Tearing Into Your Soul

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Tearing Into Your Soul

by EndoratheWitch

Summary

Bruce Wayne and his brother Jack are both witnesses to their parents’ murder. Bruce handles the loss one way, while Jack goes another until Bruce is forced to hire a doctor for his younger brother's deteriorating mental condition.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Arrival

It was a wonderful night for the Waynes who had finally gotten a chance to go out as a family, which didn't happen very often. The boys' father was a surgeon, a miracle-worker some said, and because of his gift, he was always busy. But that wasn't the only reason that Thomas Wayne was always busy. He was working to heal Gotham, not just with his skills as a surgeon, but also with the charity work he did with his wife Martha.

Their sons, Bruce and Jack, understood why their father was so busy. He would tell them time and time again that they should give back to the city of Gotham when they could and that was exactly what he and their mother were doing, giving back. They, as a family of privilege, had a responsibility to the less well-off of Gotham. They had an obligation to try to make Gotham a better place for everyone.

The boys understood, at least somewhat.

Despite understanding their parents' mission, they couldn't help but want to spend more time with their father and mother together.

But tonight was finally one of those nights where the family was all together. It was such a rare treat that in their excitement, the boys acted as if it were Christmas. The family had headed into downtown Gotham for a night on the town, dinner at a fancy restaurant, a movie the boys would enjoy...it was perfect.

They had been walking the streets of Gotham after the movie. The family decided to enjoy the clear night before heading home. Their sons were just a little distance ahead of their parents, playing characters from the movies. Bruce laughed, grabbing his little brother. “I'm taking you to jail foul villain!!”

“Bruce!! I'm not a bad guy!! I'm not going to jail!” Jack elbowed his brother in the stomach.

“Boys, now no fighting.” Their mother frowned, absently fingering her pearls with a gentle smile.

“Thomas can you make those boys settle down?”

The boys’ father laughed. “Alright you two, settle down and listen to your mother.”

The two boys were laughing and running around each other when a voice floated out of the darkness.

“Yeah boys, you might want to settle down before someone gets hurt.”

The boy's mother gasped. “Bruce! Jack! Come here!”

Before the boys could get out of reach, a man stepped out of the darkness. Long skeletal hands reached out for one of the boys, managing to grab the Wayne's youngest son Jack by the collar of his jacket. The mysterious man hauled the boy back toward him as he revealed the pistol in his other hand to the boy's parents.

Jack cried out “DADDY!” just as the gunman yanked the boy against him, wrapping his arm around the young boy's neck pressing painfully against Jack's throat. The youngest Wayne struggled, but the man holding him pressed hard against his thin neck nearly cutting off Jack's
“If you two fine folks don’t want this one to get hurt, I suggest you hand over everything, your money, them fine jewels you’re wearing...all of it.”

Bruce had run back to his parents' side. His mother grabbed him, pushing Bruce behind her, just as the man with the gun stepped forward dragging a still-struggling Jack with him, his fingers digging into the young boy's shoulder. Jack cried out, his tiny, thin collarbone snapping.

Thomas Wayne threw down his wallet at the criminal's feet. “Let my boy go now!”

The criminal yanked Jack hard, causing the boy to cry out in pain, the broke bone in his collar digging into the child's flesh beneath his skin. For a moment Jack's vision wavered, the pain causing everything to seem fuzzy, out of focus. He saw his parents standing there, his big brother hiding behind their mother, doing nothing to save him. Jack felt hot tears rolling down his cheeks, but no one moved to take him away from the bad man.

Thomas Wayne stepped forward reaching for his youngest son. “You have our money give me my son!”

The gunman snarled. “Stay back!” The man waved the gun to punctuate his statement.

That was when gun went off, a bullet striking Thomas Wayne in the chest. His body seemed to fly backwards in slow motion. Both boys watched in horror, the spray of bright red blood caught by the weak streetlights, their father's body slamming against the pavement, bouncing once then going still...

The boys' mother screamed; she reached for her husband calling his name. The gunman fired at her as Jack cried. Bruce cried out. The bullet ripped through their mother's neck, her pearl necklace shattering, ripped in half, pearls flying into the air stained bright red. As the bullet hit his mother, her blood splattered Bruce's face. He could hear the cry of his little brother being thrown to the ground, the retreating footsteps of the man running away....then the only sounds were Jack's weeping.

* 

Bruce woke up gasping for breath, dripping with sweat. He took a steadying breath running his hand through his damp hair. He couldn't recall how many times he had dreamt of that night, the night his whole life changed. He took a steadying breath when he heard the laughter. Bruce sighed throwing his legs off the side of the bed.

The laughter had started out as a soft giggle, but now it had burst into full-blown maniacal laughter, a shadow of sound that echoed through the manor. Bruce knew it was only a memory of a laugh...the manor was quiet...but the laughter seemed to always be lurking...waiting...

Bruce pushed himself off the bed and headed to the bathroom. Thank goodness the private psychiatrist was starting today. It was becoming more and more difficult for Bruce to handle his younger brother alone, especially since he had begun his nighttime activities...focusing his rage and pain in protecting Gotham as the Batman.

As Bruce ran some hot water in the sink to wash his face, his thoughts wandered to his brother Jack. Jack would disappear for days on end. No word of warning, nothing. He would just be gone, only to return home smelling of smoke, gun oil, alcohol and drugs. Sometimes he would come back looking as if he had been beaten, other times he would have blood on him but no wounds, only that maniacal smile that never seemed to waver. Jack would never divulge where he had been or what had happened to him while he was gone. Even when Jack would come home beaten and bloody, he still
would only laugh that maniacal laughter and tell Bruce not to worry.

But Bruce did worry. He could see the gleam of something in his brother's eyes that wasn't—right—but he had no idea what it was or how to handle it. It had been there since that night in the alley and had grown steadily more acute.

Now that he was older, Bruce knew that everything in regards to Jack had been handled poorly. After their parents' death, Jack had never been “right” again. He had started to mutter to himself, laughing at the strangest times, becoming more extreme in his behavior, dangerous to himself and sometimes others. The disappearances would be for longer and longer periods as he became older.

It was as if Jack had no will to live.

But the worst part was when he would find Jack's writings or drawing. Jack's brilliant mind was still there, hidden in the madness that was quietly taking him over. Jack would spend hours working on formulas for things Bruce, at the time, didn't understand.

He had thought about sending Jack to private school, a boarding school, away from the manor, away from Gotham. Bruce thought that maybe, being away might help Jack to become more...focused, stable, but Bruce wasn't sure what he hoped would happen. He sent his little brother away to a boarding school out of state. Bruce sometimes wondered if he had sent Jack away for his own peace of mind, that it wasn't for Jack's sake, but for his own that he sent Jack away to school.

Jack excelled in his classes. Jack was just as brilliant as Bruce; in some ways Jack was even more gifted. Bruce was told that his brother was a genius, that Jack could be capable of great things. But that had all come crumbling down.

When Jack returned home...actually Jack didn't return home, he was dismissed after a fight had started in which Jack had permanently disfigured a fellow student. It wasn't the first time Jack had been implicated in some sort of violence at school, but it was the first time Jack had been caught. All the other incidents had been hearsay, reports of Jack's involvement from the school had only been speculation, but the school had contacted Bruce in order to let him know about the allegations. But then the fight, the disfigured student...there had been several witnesses. Bruce never learned all the details, only that Jack had pinned the boy to the floor, laughing hysterically and carved a smile from ear to ear on the boy while whispering to him. “A smile makes everything better don't you think?”

Jack would not talk about the incident, he only told Bruce that no one at the school had a sense of humor. A large settlement with the student's family had been handled quietly and Jack had come home.

And thus Bruce had hired private tutors for Jack after that, with the help of the boys' butler Alfred Pennyworth.

Jack had a brilliant mind, just like Bruce, just like their father. He excelled in chemistry, math, philosophy, art....all subjects it seemed. But while Bruce maintained his sanity, Jack spiraled into more and more violent behavior.

*

Bruce stared at himself in the mirror. He had escaped his pain over his parents' death by focusing on training, building, learning. Perhaps he had also been trying to escape...escape not just his pain, but the pain of watching his brother fall into madness, to become something he didn't recognize.

In recent years Bruce had turned his focus on Gotham. He didn't want any other children to grow up
without their parents, to end up like him and Jack, orphans. Bruce's time away in the evenings had not gone unnoticed by Jack, though Bruce assumed his nocturnal activities were going unnoticed. Though Jack wasn't buying the “playboy about Gotham” persona Bruce had been cultivating since he hit his twenties. Jack would give him these strange knowing smiles, as if the brothers were sharing some great secret. The brothers didn't speak much, which made it easy for Bruce to keep his newest project secret...but he wondered how much Jack suspected.

*

As Bruce dressed that morning, he asked himself the same question over and over. Could he have done more when Jack was young? Even though he had been only a child himself? He didn't see what was happening to Jack until it was already too late.

Bruce adjusted his tie. There was no point in worrying about the past...he had to focus on his mission...to keep Gotham safe so that no other families fell apart like his. Losing his parents to the criminals, to the dirty underbelly of Gotham and then the slow loss of his brother to madness brought on by what happened when they were kids....no one else would suffer if Bruce Wayne had any say in it. He had just stepped back into the main area of his bedroom when there was a knock at his door.

“Sir, are you up? Ready for breakfast?”

Bruce smiled. It was Alfred Pennyworth, his family's loyal butler and his second father.

“Come in Alfred.”

Alfred came in carrying a tray from which Bruce could smell bacon, eggs, toast and the rich smell of coffee.

As Alfred set the tray down Bruce walked over.

“Have you seen Jack this morning yet?: Bruce asked as he sat down at the small table and chair in one corner of his room.

“Yes Master Bruce. I served him breakfast down in the kitchen. I am uncertain if it is my place to mention this, but he was quite excited about something he was doing this evening. He stated he would be gone all evening.

Bruce frowned. “Maybe we can convince him to stay in...his new doctor is arriving today.”

“Yes sir. She shall be here within the next hour I believe.” Alfred set Bruce's breakfast out on the table by the window.

“Is there anything else you need sir?” Alfred asked as he finished setting up the breakfast.

“Thank you Alfred, I'm good. Going to eat and run,” Bruce explained. “I'm supposed to be heading over for a board meeting this morning.”

Alfred bowed, but before he left he placed his hand on Bruce's shoulder.

“Don't worry sir. I'm sure this new doctor will help Master Jack.”

“I hope so.” Bruce sighed.

*

Alfred returned to the kitchen to see that Jack was still at the small table scribbling notes with a wide
smile on his lips, his light brown hair having fallen over his forehead to hide his green eyes as he worked.

“Master Jack, I wanted to remind you that your new doctor will be arriving today.”

Jack looked up from his work, a frown suddenly replacing his smile. “Is that today?”

“Yes sir.” Alfred started to clean the oven.

“This one is going to live with us? I still can't believe Bruce thought that was a good idea.” Jack giggled. “A live-in doctor for the crazy brother!” He stopped what he was doing to laugh louder.

Alfred frowned. Jack's laughing had started to sound...frightening to him...as if the young master was about to go off the rails so to speak.

“Promise to be on your best behavior master Jack.” Alfred walked over picking up Jack's breakfast dishes.

Jack grinned crossing his heart with his long fingers. “I cross my heart and hope to die Alfred.” Then he giggled.

* 

Dr. Harleen Quinzel pulled up at the gate in her beat up VW bug, her blue eyes large and round as she looked through the gate toward Wayne Manor. The place was far bigger than she had anticipated. She knew Bruce Wayne had money and lots of it, but she hadn't really considered how much money until she got a look at the house. Harleen swallowed. “Wow...” she whispered to herself.

She rolled down her window, leaning out to press the button on the intercom.

“Wayne residence, how may I help you?”

Harleen smiled. “Dr. Harleen Quinzel, I'm here!”

“Oh good morning Dr. Quinzel, I shall just buzz you through.”

There was the sound of an actual “buzz” and the gate slowly opened. Harleen drove through, her heart hammering in her chest with excitement and a little bit of fear. She hadn't been a doctor that long when Bruce Wayne hired her to be his brother's private doctor. Rumor had it that Jack Wayne was so crazy that Bruce Wayne kept him locked up in a tower...stories of course. But Dr. Quinzel had been scared and thrilled when Mr. Wayne had offered her the job.

Mr. Wayne had hired her on the understanding that she would speak to no one about her work with his brother. The elder Wayne brother also required her to sign a non-disclosure agreement that prevented her from writing about or publishing any work relevant to her time with the Waynes. Which was fine with her; Mr. Wayne was providing her not just with a paycheck, but he was also providing her room and board at the Wayne estate so that she was always on hand when his younger brother needed her.

Harleen drove up turning her tiny car along the circle drive and parking on the side, her eyes wandering up the front of the manor. “God!” she thought to herself as she got out of her car. The place was even bigger up close.

*
Inside, gazing out one of the windows, Jack watched his new doctor pull up. She wasn't very tall, he noted, watching her as she stood next to the little VW. He would tower over her, but she had a very nice figure that was highlighted by her black pencil skirt and deep red blouse. Her thick blonde hair was piled onto the top of her head, held in place by a couple of hair sticks. She turned around to pull her suitcase out of her vehicle as Alfred walked out to meet her, Jack saw the sunlight reflect off the lenses of a pair of glasses.

He rested his narrow chin on the palm of his hand watching her with a huge grin. He wondered how much fun she would be...she couldn't be much older than him. Though he couldn't get a very good look at her face from up here, he wouldn't be surprised if she was a good ten years younger than he was. He giggled. “Pretty, Pretty...” he murmured to himself pushing away from the window. He stopped at the full-length mirror that sat in the corner of his room and looked himself over. His brown hair was slicked back from his face and he wore a suit of dark grey, pinstriped with a lighter grey, and a bright purple tie for color. His shoes were highly polished oxfords that he snazzied up with a pair of spats. He grinned showing off his perfectly white, almost unnatural looking straight teeth.

“Looking good Jackie boy.” He winked at himself in the mirror.

* 

“Let me show you to your room first Dr. Quinzel, give yourself a chance to get settled in before you meet Master Jack.” Alfred Pennyworth, a real-life butler, picked up Harleen's bags for her and turned to walk up the stairs. Harleen was trying her best not to stare at everything, but this place was incredible!

The stairs were made of some sort of highly polished thick wood, and looked as if they came out of some romance novel, Gothic manor on the moors! There were huge paintings and other pieces of art such as marble sculptures or huge vases...everything looked as if it should be in a museum! Harleen found herself holding her arms close to her body, afraid she might knock something over and break it!

Just as she put her foot on the first stair, she heard the sound of a cheery laugh.

“Let me take those Alfred, old boy!”

Harleen looked up to see an incredibly handsome man leaning over to take her bags from the butler.

“Master Jack I am quite capable...”

“Oh Pfffttt!! Alfred...she is going to be my doctor, let me show her to her room.” The man looked past Alfred and grinned at her.

Harleen found herself speechless for a moment. He really was very handsome as he smiled down at her. “Jack? Jack Wayne?” she finally managed to get out.

Despite holding her bags, Jack Wayne executed a perfectly elegant bow.

“At your service Dr. Quinzel.” He grinned brightly at her.

Harleen tried to remain professional, but she couldn't stop the blush creeping up her neck and over her cheeks.

Jack continued to grin. “Come along Doc. I'll show you your room!”

Alfred nodded to her as she walked past him but as she followed Jack up the stairs Alfred frowned
deeper...

* 

Jack threw open the doors to the most beautiful room Harleen had ever seen. All through college she had been forced to share a house with six other girls, all of them struggling to make ends meet and get through school. Before that, she had lived in a dinky two bedroom apartment with her parents, two sisters and a brother. This room made all those places look as if she had been homeless this whole time. She could fit everything she had ever owned in this room! She pressed her lips together in order to keep her mouth from hanging open as she stepped in. The room had a king size bed in the middle of it. The mattress on the bed looked as if she would sink into its comfy embrace. The room also included a large desk and bookcase in one corner. There was a giant chest of drawers, a vanity with mirror, a full length mirror, a dressing screen painted with roses and a massive window. As she walked over to the window she saw that it looked out onto the Wayne Manor gardens.

Jack set her luggage down and flopped onto the bed.

“I know it isn't much, but I hope you will find it comfortable doctor.” Jack leaned back on his elbows watching her inspect the room.

She had just opened a door peering in and saw that she had her own bath with a deep, sauna bathtub...it was as if she had just booked a room at a swanky hotel in downtown Gotham.

She looked back at Jack who was watching his feet as he kicked his legs back and forth over the edge of the bed. “This is very nice. Thank you Mr. Wayne.”

Jack grinned at her. “Mr. Wayne is my brother. Call me Jack...especially since you are going to be poking around in my head.”

Harleen walked over to take a seat on the bed beside him. “Is that what you think I'm going to do? Dig around where I’m not wanted?”

Jack shrugged. “Maybe...maybe not.” He grinned and laid back on his elbows, rolling his head to lay his cheek against his shoulder. “You are quite pretty for a doctor.”

Harleen blushed. “Thank you. But my looks do not take away from the fact that I know what I'm doing.”

Jack nodded and pushed himself to his feet with a little hop. “Well, you get yourself settled Dr. Quinzel.”

Jack did a spin on the balls of his feet, stopping to grin at her. “You know, if you rework your name a little, you could be Harley Quinn...like a Harlequin...doesn't that just make you want to smile?”

He chuckled taking several long strides to the door.

“See you for our first session doctor.” He winked at her before slipping out the door.
The next morning, Dr. Quinzel dressed in what she hoped was a professional looking outfit. She had on a white coat/jacket over a deep blue blouse and a straight black skirt. She carefully chose her shoes, deep red heels, not too high, but high enough to give her some height and hopefully some authority. Her stockings were a bit...risky...for her professional look, with the line running down the back, but they were her favorite kind of hose to wear, a little sexy without being too sexy.

Harleen studied herself in the mirror as she piled her thick blonde hair up on top of her head, shoving a few bobby pins in to hold it in a bun. Despite her best efforts, however, long strands came loose to frame her face. Sometimes she really hated the way she looked. No one took her seriously as a doctor. Well...until Mr. Wayne. She sighed a little. He was quite handsome, wealthy, donated to charities with genuine concern for people...everything a girl would want really, but when she had met him face to face for her interview, all her “attraction” had vanished. He was still handsome and rich, but there was something about him that was...distant. He was not a man who gave in to his passions. It had been a disappointment to Harleen...no whirlwind romance with a billionaire in her future. She just felt no attraction to him.

She slipped her glasses on. They were fake—like her blonde hair—just plain glass filled the frames. She hoped the glasses helped her look more professional, smart. She turned her head one way, then the other. This job could be the chance she needed, a chance for her to make her career...maybe write that book she wanted to write on extreme personalities, albeit with names changed, maintaining the privacy of the Wayne family and upholding her contract. Working with Mr. Wayne's brother could be the big break she needed to get Arkham Asylum to give her a serious look as a doctor. She smiled at herself. Now, to go find her patient. When Harleen stepped out of her room, she realized she had no idea where she was supposed to go. Yesterday, after Jack Wayne had shown her to her room, he had disappeared. It was the butler, Alfred Pennyworth who had given her a tour of the estate.

The Wayne grounds and the manor were gorgeous! Harleen had seen pictures of the Wayne manor and it's lands in magazines before...images from when the Wayne boys had been young, before their parents' tragic death. She remembered gazing at the house in wonder while flipping through the magazine. It was a radical difference between her own home, a cramped two bedroom apartment with her parents, a brother and two sisters. But now, here she was, her own spacious room in the Wayne manor.

* 

Harleen carefully made her way down the elegant staircase looking for anyone, but the place seemed deserted. When she reached the great hall, she walked around, gazing at the art on display. She was simply amazed by what the Wayne's had in art. There was an original Rembrandt, and a one of a kind Rachel Whiteread, and those were just a small sampling of what she saw and what she suspected they owned!

She had just walked through a doorway that led to what looked to her to be a dining room when she smelled coffee. She lifted her head sniffing the air. Oh yes...coffee! she thought. At that same moment her stomach made a loud growling sound. Blushing, Harleen grabbed her stomach only to hear a soft giggle.

“You really should get some breakfast, doctor.”

Harleen turned around swiftly to see Jack Wayne standing there watching her from the doorway. Her heart slammed against her breastbone. She hadn't heard him at all.
“Hello Mr. Wayne.” She pressed her lips together. He looked incredibly dashing, leaning in the doorway with that smile on his face.

Jack chuckled, holding up a gloved finger. “Tsk, tsk! Dr. Quinzel. I told you, Mr. Wayne is my brother.”

Harleen smiled. “Sorry...Jack,” she amended.

He grinned. “Now that is much better.”

This morning Jack was dressed in a three-piece English cut suit of black with thin pin-stripping in dark grey, paired with a blood red tie and spats over his black oxfords. He even had a gold chain across his stomach. His brown hair was slicked back, highlighting his brilliant eyes, eyes which she couldn't decide the color of...his eyes almost seemed to shift from blue to green as he walked across the room toward her.

“How about I escort you to the kitchen for breakfast?” He smiled at her, those perfect teeth forming a perfect grin.

“You eat in the kitchen?” Harleen asked a little surprised.

“When I'm home I do...most of the time. When I'm working, I take my meals in my room.” Jack put his arm out for her and she hooked her arm through his.

“What sort of work do you do Jack? Do you work with your brother?” Harleen tried to suppress the blush, but this close he smelled...good...more than good—delicious. She couldn't put her finger on what the scent was, but she found it almost intoxicating.

“Work with Bruce? Pfftt!” Jack made a rude noise and laughed. “Oh listen to you! Trying to get into my confidences already and we haven't even had a first date! Naughty naughty, doctor!”

Jack giggled taking her around a corner and into the kitchens. She was immediately in heaven. The smells of coffee and cooking eggs were delicious and her stomach was making itself loudly heard. Alfred looked up from where he was working at the stove. “Ah Master Jack, Dr. Quinzel—ready for breakfast?”

Jack let go of her arm and pulled a stool out for her, one of several that lined a large metal topped counter in the center of the kitchen.

“That smells divine Mr. Pennyworth. What are you fixing?” Harleen asked as she took her seat.

Alfred smiled while Jack pulled three mugs down and started to fill them with coffee from the coffee pot down the counter from the oven.

“I'm making Master Jack a crab and cheese omelet,” Alfred explained. “Would you like one Dr. Quinzel? It is no trouble at all.” Alfred smiled at her while he worked.

“Oh please, call me Harleen. That goes for you too Jack. I may be your doctor, but I also want us to be friends.” She smiled softly. Some of her instructors had taught that one had to maintain a critical distance from one's patients, whereas others had argued that balancing a friendly relationship while being professional was important with some patients. Harleen elected to go for the closer relationship
on this job.

Jack gave her a devilishly amused grin. “I don't have any friends except old Alfred here.”

“Miss Harleen? Omelet?” Alfred slid Jack's onto a plate with ease, picking up some eggs ready for the next omelet.

“You know...I will have one, thank you.” Harleen sipped her hot coffee with a smile. Alfred smiled and nodded as he set Jack's plate in front of him and started to prepare her omelet. Jack pushed his plate in front of her. “You have this one—I'll wait.” He grinned at her leaning his elbow on the table and putting his chin in his gloved hand.

“I couldn't!” she exclaimed, but Jack grinned and lifted one eyebrow. “I insist.”

Harleen smiled taking the plate and cutting a bite off. She stuck her fork in the fluffy egg and brought it to her mouth, Jack watched her the whole time with a smile on his face, his gaze intense as he watched her. When Harleen bit into the fluffy egg, cheese and crab, her eyes rolled. It was probably the best thing she had ever eaten.

“Oh Mr. Pennyworth,” she said with a pleasantly surprised expression. “This is delicious!”

Alfred gave her a smile over his shoulder. “I am happy that you find it so, Dr. Quinzel. And please, call me Alfred.”

Jack grinned brightly. “Now that we are breaking bread together, can I call you a friend Dr. Quinzel?”

Harleen smiled back at him. “I'm here to help you...Jack. That is why your brother hired me. I hope that we can build a trust between us and yes, you can call me your friend.”

Jack looked delighted. “I actually don't have any friends, you Doctor, will be my first. Other than Alfred, of course.”

Harleen smiled. “And you will be my first. I don't have any friends either Jack.”

Jack grinned wider. “Well, you have one now Harleen.”

* 

After breakfast, while she was finishing her coffee, Harleen asked Jack, “So what do you do Jack?”

Jack chuckled. “Oh, a bit of this and a bit of that...”

She nodded sipping her coffee. “Why don't we, together, decide on a room that would be the best place to conduct our sessions. I would like to set aside an hour each day for us to just...talk...get to know one another. The rest of today I would like to spend observing—if that is acceptable to you Jack?”

Jack grinned with a glint in his eyes. “Oh, that is more than acceptable.”

* 

Alfred frowned glancing at the two of them. Jack's enthusiasm surprised Alfred. When Master Bruce had first approached Jack about having a live-in doctor for him, Jack had been livid. He had disappeared for a day and a half, returning dirty, beaten with a bloody lip, but he had said nothing to Master Bruce when he returned about where he had been or what had happened while he was gone.
The only thing that Jack had said was that he was agreeable to the doctor now.

* 

Jack hopped to his feet bowing at the waist, one hand behind his back and the other he held out to Harleen. “Shall we then, my dear doctor?”

Harleen couldn't help the smile that danced across her lips. He was indeed charming. She took his hand as she slid off her stool. Then Jack spun around, his arm extended to her. Harleen put her arm through his and the two set off. Alfred watched them leave the kitchen, a strange feeling of foreboding washing over him.

* 

Jack walked Harleen out into the main room throwing his arm up like a game show host.

“Now we have so many many rooms we could explore...but...I think I have the perfect room for our little chitchat sessions, my dear doctor.” With a display of his teeth in a wide grin, Jack proceeded to guide Harleen back the way they had come through the dining room, the great hall, through another room that she thought might be a drawing room, into yet another room that looked to be a study, finally stopping in what was clearly a library.

The walls, except for one where a very large fireplace dominated the space, were covered in shelves upon shelves of books, reaching all the way to the high ceilings of the room. There were a handful of long polished tables as well as several comfortable looking wing-backed chairs, and a long couch that reminded Harleen of something found in a Victorian era home.

The room was all polished wood and warm rich colors. The textured ceiling was highlighted by the warm light of a chandelier.

Jack grinned as he took her hand. “How is this my dear, dear doctor?”

Harleen smiled looking around. “I think this will do perfectly Jack.”

He laughed and, still holding her hand, escorted her to one of the chairs. He pulled her hand up and kissed her knuckles before he gracefully took a seat on the couch next to her. He crossed his legs and folded his hands along his knee.

“So my dear beautiful Doctor Harleen, what shall we talk about?”

Harleen blushed. “Please Jack, while I appreciate the compliments, can you please not do that?”

Jack grinned at her. “Why ever not? You are a beautiful woman, after all.”

Harleen blushed, clearing her throat. “We should be talking about you, not me.”

Jack continued to smile, something that Harleen noticed he did a lot. She wondered if his smile hid something deeper however, something not amusing or happy. “Alright, what should we talk about?” he inquired.

“Well, since this is our first session, why don't we just get to know each other?” Harleen smiled. Jack tilted his head to the side, maintaining his smile.

“You have a beautiful smile.” He giggled when she blushed and continued. “Alright, how about for every question I answer of yours, you have to answer a question of mine?
Honestly. No beating around the bush or declining to answer. If you want me to trust you, then you need to be perfectly honest.” Jack smirked. Harleen nodded in acceptance.

“Alright, but you promise the same? Complete honesty?” Harleen put her hand out to him. Jack gracefully removed his gloves, placing them on the couch beside him and wrapped his long fingers around hers. Harleen felt the warmth of his hand run up her arm, spreading through her like melted chocolate, oozing and caressing as the heat traveled through her body.

He held her hand, not letting go even when Halreen lightly tried to tug her hand back. He turned her hand over, her palm laying open and started to trace the lines the criss-crossed her palm.

“I think I shall go first,” he murmured gazing at her palm. His touch tickled slightly, the tip of his finger just barely skimming the lines of her palm. She noticed that his nails were perfectly manicured, his fingers the long tapered digits of an artist.

“Why did you become a doctor, a psychiatrist...Harley?” Jack looked up then, catching her eyes with his and holding hers with the intensity of his gaze. A stray lock of hair fell forward across his forehead. Harleen had a powerful urge to reach over and brush the lock of hair back into place with the others. With a mixture of excitement and alarm, she thought that he looked incredibly sexy as he stared at her.

She swallowed. “Remember, my name is Harleen.”

Jack grinned. “Yes, but I like Harley. You look like a Harley to me. Remember, yesterday when I said reworking your name to Harley Quinn instead of Harleen Quinzel...made me smile? You want me to smile don't you Harley?”

Harleen blushed glancing down at her hand in his, his finger still lightly tracing the lines of her palm. “Alright, when we are alone, you may call me Harley if you like, but if we are in public or around your brother, please call me Harleen or Dr. Quinzel.”

Jack nodded his agreement.

“I became a psychiatrist to help people. I've always been fascinated by “extreme” personalities, people who see the world differently.” Harleen watched while Jack continued to caress her palm.

“My turn,” she said softly. “Why did you have problems in school?”

Jack stopped his caresses to laugh. “Oh, now that was a long time ago! Boarding school...who would ever like that?” He met her gaze, a slight crinkle around his eyes filled with humor. “Poor orphaned rich boy whose own brother doesn't want him around? It was a perfect storm for teasing, beatings, you name a humiliation, I bore it. Until I became tired of it.”

He laughed then. “Poor Brucie, never knowing what to do with his little brother.” Jack dropped her hand to lean back into the couch.

Harleen found herself disappointed that he had dropped her hand and tried to put that thought out of her mind.

He grinned at her, putting his hands behind his head. “My turn. Why the glasses? They're clearly fake.”

Harleen blushed again pushing the glasses up her nose. “I...wanted to project a more professional air. It's hard to be taken seriously as a woman.”
Jack smirked. “You mean as an attractive woman, don't you?”

Harleen blushed and posed her own question. “What's your favorite past time?”

Jack grinned. “Inventing.”


Jack nodded. “Yes. I love chemistry and explosives...maybe I'll show you my ‘lab’ sometime.”

When Jack said lab, he emphasized the word by removing his hands from behind his head and made air quotes.

Harleen smiled. “I would like that.”

Jack laughed. “Okay...” He hopped to his feet. “I'm bored with this game. We should do something fun!”

“Fun?” Harleen stood up. Jack let his eyes roam slowly down her body. “Hmm...” His eyes came back to her face. “You should change into slacks.”

“Why?” Harleen self-consciously ran her hands down her skirt to smooth it out.

“Because, I'm taking you for a ride on my motorcycle.” Jack spun on his heel and walked out of the library calling over his shoulder.

“Come on Harley!”

Harleen stood there unsure what to do. She heard Jack call again. “Come on Harley!!!”

She jerked and took off at an awkward jog in her high heels after him. She had said that she wanted to build trust between them—she had to admit that riding on a motorcycle would be one way to achieve a new level of trust.

*

Several minutes later, Harleen found herself standing in a garage that was bigger than four of her apartments put together. Jack had waggled his eyebrows at her when he flipped the switch that lit up the entire room, rows of lights snapping on to reveal the works of art that were the Wayne brothers' cars.

There were a wide variety of cars, from a 1936 Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster painted in midnight black, to a 2017 Bugatti Chiron in a deep, sparkling silver. Harleen tried to keep her mouth close, but she couldn't help gaping at the cars. Each vehicle was expensive and beautiful.

Jack was still in his suit while Harleen had changed into a pair of black slacks, losing her white “doctor” coat for a red fitted blazer and a pair of knee-high black boots. She had left the glasses upstairs too, though her hair was still up in its conservative bun.

Jack grabbed her hand and pulled her down the garage to a section where there were several motorcycles running down the decades in the same way as the automobiles. Jack stopped in front of a slick looking motorcycle painted a vibrate purple with decals or paint that appeared to be happy faces with knives through them.

“This, my dear is MTT's New 420 RR, Turbine Superbike, one of the fastest bikes on the market. Well...not yet,” he corrected himself. “This is one of the first, but it's one of the fastest street legal
bikes out there.”

Jack grinned looking like a little boy for a moment.

Harleen paled. “Is it safe?”

Jack giggled. “Who cares?! Come on!”

He tugged her toward the bike. He dropped her hand walking over to some shelves against the wall that were lined with helmets. He stopped to inspect the helmets for a moment before he grabbed one off the shelf and handed it to her.

“Put this on,” he said as he walked back toward the bike.

She took the helmet as Jack walked over to the bike, and swung his leg gracefully over to settle onto the motorcycle’s seat. He started the engine, which caused Harleen to jump back just before he backed the bike up.

“Aren’t you going to wear a helmet?” she asked as he held his hand out to her.

Jack grinned. “Now where is the fun in that?”
Caught In A Landslide

Harleen wrapped her arms tightly around Jack's waist as he hit the gas and ripped down the pavement and out of the garage whooping with joy. He zipped down the driveway toward the gate that surrounded the Wayne estate, building speed as he went. Harleen glanced over his shoulder, her eyes widening; the gate was rushing up fast. She started to say something, but Jack was laughing. Harleen tightened her hold on him instead, screaming out. “JACK!!”

He was still laughing as they came right up on gate, then at the last moment, the gate suddenly started to slide open and Jack slipped through the narrow opening.

Jack threw his head back laughing. Harleen pressed her forehead against his shoulder, her heart hammering as she screwed her eyes shut. Jack raced down the street going faster than Harleen thought was possible. He was laughing as he took the turns in the road, whipping the bike from one turn to the next with expert skill. He rounded the curves in the road nearly laying the bike flat as he did so. He hit the gas when they straightened, causing the bike to lurch forward and Harleen tightened her grip once again though he didn't seem to notice. Before she knew it, they are on the streets of Gotham City, ripping through lights and traffic as if he owned the streets. Jack leaned forward on the bike, tearing past a police car which instantly had their lights flashing pulling out to pursue them.

Harleen turned looking over her shoulder, her eyes widening when she saw the police. “Jack!!” She yelled, but the wind whipped her voice away.

The police car tried to keep up, but Jack was going too fast and whipping down streets and around moving vehicles at such a speed there was no way the police could keep up. It only took a few minutes for Jack to completely lose the cops within the confines of Gotham's many narrow alleyways and congested streets.

Once the police were no longer an issue, Jack slowed down, though he continued to drive down the streets heading to downtown Gotham. It was clear to Harleen that Jack had a goal in mind, not just a joy ride. After a while she saw their destination up ahead of them. They were coming up on Amusement Mile...a whole mile dedicated to an entire carnival. The place was busy on this cool autumn day; there were crowds of people going in and out of the massive parking lot to the side of the main entrance.

Jack slowed down, weaving easily through the parking lot and the people who milled about until he parked his bike. He hopped off and helped Harleen ease off the bike, stepping close to her in order to unstrap her helmet. Harleen froze when he touched her, his long graceful fingers moved swiftly, but wherever he touched her skin, she felt a flash of heat. He pulled her helmet off gently, placing it on the bike. He grinned at her still standing uncomfortably close to her.

“There you go Harley. Beautiful.” He reached out and brushed a stray lock of her hair behind her ear with a wink before he turned to crouch down by his bike. She could see he was doing something to the bike, but she couldn't quite see what exactly he was fiddling with on the side of the motorcycle.

“Jack, what are you doing?” She looked down trying to figure it out, but she had no idea. It almost looked like he was...well...setting a bomb.

Jack stood up, dusting his hands off on his slacks. “I'm rigging the bike to explode if anyone tries to take it.”
Harleen laughed. “No, seriously what are you doing?”

Jack turned, his face deadly serious. “I’m rigging the bike to explode if anyone but me tries to start it.” Then he smiled that infectious smile. “Come on, let’s go have some fun shall we Harley?” He put his arm out to her and while Harleen glanced back at the bike with a frown. But she weaved her arm through his and let him lead her away.

Jack paid for tickets and turned to grin at her. “So my dear, what would you like to do first?”

Harleen looked around. “Why are we here?”

Jack laughed. “To have some laughs doctor, or don’t you laugh?”

Harleen smiled blushing a bit. “I laugh!”

Jack grinned. “Then show me, pick something for us to do first.”

Harleen looked around then pointed at the roller coaster. “How about that?”

Jack chuckled. “Oh the bike wasn't exciting enough I see. Come on, Harley.” He grabbed her hand tugging her with him as he set a brisk pace for the roller coaster.

While they waited in line for the coaster, Jack leaned in close to her, his breath a tickle against her ear. “We used to come here with our mother sometimes but it was usually Alfred who would bring Bruce and me, even before our parents died. This was always my favorite place.”

Harleen smiled turning to look at him. He was so close, his nose almost touching hers. His eyes were so compelling, and his smile...Harley swiftly forced her thoughts back away from his physical attributes.

“So this was a favorite place when you were a kid. How often do you visit now?”

Jack shrugged. “Oh, a lot I suppose. To me, this place is what life is all about, fun, games, and disappointment.”

“Disappointment?” Harleen frowned. “What do you mean?”

Jack grinned. “Because all the fun is a facade. Do you think the people that work here are having fun? Don't you think there might be something deadly...decayed...rotten...under all the grease paint? This place is just like Gotham, just like...” He stopped himself. He frowned for a moment, but then he smiled again. “Even all the fun and happiness in the word can't keep the rot from spreading. To fight it is simply foolishness. You just have to give in to the madness!”

Harleen frowned deeper. “To fight it? What do you mean? What madness?”

Jack turned to Harleen. “There is something dark underneath...” He reached out and grasped her chin gently, running his thumb over her bottom lip in a caress that had her spellbound in its seductiveness. He stared intently into her blue eyes. She felt like he was looking into her soul. His eyes wandered down once to her lips, his smile reaching his eyes for a moment so brief she wasn't sure she had seen it. When he spoke his voice was a low, warm purr that melted over her, his lips almost touching hers.

“Tell me doctor, is there something black and rotten in you...something you're covering up with all the pretty outside trappings of being sane, of being “good?” Our smart, smart pretty, pretty doctor...or
is there something dark dwelling inside Harley Quinn just waiting to get out?”

His smile was slightly lopsided, the smile of a rogue. He winked at her letting her jaw go, dropping his hand back to his side.

Harleen found herself missing the warmth of his touch. She swallowed. “There is nothing dark in me Jack, I assure you.”

Jack laughed. “Oh you are so pretty, so good...you keep telling yourself that.” He reached out and took her hand to bring her knuckles to his lips and press a kiss on them. Harleen stared at him for a moment before dropping her eyes.

* *

When it was their turn for the roller coaster, the operator who was running the coaster saw them and yelled, “Hey Jack!! I was beginning to think you weren't going to come back!” The man put his hand out and Jack took the offer, shaking his hand.

Jack grinned. “Well, hello there Mark. Let me introduce my friend.” With a broadening smile, Jack gestured at the operator. “Harley this is Mark...he is a man of many trades and few talents.”

The man named Mark grinned, clearly not catching the veiled insult as he gave Harleen the once over. “Well, well Jack...you've got good taste in the dames.” Mark took her hand kissing her knuckles in nearly the same place that Jack had just kissed her moments ago. Neither Harleen nor Mark saw the way Jack looked at him. Jack's face suddenly darkened, his blue-green eyes going flat for just a moment. Mark grinned at Harleen and winked. “When you get tired of the rich boy here, you come look me up toots, okay? Get to hang out with a real man, knows what a dame like you needs.”

Harleen flushed. “Ah...thank you.” She quickly snatched her hand back looking uncomfortable.

Jack smiled, though it didn't reach his eyes. “So Mark, me and Harley here came to have a good time. Anything good happening?”

Mark shrugged. “There's a game going on tonight if'n you're interested.”

Jack laughed. “Oh yes, I'm interested.”

Mark grinned. “Come by around midnight...bring your girl with you if you want. I always like taking your money.”

Jack nodded. “Maybe I will.”

Mark lifted the gate up with a laugh. “Your chariot awaits!”

Jack climbed into the seat holding Harleen's hand and guiding her to the seat beside him. When the restraints came down in the next second, Mark walked over checking everyone's restraints to make sure they were in working order, though he did a little too complete a check on Harleen's. She backed herself against her seat as far as she could to prevent Mark's hands from touching her as best she could. After Mark stepped back Jack took her hand, bringing it up to his lips and kissed her knuckles. “Scared?”

Harleen smiled. “Nope.”

Jack grinned in response to her answer. “Good.”
Harleen frowned a bit. “What party was he talking about?”

Jack kissed her knuckles again. “Nothing for you to worry about my dear, dear doctor.”

Then the coaster took off. Jack laughed the whole while; his laughing had her laughing along with him throwing her arms up in the air when the coaster dived. Jack chuckled holding his arms up too. The ride was exhilarating and fantastic!

When they got to the end of the ride, Jack helped her out pulling her close, his hands pressed against her waist. Jack’s nose was nearly pressed against her own, all of it accompanied by his ever present smile. “Let’s go get some cotton candy shall we?”

Harleen laughed. “That sounds great!”

* 

They walked the circuit of the carnival eating cotton candy together. Jack stopped in mid-stride, his eyes going toward one of the many shooting games. This game had the participants shooting moving targets. Jack got a wicked grin on his face.

“I’m going to win you a stuffed bear,” he announced. He grabbed Harleen’s hand dragging her over to the game.

“Gonna win the lady a prize?” The man running the stall inquired with a grin.

Jack winked. “Yes, I am.” He handed the man some bills and picked up the toy gun. Within seconds, Jack had gotten off several shots, each one taking out a target. Harleen was a little surprised at how quick and accurate his aim was; it was really impressive. The man running the stand nodded. “Now that is some good shooting!” He handed Jack the teddy bear and Jack, in turn, handed it to Harleen with a deep bow. “My lady.”

Harleen laughed. “Thank you,” she said with feeling.

Jack winked at her before taking her hand again.

* 

They rode several other rides, including the carousel. Harleen decided that of everything they did, the carousel was her favorite.

When they stepped onto the platform of the ride, Jack picked Harleen up easily by the waist setting her on the back of a white horse.

Harleen squeaked in surprise when he lifted her up. He was deceptively strong. “Thank you Jack,” she said with a slight blush to her cheeks. Damn it, she thought. I’m blushing at a patient! What’s wrong with me?

Jack took the bat-looking thing beside her hopping on gracefully. “You are always welcome Harley.” He gave her a smooth, seductive smile, holding onto the pole as he leaned against it.

“Did you’re parents ever bring you to the carnival Harley?” Jack asked.

Harleen frowned. “No...we could never afford it.”

Jack quirked a brow at her before he grinned again. “Then I’m glad I was the one to take you.”
Harleen started to say something in return, but then she had to grab the pole, laughing as the carousel started. Jack grinned at her reaching out to take her hand. He giggled and started to make up lyrics to the carousel music that was playing while swinging their hands back and forth.

“Oh Harley pretty, pretty Harley...why don't you come out to play!”

Jack’s singing voice was beautiful, Harleen noted, though she was not surprised; Jack seemed to possess many talents.

Harleen laughed and grinned at Jack who swung her hand back and forth his eyes never leaving hers as he sang his made-up song to her.

* 

They ended up staying all day at the carnival, riding all the rides at least twice, playing games and eating junk food. Jack was attentive and entertaining the whole time. He would tell her terrible jokes that had her laughing. If I wasn't his doctor...no...Harleen stopped herself from following that line of thought. She had to keep her thoughts about Jack neutral. The fact was, she was his doctor. What might be...could be...no...Harleen got after herself for letting her thoughts drift...she was here to help him, not anything beyond that.

It was late in the day, the sun setting and the lights of the carnival came to life around them. They were sitting at one of the picnic tables that were placed around the carnival eating something or other that had been deep-fried on a stick. Jack was laughing at her as she took an experimental bite then wrinkled her nose. “Is that an Oreo?”

Jack grinned tapping the tip of his nose. “You are correct!”

Harleen laughed. “Eww!”

Jack giggled taking a bite of his own deep-fried treat. “I don't know Dr. Quinzel...you don't like fried Oreos. I don't know if I can trust you with my deep dark secrets now.”

Harleen made a face at him and stuffed the rest of the fried confection into her mouth which had Jack howling with laughter.

Harleen grinned with her mouth full of Oreo, which had Jack laughing even more. A cool breeze brushed over them and Harleen shivered slightly.

Jack noticed her shiver. “I think it's time to head home.”

He stood up taking her hand and helping her to her feet. Jack didn't let go of her had while they made their way back to the parking lot. Harleen thought she should take her hand back, but his grip was pleasant, his hand warm. And it was just friendly hand holding, she told herself, nothing to get all worked up about.

When they arrived back at the bike, Jack helped her again with the helmet. He gave her a smile while his fingers stroked slowly along her chin. He strapped the helmet on then caressed her cheek once with the back of his fingers before reaching out and stroking some of her blonde hair back from her brow. Harleen tried not to react, but the blush was immediate.

If Jack noticed he gave no indication, turning around to climb onto the bike, twisting toward her, his hand out.

She climbed onto the back of the bike, holding onto Jack with one hand, the other around the stuffed
bear he had won for her. Once he had her seated, he shot a grin over his shoulder at her.

* 

They drove back to Wayne manor at a much more subdued speed than they had come to Gotham so many hours previously. Harleen relaxed, laying against his back with her one arm around his waist. She couldn't remember the last time she had had that much fun.

Jack drove into the garage and parked the bike hopping off with a huge grin. Turning, he helped Harleen to climb off the bike.

“Want to join me for dinner in the kitchen?” Jack asked. Harleen thought that he looked so adorable, his brown hair, wind-blown and falling over his forehead, his fancy suit slightly wrinkled, but he still looked fantastic...handsome. Harleen quickly shoved those thoughts away. No, she could not think of him like that—he was her patient!

“Let me go freshen up, then yes, dinner sounds good.”

Jack grinned. “Meet you there.”

* 

Harleen showered, dried her hair and pulled it back into a loose ponytail. She dressed in casual leggings and a long t-shirt...a little more informal than “doctor/patient” attire, but since it was just dinner in the kitchen after spending the day together at a carnival, Harleen decided being casual was acceptable in this instance. Besides, she lived here...she couldn't stay looking the doctor part all the time, could she?

She made her way down the stairs, wearing only her socks on her feet; this time she was able to find her way to the kitchen without any help.

When she arrived Jack was already there, dressed in a pair of grey slacks and a white dress shirt, the sleeves of which were rolled up, the collar unbuttoned a couple of buttons down, exposing his collar. She could tell he was freshly showered, his hair still damp and slicked back from his narrow face. The image of him sitting there, forearms exposed, a hint of his collar and chest...Harleen stop it! She mentally berated herself. He is your patient! Remember that!

Jack was working on something at the counter where he sat on a stool writing, his full attention on whatever it was he was working on. Alfred was at the counter near the oven snapping peas and cutting a few other vegetables. “Good evening, Miss Harleen.”

She smiled brightly. “Good evening Alfred, dinner smells fantastic.”

Alfred smiled. “Why, thank you Miss Harleen. I'm making Chicken Scaloppine with sugar snap peas, asparagus, and lemon salad.”

Harleen gasped. “Oh, that sounds delicious!”

“I hope so.” Alfred smiled.

Jack looked up and grinned at her. “Well Harley...I mean, Harleen, you look adorable tonight.”

Harleen blushed. “Thank you Jack.” She turned back to Alfred. “Can I help you with anything?”

Alfred shook his head. “Thank you Miss Harleen, but I have everything handled.”
Jack pulled a stool out and patted the surface. “Come sit with me Harleen.”

She came over and climbed onto the stool glancing over at Jack's papers. “What are you working on?”

Jack grinned and waggled his eyebrows at her. “Secret project.”

Harleen put her chin in her hand leaning on the counter. “Secret project?”

Jack nodded. “Yes, but I might share it with you.” He gave her a coy grin looking at her with those intense eyes through his lashes. Harleen was suddenly very aware of how thick Jack's lashes were...she felt a warmth along her cheeks curling down her spine when she looked at him.

Alfred walked over, setting a bottle of wine and two glasses on the counter between them.

“A Sauvignon Blanc, goes well with the chicken.” He smiled at the two of them and walked back to his vegetables. Alfred glanced once over his shoulder. It pleased him to see Jack talking to Dr. Quinzel so easily. Alfred seemed to genuinely like the doctor. Alfred hoped that she could help him; Alfred feared for Master Jack more than he had confided in Master Bruce. The young man was reckless...destructive, traits that were becoming more intense as he grew, and grew more lonely. The boys had been close before their parents death, but now they could go whole days without seeing each other. Alfred sincerely hoped Dr. Quinzel could help mend the rift between them.

* 

They did not have to wait long until dinner was ready. Alfred served the two of them as if they were dining in the dining room surrounded by guests.

While they ate, Jack showed her what he was working on. He pointed down at a formula that Harleen could neither make heads nor tails of. “This will create a gas, but it also has a liquid form.” Jack giggled.

Harleen frowned staring down at it. “What exactly does it do?”

Jack giggled. “I have no idea yet, but I’m looking forward to finding out!”

“Isn't that dangerous?” Harleen frowned as she sipped her wine.

Jack shrugged. “It will be fun to find out won't it? That's part of the fun, having no idea if it will kill you or not.” He grinned at her and surprised her by leaning over and kissing her cheek while stuffing the paper into his pants pocket.

“Well, I have to go. See you tomorrow for our session, my dear doctor.” He gave her a wink as he strolled out of the kitchen before Harleen could murmur a word. Harleen watched him go, her fingers coming up to delicately touch her cheek.

* 

Jack stopped at his room on his way out. He slipped on a black jacket, grabbed a wide brim hat that he set low on his head, casting his eyes in shadows. He slipped a switchblade into an inner pocket of his jacket, as well as a deck of cards. He stopped as he passed the mirror in his room, a full-length antique that had been his mother's. Jack stared at himself for a long moment and a gradual smile formed across his face. Tonight is going to be fun, he thought to himself.

*
Jack walked out to the garage and headed to his favorite vehicle, a 2016 Lamborghini Huracan painted in a deep—and gorgeous, he thought—shade of purple. The car had been a birthday gift to himself. Bruce had been upset, especially because Jack refused to tell him how he had paid for it...in cash. Bruce kept tight purse strings for a billionaire. Jack chuckled. Big brother Brucie really hated not being in control, but that was what made life worth living as far as Jack was concerned—realizing you never had control...of anything.

Jack slipped into the car, leaning back in the white leather seats with a wide grin as he turned the motor, listening to the purr of the engine. He grinned wider as he thought about Harley sitting next to him in a very short dress, her long legs showing. She was a delicious dish of a doctor...and she was all his.

Jack started to laugh as he took off, leaving Wayne Manor and heading into Gotham.

*

Jack drove back to the now closed carnival stopping at the gate where a large man stepped out, his face painted like a clown. He leaned over, saw Jack and grinned. “Head to the camp, game’s going on in the main tent.”

Jack gave the clown a two-fingered salute and headed on in.

*

Harleen sighed when she was back in her room changing into her night clothes. She wore just her panties and an oversized t-shirt with a cute teddy bear on it that read “Beary tired.”

Harleen pulled the bed back crawling under the covers, the stuffed animal that Jack had won her at the carnival on the pillow next to her. She grinned looking at the teddy bear laying against the pillow with a cheery grin. The bear made her think of Jack. Harleen groaned and flopped down on her own pillow glaring at the ceiling. “Don't let yourself be charmed Harleen! He’s your patient! Mr. Bruce Wayne hired you to help his brother...not get all hot and bothered by him! Especially within the first week of working with him!” She made a face, screwing up her lips and wrinkling her nose. Why did he have to be so charming?! She thought to herself as she pulled the covers up and leaned over to turn off her light.

*

In the main tent, Jack leaned back in his chair, his long legs stretched out before him, crossed at the ankles. He had a cigarette held between his lips as he looked at his cards, his hat tilted low over his brow. His hand wasn't the best, but he was fairly sure the others at the table were bluffing. Jack's eyes wandered over to Mark, the guy who had been working at the roller coaster. Jack's eyes narrowed. Mark wasn't paying any attention, all his focus on a brunette who had been serving the men their drinks all night. Jack leaned forward picking up his glass of whiskey and downing it in one swallow.

Mark finally turned back to the game. “Come on Jack, whatcha got?”

One of the other men, a guy everyone called Bone sighed. “Shut up Mark, let the man take his time.”

Mark scowled. “If'n he's going to lose, he needs to get it over with.” Mark then smirked. “Some of us got other plans tonight too.” Mark's gaze turned once again to the brunette.

Jack grinned. “Fine...I'm calling your bluff Marko.” Jack laid his cards down, a good old-fashion straight.
The other men at the table groaned throwing their cards down while Mark looked confused. “But...you can't...”

Jack laughed standing up and pulling the money in the middle of the table toward him. “Not my fault you can't play cards, Mark.”

Mark growled throwing his cards. “I'm done.”

Jack stood up pocketing the money. “I'm afraid I'm done as well boys.” Some of them groaned about winning back their money, but Jack laughed. “Next time gents!”

Jack waved turning to leave, but he walked over to Mark. “Come take a drive with me buddy. I have something I need to discuss with you.”

Mark frowned and shrugged. “Okay, what is it.”

“Believe me, it is an opportunity that will make you a lot of money!” Jack laughed.

* *

Mark grinned running his hands over the interior of Jack's car as Jack drove to the warehouse district of Gotham, located near the docks. Mark glanced out the window. “What are we doing here?”

Jack grinned. “Well I never said it was honest money, did I?”

Mark nodded. “Yeah, yeah I get it, you don't have to worry about me. Figured all you rich guys had to get rich somehow that wasn't honest.”

Jack pressed his lips together into a thin smile, not saying a word.

They ended up parking behind an old abandoned warehouse. From the discarded equipment around it, whoever had owned the place had dealt in heavy equipment. Jack parked and slid out of the car, walking up to the warehouse. He moved not just with a long familiarity of the place, but he also didn't seem to be affected by the lack of light. He found the door easily and after a few seconds Jack escorted Mark inside.

Mark started to feel uncomfortable when he stepped into the warehouse; the place was dark and deserted. He started to turn around. “Hey Jack, what's...”

Suddenly Jack had wrapped an arm around Mark's neck from behind and with his other hand, which he rolled and twisted, snapped out a switch blade. The pale, watery moonlight that came into the warehouse from the upper windows hit the blade in Jack's hand, causing the slick metal to shine eerily in Mark's eyes.

“Look, what's this about Jack? I didn't do anything to you man!” Mark's voice cracked a little.

Jack smiled his lips pressed against Mark's ear. “You remember that woman I was at the carnival with earlier today?”

“Yeah, yeah, sure man the hot blonde. I remember, what about her?” Mark spoke a little too quickly.

“Well you see Mark, you made her uncomfortable...and you kept staring at her in a way I didn't like much...”

“Look man, I'm sorry man, I'll apologize!” Mark trembled in fear. He had been in unpleasant situations before, but Jack Wayne truly frightened him right now.
“Don't worry about a thing Mark—that's why I'm here, for your apology.”

Jack started to giggle, moving his arm that pressed down on Mark's neck, his hand coming up to cover Mark's mouth as he slowly and precisely ran the sharp blade across Mark's neck.

He dropped Mark to the floor, watching with a grin while Mark jerked and sputtered, the blood pooling under Mark's body becoming a bigger and bigger puddle.

Jack smiled down at Mark.

“Apology accepted.”
**Fly Me To The Moon**

Harleen woke up the next morning in a good mood. She had showered last night before bed, but decided to take another quick one this morning to freshen up (and she didn't have to worry about the water bill, so why not indulge?)

Letting the water run down her body, her eyes closed and enjoying the warm water, she started singing to herself surprising herself when it was the words to the song Jack had made up while on the carousel. She stopped singing to giggle at herself.

Once out of the shower she blew her hair dry and piled the blonde tresses on the top of her head, sliding two hair sticks into the bun to hold it in place. She dressed today in a blue blouse that brought out her eyes and a white calf-length flared skirt, matched with a white jacket and a pair of black heels along with her mock seam hose. She slipped her glasses on and smiled at herself.

“You look very professional, Dr. Quinzel,” she said to her reflection.

Soon she was on her way down the stairs as the smell of coffee wafted up from the kitchen below. She turned the corner and ran smack into a wall of muscle. She stumbled backwards with a startled yelp. She teetered on her heels for a moment, but a pair of large strong hands reached out to grab her upper arms preventing her from tumbling backwards. Harleen looked up startled into the face of Mr. Bruce Wayne.

“Are you alright, Dr. Quinzel?” Mr. Wayne asked, his voice laced with concern.

“Oh yes, sorry Mr. Wayne. I didn't see you there.” Harleen flushed.

Mr. Wayne let go of her arms. “Following the scent of coffee?”

Harleen laughed softly. “Yes, yes I am.”

He nodded smiling. “As was I. Can I ask, how are you and Jack getting along? I know it's been only two days, but...”

Harleen ran her hands nervously down her skirt. “Oh, so far so good. We are having a session later today as a matter of fact. Right now my sessions are more about building trust with your brother so he will feel comfortable and open up to me more.”

Mr. Wayne nodded. Harleen could see the stress around the man's eyes. He looked as if he had not received enough sleep.

“You know Mr. Wayne, I will be able to help your brother. You don't have to worry and if you need to, you can always talk with me if you wish too?” She gave him her best professional smile.

“Call me Bruce, please Dr. Quinzel.” Bruce smiled.

“Then you should call me Harleen.” She smiled in return. Bruce put his arm out to her. “Would you like an escort to the kitchen?”

Harleen chuckled. “Why thank you Bruce.”

* 

When the two of them arrived in the kitchen, Jack, dressed in a three piece suit, a blue-grey with a
dark purple vest, white shirt and a purple and white polkadot tie (which was unusual, the added color of the vest and all, but Harleen found she liked it a great deal.) Jack sat in his usual spot drawing. He was bent over the drawing, his dress shoes, complete with spats, were hooked under the stool. His posture almost made him look slightly child-like. He was bent over the drawing in such a way that Harleen only caught a glimpse of the image on the sketch pad. She frowned, the image on the paper looked like a lot like a drawing of her...and it was gorgeous.

Jack swiftly closed the sketchbook and frowned as his eyes fell on his older brother. He curled his lip a little.

“Moving in on my doctor Brucie?”

Bruce escorted Harleen to a stool which she took. “I turned a corner and bumped into him.” Harleen shrugged.

Bruce frowned at his brother, but made no additional commentary to Harleen's explanation.

Alfred was at the stove flipping a large omelet. “Master Bruce, are you planning to eat breakfast with the good doctor and your brother?”

Bruce shook his head. “No Alfred. I was just lured in here by the smell of coffee.”

Alfred smiled. “You really should eat before you go this morning sir.”

Jack placed his elbows on the counter where he sat, setting his chin in his hand. “You should brother dear.”

Bruce turned to look at his little brother, but Jack's smile seemed genuine. “Alright Jack.”

Jack smiled hopping up and walking to the cabinet grabbing a cup for Harleen and one for Bruce. Alfred smiled. The brothers hadn't eaten a meal together in ages. Perhaps Dr. Quinzel's presence was helping.

Alfred glanced over his shoulder where Jack was at the coffee maker.

“The coffee is that Rwanda Blue Bourbon coffee you got last week Master Bruce.” Jack handed Bruce his own mug while he went about preparing Harleen's for her. He waltzed back over offering her the steaming mug. “Thank you Jack.”

Jack winked at her and retook his seat, picking up his mug and sipping his own coffee. Alfred grinned as he cracked a few more eggs into the bowl he had been using. “I'm making cheese and spinach omelets this morning Master Bruce, would you like one?”

Bruce smiled and shrugged, giving in. “Sure thing Alfred.”

Soon the three of them were eating breakfast together. Alfred poured himself a cup of coffee while he finished cleaning up.

“So, Jack, what are your plans today?” Bruce asked. It was clear to Harleen that there was an awkwardness in Bruce's attempts to engage his brother. Jack glanced up from where he had been staring down at his food. He hadn't eaten but a few bites, the rest he simply poked with his fork. Harleen could feel and see the tension between the two. It was clear from the way Bruce Wayne held himself that he was not accustomed to having breakfast with his brother and the way Jack seemed slightly sullen he was upset that Bruce had actually decided to share breakfast with him. She wondered how long their arrangement of avoiding each other had been in effect...months? No—she
Jack looked up grinning, a lock of his brown hair hanging across his forehead. “Oh, get my head shrunk by our dear doctor here. Maybe she can find out why I’m broken, eh Brucie? Give me a bunch of pills to make me all better. Or maybe it’s something you can fix if you throw enough money at it? Maybe she’ll disappoint you and you’ll find out there is nothing wrong with your little brother except he sees the world as it is?”

Jack grinned wider seeing Bruce pale a little.

“Jack, you know why I brought in Dr. Quinzel. Can we please...I mean...let's talk about this later...” Bruce frowned, but Jack only laughed glancing at Harleen. “You know if you can't figure out what is wrong with me, my big brother is going to lock me up. Put in a tower like a dirty secret and hope I don't do anything he can't fix. He might even become desperate enough and stick me in Arkham. Now wouldn't that be a gas?”

Jack giggled.

Bruce closed his eyes and let out a sigh. “Jack...” He looked at his brother who was resting his chin in his hand leaning forward expectantly, a huge smile on his face. Bruce sighed. “Nevermind. I have to go into the city. I'll be back later. Jack, please don't forget about the fundraiser Friday night.”

Jack giggled. “Oh, you trust me to mingle with other people?”

Bruce stood. “I trust you to uphold the family name and take seriously some of the responsibilities.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “This coming from the Bruce Wayne sex machine.”

Bruce flushed bright red which had Jack laughing. “Fine, fine, big brother. I'll make an appearance and I will be good.”

“Thank you Jack. I will see you later.” He nodded. “Dr. Quinzel, Alfred.”

“Master Bruce. Oh sir, will you be home for dinner?” Alfred asked while wiping off the counters.

Harleen watched him go thinking to herself that Bruce Wayne needed a therapist too. Jack grinned as he picked up his coffee. “Poor Brucie—burdened with good looks, money and a crazy brother. It's all very romantic really. Would make a great movie don't you think Harley? I mean Harleen.” He winked at her.

Harleen could tell the slip on her name was on purpose, but she decided not to call him out on it.

She stood up taking her plate and set it in the dishwasher after scraping off any food remains into the garbage. “So what is this fundraiser all about?”

Jack made a face. “Oh it's for a good cause that all rich people love. Oh look at us donating money to help those filthy poor people and we don't have to get our hands dirty.”

Jack wiggled his fingers in the air. Harleen had to press her lips together in order not to laugh.

“But the money does go to a good cause. Doesn't it?” Harleen resumed her seat watching Jack with interest. He made a face. “Yes, but those fundraiser have more to do with all those people feeling good about themselves than about the people they help. Hypocrites. The poor wish to be rich, the rich wish to be happy, the single wish to be married, and the married wish to be dead.”
“Even your brother?” Harleen asked quietly.

Jack frowned. “Bruce...cares. It's a fatal flaw.”

Harleen started to open her mouth to ask why it was a fatal flaw, but Jack jumped up. “How about you go to the fundraiser with me?”

“But...I don't know...” Harleen frowned rubbing her chin with a finger, but Jack laughed. “Oh come on, it would be fun with you there and besides, Bruce would be happy. I would be there and I would have my doctor there undercover making sure I don't do anything embarrassing.” He gave her the most charming smile.

“Well, I suppose...” Harleen muttered rubbing a hand up and down her upper arm. “I don't really have anything to wear to a gala...fundraiser though.”

Jack made a rude noises. “Pффффt! Just means later today I'm taking you shopping.”

* 

Alfred was just about finished cleaning up after breakfast; he was standing at the sink washing the pan when he heard Master Jack state that he was going to take Dr. Quinzel shopping. Alfred tried to hide his small smile focusing on the task at hand. True, this was crossing a line between a patient and doctor relationship, but Alfred was pleased to see Jack taking an interest in someone. Maybe little things such as Dr. Quinzel accompanying Jack to the fundraiser was a type of therapy for the young man. Alfred wasn't sure how master Bruce would feel about it, but Alfred was pleased.

* 

Harleen frowned. “I don't know...”

Jack put his hands together, weaving his fingers together and stuck out his bottom lip. “Please Dr. Quinzel, don't make me face all those people alone. So much boredom might actually kill me! Without a charming companion to help relieve the stress of so many stuck up rich people I might actually die.” Jack fell across the counter with his tongue hanging out. Harleen laughed. “Fine, alright.”

Jack popped up with a huge smile lighting up his face. “Perfect!”

Harleen laughed. “Are you ready for our session?”

Jack nodded with a grin, grabbing her hand and pulling her up from her seat at the same time snatching his sketch pad and pencil from the counter, tucking it under his arm.

“Let's go shrink my head doc!”

* 

It required a few minutes to get settled in the room with Jack draping himself dramatically over one of the couches in the room. She tried not to laugh, but he was being so silly it was hard for her not to. She pulled out the small notebook she had stuffed in the pocket of her jacket along with a pen.

“So, Jack, what do you feel like talking about today?”

Jack laid the back of his hand across his forehead. “I have no idea.”

Harleen tapped her pen against her lips. “So you draw?”
Jack laughed. “Yes I do, my good doctor.”

“Is there a reason why you hid the drawing when your brother and I came into the kitchen?” she asked.

Jack waggled his eyebrows smiling. “Maybe I'm shy. Or I was drawing naked women and didn't want my big brother to see. OR maybe I was drawing you.” He pressed his teeth into his bottom lip smiling at her.

“Would you like to share your work?” she inquired with a tilt of her head. “Have you ever thought about doing art professionally?”

Jack snorted. “I am planning on sharing my art, my talent...some day.” He revealed this with a strange, almost whimsically delighted air as if he were planning something big.

“Oh, are you planning to display your art in a gallery?” Harleen smiled.

Jack giggled. “Something like that.”

Harleen made a note and then looked back at him. Jack had his sketchpad resting against his bent legs where he lay on the couch. He was holding the pages up looking at his drawing. She saw the image he had been working on before breakfast, an image of her. Jack glanced over at her smiling before he let the cover fall back into place.

They were quiet for a moment as Jack flipped his sketch pad back to a blank page, twirling the pencil along his fingers for a moment before he started to sketch.

She pressed her lips together glancing back down at her notepad. “Tell me about you and Bruce as children.”

Jack made a face as he scribbled on the paper. She couldn't quite see what it was he was drawing.

Harleen frowned. “Why the face Jack?”

“Bruce. Don't get me wrong Harley. I love my brother. He's just so...I don't know. He does the playboy thing, a different lady all the time, parties, but he can't fool me. Brucie has a deep dark secret.” Jack narrowed his eyes staring at the wall across from him over the top of his sketch pad before he started to giggle.

“Fool you?” Harleen asked. “What do you mean?”

Jack sat up straighter. “Bruce isn't like that. He was always serious. Especially after our parents were killed...”

Harleen frowned. “How did he react after the death of your parents?”

Jack laid back down, crossing a leg over his knee and settling the sketch pad on his thighs. He motioned with the hand that held the pencil. “He became more...I don't know...focused.”

“What about you?” Harleen asked softly.

Jack frowned as he stared off into space again. When he spoke it was with a smile. “The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.”

Harleen frowned. “Mark Twain?”
Jack grinned. “Very good, doctor.”

“So do you think you live fully and Bruce doesn't?” She tilted her head studying him.

Jack grinned rolling his head over to look at her.

“I live each day as if it will be my last and I look to go out with a smile on my face. Don't you realize doc? This is all—all of it—a big joke.” Jack threw one of his arms out to encompass everything.

Harleen chewed her bottom lip. “Do you think this has to do with your parents dying in front of you? Do you see yourself as taking risks in order to “fully” live your life? Is that why you see everything as a joke?”

Jack went quiet. Harleen looked from her notepad where she had been taking some notes, her eyes focusing on Jack's profile. He was very attractive and, to her mind, more so than his older brother and Bruce Wayne was considered one of the most eligible bachelors in the world. Jack wasn't just attractive; there was an intensity about him that she found compelling.

“Jack?” Harleen said his name gently.

He frowned still not making eye contact. “That's not a funny question at all,” he muttered.

Harleen became quiet. “Jack, how did your parents' death make you feel?”

Jack giggled softly. “He broke my collarbone you know.”

“Who did?” Harleen again asked gently.

Jack sat up straighter, flattening his legs and placing his hands on top of the sketchpad.

“The man who murdered my parents.” Jack said it casually as he finally turned to look at her. Then in a playful voice he said.

“Well, you know, this is becoming quite dark Harley.”

He laughed getting to his feet casually dropping the pad and pencil on the couch.

“I think we need to lighten the mood. Do something fun, don't you?”

Harleen frowned. This was exactly what he had done yesterday. As soon as a tough question came up he deflected, but she decided not to press him—not yet anyway. Her relationship with Jack Wayne was going to take time. He would answer the questions when he was ready. Her job was to help him to be ready.

“Alright Jack.” She closed her notebook, sliding the small pad back into her jacket pocket. “What did you have in mind?”

“I think you should put on something less...doctery, doctor. Then we will go shopping for a dress! AND I will take you out to lunch!” Jack grinned with a gleeful shine in his eyes.

*  

Bruce arrived at his office to find the morning paper waiting on his desk. Bruce could have read the paper online like everyone else, but he felt like he owed it to the old Gotham Gazette to still read the hard copy of the paper they put out...especially since a portion of his wealth went to keeping the paper from falling into obsolescence. Bruce also liked the feel of the paper in his hands, the tangible
texture of the newsprint. Maybe it was because holding the paper reminded him of his father?

He sat down at the desk picking up the paper. That afternoon he was to go to the tailor for a fitting, make some last minute menu arrangements for the fundraiser and a few other frivolous things. But what he was really looking forward to was meeting with Lucius Fox. The two of them had been working on some new designs for his weapons and Lucius was to show him some modifications to the car, especially after that time Bruce had come back to his vehicle only to find the tires slashed.

Bruce picked up the paper and frowned at a small article near the bottom of the front page. Bruce's eyes ran over the article. A man name Mark Boyd was found dead in the warehouse district. Boyd had a criminal record, illegal gambling, one rape charge that was dropped and a few minor crimes. Boyd had currently been working at the Amusement Mile theme park. Bruce frowned. He knew the Amusement Mile was a place his brother frequented. He knew Jack gambled illegally and that there was a backroom poker game that was held at the park. He wondered if Jack was acquainted with Mark Boyd, but then he sighed folding the paper and put it aside. While he would like to be able to stop all crime in Gotham, he knew realistically that the Batman could only do so much. But right now it was time to act like a billionaire playboy without a care in the world.

* 

Harleen hurried down the stairs of Wayne manor. She had changed into a red sweater and a pair of low waist, flare-legged black slacks and red heels. She had left her hair up and ditched the glasses.

She made her way out through the kitchen toward the garage where she found Jack waiting for her. He was dressed the same as he had been at breakfast except with the addition of a cigarette hanging from his lips. He was using a cane as a golf club, hitting imaginary balls down the length of the garage.

He turned at the sound of her heels clicking against the floor. When he saw her, Jack let out a wolf-whistle. “You look very nice, Harley.”

She blushed giving him a small smile. “Thank you.”

He giggled and put his arm out. “Shall we?”

Harleen put her arm through his and Jack started to walk them through the garage.

“What vehicle shall we take?”

Jack stopped in front of a Ferrari 250 GT SWB, a car Harleen had only seen in movies or magazines. It was a shiny deep blue, with a pair of white stripes along the sides making it look as if the vehicle would fly down the road. Jack stood in front of the car tilting his head one way then the other before he smiled. “Yes, perfect.”

“Perfect?” Harleen asked. “I mean, yes, the car is perfectly beautiful.”

He smiled at her reaching out with his free hand to trace her bottom lip with his forefinger.

“I mean, it's perfect for you. You will look gorgeous in this car.”

She blushed again; the touch of Jack's finger left a burn across her bottom lip. She really needed to work on reining in this...whatever this was. I am his doctor, Harleen reminded herself. But she was also a woman who found her patient not only interesting, but extremely attractive.

Jack let go of her arm and waltzed away to retrieve the key from the safe. He returned and opened
the door of the car for her with a bow. “My lady.”

Harleen laughed at his behavior, but slipped into the seat. 

Soon they were on their way into the city. Jack started to sing during the drive. There was no music playing, the car was in its original state...no modern additions. Jack grinned as he sang; Harley thought that he had a fantastic singing voice.

“Fly me to the moon, Let me play among the stars, Let me see what spring is like on, A-Jupiter and Mars, In other words, hold my hand, In other words, baby, kiss me...”

He winked at her while he sang. Harleen couldn't help staring at him, blushing as he winked at her.

“Fill my heart with song, And let me sing for ever more, You are all I long for, All I worship and adore, In other words, please be true, In other words, I love you...”

She tried not to delude herself that the words had any meaning beyond just being a song, but the way Jack kept looking at her had Harleen shivering.

He drove into Gotham at a far more sedate rate than he had when he had her on his motorcycle. They drove into the downtown shopping area of Gotham City, but what surprised Harleen was that he kept going, past the mall and headed into the section of high quality stores that Harleen Quinzel, on her beginning psychiatrist's salary, could only window shop at from the sidewalk.

“Jack, where are we going?” She looked out the passenger window seeing shops such as Ralph Lauren, Neiman Marcus and Versace. Jack glanced sideways. “We are shopping,” he said as if the answer were self-evident.

“But Jack—these places...” Harleen glanced at her nails, noticing the polish on two was chipped. “I can't afford places like this...I doubt I can afford to walk inside!”

Jack snorted. “You're going to be with me, Miss Quinn.” He winked at her.

*

Jack parked along the street. Even though all of the cars parked along the street here looked to be expensive, Jack's Ferrari stood out. Jack practically leapt out of the car, coming around to pull her door open for her, bowing as she exited the car. The whole “show” caused her to blush badly, but she got out, taking his hand and stood. Jack grinned kissing her knuckles before they headed toward the one of the stores.

*

Jack strolled into Neiman Marcus without a care in the world, one of his hands wrapped around hers. Jack didn't seem to noticed it—or paid no attention because it was such a part of his everyday life—but Harleen could have sworn someone took a picture of them entering the store. She glanced back, but whoever it was had gone or had never been there in the first place.

Once inside, a young women dressed in a tight, short black dress that showed off her model thighs, her long hair dyed a white-grey, (very trendy, Harleen thought) immediately approached them. “Hello, welcome to Neiman Marcus,” she greeted with a magazine cover smile. “How can I help you Mr. Wayne?”

Jack smiled politely, but with a wicked edge. “You can find the beautiful lady here a beautiful dress to match, money is no object and I want it in red.”
The woman looked at Harleen just barely keeping the sneer off her face. “Very well, Mr. Wayne.”

Harleen glanced over at him. “Mr. Wayne?” She giggled. It just seemed strange to hear someone refer to Jack as Mr. Wayne. He shrugged. “I may have bought a suit or two here.”

It only took the clerk a few moments to return carrying a gorgeous Jovani gown. The gown was mermaid cut, ruby red, sleeveless with a mock neckline and backless. Jack whistled. “Now that's a dress. Go try it on Harley!”

He shoved her at the clerk who held the dress waiting impatiently. Jack's shove caused Harleen to stumble slightly, but then the clerk turned her back on Harleen and began to walk toward the dressing rooms. Jack frowned at their retreating backs. The look on that clerk' face though...Jack frowned and narrowed his eyes slightly. He didn't like it, not at all.

Once inside, Harleen slipped out of her clothing and into the dress. The dress fit as if it were made for her, hugging her figure in such a way that Harleen blushed to see herself in the mirror. She turned around examining the way the open back dropped low, just at her hips. She flushed red enough to nearly match the dress. This would be the most expensive, sexiest garment she had ever had, and Jack wanted to buy it for her. She wasn't sure what to do! On one hand, this was definitely a violation of the doctor/patient relationship, but on the other hand, she couldn't show up to a fundraiser in anything she currently owned and she really couldn't afford to spend that much on a dress, even with the salary Mr. Wayne...Bruce...was paying her. She took a deep breath. “Playing loose with that line aren't you, Dr. Quinzel?”

She turned and walked out of the dressing room.

Jack was waiting for her when she stepped out. His eyes widened at the sight of her. He grinned motioning with his finger for her to turn around, which she did. Jack laughed and slapped his hands together in a single clap of delight.

“Oh, I think I am actually going to enjoy this fundraiser now. We'll take it!”

Jack drove them down to one of Gotham's dining areas, stopping at a restaurant called Kirby's Place, another place that Harleen Quinzel would never have been able to get into on her own. They were shown to an intimate table by the restaurant's large picture window. Jack grinned as he pulled her chair out for her.

“Oh Jack, this...I mean this is a bit much. I'm your doctor, not...” She looked unsure as she spoke, Jack laughed her concerns away. “Harley, Harley can't you be my friend too?”

Harleen frowned, glancing down at her hands. “I don't have many friends,” she said softly.

Jack, taking his seat, reached across the table and took her hand. “Well, you have one now Harley.”

She looked into his eyes. It was the strangest sensation, she realized. It was at once erotic, his eyes were gorgeous, but it was also like looking into a bottomless pit, a place she could become lost. Losing herself...

Jack squeezed her hand before letting it go and picking up his menu. “Let's see what looks good shall we?”

*
The rest of the day was pleasant. They had a nice lunch and Jack took her for a drive before returning to the estate. Harleen could not have asked for a nicer day. If she wasn't his doctor it could almost have been a date. She was actually disappointed when Jack excused himself, explaining to her that he had some work he wanted to do before dinner.

Harleen decided that she would spend the remainder of her afternoon typing up her notes on Jack and working on some potential therapy ideas to work on getting Jack to open up more to her. But when she went to bed that evening, her dreams were filled with very unprofessional dreams about Jack Wayne.

* 

The sun was just beginning to set below the horizon when Jack left the house. He had stopped by Harleen's room, his knuckles poised inches from the door. The thought of inviting her along...the urge was strong, but he stopped himself. Not yet, but maybe soon.

He turned and left, hurrying outside. He only had a short time before dinner, which he didn't want to miss. He found that he enjoyed Harley's company more than he anticipated. She was becoming a distraction, but he didn't mind.

He trotted down the path from the manor, then around the side. He stopped and glanced back at the manor for a moment with a little smile. Then he turned and headed out to the gardens, his goal, an old workman's cottage. The cottage was part of a series of buildings that had once housed some of the Wayne Manor's staff. Most of the cottages were gone had fallen apart, but this one still managed to stand, though it was falling apart. In many ways the structure could barely be called a cottage at all. But it had walls, doors and it was ignored by both Bruce and Alfred and any workers that came onto the grounds to tend the gardens and lawn.

Jack had found the place not long after his brother had returned him home from boarding school for the last time. Over the years Jack had turned the place into his own hideout, lab, a secret place to do his experiments. He giggled as he slipped inside after unlocking the series of locks he had installed.

Inside, the cottage was equipped with everything any scientist would want or need. Jack smiled turning around to gaze at his toys after locking the door. The inside of the room glowed softly.

Jack walked over to the table where he had several syringes lined up, each glowing softly in the dim light leaking through the window. Jack picked up one of the syringes.

After dinner tonight, he decided it was time to see what his new chemical that he had made could do....and he knew a perfect volunteer.
It was well after midnight. The moon was high in the night sky illuminating the Wayne Manor grounds. The only light from the structures on the grounds came from a small cottage on the property. It wasn't much of a light; dim, liquid, if one wasn't looking for it they would not have actually seen it.

Inside the cottage, Jack hummed happily to himself, one of his favorite Frank Sinatra songs. If he was honest with himself, he loved all of Old Blue Eyes' music, but tonight the song he had in mind was “The Way You Look Tonight.” Jack weaved to his humming, occasionally singing the words as he thought of Harley. He imagined her in the dress he had bought for her, the doctor in his arms, and the two of them dancing. He sighed. She was not part of his plans, not at all, but she was a lovely distraction...maybe more. He frowned for a moment wondering if he was letting her worm her way inside his mind...but then he shrugged and smiled.

“Some day, when I'm awfully low, When the world is cold, I will feel a glow just thinking of you, And the way you look tonight...” Jack did a perfectly executed spin on his black, Italian leather Prada Oxfords. He smiled at the woman from Neiman Marcus who was on the old hospital exam table. Her whole body was tilted at a 90 degree angle on the exam table, her arms and legs strapped down, another strap across her forehead and a ball gag in her mouth. Jack walked over weaving to the music while he sung.

“With each word your tenderness grows, Tearin' my fear apart, And that laugh...wrinkles your nose, Touches my foolish heart...”

He stopped singing, holding the syringe full of a deep green, slightly glowing liquid. Jack held it up just where his reluctant patient could see it. “Well, Miss...” He leaned over and lifted her name tag up a little in order to read it better. “Miss Ashley...You my dear have been chosen, because of your rude behavior earlier today toward my female companion, Miss Harley Quinn.”

Jack leaned an elbow against the side of the table his intense eyes examining the contents of his syringe. He glanced at Ashley, watching her as she twitched, her eyes wide with terror and a single tear rolling down from her eye.

“You know Ashley. I think I might actually be falling for the good doctor.” He smiled looking surprised at his confession. “She is fun, beautiful and I think there is something deep inside her that will understand...everything about me.”

He giggled. “It would be nice to have someone to share my passions with. You have any idea how important it is to find someone who understands you?” He tilted his head, examining Ashley from a different angle. “I suppose not, Ashley my dear.”

He sighed then stood up straight. “Well, shall we proceed Ashley? I have no idea what this is going to do to you. Most likely it's going to kill you, but there's always the chance it will simply scramble your brains.” He giggled while Ashley started thrashing around, her eyes round and wild with fear.

“Oh, now come on Ashley, really? That is so undignified! Really, don't take life so seriously Ashley, it's not like you are going to get out of it alive anyhow?”
Jack started laughing as he laid the needle against her arm, breaking the skin, shoving the needle into a vein and pushing the plunger. Ashley screamed behind her ball gag, struggling to no avail. Jack placed the empty syringe on the table and pulled up a stool, perching himself elegantly on it. He crossed his long thin legs, resting his elbow on his knee to hold his chin in his hand watching her with an amused, yet interested expression.

* 

The next morning Harleen woke, stretching her arms over her head with a bright smile. She had slept like the dead and now she felt good and refreshed. She was humming when she stepped into the shower, letting the warm water run down her body. Today is going to be a good day, she thought to herself.

While sitting in her robe at her vanity, she dried her hair moving the blow dryer around as she combed out her long blonde hair. She smiled at herself while she pulled out clips and bobby pins from a drawer in the vanity in order to style her hair for the day. She put her hair up again, going once more for that slight professional look, though she pulled a few long strands out letting them curl softly around her face. It softened her look. She smiled wondering if Jack would like it?

“Harleen, now you stop that!” She pointed a finger at herself in the mirror, but she left the soft curls around her face as she got up to get dressed.

Today's outfit was a pair of black, modern fit trousers, a white blouse with a tie neck. The only part of the outfit that wasn't “professional” was the pair of bright, ruby red stilettos she wore. Harleen gave herself one more look in the mirror. She still looked professional, like a doctor. She reached over and picked up her perfume, spritzed herself with some before heading down for breakfast.

* 

Alfred was already up, as usual, dressed in his butler's uniform, minus the jacket. He wore a plain white apron over his front while he stood at the oven cooking breakfast.

This morning he was making crepes.

At the moment, he was filling the crepes with what looked to be apricot jam, wrapping them over with ease before he picked up a steel container (similar to a salt shaker but a little bigger) and gently tapped the side of the container, sprinkling the tops of the prepared crepes with powdered sugar. The crepes looked perfect, exactly like one would see in a cookbook or advertisement for crepes, almost too good to eat—almost.

As usual, Jack was already here sitting at his counter writing in his notebook. Today he was dressed in a Marks & Spencer dark grey three piece suit, white shirt, with a deep red double-breasted vest and matching red tie; his brown hair was mostly slicked back, but one strand that seemed determined not to stay, as it curled softly across his brow. He looked...gorgeous, Harleen thought to herself, her heart picking up speed and her palms became sweaty.

“Good morning Jack, Alfred...”

“Ah, good morning Miss Harleen. Crepe?” Alfred turned to smile at her. He picked up the plate he had just sprinkled with powdered sugar and placed it in front of her. “The coffee today miss, is called Jamaican Blue Mountain. It has quite the unusual flavor.”

“Thank you Alfred.” Harleen walked over to the coffee getting herself a mug.

Jack made a few more notes before closing his notebook and looked up to see Harleen walk over to
the coffeemaker. He leaned against his arm watching her make her coffee, the way she walked, the movements of her arms, the way the air from the vents in the kitchen made the soft, silky hairs hanging free from her bun swirl. Jack was hyper aware of everything to do with her, even the soft scent of her perfume that drifted over to him. His eyes wandered down taking in every inch of her, tracing the soft curves of her figure, the way the slacks hugged her backside. He grinned pressing his teeth into his bottom lip watching her. She was damn sexy without even trying. His eyes wandered down to the shoes she was wearing, imagining the way her legs looked under the slacks. He giggled softly to himself, looking forward to tomorrow night.

Harleen turned to look at him over her shoulder causing Jack to grin brightly at her.

Harleen blushed as she walked over to take a seat by him. “I thought today we might try some therapy exercises.”

Jack pursed his lips with a twinkle in his eye. “Do tell?”

“Well, there is art therapy. I saw yesterday that you draw—perhaps we could do something with that or there is also music therapy. Do you play any instruments?”

Jack laughed. “I play a mean piano...took piano lessons when I was younger. Kept up with them even after I didn't have to anymore.”

For a moment, a split second that Harleen would have missed if she hadn't been looking at Jack's eyes, a shadow passed over him at the mention of the lessons. Harleen surmised that his parents had him taking piano before they died.

She had just reached out, her fingers having just brushed against Jack's when Bruce walked into the kitchen surprising everyone into a startled silence. He was dressed almost all in black, black suit, grey shirt, black tie, his black hair slicked back, and his blue eyes piercing. Harleen thought, for a “rich playboy” Bruce Wayne looked terribly serious all the time.

“Jack, I need you to come with me into the office today.” Bruce looked slightly upset.

Jack groaned. “Why? I thought you were going skydiving with that French model...what was her name...Amelia?”

Bruce sighed. “Because you still have a controlling share in Wayne Enterprises and there is a vote this morning—you are needed. And yes, afterward I am going skydiving”

Jack groaned for a moment looking like a child as he dropped his forehead to the counter. “I thought I wasn't allowed to vote? You know, because of my instability.” He giggled without looking up.

Bruce frowned clearly unhappy with Jack referring to himself as unstable.

“Jack, you could sell your shares to me.”

Jack sat up grinning. “You would like that wouldn't you? So what's so important that Lucius is having us both show up?”

“We are voting on whether to take the deal with LexCorp for the development of cybernetic scouting drones.” Bruce walked swiftly over to the coffeemaker, filling a mug with coffee before turning around to face his brother again.

“And where do we stand?” Jack stood up, brushing off his suit.
“I’m against it. You can vote however your conscience feels Jack.” Bruce took a sip of his coffee studying his younger brother.

“Fine. Let’s get this over with. You know how much I hate all those corporate asskissers.” Jack straightened his jacket, then stepped closer to Harleen taking her hand and kissing her knuckles. “How about I come back and pick you up for lunch doctor, and we can have our therapy session over food?”

Harleen glanced at Bruce and nodded. “That sounds fine Jack. See you when you return.”

Jack winked at her then turned toward his brother. “Alright, let’s go.”

*

The two brothers sat in the back of a black 2017 Cadillac Escalade with tinted windows as a driver/body guard drove them to Wayne Enterprises. They were both quiet, Bruce on his phone texting and Jack staring out the window. Bruce put his phone away in the inside pocket of his jacket and glanced at his brother. Jack was smiling to himself staring out the window, his chin resting on his knuckles, his middle finger seemed to be tapping out a beat only Jack could hear.

“So how are things with Dr. Quinzel?” Bruce asked.

Jack frowned, lifting his brows and turning to Bruce. “Hmm...what do you mean?”

“I mean, do you like her? Is she helping?” Bruce turned sideways to face his brother.

Jack grinned. “I like her. She is...different.”

Bruce nodded. He wasn't sure how to ask his brother how things were going...are you feeling less destructive? Less violent? That sounded...wrong. Instead, Bruce turned back around. “That's good.”

Jack tilted his head looking at his brother. They had not spent a lot of time together...actually if Jack was truthful, they had not spent much quality together since before their parents' death.

Jack smiled. “You need to laugh more Bruce.”

Bruce glanced back at him quizzically. “Laugh?”

“Yes! Life is one big joke and you are missing it completely Bruce. Completely.” Jack giggled.

The sound of Jack's giggle send shivers down Bruce's spine. He could hear that slightly unhinged quality that continued to creep into Jack's laugh. It was one of numerous factors that had prompted Bruce to find a personal psychiatrist for his brother.

Bruce pressed his lips tighter. “So, ah...what have you been doing?”

Jack grinned laying a finger aside his nose. “Oh Bruce, do you really want to know or are you being the polite big brother? Hmmm?”

Bruce frowned turning away from Jack to look out the window. After a few moments he murmured, “They found a man you might know...Mark Boyd. He was found murdered.”

Jack laughed. “Oh now that is NOT a surprise.”

Bruce frowned deeper. “So you did know him?”


Jack was looking out the window again, neither brother looking at each other. “I did—played cards with him at the amusement park once or twice. Not a good man Bruce, so don't cry any tears over him.”

“Do you know anything about what might have happened to him?” Bruce asked.

For a moment Bruce was reminded of all the times Jack had been violent over the years, starting with the incident at school. Each time his violence had been directed at someone who had annoyed him, or Bruce for that matter, and each incident had become more and more violent until one day, his violent episodes had stopped. Bruce figured Jack had just become more gifted at hiding it, not that the psychiatrists or psychologists they had hired in the past were actually helping his brother, but each time Bruce confronted him, Jack had always been innocent.

Jack frowned putting a hand to his chest in mock horror. “Goodness Bruce, are you accusing me of something?”

Bruce’s brow furrowed. “No, no, just just a casual question.”

Jack smiled. “Well, believe me Bruce, if I ever did something like that, you would never know if it was me more or not.”

Bruce frowned at Jack, but his brother had already turned away his smile back in place just a little bit bigger than before.

* 

Harleen sipped her coffee and cut into the crepe that Alfred had placed in front of her. Alfred had excused himself for a moment when there was a buzz at the front door.

“Probably a package, Miss Harleen. I shall be right back.”

Harleen had nodded then continued with her breakfast. She glanced over seeing Jack’s notebook from the corner of her eye. She looked around, no Alfred. She pressed her lips firmly together, contemplating whether or not she should, but then she reached out with one finger and slid the book toward her.

There was nothing on the cover stating that this was a diary or anything of that nature. She frowned staring down at it. This was not a “good” doctor thing to do...or a “good” anything to do. She ran her fingers over it for a moment more before she opened it to a random page.

She wasn’t sure what she had been expecting on the page, but it was covered in mathematical equations, math way beyond anything she could understand. She smiled. There was a fine line between madness and genius.

She flipped to another page. Here Jack had written some notes:

Interesting results:

laughter

contracting of facial muscles

suggestibility.

Harleen frowned. She was about to flip to another page when she heard Alfred coming back. She
closed the notebook and slid it back into place.

“Sorry about that Miss Harleen. Are you enjoying the crepes?” Alfred asked politely taking off his apron.

“Delicious Alfred, thank you.” Harleen smiled finishing off the last few bites.

“I suppose I should go do some work.” She sighed getting to her feet.

Alfred smiled. “Feel free to call me if you need anything at all Miss Harleen. Also do feel free to walk the gardens. They are beautiful this time of year.”

Harleen smiled. “Thank you Alfred.”

* 

Bruce and Jack Wayne walked into the main headquarters of Wayne Enterprises, neither of them aware of the stares they were receiving.

They took the elevator up to the top floor where the main meeting room for the Wayne Enterprises board of directors met for special votes like the one going on today. Jack sighed completely bored. He hated dealing with the board of directors. These men and women, as far as Jack was concerned, had no idea about anything. They lived in a world that was full of numbers, money and some of the most idiotic concerns that Jack had ever been witness to in the few times he had graced Wayne Enterprises with his presence. As they walked into the board room, today looked like it would be a perfect example of what he hated about most human beings, their complete lack of sight, lack of understanding at what the world really was...

* 

Lucius Fox stood up as the Wayne brothers entered. “Ah, good of you both to come.” He held out his hand shaking Bruce's then Jack's. The brothers took their seats, Bruce at the head of the table, Lucius on the right and Jack on the left, announcing that the meeting had begun.

* 

The meeting only lasted an hour, which was lucky for Jack because at the end of it he was about ready to start strangling the man sitting next to him, a blond with blue eyes, perfect teeth, and a shitbag personality.

The votes were cast, a decision made and Jack was ready to go when the man next to him reached out and put a hand on his upper arm stopping Jack from moving.

“Hey man, the name is Marcus McDermott, I have got to show you something.”

Jack's eyes widened as he struggled to control himself. He rolled his eyes to his brother looking for salvation, but Bruce was in conversation with Fox. He sighed, turning back to McDermott. Marcus grinned pulling out a silver cardholder, taking out a card and set it on the table.

“New card, what'd ya think?”

Jack looked down. To him, it was a white card with the man's information printed on it in boring black...dull. Marcus grinned.

“Eggshell with Romalian type ...” Marcus tapped the card with his middle-finger. “It's even
Jack stared at the card pressing his lips together in a thin white line. He glanced at Marcus McDermott who was grinning like a pleased cat. All Jack could think about was how good it would be to slice the man's throat open. Jack smiled.

“Impressive,” he said.

McDermott smiled. “I know.”

Jack grinned. “Wanna hear a joke?”

Marcus frowned at the youngest Wayne brother. “Sure?”

Jack grinned. "This guy goes into the hospital, okay? His wife's just had a baby and he can't wait to see them both. So he meets the doctor and he says, 'Oh, Doc, I've been so worried. How are they?' And the doctor smiles and says, 'They're fine. Just fine. Your wife's delivered a healthy baby boy and they're both in tip-top form. You're one lucky guy.' So the guy rushes into the maternity ward with his flowers. But it's empty. His wife's bed is empty. 'Doc?' He says and turns around and the doctor and all the nurses wave their arms and scream in his face. 'April fools! Your wife's dead and the baby's a spastic!!'"

Jack started to giggled. Marcus looked uncomfortable. Jack slapped the man on the back.

“Oh now come on, that was funny? You know what you need Marcus, you need to smile more. That's what everyone in this damn building needs, a little smile. Why so serious Marcus?”

Marcus smiled reluctantly. “Yeah...”

Jack started to giggle a little louder which captured his brother's attention. Bruce came over putting a hand on Jack's shoulder. “Ready?”

“Oh, I was ready when we walked in.” Jack stood up picking up Marcus's card. “Thanks for the card Marcus, now I know how to find you if I ever need you.”

Jack grinned slipping the card into his jacket pocket before waving his fingers at Marcus. “Toodles.”

* 

Bruce escorted Jack downstairs. “What did you say to him?” Bruce asked as they waited for the elevator.

Jack grinned. “Nothing just told him a joke. Goodness Brucie, don't trust me?”

Bruce frowned not saying anything for a little bit, then softly spoke. “Thank you for coming in today Jack.”

Jack grinned patting Bruce on the arm. “Anything for my big brother.”

The elevator doors opened and Jack stepped in turning around to smile at Bruce. “See ya later alligator.”

The doors closed on his brother. Bruce frowned staring at the closed doors. Something felt...off, but he could not figure out what it was. Maybe...Bruce sighed with a slight shake of his head. He had been so busy that he and Jack had hardly spoken in months. Maybe he should make an effort to change that...
Harleen sat at her computer typing up her notes when her cellphone rang. She picked it up, placing it between her ear and shoulder as she continued to type. “Dr. Quinzel.”

She burst into a smile when she heard Jack's voice. “Harley, Harley, so professional sounding!”

She chuckled. “Hello Jack.”

She heard Jack giggle softly in reply. “You get dressed for a picnic and meet me in the garage.”

Harleen was dressed in a pair of jeans, a close fitting red t-shirt with a white sweater over it, red keds and her blonde hair up in a ponytail, was waiting for Jack with a picnic basket that Alfred had waiting for her when she came down stairs. Alfred, under the directions from Jack who called ahead, had packed a fairly big basket which included a spinach pie, deviled eggs, Parmigiano Reggiano and Wild Mushroom Risotto Balls, Parma Ham, Parmigiano Reggiano and Basil Mayonnaise Baguettes, Blackberry Lime bars and a bottle of Pinot Blanc.

Harleen also had a bag which contained a change of clothes for Jack. She was rocking on the balls of her feet when Jack came jogging from inside the house.

“Hello Nurse!” He yelled laughing.

Harleen blushed. “Hi Jack.”

He grinned at her. “I see Alfred is as efficient as ever. Would you mind driving?”

He tossed her some keys. Harleen caught them out of the air with a grin.

Harleen was smiling as she pulled out of the garage driving a Fiat 500 painted a deep plum color. Beside her Jack was undressing.

Harleen was doing her best to keep her eyes on the road, but it was extremely hard for her to avoid watching Jack shrug out of his suit jacket, unbuttoning his vest, then he started loosening up his tie. Harleen chewed her bottom lip her eyes shooting sideways. He slipped out of the dress shirt revealing his torso. He was muscled, though not overly so, thin, cut muscles, his chest was smooth, hairless, well sculpted, flat stomach.

Is my mouth watering? She thought to herself as she swallowed. He pulled out a light blue button-down shirt (she could tell with a quick glance the shirt was fitted for him) from the bag slipping it on without buttoning it up, then proceeded to unbutton his slacks.

Harleen lost control of the vehicle for a second as she started to swerve out of her lane.

Jack started laughing. “Never seen a man get undressed before doctor?”

She knew she was bright red. “Not...no...well...”

Jack grinned slipping the slacks off after having kicked his dress shoes to the floor. “Don't worry doctor. I'm putting my clothes back on...unless you would prefer I didn't?”

He lifted an eyebrow at her. Harleen was sure her ears had just turned red to match her cheeks.
Stuttering slightly. “N-no...you go ahead and get dressed.”

Jack laughed again at her reaction.

Harleen saw that under his slacks he wore boxers, dark grey, with lighter grey stripes. Suddenly boxers were the sexiest piece of clothing Harleen had ever seen. Jack pulled out a pair of jeans from the bag. Harleen was sure she was going to have a heart attack.

She tried hard not to pay attention to him, but watching him arch his hips up, pulling on the jeans, the shirt falling away to reveal his flat stomach, a thin line of hair just under his bellybutton that disappeared under the band of his boxers...

Harleen felt heat pool in her groin making her squirm in her seat.

Jack settled back after buttoning the jeans and proceeded to button up his shirt. He grinned at her and waggled his eyebrows. “So still able to drive to the park?”

Harleen smiled, continuing to blush badly. “Yes.”

*  

They pulled into Robinson Park with Jack directing her where to go until they found a more secluded parking lot. Jack jumped happily out of the car walking around to the back of the car and pulled out the picnic basket before he headed from the parking lot away from the trail. Harleen jogged to keep up, dashing from the car to catch up to Jack.

He grinned at her when she came up beside him.

Jack led her into a grove of trees that eventually opened up into a small clearing with a park bench. Harleen gasped. It was a really lovely spot with the sun streaming through the tree branches, the sound of birds and the breeze cutting off all the sounds of Gotham.

“Oh Jack, this is lovely.” Harleen smiled.

Jack laughed. “I found this place one day when I was about fifteen. I was wandering the park and simply stumbled on it.”

Jack set the basket on one of the benches, opening it up to remove the contents. He pulled out a red and white checkered table cloth, snapping it out and laying it across the ancient wooden table. He then proceeded to pull out the plastic plates, forks and flutes, then the wine and food, setting everything up while Harleen watched. After he was done he gave her a cheery grin and bowed, one arm to his waist the other out. “Your lunch, my lady.”

Harleen laughed taking a seat. “Thank you Jack.”

Jack sat down opposite her picking up the wine. “So did you miss me?”

He popped the cork, but he did something that startled Harleen. He not only popped the cork, he managed to grab it out of the air. It was a quick movement, but amazing, she thought. He smiled at her setting the cork on the table and poured the wine into her glass.

Harleen smiled. “Thank you and yes Jack, I did miss you today. How did the meeting go?”

Jack groaned. “Boring.”

Harleen looked up from where she had been placing food on her plate. “You don't enjoy the family
business?"

He grinned. “Not at all. Oh I like the money and I like some of the things that Wayne Chemicals and Electronics puts out, but the day-to-day workings? No. I a not a rat in a maze Harley. I don't do well confined to a set program of behavior.”

He took a sip of his wine. “Because when it's all said and done, what does any of it matter?”

“Any of it? What do you mean?” Harleen sipped her own wine watching him.

“Life is chaos. Everyone is always trying to bring order to it, but that just isn't how it works. You must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star, or so says Nietzsche. I want to birth dancing stars Harley.”


Jack grinned at her, a slow, almost seductive smile. “Not as beautiful as you Harley Quinn.”

Harleen glanced down at her plate embarrassed. Jack laughed softly. “Sorry that I embarrassed you.”

She glanced up at him. “It's fine.”

He laughed softly. “You know how nice it is to have someone see you as you really are Harley? To have someone see past your smile and still like you?”

Harleen smiled. “I like you Jack.”

“And I like you Harley.” Jack took her hand and laced his fingers with hers.

* 

Jack drove them back home later that afternoon singing a Dean Martin song. “...My head keeps spinnin', I go to sleep and keep grinnin' If this is just the beginnin', My life is gonna be bee-yoo-tee-ful”

Harleen laughed, smiling so hard that her cheeks hurt, but that seemed to be becoming the norm when she was with Jack.

* 

That night when Harleen went to bed, her dreams were filled with Jack Wayne. It was highly inappropriate the way he was making her feel, but there was no denying—the man really did it for her.

* 

Later that evening after dinner, Jack made his way quietly down to the garage. He was dressed in a black suit, black shirt, even a black tie. He flipped on the lights watching as they came on snapping down the rows revealing each expensive vehicle. Jack smiled making his way to his motorcycle. Just before getting on the bike he pulled out the business card and gazed at the name.

“Marcus McDermott, now I know exactly how to find you and I think it's time I put a real smile on that face of yours.”

Jack chuckled softly.
Chapter End Notes

Used a scene from American Psycho in this chapter :)  
And the joke is from the Arkham Asylum comic
Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2

The morning of the gala, Harleen woke up early. She was nervous and unsure why she was nervous; her nerves were on end, to the point that she hadn't slept well. She decided to use the Wayne's indoor pool. She had seen it during the tour and Alfred had assured her she could use it at any time. Harleen was happy that she actually had a swimsuit. It was a deep red bikini, something she had bought on a whim, but hadn't really had the opportunity to wear. She felt a little exposed, but it was the only suit she had. She wrapped a towel around herself, slipped on a pair of matching flip flops and made her way down to the pool.

* 

The indoor pool room was massive, easily the size of two ballrooms put together. Three of the walls were large picture windows wrapping around on two sides, that looked out onto a patio (big enough that Harleen thought it was more of a plaza) that was set up with comfortable and well-crafted outdoor furniture while she could see the Wayne Manor gardens beyond. The lighting in here could alter between bright to a soft seductive light that made the room feel warm and inviting. The pool itself wasn't a straight rectangle, but rather flowed in nice rounded sharps, resembling a melting figure eight. The colors of the room were golden browns, and even the tiles around the pool were a slightly darker shade from the walls. Harleen felt that it was all very relaxing. Additionally, running along side the main pool, was a lap pool strictly for exercise.

There was even a large stereo built into the wall next to where the dressing rooms and showers for the pool room were located. Harley walked over to the stereo turning it on and sorting through the music that was available until she found one she liked.

As the music wafted through the room, some smooth jazz,, Harleen removed her towel and tossed it over a lounge chair. When she had asked about the pool the previous day, Alfred told her that she didn't need to worry about a bathing cap, so she had pulled her long hair back into a ponytail. She stood on the edge of the pool, her toes hanging over the edge. She held her arms out in front of her, looking into the clear blue water before she dived in, cutting an almost perfect figure into the water with very little splash.

She swam down a little ways before she came up, breaking the surface of the water with a gasp and a huge smile.

She turned around ready to swim back when she saw Jack standing there at the pool's edge. He was wearing pair of dark blue swim trunks decorated with bright orange octopi, a towel flung over his shoulder. Harleen did her best not to stare, forcing her eyes to stay on his face, but she was discovering that it was difficult to avoid thoughts of how attractive Jack Wayne was. He was all lean muscles, well defined muscles. His hair hadn't been combed back as it usually was, the thick brown strands loose, curling slightly around his forehead, that sharp, charming smile on his face, and those beautiful eyes...Harleen swallowed.

He was grinning as he greeted her. “Hello there, doctor.”

Harleen wiped the water from her face. “Jack! Hi! You surprised me!”

Jack laughed. “I saw you heading this way wrapped in a towel and I thought, why not? A swim sounded fun! Oh, you like my trunks?”

He posed, a hand behind his head, cocking his hip to the side, resting his other hand on his waist and
shooting her a devilishly handsome smile while he struck a model's pose.

Harleen couldn't help the laugh that bubbled up. “I like them very much.”

Jack waggled his eyebrows and arched his hip the other direction. “Why thank you Harley.”

He tossed his towel over to the lounge chair where hers was and dived in, cutting through the water without a sound. Harleen watched him swim toward her, popping up right in front of her. She squeaked a little louder than she intended when he broke the surface. Jack laughed at her expression.

“What's the matter doctor?”

Harleen blushed “Nothing...nothing at all.”

Jack waggled his brows at her full of humor and splashed her. Harleen squeaked again, swimming away from him and splashed back. Soon they were laughing like a couple of children, splashing water back and forth screaming with laughter. Jack dived down grabbing her around the waist and pulling her under. Harleen just barely had enough time to grab a gulp of air before she was yanked under the surface of the clear blue water.

Jack let her go once she was under, though he stayed close, floating under the water, so close he could have simply leaned in and kissed her. His eyes were watching her with humor, but there was something else there for the briefest of moments. Harleen wasn't sure what it was she saw, but there had been something there...

Jack reached for her, his hands sliding against her naked torso, gripping her waist then he kicked for the surface. They both broke through, gasping for breath. Jack was smiling, his hands still resting on her waist. Jack let go with one hand, the other remained on her waist while he used his other hand to wipe his hair back from his face, droplets of water running down over his cheeks, nose and his lips. He stared at her tilting his head. Harleen was struck dumb staring into his incredible eyes. She was hyper-aware of his hand on her waist, the length of his fingers, the heat radiating up from the point where his fingertips touched her skin.

He opened his mouth, about to say something when they heard someone clear their throat.

They both turned, Jack looking over his shoulder and Harleen looking past him. It was Bruce.

“Just came to use to the lap pool,” he said but there was something in his voice, just an inflection that indicated he was not happy.

Harleen flushed looking down at the water. “I should get dressed. See you at breakfast Jack, Mr. Wayne.” She swam to the side, away from Bruce, pulling herself up and grabbing her towel. Jack turned to watch her. She is gorgeous, he thought, the suit sticking to her, the way the light softly illuminated her perfect skin.

As soon as Harleen had left, Jack glared at his brother.

“What was that about?”

Bruce frowned tossing his towel to the side. “I don't know what you mean Jack.”

Jack trended water, his eyes slightly narrowed. “She was here first, I just followed.”
Bruce frowned deeper. “What are you doing Jack?”

“What do you mean, what am I doing? I'm swimming.” Jack grinned leaning back and letting the water hold him on his back.

Bruce sighed. “Just don't get any ideas of seducing your doctor.”

Jack laughed. “Oh Brucie, so concerned. You know, I'm a grown man and she is a grown woman, even if she is in your employment big brother, you can't control feelings.”

“I could let her go,” Bruce said quietly.

Jack came up, his eyes cold. “Don't even think about it Bruce. You think I'm bad now? Just wait.”

Bruce stared at his brother. “Is that a threat?”

Jack smiled again. “No. I would never threaten you Brucie. Besides if you don't want to pay her I could always do it myself. I want her to stay. Plus I don't really see where you have a lot of room to talk.”

Bruce mouth twitched. “What do you mean?”

“Oh Brucie, stop. You know exactly what I'm talking about. Let's see..what was her name? Oh yes...Alison wasn't it? Worked for that rival company. And then there was Jillian...your lawyer?”

Bruce sighed. “Fine, point taken.” He frowned deeper. “Fine, she stays, but Jack...please listen to her as a doctor, please.”

Jack laid back again. “Brucie, don't worry. Dr. Quinzel is doing her job. She is gaining my trust, isn’t that what you want Bruce? Dr. Quinzel to not just be my doctor, but my friend? She's doing just fine. Hell, we talked about my feelings just yesterday.” Jack giggled. “Oh I should probably tell you that she is my plus one tonight.”

Bruce stared at his brother then grunted. The next thing Jack heard was his brother starting his laps.

* 

As Bruce swam his laps, his mind mulled over the situation with his brother and Dr. Quinzel. Jack could be falling for Dr. Quinzel...would that really be so bad? Jack had shown no affection towards anyone beyond Bruce and Alfred. His brother had never dated, didn't have any friends in the truest sense of the word that Bruce was aware of and he had never shown any interest in women—or men, for that matter. But now, just this morning, the one other time he had seen them together, alone, it was clear to Bruce that Jack was feeling something. Perhaps he was being too hard, his little brother falling in love might be just what the doctor ordered. Bruce chuckled mentally at himself. What the doctor ordered. Jack would find that play on words funny. But yes, he decided, he would step back, let things progress until something happened one way or the other that would require him to step in.

* 

Harleen sat at her vanity and wiped the tears from her face. She had changed out of her suit into a tank top dress with a modest square neckline and flared skirt, a shrug laid across her lap to put on before going downstairs for breakfast, if she was still working here. She was barefoot, her feet crossed at the ankles under her seat as she glared at herself in the mirror. She hadn't started to put her make-up on yet because she kept tearing up.
God, how could I be so stupid! Mr. Wayne is going to fire me for sure! she thought in fear and self-recrimination. Of course, nothing had happened between her and Jack, but their behavior had looked bad in the pool. How could she..? Then she told herself to stop. She was building a relationship with her patient...the attraction had not been intentional.

“Harleen stop trying to doctor talk yourself.” She glared at her reflection.

“UGH!” Harleen dropped her head onto her folded arms. That was when there was a knock at her door. She looked up going pale. This was it.

“Just a minute.” She angrily wiped the tears away trying not to look like she had been crying.

“Harley, it's me.”

Harleen turned at the sound of Jack’s voice. “Jack?”

“Can I come in?” Jack asked.

“Ah...yes, sure.” Harleen glanced in the mirror. Oh god, I look terrible! Her hair was still damp, no make up, her skin blotchy from crying. The door opened and Jack slipped in, closing it behind him. He was wearing just a pair of dress slacks and a white button-down shirt, untucked, his hair still damp. He looked as if he had simply thrown on some clothing and hurried straight to her door.

“I came to let you know Bruce isn't angry with you—or us.” Jack grinned.

“What?” Harleen was confused.

“I said, 'Bruce isn't mad.' Don't worry about anything.” Jack smiled at her walking closer to gently grasp her chin.

“Everything is fine. Nothing for you to get your pretty head in a tizzy about.” He smiled, a soft gentle smile while lightly holding her chin, his thumb lightly stroking her skin.

“I explained about building trust between doctor and patient. He understood.” Jack stroked her bottom lip lightly, such a feather soft touch that for a moment she wasn't sure he had actually touched her.

Harleen's whole body relaxed, her breath flowing out of her in a gush.

Jack grinned. “There—better?”

“Much...I-I just...” Harleen stammered.

That was when Jack surprised her by pulling her against him and wrapping his arms around her in a tight hug. He laid his chin on the top of her head and whispered, “You are still my doctor. Now let's forget all about stick-up-his-ass Bruce and go have breakfast. You said you wanted to try some art therapy and I promised you I would play the piano. Let's see about doing that today hmmm? I can teach you to play a game of pool too.” He tightened his hold just a fraction. “And of course, I have to show you my dancing skills tonight.” Jack giggled stepping back from her, his hands shifting to her shoulders.

Harleen looked up into his beautiful eyes and melted. Oh, this is so dangerous, she thought to herself, but he was like a magnet that she just couldn't pull away from.

“Sounds good Jack.” She smiled in response to him.
Jack stared at her for a long moment, not saying anything. Her eyes are amazingly blue, he thought. There was something about her...he could see a lurking darkness behind those blue eyes. Interesting, he thought to himself, but there was more to it. She...tugged at him.

He took a breath before he nodded. “See you at breakfast.” With that he spun around gracefully and was gone.

Harleen took a deep breath, her knees feeling weak for a moment. She smiled. Maybe everything was going to be alright after all.

* 

When she came downstairs for breakfast, most of her hair was pulled back with a barrette at the back of her head, the rest of her hair falling in a soft wave down her back, and her makeup was in place as was her smile. She looked more like herself.

Jack had already fixed her cup of coffee and was standing by the oven with Alfred cooking. Jack glanced over his shoulder when she stepped into the room. He was fully dressed now, wearing another three piece suit, this time in navy blue, though the jacket was currently lying across the counter behind him. He was wearing only the white shirt and vest, his sleeves rolled up and an apron over his front. He smiled when he saw her, giving her a wink.

“Doctor! Ready for a hearty breakfast?”

Alfred turned around, smiling brightly. “Good morning, Miss Harleen. Master Jack decided he wanted to cook this morning.”

Harleen took her seat in surprise. “You cook, Jack?”

Jack winked at her again. “I'm a man of many talents doctor.”

“Well whatever it is, it does smell good.” Harleen blushed, but picked up her cup of coffee to hide her red cheeks behind it. She took a sip of the coffee and smiled. Jack had made it just as she liked it; he had noticed, she thought to herself. Her heart did a little flip. The fact that he had paid attention to how she took her coffee—it was nice. She set the mug down taking a breath to swallow the sudden swell of emotions that the simple gesture of making her coffee had caused in her.

“So what are you making?” she asked straightening up in her seat to try to see what was going on at the stove.

“I am making French Toast and it requires a great deal of attention.” Jack giggled as he gestured with a spatula.

Harleen laughed. Alfred smiled reaching up to retrieve some plates for Jack and Harleen. Jack glanced at Alfred. “Oh no you don't, you have to eat breakfast with us old man, since I'm cooking.”

“But Master Jack...” Alfred started to protest, but Jack smiled pointing the spatula at him.

“Nope, I insist. You and Harleen are my favorite people in all the world and we are going to eat breakfast together. So get yourself a plate.” Jack smiled with a mocked narrow-eyed look. Alfred laughed. “As you say, Master Jack.”

Harleen sat stunned. She was one of his favorite people?

*
A few minutes later the three of them were sitting at the large island counter eating together. Alfred had set the plates and utensils, bringing over a small ceramic pitcher that contained a thick, delicious syrup and had even poured the three of them glasses of milk.

Harleen smiled at Alfred as the older man took his seat. “So has Jack always cooked?” she asked with a glance at Jack.

Alfred laughed softly with a twinkle in his eyes as he raised his glass to take a sip. “He has always tried.”

Jack gasped in shock. “Alfred!” Then he giggled. “I don’t think Alfred has ever forgiven me for burning up his kitchen when I tried to make that omelet by myself.”

Harleen snorted a laugh on the bite of French toast in her mouth, trying to swallow. “You burned the kitchen up?”

Jack nodded. “I did.”

Alfred laughed again. “Master Jack burned his eyebrows off too. He was trying to make a father’s day omelet for me.”

“Oh Jack, that is so sweet!” Harleen looked over at Jack who shrugged.

“I ate it despite its blackened state...and the state of the kitchen,” Alfred said softly. The emotion in the older man's voice was clear. Alfred looked on Jack like a son.

Harleen took a bite of her French toast, a soft smile on her face. This little conversation told her quite a bit about Jack, how he felt about Alfred, the one person in his life besides Bruce that he had feelings for, a connection with...and now he considered her part of that small circle. Harleen felt—excited and honored, her own feelings toward Jack twisted tighter in her chest. It made her all the more determined to help Jack in any way possible.

* 

After breakfast Jack took Harleen to a room she had only been in once, during her tour. The Wayne Manor gaming room. The elegant room was large (much like most of the rooms in the manor), but this one was dominated by a large, elegant pool table that sat in the precise center of the chamber.

The pool room was decorated in dark wood paneling and clearly expensive oriental carpets in shades of rich red and deep golds. The lights overhead hung from the ceiling reminding her of the lights one would find in a fancy bar. The lights cast a warm orange glow throughout the room. There were no windows in this room; instead the walls held a rather large dart board, a flat screen TV hung on another wall in front of which sat a circle of comfortable looking plush chairs and a long wrap-around couch facing the TV. Along the opposite wall there was a bar made from what looked to be large stones. The counter was a shining cherry wood and the wall behind the bar held an extensive liquor cabinet.

Near the bar there also sat a gorgeous piano, a baby grand if she wasn't mistaken.

Jack strolled in walking over to the bar.

“Fix you a drink doctor?” he asked with a grin.

“It's a bit early isn't it?” Harleen asked as she gazed around the room.
“I suppose.” He smiled as he poured a shot of whiskey, downing it without even flinching before walking back around to take her hand and lead her over to the piano. He sat her down next to him, their hips touching as they shared the padded piano bench.

“So, music therapy, how does that work Harley?” Jack asked going back to calling her the nickname he had given her. He opened the lid over the keys and lightly ran his fingertips over the keys.

“Well, it's supposed to let you express yourself in a way that might be easier for you than talking. I mean, in its simplest form.” Harleen smiled.

“How about right now?” Harleen suggested.

Jack smiled. “Alright.”

With a saucy grin, Jack laced his fingers together then stretched them out cracking his knuckles. He winked at her before he placed his long fingers on the keys, but he didn't move to play immediately; instead Jack closed his eyes.

Harleen watched him, her eyes glancing down to his fingers spread out on the keys. Then he started to play, slowly and gracefully; his fingers moved over the keyboard as if they were dancing. Jack's body began to move gently while he played, the music seemed to move through him. Harleen didn't know much about classical music, but she did have a CD her friend Dr. Ethel Peabody had given her to help her sleep. Though Harleen had only listened to it once or twice she knew enough of the recording to recognize the piece of music Jack was playing...Chopin-Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2.

Harleen watched intently while Jack played. She has never seen anyone put so much emotion into the music. As she watched him, she could feel the pain within him, the darkness that dwelled in Jack Wayne. He swayed slightly, a slight crease to his brow while he played. Harleen felt as if he were laying his soul bare to her if she listened hard enough.

He gently began to bring the piece to a close, his fingers nimbly sailing over the keys and then gradually playing the last note which hung in the air.

When he was finished he turned to face her. “How was that?”

Harleen blinked several times, wiping her eyes. “Oh Jack...” she shook her head just barely. “That was—it was beautiful.”

Jack laughed, but she could see something lurking in the back of his eyes...a shadow of emotion that flitted by and then was quickly gone. Jack smacked his hands playfully on his knees. He looked down for a moment, his voice barely a whisper. “Will you save me Harley? Save me from my demons? Or will you dance with them...dance with me?” Harleen started to open her mouth, but then stopped, remaining quiet. She reached over to lay her hand on top of his, squeezing. “Yes Jack. I will be there to battle the demons with you...or dance, whatever you need.” She smiled. Jack turned on the bench to look at her, his head still hanging so that his hair fell forward making him look younger, his large smile in place, looking perfect on his lips, she noted. There was something about his smile that stirred a quiver of something deep in her gut, but it passed.

“So, I think you should play pool with me until lunch. Then we should have lunch with Alfred before we have to get ready for the gala tonight.” Jack lifted one eyebrow marginally, his smile still in place.
He always smiled, had smiled at her a great deal, but there was something she could detect that was different about this smile. She couldn't lay her finger on what it was...just a slight change, but it made her heart squeeze tightly in her chest.

“That sounds perfect Jack.”

*

Jack set the pool table up, handing her a cue stick. “First thing you want to do my sweets...” Harleen blinked in surprise when he called her my sweets. Jack kept talking, not seeming to realize the term of endearment he had used to refer to her. She decided to simply file that away to examine later, but her heart had skipped a beat when he said it.

“You want to pick a cue stick, one with a good head.” Jack giggled. “Good head.” He grinned at her which caused her to blush bright red.

He continued with a laugh in his eyes. “Anyway, you also want to make sure your stick isn't bent. Not something we really have to worry about here.” Jack walked over to the wall where the cue sticks were hung in a row, taking four down. She watched him as he weighed them before coming back to her and handing one to her. “Chalk your tip, but don't blow on it because that puts moisture on the tip. I already racked the balls for you. So now Harley, I want you to break.”

Harleen wrinkled her nose in question. “Break?”

He nodded moving around behind her. “You are going to hit the cue ball, that's the white ball there...” Here he pointed at the white ball on the table.

“Then with a nice easy hit...” Jack said quietly.

Harleen bent over, holding the cue stick a little awkwardly pointed at the white ball. She glanced up at Jack who grinned. “Here let me show you how to hold it more comfortably.

He walked around behind her and put his arms along hers. His right arm was practically around her waist. With that hand holding the stick just behind her own hand, he placed his left hand above hers, his arm practically flush with hers as he showed her how to hold the cue stick.

Harleen wasn't really listening to him talk. She caught that he was showing her how to do both an open hand bridge and a closed hand bridge for the cue stick. But her attention was focused on the feel of his body so close to hers, how good he smelled, a combination of spice, cologne, the hint of cigarette smoke, and the warmth of his breath. His cheek was almost touching hers...instantly Harleen forgot how to breathe, his words seeming distant as he explained how to use the cue stick...the heat of his body against hers was more than simply erotic, it was...she couldn't think of a word to describe everything that was churning inside of her.

Harleen did her best to stop focusing on Jack's body against hers and tried to pay attention to what he was telling her.

Jack was hyper aware of Harley. The smell of her, the warmth of her. The urge to lick her neck, to lay her across the table...he had never felt lust like this before. And it was more than lust, but instead he returned his focus to the game.

“Now, hold the cue stick like this...” He moved her hands on the stick, his body leaning into hers. His face was so close to her own that she could feel his breath against her cheek moving the fine hairs along her skin.
“Once you have the shot lined up, just let the stick flow, hit the ball, not too hard; give it a light tap.” Jack was smiling. He glanced sideways at her, their eyes meeting. For a moment, just a moment, Harleen thought he might kiss her. The way his eyes seemed to glow, circled by those thick lashes, that seductive smile.

“You don’t want to push the ball too hard or you’ll lose control of it.” Jack stared into her eyes while he spoke. His lips were so close, his breath caressed her lips. But then the moment was broken at the soft click of the ball hitting the others, sending them rolling across the table.

Jack stepped back. “Good shot Harley.”

Harleen laughed. “Lucky you mean.”

Jack grinned at her. “Maybe...or maybe I'm just a great teacher.”

Harleen laughed. “You might be right.”

*  

They ended up playing a game of pool with Harleen not doing too badly, but ultimately Jack won. Harleen clapped. “That was fun Jack.”

He grinned leaning against the table with one hand. “You think that was good, you should play tennis with me.”

Harleen smiled blushing. Jack stepped around the table wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her against him. “Come on Harley, let's go eat!”

*  

They ate lunch with Alfred who made a light meal of baby kale, butternut and chicken salad.

“The food tonight for the gala will be rich so I thought you two would enjoy a light salad.” Alfred smiled.

Jack grinned pointing his fork at Alfred. “You can always count on Alfred to take care of us.”

Alfred chuckled. “If I didn't, you and Master Bruce would have eaten cake all the time when you were small.”

Harleen laughed, shaking her head for a moment. “The salad is wonderful, thank you Alfred.”

He smiled at her. “Well, I do hope the two of you have a good time this evening. Oh and Master Jack, your masks arrived today and I have hired the driver you requested.”

Harleen frowned in confusion. “Masks?”

Jack grinned. “Didn't I tell you? It's a masked gala.”

Harleen blinked. “Really?”

Jack laughed. “Oh yes. It's going to be great fun.”

“Are we riding with Bruce?” Harleen asked before taking a bite of her salad.

Jack made a face. “No, he has his own driver, and he is going with some Finnish model named Suvi
I believe. The latest in a long line…”

“Does Bruce only date models?” Harleen frowned.

Jack shrugged talking around his bite of food. “Pretty much, though occasionally there is an heiress or a professional woman thrown in to add variety.”

Harleen frowned. “I guess Bruce isn't looking for a Mrs. Wayne is he?”

Jack shook his head. “Bruce plays the playboy, but he can't fool me.”

“You've said that before…” Harleen took a sip of her water.

Jack simply smiled, changing the subject. “I hired a make-up artist and hair dresser for you. They will be here in approximately…” He looked at his watch. “An hour.”

“What?” Harleen looked shocked, but Jack waved his hand in a dismissal.

“You are going to a party with me. You shouldn't have to do your own makeup or hair.” Jack chuckled.

“But Jack, between that and the dress...it's just…” Harleen struggled for a moment, but Jack put a hand up.

“Harley, it makes me smile. You want me to smile don't you?” He stared at her intently.

“I-I...y-yes. I do..” Harleen stuttered.

“Good, then it's decided.” Jack took a last bite of his salad hopping to his feet.

“See you in a couple of hours Harley.” He gave her a wink as he strode out of the kitchen.

Harleen glanced at Alfred who only smiled. “I have not see Master Jack this...invested in anything...anyone Miss Harleen.”

She turned to look at Alfred, her heart slamming against her chest despite her brain telling it not to...

Alfred smiled gently at her. “I thank you for that.”

*

For the next few hours, Harleen Quinzel was made to feel like a princess. The people Jack Wayne had hired were not only gifted artists, but they were terrible gossips and a lot of fun. Harleen had never had so many people exclaim over her before.

The make-up artist, a man named Jeffree squealed loud and long when he saw her.

“OH MY GOD!! Look at your eyes!! Those have got to be the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen!!” He had grabbed her face in his soft hands turning her face this way and that.

“You are going to put every one of those high society ladies to shame tonight, mark my words! And our Jackie is going to be drooling over you!”

The hairdresser was just as bad. Her name was Deepica and she had marveled over Harleen's hair. Deepica had her sitting in a chair putting gold highlights in her hair, while Jeffree did her make up and had assistants attending to both her fingernails and toenails.
At that moment Harleen felt like Cinderella being transformed for the ball.

* 

After a few hours, finally, Harleen was ready.

Alfred had come up to knock on her door, letting her know that Master Jack was ready and waiting for her.

* 

Jack was waiting at the bottom of the steps, their masks in his hands. He was dressed in a slim cut black jacket, trimmed in silver along the lapels. He was wearing a black shirt underneath, with a matching silver waistcoat, a silver tie that had a black stripe running down the middle of it, wrapped with a silver ribbon, all of it held in place by a silver pin. His hair was slicked back, his devilish smile in place, but as he looked up the stairs, his smile faltered.

Harleen came down the stairs, her hand on the rail, wearing the red dress he had bought for her. Her hair was half up, half down, golden blonde waves tumbling down her back, loose strands curling around her face. The diamond drop earrings that Jack had sent up while she was having everything done, glittered from her ears. Jack had decided that was the only jewelry she needed and he had been correct. She was a vision. Her lips were done in a deep red, her eye make-up, done in a elegant smokey-eye with just a hint of glitter for evening, the effect made the blue of her eyes glow. Jack felt that strange twist in his chest when he saw her; it was more than lust (though looking at her right now had his desire for her working overtime) the feeling was something...deeper.

Jack smiled broadly reaching up to take her hand as she came down the last few steps.

“You, my lovely, are a vision,” Jack said just before kissing the back of her hand.

Harleen blushed smiling at Jack. “Thank you.”

His grin became even brighter. “Ready to go cut a rug?”

Harleen laughed with a nod. “You bet.”

Jack handed her a mask. The mask covered her eyes and nose, leaving the deep red of her lips and the blue of her eyes exposed. The mask was silver and gold, that almost looked to be made of lace, small diamonds were embedded in the middle of the brow, along the eye-slits, and curling up with the corners of the elaborate mask. Jack’s mask was a counterpart of Harleen’s. His mask, which also left only his mouth exposed, was a burnished antique silver/gold. The sides of the mask flared up, making the wearer look part devil, but in what Harleen thought was an entirely sexy way.

Jack helped put Harleen’s mask on, her blue eyes standing out in startlingly contrast to the silver of the mask. Jack grinned, sliding his own mask into place startling a gasp from Harleen as she looked into his eyes, the blue/green blazing with mirth.

“Shall we, my princess?” He bowed, took her hand, and led her outside to the waiting limousine.
When Jack took her outside, Harleen was surprised by the vehicle waiting for them. It wasn't a traditional limousine that was parked in the Wayne Manor turnaround. Instead, it was a Rolls Royce, and not just any Rolls Royce—this one was clearly from the 1960s. Harleen glanced at Jack who grinned clearly pleased with himself.

“This is a 1961 Rolls Royce Phantom V...not just any old car to take my princess to a party.”

Jack gave her a wink as he leaned over and opened the door for her. Harleen was smiling, she was definitely feeling like Cinderella and this was her fairy tale. For a moment, she wondered if she should allow herself to think that way, considering that she was Jack's therapist, but she decided that for tonight, they were concentrating on friendship, the gala, and to hell with the standard rules.

He guided her in, making sure her dress was in the car, his fingers for a moment, tracing the side of her leg before closing the door.

Harleen felt the burn where his fingers had glided along the fabric of her dress. She felt heat rise in her face as she watched Jack make his way around the back of the vehicle. He seemed to skip around to the other side, jumping in beside her with a wide grin. Harleen couldn't stop herself from giggling suddenly. He looked dashing, his brilliant eyes sparkling at her from behind his mask.

“I've never been to a gala,” she admitted. “Well, nothing like this I mean. The closest, I guess, would be a friend's wedding where I had to dress up.” Harleen felt a blush again. She felt like a backwoods hick.

Jack took her hand, kissing her knuckles.

“Well I won't spoil it for you by giving my opinion on these parties where the rich and richer like to try to one-up each other.” Jack's smile was a sardonic expression. “Though I have to say I probably would have attended more of them if I had had someone like you on my arm. You look good enough to eat, Harley.”

Jack waggled his eyebrows with a wide perfect grin on his face just before he dragged his upper teeth light across her knuckles sending waves of heat through her body.. Harleen blushed deeper, glancing down at her lap. Jack still held her hand, placing it on his lap, his hand covering hers. The simple gesture made her heart slam against her breastbone. His hand was warm and the feel of his thigh under her hand was strong, lean. She resisted the urge to squeeze...just barely.

The back of the car was not overly large and they were sitting almost hip to hip. She could smell his cologne, the slight undercurrent of cigarette smoke mixing with his own unique scent. The combination was enough to make her squirm in her seat. She had never been this shy around someone like she was with Jack. Nor had she ever been this attracted to anyone! He was like a drug...intoxicating. Damn it, why did he have to be so handsome and charming!! Harleen asked herself. Her attraction to him was almost overpowering. She glanced sideways at him only to find him gazing at her, that soft smile tugging at his lips, a smile that always seemed to be present. The way he looked at her combined with the hint of a smile, a secret at the corner of his mouth just waiting to be shared just with her. Harleen swallowed, her eyes moving from his mouth back to his face.
He released her hand, reaching over to brush his fingertips along her cheek, tenderly caressing a line behind her ear. Jack found her irresistible...he wanted to lose himself in her. The feeling was slowly becoming desperate, almost like a drive to possess her, make her his...as he touched her cheek he promised himself that soon, he would make her his, part of everything that mattered to him.

Harleen glanced at Jack. She started to say something, but Jack took that moment to brush his fingers over her lips quieting her before he put his hand back over hers turning to look out the window. Harleen stared at him for a moment before she felt her blush burning her ears causing her to turn away and look out the window too.

* 

The ride wasn't too long from the Wayne estate. The driver made good time, sweeping them from Wayne Manor to downtown Gotham in a matter of minutes. Their car turned onto the main street, traveling down a few blocks until they were met with traffic. They had arrived at the Gotham City Art Museum where the gala was being held. Harleen tried not to let her mouth fall open, but when they pulled up to the museum, it was difficult. There were fancy cars everywhere! Harleen had never seen so many clearly expensive automobiles except on TV or in the movies. The elite of Gotham were attending this gala fundraiser and it looked to Harleen as if some actual celebrities were among those attending the gala.

Not everyone wore masks. Some attendees had their masks on sticks or in their hands posing for the Gotham press to take pictures. There was even a red carpet rolled down the front steps of the museum for the guest to walk. Reporters lined both sides of the red carpet that was protected by velvet ropes and a few men in tuxedos and women in dresses that were simultaneously elegant while allowing for rapid movement if necessary that were clearly security, so that only those attending the gala could walk in the carpet. Harleen's eyes grew larger. “I wasn't expecting so many people!”

Jack laughed. “Oh, a Wayne charity gala brings out the who's who of Gotham and beyond. Brucie really knows how to put up a fancy get-together don't you think?” It took over fifteen minutes for them get to the front of the museum, but soon their car was able to pull up and drop Jack and Harleen off at the entrance to the party.

When Jack jumped out of the car, the press went crazy. Even with the mask the reporters apparently recognized Jack Wayne.

Unlike his brother, Jack Wayne did not attend a lot of these functions and was not seen out and about as much as his brother. The fact that he was attending the gala and with someone on his arm was unprecedented. Some reporters yelled questions which Jack ignored, swiftly moving around to open the door for Harleen himself. When she stepped out the press included Harleen in their questioning.

“So who's the lady Mr. Wayne?”

“Jack! Jack Wayne! Does this mean you're off the market? What about your brother? Can you take the masks off?”

Jack simply ignored the press, though he put his arm around Harleen's waist which had the crowd going crazy again. Jack leaned in close to her so she could hear him.

“Don't worry about them. The press like to be here at these things...never know who is going to show up at one of my brother's parties.” Jack smiled giving a wave to the crowd with his free hand.

“But...are you sure you want to be seen with me?” Harleen was doing her best to try to avoid looking scared, but this was a bit overwhelming.
Jack laughed. “Let them print what they want. Besides, they only know it's me from the car and you are my mysterious companion! Besides that,” he added with a grin, “we look good together don’t we Harley?”

Harleen blushed, but didn't have a chance to respond. They had made their way up the stairs to the main entrance of the museum amongst the flashes of a hundred cameras.

*

The entrance was a large glass front behind four sets of Roman Tuscan columns. There were four different entrances, but three of them had been blocked off so that guests could only enter through one which was being held open by an imposingly tall, wide man in a tuxedo, wearing a simple black mask. As they approached the door and the tall man, Jack laughed.

“Well hello Bruno! Fancy seeing you here!”

The man grinned. “Mr. Jack Wayne. Not as surprised as I am to see you here. You don't usually come to these events.”

Jack shrugged. “Oh you know how it is...big brother gets angry and tells you that you have to go or else. Besides, how could I refuse to take this gorgeous lady out?”

Jack bowed presenting Harleen. Bruno gave her a once over and grinned.

“You ever get tired of skinny here,” Bruno said with a sly, yet friendly grin, “Feel free to look me up.”

Jack's eyes narrowed ever so slightly, the brilliant color of them going flat for a brief second though neither Harleen nor Bruno noticed. Instead Jack smiled. “Sorry Bruno, Harley here has better taste than that.”

With that Jack swept past Bruno and into the museum itself. Bruno watched them go, eyeing Harleen's backside with an appreciative smile.

*

Harleen hadn't had a lot of chances to go to the Gotham Art Museum. She had driven by it a few times, but as she walked into the gala her mouth fell open. When walking in, she was greeted by the breathtaking decorations and just above her a glorious skylight that right now showed only stars. The floors were a dark marble that shone in the lights that were everywhere. The overall lighting was dim, creating an intimate atmosphere despite the large size of the room. Lights shone everywhere. The lights that were littered throughout the room were actually designed to look like pillars made from tiny, twinkling lights that were set on heavy marble bases. At the base of each light pillar, were a large number of fresh flowers. The flowers might have been white, or blue or purple.

Harleen realized that it was difficult to determine in the dim lighting throughout the museum. Tables and chairs had been set around the room, each decorated with white table cloths, candles and more flowers. With an amazed shake of her head, Harleen noted there was even a fountain in the middle of the room. She wasn't sure of the time period, but the fountain looked old to her and made from white marble, though the lights made it seem dark purple or blue. The sound of the running water from the fountain mingled with the other sounds of quiet conversation and the beautiful melody that was being played by a string quartet. The ceiling of the museum had been decorated with dark blue drapery that gave the entire main room a rich quality that was enhanced by the lighting. There had even been a dance floor set up where several couples were dancing. Across from the dance floor a small stage
had been put together for the charity auction later this evening.

The next thing that Harleen noticed beyond the room were the masks and the clothing. She had never seen so many gorgeous dresses! And the masks were amazing! Moving among the crowd of expensively dressed people, were waiters and waitresses all dressed in black tuxedos and all wearing simple black masks across their eyes. They carried trays of champagne, wine and some even carried beer which Harleen was sure was probably some sort of expensive beer, not just regular “bar” beer.

Jack grinned taking her hand and kissing her knuckles. “Would you like to dance?”

Harleen blushed, but nodded. “Yes.”

Jack held her hand gently and led her out to the dance floor. The quartet had just started playing a new tune and Harleen frowned softly. “I know this song.”

Jack smiled putting an arm around her waist, his other hand holding hers as he slowly moved her around the dance floor. Low, only for her to hear he started to sing, his voice warm, sending shivers down her spine and heat where his hands touched her.

“Guess it's true, I'm not good at a one-night stand But I still need love 'cause I'm just a man These nights never seem to go to plan I don't want you to leave, will you hold my hand?”

He spun her around, holding one of her hands before he gently tugged her back into his arms. Harleen's heart was beating so hard in her chest, pounding against her breastbone, that she was surprised he couldn't hear it. He held her close, his lips pressed just below her ear where she could feel the soft caress of his lips against her skin as he continued to sing just for her.

“Oh, won't you stay with me? 'Cause you're all I need This ain't love it's clear to see But darling, stay with....”

Jack smiled, brushing a kiss across her pulse beating fast beneath her flushed skin. He spun her out, slowly spinning her around, then, his strong hand was pressing against her waist, he lifted her up spinning around once, then placed her on her feet. Jack wrapped his arms around her, one at her waist and dipped her back; with his other hand, he cradled her head ever so gently, his long fingers in her hair. He smiled at her, that wide glorious smile, and his eyes twinkled behind his mask. Harleen took in a shuddering breath as he leaned in close, his lips almost touching hers. She could feel the brush of his breath against her mouth before he gracefully pulled her back to her feet. They glided across the dance floor Jack continuing to sing just for her.

“Why am I so emotional? No it's not a good look, gain some self control And deep down I know this never works But you can lay with me so it doesn't hurt...”

He pulled her close, putting her weight against his left arm, his right gently pressed to her stomach as he spun slowly around. Harleen reached up to caress his cheek with her fingertips causing his smile to broaden. As her fingers glided past his mouth, Jack brushed a kiss against her digits. He wrapped both arms around her when he pulled her close again, the two of them now just weaving to the music.

Jack brushed his fingers through her hair. He had so many things he wanted to say at that moment, but he said none of them, instead content to hold her against him. Harleen closed her eyes, her cheek to his, she felt his hand come up to cradle the back of her head again, while they weaved to the music. Her emotions were in turmoil, roiling butterflies in her stomach like nothing she had ever felt before...she didn't know what to say or do...she was his doctor!! She...
“May I cut in?” They both turned at the sound of a rather high-pitched man's voice.

Jack narrowed his eyes ready to lash out, but then he saw that it was Harold Sale, which startled him for a moment. He recognized the foul little man even with the rather gaudy mask he was wearing. Jack remembered Sale from school, one of the numerous bullies who made life hell for Jack, until he took matters into his own hands. Harold was one of the richie riches of Gotham, born into money. Sale had made even more by dealing in real estate and other investments...not all of them strictly legal.

“Oh, if it isn't Harold Sale. You know, looking at you Harold, I understand why some animals eat their young.” Jack sneered.

Harold laughed. “Why if it isn't Jack. God, when was the last time you attended one of these? Oh that's right—your big brother doesn't let you out much does he? Got to keep his crazy brother on a short leash doesn't he?” Harold bodily moved himself between Harleen and Jack. “This schmuck bothering you miss?” Harold smiled, his teeth so white that for a moment Harleen was sure they were fake.

Harleen frowned, pulling back. “No he isn't, thank you.”

Harold reached out grabbing her hand in a vice-like grip.

“Why not dance with a real billionaire? Nice seeing you Jack,” the shorter man said dismissively.

Harold grabbed Harleen, practically dragging her out onto the dance floor just as the music changed. Jack hissed ready to go out there and break Harold's nose...and maybe a few other appendages when someone grabbed his arm.

“Don't Jack.”

Jack Wayne turned to see his brother. Bruce held Jack's upper arm loosely, but firmly and discreetly enough that no one would notice anything more than two brothers speaking.

“Don't cause trouble Jack.”

Jack glared, but took a deep breath. “It's fine Brucie. I'm fine.”

Jack watched Harold and Harleen dance for a few minutes, his brother maintaining a hold his upper arm.

Bruce sighed, watching Harold and Harleen too.

“I understand, believe me. If anyone deserves a beating, it's Harold Sale, but Jack, you can't solve problems with your fists.”

“No, but breaking his face would do a lot to solving one of my problems.” Jack laughed.

The brothers were quiet for a moment. Jack's eyes never left Harleen.

Bruce cleared his throat. “Did you hear about Marcus McDermott?”

“Who?” Jack didn't look at his brother.

“Marcus McDermott, he is on the board of directors....you spoke to him after the meeting?” Bruce continued tilting his head to gauge his brother's reaction.
Jack finally looked at him. “Oh, you mean the man with the cards right?”

“Yes, apparently he took off on vacation without a word to anyone.” Bruce took a sip from his champagne glass that he had been holding. Jack shrugged his shoulders. “Why are you telling me?”

“No reason, just saw you talking to him, thought you two might be friends.” Bruce turned back to watch the dancers.

Jack laughed. “I didn't want to talk to him. And no, he isn't a friend.”

Bruce nodded. He glanced sideways at his brother. Jack's eyes had not left the pretty blonde once.

Bruce sighed letting go of Jack's arm. “Go on, go get your doctor back.”

Jack grinned at his brother and waved at Bruce as he made his way back to the dance floor. Bruce watched him go shaking his head slightly though he did so with a smile. It really was good to see Jack take an interest in someone and Dr. Quinzel did look beautiful tonight. He couldn't fault his younger brother on his taste in women. With a smile Bruce turned and went back to wandering the party.

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As Jack approached Harold and Harleen on the dance floor, he hummed along to the music that was playing; this time the quartet was playing some Coldplay song the words of which he couldn't place, but he remembered the tune and danced along as he glided across the dance floor. He came up on Harold and brought his hand down, a little too hard on Harold's shoulder causing the man to stumble to the side a bit. Harleen looked relieved when she saw Jack.


Harold started to say something, but Jack grabbed Harold's tie, yanking Harold close.

“Don't start Harold...” Jack's voice had dropped low, menacing. “She's with me Harold, dear and I don't like sharing, so consider yourself lucky that I let you dance with her. Capiche?”

Harold's eyes widened, but he nodded. “Yeah, yeah, it's fine Jack.” Harold put his hands up looking meek.


Harold stared wide-eyed at Jack before he quickly took off, stumbling in his haste which caused Jack to chuckle. He turned to Harleen and swept her an elegant bow before he gathered her into his arms again. “Sorry about that...”

Jack spun her around slowly on the dance floor. Harleen smiled, relieved to be back in his arms.

“That man was disgusting,” she muttered.

Jack frowned glancing toward Harold, then back at her pulling her close against him.

“That won't happen again. I promise.” They glided along the dance floor, Jack keeping her body pressed against his as they moved in a sensual weave to the music.

Jack giggled. “Did you see the dessert table?”
Harleen smiled with a blush coloring her cheeks. “Dessert?”

Jack laughed. “Yes! I love a woman with a sweet tooth.”

Harleen blushed as Jack danced her to the far right and then off to the side where the dessert table sat. The white cloth covered table spanned the length of the wall, heavy with a wide variety of desserts. Harleen was delighted. She had never seen so many desserts in one place, not even at her friend’s wedding! Some of the desserts were things Harleen had never even seen before!

Jack held her hand as he led her over. Harleen thought that the table was loaded with everything one could possibly want, from macaroons all done in a variety of shades of purple, to cake pops that were not just in a variety of flavors, but the decorations were what she could only think of as beautifully elegant. There were whole slices of cake, parfaits, blueberry violet eclairs, pavlovas with blueberry jam, cupcakes and more.

Harleen giggled. “Oh gosh, there is so much to chose from!”

Jack reached over grabbing two dessert plates with a hungry look in his eyes and a smirk on his lips. “You grab two plates too. Let’s take a bit of everything!”

Laughing like a couple of kids, the two of them filled their plates to overflowing with some of nearly everything that was available. They found an out of the way table, with Jack hopping up to grab them several glasses of champagne from a server, before coming to sit back down with her.

“I feel so wicked!” Harleen giggled.

Jack grinned cutting a bite off a piece of rich chocolate cake and holding it out to her. “It’s fun to be a little wicked, don’t you think Harley?”

Her eyes sparkled behind her mask as she leaned forward a little, opening her mouth. Jack slowly caressed her lips with the chocolate. He watched her mouth, catching his bottom lip between his teeth when her pink tongue licked across the edge of the chocolate covered fork. He had never in all his life seen anything more sexy than Harley.

Grinning, he fed her the bite slowly, brushing the chocolate frosting against her red lips. Harleen blushed giggling as he slid the bite of cake into her mouth. She smiled putting her fingers up to her mouth, but Jack reached out pulling her fingers away in order to wipe the small dab of chocolate from her mouth with a finger. He then stuck his finger in his mouth grinning at her.

Harleen wondered how he managed to look completely and utterly seductive with his finger in his mouth, the twinkle in his eye. She felt a hard twist in her groin while she stared at him. Jack reached down and plucked a macaroon from his plate reaching over to caress Harleen’s lips with the smooth surface of the treat. Jack’s eyes followed the shape of her lips, his breath catching just a little when she slowly opened her mouth. “You’re lips are perfectly kissable. Did you know that Harley?” Jack purred, his eyes coming up to catch hers.

Before she could answer, they were interrupted by someone using the speaker on stage. The room was suddenly filled with loud feedback buzz startling everyone. Jack and Harleen turned to see Bruce standing on the stage.

“Sorry about that folks! I wanted to thank all of you who came tonight in support of art programs in our inner city schools. Tonight we have some great local musicians and if you walk through the Basquiat hall you will be treated to the works of not only local Gotham artists, but works from students from our own Gotham public schools. Our string quartet providing our music tonight is also
from Gotham High. Our charity auction will be starting in the next half hour.”

Suddenly there was a loud explosion and the wall behind Wayne exploded in a burst of smoke, fire and marble. Bruce was knocked from the stage, disappearing in the smoke. Jack and Harleen lost sight of Bruce almost immediately as the crowd started to scream, the room filling with smoke and heat.

“ALRIGHT GOTHAM’S RICH AND FAMOUS, THIS IS A HOLD UP!!”

Out of the smoke, appearing much like a rock band, stepped a group of five individuals, all dressed in elaborate complimentary costumes, each one representing a part of a suit in a deck of cards. One was dressed as a queen of spades complete with the traditional card crown, a king of spades with the stylized card king beard, a Jack of spades with the Jack of spades crown and outfit, and the last two both wore white bodysuits decorated with spades, the ace of spades, and another woman dressed in a ten of spades. All of them wore black masks that covered the upper halves of their faces, and all were armed with heavy weapons.

Jack stood up so quickly he nearly knocked their table forward. He grabbed Harleen, pulling her close, his arms wrapped protectively around her, but he was laughing.

“Oh my God! Get a load of those outfits.”

Harleen was scared, though not as scared as she thought she should be. Jack's attempts at stifling his giggles was making her laugh as well.

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The king of spades walked up to the microphone. “Alright folks, now that we have your attention, let's get down to business. My friend there...” Here the king pointed at a large man dressed as the ace of spades. “He is going to go around with a large duffel bag and you are going to put money, watches jewelry, all of it in the bag. Anyone decides to be greedy and keep their valuables OR decides to play hero, is going to end up dead. Got it? Good. Go on Ace, go collect for the Royal Flush Gang fund.”

The man called Ace hopped down with his duffel bag, armed with a Colt M4 Carbine in his other hand. His voice was gruff when he spoke. “Alright, put it in the bag people and hurry up!”

Harleen was still giggling, trying to cover it behind her hand. Jack was laughing, his head on her shoulders. She hissed at him. “What are we going to do Jack?” For a moment, she wondered if the stress of the situation was making her slightly hysterical.

That was when there was a crash from above. Everyone's eyes moved skyward. Suddenly a dark shape swooped down, shooting something out that hit the Ace of Spades in the chest knocking the man backwards causing him to drop his weapon, though he managed to keep a hold of the dufflebag. Someone in the crowd shouted.

“BATMAN!”

Jack's eyes widened as he turned to look at the dark figure crouched between the party goers and the Royal Flush Gang. Something in Jack's eyes sparkled with glee.

“The Batman,” he murmured under his breath with a slight chuckle on the end.
Dance sequence from the show "Reign" (which I have never actually watched!)
Darling, come on to me...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jack grabbed Harleen's hand, maneuvering her back behind their table while he giggled like a child. He was clearly excited about getting to watch Batman in action. Harleen's eyes widened when she saw the Batman. He stood, looking like a Gothic gargoyle, clad all in black, his cape whipping out behind him, and pointed ears atop his head. She had heard the stories about the Batman, but she had never actually seen him, hadn't even been sure he was real, but there he was right in front of her looking like a creature from a nightmare! She glanced at Jack who was giggling and smiling, enraptured at the spectacle.

“Jack?” She touched his face in concern.

Jack's giggle turned into a laugh. “Gotham is becoming so much more entertaining now that we have a masked vigilante stalking the streets of Gotham, don't you think Harley sweets?”

Harleen frowned. She wasn't sure why he was laughing; maybe it was nervousness, fear? She was scared, but...a giggle bubbled up some her, the tension of the situation mixed with the smile on Jack's face. She really didn't know why she was laughing along with Jack, but there was definitely something frighteningly ridiculous about the costumed villains and hero crashing a masked party and doing battle right in front of them. For the briefest of moment's Harleen thought about how funny it would be just to walk among them and bash a few heads!

One of the few conscious security guards, (who had not been knocked unconscious by the initial explosion) a young man no more than twenty-five, ran up to the group of “cards” with his weapon out. “You are...” He never got to finish his statement before the Jack of Spades pulled out a taser, hitting the young guard in the chest, putting him down quickly. Many of the bodyguards that were present, were too busy watching over their charges to interfere with the gang, especially now that the Batman had shown up.

At that moment, Batman turned yelling to the crowd in a terrifyingly deep voice. “Get down!”

Then he threw out a small black bat-shaped object (which Harleen would later learn was called a batarang) knocking the weapon from the King of Spade's hands. Within the same motion, Batman spun around just in time to bring both his arms up to block a roundhouse kick from the Ten of Spades. Ten hissed as she moved in on Batman, her fists and feet flying quickly. She clearly had some sort of kickboxing training as she came at Batman again and again not giving him room to maneuver and recover. Her fists and feet, lashing out with a surprising amount of speed continued to connect, but each time the Bat blocked her strikes with ease. Batman took several steps back, keeping his arms crossed in front of his face, his armored forearms taking the brunt of her attack, before he managed to grab her ankle in a lightning fast movement. With a quick and powerful twist of his wrist, Batman flipped her over by her ankle. The woman lost her footing and twisted in the air before slamming into the floor hard. Batman released her ankle and the woman lay there unmoving.

The King of Spades yelled. “EVERYONE!!! GO!!”

The other members of the gang turned, taking off the way they have entered the museum, through the hole in the wall their explosion had caused. The Ace of Spades stumbled to his feet just when Batman twisted around and threw something at the man. The Ace stumbled backward something clearly slamming into his back and knocking him to the floor with a jarring hit; he slid and slammed
into the stage. The Ace shook his head from the impact, reaching in and grabbed something out of his dufflebag, throwing it Batman.

Whatever it was, the object struck Batman in the chest and exploded with the sharp scent of smoke and burning plastic. People started screaming again at the unexpected explosion.

The explosion was powerful enough to knock the Bat off his feet, sending him flying backwards a few feet, but it didn't put him down permanently. The concussive force wasn't strong enough to kill, but it caused enough of a distraction for Ace to follow his friends out of the museum. The sound of sirens outside could be heard by the people inside of the museum. The loud blare of sirens was accompanied by the colors of red and blue flashes throughout the interior of the museum.

Batman glanced the way the others of the Royal Flush Gang had gone, then back at the unconscious Ten of Spades. He seemed aggravated to Harleen, but he took the time to tie the Ten up before he took off after the rest of the gang.

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Jack had watched all of it with an enchanted expression. His attention never wavered from the Batman. Harleen, nestled in Jack's protective embrace, watched in awe.

She whispered to Jack. “You think he'll catch them?”

Jack shrugged. “If he would just kill them, he wouldn't have the issues he has...”

Harleen giggled. Perhaps it's nerves, she thought, but she looked up at Jack.

“You might be right. But I had heard he never kills.”

Jack nodded. “Never...you really have to wonder what makes a man put on a mask and run around Gotham fighting crime trying to bring order to chaos.” He giggled. “I bet you would love to get him on your couch my sweet doctor.”

Harleen smiled. “Well...yeah,” she nodded. “Someone like that...fighting crime in a mask..childhood trauma would be my guess.”

Jack giggled. “Careful Harley, you might have me thinking you like Batman better than me.” He gave her a clearly put on pout before he spoke again. “Maybe I should put on a mask and take up crime fighting? Oh! Or maybe I should bring more chaos into Gotham just to see how the Batman likes it? But how?” He giggled again. “What do you think doctor?”

Harleen was about to say something when suddenly the museum was filled with police shouting at patrons to calm down, to not move...the typical police protocols.

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Jack and Harleen sat at a table with a few other of the gala guests waiting to told when they could leave. Everyone at this particular table had already given their statements and were simply waiting now. There were plates of desserts on this table that had turned into something mushy and disgusting looking. Jack and Harleen were mostly making designs with the gooey remains, using forks to create weird little pictures that the two of them were laughing about, while they waited. The Gotham police force kept everyone at the museum for several hours, taking statements, trying to organize witness accounts. By the time Jack and Harleen were finally allowed to leave, it was nearly midnight. Jack held Harleen's hand as they stepped outside of the museum into the fresh night air. Harleen took a deep breath. She hadn't realized how much smoke had been in the museum until she was able to step
out. She figured the thieves must have deactivated all the smoke alarms and the sprinkler systems. For a moment she wondered how many priceless works of art had been damaged due to the botched robbery. It's such a shame, she thought idly.

There were still several reporters waiting outside the museum. Most of the reporters were herded off in a tiny section of sidewalk, being held at bay by the GCPD. Though a few had called it a night, there was still a little bit of chaos going on outside the museum with everyone who had been inside now allowed to leave, trying to get to their cars.

There were bodyguards, police and security hired for the gala milling around outside trying to get everyone to their vehicles safely.

Jack tugged on Harleen's hand and pulled her back away from the main knot of chaos, the two of them slipping behind some bodyguards and away from the little press circle and the struggle of the rich trying to get to their cars.

“Jack? What about the car?” Harleen glanced back as she stumbled with him. She wasn't exactly tired, and in fact felt energized after the events of this evening.

Jack grinned, seemingly full of energy too. “Why don't we walk? I'm not ready to go home—are you?” While he spoke he pulled out a cigarette case made of silver with an elaborate “J” craved on the front of it. Jack pulled a thin cigarette out of the case and withdrew an exquisitely crafted lighter out of the same inner pocket. The lighter was a rich plum color with another “J” on its surface with gold filigree surrounding the letter. He lit the cigarette and took a long pull with a grin, blowing out a line of smoke. He gave Harley a grin.

Harleen shook her head in answer to his question. “Nope.” Jack gave her a wide grin squeezing her hand gently.

“Then let's go for a walk.” Jack pulled her close putting an arm around her waist. He surprised her by kissing her ear before he laughed and began to walk with a skip in his step. Harleen felt her cheeks burn, the heat from the kiss on her ear traveled down her neck spreading throughout her body.

*

They walked downtown with no real destination in mind. The night was clear, the stars just barely visible over the glow of the streetlights. Downtown Gotham consisted in a series of restaurants, local art galleries, specialty clothing stores and jewelry stores. There were even a couple of wine shops and a beer garden. Of course, at this time of the night everything was closed.

Jack murmured squeezing her close for a moment as he took his cigarette blowing a stream of smoke. “Someday I would like to meet the Batman.”

“Really?” Harleen asked softly.

Jack nodded. “Hmm...yes...I want to know why he does it. I mean...why put so much effort into saving people—and for what? Everything dies, crime continues, chaos reigns. Is he trying to bring some sort of order to the chaos of living...everything is chaos, there is no way to bring any sort of justice. Is there justice in two little boys watching their parents die? The man who killed them never saw justice. The only sensible way to live in this world is without rules.” Jack spoke serenely, not the least bit disturbed by what he had said. Harleen frowned slightly as Jack moved his arm from around her waist and took her hand once more. He swung her hand gently.
Harleen frowned “You really believe that? No rules?”

Jack smiled sliding his eyes sideways. “Introduce a little change, upset the established order, and everything becomes chaos...what is Batman really? He doesn't work within the law, or the established order—he is a rogue element trying to bring the wrong to justice, but in fact he isn't following the law either. Order needs chaos.”

Jack giggled kicking a can down the sidewalk.

“I myself enjoy not knowing what is going to happen. I like pulling the thread and watching things unravel in surprising ways!”

Jack tugged Harleen's hand a little, his expression playful.

“Will going down this alley get us killed? Or will we simply walk out into someplace new? Everything, all of it, no matter how hard you try, everything is chaos. I really don't think Batman understands that...he wants to bring a kind of order to Gotham...which will never happen.”

Jack laughed, the laughter taking on just a slight hysterical edge. “Robert Musil says that it's not necessarily a matter of good and evil, but what you fight against and what you decide to accept that matters. Batman accepts that there is good in the world and that he is doing his bit to bring order. I, on the other hand, think everything is chaos and Batman...like my brother Bruce, I suppose...just can't accept that.” Jack laughed dropping his cigarette and putting it out with the toe of his shoe.

Harleen frowned ever so slightly at his conclusions, but then Jack grinned. “Look! A diner! Come on, I'll buy you a cup of coffee.”

Harleen laughed as Jack pulled her down the street, then across heading for the lights of the diner.

* *

When the two of them stepped in, the few patrons inside, as well as the staff, stared, startled to see two people in expensive evening clothes suddenly appear in their quiet place. They stared for a good long moment, then went back to ignoring them. Jack laughed. “Good old Gothamites!”

The “diner” wasn't your traditional diner, more of a twenty four hour restaurant. The inside of the place was done in warm colors, the floor was hardwood, polished and the booths were dark brown, as were the chairs. The lighting was subdued, the walls painted a warm shade of burnt orange. It reminded Harleen of a little place she used to go to as a kid with her family before everything became so messed up at home.

Jack tugged Harleen with him to a free booth in the corner, just at the edge of the large window that ran the length of the building's front. The waitress came over a few seconds later, pad in hand, to take their drink orders. “What can I get you to drink?”

She was pretty, with dark hair piled up in a messy bun. She had a nice figure, big brown eyes and full lips. The way she kept looking at Jack, it was clear she wanted him to notice her. The waitress, whose name tag read, “April” kept all her attention on Jack, acting as if Harleen wasn't there at all. April wore snug black pants and a navy colored shirt and by the way she was holding herself it was clear to Harleen this was a woman accustomed to using her looks and body to get what she wanted. If Harleen would hazard a guess, she would bet April was a woman looking for a “sugar daddy” to take care of her.

Jack, who didn't seem to notice the way the waitress kept leaning toward him to show off her cleavage or the way she would shift her hip closer to him, had all his attention on the menu or
Harleen. Jack didn’t react at all to the waitress. Instead he looked down the menu then up at Harleen giving her one of his sexy grins.

“Just coffee please.” He ordered without giving the waitress a look. “Harley?” He lifted a brow quizzically at Harleen.

Harleen smiled. “The same.”

April frowned and went to get their coffee; by the set of her shoulders, she was clearly annoyed the Jack hadn’t noticed her.

April came back just moments later with a pot of coffee and two mugs, setting them down and trying yet again to flirt with Jack. She leaned forward, her cleavage nearly on the table in front of Jack as she asked, “You ready to order sir?” The waitress then did a double take at Jack. “Hey, wait, aren’t you Jack Wayne? Bruce Wayne's brother?”

Jack frowned, his eyes finally moving toward the waitress. They were cold eyes, flat and clearly annoyed. The waitress smiled at him, seemingly unaffected by his flat stare. Jack held his eyes on the waitress a heartbeat longer, then looked over the top of his menu at Harleen. His blue-green eyes twinkled. He held the menu so that it continued to cover the lower half of his face as he asked.

“You wanna share a plate of Belgian waffles with me doc?” Jack grinned like a child, his eyes full of expression now that he was gazing at Harleen, in stark contrast to how he had looked at the waitress just moments ago. Harleen blushed. She couldn't help the grin on her face. Here she was in a twenty-four hour diner, wearing expensive clothing with a gorgeous man ordering Belgian waffles.

“I would love to Jack.”

Jack tossed down his menu dramatically. “A large order of Belgian waffles serveuse!”

Harleen giggled. The waitress didn't look happy, but she took their order. Harleen gave Jack a quizzical look as she put sugar and cream in her coffee. “Do you speak French?” Jack smirked. “Fluently, along with a few other languages. Harley, vous êtes la plus belle femme et intéressant aussi. Vous êtes le mien et je suis le vôtre.”

“What did you say?” Harleen leaned her elbows on the table cupping her chin between her hands, but Jack simply smiled. “You will just have to figure it out Harley.” He reached over and bopped her gently on the tip of her nose with one long finger.

Harleen blushed picking up her coffee and took a sip of the hot liquid. Jack took his coffee black, glancing around once. “Too bad I can't smoke in here. Nothing like coffee and a cigarette for relaxing, especially after our little adventure.

Harleen nodded. She was about to say something else, but that was when the annoyed waitress returned with their waffles.

Jack grinned when the plate was set on the table between them.

“I remember my mom making waffles once. Alfred was teaching her how to cook. I'm not sure why she was doing it, but I remember her laughing. She had a wonderful laugh,” he said wistfully. “That's one of the few things about her I remember with any clarity.” Jack frowned at the memory. Harleen could see the dark cloud behind his eyes, but just as quickly it vanished. Jack seemed to shove the memory away. He grinned as he picked up the small pitcher of syrup and poured it over the waffles after he buttered them.
“It's nice to replace that memory of waffles with a new one.” Jack cut off a bite, but instead of eating it himself, he leaned over the table to feed her. Harleen grinned and opened her mouth slowly. Jack giggled lightly coating her lips with syrup before sliding the bite into her mouth.

Jack cut off his own bite and put it in his mouth with a grin.

“Are you sure you want to replace a memory like that?” Harleen asked softly after she had swallowed.

Jack shrugged. “Sometimes I think that memory is treacherous. It can so easily lie to you. One moment you're lost in a carnival of delight, childhood aromas...everything is perfect, happy, you have not a care in the world...you're safe with your family, protected by the strong arms of your parents, you're brother will always protect you...then Boom!!! All that's taken away by one person with a bad attitude and a gun.”

He chewed his bite contemplatively, resting his chin in his free hand. Jack cut off another bite and fed it to Harley smiling as he watched syrup dribble on her bottom lip. He reached out with his other hand wiped her lip then licked his finger. His smile faltered as he gazed at Harleen.

“Memory can also be terrible, rebellious, takes you somewhere you don't want to be, someplace dark and cold...vile, bloody...the sound of a child's scream, the snapping of bone, the crack of a gunshot...then everything that you thought was solid, is gone.” Jack's eyes were distant, but then he snapped back to the present giving her a grin again. Harleen frowned slightly. She wanted to ask more, to delve deeper, but this was not the place to do so, so instead she simply let Jack feed her bites of waffles. “Tell me about your childhood Harley?” Jack sipped his coffee smiling at her over the rim of the cup. Jack frowned ever so slightly when he noticed the minute changes in Harleen's expression when he asked the question. “What is it Harley? You can tell me.”

He reached across the table and took her hand, lacing his fingers with hers. The gesture was so sweet, so tender, that Harleen felt her eyes sting. She gently squeezed his fingers.

Harleen took a deep breath. “It was...good when I was younger, but after my father died my mother remarried and my step-father was...frightening. I wasn't his and he made sure everyday of my life that I knew I was not important. Then, after he and my mom started having their own kids, he made sure I knew that I was nothing, that his children were the important ones...I have two younger half-sisters and a younger half- brother, none of who I've spoken with in years. I left on the day I turned eighteen. Worked odd jobs, got myself through college...” her voice trailed off as she realized she had told him more than she intended.

Jack tilted his head gazing at her. “So, no family you care about it?”

Harleen shook her head. “ I did, but not anymore. My mother chose that family over me.”

Jack grinned tugging her hand up and kissing one of her fingers. “Who needs family!”

Harleen smiled. “What about your brother? Alfred.”

Jack wrinkled his nose. For a moment she thought she saw something pass over his face. She couldn't be sure what emotion that was, it seemed both dark and sad then Jack changed the subject.

“How about we go walk the waffles off before I get us a taxi?” Jack stood throwing some bills onto the table. Harleen followed, glancing at the table to see that Jack had thrown down two one hundred dollar bills.
“I know what we should do next.” Jack said, laughing lightly as he did a hopscotch on the sidewalk. Harleen couldn't help but be enamored watching him in his expensive suit, arms out to his sides, playing hopscotch on his own. Her professional opinion was that his behavior might not have been typical for an adult of his age, but she certainly didn't find it to be unhealthy. And again, perhaps the excitement of the night was manifesting itself in his—and her—actions right now. Jack grinned at her when he suddenly stopped.

“We should go get drunk!”

“What? Why?” Harleen frowned, again thinking of the nervous excitement of the night, but Jack grabbed her face with one hand, squeezing her lips gently. She stopped moving, staring into his eyes; they were hypnotic. He smiled, gazing down at her and then he made a pouty face. “Please...pluh-eeze Doctor Quinzel...let's go get drunk, pretty please.” He was holding her cheeks giggling as her pushed her lips together. Harleen was trying not to giggle, but the way he was talking was so cute and funny, his fingers on her cheeks warm. He stepped so close that for a moment she thought he might kiss her. He released her face after a few seconds, his fingers slowly dragging down her throat in a sensual caress. His voice dropped to a whisper.

“His voice dropped to a whisper.

“We could get drunk, then go home and so skinny-dipping in the pool. Bruce would be livid.”

He chuckled, his lips so close to hers that she could feel his warm breath brush against her mouth. “Whatya say doc?”

That was when a rough voice growled. “Real sweet love birds, now give me all your money.”

Jack and Harleen turned to see a man standing there with a gun on them.

The man motioned. “Wallets and honey, you can give me those earrings.”

The man mugging them was taller than Jack and more clearly muscled. What scared Harleen the most was that he wasn't wearing a mask, nothing to hide his face from them.

He was unshaven, bald, with a nasty scar running from the bottom of his chin through his lips and up his cheek. His clothes were nondescript. He leered at Harleen. “You know what babe, I want the earrings and you too.”

Harleen didn't notice that the only movement Jack had made was the balling of his fists.

Jack hissed. “You are not going to touch her.”

The man laughed. “Oh, I'm not am I?” The mugger moved surprisingly swiftly grabbing Harleen by the front of her dress and yanking her toward him. She stumbled, slamming against the man's chest.

“Ah!!” She let out a startled gasped.

The man let her go just long enough to grab her by her hair and yanked her around while he laughed. “You just give me your money pretty boy and you can go. The lady and I are going to go have some fun.” He yanked on Harleen's hair causing her to cry out. Jack giggled, but the sound was anything but humorous; there was an edge to it. Harleen was too scared to notice the darkness to the laugh, her eyes wide with fear.

“Let her go and I might consider letting you live, though I doubt it.” Jack smiled. It was a chilling smile that sent ice racing through Harleen's veins.
The mugger laughed. “What are you doing to do pretty boy? Eh?” The big man waved the gun threateningly.

Jack chose that moment to move. He was surprisingly swift as he stepped forward, easily knocking the gun from the mugger's hand with a sharp snap to the man's wrist with the ball of Jack's hand. The man stumbled back away from Jack yanking Harleen with him, determined to maintain at least the advantage of holding onto her. She cried out in pain as some of her hair was ripped from its roots, but the man kept a hold of her. He threw himself to the side yanking Harleen around in front of him as a shield, then pulled a long wicked looking Bowie knife from his belt, pressing it hard to Harleen's throat. She gasped in pain, a long, thick trickle of blood appearing on her pale skin.

“Stay back!! STAY BACK!! I'll cut her throat!! I WILL!” Harleen could feel that the man was suddenly terrified, his arms around her were shaking, she could feel the blade wobble against her neck.

Jack snarled at the sight of Harleen's blood. But Jack was full of even more surprises. He snapped forward, grabbing Harleen in an firm grip and easily—surprisingly—breaking the man's hold on her. Harleen cried out as Jack yanked her free, the man taking several strands of her hair, but his grasp on the mugger's knife hand was like steel, preventing the bigger man from carrying out his threat. Jack's grip on her arm would leave painful bruises, but suddenly she was stumbling away from her assailant, losing her balance. Her knees slammed into the concrete as she fell.

Jack grabbed the man by the throat with both hands. The mugger brought the knife up, slashing at Jack cutting through the fine suit, the shirt, biting deeply into the flesh of Jack's upper right arm forcing Jack to release his throat. If Jack felt any pain he didn't seem to register it or show it. Instead, he slammed the mugger up against the front of the nearby building. Jack's grin never faltered. Jack lashed out, grabbing the wrist of the mugger that held the knife. The two men struggled, the mugger trying to yank his hand away from the iron grip that Jack had on it while Jack, holding his teeth in a vicious grin, yanked the bigger man toward him, twisting the hand holding the knife, struggling to disarm him. The two men stumbled, slamming into the wall. The mugger tried clawing at Jack's face with his free hand, but Jack was too nimble, keeping an iron grip on the wrist holding the knife while avoiding the clawing fingers of the mugger's free hand. Jack gave a quick slam upward with his free hand under the bald man's chin forcing his head back.

The two men stumbled again, but kept their footing. Jack, with a chuckle on his lips, slammed his forehead against their attacker's face, blooding the mugger's lip, leaving a small cut on Jack's forehead, while at the same time squeezing the man's wrist with a wrenching twist, which finally caused him to dropped the blade. Jack released the mugger's wrist the moment he dropped the blade. Jack brought his arm up, pressing his forearm against the mugger's throat and forced the larger man back against the wall. He pulled one hand back and started to punch the man, over and over in the face with brutally quick blows while holding him up by the neck with the other hand.

Harleen struggled to her feet, her dress torn in the front and on her knees. Jack's fist was bloody. The mugger stopped struggling moments ago, but Jack didn't stop; he continued to hit the man though laughter started to bubble up. Jack's laughter turned maniacal until Harleen grabbed him.

“JACK!! JACK!! Stop!! He's down, stop please!!” Harleen grabbed his arm, her fingers slipping for a moment on the blood that stained Jack's jacket from the knife wound.

Jack giggled as he glanced toward Harleen. What she saw in his eyes both frightened her, but oddly that look of madness attracted her, and just as quickly, the look in his eyes was gone. Jack let go opening his hand that had been around the man's throat, letting the man drop to the ground though Jack continued to smile.
Harleen crouched down checking the pulse at the man's neck.

She let out a sigh of relief. “He's alive.”

She stood up looking down at the mugger. His face was a mess, nose clearly broken, some teeth were shattered, his lip split and one eye swelling shut, and maybe even broken cheek bones, but he was alive.

Harleen turned to look at Jack who was smiling, his hand bloody and cut up, the slice across his arm seemed to have stopped bleeding, but it was hard to tell with the blood matted material.

For a moment she thought about calling the police, but she didn't want Jack to get in trouble. He might not get jail time with his family's money, ties...and this was self-defense, but part of her worried about what his brother might do. She was Jack's doctor, this was part of what she was supposed to be helping him with. So, no police. Besides, her rotation in a hospital entailed hands-on medical work. She could handle stitches.

“Jack, we should go.” Harleen grabbed his shoulders, turning him to look at her. She was shaking like a leaf. With one hand she caressed Jack's cheek. “Jack?”

He blinked as if seeing her for the first time before he nodded. “You're right. Let's go home.”

* Jack called Alfred to come pick them up. The older man arrived in a timely matter, Jack and Harleen waiting for him near a small convenience store that was open twenty-four hours. Harleen had gone in and purchased some gauze and a couple of sodas. The man checking her out kept staring at the bloody wound on her neck, the torn dress, but other than that, he said nothing and didn't bother calling anyone either since she didn't ask for help.

Harleen carefully wrapped Jack's arm while he sipped the drink. He was going to need stitches, as she had suspected, but this was the best she could do for right now. “How is your neck?” he asked gently reaching out to caress the side of her throat. Harleen reached up, touching it gingerly. “It looks worse than it is.”

Jack frowned reaching out with his undamaged hand to cup her cheek.

“If anything had happened to you...”

Harleen opened her mouth to say something in reply when they heard a car horn. They both turned to see Alfred leaning across the car seat looking at them both with concern.

He was driving a four-door Chevy Nova, in good condition, but clearly old and not as pristine as one of the Wayne brothers' cars. If Harleen had to hazard a guess she would say this was Alfred's private vehicle. The butler rolled the window down frowning as he looked at the both of them. If Alfred was shocked by their appearance, however, he gave no indication.

“Come along,” Alfred said as he popped the passenger door open. Harleen started to get in the back, but Jack gave her a playful shove. “I'm sure Alfred would rather sit next to a beautiful woman than me any old day.”

Alfred smiled. “Quite right, Master Jack.”

Jack started laughing as he slipped into the back seat. Alfred glanced in the rear view at Jack, a slight frown on his face then he glanced at Harleen seeing the drying blood on her neck.
“Are you both alright?”

Jack nodded. “Nothing a few pain pills and some drinks wouldn't cure.”

Alfred frowned. “Not amusing, Master Jack.”

Harleen set her hand on Alfred's arm. “Jack needs stitches, but overall we're fine. It would have ended much worse if not for Jack.”

Harleen turned around. Jack looked pale in the back seat, his face illuminated only by the streetlights and the dash lights, but he gave her a wink. As Alfred drove them home she related most of what had happened. She didn't tell him about Jack losing control though, that was to be her and Jack's secret.

*

Alfred made no comment on the way home about what had happened. Once they were back at the manor, Alfred led Harleen, who had her arm around around Jack's waist, his less injured arm around her shoulders, to a small room located near the kitchens.

The room Alfred took them into was a fully stocked medical room. Harleen's mouth dropped open in surprise. There was even an examination bed where Harleen helped Jack to sit down on the edge of the bed.

“Why do you have a room like this?” Harleen looked around astounded by how well stocked the room seemed to be with all manner of medical equipment and a locked refrigeration unit, probably holding medicines that needed to be cooled.

Alfred smiled. “Raising two boys, I thought it would be...wise to be prepared for any...emergency.” Alfred washed his hands and wrists and removed some plastic gloves before opening a drawer that held sterile bandages. He unlocked another drawer that had a keypad lock and took out some vials of medicine, a syringe, needle and thread before he turned around to face Harleen and Jack.

“Alright, Master Jack, let's get that shirt and jacket off. Do you mind assisting Miss Harleen?”

Harleen nodded. “Yes of course.”

Jack grinned at her. “My very own Nurse Nightingale.”

Harleen blushed as she helped him with the buttons on his shirt after Alfred had helped with removing the jacket by taking some scissors and cutting up the sleeves to make it easier to remove. Harleen did her best not to stare at Jack's bare chest or to caress him when she removed his shirt. She had seen his chest once already, but she found herself staring anyway, especially when she pushed the fabric of the shirt off his shoulders and her fingers brushed his bare skin. Jack's eyes stayed on hers, a smile gracing his features. Once they had his clothing removed and the makeshift bandage Harleen had put on cut off, Alfred carefully examined the wound.

“Yes Master Jack,” Alfred said with his experienced eyes. “You are going to require stitches and your knuckles are going to need cleaning and bandaging. This is going to hurt. I could give you a numbing agent?” Alfred lifted an brow in inquiry, but Jack waved him off. “Nah, I'll be fine. You should check Harl...Harleen first.” Jack frowned glancing at her cut throat and torn knees.

“Jack! No! You need stitches! I'm fine.” Harleen pleaded with him.

Alfred sighed. “Both of you sit and be quiet and I will take care you both.” His tone was firmer than
what Harleen had heard the butler use before.

Jack pulled Harleen next to him on the bed pressing his lips together, but his eyes danced with humor.

“I think we both just got into trouble.”

Harleen had to laugh. Despite everything, Jack could make her laugh.

Alfred stitched up the wound on Jack's arm, requiring at least thirty stitches. Jack's knuckles were badly cut and bruised, but Alfred cleaned and bandaged them with the care of an expert. He then examined Harleen's throat, cleaning and placing a bandage across it.

“It should heal without a scar Miss Harleen or at least if it does scar, since your skin is so fair, it should be light. Once it has scabbed over I shall give you some cream that will help with preventing any scars.”

He cleaned and bandaged her knees before he stepped back looking at the two of them with the slight air of a disapproving father.

Harleen had so many questions to ask regarding Alfred's medical skills and the fact that he didn't question them too much beyond what Harleen had told him about the incident—why he didn't suggest they call the police. But she chose to let all her questions go—perhaps it would be best if she didn't know.

“I want you both to go shower then come down to the kitchen where you will both be served some hot tea and scones before bed. Now scoot, both of you. We will say nothing of this to Master Bruce.”

Jack and Harleen glanced at each other then with humor in their voices they both said at the same time. “Yes sir.”

Alfred smiled then shooed them off while he cleaned up in the medical room.

* *

Jack and Harleen walked up the stairs together. “Let me walk you to your room,” Jack said softly.

“You don't have to Jack.” Harleen smiled shyly.

“I insist.” Jack gave her one of his smiles that made her heart race. It felt strange walking with him in her now torn dress and him without a shirt. Harleen was thankful that Bruce Wayne wasn't home yet. This would have been...embarrassing seemed too mild a word, but that was exactly what it would have been like for him to catch the two of them like this...

They turned down the hall, stopping outside Harleen's bedroom door. Jack smiled taking her hand with his—relatively—uninjured left hand, lacing his fingers with hers. He stepped closer to her.

“Despite the part with you getting hurt, I enjoyed our evening Harley.” Jack smiled moving her hand up to kiss her knuckles at the same time backing her against the wall. Harleen blushed, smiling with a shy downward turn of her eyes. “Yes, despite both of us getting hurt, I enjoyed myself...even with the gala being...cut short.”

Jack pressed closer, his bare chest up against her. He brushed the tip of her nose with his, smiling as his eyes moved to gaze at her lips then back up to her eyes, which she turned up to meet his. He grin
was contagious; she smiled back at him though her heart was beating a million miles a minute. Heat rushed through her body and breathing became difficult. Jack caught his bottom lip between his teeth as he smiled at her, his eyes moving once again over her face.

“Would you mind if I kissed you Harley...” His eyes met her once more, burning, melting into her. For a moment Harleen was sure he could see the dark parts of her soul, that he knew her inside and out.

Her voice came out in a whisper. “Yes Jack.”

Jack smiled wider just before he brushed his lips against hers. He dropped her hand so that his fingers could lightly caress her cheek, the very tips of his fingers, soft, like a breeze across her jaw. The back of his fingers lightly caressed the slope of her neck, resting for a brief moment against her collar. His lips stroked over hers once, then twice, the pressure never more than a breath across her mouth. Harleen's eyes fluttered shut. The kiss was sweet, innocent, a tease of what could be...but there was a burning passion behind it that was more erotic than if he had slipped his tongue into her mouth.

Then just as swiftly, Jack stepped back from her.

“See you downstairs, Harley.” Jack's voice was a whisper, accompanied by a smile. He winked at her before strolling away to his room. Harleen felt her knees turn to jelly, wanting to slide down the wall. It took a great deal of effort for her to turn and open her bedroom door.

* *

Showering felt wonderful, the warm water stung when it hit some of the places where she had gotten little nicks and cuts, too small for bandages, but after the initial discomfort it was nice to wash up and put on some comfy clothes, a pair of yoga pants and a black sweatshirt that read “Pink Freud” on it in pink. It has been a gag gift from a friend at school, but it was a darn comfy shirt even if Freud was a complete nutter.

As she sat in front of the vanity braiding her damp hair before pulling on some thick red socks, Harleen studied herself in the mirror. She smiled softly reaching up and touching her lips, thinking about the warmth of his lips. A blush raced up her neck and over her cheeks.

His lips had been so perfectly soft, the brush of them so sweet it almost tickled. The heat from his fingers where he had stroked her jaw...she shivered blushing a deeper shade of red.

* *

When she came downstairs for the required tea and scones before bed that Alfred had ordered, as she approached the kitchen, Harleen heard Jack and Alfred speaking.

“Jack, you need to be more careful.” It was Alfred speaking. It surprised her because so far Harleen had never heard Alfred refer to Jack as anything but Master Jack. The familiarity with which he was addressing him now reminded Harleen that Alfred had been both Jack's and Bruce's only adult figure growing up, that he raised the boys after their parents’ death.

“What was I supposed to do Alfred? Let her be hurt more than she already was?” Jack sounded slightly sullen.

“No, but...Jack, you know how Bruce feels...he worries about you crossing that line again,” Alfred said softly.
Jack hissed. “Bruce is always so worried about right and wrong, black and white...order versus chaos...he just doesn't get it, does he?”

Alfred said something else, quieter, but Harleen couldn't quite hear him. She felt embarrassed having eavesdropped so she pretended to stumble making some noise so that the two men would hear her approach as she stepped into the kitchen.

Jack was sitting in his usual spot, his normally slicked back hair now damp and ruffled, curling slightly over his forehead. He wore a pair of white cashmere sweatpants. Harleen wasn’t an expert on clothing or anything, but she knew cashmere when she saw it. He also had on a plain, dark grey v-neck t-shirt that gave her a rather delightful peak at his pecs and a very enticing view of his collarbone which she found to be immensely sexy. She could feel the blush creeping over her cheeks again as the remembered feel of his lips brushing hers immediately came flooding back.

Jack grinned when he saw her then laughed. “Oh, I love the sweatshirt!”

Harleen blushed even more deeply. “Oh it's—it's a joke from a friend.”

Alfred chuckled lightly. “Well I have the tea and scones ready, as well as some pain pills for the both of you.”

Harleen opened her mouth to protest, but Jack reached out and laid his hand across hers. “No point in arguing with him. When Alfred tells you to do something, it's best to just do it.”

Harleen smiled as Alfred looked slightly affronted.

“Master Jack, now I...”

Jack laughed.

Alfred busied himself pouring tea and placing a plate of scones between Jack and Harleen then gave them each a small cup holding two pills. “I shall clean this up in the morning. I expect you both to go straight to bed.”

“Yes sir,” they both said as before and giggled as Alfred left them alone in the kitchen. They sipped their tea, nibbling on scones when Harleen said quietly, “Tonight made me realize something.”

Jack gave her a quizzical look. “What was that?”

“I need to learn to defend myself.” Harleen frowned taking a sip of her tea.

Jack tilted his head studying her. She looked over at him and nodded.

“I wasn’t any help to you tonight. I wasn't any help to myself,” she said with a heavy frown. “I want to learn to fight.”

Jack gazed at her, a smile slowly forming across his lips.

“Then starting tomorrow doctor, I’m going to teach you how to fight.”

*  

It was still dark out when a couple of detectives from the Gotham Police department stood on the dock watching as a body was pulled from the water. They had gotten the call of a body being seen floating in the water about an hour after the incident at the Gotham city art museum gala. Detective Bullock didn’t think the two things had any relation to one another, but he wasn’t ruling it out.
The team got the body on the dock. It was wrapped in some sort of tarp. Bullock walked over to see what they had, his partner, Renee Montoya walking beside him. Just as they were approaching, one of the assistants to the coroner had walked over to remove the covering from the victim's face. As soon as he did, the young man gasped and turned away vomiting.

“Well, that is just great,” Bullock muttered.

Montoya frowned. “What's up with him?”

“Man with a weak stomach doesn't need to be in this business,” Bullock grumbled as they stepped closer. That was when he saw what had made the young man lose his lunch. The body of a woman, her skin chalk white, her mouth pulled back in a rictus, sardonic grin. The skin at the edges of her smile was torn and bloody as the skin had struggled to maintain the creepy smile. The victim's eyes were wide open, almost “bugging” out of her skull.

Bullock swallowed hard, the bile in his stomach roiling at the morbid sight. Montoya held the back of her hand over her mouth as she asked of no one in particular,

“What on earth could have done that?”

Chapter End Notes

Used modified quotes from The Killing Joke and The Dark Knight (movie)
The next morning, sitting at her desk in her pink pajamas with her hair braided and falling over her shoulder, Harleen was on her desktop looking for a language translator. She didn't remember word for word what Jack had said at the diner last night, but she was hoping she could pick out some of the words. Maybe piece it together like a puzzle? She had only been at it for a few minutes when she realized this was not going to work out as easily as she thought. She didn't even know how to spell the words correctly...so she decided to work on getting Jack to write down what he had said. She wondered if he would or would he just leave her to figure it out...like a test? She stood up to stretch, parts of her body cracking that had no business cracking as she contemplated what to wear instead of trying to figure out French when she heard a knock at her door. Harleen frowned walking over. It was still a little early for anyone else to be up. She opened it only to find Jack standing there looking—delicious was the word that came to mind.

He wore a pair of tight, purple shorts, a snug white t-shirt and a pair of athletic shoes. His hair wasn't slicked back, but lay naturally, some of the locks of hair forming soft curls around his forehead as he leaned in her doorway. “Ready?”

Harleen blinked in surprise. “Uh…”

Jack’s warm gaze roamed down her body taking in the oversized t-shirt top and big pink pajama pants, her braided hair looking bed ruffled. She felt a little silly, but Jack thought she looked good enough to simply take her back to bed.

Instead he grinned. “I guess not.”

“Are you sure you should be doing anything with those stitches in your arm?” Harleen frowned, her eyes on his bandaged arm.

Jack smiled at her, the smile having a soft, almost seductive edge to it. “Don't worry Harley, I wasn't planning on anything too strenuous. So change and come on!” he said eagerly. She wondered for a moment where he got so much energy.

Jack stepped into her room grabbing her hand as he did so and leading her back inside, closing her door behind him. Harleen sighed in resignation accompanied with a soft laugh. “Okay, okay!”

Jack kissed her knuckles before letting go of her hand and flopping onto her unmade bed while she grabbed some clothing out of a drawer and walked into the bathroom.

“Did you sleep alright after last night's fun?” Jack asked picking up the sheet he was lying on and holding it to his nose. He smiled. The sheet smelled like her, sweet...desirable...Jack sighed softly. He envied the bed, to be surrounded by her scent. He pressed the sheet to his cheek for a moment longer.

From the bathroom Harleen called out. “So what're you going to teach me exactly?”

Jack laid back against her bed, his arms outstretched to his sides, moving them up and down like he was doing a backstroke. “Oh, some basic self-defense, eventually leading up to teaching you how to shoot and maybe some brawling.”

Harleen came out of the bathroom wearing a pair of black crop pants and a red racer-back tank top. She was barefoot when she walked out which Jack found to be extremely cute. He rolled onto his side, leaning his head against his hand and watched her rummaging around for a pair of socks.
had unbraided her hair, pulling it back into a high ponytail, the long blonde hair bouncing back and forth as she dropped down on her knees to pull out the bottom drawer of her dresser.

“Did you take self-defense classes?” Harleen asked while she pulled out a pair of ankle socks.

“I’ve taken several types of fighting classes; karate, kick boxing, regular boxing, judo, aikido...you name it, Bruce put me in it. I think he was hoping to ‘focus’ me, provide me with an outlet for my ‘aggression’.”

Harleen sat down on the side of the bed next to Jack while she pulled her shoes on. She stopped in the middle of tying her laces to look at Jack. “Did any of it help?”

Jack shrugged. “Not really, but I enjoyed all of it. It's nice knowing a lot of ways to kill a person.”

He said it so matter-of-factly that Harleen frowned. Jack glanced over seeing her expression and laughed. “It's not like I would...just that I can. It's kinda of funny though isn't it?

Harleen finished with her shoe and brought the other one up. “Don't you mean it's nice knowing you can defend yourself?”

Jack grinned with a lazy nod. “Oh, that too.”

*

A few minutes later, they were down in the Wayne Manor gym. The room itself was very nice, Harleen thought, open with a large picture window on one side that let in ample amounts of sunlight. The floor was a highly polished light wood (she couldn't tell if the wood was real or imitation, but she was betting it was real) and the walls were all white, some holding mirrors that took up nearly the entire wall. There was a large open space in the middle of the room with a mat, along the edges of which were weights, exercise equipment, boxing gloves—you name it, the gym in Wayne Manor had it.

Jack led Harleen over to the center where the mats were laid out. He walked to the center of the mats stretching his arms over his head which Harleen found completely distracting. Jack Wayne wasn't overly muscled, but no one would dispute that he was in great shape; she liked the lean look of him as her thoughts wandered back to the pool.

He grinned at Harleen, waving a hand and motioning her over. Harleen's unfocused gazed snapped back. Jack chuckled.

“Just follow me for right now, yeah? We're going to do some warm-ups first...not that you get to do warm-ups in real life, but for now...”

Harleen was walking around some of the equipment on her way over to him when Jack chuckled and bent over to grab his ankles, his rear facing her. Harleen had to stop a moment to catch her breath when he did that, she could see his grinning face, upside down between his legs.

She giggled to herself. “You're acting like a hormone driven teenager Harleen,” she thought to herself as she moved around so that she was facing Jack. She stretched her arms over her head, then bent down to grab her ankles feeling the pull on her leg muscles. She made a face. It had been a while since she had exercised like this...warm-ups had once been a daily part of her life. Now—she was a bit out of practice.

Jack straightened. “Okay, now stretch side to side.”
Harleen popped up just as Jack leaned sideways. She mirrored his movements doing her best not to laugh at the faces he was making at her while they stretched. Jack kept crossing his eyes or sticking his tongue out, blowing his cheeks out like a chipmunk while Harleen giggled.

* 

“So Harley, it states on your resume that you took gymnastics?” Jack asked as he began to do some jumping jacks.

Harleen blushed following suit. “You read my resume?”

Jack grinned. “Of course I did. How long ago was that?”

“A while.” She frowned switching to jogging in place.

Jack grinned. “So you know how to warm up and were just letting me feel in charge?”

Harleen blushed and shrugged which made Jack burst out laughing. “Look at you trying to stroke my ego. Alright you, I want to see some of your moves.”

Harleen stopped jogging in place and winced. “It really has been a while.”

Jack smiled stepping closer to her, his fingers stroked along her jaw. “I bet it's just like riding a bike.”

Harleen felt a shiver run down her spine at his touch. “Oh...okay, but step back off the mat.”

Jack did as she requested taking up a seat on the edge of a weight bench leaning forward with his elbows on his knees looking like a kid at the circus.

Harleen started out with doing a simple backward roll. She wasn't too sure about doing one; it really had been a while, but as soon as she had herself in position, the years of training took hold. She did the roll and came up on her feet with a bounce. Immediately all the years she had spend training in gymnastics came rushing back to her. She threw her arms back doing a couple of backward handsprings, switching to cartwheels then coming back toward Jack with a few forward handsprings.

She then slowed slightly, doing a back walkover, stretching her long legs, which had Jack catching his bottom lip between his teeth. Harleen came up on her feet again moving from the back walkover to doing a little jog, jumping up to do a split leap, then tucked and rolled. She finished with a series of aerial cartwheels and a front tuck, arching her back, her arms out as she finished.

Jack stared at her, his mouth slightly open, his eyes wide watching her in amazement. He had been prepared for her to do a few cartwheels and somersaults, but nothing like this! He leapt to his feet and started clapping his hands with enthusiasm. “That was AMAZING!!”

Harleen blushed. “Not really.”

Jack came over and wrapped his arms around her, under her rear, and lifted her off her feet, spinning her around. “That was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen!” He laughed.

Harleen laughed with him, looking down at Jack, her eyes sparkling. He was grinning up at her with the most beautiful smile. Harleen knew at that moment she would never get tired of his smile, she would do whatever it took to keep him smiling at her like that. Jack set her on her feet taking her face gently between his hands. His thumbs settled on her cheeks, his long fingers just under her ears. He held her face firmly, but tenderly, just enough pressure to keep her from pulling away, but not so much that he was hurting her at all. He gazed into her eyes for what seemed forever to Harleen,
before his eyes roamed over her face, studying the details of her features, the curve of her lips, the tiny upturn of her nose. Harleen felt as if he were memorizing her, taking in this moment and cherishing it. His eyes came back to hers, ensnaring her gaze with his own. He leaned in slowly, never averting his gaze, never closing his eyes as he pressed his lips to hers, kissing her tenderly.

Unlike the kiss last night, this time, as he held her face, he traced her lips with the tip of his tongue. Harleen's eyes fluttered close. She didn't want to close her eyes, but she simply needed to absorb the feel of his tongue, butterfly light against her lips.

She opened her mouth only slightly, letting Jack direct how much he wanted to kiss her. She felt the gentle caress of his tongue, damp against her bottom lip, like he was licking her, then just as she was leaning into him he released her and stepped back.

His smile was devilish, a teasing look which made Harleen want to stomp her foot like a child, but instead she blushed and crossed her arms over her breasts.

Jack laughed. “Come Harley, now I will show you how to defend yourself.”

Harleen shook her head with a smile. “Alright, what do I do?”

“Okay, first, let's say I came at you like this?” Jack reached for her grabbing her upper arms, his grip was like iron. Harleen struggled, but Jack easily yanked her forward against him. Wrapping a leg around the back of hers, he tripped her back. Harleen let out a gasp of surprise as she hit the mat. She struggled, pounding on Jack's chest. He was scaring her, his eyes had gone flat; the smile was there, but it was all teeth and lacked anything that was Jack in it. He grabbed her arms painfully jerking them over her head, shoving a leg between hers.

“Jack stop!!”

Jack smiled wider, but his eyes came back to her, she could see her Jack there in his eyes.

“Stop me Harley, think where my most vulnerable place is, use your natural flexibility.”

He grabbed her wrists, his long fingered hand managing to encompass her wrists by pressing them against each other. Harleen did the first thing that came to mind, the leg he didn't have pinned she twisted it up, placing it between them. She planted her foot directly over his chest and shoved him away from her with all her strength. Jack grabbed her ankle with his free hand, but she screamed and shoved with all her might knocking him off of her.

Jack did a somersault coming to his feet with a laugh. “That was pretty good, but let's see if I can teach you to stop an attack before your mugger or worse gets you to the ground.”

Harleen was panting, her heart racing. “Okay. Jack? Are you alright?” Though she asked him, she was feeling a bit shocked at the practice session already. She had not known what to expect, but it certainly wasn't...that.

His smile was beautiful. “Yes, of course...”

Jack's expression now beamed with pride. Harleen had not broke down crying, but instead had gotten angry fighting him. He admired that, though he didn't say it.

“No, when I come at you this time, I want you to snap your arm out, straight, the ball of your hand should hit my chin or my nose. Please stop short of actually breaking either of those, if you don't mind. Part of fighting—self-defense—is controlling your actions, your position.”
Jack chuckled walking slowly around her. Harleen watched him, repeating what he said. “The ball of my hand...okay.”

Jack nodded as he watched her. “The ball of your hand will have a lot more force, but also you won’t break any fingers that way. Most people make a fist incorrectly and you could break your fingers or thumb.”

Harleen nodded watching him warily. Jack walked behind her slowly, then suddenly he grabbed her shoulder and spun her around. Harleen did what Jack had told her to do. Her expression serious, Harleen’s arm shot out lightning quick, the ball of her hand, fingers curled against her upper palm just as he had shown her. She went for his nose, her blue eyes hard.

Jack laughed bringing his hand up and blocked her, catching her wrist, his smile bright with pride.

“That was great Harley!” He twisted her hand around, weaving his fingers with hers pulling her close to him, his other arm going around her waist. He brought his face close to hers, his tip of his nose touching her nose.

“You're a natural at this,” he whispered.

His voice contained so much pride in it that Harleen felt herself blush. “Thanks Jack.” She smiled shyly enjoying the warmth of his body, the fine sheen of sweat on his skin.

Harleen just couldn't get over how attractive he was...so magnetic...

Jack brought her hand up kissing her fingers before releasing her hand.

“Now I'm going to come at you from behind. I want you to use your elbow the same way you would your hand, go for the face, alright?”

“Alright Jack.” Harleen nodded as he let go of her hand stepping away from her.

She turned to follow him with her gaze.

“Don't watch me...just start walking the mat...you would not see your attacker coming up behind you so you need to pretend you don't see me.” Jack's voice was a warm whisper. She nodded and started to walk around the mat. She gazed out the window, examined the equipment. Her heart was racing knowing she was going to be attacked, but not when...she was about to ask Jack what he was doing when Jack moved, rushing up behind her and grabbing her around the waist. His arms were like a steel vice, lifting her off her feet Harleen twisted, her elbow coming up, aiming for his face, but he jerked her, leaning back so that her elbow missed his face.

“Go for the foot!” he exclaimed. “The bridge! Stomp! If you can’t reach that, kick backwards, go for the groin, kick him in the balls!”

Harleen was struggling, but Jack lifted her up off her feet when she tried to slam her foot down. She snarled trying again with her elbow, but this time she connected. Jack let out a yelp dropping her. Harleen fell on her knees wincing as the impact opened the newly formed scabs from last night.

“Oh my God, JACK!” Harleen stumbled to her feet reaching for Jack who had a hand up over his mouth and had flopped down on the mat.

Harleen was struggling, but Jack lifted her up off her feet when she tried to slam her foot down. She snarled trying again with her elbow, but this time she connected. Jack let out a yelp dropping her.

Harleen fell on her knees wincing as the impact opened the newly formed scabs from last night.

“Oh my God, JACK!” Harleen stumbled to her feet reaching for Jack who had a hand up over his mouth and had flopped down on the mat.

She pulled his hand away to see that she had bloodied his lip. “Oh my god Jack, I'm so sorry! Oh god, oh god!”
Jack started laughing. “Harley! Harley it's alright!” His lip was bloodied enough that she could see his teeth stained with blood.

But she wasn't listening. She rushed over to where some towels were folded over a hanger near the mirrors, grabbing one of them and rushing back to hold the white cloth against his lip.

“Oh Jack...” Harleen's eyes started to tear up. Jack chuckled placing his hand against hers his voice muffled against the cloth. “I'm fine. I'm proud of you though, that was great!”

Harleen sighed, but she smiled. “Thanks.”

Jack removed the towel and Harleen took his face in her hands inspecting his lip. The bottom one was split, not bad, but it would swell a little. “I guess it's not too bad,” she whispered as she examined it. Jack smiled wincing a little, but he whispered. “A kiss might help.”

Harleen blushed. Jack stuck his split lip out in a childish pout which made Harleen laugh softly.

“Alright a kiss.” She leaned forward and pressed her lips tenderly against his wounded lip. Jack slowly caressed her neck, his hand moving to cradle her head tugging her closer. His mouth opened against hers in a tender response. Harleen moaned softly; she didn't mean to, but when his tongue slid against her bottom lip then met her tongue in a sweet, slow caress, Harleen thought she would melt. This was so wrong...she would never be able to keep her treatment of him separated from her feelings for him. She hadn't just crossed the line, she had leapt over it and then did a cheer on the other side. But she just couldn't stop herself. The kiss was slow, their tongues licking against each other gradually. She could taste just a little blood on his tongue and his lips and it was...exhilarating.

He was the one to end the kiss again, pulling away from her, but he kept his hand cradling the back of her head. He smiled. “That was much better.”

Harleen blushed. She started to say something when there was a buzz and then the sound of Alfred's voice over an intercom. “Master Jack, Miss Harleen, breakfast will be done in a few minutes. If you both would like to shower and come to the kitchen.”

Jack chuckled standing up and walking over to the intercom that Harleen hadn't noticed against the wall. He hit the button. “We'll be there in a jiffy Alfred.”

“Thank you Master Jack.”

Jack smiled. “We better go shower and dress. No one wants to see Alfred pout because his breakfast was served cold. Walk you to your room?”

Harleen smiled in return. “I would love that.”

*

At the door to her room, Jack left her with a brush of his lips against hers “So, are we having a session today doc?”

Harleen frowned in confusion for a brief moment before she gasped. “Oh yes, yes we are.”

Jack laughed. “After breakfast then!”

He took off at a jog turning to wave at her. Harleen felt herself go weak in the knees...oh GOD what am I doing?!
Back in his room Jack stripped off his shirt and shorts, tossing them to the floor in the bathroom as he stepped into the room. He stripped off his underwear, leaning in to turn on the water on in the shower, taking a moment to adjust the temperature before he turned and examined his lip in the mirror. He grinned, proud of Harley. With her gymnastics moves and natural skill, she could really cause a person some damage once he had her trained. He grinned, the wound splitting a little, a drop of blood forming on his bottom lip. He gently brushed his lips, smearing the blood over them, grinning at the bright red, thinking about her kiss, the sweet taste of her tongue. He closed his eyes imagining her for a moment, naked, her long blonde hair flowing down around her shoulders, her breasts peeking through the spun gold of her hair. His body reacted to the image of her in his mind. She was...distracting...from his experiments...from everything actually...but he hoped soon he could include her...show her everything about him. It would be good to have someone to share himself with...all of him, all his secrets.

He had seen the news this morning on the local Gotham news website; they had found the body a little quicker than he anticipated. Ashley's reaction to the chemical had been quite interesting. He particularly liked the smile, but then she had expired and he had no more use for her. So into the water she went.

Jack sighed and opened his eyes. Thinking of his experiments had nearly ruined his thoughts about the good doctor...he shook himself, his thoughts returning to the image of a naked Harley, his smile returning before he got into the shower.

* 

Harleen came down for breakfast wearing a pair of red slacks and a black blouse with a lace, embroidered round neckline that showed off her neck and collar. It hung loose off her shoulders then clung to her waist. She was feeling pretty after sharing kisses with Jack, so she wore her hair down, loose and flowing over her shoulders, her make-up light and natural. She slipped on a pair of red heels then made her way into the kitchen. The delicious smell of coffee, blueberries, eggs and bacon greeted her as she stepped in.

Her heart skipped several beats when she saw Jack waiting for her. Alfred was setting a plate with muffins on the counter that had become hers and Jack's 'place' for their meals. Today Jack had dressed in a beautiful silver on light grey tartan three-piece suit, with a white shirt and a tie of black and grey checkers. His hair was slicked back again. His lip still looked swollen, the cut now dark with dried blood, but it didn't look quite as bad as it had earlier. He looked good enough to eat she thought. Jack smiled which made the rapid beat of her heart increase two-fold. He grinned at her patting the chair next to him.

“Alfred has made us a huge breakfast this morning, which means he must be in a good mood.”

Jack grinned at Alfred who blushed with a slight shake of his head.

“Master Jack is not mistaken, my mood is quite good this morning.” Alfred turned from the oven and set a plate of bacon and thick sausages on the table. (Alfred was in a good mood, despite the situation in which Jack and Harleen returned home, he had been happy to see the way the two of them interacted together. It gave him hope for the future of Jack, but also that maybe one of the young men would carry on the name of Wayne. Alfred feared that Bruce's obsession with Gotham and righting the wrongs of the past would send that eldest brother down a path of destruction...perhaps there was hope for Jack still.)

Jack laughed. “Alfred was thrilled to see you socked me in the lip. Made his day!”
Harleen blushed. “I'm so sorry...I mean it was an accident Alfred.”

The butler chuckled. “Sometimes that young man does need a smack.” Harleen and Jack laughed.

Harleen took her seat next to Jack and frowned with wide eyes, staring at the size of the sausages. “Those are huge!”

Jack laughed. “What every man wants a woman to say!”

Harleen blushed covering her mouth to stop the girlish giggled that bubbled forth while Alfred, clearly trying not to laugh scolded him.

“Master Jack, really! Must Miss Harleen box you in the mouth again?”

Jack grinned wrinkling his nose at Alfred. “She can smack me in the mouth anytime she likes.” He winked at Harleen before he continued. “We are being treated to an almost traditional English breakfast, well...albeit with an American influence since it is minus the baked beans.”

Harleen made a face. “Beans?”

Alfred was busy setting down a plate with round slices of tomatoes, slightly blackened on one side.

Jack giggled. “Yep, but Alfrie knows how much I hate beans.”

“Yes, Master Jack has always been difficult about eating his beans.” Alfred smiled just a little setting down plates of fried eggs in front of each of them.

“Are fried eggs alright Miss Harleen? I can make you something else if you wish,” Alfred offered.

“Oh no, this is perfect! Thank you Alfred.” Harleen grinned at him. Alfred smiled in return and gave her a nod turning back to bring the pot of coffee over, setting it down on the counter with Jack and Harleen, placing it on a mat next to the cream and sugar that were already there. He went to the large refrigerator pulling out butter and jam, next to a plate of toasted bread, before laying out the silverware for the two of them.

“There, you two eat up.” Alfred smiled.

“Aren't you going to join us Alfred?” Jack asked with a slight frowned.

“No, no Master Jack. I will be back to clean up. I have a few things I would like to take care of before the post arrives.” Alfred said as he removed his apron. “Please enjoy your breakfast.”

With that Alfred left the two of them alone.

Jack smiled with a sigh. “That man is always busy.”

“He cares a lot about you and Bruce doesn't he?” Harleen asked as she poured herself some coffee. Jack picked up the butter-knife and started to butter some of the toast, putting a slice on Harleen's plate.

“Alfred...Alfred is a good man,” Jack murmured putting sausages and some bacon on both their plates.

Jack started using his knife and fork to cut up his eggs. “So doc, what are we going to do today for our session? More music? Maybe some dancing? I would love some dancing.” Jack waggled his eyebrows at her.
Harleen blushed and laughed softly cutting off a slice of sausage.

“I thought we might do a Rorschach test.”

Jack sat up straight. “Oh, is that the one with the ink blots?”

Harleen chuckled. “Yes it is. There’s a lot that goes into interpreting Rorschach tests, but I’m just going to do it for a quick reaction...just to see how your mind works.”

Jack giggled. “So you can see if I’m borderline crazy or just plain crazy? That my aggressiveness is just a personality defect or brought on by my issues in my childhood? Or maybe you just want to see how my mind works?”

Harleen pressed her lips together. “My version is not that deep Jack. No, this is just an evaluation of emotional and personality characteristics.”

Jack leaned toward her. “Oh is it?” He leaned his chin on the back of his hand that held the fork.

Harleen giggled just as Bruce Wayne stepped in. “There you are Jack, Dr. Quinzel; Alfred said you were having breakfast.”

Jack frowned looking up from his breakfast. “Oh don't tell me there is another party after that disaster at the gala last night? By the way, where were you? Saw you fall off the stage then you didn't come home last night.”

Bruce frowned. “I'm fine, just had to deal with the police and some of the patrons...I stayed with...a friend. Anyway, that is not why I'm here. I wanted to let you know that Vicki Vale called this morning, she is wanting to do an article on the two of us. I agreed.”

Jack made a gagging sound. “Vicki Vale? Why on earth did you agree to her interviewing us?”

Bruce frowned more (if that were possible. Harleen was beginning to think that Bruce Wayne never smiled.)

Bruce continued. “After last night we could use the good publicity and she has agreed to run an article on one of the charities that Wayne Enterprises sponsors in exchange for an interview with us.”

Jack made a face. “Fine, but only if Dr. Quinzel gets to be there.”

Jack made the statement without looking at his brother, instead shoving a forkful of egg in his mouth.

Bruce glanced at Harleen. “I don't think advertising that you have a...”

Jack smiled. “It won't be, the public already thinks she's my girlfriend after last night. Didn't you see the gossip columns this morning? There were pictures of everyone...including me and the good doctor. Speculation is running rampant!!”

Jack put his hands up, thumbs touching like he was framing a picture. “Who is Jack Wayne's paramour? Will the youngest Wayne brother find love...unlike his brother?” Jack wagged his eyebrows at his brother, grinning at Bruce. “Might be better for the Wayne reputation if they think Harleen is my girl and not my doctor.”

Bruce sighed. “Fine. Ms. Vale will be coming Monday night along with her camera man to interview us, tour the house, take a few pictures...under supervision. Just promise me to be on your best behavior.”
Jack made a face, crossing his eyes. “Yes sir. Geez...meetings, galas...dinner...I don't know if I can handle all this Bruce. I might snap!”

Bruce narrowed his eyes. “Not funny Jack.”

Jack grinned. “Oh I don't know...I think it's a little funny.”

Bruce looked confused for a moment. He finally realized Jack's lip was busted. “Did that happen last night?”

Jack laughed. “No, our doctor here did that this morning while I was teaching her self-defense.”

Bruce frowned, looking like he wanted to say more, but let the matter drop instead.

Bruce sighed and glanced at Harleen. “Do you mind not stating anything in regards to your treatment of my brother to Ms. Vale while she is here. I know she will learn everything there is about you and she is bound to speculate, but if you and my brother can keep our arrangement...quiet, I would appreciate it.”

Harleen nodded. “Yes, of course. I know what ought to remain private, have no worries, Mr. Wayne.”

Bruce nodded his thanks giving Jack a last look. “Be good.”

Jack snorted on a laughed. “Yes, Dad!”

*

Bruce made his way down to the Batcave, leaving his brother eating breakfast with Dr. Quinzel. Even though Bruce was sure Jack would not follow him, he was careful. He didn't want his brother to know about his nighttime activities.

Alfred was already down in the cave making some repairs to Bruce's batsuit. Alfred glanced over at Bruce. “The damage the Royal Flush Gang did during their escape is not bad sir, easily repaired, though I think we might want to consider lining the suit with something a little less...tearable?”

Bruce frowned. “I don't want to make it too heavy Alfred. I need to be flexible.”

“Yes sir, but that new material Mr. Fox was working on...I read through the reports...I think it might be pliable and light enough to line the suit with...”

Bruce nodded not really listening as he sat down in front of his computers. Alfred frowned glancing toward Bruce. He had suggested more than once that Bruce share this 'obsession' with Jack, but Bruce had flatout refused stating that Jack's delicate mental state would not be able to handle this...Alfred wasn't sure he agreed, but it was not his secret to tell.

“What is it sir?” He watched Bruce, noting that the younger man's expression was grim.

“Did you read about the strange body they found by the docks last night?” Bruce brought up the article on the computer.

Alfred nodded. “I did. The woman was found with a horrible smile on her face, frozen as it were...”

Bruce nodded. “It has me worried.”

“How sir...I mean beyond the apparent.”
“It's strange enough that it has me worried there will be more...the Royal Flush Gang is only one of many new types of criminals coming into Gotham. And this...it just feels like a...beginning.” Bruce's voice sounded distracted as he accessed the GCPD's computer files.

Alfred's expression became solemn. “Do be careful Master Bruce.”

Bruce smiled just a little. “I always am Alfred.”

Alfred chose to refrain from making the obvious rebuttal to Master Bruce's statement.

* 

Since Jack insisted on a dance today, they went to the ballroom for their session. Harleen had seen it on the tour when she first arrived and it was just as impressive seeing it a second time.

“When was the last time your brother held a party in here?” Harleen asked as she stepped out onto the polished floor. The ballroom was big, not so large that it couldn't hold a large crowd and lose it's cozy feeling, but large enough that it could hold at least a hundred people. The floor was a stunning amber marble, the walls a mix of old wood, highly polished and walls painted a deep almost rose color. The chandelier that hung from the ceiling was amazing. Harleen stared up at it. Jack noticed her looking up and smiled.

“My grandmother had that imported from Turkey. At least that's the story I've heard.”

“It's gorgeous!” Harleen walked around in a circle as she looked up at it.

Jack walked over to her, wrapping his arms around her from behind.

“It's not nearly as gorgeous as you,” he whispered against her ear.

Harleen closed her eyes leaning back against him, her arms outstretched. “Jack...do you mean that?”

He laughed turning her around in his arms. “Yes, yes I do.” He grinned. “Now dance with me.”

“I thought...” She started, but Jack placed the finger of his other hand against her lips.

“Shh...don't be my doctor right now.”

“What am I Jack? I don't know anymore,” she whispered softly against his finger.

Jack grinned sliding his finger along her lips. She giggled pressing her lips together as the caress made her lips tingle.

“You Harley...are mine.” He took her hand and with a laugh started to prance with her around the ballroom floor. Harleen started laughing as Jack twirled her around leaping and swinging, the two of them laughing together. Jack sang just a little in his pleasant voice.

“...For dancing Soon becomes romancing When you hold a girl in your arms that you've never held before...”

Harleen let herself go, let herself enjoy this, the two of them laughing and dancing until Jack finally stopped in the middle of the ballroom. He pulled her close, wrapping his arm snugly around her waist, his eyes steamy as he looked down at her in his arms. He leaned toward her, his lips brushed against hers, a sweet tender caress. He dropped her hand, wrapping his other hand around her back, his hand sliding up into her hair. “I like your hair down Harley...like spun gold.”
Harleen stared back at him. His eyes wandered over her face, his smile softer. When his eyes came back to hers Harleen saw something there, possessiveness. She recognized it as a doctor, but she found herself pulled into that gaze, feeling the same—possessive. Jack was more than her patient...he belonged to her.

Jack spread his fingers in her hair licking her lips tenderly, the very tip of his tongue just barely tracing the form of her mouth. Harleen moaned softly, opening her mouth, her tongue meeting his...Jack stroked her tongue with his own before he plunged his tongue into mouth tugging her up tight against him. Harleen grabbed onto him, her fingers balling up the expensive fabric of his suit in her fists. This time his kiss was hard, demanding, passionate. Harleen groaned.

The kiss seemed to last forever. Harleen held onto Jack, her lifeline, keeping her grounded as his kiss carried her away, made her knees feel weak. When he finally pulled his lips away from hers, he smiled. “I’m going to take you out tonight. Dinner and dancing. Since you are mine...let's give Vicki Vale something to talk about eh?”
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes

Jack grabbed Harleen's hand. “First, we are going shopping! The place I'm taking you for dinner has a very specific dress code.”

“What kind of dress code?” Harleen asked as Jack practically dragged her out of the ballroom and headed toward the garage. Jack was grinning from ear to ear while holding her hand, his long fingers laced with hers.

“Let's just say that it's very “time” specific.” Jack chuckled.

* 

In no time, Jack had dragged her into the garage. He tugged her down to the left end of the huge space. The handful of times she had been in here, this section had remained in darkness. On this end of the garage, there were several very unique cars, probably custom-made vehicles, Harleen realized. There were also a few vehicles that she couldn't see because, even while in the garage, they were covered in tarps. Jack led her along, skirting behind the cars, flipping on lights as he went until they were near the very back.

“You are going to love this car!” Jack said excitedly. “Bruce bought it for me for my twenty-first birthday. One of the few gifts that I think Bruce actually picked out himself. Usually Alfred would buy the gifts for him.”

With the flair of a game show host, Jack pulled the tarp off to reveal the most gorgeous car Harleen had ever seen. “Ta Da!!” he announced with a wide smile.

Harleen gasped when she saw the car. Never had she seen any automobile as gorgeous as this one.

“What is it?” Harleen asked reaching out to run her fingertips along its smooth side. Jack grinned with pride.

“It's a 1930's Screaming Purple Mercedes Exotic GT racer convertible.” Jack stroked the car. “Bruce had it built just for me...black leather interior, the purple paint job was specially done because Bruce knows purple has always been my favorite color. He really surprised me with this...” Jack's voice trailed off. She could hear the emotion in it, a slight tremble of feeling, but then he shook himself.

Jack turned toward her where she stood on the other side of the car. He grinned and hurried over to open the door for her. He bowed slightly at the waist, his hand pressed to his chest. “My lady.”

Harleen blushed and slipped into the seat.

* 

Within moments, they were heading into Gotham, the air blowing through their hair. Jack was laughing with delight as he sped down the road, Harleen laughing along with him. She had a scarf tied around her head to prevent her long hair from whipping into her face, her hand on the top of her head holding it in place. They drove into Gotham, the sun shining down in a soft hazy light heading not to the downtown shopping area, but instead they made their way to the east side of Gotham.

Gotham's east side had once been one of those sections of the city that had belonged to street gangs, prostitutes and a wide variety of crime, but in recent years, younger, successful people had been moving into the area and reclaiming it. Nowadays there were an eclectic collection of stores, shops,
specialty stores, along with a few restaurants and old houses that had been either turned into dining establishments or artist's apartments. Some of the older apartment buildings had been revitalized as well, providing artist lofts, studio apartments, and a wide variety of living spaces. The area wasn't as high-end as downtown Gotham, but it was definitely on it's way to becoming a haven for the artists and musicians of Gotham City.

Jack drove down the main street, the two of them receiving a lot of backwards looks as they drove by. Jack turned left into an alley that led to a small parking lot. The back of the building, which was painted a rose color, the trim in bright white, held a sign that read “Parking for The Attic”. Jack pulled in turning off the engine.

“You are going to love this place. I've actually acquired a couple of suits here as well as some other odds and ends.” Jack grinned.

Harleen looked shocked. “Really?” She had thought Jack only wore expensive designer suits, not any second-hand clothing.

Jack nodded as if reading her mind. “Yep, this isn't a “second hand” clothing store in the traditional sense; this is a high-end vintage resale shop. Milano has procured me some really rare finds. I just know he will have something for you.” Jack wrinkled his nose in amusement, opening the door for her and taking her hand as they entered.

* The inside of the store was a surprise. When Harleen heard “vintage” she usually thought of secondhand clothing stores that smelled like mothballs, but this place was not even close. There probably wasn't a mothball anywhere.

The walls were painted a rich gold color. Heavily framed pictures from vintage fashion magazines covered the walls, along with several long mirrors. There was a row of vintage chandeliers that ran the length of the shop providing a twinkling display of lights. And gorgeous clothing was everywhere! Rows of exquisite shoes, hats, gloves, jewelry were displayed throughout the shop. As Harleen took a closer look, she could see that everything here was designer, and all of it looked to date between the 1920’s to the 1950’s! There was a gorgeous deep red silk 1950’s sleeveless, knee length prom dress, a 1920’s beaded flapper dress in light green silk chiffon and gold lame. Over in a corner she saw a 1930's white satin wedding dress...it was just an amazing assortment of beautiful period clothing. She noticed a men's section containing suits, all from the same periods displayed in the women's section of the shop. It was almost like walking into a museum, except here you could touch and wear the outfits!

As the two of them stepped further into the shop, Harleen saw an older gentleman behind a heavy wooden counter reading a book. He was dark skinned, wearing white slacks, a white vest matched with a blush colored shirt, yellow tie and a red, yellow and blue plaid blazer. He had on a pair of perfectly round, thick black framed glasses, sporting a white beard and equally white hair. He reminded Harleen of a barbershop singer. When he glanced up and saw Jack, the man's face broke out into a huge smile.

“Jack Wayne!! Long time no see, son! Where have you been hiding?” The man put his book down and strolled over to pull Jack into an embrace, smacking the younger man's back.

Jack laughed. “Sorry Milano! But it's good to see you too!”

Milano grinned stepping back, his hands on Jack's shoulders. “Now what on earth happened to your lip?”
Jack chuckled. “Oh nothing, just a beautiful woman.”

Milano laughed. “Ah, women. Now that I have you here, I have this vest I’ve been holding aside on the off chance you would come in sometime. It’s purple Cavalier tapestry vest, perfect for you! Just perfect.” The man named Milano lightly thumped Jack on the chest.

Jack laughed. “Maybe later Milano, today I am here to buy a dress for my lady.”

Milano blinked in surprise. “Your lady?”

Jack put an arm around Milano's shoulders and turned him, his right arm going out to show Harleen. “Milano, let me introduce you to my lady, Harley Quinn. The one who popped me in the lip,” he added proudly.

Harleen smiled and gave a little wave. “Hello.”

Milano's eyes widened. “Well, well....” He smiled as he walked over and took Harleen's hand. “Good afternoon, beautiful.” He tilted his head down and lifted her hand to kiss the back of her hand.

Harleen blushed glancing at Jack who was shaking his head in amusement. “Milano, Harley here needs a dress for tonight. We are going to Maxim's Revisited tonight for dinner and dancing.”

Milano gasped. “Perfection Jack! Let us see what I have in stock for such a delightful woman.”

Milano placed two fingers alongside his jaw and studied Harleen. Harleen felt a bit odd standing there while Milano stared at her, his dark brown eyes roaming over her. She felt like a piece of meat being evaluated, but Jack grinned and winked at her from just behind Milano, which helped her relax. After another couple of moments, Milano smiled and stuck his finger up in the air with a flair. “I have the perfect dress!”

The older man hurried off, but returned momentarily from the back room, carrying a gorgeous black and red dress.

“This is a 1937 Charles James designed dress. James was an American designer known for his structured aesthetic—very beautiful.”

Milano held the dress up running his hand down it as he described it for her. “The top is black silk-rayon velvet, the skirt, red-silk satin with these structural accents to emphasize the hips along with black silk crepe. It's cut to accentuate the figure while the slim straps highlight the lady's slim neck and shoulders along with the sloped V-line of the back. I believe this is a perfect choice for Miss Quinn. You have that gorgeous hair of yours piled up so that your neck is on display...those creamy shoulders, you will be the bell of the ball.” Milano grinned, pleased with himself.

Jack stepped over and took the dress from Milano, holding it up and inspecting it with a critical eye. Then with a wide smile at Harleen he asked, “Would you try this on for me?”

Harleen blushed. “Of course.”

Milano led her to the back where he had a set of three dressing rooms; Jack followed behind carrying the dress.

Milano held the door open for her. “While you are trying this on dear, I have a darling pair of black satin gloves that will match perfectly with this dress.”
Harleen blushed. “Thank you.”

Milano smiled taking the dress from Jack. “You should go and see the new hats that came in Jack, there are several there that I think you will like.”

Jack grinned. “Ah, you know me so well.” Jack’s eyes settled on Harleen for a moment. “Call me once you have the dress on—I would like to see it.”

Harleen nodded. “Of course Jack.”

With that Jack gave a jaunty salute and started to walk in the direction of the hats.

Milano watched him go for a moment before he spoke again. “You are a very lucky woman Harley. You must be something very special if Jack has taken to you.”

Harleen smiled, a rosy blush spreading along her cheeks. “Well, he's something very special to me, too.”

Milano nodded with a smile. “Good. Well, I'll be back with those gloves.”

*

Jack heard Harleen shut the dressing room door. He smiled thinking about her in the dress while he causally examined some ties on his way over to the hats. He had just picked up a tie, yellow and green striped, colors that that reminded him of clowns, but he also the thought that Bruce would hate it—not conservative enough—when something caught his attention from the corner of his eye.

Jack turned. It was in the intimates section, women's period bras and panties, but what had his attention was a simple red nightie. It was see-thru, with thin spaghetti straps and ruffles with a bow between the breasts. The bottom of the nightie had matching ruffles with tiny red bows of satin running around the bottom. The negligee would hit his Harley just below her hips. Jack's eyes widened, a slow smile spreading across his lips as he imagined her wearing it.

He simply had to have it for her.

“Milano?” Jack called.

“Yes Jack?” Milano's voice came first before the older man stepped around from behind a rack of clothes.

Jack pointed at the silken negligee. “I must have that.”

Milano smiled with a twinkle in his eyes. “Ahh...a perfect choice!

*

Once alone, Harleen very carefully put the dress on. She was surprised, but the darn thing fit like a glove! She looked at herself in the mirror that was on the wall in the dressing room. The dress was gorgeous, despite its age; it was well cared for, looking almost brand new. She slipped the straps up over her shoulders and then started to struggle to reach the zipper. It took several minutes of her dancing around in a circle, struggling to reach the zipper while at the same time being extra careful with the vintage dress. After a few minutes, Harleen had to admit she needed help. With a sigh she opened the dressing room door and peeked out.

Milano was nowhere to be seen. There were no other customers in the shop, so Harleen stepped out
of the dressing room looking around. “Jack?” No answer.

She called again, a little louder. “Jack?”

Jack’s head popped up from behind a rack of hats, one on his head. Harleen smiled when she saw him. He was wearing a wide-brimmed fedora that had the edges upturned.

The hat was made in dark grey with a black band. Jack ran his fingers along the brim. “What ya think doll face? Going to pair this with a period suit. It's by Huckel.” “I think that will look amazing on you Jack,” Harleen said softly, then looking around again, she motioned him closer. Jack waltzed over, the hat cocked at a crooked angle. “What can I do for ya toots?” he said with a grin winking at her.

Harleen laughed and turned around to show her back to him. “I can’t quite reach the zipper.”

When she turned around, showing her back to him, Jack stared. Her back was so smooth, the sides of the fabric having fallen aside to reveal her pale creamy flesh. Jack stepped closer reaching out toward her like a thirsty man and Harley was the source of his salvation, his life...Jack's hand trembled for a moment. He had seen her skin before in the bathing suit, but there was something even more erotic around the dress falling open to reveal her back.

Jack had never been with a woman...never felt the desire, never found anyone that he felt that kind of connection to...that he wanted to share himself with in that kind of intimacy. But Harley was different. He wanted her on a level he had never wanted anyone before...she was...He didn't simply need her, it was so much more than that...he wanted to share himself with her, not just physically, but mentally, emotionally.

Jack stepped closer, his eyes never leaving her back. He reached out and slowly, lightly ran the back of his knuckles along her exposed flesh. He traced the smoothness of her back, a tender caress down her spine feeling the way her back curved down to her hips.

Harleen gasped softly. The brush of his knuckles was feather light, but it still sent goosebumps racing over her skin while at the same time burning through her to her very soul. Harleen closed her eyes while Jack's knuckles traced her spine as far down as the unzipped dressed allowed.

“You're not wearing a bra.” His breath was hot against her ear when he spoke sending tremors through her.

“I took it off when I put the dress on, the straps were showing at my shoulders,” she whispered back. Jack chuckled softly, his knuckles disappearing from her spine to be replaced by his fingers at her neck. He traced the smooth slope of her neck, a hand on either side. Harleen's breath was shaky when his fingers glided over the soft skin of her neck, the caress causing heat to pool in her breasts and groin. She could feel the heat of his body behind her, the shift of the fabric of his clothing against her bare back. His fingertips shifted to brush along her shoulders, sliding forward to caress the line of her collarbone. Jack leaned in, bringing his hand around to brush her hair aside, gently stroking her thick locks over one shoulder just before he leaned down and pressed his lips against the nape of her neck.

The kiss burned against her skin. Harleen leaned back closing her eyes letting herself focus only on the feel of his hands and lips.

Jack's kisses glided along the nape of her neck burning a trail across her shoulder, his fingers squeezed against her skin where his hands hand moved to grip her shoulders.
He worked his way back up her throat, pressing his mouth at the tender place just under her ear. His tongue snaked out to lick her ear when they were interrupted by someone clearing their throat.

Jack looked up. Harleen couldn't see it, but she felt the pressure of his fingers on her shoulders, heard the flatness of his voice.

“What Milano?”

The older man frowned taking a unintended step back. He was holding a pair of black gloves in his hand. “Ah, you two should get a room if you're going to be playing that sort of game. Bad for business if you're doing it in the middle of the sales floor.”

Jack laughed then, releasing Harleen. “Sorry Milano.”

Jack stepped back from her, but then she felt him take a hold of the zipper and pull it up the back of the dress.

“There you go Harley. The dress fits as if was made just for you.” He walked around her to get a better look.

Smiling, Harleen did a little spin in the dress.

Milano grinned. “Ah, I knew you would look perfect in that. Your figure is stunning! Isn't it Jack?”

Jack grinned his eyes devouring Harleen. “You are perfection,” he said to her with feeling.

Harleen blushed. “Thank you.”

Jack stared at her for a moment more before he clapped his hands. “Alright, I'll take the dress, gloves; do you have some shoes in her size that would go with the dress? Oh and hose, period hosiery too?”

Milano laughed. “Of course I do Jack!”

“Why all the period stuff Jack?” Harleen asked as Jack came back behind her to unzip the dress. He slowly pulled the zipper back down, then ran the backs of his fingers up her smooth back sending goosebumps racing across her skin again.

“Because where we are going you will want to be dressed just right,” he said, his lips close to her ear before he quickly placed a kiss on her shoulder and stepped away. “Go change. I'll take you out to lunch, then home!”

*

Jack arranged for Milano to have everything delivered to the manor before 6 pm. Their dinner date was to start at 8 pm. But for now Jack decided he was taking Harleen out for lunch.

He took her hand as they left the shop. “I know a perfect place for a light lunch.”

He kissed her hand before handing her into the car. They drove a few blocks away until Jack found what he was looking for and pulled into a spot in front of a cafe. The cafe's name was placed across the top of a burgundy and gold awning.

“Nicoletto's Cafe”

Jack grinned. “This is perfect!”
He hopped out of the convertible without opening the door and jogged around taking Harleen's hand as he opened the door for her. The two of them were getting quite a few looks; a few people were even snapping pictures of them and the car. Jack's clearly expensive suit and busted lip probably had tongues wagging and if anyone recognized him it would not be long before someone from the Gotham press showed up to take pictures.

Jack strolled inside holding her hand for everyone to see and stopped at the counter looking over the menu that was displayed on a large chalkboard. “What looks good to you, my sweet?”

Harleen felt herself blush. He had called her his sweet? She distracted herself from the eruption of joy in her chest to examine the menu. She frowned in thought as she read each item.

“Mm...maybe the spinach fettuccine with sauteed cremini mushrooms?”

Jack laughed. “Peachy!” He kissed her cheek before he stepped up to the register.

“Two spinach fettuccine with sauteed cremini mushrooms! And a bottle of whatever Sauvignon Blanc you have here.”

The young woman at the register, thick black hair and brown eyes, blushed at Jack. Harleen knew how charming and handsome he was...she couldn't really blame the young woman.

“Yes sir. If you would like to find a seat, I will have one of our waiters bring your meal to you and your friend.”

Jack gave a little bow. “Thank you my dear.”

*

They ended up sitting outside under a large red umbrella in surprisingly comfortable wicker chairs. Their lunch was brought out fairly quickly along with the wine and two glasses. Jack popped the cork and poured some into Harleen's glass smiling at her the whole time.

“This is really nice Jack.” Harleen smiled wrapping the pasta around her fork.

Jack grinned in return. “It is. Never wanted to take anyone out before, but you—I want the world to see you Harley.”

Harleen blushed glancing down at her plate when a woman called. “Jack? Jack Wayne?”

Jack turned to glance over his shoulder. Harleen couldn't see his face, but she could tell by the set of his shoulders that he was not pleased.

“I thought that was you Jack Wayne.” The woman that walked over exuded sex. She was simply gorgeous with long silver-white hair that flowed down her shoulders and startlingly blue eyes. She was dressed in a sleeveless, v-necked, cream-colored crepe dress that highlighted her figure and legs, along with a pair of black Prada t-strapped studded sandals.

She stopped at their table cocking a hip, placing her hand on it, her small white purse hanging from her wrist as she smiled at Jack.

The woman gave Harleen a nod that stated “Yes I see you there but you are not important” as she turned her attention back to Jack. “You never returned my calls Jackie.”

Jack sipped his wine. “Silver St. Cloud, let me introduce you to Harley Quinn.”
Silver pressed her lips together turning to smile at Harleen. “Pleasure to meet you Miss Quinn.”

“Pleasure you meet you Miss St. Cloud.” Harley gave St. Cloud a little smile and Silver laughed. “Oh call me Silver please. So are you dating Jack?”

Harleen glanced toward Jack who smiled. No beating around the bush with this one, Harleen thought, keeping her thoughts from manifesting in her expression.

Jack spoke to Silver, though his eyes were on Harleen. “Yes, we are actually. I'm sure you'll hear all about it when Ms. Vicki Vale does her interview later this week.”

At first it seemed Silver didn't hear everything Jack had said as she smiled.

“Well, keep a tight hold of him if you can because I decided month ago that Jack Wayne would be mine.” Silver giggled then frowned, “What did you say Jack?”

Jack smiled. “Bruce is allowing Ms. Vale to tour the mansion and interview the two of us.”

Silver stood up straight crossing her arms over her chest, her bottom lip sticking out. “Seriously? And Bruce hasn't bothered to tell me?”

Jack snorted. “Now why on earth would he tell you?” He twirled some noodles on his fork without looking up at her. “I mean, it's not like you mean anything to him. It's not like you actually mean anything to anyone, Silver.”

Jack finally looked up at her, but he was smiling, a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. “Look Silver, I have neither the time nor the crayons to explain this to you, but you know...I'm gonna try. Do you really think you were important to him? Isn't that why you tried to seduce me? Figured you would try to either make him jealous or at least to get one Wayne brother and hopefully some of that Wayne fortune or Wayne Enterprises backing on your side? But oh boohoo, poor Silver St. Cloud, not as attractive as she thought she was...nor as interesting. She'll never know which one it was that made Bruce dump her or made me not want anything to do with her...or it might be both. Now, I'm eating lunch with my girl. So please go. ” With that Jack turned away from her.

Harleen quickly grabbed her wine glass to try to cover up the laugh.

Silver stared at Jack in shock. That was when a camera clicked. The three of them turned to see Nellie Majors from the Gotham Herald writing on an Ipad along with her photographer Wilbur Eagle who was getting ready to take another picture.

Miss Majors smiled. Her strawberry blonde hair was cut in a short bob, just under her ears, the bands were high and perfectly symmetrical making her look a great deal like a blonde Vulcan to Harleen's eyes. She was wearing a bright blue pencil skirt and white jacket, while Wilbur with his short curling hair, baggy navy slacks and white polo reminded Harleen of a golfer.

“So Jack Wayne, can I get a comment about the lady you are dining with?” Nellie grinned. Jack rolled his eyes, but Harleen could see he was grinning. “No, not now Nellie dear, eating,” Jack said without looking back at her.

Silver St. Cloud glared at Jack with a hissed, “This isn't over,” before she stomped off. Wilbur followed her with his camera, very interested in the sway of her hips. Someone apparently reported Nellie Majors for disturbing guests, because a few minutes later a man in a black suit came to escort her away from Jack and Harleen.

Jack took a sip of his wine. “Sorry about that.”
Harleen smiled. “You were fine.”

Jack smiled. “If you hadn’t guessed, Miss St. Cloud there once dated my brother and when Bruce inevitably dumped her, she came after me...I never was interested in her.” Jack shook his head taking a sip of wine. “Woman like that only wants one of two things. Money or power...or both.”

Jack set his glass down to gaze at Harleen. “She could never compare to you.”

Harleen blushed.

* 

Jack drove them home. Harleen had completely forgotten about the session she was supposed to do with Jack, instead she was focused on tonight.

* 

The clothing arrived right on time along with the hose, shoes, garter belts, strapless bra, even perfume! Everything came in separate large boxes tied with red ribbon. It was almost like Christmas!

Harleen untied each box examining the contents. From one of the boxes she held up the nylon hose. They were not made of period materials, clearly modern, but they were made to look and wear like hose from the 1930's; there was even a seam down the back of each leg. The garter belt was black with tiny red roses on it and came with a matching strapless bra and panties.

The shoes were lovely with an art deco feel to them, she thought as she held them up. They had a Spanish heel, t-strapped black leather with red piping.

The last thing she removed was the negligee. It was lovely. Harleen blushed when she held it up. But no sooner she had to put it aside on the bed than there was a knock at her door. Thinking it might be Jack, she opened it only to be greeted by a young woman. The woman looked like she stepped right out of a rockabilly video with the black 1950's hair, a red and white polkadot dress, except she wore combat boots. The girl smiled. “You Harley Quinn?”

“Yes?” Harleen said with her eyebrows lifted in confusion.

“Jack Wayne hired me to do your hair and make-up. I'm Alice—nice to meet ya.” Alice picked up the make-up kit at her side and shoved her way into the room. Harleen frowned, but a slow amused smile crossed her features. Just like for the gala, Jack hired someone to do her hair and make-up. Now she was really curious about this place where he was taking her.

* 

It only took Alice forty-five minutes to get Harleen's hair combed back at the forehead, the rest of her hair falling around her shoulders in soft ringlets. Her make-up was done spot on for the period with shimmering pink eye-shadow, her lips painted in a cupid-bow with a deep maroon lipstick, the blush was applied in a triangle on her cheeks and the stylist painted Harleen’s nails to match her lipstick.

“Now for a real 30's look I would give you pencil thin eyebrows, but since this is only for tonight I'll skip that.” Alice grinned. “There—you’re ready to go!”

Harleen looked at herself in the mirror. She did indeed look like she just walked out of a glamorous party from the 1930's.

“Wow,” Harleen murmured which made Alice grin.
“Well I gotta go. You two have fun!” Alice gathered up her things and with a jaunty wave took off.

* 

Harleen made her way downstairs after Alice had left, but instead of finding Jack in the entrance way she found Alfred. He smiled brightly when he saw her. “Miss Harleen, you look stunning.”

She blushed. “Thank you Alfred.”

The older man smiled taking her gloved hand and wrapping it around his arm as he led her to the front door. “Master Jack is outside. He is smoking so I insisted he wait out there for you if he insisted on lighting a cigarette.”

Harleen laughed lightly.

Alfred opened the door and there was Jack dressed in an iconic gangster suit, with the wide brim hat, a double breasted jacket with peaked lapels over a vest with lapels and flat front trousers with a flared leg ending in a cuff. The suit was black with very thin pale pink pinstripes. He had a cigarette between his teeth, his hair slicked back. When he saw her, his eyes widened and he grinned with a show of teeth.

“Well, well, hey there doll, you ready for a night on the town?” Jack grinned waggling his eyebrows.

Alfred chuckled and whispered to Harleen. “Master Jack always did like dress-up.”

The older man took her hand and handed her to Jack. “You two have a wonderful evening.”

Jack grinned taking out his cigarette. “Don't ya worry Pops. I'll have her home at a decent hour.”

Alfred laughed shaking his head as he headed back into the manor.

Harleen giggled at Jack who surprised her by tossing his cigarette with a flick of his fingers and pulled her close just before he dipped her back a little. He press his lips to hers. Harleen swoon, wrapping her gloved hands around his neck, her maroon lips opening slightly. Jack opened his mouth, his teeth scraping against her bottom lip, his tongue teasing against hers before he let her go.

He smiled widely. “Let's go have some fun.”

* 

The restaurant, Maxim's Revisited, looked just like a 1930's art deco style restaurant with bright lights, stain-glass windows and double doors. Jack pulled up front where a valet took the keys to park the car. Jack wrapped Harleen's arm around his and led her inside. There was a maitre d' waiting at a pedestal. He had a pencil mustache and slicked back dark hair. “Reservation?”

Jack took his hat off. “Table for two, Jack Wayne.”

“Ah Mr. Wayne! It has been a long time since you visited us!” The maitre d' grinned.

Jack shrugged. “Yes it has, but I'm glad to be back tonight.”

The man snapped his fingers and a young waiter dressed in a waiter's tux came to lead them to their table. The tables inside the restaurant were all round, covered in long white table clothes with flowered centerpieces. The interior was art deco design in blues and golds, with palm trees decorating the corners. In the center of the club was a large dance floor where couples dressed in 1930's clothing were dancing to a live band and singer on a small stage. The ceiling was painted to
look like a night sky with stars and chandeliers hung from the ceiling everywhere.

Jack grinned watching her reaction. “Oh Jack, this is amazing.”

“Isn't it!” Jack laughed. “That band is Mary and Joe Steam and the Maxim orchestra—they are
regulars here though sometimes the management brings in singers.”

Harleen was mesmerized as the big band played, men and women in period outfits danced and ate
dinner, she felt like she had walked backwards in time.

* 

Their table was over to the right, not in the center of the room and not too close to the dance floor
giving them an illusion of privacy. The waiter gave them each a menu; again the menu design
continued the art deco style of the restaurant.

“What can I get the lady and gentleman to drink this evening?”

Jack glanced at Harleen. “Care if I order for us both?”

“No, no, you go ahead.” Harleen smiled at him.

Jack turned to the waiter. “How about a nice Chardonnay.”

“Right away sir.”

Jack grinned at Harleen. She looked so beautiful tonight, he was proud to have her on his arm.

“So what does my dame feel like?”

Harleen looked over the menu. “Oh gosh there is so much!”

Jack leaned forward. “I recommend the lobster.”

Harleen blinked. “That is so...”

Jack held up a hand. “Before you say expensive, remember who you're dating toots.” He laughed
tossing the menu down. Harleen blushed.

* 

Harleen's gloves lay folded next to her plate where the remains of her lobster lay. She was sipping
her wine as Jack told her about growing up watching some of the old comedians.

“I really enjoyed watching Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, but I think my all time favorite was
The Marx Brothers.”

Harleen laughed. “Oh I loved their movies! Duck Soup is one of my favorites!”

Jack's eyes lit up. “Really?”

Harleen nodded. “Oh yes! I just loved that movie!”

Jack grinned. “I love Groucho's one liners.”

Jack grinned pretending to have a cigar between his fingers that he waggled. “Outside of a dog, a
book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.”
They both laughed. Harleen sighed happily looking at Jack across the table. He was so handsome, the suit looked great on him, though she doubted there was anything he could wear that would not look spectacular on him.

She was about to ask him something else when suddenly a rather short, slim man who might have been about Bruce Wayne's age, perhaps a year or two older, appeared at their table. He was dressed in period clothing, a white dinner jacket matched with a black vest and pants. The shorter man's dark hair was slicked back from a very sharp nose and a monocle on a gold chair was over one eye. He held a cane in one hand, both of which were concealed behind black leather gloves. He might have been attractive except for the scowl on his face.

“Well, well Jack Wayne. Whatever are you doing here?” The man smiled. Harleen found herself cringing a little.

Jack lifted his brows in mild surprise. “Oswald Cobblepot...now how on earth did you even get in? I thought this place had standards.”

Cobblepot narrowed his eyes. “Very funny rich boy. Surprised your big brother let you out. Heard he was keeping you under house arrest...gotta keep the crazies out of good society.”

Jack's right hand was on the table, Cobblepot on the left. No one but Harleen saw Jack's fingers wrapped tightly around the knife that sat next to his plate. She frowned slightly, wondering who this increasingly unpleasant little man was to evoke such a reaction from Jack.

“You know Cobblepot...Charlie Chaplin once said that life could be wonderful if people would leave you alone...especially fat little birds who think they are more than what they are...”

Cobblepot narrowed his eyes, his face turning red and his voice picking up volume. “You know Wayne, my family was something in this town long before you Waynes came to Gotham and took EVERYTHING!! Your family are nothing but thieves and liars!!”

Cobblepot slammed the table suddenly with his cane causing their dishes to leap and shatter to the floor. Harleen let out a startled cry, nearly falling over in her attempt to get to her feet. Wine spilled across the fine white table cloth and the remains of lobster tumbled to the floor.

Jack moved swiftly. He was out of his chair, his right arm whipping around, the knife from the table in his hand, held across his forearm. He stopped short, the blade coming right up under Cobblepot's throat and quivering chin. Jack's other hand had an iron grip on the shorter man's shoulder, pressing painfully into Cobblepot's skin through his clothing. Jack's long fingers squeezed Oswald's shoulder painfully. Jack leaned in close, his voice a low growl, his eyes flat and deadly.

“I suggest you leave, Oswald Cobblepot, before you get yourself into trouble that money can't get you out of...”

The shorter man stared at Jack in surprise, his blue eyes going wide, the monocle popping out to drop at his waist. Oswald opened his mouth to respond, but instead his lips flopped around. Harleen thought for a moment that the man looked like a fish struggling for breath.

A couple members of of the staff came jogging over. “Sirs! Sirs! Please!”

Jack moved his hand quickly, his long fingers nimbly sliding the knife up his sleeve, only Harleen having seen the blade and even she wasn't sure she had seen him slip a knife up his sleeve.

A couple of members of the staff rushed over, one of them, a middle aged man in a fine suit looked between Jack and Oswald. “Sirs, I must insist if you are to have an altercation, that you take it
outside of our establishment.”

It was clear Jack and Oswald's “altercation” was drawing stares from other people in the restaurant.

Jack smiled at Oswald. “We're not having an altercation now are we Cobblepot?”

Cobblepot looked between Jack and the restaurant staff. He narrowed his tiny eyes before muttering. “No, there's no problem.”

With that, his long pointed beak of a nose in the air, Cobblepot tottered off using his cane for support.

The gentlemen who had questioned them bowed to Jack and Harleen.

“Sir, why don't you and your lady take a spin around our dance floor while we clean your table? And might I suggest a baked Alaskan, on the house for the two of you?”

Jack smiled, every inch the gentleman. “Of course, that sounds excellent, don't you think Harley?”

Harleen nodded as Jack took her hand leading her out onto the dance floor. The band had just started to play another song, the female singer, wearing a long midnight blue dress, stepped up to the microphone, holding the oversized mic in her hand and began to sing.

“They asked me how I knew
My true love was true
I of course replied
Something here inside cannot be denied
They said "someday you'll find all who love are blind"
When your heart's on fire,
You must realize, smoke gets in your eyes “

* *

Jack grinned pulling Harleen close against him. “I love this song.”

His voice was warm as he spun her around on the dance floor, his thumb gently caressing her back where his hand rested against her.

“What was all that about?” Harleen asked as they spun around. She could see Cobblepot glaring at them from his table.

“Oh, old Oswald insists that his family is old money, helped in the establishment of Gotham, claims that the Wayne's somehow tricked his family and stole their fame and fortune.”

Jack did a little spin with her, winking at Oswald. He came back around with her, Harleen saw the smaller man glaring hatefully at Jack. Harleen thought about asking Jack about the knife, the swiftness of his attack, but she didn't even though Jack was supposed to be her patient. She glanced at the sleeve where he had concealed the blade. Jack followed her gaze smiling impishly.

“Are you going to tell on me Harley?” He dipped her, pressing his teeth against his bottom lip as his
eyes seemed to devour her, running down her breasts, then he was lifting her back up bringing her close.

The singer continued to purr into the microphone.

“So I chaffed them and I gaily laughed
To think they could doubt my love
Yet today my love has flown away,
I am without my love (without my love)

*“No Jack, never.” Harleen knew she meant it too...she could never betray him. Jack laughed pulling her closer, then suddenly he dropped her hand to wrap both of his arms around her waist lifting her off her feet just a little. Harleen put her arms around his neck staring into his eyes, a soft laugh on her lips.

Jack kissed the tip of her nose with a wide smile.

“My girl...that's what you are Harley—my girl,” Jack whispered. He spread his hands down to her hips pressing her up against him, rolling with her as they swayed to the music. She could feel the slight hardness of him pressed against her.

“You my girl Harley?” Jack ducked his head then, coming up to brush his lips against hers. “Tell me you're mine Harley.” His stroked his lips against hers again, his tongue slipping out to lick her lips. “Tell me Harley.”

Harleen's eyes fluttered, she felt like she was melting, becoming lost. That was what was happening, she thought to herself. She was losing her way and she didn't care. “I'm yours Jack...

Jack kissed her then.

They weaved to the music until they were in the middle of the dance floor. His hands slid down her body, spanning her rear and squeezed, pressing her against him. Harleen's hands stroked the back of his neck, her fingers brushing through the short hairs on the back of his skull. Jack nipped and licked her lips, his tongue stroked against her tongue, circling, twisting. His hands squeezed her rear again before gliding up to her waist.

Harleen moaned, but then the music stopped and the audience was applauding the singer. Jack, the side of his nose against hers, opened his eyes to look deeply into hers. Harleen felt hypnotized staring up at him.

“Mine,” he whispered before brushing her lips with his, trailing down her chin and placing one last kiss on her jaw. He grinned. “Let's go have dessert.”

* When Jack and Harleen arrived back at Wayne manor that evening, the place was dark, quiet except for a light on the porch and another in the main hall. Jack walked Harleen to her room, stopping at her door.

“I had a good time Harley.” He stroked his fingers along her jaw.
Harleen blushed. “I did too.”

Harleen knew right then, that if Jack asked to come into her room, to spend the night with her she would not have said no, but instead he planted a light kiss on her lips, the tip of her nose and lastly her forehead.

“Sleep well, my Harley.” Jack whispered against her forehead before he stepped back, smiling and started back down the hall. Harleen watched him go, with Jack stopping on the steps to give her a wave before he descended. Harleen sighed smiling happily.

There was no denying it, she was in love.

*

Jack was excited. Harley was...perfect!! He took the stairs back down to the main floor two at a time, grinning the whole while. He was heading out to check on his volunteers. He had recruited a couple of men, homeless...people no one would miss, people that would do anything for money. He would have rather spent the night in her bed, exploring her, but duty called.

He was practically dancing again when he opened the locks letting himself into his “lab.” Harley had him on cloud nine. He knew right then she would be his in every sense of the word, when the time was right.

*

When he brought the volunteers over to his “lab” it was only after he had removed his previous...experiments; didn't want to scare them off by seeing the bodies of the other ones now, did he?

As Jack stepped in, he glanced over to where he had the two men strapped down to hospital beds. One of them was clearly dead, his eyes widened until one of his eyeballs had simply popped out of its socket, his face stretched so wide in a smile that the skin had split. Jack had given this gentleman the old dosage.

But the other man, he had received the new formula. The man's hair had turned a lime green, his skin a chalky grey along with the wide laughing eyes and rictus grin. Jack walked over to his subject, studying him. “Oh...darn...” Jack frowned. “Looks like you died too, but I really like the interesting new developments.”

Jack laughed.

*

The next morning Harleen, feeling pretty and wanting to be pretty for Jack, wore a spring dress of light blue, decorated with a scoop collar and printed with flowers, her hair done in a French braid. She had paired the outfit with a pair of light blue high heels and a white shrug.

Jack looked stunning as always in Harleen's eyes. He wore a slim fit navy blue suit, with matching vest, white shirt and a tie that was white, but decorated with blue roses. Harleen swooned inwardly staring at him. Oddly their clothing seemed to match.

“Alfred the beauty has arrived!” Jack said as he stood up to pull out her stool for her.

Alfred smiled. “And a very good morning to you Miss Harleen. Master Jack was giving me very few details about your “date” last night.”
Jack grinned. “Just waiting for Harley, Alfie.”

Harleen blushed sitting down. “Oh Alfred it was a fabulous night.”

Harleen smiled as Jack reached over to place his hand on her knee. She was still having trouble thinking of him as “her” boyfriend, but when he had looked up and saw her in the doorway of the kitchen, the smile that he had given her had sent her heart soaring.

She went on to tell Alfred all about the restaurant, the clothes, music, the food (carefully leaving out the part about Oswald Cobblepot.) and the dance. “Jack is such an amazing dancer Alfred.”

Alfred smiled having just set the coffee, the bacon and leek quiche he had made on the counter in front of the two of them, already cut into slices.

“It sounds like the two of you had a good time.” Alfred seemed very pleased.

Jack grinned from where he had been making notes in his notebook, squeezing her knee with his other hand while Harleen spoke.

“It was, it was just a unique experience!” Harleen smiled brightly.

Jack chuckled without looking up. “Well the company I had was simply the most beautiful and engaging woman in Gotham...probably on the planet.”

Harleen blushed brightly. Jack stole a sideways glace at her and winked.

Harleen her cheeks still red, glancing down to cut a bite from her quiche. She had just taken a bite, groaning with appreciation and was about to tell Alfred about how magnificent the food was, when Bruce came in like a storm cloud, looking annoyed.

“Jack,” he growled.

Jack looked up. “Bruce.” His voice was flat.

“What was going on in your head yesterday? I just saw the news on the Gotham Herald! First you insult Silver St. Cloud yesterday afternoon AND in front of Miss Majors from the Gotham Herald! Who went on to write a scathing article about you. AND now you've jumped right into a spat with Oswald Cobblepot last night? What was going on yesterday Jack? And Dr. Quinzel, I thought you were supposed to keep my brother out of trouble, not get him into it!”

Jack slammed his hands down on the counter pushing himself to his feet.

Harleen jumped.

Alfred frowned.

“Leave her out of this Bruce.” Jack's voice was deadly flat.

Bruce took a calming breath. “Jack...this is not the kind of publicity we need.”

Jack narrowed his eyes at Bruce. “Look, Bruce, it's not my fault I had to tell Silver St. Cloud off...you should have done that ages ago instead of avoiding her or leading her on...whatever it is you do with your numerous women. Then maybe she wouldn't have been trying to seduce me for the last few months. As for Cobblepot...fuck off, Bruce.”

Jack grabbed his notebook and reached out taking Harleen's hand. He stopped then, glaring at his
brother.

“And don’t you ever bring Harley into this again.”

With that Jack tugged Harleen with him out of the kitchen.

Bruce ground his teeth.

Alfred spoke quietly. “Master Bruce, I don't think that was the best way to handle Master Jack.”

Bruce sighed in frustration running a hand down his face. “I just...”

Alfred came over and laid a hand on Bruce's shoulder. “On the other hand Master Bruce, I've never seen Jack so...happy before and you know how Miss St. Cloud can be. As for Oswald Cobblepot the man has been looking for an opportunity to make a spectacle of himself since returning to Gotham, you can't really blame Master Jack for that.”

Bruce sighed. “I...I guess not.” Bruce was about to leave then frowned turning to Alfred.

“Did he just call Dr. Quinzel Harley?”
Precious

Jack dragged Harleen along with him. She didn't say a word, sensing that now was not the time. She let him drag her wherever he needed her to be, though it wasn't until the last moment that she realized he was headed toward the garage. Harleen stumbled a little in her heels trying to keep up when they went over a dip between the manor and garage.

“Where are we going Jack?” she asked with some concern as he yanked her with him.

“We are going for a drive,” Jack stated, continuing through the garage.

* 

Jack headed straight for his motorcycle. He grabbed the keys and tossed a helmet at Harleen. She just barely caught it as he pulled the bike out of its place and started the engine. Harleen quickly dashed over, lifting her dress up to straddle the bike behind him. For a moment, Jack reached back, running one hand along her bare thigh; she could see the tension in his shoulders ease a little when he touched her. Jack tenderly caressed the underside of her thigh one more time before he brought his hand back to hold the handle of the bike and hit the gas. Harleen blushed under the helmet as she wrapped her arms around Jack's middle. He didn't move for a few more heartbeats, letting the engine rumble under them, reaching back with his hand one more time just to stroke her leg and lean back into her embrace. She tightened her arms around him as if she were trying to protect him, which she supposed she was.

The intimacy for both gestures, the touch of his hand on her leg and her grip around his waist, all of it sent goosebumps along with a tingling heat all throughout her body. Jack seemed reluctant to stop touching her, his fingertips dragging across her thigh before he hit the gas, grabbing the handles with both hands and took off.

* 

Harleen wanted to ask where they were going, but instead of trying to talk, she just held on tightly as Jack sped away from the manor heading into Gotham. They drove for a while, weaving dangerously in and out of traffic, running a few lights and barely avoiding hitting a car or two. Harleen closed her eyes and tightened her grip around his waist until they finally ended up on the upper west side close to Chinatown. Jack slowed down and maneuvered the bike deftly around some vehicles until they were near an old three story brick apartment building. It was fairly plain, nothing special, a simple utilitarian building.

As Jack pulled the bike down an alley, Harleen saw that the lower floor of the building was actually a Chinese restaurant. A large sign over the top of the restaurant read TASTE OF CHINA in yellow letters on a blue background with Chinese dragons painted in the corners of the sign.

Jack pulled around from the alley to the back of the restaurant where there were a couple of large dumpsters, a few other bins and some trash littered on the ground. A blue painted back door was opened that led into the back of the restaurant. Jack hopped off the bike and helped Harleen to dismount, then he walked through the door to show that yes, it did lead into the restaurant, but sharply to the right of the rear entryway lay a set of stairs.

Taking her hand, Jack took the stairs up to a landing where a short hallway led to a couple of red painted doors. Jack walked down to the door on the left, producing a key with which he opened the lock. He held the door open for her. “Go on in,” he said calmly.
The interior of the apartment surprised her. The walls were white, not old yellow white, but the crisp bright white that reminded her of a showroom floor. In the main room was a simple red couch, a flat screen TV mounted on the wall across from the couch with several large white box shelves surrounding the set. The shelves contained a few Blurays, a couple of brightly colored vases and some books. The small living room led right into a tiny kitchen and from where she stood, Harleen could see what looked like two more rooms, her guess being a bedroom and a bathroom.

“What is this place?” Harleen asked as she stepped in, her gaze taking in the simple decorations and clean lines of the apartment.

“Sort of my secret hideout.” Jack grinned as he walked in and tossed his keys into a bowl on one of the shelves. “It's an apartment I maintain—without Bruce's knowledge—for when I need to get away. The only people that know about this place are me, Alfred and now you.”

Jack walked over to the couch and flopped down, one arm draped across the back of it. Harleen walked over and sat down next to him. She laid a hand on his thigh looking at him with concern. “Are you alright?”

Jack chuckled and said, “I will be. Promise.”

He turned to face her, his eyes searching her face for a moment. She wasn't sure what he was looking for, but then suddenly Jack reached out to run his fingers along her face. He stroked the line of her jaw tenderly before his fingers slid up into her hair. He reached around and pulled out the tie that held her hair in the braid. Harleen didn't move; she let him do what he wanted which was to unbraid her hair, running his fingers through her thick locks until they were loose around her shoulders. He smiled then.

“You look beautiful.” His voice was almost a whisper just before he slipped his hand to the back of her head, cradling her skull as he gradually drew her toward him.

Jack leaned forward and brushed her lips with his in a caress that rippled through her. Jack's mouth opened slightly as his warm, soft lips traced hers, only a slight line of blue from his eyes visible under his thick lashes while he watched her. Harleen took in a slow shuddering breath and leaned into him, pulled toward him just as Jack's tongue flicked across her lips. The feel of his tongue was a gentle tickle that made her lips tingle. Harleen's tongue greeted his, the touch at first soft, gentle...

Jack suddenly hauled her over to him. He shoved her dress up her legs, positioning her so that she was straddling his lap, not once losing contact with her mouth. Jack's kisses became more insistent, demanding. He reached for her holding onto her with desperation as his mouth hungrily glided over hers, teeth nipping at her lips, her tongue, as if suddenly Jack couldn't get enough of her, that he needed her to breathe.

Harleen grabbed his head between her hands, rising up on her knees a little, her own kisses meeting his with equal desperation. She ground her hips against him, her hands moving through his hair holding fistsfuls in her hands, bending his head back as she took from him just as much as he was taking from her. Jack's hands slid up her legs in soft gentle strokes, but then he would drag his nails down her skin leaving red marks in his wake which only caused Harleen to groan in delight. She found she liked the mix of pleasurable caresses with just enough pain to make her body feel aware, tight, wanton.

Jack's mouth glided to her throat and she gasped at the feel of his teeth against her skin. He sucked,
then bit down, followed by soft kisses against her skin. He was driving her mad with want. Then his hands were behind her back, finding the zipper of her dress. She thought about stopping him...they had crossed the doctor patient line days ago, but this was new territory. And Harleen found she didn't care about that; she only cared about Jack.

The sound of Jack yanking the zipper of her dress down had her moaning against his mouth. Jack smiled gliding his fingers up her silken back until he found the strap of her bra. Within moments his nimble fingers had unhooked her bra. She felt him chuckle softly against her throat.

Harleen gasped at the sudden release of pressure from her bra strap coming loose.

Jack groaned against her neck. “Harley...mine. My Harley.”

Jack tugged her dress down taking her bra down as well. He pulled away from her mouth as he removed the fabric, his eyes heated. He stared at her naked breasts. Harleen felt like she was holding her breath, waiting to see if he would reject her. She wasn't as confident about her body as she made herself out to be...she hadn't been with anyone in ages, focused on her career, on making a better life, but now...she bit her bottom lip watching him.

Jack exhaled slowly. “So beautiful...” his voice came out in a whisper. “Oh Harley...” He slowly placed his hands over her breasts. Harleen arched her back with a soft moan. “Oh Jack, Jack...”

He squeezed gently before he dragged his fingers down over her breasts. Jack cupped her breasts, rolling his thumbs over her nipples slowly, watching the way they hardened even more under his touch.

Harleen's breath came out ragged, his touch was in equal measure fire and electricity, but then she inhaled sharply when Jack's tongue rolled over her right nipple. Jack pulled her close again, his mouth hungrily exploring the soft, creamy hills and valley of her breasts. Harleen shivered with pleasure her hands running through his thick hair holding his head to her breasts. After a few moments of licking and sucking, Jack started to bite. Not so hard that he broke the skin, just enough that there was the hint of pain again mixed with the pleasure of him sucking, licking and kissing her breasts. Jack growled twisting around and dumped her on the couch before he crawled on top of her.

He sucked the nipple of one breast into his mouth, his tongue twirled around her nipple, his teeth scraping against the tender flesh listening to the sweet sounds of her gasps of pleasure. His hands ran up her thighs, pushing her dress up until he was at her panties. The fingers of one hand were wrapped around the side of her underwear, fighting the urge to yank them down, the urge was strong...he wanted her...his...his Harley, wanted to bury his mouth in her, to taste her...

“Mine” he kept thinking to himself. Mine...she is mine. The one thing in his life besides his “work” that was completely his...untouched by Bruce, by the Wayne fortune, the Wayne name...by Gotham. She was his. His Harleen Quinzel, his Harley Quinn.

Harleen cradled his head against her breast. “Oh Jack...Jack...” she whispered softly.

“Mmmm...” Jack growled, his mouth latched to the soft round underside of her left breast. Harleen groaned, her hips rolling, looking for some sort of friction. Her whole body was hot, burning; every part felt overly sensitive. Jack's fingers were still wrapped around the side of her panties, but he didn't pull them down as much as she wanted him to, she could just feel his fist rubbing against her hip while he switched breasts, sucking, flicking his tongue over the nipple, his mouth drifting just past her nipple and biting down again. The fingers of his other hand tangled in her hair, tugging her head back.
Harleen gasped. One hand was in his hair, balling his hair in her fist, while her other hand caressed his shoulders, brushing over the fine fabric of his suit. He sucked, shifting position, placing one of his thighs between her legs now, rubbing, giving Harleen the friction she wanted.

Harleen gasped, her hips jerking. She was turned on to the point that if Jack didn't take her she might cry when they both heard Jack's cell phone go off. At first they both ignored it, Jack's mouth sliding down to start nibbling his way along her torso, but the ringing would cease only for a moment, then just start again.

Finally Jack frowned sitting up with a muttered, “Fuck.”

Harleen wanted to drag him back down, but she didn't, swallowing down a heavy sigh. She simply watched, trying to catch her breath while Jack pulled the phone out of his jacket's inner pocket. Harleen lay where she was, her dress around her waist, her breasts exposed covered in bites and slowly blossoming bruises. Jack grinned down at her, his eyes roaming over her naked breasts, the way her dress was pushed up past her hips...

Harleen giggled blushing and biting her lips, blue eyes smoldering with want.

“What?” Jack frowned sounding slightly annoyed. “Alright fine.” Jack hung up, sliding the phone back into his pocket.

“That was Alfred. Seems I received a summons.” Jack looked dangerously irritated as he sat back. Harleen pushed herself up pulling her dress and bra up at the same time.

“Court summons?”

“No, our friend Cobblepot apparently sent a message for me...the messenger won't leave until he delivers the message personally.” Jack reached over and gently turned Harleen around sliding her bra straps up her arms and hooking it back into place before he tenderly pulled her dress up, sliding the zipper up, though not before kissing the back of her neck.

“A messenger?” Harleen stood up tugging the skirt of her dress down. Jack ran his hands through his hair as he watched her. He was frustrated...he wanted her badly, but he had to take care of this—situation.

He stood up taking her hand and turning her around, pressing her up against his chest. Jack stared down at her running one hand through her hair. He brushed his lips against hers.

“My Harley...” he whispered.

Harleen reached up to cup his face between her hands. “Always Jack...I'll always be yours.”

He grinned capturing her mouth in a deep kiss before he pulled away reluctantly.

“Why don't you go freshen up before we return,” Jack purred, his fingers playing with a lock of her hair wrapping it around his fingers.

“Then we will go see what old Cobblebutt wants.”

“Alright...” Harleen purred too, enjoying the slight tug he gave her hair before he pointed to the bathroom. She closed the door behind her stopping to stare at herself in the mirror. Harleen reached behind her and unzipped the dress, tugging it down pass her breasts, then slipped her arms out of the straps of her bra to look at herself. Her neck, shoulders and breasts were covered in light bruises and bite marks. Harleen's smile was bright. He had marked her—she was his, just like he said, she
thought as she ran her forefinger over her slightly swollen lips. She was all Jack Wayne's.

*

When they arrived back at the manor Jack pulled the motorcycle right up to the main door parking it behind a smaller car, by the looks of it a black Chevrolet Spark. On the doorstep a young man was standing in a uniform. He looked uncomfortable in a high neck navy coat with brass buttons, navy slacks with a stripe down the leg, a belt and a box-like hat that had a family crest on it. Jack pressed his lips together, his eyes going wide when he saw the cap's family crest...Cobblepot.

The young man was sipping from a cup of tea with Alfred when Jack and Harleen pulled up.

“Master Jack, this is Mr. Oswald Cobblepott's messenger Lance; he has a message that he can only hand over to you.”

Jack gave Lance a once over giggling, his earlier anger seemingly gone. “Oh...well okay Lance. I'm here.”

Lance handed Alfred back the cup looking nervous as he pulled out an envelope from his coat's pocket near his hip.

“Here you are sir.” The young man handed Jack the envelope. The envelope was made from fine linen with a wax seal that had the same crest on it as the young man's hat. Jack broke the seal opening the envelope and pulled out the letter inside, the paper making a soft rustle as he pulled it out. Opening it up, Harleen watched as Jack's eyes roamed swiftly over the paper and then he burst out laughing.

“He isn't serious, is he?” Jack looked over the top of the letter at the young man who had delivered it. The young man nodded. “Yes, sir. Mr. Cobblepot is very serious.”

Alfred frowned glancing at Jack then Harleen. “Master Jack, may I inquire...”

“Cobblepot has challenged me to a duel because I have stained his honor or some such nonsense.” Jack laughed again, genuinely amused at the situation.

Alfred frowned. “Master Jack I don't know if this is really a laughing matter. Mr. Cobblepot is quite...vehement in his views. I think he may be serious about this duel of his.”

Jack grinned. “Oh I have no doubt that he is serious, but I wouldn't be surprised if he thinks I will decline. So I gather you are to wait for an answer?”

The young man nodded. “Yes, sir. I am.”

“Well, you can tell Cobblepot that I accept his duel. Just send me the time, place and, as is custom, I will choose the weapons...which will be fencing. Oswald thinks I'm too chicken to face him...well the joke will be on him.”

The young man looked relieved to finally be allowed to go. “Thank you sir—I will let him know.”

Alfred frowned. “Your brother is not going to be happy about this.”

Jack’s grin was wide. “Oh Alfie, you just gave me another reason to do this!”

Alfred sighed. “Master Jack, Mr. Cobblepott is known to be quite good at fencing...I just don't know if this is a wise course of action.”
Jack came up to Alfred wrapping his arm around the older man's shoulders. “Alfred, remember, I'm pretty good at fencing too.”

“I do remember Master Jack...just...” Alfred shook his head while Jack gave the butler's shoulders a squeeze. “Just don't tell Bruce. I'm sure I can get this all taken care of before Ms. Vicki Vale shows up. Bruce will never have to know.” Jack chuckled softly with a shake of his head.

Alfred sighed again. “Unless you lose Master Jack, then everyone will know,” the butler warned. “Cobblepott will make sure of it.”

“Guess I better not lose then, should I? Don't worry...I won't lose. Besides I can't lose in front of my girl now can I?” Jack winked at Harleen.

Alfred looked miserable.

*

After dinner that night, Jack wanted Harleen to meet him in the gym. Before she went, Alfred asked softly, “Miss Harleen, might I ask a favor of you?”

Harleen had just stood up after Jack had left. “Of course Alfred, anything.”

Alfred smiled at her. “Please watch out for Master Jack. He has a tendency to be...reckless.”

Harleen stepped closer to Alfred, surprising the older man when she wrapped her arms around him. “I will Alfred.”

Alfred patted her back with a whispered, “Thank you Miss Harleen.”

*

Harleen came down to the gym wearing a pair of red jacquard yoga pants and a black revere tank-top, her blonde hair piled up on the top of her head in a messy bun. The bites and bruises showed, but since it was just the two of them here she didn't think much about it.

When she arrived, she saw Jack stretching. She stopped in the doorway to watch for a few minutes, her eyes taking in his lean, muscled form. Jack wore a pair of tight calf-length black spandex shorts and a tank-top of the same color, except there were purple striping down the sides. He had his back to her while he bent over touching his hands to the floor. Harleen let herself enjoy the view, a light blush on her cheeks because of the terribly unprofessional thoughts she was having—not that being professional with Jack during their private moments was much of a concern anymore, she acknowledged. Then Jack giggled. “Going to stand there all evening looking at me like a piece of meat Harley?”

Harleen blushed with a light giggle. “Hi Jack.”

Jack turned around with a grin. He started to say something then stopped, his eyes roaming over her neck and chest where the bites and bruises he had left on her were clearly visible. His eyes followed to the marks that disappeared under her top, a lopsided grin dancing along his lips before his gaze met her eyes again.

“Harley.” He said the name he had given her with such emotion that Harleen felt herself melting...
inside. He held out a hand to her and she immediately walked over taking it. Jack tugged her close, wrapping an arm around her waist, his other hand cradling the back of her head as he kissed her. Jack pressed her body close to his. The kiss danced over her mouth and tongue causing her body to become fully aware. Harleen clung to him desperate for more, but all too soon Jack ended the kiss. He rubbed his nose against hers, his eyes smoldering as he gently nipped her lips. “Ready to help me practice for my duel Harls?”

Harleen frowned then. She wasn't uncertain of Jack's ability; she had sparred with him, but what bothered her was not knowing Cobblepot's skill. “Are you sure about this Jack?”

Jack laughed taking a hold of her hand and led her over to the mats where at the edge of the mat lay two foils.

“I'm certain. Cobblepot wants to play this sort of game, well I can play too. I like games.” Jack released Harleen's hand and picked up one of the foils. He performed a few swift movements with it before winking at her. “He isn't the only one to learn fencing.”

Jack picked up the other foil and handed it to her. Harleen cringed. “I know nothing about fencing Jack!”

“I know. Just stand there with it and look pretty for right now.” He grinned at her with an eyebrow wiggle.

Harleen frowned, but did as he asked watching while Jack went through a series of lunges and stabs. “Is there anything you don't know how to do?” she asked while watching the way his muscles shifted.

Jack grinned. “Well, I can't fly a plane very well.”

“But you can fly one?” Harleen asked.

Jack grinned. “A little, never received my license though. Now Bruce, he has his flying license and his own plane.

“I don't really care about what Bruce can do.” Harleen made a face which had Jack laughing. “You are so cute.”

She blushed. Jack went through a few more moves. “Do any of these moves have names?” she inquired.

Jack grinned. “Ah, a chance to use my French again. By the way, did you ever translate what I said to you?”

“No...I'm not good with languages. I only took enough German to fulfill the requirements at college.” Harleen frowned. “Like math—never was my strong suit.”

Jack laughed. “Then I'm going to teach you.”

He stepped forward in a lunge, his blade smacking against Harleen's making her yelp in surprise. He laughed. “That is called Attaque au Fer and this one—is called Coulé or glissade.” Here Jack slid his blade along the one that Harleen held.

“Everyone loves that move.” He gave her a wink as he stepped back and snapped the foil out. Harleen was watching him with rapt attention. He is so beautiful, she thought to herself. Just watching the way he moves is like watching live art playing out, she mused.
Jack shifted suddenly. He brought his rear leg (his left) in front of his right and sprinted toward her. Harleen squeaked in surprise holding the blade out. Jack only tapped it as he passed, turning on the ball of his foot with enough elegance to make a skilled dancer envious. “That one is called a Flèche.”

“Did you ever compete in fencing...or any of the sports you know?” Harleen asked with genuine curiosity. Jack snorted. “No. I was always seen as too aggressive, too loose with the rules and I didn't take any of it seriously enough.” He shrugged lightly. “It was all pretty silly if you ask me, but who knew I would be challenged to a duel or that fencing would come in handy?” Jack laughed

He suddenly turned, coming in close, moving fast toward her. Harleen instinctively put up the blade she held to block. Jack drove her backwards until her back was up against the wall. Jack's body was pressed up against hers, the swords caught at the hilt, his other hand having hit the wall next to her head. His voice dropped down to a warm whisper.

“This one is called Corps-à-corps and is illegal in foil fights.”

His light blue-green eyes dropped down to watch the heaving of her breasts as she sucked in air. He could almost feel the beat of her heart as she gazed into his face. Jack tossed down his foil, grabbing hers and throwing it away as well. He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her hard.

Harleen groaned melting into the kiss. Jack hands dropped from her cheeks to grabbed her hips, his fingers digging into the stretchy fabric. His mouth glided over hers, their tongues brushing and sliding together. Harleen ground against him suddenly, one leg wrapping around his waist. Jack caught her thigh and lifted her up pressing her against the wall harder. She wrapped both her legs around his waist gasping when Jack grabbed at the tender skin of her neck with his teeth again. His hands moved down to her rear, squeezing as he pressed her up against the wall.

He ground himself against her, pushing against her warmth. She could feel how hard he was pressing against her, rubbing, thrusting...Harleen started panting. He had her held up against the wall firmly enough that he could bring one hand over to cup her breast, squeezing gently, then pinching her nipple through the fabric of her top, eliciting a pleased gasp from her. He chuckled, hissing against her throat, she could feel the warm tickle of his breath against her neck. “You like that Harley...like it a little rough?”

“Ohh..Jack...Yes” she ran her hands up into his hair tugging at the thick strands. Jack continued to suck and lick his way down her neck, one hand pinching her nipple and rubbing his hard mass between her legs. Harleen groaned, her mind a complete blank. All she could focus on was his teeth, his tongue and the way he felt between her legs, the deliciously painful yet pleasurable way he pinched her nipples.

“Come for me Harley...come for me...” Jack grabbed her bottom lip between his teeth. He sucked on it, pulling her lip slowly.

“Uhahhuhhh....oh Jack...Jack...”Harleen's eyes rolled. He was pressing just right, the way he was moving his hips she couldn't think straight. He yanked her shirt down. She was vaguely aware of the tear of material then his mouth was on her breast, Jack's tongue rolling over her nipple.

Harleen cried out, an orgasm ripping through her, burning like a dying star, so hot, so intense that for a moment, if she had passed out, she would not have been surprised. Jack's kisses on her breast slowed to sensual tender pecks that traveled up her neck until he reached her mouth. He moaned softly, his tongue dancing with hers.

After a few more moments of intense and sensual kissing, Jack stepped back, Harleen dropped her legs thought her knees were wobbly and her legs didn't want to hold her up. He pulled her top up
before he stroked her face tenderly. “You should get some sleep.”

“We...I mean...you can...come to my room if you want.” Harleen offered quietly.

Jack grinned. “Not yet, it's not time yet. But it's closer...definitely closer, my Harley.”

Jack stepped back, smiled, reaching for her hand. “Let me walk you back.”

* 

At the door to her room Jack cupped her face staring hard into her blue eyes. His voice was low, soft, but intense. “You are precious to me. Remember that, no matter what happens...whatever that might be...you are precious to me. Remember that.”

Jack grinned and kissed the tip of her nose leaving a bewildered Harleen swaying in the hallway.
Harleen's dreams were filled with Jack. Her subconscious conjured him naked, looking down on her with those intense eyes of his boring into her very soul. He was drawing his fingers along her jaw, a sweet caress that flowed down her neck to her breasts, yet she could feel it, her nerves stimulated everywhere. It was such a warm feeling, it curled her toes and made the butterflies in her stomach turn into a tornado. She was burning everywhere he touched her. He had just lowered his mouth to hers when suddenly she heard a strange tinkling noise. Harleen tried to push the sound away, but she heard it again, the dream dissolving like so much mist.

She woke up feeling groggy and unsatisfied, the sound of her cellphone ringing on her bedside table being the culprit that ruined her dream. Harleen rolled over grabbing her pillow, pulling it over her head, hoping the sound would go away, but at the last moment she reached over for the damn dream shattering device. When she picked the phone up, she had to blink her eyes a few more times, trying to focus on the number. Suddenly it became clear and she saw that it was her mother. With a confused expression, she pushed the button.

“Mom?” Harleen's voice was full of shock.

“No. It's me.”

Harleen frowned. It was her step-father, Doug, on the other end. “What do you want? Why are you calling on my mom's phone?” Her voice was flat and clipped.

Harleen sat up running a hand through her hair, reaching over to pick up the clock on her bedside table. It was almost ten in the morning. Damn, she had over slept.

“I wanted to let you know that your mother's funeral is today at four p.m.” Her step-father's voice had that arrogant, “I hate you” quality it had had all her life. It took a moment for the words to register. Harleen's chest constricted, she couldn't breathe for a moment, everything in the room narrowed down to just her phone.

“What did you say?” Her voice came out in a whisper.

“Your mom's funeral is this afternoon.” Her step-father repeated with irritation.

“What happened?? What do you mean funereal?? What happened to my mother?!!” Harleen tried not to, but she screamed into the phone.

“She had a heart attack this weekend—it was instant.” Her step-father sighed. “If you want to come the funeral, it's today at Musgrove Memorial Gardens. The service is at that church your mom liked to go to...” That was when the phone went dead. Doug had hung up on her.

Harleen hadn't spoken to her mother in years, not since she left home. That decision had come (actually Harleen had decided to leave nearly the first week Doug had moved in) not long after her mother and Doug had started to have their own kids, but now...her mother was dead. Whatever tie she had had in the world (excluding extended family of which there were none that she spoke to) were gone, vanished, just like that. Harleen Quinzel was adrift in the world, her one anchor...gone.

“I'm an orphan...” she whispered.
Harleen dropped her phone onto the covers of the bed, covering her face, her whole body rocked with deep sobs.

*

Jack sipped his coffee, his eyes constantly straying to the doorway, his notebook that he had opened in front of him, forgotten. Alfred was flipping pancakes glancing over and watching Jack’s intense interest in the kitchen doorway.

“Master Jack, maybe you should go upstairs and check on Miss Harleen? You can take her breakfast to her.”

Jack jerked in surprise, (surprise being something he seldom felt except around Alfred and now, Harley) glancing over at Alfred who smiled, already holding a tray set up with a plate of pancakes, syrup, butter, strawberries, a cup of coffee, juice and a couple of sausages. The older man set the tray down in front of Jack before he made a shooing motion at him.

The younger man laughed. “Alright. Thanks Alfred.”

“Anytime Master Jack.” Alfred smiled serenely turning back to clean up.

*

Jack carried the tray up the stairs until he arrived at Harleen's door. Balancing the tray carefully with one hand, he was about to knock on her door with the other when he heard the sounds of muffled crying. Jack frowned leaning in to listen. Sure enough, he could hear Harleen crying. Jack knocked. “Harley, may I come in?”

It was quiet for a moment, but then he heard a soft answer. “Yes.”

Jack opened her door, coming in sideways with the tray. “I brought you breakfast?” He turned around to see her sitting on her bed, still in her pajamas, her hair a mess, her eyes bloodshot, cheeks tear-stained. Jack hurriedly put the tray down on a nearby dresser and rushed over to her. “Harley, what happened?”

He climbed up onto the bed and wrapped his arms around her. Harleen buried her face against his chest. “My step-father called. My mother...she died...her funeral is today. He didn't even bother to tell me she...” Harleen swallowed hard on the verge of tears. “We, we weren't close after she married him...he was one of the reasons I left home as soon as I could. I hadn't talk to her in years, but...” She took a deep, shuddering breath.

Jack held her close running his hands up and down her back. “Shh...It's alright.”

Holding her tightly, Jack rocked her gently. She could hear him whispering to her, though she couldn't hear the words. Still, the soft warmth of his breath against her hair and his arms snug around her did more than anything else in calming her. Harleen wrapped her arms around his waist. He eventually laid down with her so that her head was resting on his chest. She had stopped crying, just breathing deeply, her arm around his middle.

“When is the funeral?” He asked the question softly.

“Today, at four,” she said quietly squeezing his waist.

“I'll take you, unless you don't want me to.” Jack kissed the top of her head.
“I would like that,” she murmured, squeezing his waist again.

Jack smiled and kissed the top of her head. “You go shower. Let me take care of everything else alright?”

Harleen's bottom lip trembled. “Thank you Jack.”

He kissed the top of her head again sitting up; he cupped her face between his hands staring into her blue eyes. “I would do anything for you. Always remember that Harley.”

*

Soon Jack and Harleen were sitting in the back of a black BMW 7 series limo-sedan. The funeral was located on the edge of a suburb outside of Bludhaven and the drive time from Gotham took almost two hours. One of the Wayne's drivers was at the wheel and Jack had seen to getting Harleen a dress for the funeral. Jack was dressed in an extra-slim three piece suit of Italian virgin wool, matched with a blue silk shirt and black tie, all tailored to fit him perfectly. To top off the look of money and sophistication he wore, Jack's hands were covered in a pair of black leather gloves. He looked devastatingly handsome, Harleen thought.

She wore a dress Jack purchased for her merely an hour before they left. He had insisted that she should allow him to do that for her. He had held her face gently between his hands, gazing into her eyes.

“Let them know that you are better than them Harley. He treated you like you didn't matter. He made your mother do the same. You are going to walk into the funeral and you are going to show them that no matter how hard he tried, he didn't tear you down.” Then Jack had kissed her and suddenly everything had been all right. So now she was dressed in a black Marina jeweled neck shift dress and a pair of black suede Louboutin heels, simple, and understated diamond studs in her ears. Her hair was down, brushed and shining beautifully. She looked like a million dollars, Jack had said, adding “I should know.”

They sat in the back of the car, Jack holding her hand in his lap between both of his glove clad hands. Harleen was done crying. She had shed all the tears her mother deserved. That was what Jack had told her, and he was right. Why should she cry anymore for a woman who hadn't valued her enough as her daughter to protect her from someone like her step-father.

*

During the drive with soft music playing through the speakers, Jack put his arm around her shoulders. “Tell me about your step-father...” Jack murmured softly.

Harleen frowned as she rested her head on his shoulder. “He told me from the moment he walked in the house that I wasn't wanted. Called me a whore, bitch...cunt...every name he could think of. He monitored my homework, what books I read, what music I listened to...and the worst part was, my mother let him. She never spoke up for me, not once. And it wasn't long before she started calling me names too. I was so happy the day I turned eighteen.”

“What about your grandparents?” Jack asked as he rubbed his hand up and down her arm.

“The one still alive was too senile to care. My aunts, uncles, all believed Doug...they never liked my biological father. I became everyone's target. If the sun didn't shine, then it was probably somehow my fault.”

Harleen didn't see it but Jack’s eyes narrowed slight. “Did you believe the things he said about you?”
Jack asked softly.

Harleen sighed, thinking. “For a long time, yes. I guess sometimes I still do... I guess that was one of the reasons I became a psychiatrist...to understand why I felt that way.” Jack placed his fingertips under her chin, lifting her face so that he could look into her eyes. His held her gaze. “You are worth more than any of those people. You are worth the world to me Harley. Remember that...” Then he leaned in and kissed her. Harleen forgot everything for those few precious moments when his lips and tongue were entangled with her own.

*  

At one point during the drive, Jack started to sing softly to her, easing her troubled mind and emotions.

“...Only you can make this change in me
For it's true you are my destiny
When you hold my hand
I understand the magic that you do
You're my dream come true
My one and only you...”

Harleen blushed gazing up at him as he sang to her, a grin on his handsome face. His voice, his eyes calmed her until at one point she had dozed off with her head against his shoulder.

*  

The church was a small quaint brick building, nothing overly grand. There were several vehicles filling the church's small parking lot and more parked along the sidewalk. Harleen frowned looking out the window. She could see people milling about speaking in small groups or heading into the church for the service. As she watched, she was able to pick out cousins, her aunts as well as other people she remembered from her childhood. She saw her half-siblings, walking into the church, and for a moment, she thought she saw her step-father. All people who had ignored her for years as if her step-father's treatment of her had been all her own doing. Jack noticed the way Harleen was looking out the window, the furrow between her brows and the slight frown on her lips. He reached out to touch her shoulder.

“Are you all right?” he asked gently.

Harleen turned around settling back into the seat. “Yeah, just...just a lot of people I haven't seen in years.”

Jack grinned as he grasped her her hand and kissed her knuckles. She smiled, enjoying the feel of the leather against her palm and the press of his lips against her knuckles.

“You'll be fine. All eyes will be on you and everyone will know that you don't need them and never did.” He chuckled pressing his lips to her knuckles one more time. “They are all just bugs Harley...they don't mean anything because they are nothing. You never needed them,” he repeated.

She blushed. “Thank you, Jack.”
He grinned. “Just telling you the truth.”

Everyone's eyes were on the slick and clearly expensive car as the driver pulled into the parking lot. Harleen glanced out the tinted side window of the car. She felt both shy and exhilarated despite the fact that she was attending her mother's funeral. She wasn't really sure how her mother would feel if she saw her daughter now...would she care? Somehow Harleen felt sure her mother would find some fault with her daughter now, despite the degree, the car, or the man with whom she arrived.

The black, vindictive part of Harleen's heart was happy to see the stares she received when Jack strolled around the car after the driver had opened the door for him. He held a black silver handled cane in his left hand as he stepped around to her side of the car. Everyone stared as Jack Wayne opened the door and took her hand. She exited the vehicle wearing the expensive clothing Jack had given to her. Only someone living under a rock would not see that she was with Jack Wayne and it was Jack Wayne wrapping her hand around his arm and escorting her into the church.

Harleen glanced at Jack while they made their way to some seats near the front of the church that had been set aside for family, (though the usher, one of her step-father's brothers tried to put them in the back only to be “redirected” by one of her mother's sisters...which probably had a lot to do with Harleen's escort and not the fact that despite everything, Harleen was still her mother's daughter.) Jack smiled at her, patting her hand after they were seated. He leaned in close, his lips tickling her ear.

“You're doing great,” he whispered. “Just look at them and think to yourself this is all a joke...all of it Harley. Everything these people have strived for, struggled for, all of it is just one big joke. Because in the end, this is where we all end up. Pickled in a pine box.”

Harleen wanted to be scandalized by what Jack had just said, but as her eyes wandered up to the coffin holding her mother's remains, all she could do was giggle. He was right! Why was she upset that a woman who hadn't really loved her enough to fight for her was dead? All her mother's preaching, scolding and viciousness came flooding back to her. All the time her step-father had hurt her both physically and mentally, the people who didn't care enough to keep in contact with her...who just didn't care..too busy with their petty little lives. Why was she caring? That was when Harleen giggled.

Jack lifted a brow at her in question, a smile dancing across his lips.

She leaned her shoulder against his. “You're right...why do I care?”

And then the service began. Harleen could see her step-father from the corner of her eyes glaring daggers at her as she and Jack, like a couple of little kids, their heads together, giggled at everything that was being said by the pastor about the good life her mother had led, how much her family and community loved her et cetera and et cetera... When her “family” started to take the pulpit and go on about how much of a saint her mother was, Harleen had to cover her mouth to stop herself from laughing out loud. Jack tickled her side causing her to squirm which had Harleen giggling even more. He winked at her, pulling her closer, his arm around her waist while the two of them snorted and chuckled during the whole service.

Finally, it was time to walk past the casket before heading to the cemetery. Harleen and Jack stepped in line with the rest of the family (though they trailed in the back just before friends and guests.) As Harleen walked up to her mother's casket she stopped and stared down. The funeral home had performed an admirable job on her mother. Her hair was dyed blonde and perfectly coiffed, her make-up done well and the dress was a simple blue dress, just perfect for being buried in, if there
was such a thing as a perfect dress for that sort of thing. For a moment, Harleen was struck by how much her mother actually hadn’t changed in all the years since Harleen had left.

Holding Jack’s hand, she leaned in close and hissed. “I thought I was sad you were gone, but now I realized you were dead to me from the moment I left when you chose that fucking dick over your own daughter. Goodbye mother.”

Jack laughed aloud. “That’s my girl!”

*

Soon the procession of cars was on its way to the cemetery for the last leg of the funeral before heading over to the family home for the wake. Jack pulled Harleen to him once they were in the car and nibbled her ear, eliciting a laugh from her. “Jack!!”

“Mm...I can't wait to get you alone,” he whispered.

Harleen blushed as Jack's nibbling moved slowly down her neck. “I thought we might get a hotel room and stay the night before heading back to Gotham.”

“Really?” Harleen looked surprised.

Jack smiled gently, licking her mouth, but before he could say anything else, the car had maneuvered down the road, turning onto the path that led into the cemetery. The driver parked alongside a grassy, headstone covered hill where everyone was filing out of their cars, making their way to the gravesite.

Everyone in attendance stared at Jack and Harleen as they made their way to the site. There were several rows of folding chairs set out for family and guests that faced the open grave. Jack led Harleen over to the chairs, taking two seats near the front. The pastor waited until everyone was seated (or standing) before he continued, pretty much beginning where he had left off in the church, saying a few more words about the deceased.

Jack leaned in close to Harleen, his lips brushing against her ear as he said.

“Do you know what the death rate is around here?”

Harleen glanced sideways at him grinning. “What?”

“Really?” Harleen looked surprised.

Jack smiled gently, licking her mouth, but before he could say anything else, the car had maneuvered down the road, turning onto the path that led into the cemetery. The driver parked alongside a grassy, headstone covered hill where everyone was filing out of their cars, making their way to the gravesite.

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Jack leaned in close to Harleen, his lips brushing against her ear as he said.

“Do you know what the death rate is around here?”

Harleen glanced sideways at him grinning. “What?”

“One person at a time.” Jack giggled.

Harleen snickered covering her mouth as the pastor's eyes slid sideways at her and Jack. Jack wrapped his arm around Harleen's waist, pulling her close, his fingers tickling her side. She squirmed, the two of them continuing to act like children, much as they had in the church. Harleen had to bite the inside of her cheek to prevent herself from laughing out loud.

Jack licked her ear, which the older women behind them saw, as clearly indicated by the scandalized gasped both Jack and Harleen heard behind them. Jack glanced back at the elderly ladies and winked before he whispered another joke to Harleen.

“A passenger taps a taxi driver on his shoulder. The driver shits himself with shock, swerving, nearly hitting a bus and stops inches from a shop window.

"Fuck-me, you're jumpy aren't yer, I only tapped your shoulder," says the passenger. "Sorry," says the cabby, "It's my first day. I've been driving a hearse for twenty years!"
Both of them snorted, drawing more attention to themselves with their badly hidden giggles.

* 

After about half an hour, the service came to an end, the coffin lowered into the ground and everyone scattering to their cars to head toward the family home for the wake. Harleen walked with her hand in Jack's back to the car. Jack squeezed her hand.

“You ready for the wake?”

She frowned. “I don't know. I haven't been back home in years. I'm actually surprised they're still in the same house.”

Jack brought her hand up kissing her knuckles. “You'll be fine.”

Harleen grinned. “You're right. Just walk in, show them they didn't destroy me, no matter how hard they tried.”

Jack laughed. “That's my Harley!”

* 

Jack held her hand while their driver guided their vehicle through the small, ancient suburb. The houses all looked to have been built around the 1940's maybe '50's. Each one looked like a cookie-cutter of the next, every lawn nearly identical, with only a few standing out because of weird lawn ornaments, flowers or different shrubs along the front. Harleen frowned, her mind flooded with the memories of her early childhood growing up on these streets. When she saw her family home, Harleen's hand tightened in Jack's. Oddly, little had changed. It was still the long ranch home, still a boring white, the lawn had a few more flowers in the flower beds around the front, but other than that, nothing had changed.

Jack's driver pulled up in front of the house. Jack leaned forward to speak with the driver.

“I'll call when we're ready to leave, which won't be long.”

The driver nodded. “Yes sir, Mr. Wayne.”

Jack slipped out, walked around to open Harleen's door, and took her hand again to help her out of the car. Just like at the church, Harleen and Jack received numerous of stares. They walked up the short cement walkway to the main door and stepped inside, ignoring every stare they received.

* 

The small house was full of people, most of which Harleen recognized. Aunts, uncles, a few cousins, family friends...all the people who willingly cut ties with her over her mother's marriage to Doug. Harleen frowned, memories of how the house used to be flooding her mind while she looked around. When she had lived here, before Doug, her mother had had pictures of her growing up on the walls. Her mother had removed all pictures of Harleen's dad when she was little, so Harleen could not remember how her father looked. Those memories had long ago been eradicated. And then Doug had come into their lives and suddenly Harleen wasn't as important to her mother any more.

Harleen shook the pain away focusing on the now. Jack smiled at her, giving her strength with his presence and support.

Harleen was about ready to tell Jack she wanted to go when Doug came pushing through the
mourners to come right up to her.

“You need to leave now,” Doug snarled glaring at Harleen, poking her hard in the chest. Then his muddied eye focus was on Jack. “You’re not welcome here either.”

Harleen felt something in her snap. She had put up with his hatred, name calling, and even the occasional slap across the face while she was growing up. He had called her a slut, whore, a tramp telling her mother that she lied, that she made suggestions to him, that she was sleeping around when she was in high school...terrible things that were wholly false.

Harleen narrowed her eyes. “I have just as much right to be here as you. I'm her daughter!”

All eyes turned toward them.

“You stopped being her daughter the moment you walked out of this house!” Doug seethed. “I only told you she died as a courtesy!”

Harleen snarled. “Well thank you so fucking much!! You turned my mother against me!”

Her words provoked Doug; his hand lifted to backhand Harleen, but Jack caught the man's wrist easily. Jack's eyes were flat, his expression cheerful, but his voice had a low and deadly quality to it.

“You touch her again and you'll regret it. You're are extremely luckly I didn't break your finger just now.”

Doug stared hard at Jack and whispered heatedly. “What are you? Her pimp?”

Jack's smile widened, but it didn't reach his eyes. He threw Doug's hand away. “Apologize.”

Doug hissed. “Take your bitch and get out of my house.”

Jack took a threatening step toward Doug, prompting the older man to take a few stumbling steps back in surprise. He was clearly not accustomed to being disobeyed or having someone stand up to him. Harleen grabbed Jack, wrapping her arms around, and glared at her step-father. “Let's go Jack. He isn't worth it.”

Jack narrowed his eyes. They seemed to almost glow, but he let Harleen pull him back. Jack smiled again. “You know what they say about revenge...it's sweet and not fattening.” With that Jack laughed taking Harleen by the hand, leading her out of what had once been her childhood home, but was now just a house she would never enter or have to think of again.

*

Once they in the car again, Jack pulled her close and wrapped his arms around her shoulders.

“I think we are going to be the focus of conversation for a while,” Jack said with a chuckle.

Harleen sighed, but her breath ended with a giggle at the end. Jack added, “It was pretty funny. I love it! I think we should stay the night here before heading out again for Gotham.”

Harleen blinked in surprise. “But...I...we didn't pack anything.”

Jack laughed. “Don't worry my sweet...I have everything taken care of.”

*
Jack had the driver take them out of the suburb and drive to a hotel on the outskirts of Bludhaven. Harleen gasped in surprise. She wasn't sure exactly what she was expecting, but it wasn't this. The hotel was huge. The large sign announced the name of the place: The Renaissance Hotel. It was a large twenty-six floor building. Harleen was certain that the place had not been here when she was little, but now it was one of several hotels that dominated the area. The driver pulled up to the main doors and a valet stepped over to open the door for Harleen. She glanced over at Jack, but he had already climbed out, quickly moving around and telling the young man, “Don't worry, I have her.”

Jack grinned and reached in to take her hand. As Jack guided her out, Harleen's gaze followed the front of the building, up, up, and up when she stepped out, counting the floors in her head.

“Jack, this place is gorgeous!” Her voice held a little note of awe.

Jack smiled. “Only the best for my girl.”

Jack turned to the young man who had come to help Harleen out. “Our bags are in the back,” he said, placing a $50 dollar bill into the young man's hand.

The valet grinned. “That you sir, right away sir!” As he dashed off to gathered their bag, Jack wrapped Harleen's arm around his. She grinned at him. “You planned this in what, less than an hour?”

Jack smirked at her. “What can I say? I'm good.”

* 

(Neither one of them were aware that someone entering the hotel had noticed Jack Wayne. A young man, dressed in shorts and a t-shirt, his camera over his neck, blinked in surprise then discreetly took a picture of the two of them entering the hotel.)

* 

Harleen tried the keep her mouth from dropping open as they walked into the large hotel lobby. The word that she thought of to describe the lobby was 'gorgeous.' The walls and floor of a rich brown and white marble that made the large lobby seem warm and inviting. Modern chandeliers provided the light in the vast, almost glittering lobby where several people were milling out, some sitting in the lounge area, others over by the giant aquarium that took up one whole wall. Other patrons could be seen off to the left where a large dining area with a bar filled the space. The place reminded Harleen of one of those rich luxury hotels one saw in movies. She did her best not to gape like a fool while Jack led her to the lobby counter.

* 

As Jack led her up to the desk, the young man who had spied them going into the hotel put in a call to his editor.

* 

Jack stepped up to the reception desk, strolling over like he owned the place (which he probably could have, if he wanted), where an older woman stood, mid-fifties, with hair that shone silver in the light which she had piled on top of her head in a fashionable messy bun. Her features were stern, but not unfriendly. She wore a white shirt with a golden-brown vest and matching skirt with her gold name tag shining with pride on her chest. Her name tag read 'Nora.'

When she saw them approach, a smile creased her face, her grey eyes sparkled.
“Hello and welcome to the Renaissance, how can I help you?” she asked in a clear voice.

On the counter sat an old fashion handled brass bell, a large book, laid open on an antique looking book-stand with an expensive looking gold and black pen settled into the seam of the book, and next to that a modern flat screen computer where Nora had been working.

Jack’s smile was charming as he leaned on the counter.

“I have a room, a suite actually, under the name Jack Wayne. I just reserved it this morning.”

The woman startled a bit when Jack mentioned his name (she clearly knew who the Wayne’s were by the slight shift in her smile).

“Mr. Jack Wayne, of course! Just a moment while I retrieve your room key and I can have someone take your luggage up to your room. How long will you be staying with us?”

Jack tapped his chin in thought. “Maybe for two days, let’s just see how thing go shall we?”


The woman turned the large open book fully to face Jack and Harleen. Jack picked up the pen and with a flair and sweep of his hand, he wrote out 'Jack Wayne.'

He handed the pen to Harleen, kissing her at the corner of her mouth. She glanced at Jack hissing under her breath. “Are you sure?”

Jack looked genuinely confused. “You're my girl, aren't you Harley? I don't care who knows we're together...especially not Bruce.” Jack grinned wide, the light seeming to catch his teeth and make them sparkle.

Harleen leaned in and signed her name under Jack's for a moment, wondering if Jack would marry her someday...if this thing they had would be...she shook her head minutely. She wasn't even sure what it was she wanted. She needed to live in the moment. The past was gone and the future would take care of itself. Not the most common attitude of a psychiatrist, but she wasn't the same person she had been when she took this job. And that was thanks to Jack.

*  

They took the elevator up to their room traveling all the way to the 26th floor. Jack nibbled her ear in the elevator, holding her tightly against him, making her giggle again. Other people in the elevator either stared, shared a giggle, or smiled. When they finally arrived at the room, Jack lifted Harleen up in a bride-carry surprising her into a squeaking giggle as he walked her to their room. The crowd in the elevator (including the young photographer who recognized Jack) applauded the young couple (with the young man sneaking a few pictures).

“JACK!!” she laughed trying not to kick or move too much and throw off his balance.

Jack giggled as he asked, “What?”

*  

A man who had hopped onto the elevator in the lobby, watched the two of them, quickly making notes with his thumb on his phone, even managing to get a photo...even if it wasn't at the best angle.

*
There were only three doors on this floor, spaced widely apart. Jack carried her down the hall to the one furthest on the right, using the card to easily open the door while holding her balanced against him. Jack pushed the door open with his hip and carried her inside.

When Harleen saw the interior of the suite, she gasped out loud. Never had she seen a room like it, not even in Wayne Manor. The room was huge (like everything about the hotel, she mused), the walls painted a warm welcoming beige with white accent walls. The floors were a continuation of the marble from the lobby, with warm fuzzy looking throw rugs and a clear glass coffee table in the middle of the room. The surrounding furniture all looking comfortable as well as expensive.

The lighting, from modern chandeliers that hung from the high ceiling, was soft, casting evening in a twilight glow. The main room contained a long plush looking couch and love seat along with a set of matching recliners, a large flat screen TV positioned on the wall over a “fake” fireplace. Across from that room, with a step leading up to it, was the bedroom. The bed was the biggest bed she had ever seen and it was round. The comforter was a clean, soft looking white, with thick heavy pillows. (She didn't quite process the idea that there was only one bed in here). But the most spectacular aspect of the room (without seeing the bathroom yet, Harleen thought) was the window that ran the entire side of the wall facing out onto the city. Jack set her down on her feet with a grin on his lips. “You like it?”

“Oh Jack!!” Harleen walked over to the window, looking out onto the city below. It wasn't as big or as densely populated as Gotham, but she thought that it was still pretty darn impressive.

Jack strolled over to her, unbuttoning his jacket as he did so and wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her against him. “You ever think about owning the city?” Harleen frowned with a slight snort. “No, I usually only worried about getting rent and maybe owning a car.”

Jack laughed kissing the tip of her nose, then tugged at her ear with his teeth. Harleen moaned softly leaning against him.

“Why don't you go take a bath and I'll order us some room service.”

Harleen turned in his arms. Jack smiled down at her.

“What is this Jack?” she asked with a tilt her head.

Jack kissed the tip of her nose. “No question, just do.” He giggled, releasing her and turning her toward the bathroom and gave her a light swat on the rear. "Go shower or bathe. The bathtub is huge, I'll bring your night gown and toiletries to you after I order our dinner.

Harleen giggled, but she did as Jack said and went into the bathroom. She had to stop and suck in her breath. She should not have been surprised, she realized as she took in the vast the room. The inside of the bath was all dark purple marble and gold plated fixtures. If anything, the bathroom was probably the most lavish looking room in the place! Harleen knew she looked foolish with her mouth hanging open, but she had never seen anything like it.

The bathtub and shower were separate, two sinks and a mirror ran the length of one whole wall and nearly everything seemed to be crafted of polished marble! Harleen walked over to the tub to run her finger along its smooth edge. The tub was a combination bathtub and hot tub that faced another large wall-size window that looked out over the horizon. It was simply amazing. With a pleased giggle, Harleen ran the tub full of warm water, finding some hotel bubble bath in one of the cabinets under the sink, along with some thick, fluffy white towels, which probably cost more than her entire wardrobe of clothing, she thought with a smirk.
She undressed quickly (feeling a little strange with the window even though she knew she was high enough up that no one would see her). Tossing her clothing into a pile on the floor by the bathroom sinks, Harleen slipped into the tub exhaling slowly as the warm water gradually covered her body. The sweet fragrance of vanilla floating around her was highlighted by the silken pleasure of a million tiny bubbles. Harleen groaned leaning back in the tub, her arms draped along the back of it, her thick hair loose around her face as she closed her eyes.

“I could get used to this...” she murmured to herself.

She was so relaxed that she didn't hear the door softly open until Jack's smooth voice floated over to her. “Now that is a beautiful sight.”

Harleen jumped with a squeak. “Jack!”

He laughed, a deep low chuckle that resonated from his chest. He was standing by the tub holding two tall glasses, both filled with what looked to be champagne, his jacket and vest gone. He was still wearing his shirt, which he had unbuttoned to about mid-chest, the tie hanging loose around his neck. The belt around his slacks was gone and he was barefoot.

Harleen grinned, her cheeks red as she accepted the glass of champagne that Jack handed to her. Jack wrinkled his nose while grinning. “That bath looks nice—care if I join you?”

Harleen's blush deepened. “I would love that.”

Jack grinned broadly at her, showing off his perfect set of white teeth while he waggled his eyebrows at her just before he proceeded to get into the tub—with his clothes on. Harleen squealed, laughing as Jack displaced water and bubbles. He sat down beside her, laughed as well and lightly clicked his glass with hers.

“To great baths, sexy blondes and dead mothers.”

Harleen giggled, returning his toast adding, “And to dead fathers.”

They both laughed. Harleen moved closer and Jack put his arm around her shoulders with a smirk on his lips. His eyes wandered down, a slight pout creasing his brow. “The bubbles are much too high.”

She blushed leaning against him. “Well, they do pop.”

Jack laughed and downed his drink, setting the glass aside. Harleen quickly did the same. Jack took her glass then glided his fingers along her jaw tilting her face up.

“My precious Harley...” he whispered, his eyes wandering over her face just before he caressed her lips with his...a sensual draw of his tongue along the soft petals of her mouth. Suddenly Jack pulled her across to his lap. She laughed softly, the feel of the wet material under her as she climbed onto his lap; she felt funny and sexy at the same time. Jack gazed up at her. She couldn't quite read his emotions, but lust was definitely there. Jack's fingers caressed her back, his fingers skimming down below the surface of the water to grip her rear.

“Mmm...so soft...” he said, with a grin dancing across his lips.

Harleen giggled smiling down at him, her soapy hands caressing his face and his hair. Jack pressed his front teeth into his bottom lip as his eyes wandered down to her neck and breasts where the marks he had left the day before blazed brightly on her pale skin.

“I like that I marked you,” he whispered.
Harleen rolled her hips against him. “I should mark you next.”

Jack lifted a brow. “Oh, should you now?”

Harleen giggled with a nod. “Oh yes, I should.”

She attacked his mouth, her tongue dancing along his as she wrapped her arms around his neck. He pressed her close, his hands traveling up her back, fingers sliding along her neck and shoulders. He grabbed her wet hair and pulled her head back, exposing her neck. Jack dragged his teeth down her throat, his tongue flicking out to taste the water running down her neck. Harleen groaned, her fingers balling up the wet fabric of his shirt while she rolled her hips. She could feel him, wet and tight through his slacks, hard against her hot sensitive flesh. She ground against him slowly, the water splashing in lazy waves, cresting the edge of the tub to splash onto the floor.

Jack’s hungry mouth wandered down to her breast, biting softly down on her nipple before twirling his tongue gradually around the hard nub of her nipple.

Harleen moaned in delight. “Oh Jack.”

Her whole body arched, heat racing through her. Jack dragged his hand over her shoulder, his fingers pressing into her tender flesh, gliding down her front, over the soft hills and valleys of her breasts, his eyes watching with an intense gaze as droplets slowly made their way across the map of her skin. Harleen rolled her hips, the friction of his bound erection in the wet slacks pressing against her. Jack groaned as he ran a wet hand up her side, over her breast catching her nipple between his fingers and caressing it while she moved. Her breath came in rapid pants as she kept undulating against him, pressing herself along his pelvis as she rubbed herself along Jack's length, delighted at the feel of his shaft pressing through his slacks.

Jack groaned watching her face, watching the way she moved. He reached up pulling her to him. His kisses were hot and tender. Harleen came then, arching her back, her fingers digging into his shoulders. Jack pressed her hips down on him watching her moaning peak.

“Aahh...” she gasped, Jack's hands holding her the only thing keeping her upright. She attacked his mouth again, her teeth catching his bottom lip and tugging, riding out her orgasm for a few more moments before she let his lip go.

Jack's eyes were hooded, his blue gaze intense as he whispered. “I want you Harley.”

He released her just before he stood up, Harleen sliding off of him with a slight splash in the water. Jack, smiling, dripping wet, his dark clothes sticking to his lean form, stepped out of the tub. He unbuttoned the shirt that was sticking to him in delightful ways that Harleen greatly appreciated.

“I left you something to change into on the hanger near the sink,” he said. “Meet me in the bedroom.” Jack gave her a smile and a wink as he stepped out. Harleen was flushed, every nerve-ending in her body was on ecstatic fire as she nodded mutely at him. Jack winked at her and tossed his wet shirt into a corner of the bathroom as he stepped out.

Harleen only saw him undoing his slacks as he strolled out of the room whistling the first part of a song before he started to sing in his perfectly wonderful voice.

“Fill my heart with song
Let me sing for ever more
You are all I long for
All I worship and adore
In other words, please be true
In other words, I love you ...”

Harleen dried off and hurried over to where Jack had set her pajamas gasping in surprise when she saw the red nightie he had bought her from the vintage shop. She held up the red nightie with a blush spreading across her cheeks.

Quickly, she combed out her hair, braiding it over her shoulder, then sprayed herself with vanilla body spray before slipping on the nightie (without panties). She looked at herself in the mirror turning one way, then the other, her heart hammering in her chest.

This was it, she thought...her first night with Jack Wayne. She squeezed her eyes shut. She was in love with him, deeply, passionately, madly in love with him. Harleen smiled at herself in the mirror, then she turned and hurried out.

Jack waited for her by the large round bed with a long tray of food, wearing only a pair of silk boxers in a dark plum, almost black color. He had taken the covers off the food to reveal rib-eyed steak, whipped potatoes, asparagus, sautéed mushrooms, and bordelaise sauce with another bottle of wine, this time, Cabernet Sauvignon.

He was setting everything up when he saw her, his eyes widening with pleasure as they glided down her figure. His smile was a little lopsided and, Harleen realized with a sigh, endearing. Harleen stood with her hands behind her back, her teeth pressed into her bottom lip, blushing with pleasure. She gave him a shy look. Jack grinned with raised eyebrows.

“‘You look good enough to eat,” he intoned softly.

“I hope you don't mind that I ordered for the both of us.” He stood up to walk over to take her hand. Harleen let her eyes wander up and down his body once before she took his hand.

“‘Not at all,’’ she murmured. Jack grinned leading her over to the bed where their dinner was set out. He poured some wine into two additional glasses.

“To new beginnings.” He held his glass up.

“To new beginnings.” Harleen smiled clinking her glass with his. They both took a sip. Harleen grinned. “I'm so glad you came with me Jack.”

Jack was cutting her steak for her as he glanced up. “I'm glad I came too. Being with you is always fun.”

Harleen laughed. “You put the “fun” in funeral. I never thought I would laugh so much!”

Jack shrugged. “What can I say? I find the humor in everything.”

They both laughed, but then Jack was holding up a bite of steak for her. She smiled as she opened her mouth. Jack slid the bite of steak between her lips, his eyes heated as he watched her tongue flick out to lick the bite. His breath came a little short. No sooner was the bite of steak in her mouth than
Jack dropped his fork, his hand going around her neck and pulling her to him. He covered her mouth with his, the two of them sharing the bite of steak for a moment. They both giggled, but then Jack was gathering her up and laying back on the bed, the food forgotten almost instantly.

Jack's hands roamed up under the nightie, feeling the warm smoothness of her skin, the way her round hips narrowed to her waist then flared again at her breasts, and the fact that she wore no panties just made the whole experience intoxicating.

Jack groaned. “Harley...my Harley.”

She pushed herself up to a sitting position over him, her hands spanning over his chest. She could feel his erection straining against his boxers between her legs. She rocked her hips, rubbing herself against him, drawing out gasps from Jack and a hitch in his breath while his hands traced the curves of her figure again, the tips of his fingers slowly caressing her skin.

Jack grinned and said in a husky voice, “I really like the nightie on you.”

Harleen giggled, wiggling. “I feel pretty in it.”

Jack’s groan at her wiggling on him then turned into a laugh. “You are more than pretty, my sweets.”

Jack pulled her down forcing Harleen to drop her hands on either side of his head, his mouth going for her breasts, his lips and tongue tracing the hard outline of her nipples against the fabric. Harleen groaned, arching her back, her hands shifting to cradle his head. Jack's mouth became more aggressive, biting, sucking, while his fingernails dragged down her sides causing a combination of tickles and slight pain that she wanted to go on and on.

Jack suddenly grasped her hips and flipped her over onto her back. She squealed, which made Jack laugh.

“You are so beautiful,” he whispered looking down at her. Harleen smiled up at Jack. His hair was loose, flopping over his forehead, while his smile was both seductive and full of joy...that she had caused. That aspect made her heart soar, she made him smile! She made Jack happy...what more could she ask?

Jack ran his tongue along the bottom of his upper teeth whispering in a heated voice. “I want to taste you Harley....I want to bury my tongue inside you... Harleen shivered.

“Jack...” she said his name slowly like she was letting his name caress her tongue. Jack smiled, oozing down her body, feeling the silky texture of her nightie caressing his skin. He stopped at her hips, pushing the garment up over her stomach.

He grinned wider seeing her, the slim line of curling hair, the way her creamy hips flared out into round soft curves, the tender flesh of her thighs. The desire to bite and mark her came over him stronger than before. He spread her legs gradually, as if he were opening a flower, staring down at her, watching her open and blossom before him. Harleen's heart hammered hard against her chest, her eyes glued to Jack's face. She couldn't deny she was nervous...would he be pleased with her...find her beautiful?

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Jack ran his hands down her legs, then up to her hips before he rubbed her thighs, pressing his teeth into his lip while he gazed at her. The heat in his eyes told her everything she needed to know. Jack gave her a lopsided grin before he slowly, deliberately lowered himself down to her.

Harleen cried out when his tongue touched her. Feeling the warm wetness of his tongue against her sent shivers up her spine. Harleen was gasping for air when he ran the flat of his tongue up the length
of her sex, taking his time. Harleen shuddered.

“Oh, Jack...” she moaned, her hands coming around to slide into his hair. Jack grinned shifting her legs over his shoulders and wrapping his arms around her tights. He leaned in, pushing her thighs up, his tongue flicking over her clitoris. The touch of his tongue was electric, shooting sparks through her body, causing her to instantly climax. Her fingers jerked in his hair, her hips thrusting toward him as she cried out.

“Uuhhhh!!”

Jack laughed. “So sensitive!”

Harley flushed almost as red as her nightie, but before she could respond, Jack buried his tongue against her again, eliciting a gasp of pleasure from her.

Harleen cried out, arching when Jack sucked hard against the tender spot, pulling her clitoris, gently, just enough of a tug to send more ripples up her spine and deep pools of pleasure around her groin. He continued his administrations, rolling his tongue, teeth and lips over her, licking and sucking deeply, listening to the beautiful sounds of her gasping and groaning. One of his long fingered hands glided up her body to caress the nipple of one breast, rolling his fingers over the hard bud, driving Harleen to moan louder.

He loved the feel of her fingers in his hair, tugging, pulling, her nails scraping against his skull. Finally, tonight she would be all his...and he would be hers...their bodies and fates intertwined, tangled to the point that no one could ever pull them apart.

Harleen came again with blinding force, his tongue flicking playfully against her intimate lips. Feeling the way Jack's lips caressed her, then alternated with the slight pleasurable pain of his teeth, had her spiraling out of control, her cries loud and wanton. She didn't care who heard her! She rocked against him, feeling the press of his tongue, his lips! Then suddenly his tongue was replaced by the slide of his fingers into her. She wasn't expecting the firm feel of his fingers, the sudden change had her crying out again in sheer pleasure. Jack moaned softly, pushing his fingers in and out of her, watching the way they disappeared into her, then came out glistening. She was so wet and warm...he grinned, watching the way her hips thrust up to meet his fingers before he pulled them away completely.

“Jack! Jack!! I need you!” Harleen tugged at his hair causing him to laugh against her. He rose up onto his knees, licking his lips as he did. “You taste just like I thought you would; warm, sweet, delicious...”

He winked at her. Harleen blushed, her eyes twinkling with a mixture of embarrassment and pleasure.

“My turn Jack...” she purred sitting up and reaching over to tug at his boxers. Jack swallowed, watching her. For a moment he was nervous...just a slight twinge of worry that was quickly banished. Harleen gathered herself up, the red nightie falling back into place. She sat on her knees, glancing up at him once before she pulled his silk boxers down his hips. She let out an exhale of pleasure at the sight of him. Hard, thick, and just the right length to make her mouth water.

The expression on Harley's face had him grinning with pride. She ran her hands over his hips caressing the flat, muscled plains of his stomach, the sharp curves of his hip bones, her fingertips tracing the way his muscles narrowed down to his groin. He hissed softly at her touch, the gentle way her fingertips brushed over him, touching his erection just barely, her fingers feather light. Harleen slowly circled her fingers around, brushing his scrotum, making Jack jerk even more than
her touch of his erection.

Harleen purred. “Oh Jack...” She cupped him with her hand and squeezed gently, just enough to make his hips jerk.

“Harley...” he hissed her name, lacing each syllable with the pleasure of her touch, with deep passionate meaning. He ran his fingers over her face while she touched him. Harley. Yes, she thought. Harley...his Harley. Harleen was just her mask. Her fingers glided delicately over his erection. For something so hard, it felt like velvet to her touch. The desire to take him into her mouth, to feel that satin soft skin of his against her lips and tongue was overpowering. She lowered her mouth to him, brushing her lips teasingly against him. His skin felt hot, the warmth of him radiating through her. When her tongue flicked out in an experimental lick, Jack shuddered in delight. Harley sucked Jack deep into her mouth, groaning at the hot feel of his satin erection against her tongue. She thrilled at the sound of his moan, feeling him gently grasp her head. He looked down watching her, enjoying the way her warm, wet tongue danced along his sensitive flesh, the way she looked with him in her mouth. Harley sucked deeply then pulled her lips along his length.

His eyes fluttered as he groaned. “Oh Harley!!”

Jack moved his hips, thrusting slowly while she sucked, then circled her tongue over him. He hissed with pleasure, the soft feel of her lips around him, her wet silky tongue slipping and sliding against his shaft. Jack had never felt anything like it.

She groaned, licking slowly, then sucking hard, the warmth of him, the slight jerking of his hips, all of it made her not only feel powerful, but it thrilled her that she could do this to him, for him.

Jack’s shuddering with pleasure encouraged Harley to suck harder, taking him deep into her mouth. Jack’s fingers convulsed against her scalp.

Jack’s breaths were coming in pants, his hips thrusting slowly until he finally pulled away.

“Enough! Enough Harley...” Jack gasped, his whole body shuddering.

She released him with a giggle rising up on her knees.

Jack’s grin was broad and infectious. “Take that nightie off and lie back my cupcake.”

She giggled pulling the gown over the top of her head as Jack shimmied off the bed and easily dropped his boxers to the floor. He watched her, his gaze heated as she laid back on the pillows completely naked. Harley was surprised at herself, being so open and bold to lie there, not hiding, showing all of herself to Jack. Jack’s heart slammed inside of his chest while he gazed at her. He had never wanted anyone, ever. But her...she was like a drug, everything he wanted, everything he needed. She was gorgeous, smart and he felt wholeheartedly that she was the part of his soul that had been missing. The only person in all the world he was sure would understand him. He was sure of it and now she lay there in front of him naked, creamy, soft, vulnerable and all his.

Jack crawled onto the bed, moving like a predator. The blue of his eyes seemed to glow as he made his way up her body. He giggled and growled simultaneously. “You’re mine. Are you ready Harley?”

She groaned, writhing on the soft sheets. “Oh yes Jack, yes...”

He laughed leaning in to lick her breast, dragging his tongue over one of her nipples and then the other. Harley gasped. “Jack...my Jack...“

He laid down, against her, his face snuggled between her breasts. He laughed biting the side of one
soft, creamy mound, making Harley squeak and giggle. He pushed her up a little higher, the pillows sliding under her hips before he started to tease her opening.

He chuckled. “You're so wet Harley. Mmm...so warm...”

Harley's whole body ached with need for him. She needed him badly and only he could stop the pain. She reached up to drag her nails down his chest. “Jack...ahh...Jack...”

Jack teased her and himself, rubbing the head of his erection against her opening, coating himself with her, watching the way she groaned and pouted for him. He laughed then, a joyous exclamation.

“My sweet, sweet Harley...” He thrust into her, deeply, pressing as hard as he could, burying himself in her soft, welcoming warmth. Harley gasped, instantly wrapping herself around him. Jack leaned in, attacking her mouth, losing control of his body, the need to slam into her, to take her, the pleasure of her warmth, her wetness surrounding him as he took her. The feeling of their bodies, connected so intimately, sent his mind spiraling into animal passions. Jack grabbed her arms, yanking her arms over her head for a moment, holding her as he made long, deep thrusts, listening to the wet sound of their love-making while staring into her blue eyes, becoming lost in their depths.

Jack growled with a grin. “Come for me, Harley... I want to hear you scream my name.”

Harley gasped, Jack felt so good that it was almost mind numbing.

She moaned. “Oh yes Jack! Yes!”

She cried out, her hands twitching into fists while her body arched off the bed. Jack grinned watching her head arch back, her mouth open as she moaned his name. “JACK!”

Jack released her hands before he kissed and nibbled down her neck, leaning on one hand to cup a breast, pinching her nipple delicately. Harley mewled, wrapping her arms around him, her fingers threading through his hair, pressing her hips up to meet his thrusts, her legs sliding down from his waist, her feet caressing the back of his calves.

Jack's eyes rolled. “Harley...” He moaned her name softly against her collar.

The heated passion with which they started didn't cool, only changed into something more tender. Jack wrapped his hands around her, cradling her head. His kisses were more delicate, tender nips and licks against her skin and lips. He moaned her name, his hips shifting and thrusting gently. Harley sucked in a shuddering breath.

“My Harley...mine,” he growled, thrusting slow, hard and deep. He ground his teeth, the warm wet feeling over her washing over him. He moved his hands to either side of her head, thrusting hard, slamming into her a few times before slowing his hips down again. Jack's brow furrowed with the effort of slowly down his thrusts. He panted her name again. “Harley...Harley...”

“I love you Jack, I love you...” A tear ran down her cheek; the emotions running through her were extreme. He felt so good pumping inside her, the feel of his hips slamming into her, then the slow gentle caress of his pulling back, then sliding deep. She reached up to cradle his face between her hands as she said it, staring into his bright eyes. “I love you Jack Wayne, only you, no matter what comes, it will only ever be you.”

Jack smiled, then whispered as if he were afraid that the big, unfair universe would hear him, the words only for her.

“I love you, my Harley. Nothing and no one will ever touch you.”
That was the moment Jack came...with a long, low passionate moan, he thrust deep, pressing the whole of himself inside her as his whole body shuddered. Harley gasped, her thighs tightening around him, peaking with him, the emotions of the moment overcoming her, their bodies were one. They were one.

* 

Jack helped to clean up her and himself before crawling back into the bed under the rich covers. He tugged the covers up snuggling down into the pillows with Harley beside him. He pulled her into the cradle of his arms, the food cold and completely forgotten. Jack chuckled, holding her against his chest. “I meant to be a little smoother,” he whispered with a wry grin.

Harley giggled. “You were perfect.”

Jack laughed and squeezed her against him before he tilted her face up to his, brushing his lips over hers. She smiled sleepily with a giggled whisper. “Best funeral ever.”

Jack laughed. “Agreed.”

* 

It wasn't long before Harley was sound asleep. Jack thought about waking her, taking her with him, but he decided against it. She looked so peaceful, content. He grinned. He would tell her later.

Jack slipped out of the bed walking naked across the room, heading over to his suitcase where he pulled out a pair of black jeans, a black shirt and a hat. The last item he pulled out was a straight razor.

Jack held the razor up to the moonlight shining in through the picture window, examining it. He sighed with a smile. It was a beautiful blade. After seeing how her step-father had treated her, Jack was glad he had brought it along with him.

He slipped out of the room pulling the hat down and taking the elevator. This hotel had security cameras, of course, but not on the top floor and he knew just how to avoid being seen. This time of night the hotel lobby was practically deserted. No one paid much attention to Jack as he slipped outside, making his way to the parking lot. He looked around for a bit, tapping his chin with the tips of his fingers then smiled when he saw a fairly non-descript car, a Nissan Versa...which surprised him considering how expensive this hotel was, but it worked for him. Jack easily slipped into the car, and just as easily hot wired it.

The streets of the suburb were quiet. Streetlights here and there providing pools of false safety. Jack smiled as he drove, whistling to himself. After a few more minutes, he saw the house coming into view. There were no cars parked at the house and only one light on in the living room. Jack grinned and turned off the headlights before he parked in the driveway. He sat quietly in the car waiting, but there was no reaction to his appearance. Jack slipped quietly out of the car and made his way around to the back of the house. As he suspected would be the case, the back porch light was unlit and the door was unlocked. He smiled happily, opening it and sliding inside. He made his way toward the living room where the one light was on and he could hear the sounds of some TV program mindlessly playing in the background.

Jack walked silently into the living room and stopped in the doorway taking in the room. Numerous food containers lay everywhere. The remains of the wake Jack surmised, but there were also beer cans and wine bottles. He chuckled when his eyes landed on Doug, still in his suit from the funeral, snoring loudly while he laid sprawled in a recliner.
Jack chuckled quietly. “Oh, just like you were waiting for me to come and kill you.”

* 

Doug’s eyes fluttered. He’s head was killing him, but then he realized that there was a gag in his mouth, his hands and feet tied behind his back. He jerked and twisted in confusion trying to work himself free his heart beating rapidly in his sudden panic. His eyes darted around trying to figure out where he was when a flashlight clicked on in his face. Doug winced trying to look away, but the light followed. He snarled and struggled, but stopped when he heard a cultured, smooth voice speak.

“Must feel strange for a man like you to be in a position like this.” The man (Doug figured it was a man judging by the voice) removed the light from his eyes and came over to crouch on the balls of his feet and stare down at him. Doug frowned in confusion; it was the man that had come with Harleen to the funeral.

Doug struggled, making horrible noises at Jack.

Jack smiled. “Ah, you remember me don’t you? Jack Wayne. Not a pleasure to see you again. Harley told me how nasty you were to her while she was growing up. How you hurt her. I don’t like anyone hurting my girl...no one. So I’m here to settle that score. I’m going to hurt you, really, really badly. And then, I’m going to kill you.”

Jack stood up smiling. “I figure we have a couple of hours to play until I need to get back to Harley. I stopped by your garden shed after I picked you up...you really are a fat man Doug. Oh, that reminds me of a joke by Bob Monkhouse. When I die I want to go peacefully in my sleep like my grandfather...not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car.” Jack giggled. “You're going to go screaming...I promise.”

With that, Jack held up his straight razor, examining it in the moonlight as he had back at the hotel. He smiled widely glancing over at Doug. “I thought about taking you home with me, letting you be one of my experiments...I haven't shared them with Harley yet, but I'm going to. I love her, you see.” Jack grinned wider still. “She belongs to me now...she is the most magnificent, most beautiful creature...” Jack turned to look down at Doug. “And you hurt her....” Jack's eyes narrowed. “I simply can't let that go. You went all this time without being punished. Well...consider me your angel of long overdue punishment. And your angel of death, of course.”

As Jack giggled and stepped closer, Doug started to struggle anew, his eyes wide in terror. Jack laughed. “You know why I use a knife? A gun is too quick, but a knife—a knife lets you get in close...let's you see what people are really like...”

Smiling, he murmured. “They are never going to find your body.”

* 

Harley woke up smiling, her eyes fluttering for a moment then focused on Jack who was lying naked beside her, propped on his elbow, his head resting in his hand watching her.

He smiled happily. “Good morning, pumpkin.”

Harley giggled stretching her arms over head with a little wiggle. “Good morning puddin.”

Jack laughed. “Puddin?”

Harley blushed and giggled. “Yes...that's what you made me feel like...pudding...all wobbly, warm and creamy...puddin.”
Jack laughed. “I like that. Puddin...”

Harley wrinkled her nose with a grin. “My puddin...”

Jack rolled on top of her grabbing her arms and pinning them over her head, making Harley squeal. “We have the room for another day before we have to head back to Gotham...let's play!” Jack purred. Jack grabbed the comforter and yanked it over their heads.

Harley's laughter soon turned to moans of pleasure.

Chapter End Notes

Used a modified quote from "The Dark Knight"
Bruce woke up after only a few hours of sleep. He was still struggling to get accustomed to his new schedule, up during the day as well as up nearly all night, but he had only been on the streets of Gotham for a few months now. He was still having some difficulty leading two lives, keeping one separate from the other was difficult. He didn't make the headlines as The Batman every night, probably because the GCPD was keeping a tight lid on some of the Batman's activities, but also, for the last few nights since the gala, crime had been rather...pedestrian. Nothing big, no huge criminals or costumed villains. Just your typical alleyway muggings, a few convenience store robberies, all of which the Batman took care of easily.

Bruce stood up by the side of his bed, stretched his arms over his head, then slowly down to the floor before he strolled over to his desk and turned on his laptop to check the most recent headlines.

As he sat at his desk looking over the news, a story in the entertainment column caught his eye. He saw that a picture accompanied the article. The man in the photo caught Bruce's attention first, but then he actually read the headline.

“WHO IS JACK WAYNE SEEING?”

Bruce frowned as he clicked on the article. Over the story was a picture of Jack stepping into an elevator with a blonde woman. Whoever the photographer was, he hadn't found a good angle in which to capture the blonde, but the man in the photo was clearly his brother Jack.

The article discussed the fact that Jack Wayne was seen entering a luxury hotel outside of Gotham with an unknown woman. The author speculated in the article whether Jack Wayne was planning on being a playboy like his brother—who was seen out-on-the-town with several different women on almost a regular basis—or was this something more serious occurring between the mysterious blonde and the younger Wayne brother? The author also wrote how Jack Wayne had not been seen a great deal in recent years, but in the last few weeks, the younger Wayne brother had been making more and more appearances in public.

The article continued with the author writing that because Jack Wayne and the mysterious woman were seen entering a hotel together, could this be something serious with the younger Wayne? Why sneak around with the mystery woman unless Jack Wayne was either trying to keep a low profile or he wanted to keep his mystery woman out of the public eye? The article also discussed the fact that in regards to Jack Wayne's recent public outings, such as the Wayne gala, Jack Wayne had been seen with a masked blonde, the reporter pointed out, and how this particular woman might be the same one he was seen entering a hotel with. Could there be wedding bells in the near future for the younger Wayne brother? The article ended there.

Bruce sighed. He didn't really care that Jack had someone...he hoped that Harleen Quinzel's presence was good for Jack, though it rattled him to know he had hired her to take care of his brother and now she was in his bed!

He could only imagine the field day the press would have with the fact that Jack was dating his doctor...his psychiatrist. Bruce took a few deep breaths. He wasn't sure how to solve this problem with Jack. If Bruce Wayne had been a regular playboy billionaire, Jack and Harleen might not have bothered him at all. But the more the press examined the family, the more likely his secret night work...
might be discovered. Bruce simply couldn't have that.

As Bruce dressed for the day, slipping into a three thousand dollar Valentino suit of light blue, he thought about the fact that Vickie Vale would be here in another day to do the family interview...he just had to make sure there was nothing linking Dr. Quinzel professionally with Jack...he could fire her but Jack had already threatened Bruce once over even the idea of letting Dr. Quinzel go.

Bruce had no illusions about what Jack might do if forced to give up Dr. Quinzel. Jack had always been possessive. Maybe Bruce needed to take the good doctor aside and have a talk with her. Bruce was fairly good at sensing someone's intentions. He didn't believe that Dr. Quinzel set out to seduce his brother, just as he didn't believe that Jack had set out to seduce her, but he needed to be sure. He decided he would take her to lunch and have a talk with her. Maybe, if Bruce was satisfied with her intentions...but they would have to come up with a story of how she and Jack met, why she was staying here...

Bruce rubbed the bridge of his nose, there just wasn't enough time to deal with this before Ms. Vale's interview. Why couldn't his little brother ever make anything easy? Bruce decided first to talk to Alfred. Alfred could always be counted on to give Bruce not just the unvarnished truth, but Alfred would hopefully give him a clearer picture of the situation between Jack and Harleen Quinzel.

*

Bruce made his way to the kitchen, the enticing smell of coffee drawing him to his butler who was just setting the coffee on the tray that Alfred usually brought to Bruce's room where Bruce usually took his breakfast.

When Bruce entered the kitchen already dressed for the day, Alfred glanced up startled.

“Am I running late Master Bruce?” Alfred frowned in confusion.

Bruce smiled. “No no. I just happen to be up early and needed to talk to you about...” Bruce did a quick look around. “Is Jack up?”

“I have no idea sir. He and Dr. Quinzel did not return from the funeral yesterday. They stayed at a hotel I presume.” Alfred started setting out Bruce's breakfast when the young man pulled up a stool to the counter where Jack and Harleen usually ate their meals.

“Funeral?” Bruce frowned, then he frowned deeper...the picture...

“Yes, Miss Harleen's mother passed away unexpectedly. The funeral was yesterday.” Alfred set out the eggs and toast from the tray and proceeded the pour Bruce's coffee.

“She never asked for the day off.” Bruce frowned “She never said anything.”

“From what I gathered sir, she didn't know about the funeral until the day of. Master Jack made the arrangements rather quickly to take her.” Alfred smiled. “Master Jack seems quite smitten with Miss Harleen.”

Bruce frowned. “Yes, yes he does. Has he said anything to you? I mean about the doctor. I'm just...” Bruce sighed. “How serious is this and do you think Dr. Quinzel is after Jack's money?”

Alfred lifted a brow at Bruce's plain speech. “Well sir, if I may be blunt?”

Bruce took a sip of his coffee. “Please.”
“No. I truly do not believe Miss Harleen is after his money. It is clear to me that the young woman, despite her position as his doctor, is in love with Master Jack.” Alfred stood back from the counter with his hands behind his back.

“And Jack?” Bruce cut into his eggs as he spoke.

“I believe Master Jack is in love with her. It is nice to see one of you young men pursuing something less dark and dangerous.”

Bruce looked up sharply, but Alfred only smiled a little and continued. “I have always hoped both of you would recover from your parents' deaths and move forward. I'm just happy to see Jack is starting to do that. Miss Harleen is a lovely young woman sir.”

Bruce sighed. “Do you think Jack would be angry if I fired her?” Bruce stared at Alfred, his blue eyes held that steady determination that they had held since the night his and Jack's parents died.

“I think Master Bruce, firing Dr. Quinzel would cause damage along the lines of the the death of your parents to Master Jack.” Alfred said this with little emotion in his voice, but Bruce was accustomed to reading the older man and knew Alfred would also be upset with Bruce if he let her go.

“Fine, but we need to keep her position as Jack's doctor out of the papers. If Jack is going to pursue this relationship I want it to appear as normal as possible.” Bruce finished his breakfast and stood up.

“Can you tell them both that for me?” He looked to Alfred.

Alfred wanted to tell Bruce that he should talk to his brother himself, but he knew that Bruce was too tied up in his day and nighttime activities. Alfred was well aware that Bruce saw himself as not just trying to save Gotham, and himself (even if he wouldn't admit that part) but he was trying to save Jack every night he went on the streets of Gotham. Trying to save another little brother from the edge of madness.

“Of course Master Bruce.” Alfred nodded his acknowledgment.

Bruce stopped in the doorway, his hand on the frame. Alfred watched the younger man's back, waiting for Bruce to say something more, but he simply continued out the door. Alfred sighed. The boys had been so close before that tragic night. Now he wondered if, after such a long time, they would ever have that close a relationship again.

*

Harley had no idea what time it was when she woke up again. Only that it was daytime since sunlight streamed in from the picture windows, but the delicious smell of coffee wafted over her, bringing a smile to her lips. Judging by the light, it might be early afternoon. She yawned, sitting up, the sheets and comforter falling away from her naked body.

Then she heard Jack's soft voice.

“I could get used to seeing that every day.”

Harley giggled pulling up the comforter and blushing, making Jack laugh. “Now that's cute, blushing after what we did to each other last night? Several times...” He licked his upper lip seductively at her. Harley giggled again with a blush brightening her cheeks.

Jack sat on the side of the bed, wearing his boxers again and a grin spreading across face. “Come
here my little minx, I ordered us a hearty breakfast since we ended up not eating last night and worked off a lot of calories.”

Harley laughed wiggling to the edge of the bed where a large silver cart sat with several covered dishes that Jack was in the process of uncovering. She adjusted her position wrapping the blanket more securely around her while Jack set a plate in front of her and proceeded to pour some coffee for her.

“Now, what would my lady like? I ordered several dishes for us to choose from.” Jack waggled his eyebrows at her. “I had to pout a little to get them to make us breakfast this late, but it was worth it.” He laughed.

“Let’s see. We have Chesapeake omelets which have crab and asparagus in them, along with monray sauce. I also ordered Eggs Benedict with hash browns, Eggs Florentine...lots of egg things.” He grinned with one lifted brow. “I also ordered some vanilla Belgian waffles since I remember how much you like waffles.” Jack reached out and brushed her chin with the tips of his fingers before he continued. “Some bourbon French toast and lastly, some fresh fruit. There is also some orange juice, milk and of course, only the best coffee for my pumpkin.”

Jack put a little bit of everything on her plate as he introduced each item to her.

“Oh Puddin! This...I don't think I can eat all of this!” Harley's laugh only made Jack's grin widen. “Eat as much as you can, because I plan on working it off of you at least one more time before we head home.” He grabbed the side of the comforter tugging her closer. She giggled falling over sideways into her puddin. Jack booped her nose with the tip of his finger. Sitting beside her, their hips now touching, Jack proceeded to cut up her food before he started to feed her.

Jack grinned, taking his own bite. Harley smiled as she gazed at him. She could not remember ever being this happy, ever.

Jack tilted his head toward her. “What is it Dr. Quinn?”

Harley laughed softly. “Just...you make me happy Jack.”

“And you make me happy Harley. I won't let anyone ever take that away.” He cupped her cheek, his thumb tracing the line of her cheekbone, his eyes intent, almost frightening in their intensity.

“I won't let anyone take you from me Jack,” she echoed in a whisper.

Jack tugged her in for a kiss, his hand sliding to the back of her head holding her possessively to him. Harley's heart soared, her fingers digging into his shoulders. Jack's hands dropped to her waist hauling her back onto the bed where he rolled on top of her.

“Harley, do you swear to love me? Swear it on your life...would you die for me?” Jack laid on top of her stroking her hair back from her face as his eyes stared intently down at her. The slight green in them was lost as the blue seemed to take over, glowing with his passion for her. Jack searched her face. Harley wasn't sure what he was looking for, but she wanted him to know that she would never leave him.

“Yes Jack, yes,” she assured him with conviction. “I would die for you.” Harley felt the sting of tears pricking at the back of her eyes, the deepness of her emotions welling up inside her. She reached up to caress his face, the tips of her fingers tracing his features.

Jack frowned then as he studied her.
He caressed her chin with his thumb, then stroked her bottom lip. She wasn't sure what he was looking for, but she laid herself bare to him. Whatever he wanted from her, she would give him, no matter what it was, no matter if it hurt. She would do anything for Jack.

“That's too easy...” he whispered, a slight frown marring his brow. “Would you...would you live for me Harley...my Harley Quinn. No matter what happens, no matter what I become...will you live for me?” Jack's eyes slid closed as he waited her answer. He leaned toward her and brushed his lips against her mouth caressing her lips with a featherlight stroke that flowed across her skin. His nose brushed against hers, all of the sensations of his touch, the heat of his body lying across hers, the brush of his lips, the tender caress of his thumb; all of these little sensations were like a soft, warm breeze blowing causally across her face, a ghost of a touch, not quite fulfilling their promise. Harley groaned softly, her hands resting against his hips. Jack's voice was like warm honey, dripping with sweetness and desire.

"Careful...” he murmured, his eyes opening only a sliver, showing her that glowing line of blue. “Do not say this oath thoughtlessly my sweet, sweet Harley. I'm not asking you to simply love me, to simply be with me—this is more than that. What we have is more than just love, so much more than just fucking. You, you are me...my missing half...the thing I've been searching for...I would kill for you. Saying this, stating that you want this...it's giving me power just as I give power to you... Desire becomes surrender, surrender becomes...POWER.”

Jack licked her lips, then the tip of her nose, all the time staring down at her.

"Do you want this? Be sure...be very, very sure Harley..." he purred, his eyes searching her face. He licked her lips again. “Say it...” his voice dropping to barely a whisper. “Say it, say it, say it...pretty, pretty, pretty...” He closed his eyes taking a breath as if he were inhaling her, breathing her in while his lips playfully danced across hers, teasing her with unspoken promises.


Jack smiled. “Oh Harley, you are so good...so very good. You're mine...I am yours, come what may...”

His mouth covered hers, his tongue pressing between her lips. Harley wrapped her arms around him tugging his body down closer to her. She needed to feel him. Jack pulled the covers from between them exposing her naked body, allowing him to touch and press against her. His hand snaked up her torso feeling the soft, silken curves of her body.

“My pretty, pretty Harlequin...” His voice almost sang to her. Jack's teeth nibbled along her jaw, caressing down her throat, long fingers stroked over her breast, rolling her nipple between his fingers. Her finger stroked along his warm flesh a soft gasp escaping her lips when his tongue rolled over her nipples.

“Oh Jack...”

He smiled, his words warm against the dampness against her nipple before he moved his mouth back to her neck.

“Swear to me Harley...: Jack sounded slightly desperate, that he needed her assurance, his face buried against her neck. Harley smoothed her hands down the curve of his spine reaching the edge of his boxers and shoved them down while Jack cupped the side of her breast. He shifted, using one hand to push his boxers down his hips. Harley spread her fingers wide, her hands cupping his rear giving his backside a good hard squeeze, her hips rolling upward to meet his hips.
She could feel the burning heat of his erection against her groin, prompting her to spread her legs, her core aching to feel him again. Harley stroked her legs against his hips, her feet caressing his thighs, while her hands traveled up the slope of his back, gliding across his muscled shoulders until she reached his hair. Her fingers played gently in his hair, feeling the sensation of the thick, silky locks running between her fingers. She brushed her nose against his, her breath caressed his mouth.

“I love you Jack...I love you,” she whispered.

As Jack reached between them, adjusting, he stared into her eyes. It wasn't just him staring into her, he was allowing her to stare back, that was the moment he chose to thrust himself into her.

Harley gasped wrapping her arms around him. Jack grabbed one of her legs hooking her knee over his shoulder and leaned in hissing softly. “Harley...Uummmm...”

She gripped his face between her hands staring into his eyes while he thrust hard and deep, nearly bouncing her whole body as they fucked.

“I'm yours Jack, only yours...puddin,” Harley panted.

She grabbed his shoulders and pushed with all her strength, flipping him over onto his back her gymnast skills allowing her to know the best way to roll, even if this was not what they had been meant for. Jack let out a startled laugh, the intensity of the sound melting into a moan when Harley grinned down at him, having barely kept him inside her with the sudden change of position.

Jack stared up at her grinning. “Hmmm....”

She ground her hips down on him throwing her head back. “Oh puddin, only you, only ever you...”

Her fingers dug into his chest while she rocked her hips. Her whole body arched with her movement. Jack hissed at the feel of her nails pressing into his skin, her long blonde hair brushing the back of his thighs when she leaned back in a deep arch. Her hair tickled his legs as she leaned back, arching her back in a sensual curve, giving him a perfect view of the soft bounce of her breasts while she rode him hard.

Jack reached up, dragging his hands up her sides, pressing his teeth hard into his bottom lip watching her rocking and groaning. When his hands came up to her breasts, he cupped them, her soft, satin mounds, her nipples pink and hard. His thumbs rotated in slow, sensuous circles over her nipples. Harley was panting, grinding against him. She rode him with all her strength, begging for more from him, taking as much as she could, her thighs clamped around him. She dragged her fingernails down his chest as she leaned forward again, twisting her hips. One of Jack's hands snaked down over her stomach, his fingers spread wide, flowing lower and lower until his thumb brushed through the strip of curling hair, slipping between her damp folds to roll over her clitoris. Harley gasped at the sensation of his thumb against her, which sent her over the edge into an intense orgasm.

“OH JACK!!” she screamed her whole body tensing.

Jack grinned gazing up her, experiencing her pleasure mixing with his own. His goddess. His soul mate. Jack smiled watching her shudder with another orgasm, the way her breasts bounced, the expression on her beautiful face, the feel of her nails dragging down his chest and the way she screamed his name. Jack giggled with joy. Her inner muscles squeezed around him, causing Jack to gasp. The wet sounds of her thrusting, impaling herself on his shaft had Jack groaning. He simply couldn't hold back any longer. His climax teased at the edge of completion. He wanted to hold out, but damn it she was too much.
“Uhh! Harley!” Jack hissed, his expression almost like he was in intense pain instead of ardent passion.

His hips jerked upward as his hands spasmed, slapping down to grab her thighs. Harley dropped her hands down on either side of his head, her long hair creating a golden curtain over the two of them. Her hips came up, almost too far, causing Jack's brow to furrow with the intensity of her slamming down down on him, over and over until he was clinching his teeth panting heavily. She slowed down, rotating her hips in a gentle circular motion that had him hissing. Jack groaned loudly throwing his head back as he burst inside her. “Guhhhh!!”

Harley gasped as she felt him come inside of her. “Oh Jack!” Her next climax shot through her, hot, burning, then rolling in waves of pleasurable warmth.

Harley’s arms lost all their strength and she dropped her full weight on him, feeling as if she was melting against him. Jack held her tightly, stroking his fingers up and down her back lightly with a sweet smile on his lips.

“Mmm...you are very good at that...” he purred.

Harley giggled planting soft kisses along his shoulders and chest. “You are very good at that too.”

Jack chuckled as held her close. He pressed his lips to her ear, rocking her ever so slightly. He sang softly, just for her, his voice warm and tender, a caress not just along her ear, but around her very soul.

*  

“Every kiss, every hug seems to act just like a drug  
You're getting to be a habit with me  
Let me stay in your arms I'm addicted to your charms  
You're getting to be a habit with me ...”  

*  

Harley giggled. “Oh Jack! You're such a dork!”

He chuckled nuzzling her neck and holding her tight against his body, he softly sang into her neck and hair.

*  

“I used to think your love was something  
That I could take or leave alone  
But now I couldn't do without my supply  
I need you for my own”  

*  

He rolled over on top of her, forcing her down into the mattress grinning at her.
“Oh, I can't break away I must have you everyday
As regularly as coffee or tea
You've got me in your clutches and I can't get free
You're getting to be a habit with me ”

He pressed his grinning mouth to her giggling lips, his tongue sliding, twirling with hers in a way that made her shiver from her lips to her toes, a warmth pooling around her, the warm satisfaction of their shared orgasm telling her that everything was right with the world.

Jack looked handsome as always, Harley thought—maybe just a little more so because now he was hers—wore a slim-cut suit of deep blue that brought out the blue in his eyes. She found little details about him so handsome: the curve of his lips, the lure of his eyes, even the laugh lines around his mouth. He had just handed Harley into the car. She wore a simple, sleeveless, silk and wool open back, fit and flare dress with a bow between the shoulder blades in a light red that Jack had purchased along with the black dress for the funeral. He had even paired the red dress with a pair of Christian Louboutin, sheer lace point-toe pumps with black suede detail and red sole, all of which made Harley feel pampered. She wore her hair loose, the natural waves cascading over her shoulder. (She knew Jack liked her hair down.) Jack was walking around the car, about to get in when his cell phone vibrated in his pocket. Jack pulled it out and glanced at the screen as he hit the button.

“On my way home now Alfred,” he said into the phone just as he slipped into the back seat, the chauffeur closing the door for him.

“Master Jack, your friend Lance has returned with another envelope from Mr. Cobblepott,” Alfred responded calmly.

Jack chuckled. “Let me guess. He can't leave until I give him an answer?”

“Exactly Master Jack.”

“Well I'll be a couple of hours so why don't you treat him to lunch and I'll be there as quickly as I can. Oh and Alfred, when is the Vickie Vale dinner?” Jack reached out and took Harley's hand, smiling at her. She squeezed, returning his smile.

“That would be tomorrow evening I believe, Master Jack.” Jack could hear the sound of dishes in the background and a young man's voice telling Alfred thank you.

“Ah good, could you schedule Harley and me an appointment with Frieda for this evening?” Jack picked up Harley's hand kissing the tips of her fingers lightly, grinning the whole while.

“Of course Master Jack.”

“See ya soon Alfie!” Jack hung up the phone, dropping it into his jacket pocket before hauling a giggling and squirming Harley onto his lap.

Jack shoved the skirt of her dress up, his hands running up the top of her thighs, snaking his way up
to her hips when he realized she wasn't wearing any panties.

He growled playfully. “You look good enough to eat.”

Harley giggled leaning in to tease his lips with her tongue.

“So who is Frieda and should I be jealous?” Harley asked draping her arms around his shoulders, her fingers playing with the ends of his hair. Jack's fingers circled causally along her bare hips smiling all the while...

Jack laughed. “She is an older woman who has been cutting my hair for as long as I can remember. I thought I was due for a trim and that you might like to have a trim too.”

Harley giggled softly brushing her nose against his. “You think of everything,” she whispered. Jack pulled his bottom lip with his teeth, his expression one of pleasure when

Harley wiggled her hips down on his quickly hardening erection.

“I do try. Wanna make this car ride even more fun?” he asked, whispering against her mouth.

“Oh puddin...” Harley giggled.

Jack chuckled glancing at the rearview mirror with his finger hovering on the button for the privacy window. The driver had been looking at them, but quickly averted his eyes.

Jack grinned. “Just keep your eyes on the road and we'll be fine,” he told the driver.

The man nodded. “Yes sir.”

Jack wrinkled his nose playfully at Harley reaching down between them, the sound of a zipper could be heard.

“Now, let's see what we can do to make this drive home more interesting.” Jack chuckled.

* *

When they returned to the manor, they found the young man Lance and Alfred playing cards in the kitchen; from the looks of the game it appeared to be Gin Rummy. When they walked in, Lance jumped to his feet upon seeing Jack Wayne. “Sir!”

Jack laughed. “Settle down Lance. You have another message for me?”

Lance nodded, pulling out the envelope from the pocket of his very stiff looking jacket and handed it to Jack. Jack groaned, seeing another expensive envelope with a wax seal. He broke the seal opening the envelope and pulled out another note on expensive stationery. With a sigh of exasperation, Jack unfolded the paper and held it up to read the message.

Harley watched Jack's eyes move swiftly over the paper before he spoke. “Well apparently our little bird wants to have our duel the morning that Miss Vale is to be here.”

Alfred's expression only changed slightly, a tightening around the eyes.

Harley frowned. “Bruce isn't going to like that.”

Jack laughed. “No, but then again: who said he needs to know?”
Jack glanced at Alfred. "Can you find me a pen?"

"Of course Master Jack." Alfred swiftly left the kitchen, returning only a moment later with a pen. Jack set the note down on the counter, quickly scribbling out a response.

"There, now you can take that back to our bird friend."

Lance smiled and nodded. "Thank you sir," he said with relief before he quickly left.

"What did you tell him?" Harley asked while walking over to help Alfred who had started to get a few things down for tea.

Jack grinned. "Oh I agreed to the time."

Alfred frowned. "Master Jack, do you think that is wise?"

Jack pulled out some items from the refrigerator. He set out some apples, ham and brie for making tea sandwiches. Alfred stopped, frowning at the two of them until they each realized what the older man wanted and stopped helping. They both went to sit down at their usual places at the counter.

"Well, I figure we can have out little play date before Miss Vale arrives. Besides, the duel is not going to be here on the Wayne Manor grounds. The bird’s decided he wants to have our little face off on the remains of the Cobblepot estate."

Harley frowned. "What do you mean 'remains'?"

Jack shrugged reaching out and snagging a bite of apple from where Alfred had begun slicing the apples for making tea sandwiches. The butler shot Jack a disapproving look, which had Jack chuckling.

"The Cobblepots once had lands and a manor not too dissimilar from the Wayne fortune, but the story goes that the Cobblepots squandered their fortune." Jack snatched another bite of apple; Alfred paused in the making of the tea sandwiches with an annoyed air.

Alfred said softly, "My grandfather supposedly butlered for the family back in England. He had nothing flattering to say about his experience."

"As far as I know, the house on that land is nothing but a shell." Jack frowned. "Unless Oswald has come into some money to repair it," Jack mused then shrugged. "Well, we're to meet there for our little game of fencing."

Harley frowned. "You don't think he would really try to hurt you? Do you Jack?"

Jack shrugged. Of course, he thought, but said, "Nothing to worry about Harley." Jack reached over and brushed her chin with his thumb.

"If you and Miss Harleen would like, I can bring tea to you out on the terrace." Alfred clearly was becoming annoyed with Jack and his snatching of food when Jack grabbed another bite of apple. Jack chuckled standing up and taking Harley's hand. "That sounds wonderful Alfred."

Alfred watched the two of them leave. A small smile played across the older man's lips. He was happy to see Master Jack involved with someone. Now if only Master Bruce could follow in that vein...
The terrace looked out on the family gardens; as with everything else at Wayne Manor, the gardens were well maintained, the roses just starting to bloom. Though the air was still cool, spring was right around the corner and the sun shining down on them was pleasantly warm.

Alfred came out a few minutes later with their tea, some apple, ham and brie sandwiches along with some scones and fresh cut strawberries.

After Alfred had set out the tea, leaving the two of them alone, Jack poured the tea before setting a couple of the small sandwiches, a scone and a generous spoonful of strawberries on Harley’s plate.

“This duel makes me nervous,” she said quietly picking up her tea.

Jack frowned. “Why?”

“I don't trust Cobblepot. There's something about him, maybe it's just the doctor in me, but I don't think he's quite balanced.” Harley popped a strawberry into her mouth.

Jack laughed. “Of course he isn't—none of us rich people are, haven't you figured that out yet?”

Harley gave him a sour look, prompting Jack to reach across the small round table and take her hand. “Sorry Harley, but yes, Oswald isn't stable.” Jack chuckled then “He's obsessed with bringing back his family's fortune and of course he has had it out for Bruce and me since we were kids.”

Harley frowned. “Just promise me Jack, you won't trust him to play fair.”

Jack's grin was wide. “Don't worry my Harley; who said anything about this being a fair fight?”

Harley's brow furrowed. “So why has he been out to get you and Bruce exactly?”

Harley took another strawberry and Jack shrugged. “For some cockeyed reason that I never quite understood, he blames our family for his current situation. No idea why.” Jack picked up a sandwich and popped it into his mouth.

Harley frowned in thought. “Sounds like he's projecting his misfortunes onto you and your brother.”

Shrugging, Jack took a sip of his tea. “Maybe, or he could just be a cruel little turd.”

Harley nearly laughed tea out through her nose.

Jack snickered. “Enough talk about Ossie, you're going to make me think you like him.”

Harley stuck her tongue out. “Not my type at all. I like my men tall, dark and mysterious.”

Jack's grin was wicked. “Oh, I'm mysterious alright...”

*

In the offices of the Gotham City Globe, the local paper as well as home for the local news, Vicki Vale—her blonde hair piled on her head in a messy bun, held in place by luck and a series of pens—was sitting at her desk with the man who had provided the picture of Jack Wayne and the mysterious blonde. Vicki had her eyes narrowed as she study the man. His name was Alexander Knox. He wasn't attractive, but he had a humor about his eyes that was compelling and so far he had provided the Globe with some good leads on stories, particular his stories following the new vigilante that had been appearing with more and more frequency, the Batman.

But right now Vicki was grinning from ear to ear at Knox who had just given her a great story.
“So you’re sure you saw one of Cobblepot’s messenger boys returning from Wayne manor?” Vale asked again.

Knox grinned. “I had one of my guys stalking out the Wayne place for when Jack came back hoping the blonde might be with him. He saw the car pull in, but then he saw one of Cobblepot’s guys leaving not too long afterward. Seen the kid before, name is Lance—he is Cobblepot's messenger boy. Anyway my guy stopped my source and found out that Cobblepot has challenged Jack Wayne to a duel.”

“What?” Vicki shouted drawing the attention of everyone else in the room. She had stood up when she yelled, then quickly sat back down covering her mouth with a hand. She removed her hand glaring at Knox in disbelief. “Are you kidding me?”

Knox chuckled. “Nope, a good old-fashioned duel! Anyway, my source says that Jack Wayne accepted. It’s going to be tomorrow on the Cobblepot property. They apparently are going to be fencing.” Knox made a face that illustrated how absurd the idea seemed.

Vicki started laughing. “Oh hell, this is great! I couldn't make this stuff up! Okay, can you and or your guy get onto the Cobblepot land? I need a picture of this! Oh and any idea on who the blonde with Jack Wayne is?”

Knox frowned. “Nothing yet, but I'm willing to bet my next year's salary she's at that duel.”

Vicki giggled. “This is going to be gold! Especially right before my interview that evening!”

Knox frowned. “So, you really think Jack Wayne is as crazy as rumors say?”

Vicki frowned in thought, absently pushing a stray lock of blonde hair behind her ear. “Don't know really. That gala a few nights back, that was the first time Jack Wayne had been out in a very long time. Now that I think about it, he had a blonde with him then too.” She smiled. “I wonder if the younger Wayne doesn't have his older brother's gallivanting ways and might actually be thinking of settling down?”

She shook her head. “Anyway, you get in there and get me some pics of this “duel” that I can have tomorrow night.”

Knox stood up. “I'm on it Vicki, don't you worry.” He gave her a wink as he left his office.

Vicki chuckled. Gotham was never boring or short of interesting stories. One just had to be quick to get them first.

*  

That night Jack came to Harley's room. She had just finished showering and was dressed for bed, a large t-shirt and a cute little pair of boxers underneath with little happy kitten pictures on them. She had just finished towel drying her hair and was brushing it out when she heard a knock at her door.

She hurried over to open the door to see Jack standing there, barefoot, wearing a pair of long blue and black plaid pajama pants and a grey t-shirt. He held a tray on which sat two slices of chocolate cake and two glasses of milk.

She laughed. “Oh Jack!” She took the tray from him as he stepped into the room. “You don’t think Bruce will get upset?” she asked as she set the tray down on her bedside table.
Jack crossed his eyes and made a face. “Pffpf! If I avoided taking actions based on Bruce being upset, I would probably never leave the estate. Who cares! Besides, you're my girl...of course I want to spend the night in bed with you.”

He surprised her by grabbing her around the waist and tossing her on top of her bed, quickly pouncing after her. Harley squealed, then burst out into loud laughs when Jack pulled her top up and started to blow raspberries on her stomach. Jack's fingers tickled up her sides, his teeth nibbling along her tummy.

“Jack!!” She laughed and wiggled trying to get away, but Jack yanked her back every time she managed to get a little bit loose from him. Harley laughed fighting back, sliding her fingers under his shirt. Jack laughed and squirmed. “Harley!!”

Harley's eyes twinkled in pleasant surprise. “Are you ticklish?!”

“Don't you dare!!” Jack grinned grabbing one of Harley's hands pinning it over her head, but she still managed to tickle him with her free hand. Jack's laugh was not just sexy she thought, but she loved the fact that it was so free...he was so open with her. Harley was distracted with listening to him laugh that she didn't react fast enough before Jack managed to grab her other arm yanking it over her head. He grinned down at her. “Now you are mine.”

She squealed wiggling, but Jack had managed to get her out of her pants to blow raspberries in other places. Her giggling moans quickly filled the room.

* 

Harley woke in the morning, naked, to the sounds of Jack singing softly while stroking her hair. She didn't open her eyes at first; she just relaxed curled in the crook of his arm smelling the warm spice of Jack's skin.

“Your eyes of blue, your kisses too,
I never knew what they could do.
I can't believe that you're in love with me.”

* 

He hummed softly, the tips of his fingers caressing her cheek. Harley sighed softly snuggling in closer to him.

“It's almost time to get up, my sweets,” Jack whispered.

Harley sighed, content in his arms. “I like that you sing to me so much. What were you singing?!”

As Jack leaned in to kiss her forehead, she could feel his smile against her skin. “It's an old song from the '30's, “I Can't Believe You're in Love with Me.” Lot of old singers did versions of the song, Bing Crosby, Dean Martin...”

Harley sighed in contentment. “Mm...you have a beautiful voice Jack.” Her eyes were still closed as she rolled onto her side and wrapped her arms around him. He was still naked, his skin warm and soft as she curled in close to him. He chuckled, holding her pressed against him.

“Why thank you, Miss Quinn.” He nibbled her ear, making her squirm lightly.
She giggled. “Why do you call Cobblepot penguin sometimes?”

Jack struggled. “Oh, it started when he was younger. Actually I think it's Bruce's fault.” Jack chuckled easing down to wrap his arms around her.

“We saw him at an art exhibit. He has always dressed like you saw him at the restaurant, always in an old-fashioned suit or a tuxedo. I think Bruce said out loud at that exhibit that Oswald looked like a penguin and the press printed it...and it stuck.”

Harley frowned, then giggled against Jack's chest. “I sort of feel sorry for him, but he seems so nasty it's hard.”

“Then don't feel sorry for him!” Jack started to tickle her.

“Okay, okay I'm getting up!” She laughed pushing herself up, her blonde hair in her face. She blew on the long golden strands. Jack reached over moving the long strands aside.

“You're adorable my little muffin,” he said. “I'm going to head back to my room to dress. Wear something pretty for me will you? Maybe something in red again. I like you in red and black.”

Harley blushed. “Sure thing Jack.”

“Oh...and could you wear your hair down? You don't have to, of course, but I do like it down.” Jack ran his fingers through her hair smiling softly just before he leaned in and kissed her, pressing her back against the pillows. Jack's mouth moved over hers, his tongue swirling warm and easily with her own. He pulled away from her lips reluctantly, his fingers stroked along her cheek just before he jumped out of the bed smiling.

“I'll be back in a jiffy for you!” Jack grabbed his pants from the floor, shimmying into them and grabbed his t-shirt. He stopped at her bedroom door smiling at her as she rolled over onto her stomach to watch him.

Harley smiled. “I love you Jack.”

Jack smiled softly. “And I you, Harley.”

* 

Harley jumped up after Jack left, walking naked across her room to the closet. She flung the closet door open and stared. What could she wear that would be pretty? Harley chewed on her bottom lip pulling out a sleeveless red trapeze dress and a pair of black tights that she paired with a pair of her favorite black booties and a little black, light weight sweater shrug since it would still be cool in the morning. She brushed her hair out, pinning just the front back, the rest of it worn long and smooth down her back. She had just about finished with her makeup when a knock sounded at her door.

“Come in!” she called.

She turned just as Jack stepped in. When Harley saw him, her heart sped up, not just because it was Jack, but the way he was dressed...

Jack was wearing a pair of black riding breeches that hugged his thighs and hips in a way that made heat race straight to her groin. He was wearing a pair of knee-high boots, black soft leather riding boots, with a cream colored turtleneck monogrammed with a small purple JW, a pair of black leather gloves, and a fencing foil vinyl bag over his shoulder. Harley felt silly the way she swallowed when she saw him, but he looked devastatingly handsome in his outfit, his hair slicked back, that smile of
his, his blue-green eyes dancing with mischief.

When Jack saw her, his smiled widened. He grinned, pressing his teeth to his lower lip and moved his finger around indicating for her to turn for him. Harley blushed and giggled, doing a little twist for him.

“You look good enough to eat, which I fully plan on doing tonight.” He gave her a lopsided grin and a saucy wink. “Until then...” He held his hand out to her. Harley stepped out, placing her hand in his which he held up to his lips and kissed her knuckles.

* 

When they made their way down the stairs, Alfred was waiting for them. “Master Bruce has already left for the day, though he will be back in plenty of time for tonight's festivities. I suggest you and Miss Harleen do the same, Master Jack.” Alfred handed them each a small paper bag as he spoke. Harley frowned slightly taking the bag, the warm delicious smells of eggs and bacon wafting up from the bags.

“I took the liberty of making you each an “On-the-go” breakfast. I also have coffee ready as well.” Alfred turned and picked up two “On-the-go” coffee mugs. “And I have taken the liberty of driving the Lamborghini Huracán up front for you Master Jack.”

Jack grinned. “Thank you Alfie! That's just grand! Come on Harley, I have a duel to win!” Jack laughed taking her hand and waving goodbye to Alfred with the hand holding his sack breakfast.

* 

The drive to the Cobblepot estate was pleasant. The estate was located fairly far outside Gotham. The landscape was nice, with a lot of old mansions out this way along with long areas of rolling hills and thick trees. Jack drove fast with only one hand on the wheel, the other on her thigh.

“The Cobblepot place should be showing up in the next mile or so.” Jack smiled, then pointed as the car crested a hill. “There it is.”

Harley looked and sucked in a startled breath. While the Wayne Manor was an old fashioned looking manor, there was still something “alive” about the place, but the Cobblepot mansion reminded her of a typical haunted house. If bats had flown out and a wolf had started to howl, she would not have been the least bit surprised. And while the Wayne Manor was in perfect condition, this place looked to be holding itself up by pure will alone. It was clearly in disrepair; Harley wondered how anyone could be living in it. Jack made a right turn down an old lane that was overgrown; the trees on either side were thick, their branches large and heavy, leaning dangerously over the road. After perhaps a mile they came to an old wrought-iron gate that was open, the gate barely hanging onto the rest of the fencing that surrounded the estate. The gate was covered in the dead remains of vines reminding Harley of something from a scary movie.

Jack drove through the gate, following the lane toward the decrepit Cobblepot Manor.

* 

As they approached the house, Harley could see a figure standing by the door. As they came closer, she saw that it was Lance. The young man was dressed in the same, plain, old-fashioned crisp uniform, which looked strange against the backdrop of the old house. Jack pulled up, turning the car off. He leaned across Harley looking up at the old house, then at Lance.

“I guess this really is the place,” he muttered.
“It doesn’t look at all like I thought it would.” Harley frowned, unable to keep her nose wrinkling in slight displeasure.

Lance walked over to open Harley's door for her just as Jack stepped out on his side. “Master Cobblepot is waiting for you behind the manor in the gardens sir.”

Jack smiled pulling the foil bag out from the boot. “Thanks Lance.”

Lance smiled. “I—I can lead you if you want?”

“Sure, why not?” Jack smiled as he took Harley's hand.

Lance led them around the side of the manor where the crumbling remains of a brick path followed around the side of the house into the overgrown remnants of what must have been a beautiful garden at one time. There were tangles of rose bushes, a wisteria that had grown so large and heavy that it had pulled the trellis that it was growing up down, now looking like a tangled bush of purple flowers and greenery. The hedges were all overgrown, any shapes they had once held were gone now. Their shapes were now littered with flowers and trees poking up through the shrubbery like so many invaders.

Lance led them through the garden and down another disintegrating brick path until they came to what must have once been the center of the garden. The area was a circular space where a few rotting and bleached wooden benches sat in a circle surrounding the crumbling remains of a fountain that might have once been lovely in the middle of the space.

As their small group reached the area, they could both see Cobblepot. He was dressed in a three-piece suit, the jacket of which was lying across one of the benches. The vest he wore was green and black checkered, with black slacks and polished black shoes. His white shirt had a high, rounded collar with a black and green paisley tie. Again, Harley thought he might have been attractive except for the sour look on Cobblepot's face.

Lance walked over by the fountain, standing out of the way, his eyes darting back and forth between the two men. Oswald Cobblepot had his own fencing foil and with a hand behind his back; he was practicing several moves. He was fairly good, if Harley was any judge of skill, graceful, but he definitely lacked Jack's style and elegance. Harley had to admit, Cobblepot looked as if he knew what he was doing.

“Ho there, Cobblepot!” Jack grinned waving as he walked over with Harley. “Ready to do a battle?” Jack giggled whispering under his breath.

“Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Agreed to have a battle!
For Tweedledum said Tweedledee
Had spoiled his nice new rattle....”

Harley giggled, elbowing Jack who jerked, rubbing his side with a chuckle.

Cobblepot turned a sneer on his face. “Jack Wayne.”

Jack did his best to make a stern face, but his grin kept spoiling it. “Oswald Cobblepot.”
Oswald frowned as he glared at Harley. “You’re the woman from the other night aren’t you?”

Jack smiled. “This is Harley Quinn—my lady.”

“She your second?” Cobblepot asked confused. Jack rolled his eyes. “Are you serious? No, she is just here as my cheering section.”

“Fine. She can watch you lose.” Oswald’s smile was nasty.

Jack sighed, only just barely stopping himself from rolling his eyes at Oswald. Jack went over to Harley who had picked up the bag holding his foil and withdrew it for him.

Jack smiled at her, his eyes taking her in.

“You look beautiful today,” he said softly when he stepped close, wrapping his hand around hers that held the foil.

“Be careful Jack. I don’t trust him.” Harley said quietly as she frowned. Jack brushed her lips with his. “Don’t you worry my pumpkin pie, I’m not to be trusted either.” He gave her a huge smile and a wink taking the foil from her hands.

Jack turned around, walking a couple of steps from Harley before he performed a few stretches, several deep lunges, twirling the foil easily, his movements made easily and effortlessly. He did everything with a grin, the blue in his eyes catching the morning light and sparkling. He glanced over his shoulder at Harley waggling his eyebrows at her and made a kissy face. She grinned, covering her mouth as she giggled before she stepped up to him, placing her hands gently on his chest. “I love you.” She pitched her voice low, the words only meant for him.

She ran her hands up his chest, her eyes wandering down over the fabric of his turtleneck, feeling the muscles of his chest under her hands, the memory of running her fingers over him last night coming to her mind. She brought her eyes back up to his face. “Don’t trust him,” she reiterated with a whisper.

“I will be careful my sweets,” he whispered back. Harley cupped his face brushing her lips against his. Jack licked her lips before stepping away from her and turning to Oswald who had watched their little display with something close to envy.

Jack smiled. “Ready Tweedledum?”

Oswald narrowed his eyes stepping forward, his foil held up.

“Yes,” he hissed in anger.

The two men started to circle one another, Jack tall and lean, Oswald lean, though shorter. They eyed each other, their blades held in front of them in their right hands, their left hands behind their backs.

Jack giggled as his blue eyes danced with mischief. “What do you call a penguin stuck in the desert?”

Oswald glared at him. “Stop calling me that!”

Oswald lunged, his strike almost perfectly executed, but Jack danced back bring his blade up to easily parry, pushing Oswald's blade up and away. Cobblepot snarled, dancing forward again, his arm moving quickly as he did a series of hard remise moves. It was clear that Oswald had training, but Jack also had training and natural grace.

Jack laughed, his blade moving swiftly blocking each of Oswald's attacks. The sounds of metal striking against metal blocked out any other sounds in the garden. The two men broke apart, taking several steps back and eyeballing each other. Jack made a sudden move that startled Harley. He dropped his weight to the ground in a crouch, placing his hand on rough overgrown bricks of the path to steady himself as he lunged up, his arm coming up to stab at Oswald. The safety-tipped blade hit Oswald in the chest causing him to stumbled backward.

Jack laughed. “One for me, Penguin.”

Oswald snarled. “You wouldn't be so cocky if we were using real blades.”

The shorter man moved around in a slow circle, eyeballing Jack with a smug grin on his lips.

“Oh, you don't think so? I'm the one who scored a point already Ossie.” Jack sneered right back.

“Then if you're so sure of yourself, why don't we use real blades? Or are you afraid to look foolish in front of your tart?” Oswald chuckled.

Jack dropped the point of his foil down, his eyes narrowing dangerously. “Don't you dare say anything about Harley.

Oswald's smile was vicious. “Really? Afraid what you pay her to sleep with you isn't enough? That she might see that I'm a better catch? Or are you afraid pretty boy? Afraid of getting that face scarred up? Afraid of looking ugly to your whore”

Jack's smile was just as vicious as his eyes glinted with something akin to madness. “You say one more thing about Harley I'm going to make you regret it...for the rest of your life Penguin. I'm going to teach you a lesson about respect Penguin, a hard lesson...and if you're lucky, you might live long enough to learn it.” Jack's laugh was anything but humorous. “I'm not scared Penguin...Are you?”

Oswald laughed off Jack's threat. “Fine.”

Oswald motioned to his messenger boy who was standing nearby. “Lance, go to the house and get the real blades from the library.”

Lance looked between the two men, his eyes wide, but he nodded and took off at a jog for the house. Jack walked over to Harley. He set the foil down on the bag that she had placed on one of the benches. Harley wrapped her arms around his waist. “Jack, are you sure about this? I think that's what he was hoping for all along...” Jack pulled her against him, his eyes sliding sideways. He could see Oswald watching the two of them, his expression unreadable. Jack narrowed his eyes, otherwise ignoring the shorter man.

“Don't worry pumpkin...” Jack leaned in closely. “I'm much better than him.”

Jack smiled down at her wrapping his arms around her and giving her rear a squeeze. “I'll beat him without getting a scratch.”

*

Once inside the Cobblepot manor, Lance made a detour through the decaying rooms heading toward
the servants wing. It was in just as much disrepair as the rest of the place, but it allowed Lance to let Knox in through a small door around the back before the duel had begun without Cobblepot being any the wiser. Lance had stashed Knox in a closet and now finally arrived back to let the reporter out.

Knox stumbled out of the closet when Lance opened the door. “Geez! I was beginning to wonder if you were going to leave me there!”

“Sorry Mr. Knox. I just finally was able to slip away. Mr. Cobblepot sent me to get the real blades.” Lance glanced behind him, as if worried that his employer would be there watching him.

Knox grinned. “They're going to use real weapons?’”

Lanced nodded vigorously. “Yeah. If you go around that side, you should be able to stay hidden and get to the center fountain; that's where they're fighting.”

Knox grinned. “Thanks Lance.”

“Just don't get caught okay? I don't want Mr. Cobblepot to know I let anyone in, he'll kill me!” Lance had headed toward the doorway, but stopped and turned to look at Knox giving the reporter a pleading look.

“Don't worry kid, I'll get a few pics and leave. No one will know I was ever here.” Knox grinned. Except for a million readers of Vale's articles...

Chapter End Notes

And of course Jack’s speech to Harley is from Suicide Squad chemical wedding scene.
PayBack Time

Oswald watched them, the two disgusting lovebirds. Jack Wayne had pulled the blonde up against his body while they waited and was kissing her...if that was what you could call it. Looked a lot like he was trying to suck her face off or choke her with his tongue. Though the blonde seemed to be enjoying herself.

Oswald frowned in contemplation. After he defeated Jack, how much would it take to get the woman to suck his face like that...or suck other things. He snickered at the thought.

* 

Jack had his hands on Harley's waist, his forehead against hers. He grinned, his eyes locked with hers while he weaved them both in place as they waited for Lance to return. It was as if they were slow dancing to music only the two of them could hear.

“Jack...I just...real weapons?” Harley had her hands on his shoulders as she stared into his eyes, her fingers playing gently with the edges of his short hair. “This...I don't know...I'm scared. What if he..?” she pressed her lips together glancing down.

Jack chuckled. “Don't worry pumpkin. He's the one that needs to be worried. “

Jack traced her jaw with the tip of a finger. “Nothing is going to happen. If anything, Ossie is the one that's in trouble. He should have never said those things about you.”

Jack's eyes narrowed. “I'm going to make him pay for that.”

Harley looked nervous. “Jack, you can't...”

“Kill him?” Jack chuckled pulling her against him wrapping his arms snugly around her. “I won't kill him. I am going to give him something to remember me by though.” He giggled as he brushed her lips with his, his tongue snaking out to trace her upper lip.

Oswald made a snort that sounded almost like a bird's squawk. “How much he pay you? I'll triple whatever the going rate is for a high class whore these days.”

Then the little man snorted again.

Jack, keeping a hold of Harley, turned to glare at Oswald, and then slowly giggled.

“Away you three inch fool! More of your conversation would infect my brain!”

Oswald frowned looking confused which made Jack laugh all the harder. “Didn't they teach you Shakespeare in school Ossie or were you too busy skating on the ice with the other penguins?”

Oswald sneered in flaring anger. “Shut up Wayne!”

At that moment, Lance came running up with the swords tucked under his arm. He was panting and he looked nervous when he came to a stop in front of Oswald. “Sorry sir, I came as fast as I could.”

Oswald narrowed his eyes at Jack before he turned to reached for the weapons. “Whatever. You ready Jack? Or are you ready to turn tail and run?”

Jack smiled and laughed. “He who hesitates, meditates in a horizontal position!”
Oswald gave Jack a sour look as he handed the taller man one of the blades. “Here is hoping your skill equals your mouth.”

Jack took the blade and smiled. He had to admit, the rapier was beautiful. It wasn't old, but fairly new, based on a seventeenth century French style with doubled-sided blade, a fuller closed hilt, knuckle guard, and straight quillons. The hilt was wooden, covered in leather judging by the feel of it. The two blades were twins of one another. Jack smiled watching Oswald doing a few warm up moves. Jack had to admit, the little man knew his fencing moves.

Jack turned, holding the blade in one hand, while with the other he wrapped around Harley's waist pulling her against him.

He smiled at her. “A kiss, my fair lady?”

Harley giggled. “I shall bestow upon you a kiss, my champion.”

Jack waggled his eyebrows at her. Harley giggled in response to him and wrapped her arms around his neck as she kissed him. At first it was just a press of her lips, but Harley slowly opened her mouth, running her tongue along his bottom lip, encouraging him to open his mouth slowly. Jack purred as his tongue snaked out to caress her tongue in return. Harley rose onto the tips of her toes, her hands threading through his hair, deepening the kiss, her tongue sliding into his mouth while she pressed the full length of her body against his. Jack groaned tightening his grip around her waist, nearly lifting her off her feet.

* 

Hidden within some of the overgrown bushes and doing his best not to curse too loudly, Knox held his camera up. He was extremely pleased with himself for having brought his Nikon D5 DSLR camera and not just his cellphone, because the picture he took of Jack Wayne kissing a gorgeous blonde was not only going to be a beautiful picture, it was going to be a front page of the entertainment and society section. All while holding onto a sword, too! Knox's grin was wide, snapping a few more pictures in quick succession.

Rich people never failed to entertain.

* 

Jack grinned wickedly when Harley caught his bottom lip between her teeth tugging just slightly before letting him go.

“Be careful puddin,” she said quietly, barely above a whisper.

Jack's grin was devilish in its attractiveness. “I will...I promise my sweet.”

Harley stepped back, releasing Jack, dragging her hands down his chest before she stepped backwards out of the way. Jack turned to Cobblepot holding the sword up in front of his face, grinning the entire time. “Ready Penguin?”

Cobblepot hissed, “Don’t call me that!”

Oswald's temper had him making the first move, a swift lunge toward Jack, his sword slicing through the air where Jack's face would have been except that Jack took several quick steps back. He blocked, the swords hitting each other with a clear metallic sound. Oswald step back with a hiss. Jack smiled lifting a brow at Oswald.
Jack suddenly moved, he took two, three, and a fourth quick swipe at Oswald, who stumbled backwards and weaved out of the way, only bringing up his blade to block once. Jack grinned hopping dexterously back, sliding his eyes toward Harley and winking at her. Harley had her hands up to her mouth watching the two men, her heart hammering against her chest. She knew enough about fighting that she hoped that Jack would not be distracted by her presence.

Jack suddenly lunged again, two, three hard strikes, sword against sword, Oswald managing to keep Jack away from him. Suddenly Oswald lunged, snapping his blade up; Jack deflected at the last possible moment, but Jack misjudged and the tip of Oswald's blade slashed Jack in the face, cutting a thin, but deep wound from under Jack's right eye, up through the eyebrow. Jack hissed stumbling backwards, blood suddenly blinding him in one eye.

Oswald looked stunned for a few heartbeats, then smug as Jack put a hand to his face, his fingers coming back bloody.

Oswald laughed. “There! Ruined that pretty face of yours. He isn't as good as you thought he was, eh you little cunt?” Oswald grinned at Harley.

Harley, who had run up to Jack and was now doing her best to wipe at the blood, ignored Oswald, but Jack growled.

“Jack, stop! You need stitches,” Harley whispered emphatically, but Jack only smiled. “I'm not going to let that little shit call you names.”

“I don't care Jack! I just care about you.” Harley brushed her lips against his, tasting the blood from his wound for a moment.

Jack smiled. “I'm not going to lose, trust me.”

Harley nodded and reluctantly stepped back again as Jack turned a vicious grin at Oswald. “Pretty good there Penguin—let's see if I can do better.”

Penguin frowned for a moment, but then he had to bring his blade up quickly. Jack lunged, his arm lashing out like a striking snake. Oswald blocked, two strikes to the head, two more lower slashes, the blades ringing against each other. Jack's grinning at him was beginning to unnerve the shorter man. Oswald took several steps backwards from Jack, whose eyes never left his opponent.

Jack remained calm, staying his ground simply following Oswald with his eyes, the blade held casually in his hand while Oswald circled, looking for an opportunity. Penguin rushed him with several quick strikes, but Jack's arm moved swiftly, the clash of metal making ripples of fear run up Harley's spine. One, two, swift hits then Oswald lowered his strikes, three, four, Jack blocked each one only taking a few small steps back as Oswald circled him.

Penguin took a chance and lunged, his blade coming in close, the hand guards slamming together when Jack let him get in close, almost under his guard. Cobblepot made a stupid move and grabbed at the blade of Jack's rapier. Jack grinned, yanking his blade back, slicing open Cobblepot's palm. Oswald gasped at the surprise pain, yanking himself and his weapon backwards. He shook out his hand snarling incomprehensibly at Jack. Jack only smiled, a line of blood continuing to drip down his cheek.

* 

In the bushes Knox was nearly having a fit. This was great stuff!!! He couldn't have set this up better if he had planned it. Not only were the two of men really, actually sword fighting, but they had both
drawn blood and the blonde was weeping!! It was like a fucking movie!! It took every ounce of willpower and skill for Knox not to reveal himself and remain calm as he took pictures. This was going to be great!

Jack and Oswald circled each other just as the rain started to drizzle down. Harley glanced up, she hadn't noticed the clouds moving in. Her frown deepened as she brought her attention back to Jack and Oswald. Jack glanced at Harley as the rain began to come down harder.

Jack giggled. “Oh Harley in a wet dress. No looking at my girl Oswald!!”

Oswald grinned nastily. “Your woman might like to have a real man in her bed.”

Jack circled the shorter man with a vicious grin. “She has a real man Penguin.”

Then Jack lunged, bringing his blade up and over, then twisted at the wrist, striking Oswald's blade. Oswald held his blade up, backing away slowly his eyes never leaving Jack's. The shorter man started to feel something he wasn't accustomed to—panic. There was something in Jack's eyes, the way those blue orbs glowed with malice. For the first time since they started their little duel, Oswald wasn't certain he could win.

Jack grinned, giggling softly. He started to chant in a sing song voice.

“A man of words and not of deeds Is like a garden full of weeds...”

His sword slapped hard several times against Cobblepot's blade, while Jack, smiling brightly the whole time, continued.

“And when the weeds begin to grow
It's like a garden full of snow
And when the snow begins to fall
It's like a bird upon the wall
And when the bird away does fly
It's like an eagle in the sky...”

Jack took two steps backwards as Cobblepot lunged, their blades moving swiftly, so much so that Harley was having trouble keeping up as the sharp sound of metal against metal filled the overgrown garden. Lance had moved next to her, his young eyes large as he watched the fight.

Jack laughed, lunging, throwing Oswald off balance.

Jack continued his sing song,
“And when the sky begins to roar
It's like a lion at the door
And when the door begins to crack
It's like a stick across your back
And when your back begins to smart
It's like a penknife in your heart “
*
The rain started to come down harder, drenching everyone in the garden. Knox cursed softly, looking up at the uncooperative sky; the heaviness of the rain was making it difficult for him to get decent pictures. He was wishing now he had brought a video camera with him. Jack Wayne was being pretty damn creepy right now, just like all the rumors that had said the younger Wayne brother was crazy...at this moment, Knox would believe it.
*
Jack narrowed his eyes, his long legs taking him around slowly. His smile was beautiful as far as Harley was concerned, though to anyone else watching there was an edge of madness to the twinkle in his eyes. Oswald was panting just a little, keeping his weapon up in front of him, his eyes focused only on Jack despite the rain. The rain was washing the blood down Jack face, causing it to stain his lips red. He smiled at Cobblepot and hissed. “Now you pay for the things you called my Harley.”

Jack giggled and pressed his attack, suddenly moving with a speed he had thus far not demonstrated while reciting the last verse of the rhyme.
*
“And when your heart begins to bleed
You're dead, and dead, and dead indeed.”
*
Oswald squawked as he brought his blade up to defend himself, but Jack hammered down on him. The moment when Ossie's blade slipped, it looked like Jack might stab in him in the chest. Harley let out a scream. “NO!”

Jack pulled himself away from Oswald at the last moment, his blade dipping down to slice through Oswald's knee, the thin blade cutting through the limb like a knife through butter. Oswald gasped in shock, dropping to his other knee, then falling over when the pain raced up his leg like white hot fire, just as Jack yanked the blade out. Jack grinned viciously. “I hope you have a limp to remember me by Penguin. Don't ever challenge me again. And don't you ever insult my girl again.”

Lance had rushed over dropping down on his knees next to his employer who was holding his knee and groaning. Lance pulled out a small burner phone, dialing 911.

Penguin had turned pale and was glaring hatefully at Jack. Through clenched teeth, the little man spat, “This isn't over!! Just you watch!! I'm going to ruin you and your brother!! I promise!!”

Cobblepot was trembling from the pain, the rain making him look pathetic, Jack thought as he smiled
and replied in a voice barely louder than a whisper, “Go ahead and try Cobblepot—I dare you.”

Jack tossed the rapier down onto the old brick path in front of Cobblepot before he briskly walked over to Harley, wrapping an arm around her waist. “Let's go home; this is over.”

*K

Knox took a few more photos of Jack Wayne and the woman leaving and a few more of Cobblepot limping back to his decaying manor. Knox was fighting not to giggle with glee. This was perfect!!

* 

Jack was turning a corner in the car when the blood started to flow down his face again. Harley searched around in her purse until she found a tissue. She reached over pressing it to the half of the cut over his eye.

Jack glanced sideways at her. “Are you all right Harley?”

Harley smiled softly. “I should be asking you that. Are you all right?”

Jack smiled. “Perfect.”

Harley frowned. “What are you going to tell Bruce? You can't hide that wound.”

Jack shrugged. “The truth...why lie when the truth is so much fun!”

With his hair plastered to his forehead, Harley thought that he looked adorable despite the blood continuing to run down his face. She smiled at him and giggled with a shake of her head. “You're incorrigible.”

* 

It was early afternoon when they returned home, Jack pulling up in front of the manor. Harley had called ahead to Alfred, asking him to meet them at the door letting him know that Jack was hurt and that he needed stitches. Alfred hadn't asked any questions, he had simply told her he would have the medical room ready when they arrived. Alfred was waiting for them at the front door, looking as calm as ever when Jack pulled the car up to the front of the house. The only expression Alfred made when seeing the vertical wound that ran down from Jack's brow to the young man's cheek, was a slight wrinkling around his mouth.

“Follow me Master Jack, Miss Harleen.” Alfred frowned for a moment before he turned away from them.

“You are both soaked. We shall avoid the carpets.” Alfred said. He turned on his heel walking back into the manor, his back slightly stiff. Jack giggled holding the tissue Harley had given him to the part of the wound over his brow to stop the blood from running into his eye. He grinned at Harley.

“I think we're in trouble.”

Harley frowned. “Oh Jack.”

He smirked and shrugged at her before he followed Alfred, holding Harley's hand as they entered the Wayne home. Alfred moved swiftly through the manor with the two younger people walking quickly behind him.

Once they were in the medical room, Alfred pointed wordlessly at the examination table while he
moved to pull out a first aid kit, gloves and several other items he needed to sew Jack's head wound up.

Jack sat quietly on the bed with Harley (who he insisted sit beside him) who held his hand as they both watched Alfred. With his back still to them the older man asked.

“Did you at least win Master Jack?”

Alfred turned around, walk to the over to his patient, and set his supplies alongside Jack on the bed. The older man snapped the gloves on over his hands and carefully picked up the curved needle from the suture kit. With his other hand, he disinfected the wound before he began to delicately sew the wound on Jack's forehead closed.

“I did Alfred.” Jack grinned in response, then winced once as the needle pierced his skin.

Harley, squeezing Jack's hand, spoke with awe. “He was really amazing Alfred. It wasn't his idea to use real blades. Oswald was being rude to me then told Jack he wouldn't be so cocky if the blades were real. It was like a sword fight right from a movie! Jack was just amazing. He won by sliding his sword through Cobblepot's knee.”

Alfred, who had moved to start suturing the wound where it continued along Jack's cheek just under Jack's eye, frowned.

Jack let out a short little laugh. “Don't worry Alfie, the bird's alive.”

Alfred nodded slightly as he worked, glancing at Harley who nodded; her silent assurance seemed to make Alfred feel better.

“There now Master Jack, all sewed up.” Alfred placed a bandage over both halves of the cut. “I'm afraid it might still leave a thin scar.”

Alfred pick up the suture kit and stepped back.

Jack smiled “That's alright Alfred.”

The butler turned to gaze at the two of them. “So what are you going to tell your brother, or Miss Vale this evening for that matter?”

“Well, I was going to tell Bruce the truth...shouldn't I tell Miss Vale the same?” Jack grinned innocently.

Alfred sighed. “Go and clean up for lunch Master Jack. I would advise telling Master Bruce, but let him decide what you tell Miss Vale. Master Bruce should be home a couple of hours before Miss Vale is due to arrive this evening. I will make lunch for both of you.”

Jack nodded. “All right, come on Harley!” Jack hopped down tugging Harley with him.

“Thank you Alfred,” Harley responded thankfully, releasing Jack's hand in order to hug the older man. Alfred looked embarrassed, but returned the hug. “Go on now Miss Harleen, get yourself out of those wet things before you catch a cold.”

*

Jack tugged Harley up the stairs, but instead of taking her to her bedroom, he headed down the hall and turned to the left away from her own room.
“Where are we going Jack?” she asked realizing she had never been down this hall before.

“I thought we could shower together...in my room.” Jack smiled at her stopping when he came to a heavy oak door. He turned the knob, opening the door just enough for the two of them to enter. It was dark inside, the curtains clearly pulled over the windows to block out the sunlight. Jack let go of her hand to flip on the light switch.

Heavy curtains, a shade of plum so dark that they almost looked black, covered the large windows. The dimly lit room's floors were dark, highly polished wood, with a few thick, plush looking throw rugs in colors of dark purples and blues that matched the heavy bedspread. The bed itself had to be a king size bed; she had never seen anything so large in all her life. The walls were painted a dark plum color which made the room feel cozy to her rather than too dark. An antique desk sat against one wall where Jack had several papers spread about, along with jars of pens and pencils.

She saw several knives, a couple of them embedded into the expensive walls over his desk as if he had been playing darts with them, and a few embedded into the wood of the antique desk which made Harley think they had been slammed into it in anger. There was a half empty bottle of whiskey on the desk along with a tumbler that was half full, next to a dark stone ash tray that had recently been cleaned out. A pistol sat across the top of the desk with a handful of bullets scattered around it.

There were several dark paintings on the walls; one, all in black and greys that looked like a man's head was exploding into butterflies, another looked like a man melting against a window, his head partly gone...all in black, grey and white. Each painting conveyed pain, madness, and struggle.

The doors to a large walk-in closet were left open, the dim light from the room only hinting at what lay beyond. She caught a glimpse of shoes, a walking stick or two, and rows and rows of clothing.

Harley walked around, her mouth slightly open as she stopped to examine the paintings.

Jack smiled and explained, “I painted those...I haven't painted in a while, but I was thinking about taking it up again. Maybe painting you, if you would let me.”

Harley turned to look at him over her shoulder. “You'd want to paint me?”

Jack's smile broadened. “Yes I would, naked, lying on my bed...”

She blushed wrinkling her nose. “You're teasing.”

“No I'm not. I would. You are the most beautiful creature in the world to me Harley.” He walked closer, sliding his fingers into her damp, tangled hair. “You are what holds me on the brink of insanity.”

He whispered his voice caressing over her skin as he pulled her closer, his lips just barely touching hers. “When I fall, I want you to come with me. Would you go insane with me Harley?”

Harley's eyes fluttered partly closed. She wanted to tell him no...no she wouldn't let that happen, she wouldn't let him go insane. She was here to cure him, save him, but at that moment she couldn't say any of those words. All she could say was, “Yes, yes Jack. I will follow you anywhere.”

Jack purred, brushing her lips with his own. “How about you follow me to the shower then?”

She opened her partly closed eyes and giggled at him. Jack reached out grabbing her hand and led her to the master bathroom that was part of his room.
The bathroom was its own separate room, rather than just a small attached space on the bedroom. The floor was dark marble as was the top of the bathroom cabinet which held two sinks and a mirror that ran the length of the wall. On the counter were some different bottles of cologne, all expensive, Harley realized. His brush, toothbrush and some hair products were scattered across the counter and even a tube of bright red lip stick. There was the toilet, of course, along with the tub/shower combination that took up one whole corner of the room with clear glass sliding doors instead of a curtain. Harley was surprised to see a comfortable looking lounge chair with a side table in one corner of the room on which several books were piled.

Jack grinned brightly walking over to the shower and sliding open the door, leaning in to turn the water on. He let the water run over his hand for a few moments before he pulled the handle that shifted the water to emit from the shower head. With a smile he stepped back closing the door and started to strip.

He had just pulled the turtleneck over his head (which had Harley's mouth watering looking at his washboard stomach) tossing the damp piece of clothing to the side and frowned at her.

“Aren't' you going to shower with me?” he asked.

Harley blushed. “I...well...”

Jack yanked his boots off tossing them into the same corner before he started to unbutton his pants, his blue eyed gaze never wavering. “We might as well build up our appetite...some more.” Jack giggled with a lustful glint in his eyes. “And what better way than to have sex with a gorgeous blonde in the shower?”

Jack slowly slid his pants down his firmly muscles thighs. Harley practically licked her lips. Jack grinned, turned around and opened the shower door so he could step in, only to stop and gaze at her over his shoulder. “Coming?”

Harley nodded. “Yes, yes.”

She stripped out of her damp clothing, tossing the dress and shoes over with Jack's things, along with her panties and bra. It felt wonderful to get out of the damp clothing. She took the last few steps to the shower, Jack holding the door open for her, and stepped inside.

Jack pulled her against him under the shower head, his hands settling on her hips. He tilted his head back letting the warm water run over him. Harley's eyes fluttered from the water spraying across them, but she gazed at his arched neck, watching the water run down his front. She laid her hands on his chest gently caressing his pectorals, her hands running in gentle circles.

Jack's head came up with a bright grin. “Turn around. I want to wash your hair.”

Harley giggled with a warm blush, doing as he asked. “All right Jack.”

Jack reached to a shower shelf to grab a bottle of shampoo. The bottle was brand new, a bottle he had had Alfred purchase for him just for this (although the aging butler was unaware of its purpose)...just for the moment Jack had Harley as his and brought her to his shower, his room. No one except Alfred had ever been in his room. Having Harley here was another step in claiming her as his.

Jack lifted the bottle, pouring a small amount into the palm of his hand. He had picked the brand out himself based on reviews of how sexy the shampoo smelled. (He had settled on a brand from Victoria's Secret, where he had also purchased other items to eventually give to his Harley).
Jack smiled, pleased with the scent, reaching up and began to run his fingers over her scalp.

Harley moaned softly while Jack began to work the shampoo into a lather, his long nimble fingers gently massaging her scalp while he slowly piled her thick hair up on her head, working the shampoo in thoroughly. When he was done, Jack eased her under the shower head, letting the water run through her hair, his fingers carefully tugging through any tangles as he rinsed the shampoo from her hair. Next, Jack reached for the conditioner, pouring a generous amount into the palm of his hand before rubbing the creamy substance thoroughly through her hair, paying special attention to the ends of her hair. Harley let out a small laugh of pleasure. “This is so nice Jack.”

“I'm glad you are enjoying it,” he said softly. “There, we'll let that sit for a few minutes...now I get to wash your body.”

Harley had had her eyes closed, opened them now with a slight pout on her lips. “Don't I get to wash your hair?”

Jack grinned. “Next time—this time it's my turn to enjoy you...I get to wash you...worship you.” His eyes wandered down her body then back to her eyes. “My treat for winning today.” His smile was sweet, his blue eyes lustful.

She could almost feel the heat emanating from his gaze, his smile turning a touch predatory when he reached behind himself without looking and picked up the bar of soap. Jack waggled his eyebrows at her while he rubbed the soap between his hands until he had a good soapy lather. “Hmm...where should I start Harley?”

Harley giggled, her blue eyes dancing with mischief. “I think the breasts are always a good place to start puddin.”

Jack purred at the sound of his nickname. “Mmm...perhaps you are correct my little dumpling.”

He winked at her before reaching out to slowly run his soapy hands over her breasts. Harley took a shuddering breath, the feel of his slick palms running over her breasts caused her body to vibrate with pleasure. Jack focused special attention on her breasts, squeezing and massaging before his hands moved down over her stomach, the soap allowing his palms to slip and slide down the flat planes of her stomach easily. His hands danced along her stomach then spread wide to embrace the curve of her hips, then lower still. Jack's thumbs traced the the “v” of her sex in a smooth swirl before sliding down, spreading her thighs gently.

Harley adjusted her position when Jack's hands worked their way down her thighs. She spread her legs a fraction to allow his hands to wander along the sensitive skin of her inner thighs. Jack dragged his hands up and down slowly, massaging her skin as he did, taking his time to run his soapy hands over every inch of sensitive flesh. His hands gradually came up her thighs again, but this time his thumbs circled her sex drawing a sensual line from the shape of her groin up along the skin between her thighs and back. Jack let the running water rinse his hands as he plied his dexterous fingers to his Harley. She moaned softly stumbling back a little to lean against the shower wall when his thumbs delved deeper between the lips of her sex, finding her most sensitive spot. At first his touches were delicate, just the tips of his thumbs swirling over the sensitive nub of her clitoris, but as Harley started to pant, his strokes became more forceful. Jack grinned, his fingers pressing harder on her clitoris eliciting deeper moans from Harley.

“Uuhh...Jack!” Harley groaned, her eyes fluttering close. Jack grinned, his blue eyes on her face watching the changes in her expression as his fingers moved over her skin. He caught his bottom lip between his teeth while his thumbs pressed and rubbed against her sex urging an orgasm from her with the circling of his thumbs. Her hips jerked against the pressure, her breath hissing from between
her lips.

Jack rubbed harder, his thumbs rotating in slow circles over her, forcing Harley to use the shower wall to hold herself upright. Jack left one thumb on her clitoris rolling and stroking, while his other hand snaked up her body to glide over her breast, his slick fingers pinching her nipple.

Harley gasped climaxing with a cry. “UHH!! Jack!!”

He chuckled. “That's my precious...”

He continued to rub causing her body to quake. “Oh Jack!!” Harley moaned.

Jack licked her mouth just before he kissed her hard, pressing her up against the shower wall. The water ran down over them washing away the soap. Jack thrust his tongue into her mouth, pressing the length of his body against her. She wrapped her arms around him, her hands immediately coming down to grip his rear. She squeezed pressing his hips against hers feeling his hard, hot erection trapped between their bodies. Harley dragged her teeth over his tongue her voice heavy with need.

“I want you Jack...I want you...puddin...” She giggled softly, her eyes staring into his, becoming lost in the deep blue that seemed to almost glow, as if lit by some inner light. Jack grinned with pleasure. He liked the way she moaned his name...her nickname for him made him feel more than simply special to her...he couldn't put his finger on what it was, but hearing her call him puddin felt right.

Jack's hands slid down her hips again, then up, feeling the almost perfect roundness of her hips, the silken softness of her skin under his hands. He was about to press her against the wall when Harley slid down to her knees.

“Harley?” He blinked in confusion for a moment. Harley gave him the cutest yet wickedest grin when she gazed up at him. Her blue eyes mischievous just before she ran her tongue against the underside of his erection.

Jack groaned. The sudden warmth of her tongue was so unexpected that Jack stumbled forward slightly, his hands catching the shower wall to keep himself steady. Harley grasped him with one hand, careful not to hold onto him too hard, just enough to hold him firmly. She rubbed her wet hand up and down him once, then twice causing Jack to groan louder.

She leaned in to wrap her mouth around him while her hand continued to glide up and down his length. Jack's hips jerked. The warmth of her mouth was intoxicating, the press of her soft lips against his erection had him pressing his teeth into his lip as ripples of pleasure raced up from his groin.

Harley sucked hard, deep, taking all of him into her mouth, her tongue playing against the underside of his shaft, until he was nearly touching the back of her throat. Harley gradually pulled her lips away slowly, her teeth just touching his tender skin, her tongue flicking back and forth against the underside of his shaft, which caused goosebumps to spread across his skin. Jack's eyes rolled back for a moment before he could look down and focus on her. He had never seen anything as beautiful as his Harley down on her knees with him in her mouth. His ran his fingers through her hair, watching her while she licked and sucked on him, her hair twisting around his fingers.

Harley glanced up, grinning while she twirled her tongue around the head of his shaft. She loved having Jack almost melting at her touch, weak with the things she was doing to him. Her eyes danced with merriment. Jack chuckled seeing the expression in her eyes, then groaned, his hips jerking forward when she sucked again.
“Damn Harley...you are so good at that.” He grinned then gasped when she took him deep into her mouth once more. He reached down with one hand, his fingers caressing her shoulder then along her jaw, feeling the way her cheeks were hollowed out when she sucked on him.

“Come here Harley;” he purred then groaned.

She stood up grinning, but then Jack surprised her with the way he nearly hauled her up off her feet, pressing her against the wall. He hooked one of her legs over his arm, lifting her leg up high, forcing her other foot up on her tiptoe in order to maintain her balance. Harley wrapped one arm around his neck, the fingers of her other hand pressing into his shoulder. He held her there gazing into her eyes before he slowly lowered his head to her breast. Harley arched her back, easing her breasts up to give him better access just as Jack bit down on her. She groaned when he started to suck on her skin, knowing he would leave a purple mark on her. His tongue glided along the curve of her breast until he touched her nipple, then Jack bit again. Harley groaned, then whimpered when he released her nipple in order to gaze into her eyes again.

Jack smiled at her, while with his other hand he teased her opening.

“Do you want me Harley?” Jack asked, his voice warm, soft.

“Yes puddin...oh yes,” Harley moaned

Jack hissed, pressing close to her.

“Good...” he whispered then thrust into her.

Harley gasped in pleasure when she felt Jack enter her. Jack kept his movement's slow, but hard, burying himself deep before pulling back, then hard again, thumping her backside against the shower wall at the same moment he was pressing her leg up higher. He cradled her rear with the hand holding her leg up, pressing her firmly against the wall, his hips thrust hard and fast, then slow, yet deep. Harley, her hair sticking her to her face and shoulders, shuddered, her fingers digging into his shoulder.

She was panting crying out. “Oh Jack, Jack, Jack!!”

Jack trembled. “Harley...come for me Harley...”

Harley groaned. He felt good, more than simply good...she couldn't think of words that could possibly describe how he made her feel.

She screamed out his name. “JACK!” but her cries were cut off when Jack covered her mouth with his own. Jack's kisses were at once passionate and tender. He caught the high cry of her orgasm against his lips. She whimpered against his mouth. Jack slowed his thrusts down, easing into her, then pulling back gradually only to ease into her again.

“Uhh..Jack, I love you...I love you puddin...” She giggled her body tightening around him. Jack shuddered, moaning her name. “Harley...I love you...my girl...my Harley.”

She groaned feeling his member swelling as Jack gasped, coming with a hot sudden burst. Harley groaned climaxing with him, wrapping her arms around his neck, burying her moans against his throat.

Jack thrust a few more times, his legs trembling.

He eased out of her. Harley shuddered, a soft moan escaping her lips when he pulled out. He
wrapped his arms around her waist pulling her closer against him, his face buried against her damp hair. They stood under the shower head letting the warm water wash over the both of them without either of them saying a word. They didn't need to.

After a few moments Jack sighed. “We should finish up and have some lunch.”

Harley sighed in contentment with a warm smile, her fingers caressing the back of his neck. “You're right.”

* 

After they finished showering. Jack grabbed a couple of towels, but instead of letting Harley dry herself off he dried her.

She giggled as he ran the fluffy towel down her legs. “Jack what are you doing?”

He grinned. “What does it look like I'm doing? I'm drying my lady off.”

Harley blushed. “You don't have to do that.”

“I know.” He grinned and winked at her handing her another towel to wrap around herself as he walked naked out of the bathroom toweling his hair dry. She wrapped the towel around her middle and followed after him.

Jack walked out into the main bedroom and over to a closet. Harley followed after him just watching him. She was definitely enjoying watching him walk around naked. He tossed the towel he had been using to the side while Harley sat on the edge of the bed gazing at him. Jack pulled out a suit with thin purple chalk strips in a dark navy blue, a three piece suit with thin lapels.

He held it up. “What do you think Harls?”

“Oh, you will look incredible,” Harley gushed which made Jack laugh. “Why thank you Harls.”

Harley giggled standing up. “I should probably go get dressed myself.”

Jack frowned as if he just now realized that she didn't share a room with him.

“Oh, yes all right. I'll come to your room as soon as I'm dressed.” Jack walked over tossing the suit onto the bed as Harley stood up. He pulled her into the circle of his arms and kissed her tenderly. Harley caressed his face with the tips of her fingers.

He grinned. “I like you wearing only a towel by the way.”

Harley blushed and giggled. “I like you completely naked.”

His grin widened and then he kissed the tip of her nose.

* 

Harley hurried across the hall to her room, praying that she wouldn't be caught by Bruce or Alfred wearing only a towel. She made it to her door with a sigh of relief. Once inside, she dropped the towel and headed over to her dresser where she pulled out a pair of lacy red panties with a matching bra. She slipped into them with a smile, hoping Jack would like the set. She had bought them ages ago with no real reason except she thought they were pretty. Harley stopped and gazed at herself in the mirror. There were a few new bite marks from the shower.
She blushed tracing one mark that fell into her cleavage like a secret. The hot images of Jack with his mouth on her returned, causing her to squirm a little. She loved the feel of him, the smell of him...everything about Jack Wayne made her blood run hot. With a happy shiver, Harley hurried over to her closet. She pulled out a pair of slit-leg sailor pants in black that buttoned up the side of her hip and a red boat neck dolman top that was snug around her hips. It was a casual yet nice enough outfit that she could wear it during the interview if Vicki Vale happened to find out about her. Harley was assuming that Bruce Wayne would want her hidden, but she was also sure Jack would want her with him. This way she was prepared. Harley had just finished with her make-up, slipping on a pair of red heels and had just sat down picking up the hair dryer to finish drying her hair when she heard a knock at her door.

“It's open,” she said turning to see who it was at her door.

The door opened and Jack walked in looking devilishly handsome in the suit he had shown her earlier, his wingtip bi-colored shoes highly polished, his hair slicked back and a smile on his face. Harley's heart sped up just looking at him. She smiled turning back to the mirror. She watched him walk up behind her in the mirror's reflection and she gave him a happy grin as he stepped behind her.

“I'm almost ready; just have to finish with my hair.”

Jack grinned reaching out with one hand to brush her ear. “No rush,” he assured her. “I brought you something.”

Harley turned around setting the dryer down as Jack held out a long velvet jewelry box.

“This was my mother's, but I thought it would look beautiful on you,” Jack said softly. He opened the box. Inside, laying on a bed of white velvet, was a necklace. The craftsmanship was immediately apparent, a beautiful gold, finely crafted chain that seemed so delicate at first glance that it was almost not visible, on it hung a simple, perfectly round ruby.

“Oh Jack...” Harley said breathlessly.

Jack smiled taking the necklace out of the box, Harley turned as Jack placed the exquisite piece around her neck. He carefully hooked the clasp before he leaned in and kissed her right under the ear.

His voice was low, seductive. “It looks perfect on you.”

Harley laid her fingers against the ruby. “I just...oh Jack, it's too much.” She said, though the idea of something so clearly expensive on her throat had her a little bit thrilled.

Jack wrapped his arms around her. “It's just the start Harley,” he said with some excitement in his tone. “You are going to be part of everything with me. Even the darker bits.”

He nibbled her ear making her giggle. “Now, dry your hair and let's go eat lunch with Alfred.”

Harley grinned. She didn't know what the “darker bits” were that Jack was talking about, but honestly she didn't care. Jack had her heart, her soul and she would go wherever that would take her.

*  

When the two of them arrived in the kitchen, Alfred glanced over, noticing the way the two of them were holding hands. His old heart swelled with happiness to see one of the brothers having found
Alfred was putting the finishing touches on two plates that contained Dijon-herbed crushed salmon along with creamy dill sauce and lightly roasted red potatoes. The elderly butler was placing the potatoes on the plates just as the two walked into the kitchen. The smell, thought Harley as she entered the kitchen, was absolutely delicious.

Alfred smiled when he saw them. “Ah, there you are. I thought you might like to have lunch in the glass patio this afternoon. The rain is falling lightly and it is creating quite a cozy atmosphere. I thought the two of you might enjoy it.”

Harley blushed while Jack laughed. “You think of everything Alfie.”

“I do try Master Jack.” The older man smiled. “Now, why don’t you take Miss Harleen out there and I will bring your lunch shortly.”

*  

Soon the two of them were sitting out in the glass patio. It was a small area, only big enough to fit perhaps ten people. The patio itself jutted off the ballroom looking out onto another section of the Wayne grounds. The view was nice, trees and hills with a view of the water and Gotham in the distance. Right now, with the sun shining with a pale liquid quality through the soft grey rain clouds, the room was indeed cozy. Alfred had set the table up with a white table cloth, candles and a bottle of white Pinot Noir. Alfred had even placed some white tulips in a vase on the table. It was all very romantic, Harley thought with a small smile.

Alfred stepped into the enclosed patio carrying a tray with their lunch on it and set their plates down in front of them. “I will return later with dessert.” The older man smiled at the two of them before he left.

A grin spread across Jack's face as he poured some wine into Harley's glass for her.

Harley was blushing as she reached over and picked up her glass of wine.

“Alfred did such a nice job, it's like we are out on a date somewhere exotic watching the rain fall.”

Jack picked up his own glass taking a long sip. “Mm...yes, he thinks of everything.”

Jack leaned over and clinked his glass against hers. “To the most beautiful woman in the world.”

Harley giggled blushing as Jack gave her a saucy wink before he sipped his wine.

*  

Bruce arrived home early in order for him to prepare for Ms. Vale's interview tonight. He wanted to do a quick inspection of the house, to make sure everything looked good and that there was nothing that would arouse the reporter's suspicion or cause her to become overly interested in anything particular. He also wanted a chance to speak to Jack and Dr. Quinzel before Ms. Vale arrived, to make sure they both understood that Vale was not to know how they met and that they were not to let her know that Dr. Quinzel was living at the manor. He would have preferred that Dr. Quinzel not be anywhere near Ms. Vale, but he knew Jack wouldn't have it. He would make a scene if Bruce tried to force the issue of Dr. Quinzel.

Bruce was tense as he strolled into the manor and called. “Alfred?”
Alfred appeared a heartbeat later. For a moment Bruce was thinking that Alfred would be a great
Batman the way the older man managed to just “appear” without a sound.

“Are Jack and Dr. Quinzel here?” Bruce asked as he loosened his tie.

“Yes they are Master Bruce, they are eating lunch on the enclosed patio.” Alfred took Bruce's jacket
as younger man slipped out of it.

“Thank you Alfred.” Without further comment, Bruce walked off.

Alfred watched him go with a frown. Alfred had noticed the necklace, but now he worried how
Master Bruce would react to seeing it about Miss Harleen's neck.

* 

Jack had scooted his chair around in order to sit right next to Harley. He had picked up her hand and
kissed the tip of each finger. Harley smiled softly, both of them staring at each other as if lost in each
others eyes.

Jack pressed her index finger against his lips when he spoke. “We should go on vacation together.
Get away from Gotham for a while. There's a family cabin that the Wayne's have owned forever in
Aspen Colorado. I don't think Bruce has been up there in a while. We could go skiing, have sex in a
sauna.” Here Jack waggled his eyebrows at her. “Then we could sip hot coco naked in a big bed
surrounded by blankets...Oh!” he said with a sudden thought. “Or in front of a fire with a bear skin
rug...you naked...a glass of grape soda in your hand giving me a “come hither” look...” Jack giggled.

Harley giggled with him. “Grape soda?”

Jack laughed. “Yes! I could pour it in your navel and drink it with my tongue.”

Harley giggled. “Oh! That would be wonderful puddin.”

Jack was just about to say something else when his brother suddenly walked into the room speaking
before he even saw Jack or Harley.. “Jack, Dr. Quinzel I need to talk to you...”

Bruce's voice trailed off, his eyes focusing on Harley, but it wasn't “her” he was seeing, but rather
the necklace around her throat. Bruce's blue eyes suddenly turned cold. “Jack.” His tone was flat.

Jack turned, still holding Harley's hand, raising his eyebrows in question at his brother. “Bruce?”

Bruce narrowed his eyes focused solely on the necklace Harley wore. “Why is she wearing that?”

He pointed at Harley, who touched the necklace glancing with uncertainty between Jack and Bruce.

Jack stood up, his tone immediately defensive. “Because I gave it to her.”

“You what?” Bruce turned to Jack, his blue eyes showing more passion than Harley had seen in
them since she started working at Wayne manor.

“You had no right to give that to her Jack! Especially not when she is just a...” Bruce snarled, but
Jack cut him off.

Jack held up a finger. “Don't you dare, don't you finish that sentence Bruce.”

Bruce snarled. “That was our mother's! You had no business giving it to her Jack.”
Jack suddenly stepped away from the table, nearly knocking over his chair as he moved in close to his brother, shoving Bruce in the chest. “I can give her mother's necklace if I want.”

Bruce felt something in him boiling over. His hand shot out before he had time to consider his actions; he slapped his brother across the face. Jack's head snapped to the side with the force of the hit, splitting his lip, causing the younger Wayne to stumble into the chair. Harley let out a gasp leading into a scream. “JACK!”

Jack turned back to face Bruce. Bruce was staring at his hand, shocked at his own action. Jack's voice was low, deadly.

“She couldn't be bothered to be here Bruce, but Harley is—Harley is here for me. Unlike the rest of my blood relatives, none of whom have EVER been here for me! Harley is! Harley is here and you know what? She is only here for me! And if I want her to have that necklace, then she is going to have that fucking necklace BRUCE!”

Bruce snarled. “What do you mean no one is here for you?! I'm your brother! And OUR MOTHER IS DEAD!”

Jack leaned toward his brother's face, as if he dared Bruce to strike him again. “Why break a trend Bruce? When I said none of my relatives are here for me I meant it...when was the last time you were here for me Bruce? When was the last time you listened to me? And yeah..she is dead. DEAD, BRUCE. She has been dead longer than I ever knew her!!”

Harley watched in horror as the two men faced off. Alfred came dashing into the room clearly brought by the sounds of fighting.

Jack was grinning at his brother, blood running down his chin, dripping slowly onto his suit. “Go ahead and hit me again Bruce. Beat me with your fists until they're bloody!! That's all you were ever good at. Even when we were kids, after our parents died, remember how many times you hit me when I said something or did something you didn't like? Or didn't approve of? Or how many times you called me crazy, insane? Well Harley doesn't do any of those things. She is my girl Bruce! You are just going to have to get used to it and if I want to give her mother's necklace you can't stop me.”

Bruce stared at his brother, his face contorting between pain and rage. “I...I was young too Jack. I made mistakes.”

Jack smiled. “And you are just going to have to live with them aren't you Bruce?”

Jack reached for Harley, taking her hand and pulling her close, wrapping his arm protectively around her waist. For a moment she wasn't sure if it was to protect her or himself.

Bruce clearly wanted to say more, but instead he hissed, saying the words he had promised himself he wouldn't, but Jack, as usual, pushed him. “I don't want her here for the interview. I don't want her here at all!”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “Well you don't always get what you want, do you Bruce?”

Jack shoved Bruce in the shoulder, pushing his older brother out of his way as he led Harley out, leaving Bruce steaming with Alfred looking pained next to him.

* 

Once Jack and Harley were gone Bruce sighed. “Alfred...what am I going to do?”
Alfred sighed along with him. “Well Master Bruce, you certainly handled that with the grace of a bull.”

Bruce covered his face. “I just...why did he give her that necklace Alfred?”

“Perhaps Master Bruce, because he loves her.”

Bruce frowned turning to stare at him. “You really think so, don't you.” It was more of a statement than a question.

Alfred shrugged. “Love causes all of us to do things we would not likely do otherwise. Jack loves her.”

Bruce pulled out a chair and sat down, glancing over briefly at the remains of Jack and Harley's lunch. “I—you know I don't think in all this time Jack has ever reacted that way toward me.” His tone was soft, musing now.

Alfred sighed. “I have found that how much someone cares about you is directly proportional to how much you can piss them off, as it were. You care a great deal for Jack, and Jack cares a great deal about you, but now he also cares about Miss Harleen. If you try to take that away...I know you and Jack had butted heads over this issue already, and you have asked my opinion Master Bruce. Now it is your turn to either accept Miss Harleen as part of Master Jack's life, or risk the gap between you and Jack becoming wider.” Alfred gave Bruce a sad smile and left the patio.

Bruce sighed. It was so much easier beating up criminals at night, fighting the good fight. Everything was black and white, good or bad. That fight, out on the streets of Gotham, he could understand, but here, inside his own home, the one person he should be the closest to, was a stranger.

Bruce stood up and headed to his rooms to shower and change. He would talk to Jack after he had showered and perhaps had a cup of coffee.

*  

Jack tugged Harley along with him. He almost went outside thinking to show her his experiments, but at the last moment changed his mind and instead took her upstairs toward his room. Harley let herself be dragged around. She could see that Jack wasn't ready to talk and she didn't want to force him. She could understand Bruce's feelings and it was clear to her that the brothers had never spoken together about that night, not in a meaningful or helpful way, at least and that over the years they had both built walls around the incident and between each other.

Suddenly Jack turned and shoved her up against the wall, his mouth moving hungrily over hers. Harley dug her fingers into the cloth of his vest returning his kisses and holding on. Jack licked her mouth, then her chin.

“How about we blow this interview and you and I go have some fun?”

Harley frowned. “Do you think that's a good idea Jack? Bruce seemed to think this interview was really important.”

Jack snarled. “I don't care what Bruce wants. Now. Do you want to go or am I going alone?”

Harley blinked in surprise, the question hitting her in the gut. “No, no I'll go with you.”

Jack grinned. “Good, otherwise I was just going to lock myself in my room and paint my nails.”
Jack pressed her against the wall one more time, his fingers digging into the cloth of her blouse. He pulled away and purred against her ear. “I'm going to call a boutique downtown and have them deliver a sexy party dress for you.”

“You don't, I mean...” Harley stumbled feeling like she should say or do something, but Jack cut her off placing a finger against her lips. “You in a sexy party dress, dancing, drinking...doing whatever we want! And we can make out while we wait for your dress to be delivered. Undressing you will be fun.”

Jack giggled, pressing his teeth into his bottom lip and lifting his eyebrows at her. For a moment, despite the smile, Harley saw the madness in his eyes, but what struck her wasn't the madness there, but the fact that she didn't care...it thrilled her.

Jack grabbed her hand and hauled her toward his room.

*

Bruce frowned, looking at himself in the mirror. He was wearing a Desmond Merrion, a ridiculously expensive suit, but it suited Bruce Wayne. He wanted to present the image of a billionaire playboy, a man with too much money, too much time and not enough...wit. He smirked with a sigh. He might as well go check on Jack. Vicki Vale would be here any time now.

Bruce stepped out of his room and made his way to Jack's room. He stopped at the door and knocked. There was no answer. Bruce gave it a full minute before he knocked again. Still no answer. With a frown Bruce headed down the stairs looking for Alfred.

He found the butler preparing dinner for their guest. “Alfred, have you seen Jack?”

Alfred sighed and turned. “He and Miss Harleen just left.”

“What?” Bruce snarled.

*

Jack was laughing as he sped toward downtown Gotham. Harley sat next to him in the Lamborghini, her knuckles almost white as she held on, but she couldn't keep the smile off her face especially when Jack reached over and squeezed her knee. He was dressed in a pair of black slacks clearly tailored to him by the way they hugged his hips. He had on a deep burgundy button-down shirt, the buttons undone to just above his breastbone. Over the shirt he had a silver jacket with black lapels. Harley was completely distracted by the way his throat looked, the hint of his collar...all she could think about was biting him. He had taken off the bandages that Alfred had put on over the stitches, but somehow it made him look even more desirable to Harley.

She distracted herself by running one hand down her dangerously short dress. She wore a red mini lace, backless, halter top dress with a pair of high heeled black, open-toed shoes, all of which Jack had picked out for her. Her hair was down, curling in soft waves around her shoulders just like Jack liked it and she still wore the necklace that Jack had given to her.

Jack headed into downtown Gotham driving until they hit the downtown strip area. Here the night life of Gotham was just beginning to come alive. Jack made a couple of wicked turns on the streets until he finally drove up onto a street where there were crowds of people everywhere. Jack didn't pay any attention speeding along, forcing people to scatter out of the car's way as he pulled up in front of one of the largest nightclubs in Gotham, The Empire.
The Empire was not just the hottest night spot in Gotham, it brought all sorts of well-known clients, both the local Gotham celebrities as well as celebrities from all over. Crowds of people outside were trying to get into the club, but the paparazzi milled about taking pictures of whoever was getting into (or thrown out of) the club.

When the purple Lamborghini pulled up, all the cameras turned toward the car wanting to see who was entering the club. Jack grinned at her. “Bruce wants our relationship to be secret—then we are just going to go the opposite route, let everyone know exactly who the youngest Wayne is dating. AND we are going to show them just how crazy I actually am.”

Jack took her hand, kissing her knuckles. “Ready to dance the night away my sweetling?”

Harley nodded. “Anything for you.”

Jack grinned hopping out of the car to the flurry of cameras, hurrying around to get Harley. People were watching and cameras were flashing, as he handed her out then tugged her against him, his arm tight around her waist. Jack turned and waved allowing the paparazzi to take as many pictures as they wanted.

“Hello Gotham!” he yelled.


Harley was blushing within moments at the attention as Jack led them into the club whispering to her. “Wave Harls...let them see how gorgeous you are.”

Harley waved. One of the paparazzi yelled. “Whose the woman?” Another yelled. “What happened to your face? What's the other guy look like, Jack?!”

Jack stopped at the entrance. “Gotham let me introduce you to Harley Quinn! My girl and my doctor!” He laughed spinning her around and leading her into the club.

*

The club was packed full of dancers and people just drinking. The music thumped loudly and hard enough that it felt like the air was vibrating.

Jack grinned. “Drink or dance first?”

“How about a drink?” Harley smiled. Jack interlocked his fingers with hers leading her over to the bar. He leaned against the counter just as the bartender came over. The bartender was a tall lean woman with long black hair pulled back into a braid that looked like it could be dangerous if whipped around.

“What can I get you two?”

Jack smiled. “A whiskey straight for myself and for my lady a Mind Eraser.”

Harley laughed and had to speak loudly just to be heard over the music. “I don't know if I like the name of that drink.”

Jack bumped her hip with his. “Don't worry, you will remember everything.” He winked at her as he laughed. Harley grinned reaching out and brushing his arm. Jack turned his hand around so that she could weave her fingers with his.
They received their drinks and leaned against the bar watching the dancers. The club seemed alive; there was a powerful energy working through the place, like a powder keg ready to explode. The sexual tension vibrated through the whole place, mixed with lots of drugs and alcohol.

Jack finished his whiskey in one swallow, putting the glass down and with a nod of his head, ordered another. Harley sipped her drink staring at the dancers, her hips moving to the music, swaying in place. Jack smiled as he glanced down at her hips, watching the way her hips swayed in the snug dress, the cloth riding up on her thighs. His attention was too focused on Harley's hips to notice the woman sliding up next to him at the bar.

“Hey handsome, wanna dance?” The woman reached over and traced Jack's ear with the tip of her fingernail.

Jack jerked his head away, turning to glare at the woman beside him. She was beautiful...or at least Jack supposed she was; she looked like the type of women his brother would go out with, dark auburn hair, green eyes...an all right smile he supposed, but certainly nothing like his Harley. She was wearing a dark blue, skin-tight dress with large stripe shaped cut-outs along the sides. She was smiling at him with her eyes slightly narrowed in an appraising manner, clearly pleased with what she saw in Jack Wayne.

“Name's Vesper, Vesper Fairchild. You might have heard of me—I'm the host of Siren of the Night on Gotham City radio.”

Jack's lip curled. “I don't listen to the radio.”

Vesper frowned, but seemed to take this in stride. “You're Jack Wayne aren't you?”

Jack smiled. “Sometimes.”

“I would love to get you on my show sometime. But seriously, wanna dance? I could buy you a drink we could get a booth and talk. I promise I can show you a good time.” She smiled, fluttering her eyes just a little.

Jack frowned turning away with a quick dismissal. “No.”

Vesper pressed her lips together. She wasn't going to give up. Even if she couldn't get him in her bed, if she could get Jack Wayne on her show...his first interview...that would boost her ratings through the roof. Vesper reached out, running a fingernail over the exposed section of Jack's chest.

Harley couldn't quite hear the conversation, but she could clearly see what the woman next to Jack was doing. She was caught between wanting to grab the other woman's hand and break her fingers...a more violent reaction than Harley was used to ever having...or letting the situation play out and see what Jack did.

Jack grabbed Vesper's hand, squeezing a little too tightly. He jerked her close and hissed. “Don't ever touch me.”

He released her hand and laughed. “You know, it's better to just look like an ass than to open your mouth and prove it.”

Vesper blinked in shock for a moment causing Jack to grin and hiss. “Is your ass jealous of the amount of shit that came out of your mouth.”

Harley started laughing. Vesper narrowed her eyes and turned, melting into the crowd without a
response. Jack started laughing, wrapping his arm around Harley. “Come on my little minx, let's dance.”

*

The smooth sounds of R. Kelly's “Bump N' Grind” started to play. Jack downed his second shot of whiskey before he grabbed Harley's hand, barely giving her time to drop her drink onto the bar before he had her out on the dance floor. Jack moved with a grace that was no longer surprising to Harley, placing his hand on Harley's shoulder before he started weaving, sliding his back up and bumping his chest with Harley's.

She smiled, copying his move, her gymnastic skills making her movements exquisitely sexy when she rolled her shoulders and gently bumped her chest against Jack's. He gazed at her, his blue eyes virtually glowing while he watched her, his hand sliding down her shoulder, dragging his fingers along the length of her arm before he placed his hand on her waist. Jack rolled his body against hers, grinning at her with that smile that had her blood flowing heatedly through her body making her feel intensely aware of him. Harley's hips flowed against his, licking her lips, her blue eyes locked with his while her hips weaved, the music inviting them to grind and slide against each other.

Jack grinned as he yanked Harley against him, his hands sliding down the curve of her back, spreading his fingers across her rear and pressing her hips against his, swaying to the music. Harley caught the side of her bottom lip with her teeth, grinning at him as she draped her arms across his shoulders, sliding her fingers along the back of his head, playing with the short hairs along the back of his head. Jack purred, a soft growl deep in his chest.

Then suddenly Jack laughed, dipping her back, pressing a kiss at the hollow of her neck before pulling her up and twisting her around, pressing her backside against his groin. Harley laughed with him, completely trusting Jack not the drop her when he suddenly dipped her. She shifted immediately with the movements, her back to him. Jack's hands snaked down her sides, then against her hips where he pressed his hands firmly, thrusting her backside against his groin. He slowed his hip movements down, flowing and grinding against her. Harley snaked her body in a sensual curve, her arms over her head while her body weaved to the music.

People were watching them, several recognizing who Jack was, a few taking cell phone pictures.

Jack pressed her hips more firmly against him, dropping and rolling against her, one hand sliding lower down her thigh, grabbing the hem of her dress, his tongue licking her neck while they moved to the music. Harley exhaled slowly, weaving against him, his hands burning her skin. Jack ran his hands back up her body, flowing over her breasts, then down again, grabbing her ear with his teeth. Harley groaned, but then the song was over, changing into another song.

Jack whispered into her ear. “Want another drink?”

Harley purred. “Sure puddin.”

Jack laughed taking her hand and leading her back to the bar where he ordered her another drink and himself another shot. Jack pulled her close for a moment, kissing her deeply. He tilted her back a bit, his tongue playing sensually over hers. The taste of him mixed with the whiskey had Harley's body aching for him. By the way Jack pressed against her, it was clear he was having the same thoughts. He groaned against her mouth.

“I'm going to go get us a private booth. I'll be right back.”

Jack brushed her jaw with the back of his fingers just before he vanished into the crowd.
Harley waited at the bar, sipping on her drink when the music had changed into something with a harder beat. Harley's body thumped to the rhythm. She was weaving her hips while she waited for Jack. She smiled recognizing the song “Payback Time” by the Dysfunctional Psychedelic Waltons. She started dancing in place, a little more aggressively, the warm burn of the alcohol in her system making her dancing even more sensual, her thoughts on Jack...his body...his mouth...she closed her eyes running her hands down her sides, over her thighs. The alcohol, the music, the thought of Jack all making her feel sexy, hot, wanting him to hurry back.

That was when she felt someone come up behind her and start to grind their pelvis against her backside. Harley immediately knew something wasn't right. It wasn't Jack. She turned around to see a man, tall, heavily built man with short black hair. He wasn't handsome—far from it—and he definitely gave Harley a “creep” vibe. She pulled away, but he grabbed her arm.

“Hey honey, why'd ya stop? We was having fun. I'm Frank, Frank Boles and you are?” He yanked her back against him, his hands going around to squeeze her rear.

Harley snarled. “Let me go!” She took a slap at him, but Boles grabbed her arm.

“Oh now come on, baby.” The man dropped her arm, but when Harley tried to take a kick at his groin, break away from his grip, he yanked her hard towards him, wrapping his arms around her, pinning her arms and yanking her up off her feet, pressing her body against him.

“You were dancing so nice there.” He grinned down at her. “Don't you wanna show Frank a good time?”

“Let me go!!” Harley was about to try to go for his eyes, struggling to get her arms loose when Jack stepped into Harley's field of vision. “You heard the lady—let her go.”

Frank, still holding onto Harley, turned around to see Jack standing there, his blue eyes flat and deadly. “I said: let her go.” Jack's voice was low, but it cut through the music easily, carrying a dangerous quality that Harley was beginning to recognize well.

Frank released Harley and shoved her to the side. “Oh, what you going to do about it pretty boy?”

Jack's smile was slow and deadly. “I'm going to crush your windpipe.”

Frank snarled. “Oh, you think so?”

Jack's smile widened further. “Yes, yes I do.”

Frank turned away with a laugh, but then swung back around, his fist coming straight toward Jack's face.

Jack leaned easily out of the way, the man's large meaty fist just missing him. Jack came back up, his grin in place and the mad glint in his eyes.

“My turn.”
Because I can't Hide

Vickie Vale pulled up her plain white Nissan in front of the impressively large Wayne Manor. She was able to pull her car up the drive and into the circle drive parking fairly close to the front door. As she looked at the house from her car, Vicki could see the doorway that led into Wayne manor; she had only seen a doorway that imposing in front of a church in Europe. She idly wondered for a moment if the Wayne Manor was a church...a worship site for the two brothers to remember their parents. Were the Wayne brother stuck in the past, unable to move past the murder of their well respected mother and father?

She took a breath wondering if she would get a chance to ask them. Vicki drummed her fingers on the wheel of her car in thought before she slipped out of her car. She stood by her vehicle for a couple of seconds checking the contents of her purse to make sure she had everything: tape recorder, cellphone, notepad, printed out picture of Jack Wayne and Oswald Cobblepot dueling with swords and the picture of Jack Wayne in an spectacular lip-lock with an unknown blonde. She grinned. This was going to be one fun interview with the Wayne brothers.

When she finished with her purse, she shut her car door, stopping to check herself in the window reflection.

She wore a Milano Pique Knit Peplum Dress, one of the most expensive dresses she owned, though she did have a fairly expensive evening dress.that she put almost six months worth of salary into in order to purchase it. She owned the dress in the hopes of getting to attend one of the legendary Wayne parties. It was a long shot, but one never knew where the story would take her...and she had hope.

The dress fit perfectly to her figure and the caviar color made her skin seem softer and rosy. Her blonde hair (which she wore in a Veronica Lake-style tonight) shone, complimented by the dress's color. Vicki turned left than right, the elbow length sleeves and slimming skirt accentuated her hour-glass figure, hopeful Bruce Wayne would take notice...especially if the younger Wayne was already spoken for. Both men were extremely attractive, though both in very different ways. Bruce Wayne was square-jawed, blue eyed and while he played the part of the playboy, Vicki thought there was something more to it. Bruce, to her, seemed like a fortress that she wanted to break through and see what he was hiding. Jack on the other hand was a definite mystery. The man had had a lot of trouble when he was younger based on his school records until he was pulled out of school. There were stories, of course, but none of them substantiated. Jack Wayne was tall, slender, handsome, but in a far more delicate way, and, like with Bruce, Vicki suspected there was something hidden behind Jack Wayne's ready smile.

It wasn't that Vicki was really interested in a romance, but if her looks let her get closer to Bruce Wayne, or maybe even Jack, then that was all the better; her looks always allowed her to get closer to the story.

Vicki glanced down at her shoes for a moment, the black rounded wedged heels were a little “tall” for this interview, but they made her legs look great and sometimes that was more important than comfort.

Happy with how she looked, Vicki walked up to the door and knocked. Her knuckles had barely touched the wood of the heavy door when the door opened and an older gentleman stood there dressed in a butler's standard uniform—standard for the nineteenth century.

“Miss Vicki Vale?” the older man said, his accent refined, reminding Vicki of a member from the
cast of Downton Abby.

“Yes, that's me.” She grinned.

“I'm Alfred Pennyworth, the Waynes' butler. If you will follow me I will take you to see Mr. Wayne.”

*

Jack was laughing, moving slowly, the two men circling each other while the lights kept flashing. Jack had his fists up, but he held them up as if he were only playing the part of fighting, more of a joke than for defending himself. Frank was watching Jack with narrowed eyes, his fists up too, but he was bouncing slightly from foot to foot.

The dancers had immediately moved out of the way forming a circle around the two men.

Someone started to chant, “Fight, Fight!”

Whoever the DJ was thought he must have been funny, because he started to play some heavy bass music which went perfect with the two men circling each other and it made Jack laugh all the more.

Jack waggled his eyebrows and made a kissy face at Frank. “Come on baby, show me what kind of man you are.”

Frank snarled. “You pussy!”

Jack grinned. “Oh...is that an insult? Really? That's the best you got? Come on baby, you can do better than that!”

Jack ran his tongue over the top of his teeth grinning at Frank. “Come on baby, hit me, make your knuckles bloody.”

Frank hissed and took a swing at Jack, who ducked under Frank’s arm, twisting around with his whole body to bring his elbow up in a fluid movement. Jack smashed his elbow into Frank’s nose just before Jack jumped backwards out of the way.

Frank gasped in pain, both hands going to his nose where blood immediately flowed down his face. “You fucking broke my nose!!”

Jack giggled. “It’s an improvement, I promise. You're turn sweetheart. Hit me with your best shot.”

The look that Jack gave him was a cross between flat, violent, mixed with pure hatred and a little bit of seduction...as if this were a game of pleasure for him. Jack's grin widened as he licked his upper lip.

“Come on big boy,” Jack hissed.

*

Harley's emotions were a strange mixed bag between absolutely being turned on by Jack's fighting; the way he licked his lips, the movements of his body, every part of him was sensual, erotic and Harley wanted him badly. But she was also worried. There were a lot of people here and they were all taking pictures and video with their phones. No matter how this fight turned out, Bruce was going to find out about it. Harley just knew that was going to be another fight...worse than the last one.
Harley absently put her hand on the necklace around her neck. Any chance of Bruce accepting her had vanished with Jack giving her this necklace, but she found that she didn't give a damn. The only person she cared about was Jack. Part of her, the doctor, knew she had a problem, that she was becoming more than attached...obsessed? But she found she didn't care about that either.

She realized she couldn't live without him...she needed Jack.

*

Frank, blood covering his upper lip, shook off the pain and took another swing at Jack. Jack danced out of the way, swinging around and brought his fist down on the joint of Frank's arm. The only reason Jack didn't break the other man's arm was because he didn't want to...not yet. Frank gasped dropping to his knees. Jack walked away from him smiling, dropping down into a crouch in front of Jack. “Had enough big boy?”

Frank snarled, “I'm going to kill you.”

Frank rose quickly to his feet, charged at Jack, and took a couple of swings, first right, then left. Jack easily dodged out of the way. When Frank hit with his right hand, he over extended himself and stumbled past Jack, who turned and smacked Frank in the back of the head, not with his fist, but with the flat of his hand. The crowd started laughing.

Frank snarled, turning, taking a few more swings with his fists, which Jack simply slapped out of the way, then Jack came in close enough to Frank, getting under the other man's ineffectual guard, then he simply backhanded Frank.

Jack laughed, but his eyes were narrowed with hatred. “You really should learn when a woman says no she means no.”

Frank hissed. “You fucking pansy!!”

Jack grinned. Frank tried again to use his fists, but Jack managed to slap Frank's balled hands away a few more times making the other man look foolish. Frank came in with a low hit, his fist connecting with Jack's side, sliding under Jack defense. The hit sent the slender man stumbling into the crowd who simply pushed Jack back into the circle they had created on the dance floor.

*

Harley was chewing her bottom lip. She wanted to get in there and tear that man Frank's eyes out, but she stayed put, letting Jack fight. For a moment, she wondered where the club security was, but they were probably as eagerly watching the fight as everyone else.

*

Vicki was led to a room by Pennyworth, who bowed slightly to her, his arm extended for her to enter the room. She walked in where she found Bruce Wayne waiting for her in front of the massive fireplace in what appeared to be a library or a foyer or a...who knew? Rich people had so many rooms it was hard to keep track, Vicki thought wryly. Bruce seemed to be staring into the fire. If it had been any other man, she would have accused him of posing, but she sensed that Bruce Wayne really was lost in thought, unaware of how he looked when she walked in. Vicki strolled over toward Bruce. He looked to be brooding, staring into the fire.

“Mr. Wayne?” she asked.

Bruce turned and Vicki was struck by how handsome the man was, (although she had seen him
dark hair, blue eyes, chiseled features. Hell, he could be a model! She thought.

“Miss Vale, it's a pleasure to see you.” Bruce stepped over to her, taking her hand. Instead of shaking it, he brought her hand up to lightly brush his lips against her knuckles.

She tried not to blush, but she couldn't help it; a warmth blossomed across her cheeks. “So, Mr. Wayne, where is your brother?”

She glanced around, but they were clearly alone.

“My brother Jack is...indisposed at the moment. So it will just be you and me for dinner, and please, call me Bruce.” He smiled giving her his arm.

For a moment, as Vicki wrapped her arm around his, she wondered if his brother was gone on purpose...maybe so Bruce Wayne could eat alone with her? Nah...this was supposed to be a family interview and he knew it. Maybe Jack refused? That would make for some interesting questions...or maybe Mr. Wayne was simply trying to keep his crazy brother out of the media...another idea that could lead to some interesting questions.

She grinned at Bruce. “Well if I'm going to call you Bruce, you should call me Vicki.”

Bruce smiled brighter. “Well Vicki, let us go eat dinner.”

Bruce led Vicki into the dining room and for a moment all her questions were forgotten. The Wayne Manor dining room looked exactly like a dining room in a manor should look. The walls were paneled with walnut, cherry wood? She couldn't be sure, but she was certain it was probably expensive, just like the polished wood floors. One wall had several large windows framed with heavy curtains that were currently pulled back to let in the moonlight from outside. The chandelier that hung over the center of the room was a little more modern than the rest of the furnishings; it was large and rounded with three levels of circular forms that each carried rows of crystal drops casting twinkling lights throughout the dining room.

The center of the room was dominated by a long oak table that could probably sit at least twenty or more people, though dinner had been set up at one end for only two people. The dishes, bone china, were lovely, clearly not a choice Bruce would have made, unless Vicki had him pegged wrong. Perhaps these were his mother's? They were white china with a traditional Toile pattern, goldleaf banding. The silverware looked to be just as elegant; if she wasn't mistaken, Christofle Sterling Marly silverware. There were two wine glasses on the table and a silver ice bucket—carved to match the silverware—sitting on the table with a bottle of Chateau Margaux 2010. Vicki recognized the bottle and almost gasped; that stuff was almost $1000 a bottle!

Bruce pulled out her chair for her. “Alfred will be serving dinner shortly.”

He smiled taking the seat next to her. “Is Filet Mignon all right? I'm sorry, I didn't think to ask if you were a vegetarian. Though I believe Alfred would have no problem whipping up something for you.”

Bruce's smile was definitely charming, Vicki realized with an inward smile.

“Oh no, no—filet Mignon is perfect.” Vicki smiled holding out her glass as Bruce uncorked the wine and poured some into her glass for her.

Bruce smiled. “I believe Alfred also made roasted green beans with harissa and arugula, pear, and
blue cheese salad.”

Vicki chuckled. “He is quite the cook.”

Bruce nodded with a smile. “He is, from peanut butter and jelly to filet Mignon, the man can cook anything.”

Vicki laughed. This is going to be quite an evening, she thought.

* 

Jack grinned as he slapped Frank in the shoulder, forcing him to stumble into the crowd. Frank was turned around by the people forming the circle. Jack held his arms out like he was part of a performance and he had just executed a complicated stunt. Jack gave Harley a saucy wink when Frank suddenly rushed Jack from behind, picking up the slender man right off his feet and throwing Jack over his shoulder. Frank rushed toward the crowd, intent on throwing Jack. Except the crowd acted as huge living rubber band, bouncing the two men back into the center of the dance floor. Jack tried to beat on Frank’s back and head, forcing Frank to drop him.

Frank dropped Jack onto his feet hard, but Jack maintained his balance, his natural grace and skill kept the slimmer man on his feet. Frank came in close trying to get under Jack's guard, but Jack simply slapped the bigger man hard across the face, making the broken nose Jack had already given Frank flare hot and painful. Frank stumbled into Jack, blinded momentarily by the pain in his nose. Jack slapped him another couple of times across the face, never using his fist as if Jack wasn't willing to treat Frank to the fight he wanted, instead focused on humiliating him. The older man managed to get a grip around Jack’s waist and threw him. Jack landed on his side, sliding across the dance floor, hitting the feet of some of the patrons.

Jack got to his feet giggling. “Oh look at you Frankie...that's your name right? Frankiestein.”

Jack realized only then that he was near Harley. She reached out grabbing his face turning him to face her.

“Jack? Jack are you alright?” Harley's eyes sparkled with concern.

Jack giggled. “I'm fine, my lovely. Never fear.”

He yanked Harley around to press her against him, his arm around her waist. Jack kissed her hard. His tongue demanding, his lips almost fiery. She could taste a little bit of his blood from his lips. Jack’s split lip had broken open again, coating his lips and teeth in blood. A thin trail of blood leaked from the wound already on his face from earlier today, since one of his stitches had broke open. Jack didn't seem to notice as with his other hand, Jack grabbed Harley's rear, squeezing hard. She purred with want and the crowd screamed their praise of the kiss. But suddenly Frank grabbed Jack's shoulder, yanking him out of Harley's embrace and slugged him, his fist smashing right into Jack's face, which sent Jack sliding across the floor away from Harley.

Harley screamed and leapt at Frank, going for his eyes, but he threw her off. The crowd caught her preventing her from falling. She started to go after Frank, but a couple of people in the crowd grabbed her preventing her from jumping on Frank’s back and ripping his throat out—which was what she wanted to do.

Frank laughed taking a couple of steps back, glaring at Jack, giving Jack a chance to get to his feet. “Not so tough now are ya pretty boy?”

Jack’s eyes were flat, glancing to see if Harley was all right before he grinned, his blood-coated teeth
making his smile look sinister.

“Oh that was a good shot there Frankie. Very good shot...now, let's see if I can do better.” Jack got to his feet slowly, acting as if every muscle in his body hurt. He gazed at Frank, then suddenly moved with lightning speed.

His right fist came out, slamming hard into Frank's cheek, snapping the larger man's head to the side.

*

Vicki smiled, cutting into her filet Mignon. “So, just you and your brother live here—oh and your butler. Does it ever get lonely?”

Bruce took a sip of his wine. “Not really, both of us have our hobbies, work. We have a lot to keep us both busy.” He set his wine glass down.

Vicki chewed thoughtfully and swallowed before she asked. “So, your brother Jack, he hasn't been seen a lot, but recently he seems to have been getting out there, in Gotham that is...and he has been seen in the company of a young woman. Any ideas on who she is?”

Vicki watched Bruce from the corner of her eyes while her fork stabbed into a few of the green beans. Bruce didn't answer at first, his focus on his meal, but she could see a tightening around his eyes and mouth. Clearly he had been expecting the question, but he was still not happy about it. He took a bite of his meal, chewing slowly and then took a sip of his wine before he answered her.

“My brother is seeing a young woman yes, a Harleen Qunizel. They haven't been together long, so I don't suspect there is anything serious between them, but yes, he has been going out more.”

Vickie smiled, taking a sip of her wine, deciding to come back to the question of the blonde...Harleen Quinzel, now that she had a name.

She was about to ask another question when the butler stepped into the room.

“Master Bruce, Miss Vale—are you ready for dessert?” The older man smiled gently looking between the two of them.

Bruce glanced at Vale, lifting his eyebrows in question.

“Yes, dessert sounds splendid.” Vicki smiled. The butler nodded and bowed slightly at the waist. “Shall I bring the dessert and drinks to the patio Master Bruce?”

“Yes please, Alfred.” Bruce stood, extending a hand to Vicki. She stood up after wiping her mouth and tossing her linen napkin onto the table. Bruce led her out into a long hall decorated with paintings. She gazed at them as Bruce started to tell her about some charity that Wayne Enterprises was investing in...something about building a new hospital to replace Arkham Asylum, when she noticed that the paintings they were walking by on the way to the patio were all family paintings.

“Bruce...are these all family portraits?”

Bruce frowned, startled out of his talk. “Yes, yes they are,” he affirmed. “Each is a family member or a family portrait.”

Vicki smiled at him. “Is there one of you and your brother?”

Bruce nodded with a slight smile that Vicki thought might be forced. “There are three actually, there
at the end of the hall.” Bruce walked her down, pointing at a set of particular portraits as he did so, telling her their names, maybe a little of his ancestors accomplishments until he stopped at a series of four portraits. The first was a family portrait, by the looks of it, done not too long before the murder of the Wayne brothers' parents. It showed a happy, well-do-to family. Bruce looked a great deal like his father, while Jack was more delicate in his features, clearly taking after their mother Martha. The next portrait in line showed only the brothers. It showed the boys in their teen years. If Vicki guessed correctly, she would say that Bruce was eighteen in the painting while Jack was sixteen.

Bruce looked harder, his features stern, his blue eyes piercing and determined, much like the business side of Bruce Wayne, she thought. Jack was also paler than his brother; where Bruce's hair was black, Jack's was a soft, light shade of brown and where Bruce's eyes were a stern blue, Jack's eyes held something else. The artist captured the shared shade of blue with Bruce, but there was something haunted about Jack's eyes. Vicki couldn't put her finger on it. Was it the madness everyone rumored about or was it pain? If Vickie was to hazard a guess, she would have said pain—the younger Wayne brother held a lot of pain. Even though Bruce's hand rested on his brother Jack's shoulder, the painter caught the distance between the two boys.

The last two paintings were of the brothers, though not together. These paintings were solitary pictures of each brother. Bruce, early thirties, every inch the playboy in his fine suit, his hair just so, his blue eyes gazing out with determination and something else. Vicki frowned...this Bruce held a secret. The painting of Jack that hung right next to Bruce's showed a young man, late twenties, thirty maybe, but with a smile that had not been present in any of the other painting after the first one when he was little. But the smile, there was something...spooky about it, Vicki thought. Jack's eyes were not the same brilliant blue of his brother's, there seemed to be shadows lurking in the depths of Jack Wayne's eyes.

*

Jack laughed, slamming his fists into Frank's ears causing an intense ringing thorough the other man's head. Frank roared like an animal, taking a wild swing at Jack. Jack brought his left arm up, blocking the strike, the impact of Frank's hit against his arm vibrated through Jack's forearm and up to his shoulder, but he bore the pain as he stepped to the side to bring his right hand in low to slam his fist into Frank's side, possibly bruising his kidney. Jack slapped Frank's next swing away, twisting around to bring his left elbow up, striking Frank in the chin.

Frank gasped in pain seeing stars for a moment or two. He kept his balance and swung, managing to catch Jack on the jaw with enough force that Jack stumbled, dropping to one knee from the impact of the hit. Frank swooped in, planning on laying Jack out.

Jack, grinning a bloody smile, pushed himself to his feet, shrugging out of his jacket and then yanking at his shirt causing the few buttons that were still buttoned to burst when he ripped the shirt off, throwing it down next to the jacket. The crowd went wild, especially when Jack held his arms out and motioned at Frank with his fingers. “Come on big boy, show me what you got! To quote Shakespeare “Away, you starvelling, you elf-skin, you dried neat’s-tongue, bull’s-pizzle, you stock-fish!”

Jack giggled. “Though I suppose that insult is wasted on an idiot like you.” Jack grinned and shrugged.

Frank snarled and screamed. “You fucker!”

Jack hooted. “Oh, well damn, you cut me to the quick!! How on earth will I come back from such a witty insult?!”
Jack moved out of the way at the last moment, grabbing the hand that Frank was throwing at him, using his hold on Frank's fist to twist Frank's arm back and to the right; Jack's other hand shot out. Jack slammed the space between his thumb and forefinger against Frank's throat, causing Frank to stumble, choking and gasping for breath. Jack grinned watching Frank struggle for breath; the man's face was pale and there was a line of blood making its way slowly down his chin.

Jack started to laugh. “How’s it feel, Frankie?”

Frank's hands struggled at his throat. A bruise was blossoming where Jack's hand had hit the man in the throat. Jack took a few steps toward him, his blue eyes dull with the intent to kill the man when suddenly there was a shout from someone in the crowd. “THE POLICE ARE HERE!”

The crowd started to break up as the police shoved their way to the center of the dance floor.

“All right stand down! EVERYONE stand down!!” The cops were yelling, grabbing at anyone who happened to run in front of them, swinging them toward another group of cops who were doing their best to restrain people.

Harley rushed forward, ducking under a policeman who made a grab for her and ran over to Jack, wrapping her arms around him, stopping him from heading for Frank. People in the crowd started screaming, someone yelled for someone to call an ambulance when Frank fell to his knees continuing to struggle for a breath. One of the cops grabbed Jack from behind, breaking him loose from Harley's grip. Jack struggled, managing to get one of his arms free, turning on the ball of one foot, his movements graceful while his fist came around going straight for the cop's jaw.

Harley yelled. “NO!!”

She stepped between Jack and the police officer, closing her eyes expecting Jack's fist to hit her. But Jack, barely stopped himself from hitting Harley just in time.

She grabbed his shoulders her eyes pleading. “Stay calm Jack.”

He stared back, letting the police pull his arms behind him and handcuff him, before forcing Jack down onto his knees. Jack never broke eye contact with Harley, even when she was grabbed from behind as well. She was forced onto her knees too, but she maintained eye contact with Jack.

Harley whispered again. “Just look at me Jack, stay calm, focus only on me.”

Jack's breathing slowed, his gaze never faltering from hers, blue eyes glued to blue eyes until they were hauled to their feet and escorted from the building, Jack, now calm, didn't resist though he giggled quite a bit.

*

Vicki was impressed with the patio, a lovely glassed in area that allowed them to enjoy the night sky without being out in the cool air. The table was set with candlelight and setting on the table waiting for them were two crystal goblets filled with ice cream, shaved chocolate and what looked to be caviar on the top.

Bruce smiled while he pulled out the seat for her. “This is Tahitian Vanilla Bean ice cream with Amedei Porcelana and dessert caviar. One of Alfred's specialties.”

Vicki looked impressed as she took her seat, picking up the long handled spoon that lay on the plate next to the goblet. “Goodness, this looks great.”
Bruce grinned at her as he sat down. “I assure you, it is.”

Vicki took a bite and groaned. It was like she had taken a bite of heaven. Bruce chuckled at her expression. “So Miss...”

“Vicki...remember?” Vicki smiled at him.

“So...Vicki...What would you like to ask me? I mean, I'm assuming you wanted to ask some personal questions?” Bruce took a bite of his ice cream and smiled at her.

Vicki grinned. He really was charming.

“Well...” She took a bite of her ice cream. “I did want to ask why someone like you, Bruce, isn't with anyone? No plans to marry? Is your brother Jack going to marry before you?”

Bruce chuckled. “No, no plans to marry yet. I haven't met that certain someone I can share everything with.”

“Someone to share all the Wayne family secrets with, eh?” Vicki grinned. Bruce opened his mouth to answer when Alfred came in carrying a tray with two cocktails, each with a cherry floating in the bottom of the chilled cocktail glasses.

Alfred smiled. “Two tidbits.”

Bruce stood up taking the drinks. “Thank you Alfred.”

Vicki laughed. “Watch it Bruce, I might not be able to drive home!”

He chuckled. “You can always stay here, Vicki.”

“Are you flirting with me Mr. Wayne?” Vicki blushed.

“I might be.” Bruce's smile was inviting and charming, she had to admit.

*

Harley leaned against the bars of her cell gazing at Jack. He was across the way from her in a separate cell filled with more than a dozen others who had been arrested that night (not all from the club, a few drunks and some other misdemeanors). Jack grinned at her, occasionally blowing her a kiss. He was still shirtless, looking sexy and beaten up. All Harley could think about was getting him home and taking care of him...in several ways. Watching Jack duel Cobblepot had been sexy, but this...a full on fist fight had been damn sexy in a way she had never realized she would enjoy. She didn't know if it was because Jack had beaten the guy for being handsie with her, or just watching Jack move, fighting. Either way, right now she was aching for him.

One of the women in Harley's cell came to lean against the bars next to her. The woman (judging by her clothing, a mini skirt that was short enough that it could barely be called a skirt, a bright pink tank top and heels that only hookers or strippers usually wore) was a prostitute. She glanced across the way at Jack then back at Harley.

“That your guy?” she asked.

Harley smiled. “Yep.”

The woman laughed. “Be careful hun, that one is dangerous—you can see it in his eyes.”
Harley smiled. “I know.”

The other woman frowned looking at Harley who was staring at Jack, then shrugged. She walked back over to her girlfriends thinking that you simply couldn't save them all.

A couple of police officers came walking into the cell area. One of them was older, brown hair, a bit of a gut, had the look of a man who was tired of his job. “Okay you there, shirtless. Your turn to make your call.”

Jack grinned. “Sure thing officer.”

The other officer, younger, slim, blonde, nice looking, walked over to unlock the cell door. Jack moved out of the way grinning. “Wanna hear a joke officers?”

The older one just glared, but the younger one, whose name on his uniform read Frost, muttered quietly, “Sure.”

Jack laughed. “Two prisoners and Frank, who is a bit of a dimwit, are being executed via firing squad. The police are about to execute the first one when he yells "EARTHQUAKE!"

The police go running and the prisoner escapes before the police realize there's no earthquake. Right before they execute the second one, he yells "TORNADO!"

Of course, there is no tornado, but the prisoner escapes before the police realize that. Now it was the turn for the third to be executed. The police go "Ready... Aim...".

Then, Frank yells "FIRE!" Jack snickered.

Officer Frost laughed. “That's a good one.”

The older one, whose name was Bentley, just scowled. “Just get him over to the phone Frost.”

Just as Frost was leading Jack from his cell, they passed close to Harley.

Harley reached out for Jack as he walked by, Jack reached for her, their fingers brushing against one another. Bentley frowned at Frost. “Hey now, none of that. Break those two up!”

Frost frowned. “Sorry, Mr. Wayne.”

Jack looked back at Harley with a smile.

*

Vicki sipped at the ice cream cocktail with a smile. “So Bruce, tell me about Jack's mental health. Rumor has it that he has a problem with violence? That the murder of your parents made him unstable?”

Bruce paled ever so slightly. She could see it around his mouth and eyes, but it was quickly gone.

“Jack is much better than he was when we were younger. People have issues, but Jack is stable, an adult, a mature person.”

Vicki nodded. “So...”

Vickie picked up her purse and pulled out one of the photos from the duel.
“These are the actions of a mature, stable person?”

Bruce frowned as he picked up the picture that Vicki had placed on the table between them. It took a great deal of effort for Bruce to school his features. It was a photo of Jack, dueling with Oswald Cobblepot, the blade of Jack's rapier was through Cobblepot's knee...Bruce ground his teeth. He had seen the bandage on Jack's face, but had been so distracted by the fact that Jack had given Dr. Quinzel their mother's necklace, that he had failed to question the wound. But judging from the picture, this was where Jack had received the wound...and there in the background was Dr. Quinzel. Vicki took that opportunity to place another photo on the table...this one of Dr. Quinzel kissing his brother rather passionately.

Bruce looked up at Vicki, his mouth open, not sure what he was going to say, when Alfred came back into the room.

“Master Bruce, I am sorry to interrupt sir, but you have a rather important phone call. From your brother.”

Bruce pressed his lips together as he stood up. “Excuse me Vicki. I'll be right back. “

Vicki smiled picking up the photos and shoving them back into her purse before she picked up her drink. “Oh, no problem.”

*

Bruce hurried out with Alfred. “Did you know about the duel with Oswald Cobblepot?”

Alfred frowned. “I did sir.”

“What?!” Bruce exclaimed, startled that the older man would keep that information from him.

“Master Bruce I...I did not know they were going to be using real blades until Jack returned injured.” Alfred sighed.

Bruce let out a long tired sigh. “What is Jack calling about?”

“Well Master Bruce, he and Miss Harleen have been arrested.”

Alfred led Bruce into the library to the ground line that the manor still had. Bruce stopped, turning to look at Alfred.

“Arrested?”

“Yes sir. It seems Master Jack was involved in an altercation at some nightclub. He has been charged with a misdemeanor, but his car is still at the club and he and Miss Harleen need a ride home.”

Alfred smiled unsure. “He wanted to talk to you first. He would not say why Master Bruce.”

Bruce closed his eyes counting to ten before he picked up the phone. “Jack.”

“Hey bro!! Harley and I are down at the Gotham city jail! Can you come get us? They claim we are too drunk to drive home, which is a complete lie.” Jack giggled.

“Jack, what are you charged with?” Bruce sat down in one of the chairs near the phone, rubbing the bridge of his nose with his thumb.

“Oh don't worry, I'm filing a complaint right back! Got into a fight with some bozo who laid hands
on Harley.” Jack laughed. “No one touches my girl Brucie. You know how it is...no wait, you don't.” Jack giggled.

Bruce sighed. “Fine. I'll be there in a few minutes. I'm not picking up Dr. Quinzel.”

The line was silent then Jack spoke, his voice soft, almost a whisper. “It's both of us Bruce or I'm not coming home.”

“Jack...please...” Bruce pleaded. Bruce wasn't sure why he was being such a child about Harleen Quinzel, but it was like he couldn't help it...

“Bruce. Don't,” Jack said simply.

“Fine. I'll be there for both of you within the next half hour.” Bruce slammed the phone down.

*

Bruce walked quickly into the room. “I'm sorry Vicki, but I'm going to have to cut our evening short. Something came up that requires my immediate attention. I'll have Alfred call you a cab and I will have someone drive your car back into Gotham for you.”

Vickie frowned. “But...”

Bruce took her hand and kissed her knuckles. “Please, call me tomorrow and we can reschedule this.”

*

When Vicki slipped into the cab, she pulled out her cellphone thinking to call Knox and report about her dinner when she saw that she had missed several calls from Knox. Instead of listening to the messages, she called Knox directly.

“What's up? You know my interview with the Wayne family was tonight.”

Knox was laughing. “Oh Vicki, you're going to LOVE this! Guess who got arrested?”

Vicki frowned confused. “Who?”

“JACK WAYNE! He got arrested for fighting at The Empire club! And guess who was with him?” Knox's excitement was vibrating through the phone.

“Harleen Quinzel?” Vicki was smiling.

“BINGO!” Knox giggled.

“Tell me everything Knox.” Vicki grinned in anticipation as she pulled out her notepad and pen from the depths of her purse.

*

The ride back to Wayne Manor was uncomfortable, Harley thought, to put it mildly. Jack was still shirtless, his jacket and shirt lost during the arrest. He didn’t seem to care in the least. He had his arm around Harley holding her against him and was nibbling her ear. Bruce was focusing on the road. His temper was through the roof, but he was controlling it...barely. His grip on the wheel of the Ford F-150 Raptor was so tight that his knuckles were white.
Harley could feel the tension in the vehicle like a thick cloud, but both brothers were ignoring each other, ignoring the tension between them.

Harley turned and nuzzled Jack, occasionally checking his face. The lip was crusted over again and the swelling looked bad, and he was developing a bruise along his jaw. The hits Jack had taken weren't life threatening and nothing had been broken, but there were going to be several fair sized bruises on him in the morning. Frank Boles had filed a complaint which prompted Jack to do the same. He probably would have let it go, but if this Frank was going to be a jerk, well then Jack was going to be a jerk right back. Luckily for Jack, one of the people arrested at the club had said he had video showing that Frank had thrown the first punch. Harley was uncertain what was going to happen from that, but the Wayne family lawyer had shown up at the jail on the heels of Bruce. He had seemed very interested in the video.

Jack purred against Harley's side. If he saw the occasional glare from his brother Bruce, he gave no indication. Instead he focused on Harley, whispering into her ear. “Stay the night in my room...I need you...”

He licked her ear, causing Harley to shiver. His lips brushed a burning trail down from her ear, along the curve of her throat, his free hand reaching out to brush his fingers over her breast. The material of the dress seemed to provide virtually no resistance from the heat of his touch searing her skin. Harley made a tiny moaning sound against Jack's neck, not wanting Bruce to hear how much she wanted his brother.

Harley glanced at Jack's hand cupping her breast, seeing that his knuckles where bloody from the fight, but the broken skin and dried blood turned her on, made her groin burn and her nipples feel as if they were aching for the need of his touch. Jack's own wants were intense, burning; his groin hurt with the need to take her. He pressed his lips to her bare shoulder, wanting to hike her dress up and press his fingers between her legs, to feel how wet he knew she had to be judging by the way she was squirming.

If it had been anyone but Bruce (or Alfred) driving, Jack knew he would have hauled Harley onto his lap and taken her right then and there, the thought of pushing that dress up her hips, pressing her down on his erection...but there was no reason to piss Bruce off any more than he already had by fucking his girlfriend in the back seat of the car, especially when he would have Harley home soon and alone in his bed. Jack grinned chuckling softly against her tender neck. The violence had aroused him intensely and he couldn't wait to get home and show his Harley just how much.

* 

They pulled up into front of Wayne Manor after the quiet, intense drive home. Bruce turned off the car before twisting around to glare at Jack in the back seat. “We need to talk.”

Jack groaned. He had almost pulled Harley completely onto his lap. He glanced over at his brother from behind her shoulder, pulling her thick hair aside to he could roll his eyes at Bruce.

“Can't it wait 'til morning?”

Bruce’s eyes narrowed a fraction. “Why did you leave? You knew we had that interview tonight!”

Jack reached around and slowly pulled the zipper of Harley's dress down her smooth back for a number of reasons. One, now that they were home he wanted to get her upstairs and undressed. Two, Jack didn't want a lecture and stripping his girlfriend might get Bruce to stop and three...well that was simply a repeat of number two...Jack really, really needed to get Harley upstairs.
“I didn't feel like playing nice Bruce and you know what? I don't have to? What are you going to do, disinherit me? Oh right, if I remember correctly, the will doesn't allow you to do that.” Jack laughed. “Funny thing isn't it? Like our parents knew what a hard ass you were going to turn into, Brucie.”

Jack shifted his position, though Harley didn't turn to look at Bruce. She wasn't sure what to do. The doctor in her wanted to help, wanted to tell them both that they needed to talk, but that was Harleen, Dr. Quinzel talking. Harley only ever took Jack's side...so she kept her mouth busy on Jack's neck instead.

Bruce closed his eyes. “This is not why I hired Dr. Quinzel, so she could be your fuck buddy Jack.”

Jack sat up straight, his arms tightening around Harley. “I'm getting really tired of you talking about Harley like you do Bruce...real tired. You know, I don't want to talk about this now and I'm not going to. I'm going to go upstairs and yes, I'm going to fuck Harley's brains out and you also know what? She is going to do the same for me, because unlike you Bruce, I'm capable of loving someone.”

Jack turned and opened his door, managing to slip out of the vehicle gracefully, taking Harley with him.

Alfred was waiting inside the doorway when Jack came around the car and started to brush past Alfred his arm tight around Harley's shoulders. Alfred winced when he saw Jack's face.

“Master Jack...”

Jack smiled and waved Alfred off. “It looks worse than it is, though you should have seen the other guy.” Jack chuckled. “Harley and I will be upstairs. I don't suppose you could bring us some leftovers to my room could you Alfie?”

“Of course Master Jack,” Alfred said. Jack laughed then, patting Alfred on the shoulder with his free hand as he headed into the manor. Harley gave Alfred a soft smile and a nod as Jack breezed by with her.

Bruce followed behind more slowly. “He's not even sorry about what happened,” Bruce muttered.

“Perhaps Master Bruce, instead of pushing quite so much—perhaps you should give Master Jack and Miss Harleen space?

Bruce rubbed the back of his neck. “Just that everything he does reflects back on me and the Wayne name.”

“I am sure he knows that sir.” Alfred frowned. He looked back at the house, then turned. “Will you be going out tonight?”

Bruce nodded as he walked past Alfred to enter the manor. “Yes. Gotham never sleeps.”

* 

Jack giggled tugging Harley into his room, shutting the door and pushing her up against it. He pressed his body against hers, his blue eyes lustful as he gazed at her.

“I had fun tonight,” he whispered just before he started to graze his teeth down her neck.

Harley moaned softly as Jack reached out to tug her dress down, the garment pooling at her feet. She started to kick her heels off, but Jack hissed, “Leave them on.”
She hadn't worn a bra with the dress and the panties were small, black thongs. Jack ran his hungry eyes down her torso, his hands pressed against the door on either side of her head. His grin was lopsided looking at her nearly naked body, wearing only the heels and the thong. “You look good enough to eat...” Jack whispered, still not touching her.

“Won't...ah, Alfred be here soon?” Harley glanced over her shoulder at the door Jack had her pinned against.

“I'm sure once he hears what's going on, he'll leave the food outside.” Jack giggled. “Now...I'm hungry for something else.”

Jack waggled his eyebrows, giggling while he slowly dropped to his knees, dragging his hands down the length of her body. Harley purred, grinning, watching him, dropping to his knees, his fingers hooking into the sides of her panties and dragging them down to her knees. He left the thin fabric at her knees as a sort of flimsy bondage, keeping her legs from spreading too wide. Slowly, his hands wandered up the sides of her thighs while Jack gazed up at her licking his swollen lip. Harley leaned against the door, her legs were partly bent at the knee, her hands pressed against the door to help keep her balance in the shoes. Watching the way Jack was looking at her, like a predator, gradually running his hands up and down her thighs had her hot and aching.

Jack grinned up at her, his thumbs stroking ever so lightly over her, tickling the line of curling hair not quite touching her, teasing her with just the tips of his thumbs coming close, but not quite touching her clitoris. Harley's hips undulated, weaving just slightly, wanting him to touch her more, but he only giggled as he teased her.

“You like that Harley? Hmm...my pretty, pretty girl...” Jack purred, his eyes raking down her body again. Her breathing became ragged. He loved watching the way her chest moved, her breasts rising and falling, and saw her eyes burned with lustful need.

Jack leaned in close to her sex, his lips brushing over the curling hair of her groin, teasing her by blowing gently against her feverish skin. Harley's eyes rolled closed.

“Oh Jack...” she moaned.

Jack pressed a kiss to her groin, his hands dragging down her calves until he reached her shoes. He cupped the back of her heels, scooting in closer, pressing his lips harder against her, feeling the damp pressure of her clitoris against his lower swollen lip.

His smile was wicked on his bloody lips, the way he gazed up at her with heated desire, a wicked grin..his long fingers, with his skinned and bloody knuckles...all of it was almost enough to cause Harley to orgasm right then, just looking at him, on his knees at her feet as if he were worshiping her.

Jack giggled pressing his lips to her, brushing his nose against the hair that curled at her groin. He took a deep breath, smelling her heady scent laced with desire.

“I'm very hungry indeed,” he whispered.

And then Jack's long wet tongue delved between her intimate lips. His tongue flicked over her which had Harley jerking upright against the door. Jack's hands worked their way up from the back of her heels until he found the edges of her panties where they dangled at her knees. He hooked the sides of the thong with his long fingers and dragged the thin fabric down slowly, with a nudge from his hands urging her to lift one leg, then the other, before tossing her panties somewhere behind him in the room.
Jack switched his position, balancing on the balls of his feet, spreading her legs a little wider. Her feet in the heels wobbled a bit, but the door behind her helped her keep her balance, especially when Jack's tongue moved back and forth against her, sending ripples of pleasure up through her core, spreading throughout her body.

“Oh Jack...” Harley was nearly breathless, her fingers pressing into the wood of the door using it to keep her balance, when Jack giggled against her, sucking on her clitoris sending goosebumps racing along her skin. The only coherent sound she could make was a guttural groan. She wanted to reach down and grab Jack's hair, to hold onto him, to press his mouth to her, but it was taking all her effort not to slide down the door and melt into a puddle.

Jack's hands glided up her sides then down again, his lips caressing her, his tongue sliding and slipping, flicking back and forth until she cried out again, tossing her head back and forth against the wood of the door. “JACK!”

Jack laughed, lapping at her, yanking her hips toward him. He lifted one of her legs over his shoulder, pressing one hand against the door to help balance her on one leg, while he delved deeper with his tongue, feeling the pain of her high heeled shoe against his back when her leg contracted with the intensity of the pleasure he was creating with his tongue.

Jack nipped at her, circling his tongue over her before gently putting her foot back on the floor. He stood up with a wide smile, his lips and chin glistening with her fluids. Harley looked at him through her hair which had fallen into her face, her mouth slightly open from her panting. Jack reached out tracing her bottom lip with his thumb gazing at her naked body, leaning against his bedroom door in those sexy heels, her flesh glowing with her orgasm.

“Mm...Harley.” He grinned as he unbuttoned his pants, his eyes tracing up and down her body. Harley reached out, her fingers dragging down his stomach, feeling the ripple of muscle that formed that intoxicating “V” down to his groin. She grabbed the edge of his pants and hauled him closer.

Jack laughed letting go to grasp her face in his hands, hauling her closer and covering her mouth with his, his lips and tongue hungry to taste her mouth. Harley groaned tasting herself on his lips, while her nimble fingers worked his pants open, pulling the zipper down, peeling his pants back to slide her hands against him. Jack grunted, feeling her hands against his hard erection still trapped by the cloth of his underwear. Harley squeezed lightly eliciting a groan from Jack that vibrated along her tongue.

Jack moaned. “Turn around, Harley.”

She did as he asked, turning to lean her hands against the door, arching her hips toward him, the heels highlighting the beauty of her legs as she arched her back in a sensual curve toward him. Jack shoved his pants and underwear down, groaning at the freeing of his erection, but he stood there gazing at her for a few moments. Her backside to him, her skin, pale, soft, luscious, her long blonde hair falling over one shoulder, but then she looked over at him, her blue eyes bright, need and want clear in her expression. And then she smiled. That was what nearly did Jack in, that gorgeous, perfect smile of hers.

“Mmm...Harley...my Harley...sweet, sweet Harley,” He murmured, kicking his shoes off and letting his pants drop to the floor just before he stepped up closer behind her. Jack held himself with one hand. He wanted to shove himself inside her, but instead he rubbed against her, feeling the creamy silk touch of her flesh, the warm wetness of her opening...teasing them both for a few moments. Harley groaned, pushing back against him which made Jack chuckle. “Anxious are we?”

Harley pouted. “Jack...”
Jack slid into her slowly, groaning while he slipped inch by inch into her. Harley arched her back further, moaning, her muscles contracting hard around him as his shaft filled her. Harley pressed her hands against the wood of the door, arching back into him. He felt so good buried deep within her. Jack grabbed her hips, his fingers digging into her soft skin, yanking her hips back against him.

Harley groaned. “Oh Jack...”

“Harls...my sweetling...” He smiled bending over to press a kiss to her back. Jack pulled her back just slightly before he started to thrust. He trembled for a moment. She felt good...beyond good—she felt right.

Harley loved the feel of his hands holding her hips, the power of his long, strong fingers pressing into her skin, the thrusting of his hips, his shaft embedded in her, the slapping of flesh against flesh as Jack's thrusts picked up speed.

Harley cried out, panting out his name. “Jack, Jack, JACK!”

Her whole body arched when she climaxed, her nails digging into the wood. “Uuhh...” her voice cracked when she cried out his name again. “Oh J-Jack!”

Jack hammered hard, his fingers digging into her flesh, yanking her back against him. Harley's panting, her crying out his name, the hot wet feel of her surrounding him had Jack groaning. “Harley...oh my sweet Harley...”

She gasped, her rear pressing back against him spurred Jack on, making him want to pound her harder, until he was losing control, fucking hard, deep and fast. Somewhere in the back of his mind he knew he was going to leave bruises on her skin, but she felt so good he couldn't stop himself. Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, which hurt like hell, but he loved it, loved the mix of pain and pleasure.

Jack dropped to his knees, dragging Harley down with him until she was on all fours. Jack leaned in hard against her, his hands sliding down her sides. Harley dropped forward, pressing her backside up, dropping herself down to her elbows. Jack wrapped his fingers with hers, leaning heavily into her, feeling Harley hook one of her feet around his knee. Jack groaned, the feel of her rear pressed against him, the soft cream of her skin, the feel of her wet, wrapped around him, the press of her shoes against his legs He scooted back, pulling her and tugging her over onto her side.

“I want to see you, Harley,” he breathed, trembling as he worked to maintain control, rolling her over onto her back. Harley was smiling when she turned, careful to keep him inside her.

“My Jack...” she moaned.

Jack grinned, leaning forward, planting his hands on either side of her head, catching her hair which pinned her head in place. He pressed, fucking, his hips thrusting deep into her watching her face. Harley reached up, her hands caressing along his face, over his neck; she grabbed hold of his shoulders just as Jack slammed into her coming with a long deep groan. “Harley...”

She gasped, climaxing with him at the feel of his hot release, their cries mixing together for long, blissful moments until Jack collapsed on top of her.

They lay there on the floor for a minute until Jack started to nibble at her ear. Harley giggled and squirmed. “Jack!”

He chuckled. “Are you ticklish there?”
“Sometimes.” Harley wiggled, then squealed when Jack stuck his tongue inside her ear.

“AGH!! Jack!!”

He started laughing, his fingers working their way up her sides.

Harley squealed again. “JACK!!” She started laughing trying to push him off of her, but he was a dead weight refusing to move.

Harley laughed. “Jack stop!!”

He giggled pushing up to look down at her. “How would you feel about a bubble bath?”

*

Alfred was in the kitchen making a small dinner for Jack and Harleen while Bruce sat at the counter brooding sipping on a cup of freshly made coffee. Alfred was making a plate of turkey Reuben sandwiches cut into small bite size triangles along with some grapes and two glasses of milk. Alfred frowned as he worked; he was worried. He couldn't put his finger on what was bothering him. Of course, Master Jack getting himself arrested was uncomfortable and the fact that the brothers, after the last few years of a kind of truce, were now coming to a head. He worried too that Master Bruce's single minded devotion to saving Gotham was going to hurt the brothers. He feared Master Jack discovering what Master Bruce was doing...how he would react to the fact that Bruce had kept such a secret...

*

Jack grinned sitting across from Harley, a cigarette between his teeth, the tub filled until it was overflowing onto the floor with bubbles. He had one of Harley's feet resting on his shoulder. Jack carefully dragged the razor down as he shaved her leg.

“What do you think about getting a tattoo Harls?” he asked rinsing off the razor and pulling out the cigarette, blowing a stream of smoke into the air above them.

Harley blinked in surprise. “I don't know...never really thought about it before.” She wiggled her toes on his shoulder.

Jack chuckled, dropping some ash into the ash tray balanced on the edge of the tub before he ran the razor slowly down her leg again. He held the cigarette between his teeth as he spoke. Harley found that the way Jack smoked was sexy.

“I think we should. It'll be fun.”

“And it will annoy Bruce?” she asked softly stroking the edge of his jaw with her toe.

Jack took the cigarette from his mouth, tapping it against the ash tray again and laughed.

“Fuck Bruce.”

Harley giggled while Jack switched her legs, placing the shaved one back into the water and picking up her left leg, placing her foot against his shoulder.

“Harley, can I trust you?” Jack asked placing the cigarette back between his lips without looking up from what he was doing, his eyes following the movement of the razor along her creamy soft skin.

“Of course Jack. You can always trust me,” Harley said softly watching him.
He smiled glancing up. “I want to share something with you...eventually.”

Harley’s smile was soft. “Whenever you’re ready Jack. I can wait.”

He smiled and kissed her toes making her giggle.

*

The next day Bruce winced as he rose from his bed. Alfred had come in with his breakfast and the morning paper just a moment ago.

Bruce frowned. “A little early this morning Alfred?”

“Master Bruce, you needed to see the headline this morning.” Alfred handed the paper to him.

Bruce sat on the edge of the bed wincing a little. Last night had been a little rough...or maybe he had been angry and had been looking for more trouble than usual, which he found—it was Gotham, after all. He unfolded the paper and there on the front page:

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“JACK WAYNE: The Youngest Wayne is just looking for trouble!

Jack Wayne was involved in two violent incidents yesterday. The first was a good old-fashioned duel with one Oswald Cobblepot. The Cobblepots, who were at one time as wealthy as the Waynes, fell on hard times, losing their fortune to a series of unfortunate events and disappearing from the Gotham social circles. Oswald Cobblepot, the only son of the once wealthy Tucker Cobblepot and his wife, Ester Cobblepot, has recently returned to Gotham from parts unknown to reclaim his family's fortune and to bring back the wealth of the Cobblepot name, was seen in a duel with Jack Wayne after an incident a few nights back at one of Gotham's high end costume restaurants.

But that was not the only fight that the youngest Wayne brother found himself in yesterday. Just last night, at The Empire night club, Jack Wayne got into a fist fight with another man, identified as Frank Boles, a security officer at Blackgate prison. While the details of the fight are unknown, witnesses said it started over a woman—the same woman that was seen at the duel. One Harleen Quinzel.

Harleen Quinzel, this reporter has recently learned, is not just any pretty blonde, but Dr. Harleen Quinzel a psychiatrist fresh out of med school. It is unknown how the two met, but is this lady the one who is getting the younger Wayne brother to start becoming a regular Gotham fixture and is she the source of the recent bouts of violence that Jack Wayne had been seen participating in?

*

Bruce took a deep breath muttering, “Great, just great.”

Half a hour later, Bruce received a call from Wayne Enterprises telling him that there was going to be an emergency meeting and that both Bruce and Jack were requested to attend, though Bruce knew that request was a demand.

*

Jack frowned waking up to the sound of a fist on his bedroom door. “JACK! Wake up!”

Harley was lying next to him, naked, her blonde hair covering her face. Her back was to him, but she
was pressed up close, his arms wrapped around her. Jack smiled as he slipped out of the bed, carefully removing his arm from around her before hopping out and grabbing his pants from last night off the floor. He slipped them on as he walked to the door. He unlocked it after using his foot to move the plates with the remains of their dinner out of the way. He opened it a crack and peered out.

“What is it Bruce? It's early.”

Bruce shoved the paper at Jack through the crack in the door. “Your little stunts yesterday made the paper. We are both wanted at Wayne Enterprise in the next hour. I suggest you get dressed and come on.”

Jack's eyes ran over the paper with a frown. “How'd they find out about the duel?”

Bruce narrowed his eyes at Jack.

“That how you got that?” The older brother pointed at the stitched wound running over and under Jack's right eye. Jack grinned and shrugged. “If Ossie doesn't have a limp after yesterday I'll be surprised.”

“This isn't funny Jack. Get dressed and come on.”

“Fine, let me get Harley up.” Jack started to close the door.

Bruce stopped him from shutting the door with his foot. “Jack, she doesn't need to come with us.”

Jack smiled at his brother. “Where I go, she goes. Besides...” He gestured with the paper. “She isn't a secret any more.”

“Fine, just both of you hurry up and meet me out front. I've called the driver.”

Jack walked back over to the bed, jumping on and wrapping his arms around Harley over the covers. He bounced a few times until she giggled, rolling her head over to smile up at him, her hair in her face. “What's wrong?”

“Apparently the board has called a meeting...probably over my very eventful day yesterday.”

Harley shifted onto her back with difficulty since Jack was still on top of her. “Why?”

Jack rolled his eyes. “Who knows, bunch of sticks up their asses I'm surprised any of them can take a shit. Anyway, I want you to come with me.” Jack leaned down to lick her mouth, then the tip of her nose.

Harley giggled then yawned. “All right.”

She smiled again as Jack just gazed at her. “You are so beautiful,” he whispered. “I love you.”

Harley's smile was tender. “I love you too Jack.”

“Promise me...swear you will never leave me.” Jack's smile faltered, his eyes suddenly serious.

“I swear Jack, wherever you go, I go. I'm never leaving you.” Harley's gaze was just as intent. Jack smiled kissing her softly.
“All right, let's go put on our costumes! Gotta go do some grown up shit!” Jack leapt off the bed with a laugh.

*

Harley had thrown on her dress from last night in order to walk back to her room. She was wondering if she was going to need to move a few bits of clothing over to Jack's room.

She dressed, fixed her hair and did her make-up quickly. Since they were heading toward Wayne Enterprises, she pulled out one of her work 'uniforms.' A pair of red skinny pants, a rather plain white blouse and an invested notched black blazer with a pair of simple, yet still fairly high, black heels. Those she admitted were for Jack...especially after last night. Harley giggled thinking about the way he held her hips, his fingers pressing into her skin...the small finger shaped bruises that she now had on her hips...

Blushing happily, she pulled her hair back into a soft ponytail, a few strands loose falling in waves around her features, highlighting her cheeks and eyes.

She had just finished her makeup, sliding in a pair of simple earrings and hooking the necklace that Jack had given her around her throat. She leaned forward putting on a light gloss over her lips when there was a knock at her door. She stood up just as the door opened and she saw Jack in her doorway grinning. Her heart slammed hard against her chest when she saw him.

He looked dashing, wearing a slim-fit wine colored three-piece suit, paired with a dark blue dress shirt and a white tie. His hair was slicked back as usual, his saucy grin on his lips. He looked...cool...she thought giggling as he walked over taking her hand and spinning her into his arms.

“Ready my sweets?” Jack brushed his lips over hers.

Jack weaved with her, his hands resting on her hips while he swayed, dancing slowly in place, spinning around gradually. He hummed softly, reaching up with one hand to caress her face. Only then did she notice he was wearing gloves.

“I'm ready.” She smiled wrapping her arms around his neck and moving back and forth with him to the silent music only they could hear.

“I think, after we are finished with the stuffed shirts, that you and I should go get a tattoo.” Jack giggled, spinning around slowly

Harley laughed especially when Jack dipped her low then brought her back up to her feet. “That sounds like fun puddin.”

Jack grinned rubbing his nose against hers. “I love it when you call me puddin.”

He kissed her tenderly. “All right, let's get out there before Bruce blows a brain cell.”

*

The drive to the offices of Wayne Enterprises wasn't as awful as it could have been. Bruce seemed...it seemed to Harley as if he were making a effort to be social with her, but also trying to engage Jack in conversation...small attempts to fill the gap between them.

“So...” Bruce took a sip of his coffee.
He had had the driver pulled through a drive-thru since they had neither the time for breakfast nor coffee before the three of them exited Wayne Manor. Jack had his hand resting against Harley's thigh when he spoke to his brother. “So?”

“What do the two of you have planned later today?” Bruce smiled, clearly unsure and uncomfortable.

Jack giggled. “Tattoos. Harley and I are going to get a tattoo.”

Bruce blinked, clearly not expecting that answer. “Why?”

Jack's grins widened. “Why not?”

Bruce frowned and was about to ask something else when the driver said, “We are here sirs, ma'am.”

The Wayne Enterprise tower was impressive with the giant “W” on the outside of the art deco feel to the outside. Harley had always thought so, but going into the building and seeing the interior of the place was just as, if not more, impressive than the exterior. The walls and floor were marble, with warm inviting furniture for clients or anyone else in the building working or waiting.

The three of them took the elevator up to the top floor where an all glass walled meeting room waited for them. Inside the room, as the three of them approached, Jack and Bruce walking side by side, Harley behind them slightly, they could see several men and a few women, all dressed in sober business attire. Once they arrived near the meeting place, there was a hall to the left where Bruce stopped and turned to face Harley.

“Dr. Quinzel, my office is right down that hall. Why don't you go and wait there? My secretary can bring you anything you require. Hopefully this meeting won't take very long.”

Jack tugged Harley up against him while Bruce headed on to the conference room.

Jack purred, his eyes following his thumb which he rubbed over her bottom lip.

“See ya soon toots,” he whispered.

Harley giggled. “I'll miss you.”

Jack grinned. “Don't get into any trouble without me.”

They kissed softly then he gave her a wave and followed his brother.

* *

When they entered the conference room, Jack took the seat to Bruce's right. The room was filled with all the board members (minus one, Jack thought with a wicked grin. What was his name? McDermott? Mcturdmott? Jack chuckled silently to himself.)

Lucius Fox stood up, clearly uncomfortable once all the members were present.

“Bruce Wayne, Jack Wayne...this meeting was called by three of our board members, Ferris Boyle, Roland Daggett and William Earle in order to discuss some...issues that have recently presented themselves.”

Lucius took his seat on Bruce's other side and motioned toward Roland Daggett, a tall, slim blonde man with an expression on his face that Jack wanted to tear right off. Jack politely placed his hand over his mouth to hide the smile and suppress the giggles as he imagined actually taking Daggett's
face off with a knife while the man was still alive. It was rather funny, he thought.

Daggett stood up glancing at Jack (who grinned and made a kissy face at him...he just couldn't resist!) then Bruce (whose expression was like looking at a stone statue.) “It has come to our attention that certain members of this board have caused a drop in our stocks this morning.”

Jack lifted an amused eyebrow, though Bruce's frown deepened while Daggett continued. “This person—here he looked directly at Jack—was involved in two altercations and has been charged with a misdemeanor crime. So we request there to be a vote to have Jack Wayne taken off the board.”

Bruce stood up. “Now wait a damn minute!”

Ferris Boyle stood up. “Now I suggest we simply get rid of that woman he was seen with, Dr. Harleen Quinzel. I mean, I don't know exactly what's going on and I'm sure you would be more than willing to tell us Bruce, but there were rumors starting this morning that Dr. Quinzel was hired by you to take care of your brother?” Boyle watched Bruce's face carefully, hoping to garner an answer from the older Wayne's expression, if not from his words.

Bruce opened his mouth when Daggett interrupted with a hissed, “I don't care either way. I just want this problem to disappear. Wayne stock dropped nearly .8% just this morning. Unless Jack or Bruce here can guarantee Jack's actions won't continue to reflect badly on Wayne Enterprises, I think we need a vote to take Jack Wayne off the board.”

The last of the three to call the meeting, William Earle, looked around. “Commit him to Arkham...” Earle's eyes landed on Jack. His eyes were full of...hatred? Ambivalence? Jack couldn't be sure, but Earle smiled at him. “If you commit him...finally...then I'm sure that our stock will go back up, showing that we have taken care of the problem. Jack has been a loose cannon for years. But now...two violent altercations in less than twenty-four hours? I mean, come on Bruce...get it over with. Commit your brother. We all know that's what you've been avoiding by keeping him confined to Wayne Manor...the damn video of the night club fight is on the internet, hit more than a million views before I came in this morning...everyone can see your brother is crazy.”

Jack's eyes narrowed.

*

Harley was sitting at Bruce's desk with a magazine she found; it was a business magazine, but she was flipping through it, wishing she had brought a book when her cellphone started to vibrate. Harley frowned pulling the phone out from her purse. The number wasn't one she recognized, but she hit answer. “Hello?”

“Yes, is this Dr. Harleen Quinzel?” the voice on the other end of the line was male, professional.

“Yes it is. Can I help you?” Harley glanced out the window of Bruce's office that looked down on Gotham.

“Yes ma'am, my name is detective Roger Peak. I'm looking into the disappearance of your stepfather.”

Harley stood up. “What?”
Harley stood up from Bruce's desk, her voice was quiet. She was pleased with herself, at how calm she sounded. “What do you mean he's missing?”

The man on the other end, Detective Peak, spoke calmly. “Apparently, the night of the funeral, your step-father disappeared. His family assumed he had left town to have some time alone. I guess he had gone off without telling his family before, so no one thought anything of it, especially after losing his wife, but he has been gone long enough without contacting anyone that they're afraid that something may have happened to him.”

Harley rubbed the bridge of her nose as she began to pace the office, the phone held tightly to her ear. “I'm still not sure why you're calling me. The family had to have told you that I hadn't been in contact with him or any of them in years. My mother's funeral was the first time I had seen him since I moved out when I was eighteen.” She could hear the shuffle of papers over the phone while Peak spoke. “Yes, they did, but we're just talking to everyone who was at the funeral and the wake, anyone who spoke to him or saw him that day. I mean did he seem, unduly upset—beyond just losing his wife, that is? Out of character? Did you notice anything peculiar?”

Harley stopped in front of the window and pressed her forehead against the glass, quickly recalling the confrontation between Jack and her step-father. She had her eyes closed, but then they opened slowly as something occurred to her. Could Jack have had anything to do with her step-father's disappearance? Part of her immediately thought, no...there was no way, she told herself. Jack wasn't capable...but a voice, deep down, whispered to her. “Yes, yes he could...you know it Harleen...you...no...not Harleen...you—Harley. You've seen it in his eyes, you know he could...but would he?”

She swallowed before she answered the detective. “I was never close to my step-father. He was a massive ass to me growing up and he was even worse when I showed up for the funeral. He only called me to tell me that my mother had died the day before the fucking funeral. So what do you think? You really think I would have noticed anything about him other than he was a giant...” Harley stopped herself. “No. I didn't know the man well enough to tell you one way or the other.”

Peak was silent for a moment, then she could almost hear him nodding. “I understand Dr. Quinzel. I'm sorry to disturb you.”

Harley sighed. “I'm sorry too Detective Peak. I hope you find him.”

She pressed the button ending the call and stared at her phone. Would Jack have killed her step-father? Or maybe he had just given him money and sent him away? She pressed her lips together as she mulled it over.

* 

Bruce listened to the arguments, his face an unreadable mask (something he was becoming better and better at on his nightly rounds as the Batman...keeping his emotions out of the situation. Doing that had to be one of the most difficult parts of what he had chosen to do. But he had sworn to do what was right....which was stop crime, but then let the system do its job. He could not be judge and jury. But in order for him to achieve that, Bruce had to be able to distance himself from the situations he found himself in...save the innocent...detain the guilty.). The only indication that Bruce was upset, and only Jack saw it, was the slight frown on Bruce's lips, the small creases on the side of his mouth, barely there. Only someone who knew his face well could tell that Bruce was not happy. That was a
sign that only Jack was used to seeing. It was an expression that had become more and more common on Bruce's face as they grew up without their parents. Anytime Jack did something that Bruce found embarrassing, too violent or just didn't understand, each outburst was proceeded by that slight frown around his lips. But right now, Bruce did nothing except listen. Jack, on the other hand, had stopped listening after the three men had made their 'suggestions.' Instead Jack occupied himself by imagining the fun he would have with killing them.

Daggett, Jack just ignored. Wanting the problem to simply go away was a typical response of someone who wanted nothing to do with anything messy...though that might mean he would have other people doing his dirty work for him. Worth looking into at a later date, Jack thought.

But the other two. Jack leaned on his elbows, locking his fingers together and resting his upper lip against his hands watching them without a word. One of them, Ferris Boyle, the one to suggest getting rid of Harley, glanced over nervously at Jack, seeing the young Wayne brother watching him with an almost dead expression in his eyes. The man hooked a finger around his collar, trying in vain to loosen his tightly buttoned up shirt. Jack smiled, but his hands covered the expression—only a slight crease around his eyes conveyed his thoughts.

The other man, William Earle...he wasn't nervous. He glanced at Jack, but his expression was smug. This was a man used to getting his way. Jack's smile grew behind his hands. Earle would be fun to kill...to watch that expression of confidence and superiority washed away under the sharp slice of a knife. Jack had to press his lips together tightly to prevent himself from laughing.

* *

Another few minutes of debate went on before Lucius Fox stood up. “Enough. We will have to vote.”

One of the board members, an older woman...Jack never did catch her name...stood up. “Should we have the vote without McDermott?”

Lucius sighed. “Wherever he is, he has made himself unreachable. Unless his vote would be the deciding vote, I say we go ahead without him.”

Everyone else in the room agreed, and soon they were voting.

* *

Harley sat down at Bruce's desk again and stared out the window, her thoughts spinning slowly. Where would her step-father go? She licked her lips in thought. Could Jack have done something do him? But she didn't remember him ever leaving the hotel room. As far as she knew he hadn't...but what she found really interesting wasn't whether or not Jack had done something to her step-father, but the fact that she didn't feel anything...except a certain warm spark of joy. Joy that the man who had made her growing up hell had finally gotten what he deserved...that Jack...if indeed he had done something to the man...had done it for her? He had to have done it for her, if indeed he did do anything at all.

Harley stood up and started to pace again. She had trouble sitting still, her body vibrating with energy...with pleasure at the thought of Jack killing someone for her. Should she say anything to him? She stopped and stared out at Gotham. Or should she keep it to herself? If Jack had indeed done something with her step-father, the less she knew the better—better for them both, especially if there was no body. She smiled slowly, seeing her reflection in the glass of the window. Her smile was wide...all teeth and her blue eyes sparkled with mischief. But to share that secret...to know when no one else did? She giggled.
Jack cast his vote under many a stare as he shoved his card into the small wooden box they had for such things, but he was a member of the board and they couldn't deny him his vote. When Bruce cast his vote, the looks were the same.

Lucius Fox picked up the box. “All right, I'll read the votes.”

In a matter of less than five minutes it was decided that Jack Wayne would remain on the board. Lucius Fox nodded with only a slight smile on his lips. The vote was heavily in Jack's favor.

Lucius looked at each board member. “Jack Wayne will continue on the board of directors for Wayne Enterprise, but please, Jack, be more careful.”

Jack laughed. “Of course...keep all my fighting on the down low.”

Jack winked which made several members laugh. Only the three who had called for the vote seemed uncomfortable or angry. William Earle seemed furious...which made Jack smile all the wider. Jack decided to do some digging on Mr. Earle...might be something interesting there.

Jack slammed his hands down on the table as he stood up causing everyone in the room, except Bruce, to jump. “Well, as fun as this has been folks—I have a date! Cheerio!” Jack patted Bruce on the shoulder as he stepped around his brother's chair and headed to the door. No one tried to stop him...not even Bruce. Bruce simply watched his brother stroll out, his own feelings currently mixed and confused.

Harley was sitting at the desk again, her phone out as she searched through the internet killing time and distracting herself from her thoughts. The fact that she wasn't upset about what she suspected her lover had done, both simultaneously bothered her and didn't bother her. Then the door opened and Jack walked in.

“Heya toots!” He grinned at her with his arms out wide.

Harley squealed and leapt to her feet to throw herself into Jack's arms. “PUDDIN!!”

Jack laughed holding her tightly against him. He enjoyed the way she wiggled, his hands snaking down her back to grip her rear, pressing her pelvis against his for a brief little grind. For a moment he thought about how funny it would be to have Harley on his brother's desk, but thought better of it...for now.

“So my sweets, you ready to go get a tattoo?”

Harley laughed. “Yes!”

“Then let us go and mar our bodies for eternity!!” Jack laughed as he wrapped his arm around Harley's shoulders, spinning her around and marching out of the office.

When they stepped outside of the Wayne building, it didn't take Jack long to hail them a cab. He opened the door for Harley before walking around to slip into the other side.

Harley took his gloved hand, weaving her fingers with his. Jack leaned between the two front seats.
“So...” He looked at the driver's name. “Ed is it?”

“Yes sir.” The man driving the cab was tall and slim with large oversized glasses on his sharp lightly features and his short dark auburn hair was groomed well. He wore a green t-shirt and jeans as he grinned at Jack. “It's Edward Nygma, but Ed is easier.”

Jack giggled, brushing a gloved finger along Ed's ear. “Oh, I love your name sweetheart! Now Ed, my girl and I want to get tattoos today. You know someplace we can go?”

The young man grinned as he signaled to pull away from the curb and said, “A man wants a tattoo. He goes into the shop, and sees two tattoo artists. He looks at the back of the first one and see's a really squiggly and badly done tattoo. He goes to the second and sees a really clean, well-done tattoo. he goes to the first to get his tattoo. Why?”

Jack frowned in thought, tapping his gloved finger against his lip before he answered. Jack smiled his bright smile. “Because the tattoos were on their backs, the other tattoo artist must have done the other man's tattoo.”

Ed laughed. “Just so!” he said, obviously pleased that his passenger understood the riddle. “Yes, I know a place you might like.”

Jack patted Ed's shoulder. “Take us there, my dear man!”

With a laugh Jack dropped back into the seat next to Harley tugging her over until she was practically on his lap. He nibbled her chin before he licked her mouth happily.

“So what happened?” she asked, running her fingers over his ears, brushing his hair back as she smiled softly. She loved the feel of his skin and the way his hair would sometimes fall out of place across his forehead.

Jack smiled closing his eyes, contented at the moment as he enjoyed the feel of her nails lightly brushing across his skin.

“Oh nothing really; a lot of hot air. My little exercise yesterday made the morning Gotham news and the Wayne stock dropped. They wanted a vote to take me off the board of directors—at least three of them did...” Jack told her this with little emotion. He seemed far more occupied with her hair, curling loose strands around his fingers and watching them bounce back into curls. His smile conveyed contentment, as if nothing in the world could possibly bother him.

“So...what happened?” Harley asked grabbing his hand and stopping him from playing with her hair, bringing that hand to her mouth and kissing the tips of his gloved fingers, her blue eyes studying him.

Jack shrugged. “They voted. I'm still on the board.” He waggled his eyebrows at her.

She caught his face between her hands, planting a hard kiss on his mouth. Jack made some sort of noise as he wrapped his arms around her. Harley pulled back after a moment and grinned as Jack laughed and caressed her cheeks.

“So, I still have a 'job.'” He chuckled at that.

Jack pulled her close and whispered then. “I want a really good reward for being a good boy...”

Harley giggled. “Oh I think I can give you a good reward for being a good, good boy.”

Harley licked her lips as her eyes wandered down to his mouth then back to his eyes with a smirk.
Jack grinned tugging open the front of her blouse, exposing more of her cleavage. He growled, playfully pressing lips against her breasts before his tongue traced the smooth roundness of her breasts that flowed over the top of her bra, his teeth teasing the creamy skin.

Harley moaned softly. When he raised his head to look into her eyes, she kissed him hard, her hands pressing against his chest before she slid down his body. She then shoved him against the door of the cab, her nimble fingers working quickly at the button and zipper of his slacks.

Jack propped one of his long legs along the seat grinning as she pulled his pants open, slipping his shaft out of his boxers. Jack groaned at the feel of her hand wrapping around him.

“What are you doing?”

Harley dropped down, lying on her stomach across the seat. She took a moment to brush his erection against her cleavage while she whispered.

“I'm going to give you an advance on your reward...”

She giggled just before wrapping her lips around him. Jack gasped, dropping his head back against the window of the taxi, one hand against the back of the seat, his fingers pressing into the vinyl, while the fingers of his other hand flowed into her hair. Harley groaned around him in her mouth, her tongue weaving against the underside of his erection caressing the hot silken texture of him.

Jack shuddered, his eyes rolling back. “Uhh...Harley...”

She smiled, pressing her lips down on him before pulling up slowly, then down again, her tongue twisting around the head of him, her teeth teasing against the tender flesh. Jack's hips came off the seat, his whole body tensing when Harley bobbed her head, then lowered her mouth down him slowly until he nearly touched the back of her throat. She groaned, his shaft filling her mouth, warm, hard and so soft at the same time.

He groaned loudly, his fingers convulsing, jerking against the seat and her scalp. Jack lifted his head to look down at her, only to find her incredible blue eyes gazing up at him, a smile on her wicked lips which caused him to jerk, bursting in her mouth with a very loud groan of her name.

“Oh God Harley!!”

Harley grinned holding her lips pressed around him, feeling the hot liquid coat the inside of her mouth and tongue. She swallowed, taking a few more good long pulls on him, feeling the way his body shuddered, his fingers tugging at her hair, before she finally released him.

Jack let out a long exhale of air, his whole body going limp.

He giggled. “I always enjoyed the previews...”

*  

Edward glanced at his rear view once and grinned as he redirected his gaze to the road.

*  

Nygma drove them downtown, taking a bit of a tour to allow them to “finish” what was going on in the back seat before he finally pulled around to park behind a tattoo parlor called “Black Gotham Tattoo.” Jack hopped out of the taxi once the cab had turned off, tossing a couple of hundred dollars at the young man. “Care to stick around, drive us back later?”
Nygma grinned. “Sure thing!”

Jack laughed. “Great, hey find a sushi place and grab us something to eat...yourself too...”

“Absolutely!” Edward smiled. “People need me, yet they give me away every day. What am I?”

Jack laughed reaching in to rub his hand through Edward's hair. “Money...you're money.”

The young man laughed.

*

The interior of the tattoo parlor had dark painted, almost blood red walls. Hanging on the dark walls were old pictures, photos of skeletons, Victorian women in undergarments along with photos of tattoos of Victorian and turn-of-the-century tattooed people as well as more modern tattoos done here at the shop. There were five booths in the front for customers to get their tattoos, and another three or four in the back, Harley guessed. Over on the right there was a lounge area with a long, low table piled with binders of tattoo photos, tattoo magazines and a few random paperback books. The three chairs and one long couch that made up the area all looked like they were ancient Victorian whorehouse rejects, with heavy dark wood framing deep crimson leather cushions. There was a small, thin woman with a pixie-cut of white hair, wearing a sleeveless blue tank top that highlighted the sleeve-work that ran up and down both arms; she leaned on the counter by the register.

When she glanced up from her book, her expression went from dull boredom to shock at seeing the two fancy dressed people step in. The woman's attention was glued mostly on Jack. Harley was a little jealous; the spike of emotion burned in her chest and the thought of clawing that woman's eyes out came to her with vivid clarity—so clear that for a moment Harley felt a stab of panic. She had experienced violent thoughts before (most people do, she reminded herself), but not like this. She quickly pushed the thought away.

Jack took Harley's hand and interlaced his fingers with hers as he stepped up to the counter with Harley beside him. A couple of people sat in the lounging area staring at the two of them, but Jack ignored them as he leaned on the counter and turned his smile toward the woman.

“My girl and I are looking to get tattoos.”

The woman smirked. “Really?? Well, our artists don't usually take walks in.”

Jack smiled, showing off his perfect teeth. “Not even for a couple of hundred extra?”

The woman stared at him, then put her book down with slightly lifted eyebrows. “Wait here.”

Jack watched her go then leaned his back against the counter tugging Harley flush against his body. He smiled at her, brushing his nose against hers.

“Do you have any idea of what you want?” he asked her.

Harley frowned as her lips stroked his for a moment. She leaned back to look at him and then reached up to brush the scar he was going to have over his right eye.

“No...do you?”

Jack grinned. “I know exactly what I want...I have an idea for you if you want to hear it.”

Harley giggled, her hands running up to his shoulders, feeling the rich texture of his suit under her
touch. She leaned in closer licking his lips.

Jack moaned softly. “I can smell me on your breath...”

He grinned, the smile gradually inching across his face. Harley blushed, but her grin was wicked. Jack nipped her lips with a whispered, “Mine.”

He grabbed her rear, digging his fingers into her backside pressing her against his groin. She could feel that he was already becoming hard again.

Harley purred. “What should I get puddin’?”

He pressed his lips against her ear and whispered something. Harley giggled, nodding her head in agreement at the moment the young woman returned to the counter.

“Antonio says he will tattoo you both. Come on back.” She motioned for the two of them to follow.

Antonio was a tall, heavily built bald man with tattoos covering his arms and peaking out around his neck from under the t-shirt he wore. He had both ears pierced, with eyes so dark they looked black. He motioned with his head. “You the two want tats?”


The man frowned as his eyes wandered over the two of them. He was clearly trying to figure them out, but his frown deepened when he examined Jack. Harley wasn't sure what the man saw...Jack's smile never faltered. But Antonio settled down and pointed to the black chair that reminded Harley of a dentist's chair.

“Which one wants to go first?”

Jack smiled and shot a glance at Harley. “I'll go first.”

Jack, with his eyes on Harley, used his teeth to pull his gloves off and shoved them into the pocket of his jacket before he slipped it off too. He then unbuttoned his vest, handing each item to Harley. Next he pulled off his tie and then started to unbutton his shirt. Harley watched, aware that she had to look like a starving animal staring at Jack while he removed his clothing, but damn she couldn't help it...he was gorgeous and hers.

Jack sat in the chair once he had stripped off his top clothing.

Antonio nodded. “So what you want?”

Jack touched the space between his neck and shoulder covering his deltoid.

“Four aces, a skull face in the ace of spades with the words “All in” under them.”

Jack looked pointedly at Harley when he said “All In.” Something about his words hit her...this tattoo he was getting was more than simply art or simply just to do it for no real reason. Jack was giving her message...Harley blushed when Jack winked at her.

Antonio nodded. “Sounds good.”

It took a few minutes of Jack and Antonio working together to come up with the design on paper, but within forty-five minutes, the two men had the design sketched out and Antonio was applying
the temporary outline to Jack's skin. The woman out front brought Harley a stool while she waited. Harley watched with interest while Antonio began to work at applying the tattoo. Jack didn't flinch at all when the needle started to work into his skin.

Harley stretched her arms over her head just as the woman from out front came over to stand next to her, both women watching the tattooist.

After a bit the woman smiled at Harley. “I'm Lexi by the way.”

Harley turned to offer her hand. “Harley.”

They shook hands, then both turned back to watch Jack and Antonio. Lexi motioned with her head. “You guys married?”

Harley shook her head. “No, we're...”

She frowned for a moment...were they dating? It was more than simply dating. Harley frowned, she couldn't think of a word for what she and Jack had so she simply said. “I'm in love with him.”

Lexi nodded. “I get it, believe me. I can tell he has it bad for you, the way he looks at you.”

Harley blushed, which made Lexi smile.

They were quiet for a while, the low hum of the tattoo needle along with Jack and Antonio's talking filled the space.

Lexi stretched. “Care if I put some music on?”

“No, go ahead.” Harley turned as Lexi walked over to an old CD player setting on a shelf against the wall. Harley tapped her foot against the bar along the bottom of the stool in time to the music that started playing while she watched Jack.

She recognized the band, Sevendust from her college days and the song, “Live Again.”

* 

“...Can't see me. you feel me
Want me. you'll find me
I'll be your everything
Will you call
You'll need more & more
When you fall
In this world I see it more
The pain you feel that I ignore...”

* 

Her mind wandered back to the disappearance of her step-father. Jack was still speaking with Antonio, but his eyes had moved back over to her. The way he was watching her, his blue eyes
seemed to hold her paralyzed, her heart, she knew somehow was beating in time to his. He was a drug she had become addicted to and she had no way of knowing how deep that addiction was. The doctor in her told her that she was becoming co-dependent, or was it that Jack was appealing to something already deep inside her? Some aspect of her own personality she had simply been ignoring; some darkness that was always part of her. And that darkness spoke to the darkness she knew was inside Jack?

But more importantly, did she care?

The music played around her and the lyrics seemed to speak to her...

* 

“How many times have you looked
At yourself and felt mistreated
How does it feel to know that
This life of yours is real
All of your life you've been led
To believe your nothin'
So look at yourself and start to live again...
...If you don't change you'll be nothin’ …”

*

Her eyes that had glassed over, staring into nothing, all the other sounds around her having disappeared except the lyrics to the song. When the music stopped, switching to another song and another band, her eyes snapped back into focus and her gaze focused on Jack. Maybe it was time for a change, she thought. And maybe it wasn't Jack who needed to change, but her.

* 

“Okay, all done!” Antonio grinned. “Go take a look.”

The tattooist pushed his chair back out of the way, allowing Jack to hop up. There was a full-length mirror against the wall that hung to the right of Antonio's space. Jack walked over motioning Harley to follow him at the same time. He stood there examining the tattoo turning his head, stretching his neck to the side. “What do you think?”

He grinned at the mirror, his eyes on hers.

She examined it, the urge to run her fingers over it was strong, but she resisted. “I love it puddin.”

Jack grinned turning to slide his fingers long her jaw brushing her lips with a kiss before walking back over and retaking his seat.

Antonio finished up with Jack, cleaning away the blood, examining his work one more time to be sure everything looked good before he put a bandage over the tattoo.

“Leave that there for at least an hour. After that keep it out of the sun for a few weeks, put lotion on
it, not too much and you should heal up just fine.”

Jack smiled as he stood up. “Your turn Harls.”

Jack laughed as he vacated the seat for her. She handed his clothing to him, which he dropped onto the stool picking up his dress shirt and slipping it on. He was buttoning up the shirt watching her as Harley started to pull up her blouse.

Harley leaned back in the seat, grinning at Jack as Antonio smiled at her. “So what do you want?”

Harley untucked her shirt, pulling it up under her breasts then undid her pants pushing them down low on her hips.

“Right under here…” She pointed to the spot under her flat stomach. “I want in fancy cursive, ‘Lucky You.’” She shared a glance with Jack who grinned giving her an encouraging nod.

“All right.” Antonio smiled with a slight chuckle. The tattooist began putting Harley's tattoo together, the three of them picking out the script, deciding on the size. It only took Antonio the time to come up with the design she and Jack liked, before putting the design together onto the transfer paper.

Harley lay back, her panty's pulled down quite low, her slacks pulled down just past her hips, but when Antonio pressed the transfer to her skin, there was something about the way Antonio laid his arm along her thigh, his gloved hands touching her hips. The way he put his hands on her hip and shifted her closer, fingers brushing briefly over her stomach...that had Jack suddenly on edge.

Jack narrowed his eyes reaching over to pick up his vest and slide his arms through the holes, his eyes narrowing further as the tattooist pressed a hand down on her, the other hand holding the needle as the man started to work. It was more than just jealousy that rippled over Jack, it was...possessive yes...but more than that...he was feeling an intense urge to rip Antonio's hands off, to break his fingers for touching her, to dig his eyes out and rip his throat open. No one touched her but him...no one! And Harley...she wasn't stopping him from touching her!!

Jack ground his teeth, the muscles his in jaw tensing, causing the tendons along his jaw and cheeks to stand out. He pressed his lips together, breathing tensely through his nose, trying to calm the violent urges.

Harley looked over at him, her blue eyes clear and beautiful. Jack focused on her eyes, her mouth, the way her smile was soft, just for him. That was his smile...the one she kept just for him.

Jack calmed himself. The man was simply doing what they were paying him for...to tattoo her. Jack decided he was going to teach himself and her how to tattoo...any other marks on her body would be put there by him and no one else.

But even while Jack worked to calm himself, the urge to kill the tattooist was still strong.

*  

Harley sat up a little awkwardly once Antonio was done, trying to hold her slacks up without pulling them up over the tattoo. Jack hurried over to help her stand in front of the mirror. They both grinned looking at the finished product across her lower abdomen. Jack leaned close to her ear and whispered. “Imagine me licking that…”

Harley let out a soft, quiet little moan of pleasure. Jack grinned at her then walked her back over to the chair. He let Antonio clean and bandage her tattoo, though it took a great deal of effort on Jack's part to remain calm. Once she was bandaged and ready to go, Jack helped zip up Harley's slacks,
standing close, his eyes on hers as he pulled the zipper up.

“How would you feel if we did some self-defense practice today? I'm feeling the need to burn off some steam.” Jack knew he needed to burn off the violent jealousy that was coursing through him. Working out with Harley would be fun and quite distracting he thought to himself.

“Sure thing puddin.” Harley grinned while Jack brushed his nose against hers, his lips just barely touching her lips. She could feel his breath brush across her mouth, teasingly. (She also thought getting him alone would be a chance for her to ask him about her step-father. She had decided that she needed to know.) But then Jack stepped back, taking away the heat of his body and the intensity of the almost kiss. He took her hand, bringing it to his lips to brush a kiss along her knuckles.

*

Lexi leaned on the counter watching the couple leave while Antonio put the cash into the register.

“Why don't we have a love like that?” she asked without looking at him watching while Jack pulled Harley up against him again, pressing a passionate kiss to her mouth and dipping her back slightly. Antonio glanced up just as Jack and Harley hopped into the back seat of the taxi that had been waiting for them.

“Because we're not crazy rich people.”

Lexi knocked her hip into his with a grin. “That's more than just about being rich. You see the way those two look at each other?”

Antonio nodded. “Yeah...bit intense if you ask me, borders on the scary.”

Lexi rolled her eyes pushing herself away from the counter. “You have no romance in your soul ,do you?”

He shrugged. “Hey, just not into crazy mad love like that...I'm just fine with what we have...nice and calm.”

Lexi stuck her tongue out at him.

*

Bruce walked into the small restaurant, but stopped in the doorway to look around. Most of the customers were a mix of tourists, families and locals who probably lived in the neighborhood. The walls were painted an inviting mint green, with one wall along the left painted black with chalk like paintings on the wall illustrating the different menu items that were offered. On the same wall, there were three built in shelves that held bottles of wine. The counter at the far end had a nice pattern of black and white zigzag that ran under an accent of mint green with a natural wood counter that matched the natural wood tops of all the tables and chairs.

Bruce was noticeable in his expensive suit. He stood near the entrance looking over the tops of patrons’ heads until he found his lunch date. He saw who he was looking for sitting at a table by himself.

As if sensing eyes on him, the man glanced up and saw Bruce. The attractive man waved his hand and called, “Over here!”

Bruce smiled and made his way over to Harvey Dent, a fairly new acquaintance, but someone he
was quickly growing to respect...and like as a friend. A man with a strong sense of right and wrong and who had his sights set on the district attorney spot in the upcoming election. Harvey Dent was attractive, fair-minded and a genuinely nice person.

Bruce and Wayne Enterprises were helping to fund his campaign as the new district attorney.

Dent grinned when Bruce weaved through the other customers and wait staff.

“You arrived just in time. I got us this table but there were a couple of old ladies eyeballing me. I think they were going to take me out for the table.”

Harvey chuckled as Bruce slipped into the seat across from him.

“I hope you don't mind, but I went ahead and ordered for you since I wasn't sure how much time you have. I remember how much you enjoyed a good turkey sandwich so I ordered you one of their classic turkey clubs.”

Bruce smiled. “Thanks Harv. I appreciate the thoughtfulness.”

Harvey shrugged. “Hey, we're friends, not just two men working to better Gotham.”

A young woman at the counter called a number and Harvey stood up.

“That's us. Be just a moment.”

Soon the two men had their sandwiches and glasses of sweet tea. Bruce took a bite of his sandwich rolling his eyes in appreciation. “You're right—this place has good food.”

Bruce grinned around a mouthful.

Harvey laughed. “Yep, one of Gotham's many hidden gems.”

Bruce took a sip of his tea. “So, what did you want to see me about Harvey?”

“Well, I'm throwing a party. Okay, not me personally. It's a charity event, to raise money for revitalizing some of Gotham's poor neighborhoods, new parks, safe places for kids to hang out, some playgrounds, money for after-school programs...that sort of thing. But it's also to bring my campaign into the limelight...let people see and meet me sort of thing. It's a fund-raising carnival for this weekend. We are setting up inside Robinson Park. The ticket sales are to raise money for the Gotham Neighborhood Revitalization Project. We have a lot of people organizing it, lot of people coming. Anyway, I was hoping that maybe you and your brother Jack would show up? If we had the Wayne brothers there...”

Harvey took a sip of his tea before he added, “It would really look good. And as another enticement, I have a young woman, friend of my wife's that I would love for you to meet. I think the two of you would hit it off. Her name is Selina Kyle. She is new to Gotham. She works as an art dealer at one of the local galleries. Really interesting woman and, I might add, hot too.”

Bruce laughed. “Don't let Gilda hear you.”

Dent laughed. “Anyway, she is smart, gorgeous...just your speed. Anyway, I know your brother received some...interesting press just recently, but this would look good for the both of you.”

Bruce frowned in thought. He wasn't thinking about meeting this Selina Kyle, he was thinking about Jack and Dr. Quinzel. He was happy to participate in the fundraiser, that was pretty much a given, but he was worried about inviting Jack after the last twenty-four hours. Jack had pretty much made a spectacle of himself, though this was a great chance for Jack to get some good press by participating
in an event like this. It would also help secure his place on the board if the other board members saw Jack doing something “good” for Gotham instead of getting into trouble.

“I would love to Harvey. I'll get Jack to be there too, no problem.”

Harvey grinned. “Thank you Bruce. I mean, thank you for everything you have been doing, but this will be great press for both of us.”

Bruce nodded, thinking to himself, “I hope so.”

*

Jack came down to the gym dressed in a pair of dark purple shorts and a plain white t-shirt. He stopped in the doorway when he saw Harley. She had arrived just a few minutes before him and was in the middle of doing some stretches. She had on a pair of red yoga Capri pants and a white tank-top that hung low in the back showing the back of her red sports bra. She was in the middle of bending down, her hands grabbing the front of her tennis shoes. Her hair was pulled back into a ponytail which bounced up and down with her movements.

She had just spread her legs out and had reached down between them, her hands flat on the mat when Jack saw her grinning at him from between her legs, her upside down smile just as lovely. But as he watched her, he felt that spike of jealousy again. He wasn't sure where it was coming from, the tattoo had been hours ago now, but looking at her...so beautiful...sexy. He clenched his fists. That someone else had touched her...touched her where only he should touch her...

Harley didn't notice the subtle shift in his expression.

“Hey,” she said with a widening smile.

Jack, who had been staring intently at her backside, then at nothing at all as his thoughts chased down a rabbit hole of anger, quickly focused back on her and he grinned in return. “You beat me down here.”

Harley giggled returning upright. “I remembered the way this time.”

Plus she had needed time to think how to go about asking Jack about her step-father.

Jack stepped fully into the gym. “So, more self-defense lessons?”

He shook out his hands. The anger—he was having trouble focusing it. Part of him knew it wasn't Harley's fault...she didn't encourage the man...it...he...Jack's temper simmered as his thoughts jumped and flitted about, making him angrier yet.

Harley stretched her arms over her head. “I meant to tell you. I received a call earlier today from a Detective Peak.”

Jack had walked past her, turned to look at her when she spoke, stopping at the stereo and putting some music on. “'Peak?”

She nodded as the sounds of Lacuna Coil started to play over the gym speakers. They were facing each other, starting that slow stalking walk, moving around in a circle. Jack’s smile was cold, his usual warmth missing as he murmured under his breath along with the song.

*
“Now get ready for war
It's starting today
I'm leaving the army inside ...”
*

Harley frowned watching Jack warily. She could see his mouth moving, but didn't hear him. “Yes.
Apparently my step-father disappeared the night of the funeral. No one thought anything of it at first.
They thought he had just needed time away. Guess he had done stuff like that before, but now they
are worried—the family—he hasn't come back. They filed a missing persons.”

Jack frowned. “So?”

Harley tilted her head at him. “Did you have anything to do with it?”

Jack’s frowned deepened and his blue eyes flashed dangerously when he looked at her. “Why? Did
you care about him after all?”

He moved fast, faster than Harley had ever seen Jack move. His fist flew out straight for her face.
She barely had time to block his fist before he threw another punch at her. She blocked that one too,
barely, the pain of his fist hitting her arm vibrated up through her shoulders. She snarled, twisting her
body and kicked Jack in the side, then twisted around from the other direction kicking him again on
the other side, forcing Jack to tense in order to avoid her hitting his kidney or breaking a rib.

Jack snarled at her. “That man touching you...you didn't even stop him!”

Harley looked confused. “What man??”

“Antonio...” Jack spat.

Harley narrowed her eyes, her fists up. For the first time since meeting him, she was maybe a little
scared of Jack. But as Harley glared at him, she realized that the odd thing was, she was more angry
than scared. She was actually pissed at him. Pissed that he would think she wanted that other man to
touch her. Pissed that he would think she cared about her step-father being dead.

“That was your idea Jack, getting the tattoo...what did you expect? And if you killed my step-father
I'M GLAD! I hope you made him suffer!!!”

“NO ONE TOUCHES YOU!!” Jack snarled. “NO ONE BUT ME!”

He rushed at her, his right fist coming up from below, under her guard. She managed to avoid his
first hit, but he twisted around, grabbing her around the neck, his forearm pressing painfully against
her throat. She pushed back, throwing all her weight into him, slamming his back up against the wall,
once, then twice. She could hear the air exhaling from his lungs with a burst of hot air against the
back of her neck. She managed to bring both her feet up and used one of the work-out machines to
give her push much more leverage. Harley pushed back against the machine with both feet,
slamming Jack up against the wall a third time.

Jack snarled, twisting her around and slamming her against the wall sideways. Harley felt dizzy for a
split second when her head bounced against the wall, but she dropped her weight taking him with
her breaking his grip. But breaking his grip wasn't enough. She twisted her body to the side, bring
her elbow up to smash Jack in the chin, fully breaking his grip around her throat further, causing him
to stumble backwards from her.
Harley jumped to her feet, turning toward him and brought her fist around to hit Jack hard, with as much strength as she could put into the punch to his shoulder.

“What is wrong with you??!!” she screamed.

Jack reached out and grabbed her by her biceps, his grip painful just before he threw her across the room. Harley slammed into the wall with a gasp, sliding down the wall for a moment dazed.

“He touched you!! You're mine! AND YES!! I KILLED YOUR STEP-FATHER!! I made him suffer!!” Jack snarled. “HATE ME NOW?!” He laughed suddenly, but this wasn't like his usual laughs. Something was slightly...wrong, she realized, with the tone in his voice.

His voice had a strange hitch, that communicated more than anything else the pain Jack was feeling mixed with his rage, while he stalked over to her, reaching down and dragging her to her feet by her hair. Harley twisted, despite the pain of his hand in her hair, and slammed her to the floor. Jack paused, his grip on her hair falling, as he surveyed her. She was battered, her hair flopping in clumps around her face, as he moved to stand over her, his blue eyes flashing with madness, pain and anger.

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Harley leaped onto him, driving Jack down to the mat.

Straddling him, Harley started to punch at him hard and fast in the face, alternating her fists. “I DIDN'T WANT HIM TOUCHING ME!! Only you!!”

She hissed as she yelled, spittle flying from her lips. Jack kept his forearms up blocking her strikes.

Jack managed to get a hand up around the side of her neck, using all his strength to push her to the side, twisting her over. They both rolled, this time he ended up on top of her, but Harley wrapped her legs around his waist squeezing hard while Jack put both hands around her neck, his blue eyes flashing with madness, pain and anger.

Harley start gasping, struggling, her hands shoving at Jack's face. She finally knocked his chin up hard with the ball of her hand, stunning him for a moment. Jack fell forward, and Harley wrapped one arm tightly around his neck. Jack gasped getting to his feet taking Harley with him. She was wrapped around him, her legs tight around his waist and her arms choking him. He twisted around and slammed her up against the wall again, but she didn't let go, leaning in to bite down on his shoulder. Jack hissed at the pain of her teeth breaking skin. He slammed her back into the wall again, this time hard enough that she left a dent. Harley brought her arm up and rammed her elbow into his back.

Jack stumbled back, falling, both of them going down. Jack landed on his back.

Harley hissed, punching him as hard as she could. “I DON'T WANT ANYONE BUT YOU! YOU ASS!!”

Jack flipped her over, breaking her grip on him and staggered to his feet licking the blood from his lips. Harley pushed herself to her feet simultaneously. Her lips were just as bloody and there was a trickle of blood running from her nose. Jack's lips were bleeding and he had a pressure cut along his jaw with a smear of blood. Blood also oozed slowly from his nose.

They stared at each other panting.

Harley whispered. “I'm glad he's dead. I don't care that you killed him Jack. I don't care. And I never want anyone but you....ever. No one can touch me but you. I love you.”
For a brief moment Harley wasn't sure, but she thought his lip trembled. There was pain, loneliness and a deep raging madness in his blue eyes, the hurt of a young man lost in a world that could never understand him. His voice was low, the rage having seeped away.

“Only you Harley. I don't want anyone to touch you but me...I don't.” His shoulders slumped slightly. “Always be mine.”

They stared at each other for a tense moment that seemed to stretch into an eternity, then suddenly they were both closing the distance, their mouths slamming against each other, arms wrapping desperately around each other.

They could taste each others blood as they kissed. Jack yanked her hair the rest of the way out of the ponytail holder, his hands digging into her hair while he kissed her, staggering her back against the wall. Harley clawed at Jack, grabbing the ends of his shirt, yanking and tugging to move the fabric up over his torso while struggling to wrap her legs around him at the same time. He let her rip the shirt over his head and up his arms, throwing the garment away, her hands moving desperately over his body.

Jack grabbed the collar of her tank top, ripping the cloth in half. Harley gasped with a grin at the violence of the gesture, biting at his tongue and lips, blood coating her teeth.

She could feel the hard pressure of his bound arousal between her legs, his pelvis shoved hard against hers. She was wet, needing him inside her now!

Her fingers dug into his scalp, grabbing fists full of his hair, her mouth demanding from his, the two of them struggling to get closer to the other, almost clawing at each other.

Jack lifted her up, Harley's leg's going immediately around his waist. He carried her over to the weight bench where he laid her across the vinyl seat, grabbing the edge of her yoga pants once he had shoved her legs down, and yanked them off of her, ripping them in the process. Harley struggled to pull her sports bra over her head, kicking her shoes off at the same time. Jack hissed gazing at her lying naked across the bench, battered and bruised, the tattoo along her lower stomach. Lucky You...he grinned. He was lucky. She really was his.

He kicked his own shoes off, shoving his shorts down. He reached forward and grabbed her hips, yanking her to the edge of the bench before he seized her legs, tossing them up on his shoulders.

“Come here,” he hissed.

Jack didn't tease this time, didn't take it slow. Instead Jack shoved himself hard into her with a loud groan of pleasure, burying himself deeply into her yielding flesh nearly lifting her off the bench with his thrust. He shuddered to feel her hot wetness encompassing him, her body warm and ready for him.

Harley cried out, arching off the bench, reaching up and grabbing the bar of the weight that was settled across the bench crossbeam. The feel of him taking her hard and fast had Harley crying out with happiness. Jack groaned pounding into her, reaching down to drag his fingers across her breasts, hissing with the pleasure of touching her, feeling her.

He leaned forward, wrapping his hands around hers that held onto the bar, thrusting hard and fast as both of them panted loudly.

Harley whimpered with each powerful thrust. He felt good to the point that her brain seemed as if it had fuzzed out. Everything was a blank except this, this moment, the feel of him inside her, the
sounds of his flesh slamming into hers.

Harley moaned louder and her orgasm rushed through her body, her mind spiraling with pleasure, all sense beyond the primal gone. She didn’t care what he did to her, she loved him, come hell or high water, she belonged to him.

Jack arched his head back. “Harley...”

He let go of the bar to lean back, his hands going over her thighs to press his fingers into her soft flesh.

His mind seemed to be coming back from the brink. As if fucking her, taking her and being with her, was calming to his soul, that he was connecting to the other part of himself that he so desperately needed. To have her...to never be alone again...to know she was his...belonged to him. Jack yanked out of her, which made Harley gasp in desperation.

Jack growled. “Turn around, now.”

Panting, Harley grinned, standing up and turning around, the bench between her legs, she reached out, grabbing the bar, glancing over her shoulder at Jack with a wide grin. Jack caught his bloody bottom lip between his teeth, smirking, his eyes roaming over her backside, licking his lips. She held onto the bar, arching her back to him. Jack dug his nails into her backside, dragging them down her hips, smiling at the sight of the red marks he left on her skin. Before he took her, he pressed his lips to her spine, then scraped his tongue along her back to her hip where he bit her hard. Harley cried out, the pain of his teeth flashing across her skin.

“Oh puddin!!” She groaned, arching into his bite.

He stood back with a laugh, grabbing her hips just before he plunged deep into her again, both of them shouting together when their bodies came together again. He yanked her back against him pounding hard and fast, growling with the intensity of their joining. Harley held on to the bar, her knuckles turning white, arching back against him, wanting Jack to be as deep in her as possible. She wanted to feel all of him, every inch.

Jack leaned forward to wrap his arms around her waist and pushed up, forcing her upper body forward so that she was leaning her body against the bar. Jack snaked one hand up to grab her breast, squeezing while his pelvis slammed forward hard and deep, thrusting his shaft into her body. Jack panted heavily as he pressed his lips to her shoulder, reaching over her to grip the bar with one hand, his hand next to hers, just as he dragged his teeth along her skin, biting her again, hard enough to bruise. But as the pain mixed with the pleasure coursing through her, Harley cried out, her climax ripping through her body.

“JACK!!” She could barely catch her breath.

Jack hissed against her shoulder, the hand on her breast easing up to grip her neck, long fingers pressing into her flesh, forcing her head back gently where he placed a tender kiss against her forehead. Harley’s eyes rolled open to gaze up and to the side, to see that smile, his blue eyes smoldering only for her. Jack pressed his teeth into his lip, with one final thrust, he burst hot and fast into her. Together they cried out.

* Jack had tenderly brought Harley to the floor afterward. At first they had laid naked beside each other, panting, struggling to bring their breathing back under control.
Harley was grinning at him, but then she suddenly reached out and hit him with her fist in his shoulder.

Jack growled. “Ouch!”

He narrowed his eyes playfully before he pounced.

He laughed as he jumped on top of her, starting to tickle her sides with his long fingers gliding up her waist. Soon he had her screaming with laughter.

“Call me daddy!” He laughed. “Call me daddy and I’ll stop!”

Harley squealed wiggling and kicking until she finally screamed, “DADDY!!”

Jack chuckled, ceasing to tickle her, but he remained on top of her.

He laid over her, resting on his elbows on either side of her head while gazing down at her. He stroked her hair back from her face gently, tracing her bloody lip with his thumb, his fingertips gliding over the split at her elbow that he had caused, the sweat of their fucking smeared the blood along her brow.

“I love you Harley,” he whispered.

She smiled reaching up to brush her fingers along the quickly blossoming bruise on his jaw that she put there.

“I love you too Jack.” She smiled tenderly.

She thought that she could become lost in his eyes forever...

Jack frowned, just a slight crease of his lips before he said. “Would you marry me?”

Harley blinked in shock. “Marry you?”

He nodded. “I don't want you to leave me. I don't want to lose you. I need to know that you are the one thing in my life that I have—only you.”

“I will always be yours. Always Jack. Yes. Yes, I will marry you.” She brushed his face with her fingers gazing into his eyes.

Jack's voice dropped. “Would you keep all my secrets Harley?”

She stared at him. What other secrets did he have? Were there other deaths? Did she care?

Harley smiled. “Yes. All your secrets are mine too.”

*

The next morning Jack came whistling into the kitchen. He had a healing cut along his cheek, the swelling on his lip had gone down, but there was a bright bluish purple bruise along his jaw. If anyone saw him they could see he had clearly taken a beating.

Jack wasn't dressed for the day yet. Instead he was wearing a pair of lounge pants of purple paisley, a white t-shirt and a pair of lime green socks. His hair was still a mess, not his usual greased back look. Long locks of it were falling over his forehead and into his eyes, but his smile was cheerful. Alfred was just putting the coffee on when Jack strolled in.
“Morning Alfred!”

Alfred turned his head with a smile, but then frowned when he saw Jack, not just in his pajamas but the state of his face. “Up early Master Jack and...not dressed I see.” (Alfred had seen the condition of both Jack and Miss Harleen's faces yesterday at dinner. They had told him that their self-defense class had become more...realistic than intended.)

Jack was grinning ear to ear. “I am here to bring breakfast in bed to the future Mrs. Wayne.”

Alfred was pulling out a couple of coffee cups when he stopped. “What?”

Jack giggled. “I asked her to marry me.


Jack grinned putting a finger against his lips. “Shhh...It's our secret.”

Alfred nodded looking shocked, but then also pleased. “Master Jack!”

Jack laughed and threw his arms around Alfred who returned the younger man's embraced, coffee cups still in his hands.

“Oh Master Jack! You have made this old man very happy.”

Jack laughed releasing him. “Now I just gotta go buy her a ring!”

Alfred chuckled. “Indeed sir.”

Jack stepped back taking the cups from Alfred. “How about some Belgian waffles this morning? Is that all right?”

Alfred smiled. “Of course Master Jack.”

Alfred began taking out the ingredients he needed to make waffles and asked, “Master Jack, are you going to tell Master Bruce?”

Jack frowned. “No. At least not right now. I want to find Harley the perfect ring first. Then we'll tell him.”

Alfred nodded. “Of course Master Jack. Go on and take your coffee up. I will be up presently with your and Miss Harleen's breakfast.”

Jack grinned. “Thanks Alfred.”

Alfred watched Jack leave, taking some coffee with him, and sighed. He was happy to see that one of the brothers had found love, but something bothered him. He wasn't sure what it was, but he suspected that this engagement might just be another stone in the wall that was being created between the two brothers.

*

Jack came back to his room carefully easing in while balancing a tray with coffee, cream and sugar on it into the bedroom. Harley was awake, though still naked in his bed. She was sitting up, the comforter covering her breasts. She had her phone in her hand and seemed to be reading something when she turned at the sound of him stepping into the room. A bright smile blossomed across her face. He could see the traces of their fight there in her face, but she was so beautiful...Jack grinned
wider carrying the tray over.

“Coffee, my sweets! Alfred will be bringing up some waffles in a little bit.” He set the tray down on the beside table before jumping back onto the bed and grabbed her, pushing her back against the pillows, both of them laughing. Jack grinned down at her brushing his fingers through her hair gazing at her contentedly.

Harley returned his smile. She reached up to brush her fingertips along his lips, bringing a smile to his lips then. He kissed the tip of her finger.

“I have so much to tell you,” he whispered. “Things I haven't shared with anyone...” He brushed his nose against hers.

Harley closed her eyes, their lips hovering just barely touching.

Jack whispered. “We are going to have so much fun together. My Harlequin.”
The remains of their breakfast were littered over the floor and around the bed while the nub of a smoked cigarette and its last dying ashes sent a lazy trail of smoke into the air from an ashtray on the bedside table. Jack and Harley giggled, the covers pulled up over their heads; only the movement of the shapes underneath and the occasional moan, grunt or laugh indicating that someone was in the bed. A few beams of sunlight worked their way through the slit in the heavy curtains providing just enough light for the two figures in the large bed to see as they laughed softly and finally pulled the blankets back.

Jack chuckled as he dragged his fingertips down Harley's spine and watched the enticing way her body wiggled at his touch, or the way goosebumps rose along her flesh. She faced away from him with her head resting on her hands and her blonde hair a tangled mess about her head. He grinned as he caught his bottom lip with his teeth and ignored the slight pain the gesture caused while he examined the pale creamy slopes of her rear while he made intricate, invisible designs on her almost perfect backside, only marred by a purple bruise that he had put there himself just last night.

“Think we should get up?” Harley asked dreamily, her voice slightly muffled by her hair and being turned away from him.

Jack chuckled. “Maybe,” he allowed. “I thought I might teach you a new skill today since you seem to be picking up hand-to-hand so well.” Jack giggled and added, “Ouch.”

He leaned forward to press his lips to her backside before he playfully scraped his teeth along her skin. Harley giggled softly before she rolled onto her side and tossed her hair back. She smiled at him with a twinkle in her blue eyes.

“Oh? And what kind of skill would that be?” She asked, the innuendo clear in her voice.

Jack chuckled. “Mm...we'll come back to that...” He giggled, pulled her against him and rubbed his nose against hers. “No, I thought I would teach you to shoot.”

Harley frowned. “A gun?”

Jack laughed. “Usually it's a gun, yes.”

“But...I don't know, Jack....” Harley frowned. “I'm not really comfortable with guns.”

Jack grinned and rolled her onto her back before he climbed on top of her. He nestled against her, feeling the warm, soft, dampness between her legs, rubbing himself against her, his member hardening almost instantly. The feeling of her damp opening rubbing against him had him growling softly, deep in his throat. He inhaled her scent. She was like a drug; he just couldn't get enough of her. Her skin was like silk against him...she was his madness, his disease...he smiled knowing he would kill for her or because of her. What was it Gomez Addams said? I would die for her. I would kill for her. Either way, what bliss.

Harley groaned as she grinned at him and bucked her hips once teasingly which set him giggling. Jack grabbed her wrists when she started to stroke his back and yanked her arms over her head. Harley grinned wickedly at him and her eyes danced with mischief when she wiggled her body.

“You gonna tie me up puddin’?”

Jack growled with pleasure at the suggestion. “Later...I just might, but right now I was thinking it
would be good for you to be able to handle a weapon...a gun...knife...maybe even a hammer. I saw this movie once...woman took out several men with two claw-headed hammers all by herself. It was pretty hot.” Jack grinned as he pressed his erection against her. “She was covered in blood by the end of the scene.” He nipped at her bottom lip with his teeth.

Harley groaned at the feel of him; the pain as he tightened the hold on her wrists made the pleasure that much more intense. “All right Jack. I'll learn to shoot, to use a knife...even a hammer—whatever you want puddin.”

Jack smiled as he brushed his teeth along her chin while he hissed softly, “It'll be fun. You just imagine people's heads exploding when you hit the clay discs...it's fantastic. Well except for maybe really blowing people's heads up...”

Jack laughed.

A slight frown creased Harley's brow just above her nose and turned the corners of her lips down almost imperceptibly. “Clay discs?”

Jack nodded as his mouth and teeth nibbled down her neck. “Yes...mmm...skeet shooting...”

Harley closed her eyes and smiled. She enjoyed the feel of Jack's lips and teeth on her skin, but a small part of her—the part of her that knew the road she was on was becoming more dangerous—whispered heatedly to her that his statement was a warning sign. 'He has killed Harleen...you know of one, but don't you think there are others? Don't you?' Harley pushed the voice away. She didn't care...did she?

*  

Bruce frowned as he ran his thumb and forefinger down the lines around his mouth. It was the next morning and he had been trying to get a hold of Jack to ask him about the carnival and if he would make an appearance, but his text messages were being ignored. Bruce felt frustration with his brother, but figured Jack would still show up, no matter how late he received the text about it from Bruce. That was one thing Jack never could stay away from—carnivals, the circus...his younger brother had always loved those sorts of things. Bruce smiled at the memory of Jack, not long before their parents' death, threatening to run off to join the circus after he and Jack had gotten into a fight about something. Bruce wasn't sure what it was about now...a bicycle? No...he couldn't remember, but he did remember after they had become distracted with the idea of running away to the circus they had tried to make their own circus.

Jack, having always been good with his hands, had cut up some of his jackets to make a collar and coat for their corgi, Edison, and they had made themselves a center ring where death defying tricks would be performed by the two brothers. Bruce would never forget the look on their mother's face when she caught them. Especially because she caught them the moment Jack was walking the tightrope with clown make-up on his face, white face paint covering his skin, bright red lips and nose, black around his eyes and that big silly grin painted on his face, making his already large and bright smile even bigger as he balanced on their little rope. He had held a poker from one of the numerous Wayne Manor fireplaces in his hands; Jack had even gone so far as to paint his nails green from their mother's polish collection. (Jack's clown make-up was actually their mother's makeup that the boys had 'borrowed' from their mother's vanity...except the white face paint—that was actual paint. The amount of scrubbing Jack had gone through to get the paint off...Bruce chuckled at the memory of his little brother pouting.)

Bruce remembered their mother yelling at them and Jack yelling back about this was why he was going to join the circus because no one here understood his art...Bruce chuckled. Jack was always
the most visibly passionate of the two of them, who always had only a loose hold of his emotions, whereas Bruce was always more subdued. Yeah, a carnival—Jack would be there, he shouldn't worry about it...and he was confident Jack would be on his best behavior. He hoped. Having Dr. Quinzel with him...Bruce sighed and glanced down at his desk. His left hand lay on top of the polished wood; his knuckles were raw, the skin still had that bright red look where the skin had come off when he had punched the hell out of that rapist last night. Bruce knew he had almost gone too far last night, but he was angry with Jack, the board...with everything and then this punk, attacking women in his city. Bruce frowned as he folded the fingers of that hand into a fist and slid it under the table. He really needed to work on his control.

* 

A few phones calls by Jack later that morning had bought Harley a tweed hunting vest of dark brown with suede shoulder guards, reinforced to take the recoil from a weapon, and deep pockets for carrying shotgun cartridges. Jack had also purchased her a pair of hunting pants, highwaisted that fit her perfectly somehow, a white long-sleeve blouse to wear underneath and a gorgeous pair of dark brown, knee-high hunting boots with a pair of matching retro, large frame sunglasses. When she had finished dressing, braiding her hair into a loose French braid that fell down her back, all Jack could think about was getting her out of her outfit again.

Jack was dressed in a similar fashion; his waistcoat though had a personal touch, an embroidered purple “J” on the breast and, unlike Harley, he wore a pair of dark brown leather gloves that were clearly made for him judging by the way they fit his hands. The gloves were tailored, with buckles across the wrists, made from the finest, softest leather. He wore similar snug fitting pants, a white, long sleeved shirt and the boots he had worn to the duel with Cobblepot. His brown hair was slicked back and his blue eyes danced merrily as he picked up a pair of maverick flow sunglasses, sliding them up his nose.

“Oh look at us! We make a perfect pair! Even our bruises match!” Jack giggled.

Harley giggled along with him while she ran her hands down the front of the waistcoat she wore.

“Why the outfits though Jack? I mean we're just going to shoot clay discs right?”

“Tsk tsk, Harley! First: never miss a chance to wear a costume; and second: you always need the right outfit for the job.” Jack wrapped his arms around her shoulders and led her out of the bedroom.

“And this afternoon, you and I are skeet shooters,” Jack explained with a lopsided grin.

* 

They made their way outside into what Harley thought of as a rather lovely early Spring day. Jack led her along the side of the house heading toward the back. Harley had seen the back “lawn” of Wayne Manor before, which wasn't really a lawn, but rather a long tract of land that led off into the distance, a clear field of expertly cut green that ended in a row of thick trees. Beyond that she was pretty sure would be the stone fence that surrounded the property.

Today the expanse of green was disturbed by a clay disc skeet...shooter thing...she had no idea what the contraption was called, only knew what it did. It was set up to flip the clay discs out into the air curving along the expanse of green. There was also a chalk line that started from the edge of the machine and moved out to create a chalk path. The path curved from there to the machine and arched into a semicircle that Harley guessed was to designate where the shooter was supposed to stand. A plain fold-out table stood near the skeet shooter that held two shotguns lying ready, with two large cartons of cartridges.
Next to that was another small fold-out table, with a white table cloth laying across it where Alfred had set a stainless steel coffee urn, along with two small coffee cups that were made of plain white china, along with matching plates, and plain stainless steel utensils. On the table were also three plain ceramic covered dishes, which, when Harley’s curiosity got the better of her, she peaked under to find one held bacon, egg and cheese sandwiches, another contained what looked to be apple crumb coffee cake and the last covered dish contained almond cherry muffins. Harley shook her head in disbelief.

“How on earth does this man do it? I mean, you didn't decide we were going to skeet shoot until just a couple of hours ago! This...this had to have taken more than a couple of hours! I just...does he have a super power?” Harley set the lid back down on one of the dishes when she turned to look at Jack who was lighting a cigarette, her blue eyes wide.

Jack chuckled taking a pull on the cigarette before answering. “He does! He is a butler, one of the best in the world at what he does.”

Harley laughed. “Fine, fine don't tell me about Alfred's superpowers....and after I agreed to marry you.” She smiled at him in such a way that Jack's heart sped up and he wondered how quickly he could take her back to the room...or against the wall. He giggled while she continued.

“So...skeet shooting? Why not just go to a shooting range?” Harley asked with genuine interest.

Jack smiled as he walked over to the table and picked up one of the shotguns.

“Oh, we do have a small shooting range,” He said with a glance over his shoulder at Harley. She caught a glimpse of his eyes behind the dark lenses of his sunglasses.

“So of course you do,” she said mostly to herself as she walked over to stand beside him and watched Jack tilt the shotgun, double checking that it was empty before he reached over to pick up a cartridge from the table and sliding the ammunition into the chamber. Without looking, his cigarette held between his lips, Jack deftly snapped in several cartridges as he spoke and made certain that Harley could see what he was doing.

“But there is something visceral about shooting a moving target that you can't really get from a shooting range. This, isn't the same either, but it is a bit more...thrilling.” Jack grinned as he pulled back on the action while holding the cigarette between two fingers. Harley clearly heard the the smart clicking sound of Jack pumping the cartridges into place while he gave her a wink from behind his glasses.

“After you learn to use a shotgun, I'll teach you how to shoot a handgun...and how to hold and use a knife.” Jack grinned broadly, obviously excited by the idea. Harley grinned back, his excitement contagious; she would learn anything he wanted to teach...anything at all.

Jack pointed. “Stand back over here and just watch first, all right?”

Harley nodded and moved to stand where Jack indicated, behind the chalk line that she assumed Alfred had marked on the grass.

Jack walked to the machine, dropping into a crouch as he adjusted the skeet shooter before he walked back over to the chalk line, handling the shotgun with the ease of familiar use. He held onto the grip, tucking the stock firmly against his shoulder, the slowly ascending trail of smoke from his cigarette created a halo around him. Harley watched Jack intently, the sparkle in his smile as he brought the barrel of the shotgun up, sighting down the barrel just as the skeet shooter let a clay disc fly. Jack shot, then pumped the barrel, his first shot shattering the clay disc, the next shot taking the
second disc just as swiftly and easily and his third shot disintegrating the last clay disc.

Harley started clapping. “Oh Jack, that was amazing!!!”

Jack laughed as he held the shotgun out from his body as with his other hand to his stomach he took a bow. “Thank you my sweetling. Okay,” he said with a twist of his lips into a grin. “Your turn.”

Harley walked over to the table with Jack where he put his cigarette out in the ash tray. She picked up her own shotgun and, with a few mild pointers from Jack, loaded in the cartridges successively. Jack grinned his approval and motioned her over to the line. Harley stepped over, carefully pointing the barrel of the shotgun to the ground though she had the safety on.

Jack stepped next to her and began to explain how to utilize the sight on the shotgun and the difference between using the sight and “shooting from the hip.” Jack cocked an eyebrow as he looked at Harley. “For now, let's just have you use the sight to aim, yeah?” Harley nodded and took a deep breath. Jack walked over to the skeet shooter and crouched, adjusting the machine so that the clay discs didn't come out quite as fast for her as they did for him.

“Whenever you're ready Harls!”

Harley brought the shotgun up. It felt good to have the weapon in her hands. She couldn't really say why, but there was something powerful about it, something dangerous.

The disc flew; her first shot missed.

Jack called out. “Picture someone you hate Harley, someone whose head you would love to see explode!”

The next disc flew. Harley imagined the girl from her classes in college when she was a freshman, the perfect Sally Wuthers; pretty, popular (Sally, Harley would find out, had been a cheerleader in high school and that charisma followed her into college with guys and women throwing themselves at her, wanting to be in her bubble of influence.) Sally was a brunette with green-eyes, well-dressed, from a rich family, gifted with pretty much all the things that Harley had to fight all her life for. Love, acceptance and people falling all over themselves—even the professors—to be near her. Sally had been the teacher's pet in every class despite them being in college where supposedly that sort of thing didn't happen. For Harley, in many ways, it was like being in high school again or even in her own home. Harley remembered hating Sally, hating her prefect family, perfect life...perfect looks...everything...it was easy to imagine Sally's head on the clay disc when it suddenly flew up and this time Harley's shot was dead on, shattering the disc into bits.

Jack cheered. “That's my girl!!”

The last clay disc flew and Harley hit it with a wicked grin dancing across her lips as the disc shattered. Jack giggled as the remnants of the clay disc scattered over the manicured grass. “Okay, tell me who you just shoot?”

Harley blushed as she lowered the weapon. “There was this girl in college...Sally...God I hated her! She was such a bitch...had everything going for her...everyone liked her...except me.” She laughed “I just imagined her face and it was easy after that.”

Jack wrinkled his nose with glee. “Perfect—you are perfect.”

He walked over to Harley to wrap his arm around her waist and yank her against him. “You are perfect for me, my little Harlequin...just perfect.” Jack caught her bottom lip with his grinning teeth as his blue eyes sparkled behind his glasses. Harley hissed at the flash of pain, but then Jack let go of
her lip and kissed her hard, his tongue demanding, his teeth hitting against hers, their almost wounded lips from their fight the night before drawing just enough blood for the kiss to taste of it.

*

It was afternoon, the sun having just reached its peak and beginning its gradual descent, when Alfred came out onto the back lawn. Jack and Harley were laying on the grass, their waistcoats discarded and now being used as pillows for their heads as they lay side by side. They were pointing at the clouds seeing shapes and making each other laugh. The shotguns lay on the table, a smattering of used cartridges around the weapons. On the other table, there were scattered remains of food, most of it gone. Alfred smiled when he saw the two of them lying in the grass together. He hadn't seen Master Jack this happy since before his parents' murder. It is nice to see one of the boys so happy, finally, the older man thought. The other cheery thought was that perhaps soon there would be little Waynes running around the lawn. Alfred smiled and stopped at a respectful distance.

“Master Jack?”

Jack arched his head back looking at Alfred upside down. “Yes?”

“Your brother, Master Bruce has been trying to get a hold of you. You have not been answering his calls or his texts.” Alfred raised an eyebrow at Jack, the only sign of Alfred's disapproval of the younger Wayne avoiding his brother.

Jack groaned rolling over onto his stomach. Harley smiled as she look at Alfred upside down and waved. “Hey Alfred.”

Alfred smiled and suppressed a laugh. “Hello Miss Harleen and how are you this afternoon my dear?”

“T'm great. Thank you for the food Alfred. It was perfect as always.” She smiled at him and Alfred blushed. “You are very welcome Miss Harleen.”

Harley giggled. “Jack won't tell me if you have super powers or not.”

Alfred chuckled. “Only the best training that an English butler can receive and a family that I care for Miss Harleen, which includes you my dear.”

Harley blushed. “Thank you Alfred.”

Jack easily jumped to his feet without using his hands, reaching down to grab Harley's hand and hauling her to her feet and into the circle of his arms where he stole a peck on her lips, playfully pushing her sunglasses up her nose before turning back to Alfred. “So where is he?”

“The call is inside Master Jack, on the landline.” Alfred indicated with a glance toward the manor.

Jack sighed. “Okay. Come my darling Harls, let us go see what my elder brother wishes of me!”

With a dramatic hand movement, plus grabbing her around the waist and into his arms for another stolen kiss, he clasped her other hand with his and the two of them began to skip toward the manor as if they were doing a cheerful tango, making Alfred chuckle thinking to himself. “Young love.”

*

Jack held Harley's hand, his fingers laced through hers and swung their joined hands between them as they walked into the manor and headed toward the library where one of the few landlines in the
manor house was installed. He let go of her hand after he pressed a quick kiss to her knuckles, tossed his sunglasses onto a desk and hopped up onto one of the long walnut tables in the room next to the small round matching table that held the phone. Jack picked up the phone and pressed the receiver to his ear just as Harley flopped into one of the chairs across from him. The chair was your typical Victorian winged-backed chair; the leather was a deep burgundy with brass accent buttons. She had dropped her sunglasses onto the table next to her.

Harley smiled broadly as she stretched her legs out, her right leg crooked just a little, bent and wobbling her leg back and forth on the heel of her boot, the other leg spread out making her look not just wanton, but sexy. She smiled at Jack, her blue eyes hooded, gazing at him under her thick dark lashes, running the tip of her tongue between her teeth, the forefinger of her left hand between her teeth giving Jack seductive looks. She played with the buttons of her blouse with her other hand, popping open one, then another. Jack wrinkled his nose with a grin at her, his blue eyes glued to the slow exposure of her cleavage.

“Hey bro what's up?” he said into the phone, his gaze never leaving Harley.

Bruce frowned on the other end at Jack's causal greeting but he maintained a civil tone.

“I've been trying to get a hold of you since yesterday...anyway. Harvey Dent, a friend of mine who is running for DA is holding a fundraiser. His campaign is sponsoring a carnival tomorrow night to raise money for revitalizing some of Gotham's poorer neighborhoods. He has invited us to attend.”

Jack grinned at the news. “A carnival? Really?”

Jack giggled softly and motioned for Harley to unbutton a few more buttons. She licked her finger and slid open a few more buttons until her shirt fell open to show off the lacy black bra underneath. Jack stuck his tongue out at her, imitating licking her. Harley giggled and pressed her teeth into her bottom lip.

Jack kept his eyes on Harley as he replied to Bruce. “That sounds like it might be fun. You sure you want me out in public? Never know what I might do!”

Bruce was silent for a moment before he answered. “Not funny Jack, and before you say anything I am fine with Harleen Quinzel being there with you. Just promise...no fighting or too graphic public displays of affection. Please.”

Jack made a face which had Harley chuckling, then he held his two fingers up in a “V” and waggled his tongue between them making a terribly obscene sound which had Harley squealing with laughter at him.

Bruce heard female laughter in the background, but refrained from comment, knowing exactly who it was.

Jack snickered. “Sounds great bro. Of course Harley and I will be there. I promise we'll be on our best behavior...or close to it.”

Bruce sighed. “Thank you Jack.”

Jack frowned. “Yeah...yeah you're welcome. I gotta go.”

Jack hung up the phone, hopped off the table and slowly stalked over to Harley who grinned up at him brightly, her blouse fully open as she slouched in the chair. She had unbraided her hair so that the long tresses fell around her shoulders seductively and over the tops of her breasts that were being pushed up by the black bra she wore.
"You are a bad, bad girl Harley Quinn." Jack purred as he reached forward to run the back of his gloved fingers along the curve of one breast. The feel of the leather against her skin was erotic; she moaned softly before she giggled. "You like that about me."

Jack growled as he dropped down to his knees between her legs. "Oh yes—yes I do."

Jack ran his tongue along her cleavage while with his nimble fingers (despite the gloves) he reached around to swiftly and easily unlatch her bra. The fabric snapped away to expose her breasts when Jack shoved the offending piece of underwear out of the way.

Jack giggled. "Oh, now that is very nice."

He slowly cupped her breasts and squeezed gently before rolling his leather clad thumbs over her nipples. Harley groaned, her eyes fluttering close with the pleasure of his touch. Jack leaned in, still cupping her breasts, his teeth scraping against her neck while Harley's hands started to work at the buttons of his shirt. She pulled the cloth back, seeing the tattoo at his neck that spread down this skin. The tattoo was still healing like her own, but seeing it made Harley squirm with want.

Jack purred against the tender flesh of her throat. "Bruce wants us to go to a carnival tomorrow night...a fundraiser..." His tongue licked up to her ear where his teeth grabbed hold of her lobe sharply. His gloved thumb and forefinger pinched her nipples hard. Harley jerked, sliding down further in the library chair.

Jack stood up suddenly and walked quickly to the library doors.

"What are you doing?" Harley asked as she pushed herself up.

Jack grinned over his shoulder. "Locking the doors, no reason to give Alfred a heart attack."

Harley giggled as she rose to her feet and moved behind her chair.

Jack gave her a lopsided grin. "Are you going to play a game?"

Her giggle was cute, but laced with passion. "You have to catch me Jack."

"Ohh I do, do I? Mm..." Jack walked slowly towards her and unbuttoned his shirt as he did, his blue eyes following her every move. Harley slipped out of her shirt and bra, wearing only her pants and boots grinning at him playfully. "You gonna get me puddin? Mmm...Master Jack...Mistah J?"

Jack laughed. "Oh, calling me names, huh?"

Harley giggled again as she pushed back from the chair, her eyes dancing as she shook her hair out. She started to turn to run to the other end of the room, but Jack was quick—extremely quick—cutting the distance between them in no time. Coming up behind her, he wrapped his arms around her, pinning her arms to her sides and lifted her up as she kicked out with her booted feet. Harley squealed hitting a table with her feet, knocking it over and sending the lamp and books crashing to the floor. Jack was laughing as he hauled her back then stumbled forward with her, pressing her up against one of the large library windows that was nestled between two wall length book cases. Jack licked her ear.

"Mm...just too slow Harley...you can never get away from me." Jack held her with one hand, his other coming around the front to unfasten the button on her pants, his hand sliding between her legs once he had the fabric loose enough. His fingers brushed against her, gentle despite how tight his arm was around her torso, or how hard he had her pressed up against the glass of the window with his weight keeping her in place. One handed, Jack worked her pants down, his fingers of his other
hand caressing her softly, teasing her with their gentleness while he yanked her pants down her
thighs roughly.

“Tell me you're mine Harley, tell me,” Jack hissed against her ear. She could feel him struggling with
his own pants behind her.

Harley groaned feeling his member, hot against her backside when he had succeeded in getting his
pants down to his thighs. He grabbed her hip with one hand in a painful grip, but Jack's lips against
her throat and then her ear were tender, brushing against her skin, his tongue a hot, wet tease as the
tip of his tongue glided over her ear. He pressed her hard against the glass, his mouth moving down
to the curve of her shoulder where he bit into her skin hard enough that she knew he had bruised her
before he whispered again.

“Tell me Harley.”

“I'm yours Jack...only yours...” Harley moaned and arched her head back as Jack's fingers between
her legs rolled and caressed until she shuddered, her climax stiffening her whole body.

“JACK!”


He scooted back from pressing her against the window, removing his hand from between her legs,
his fingers glistening. Harley whimpered at the loss of his hand, but Jack bent her over, running his
hands up the curve of her back before reaching with one hand to grab her hair, giving her thick hair a
gentle tug. Then he pushed her forward. Harley braced her hands against the glass while Jack
grabbed her hips with both hands and took her from behind with a powerful thrust into her, burying
himself deeply.

She cried out, arching, her hands pressed flat to the glass. “Uuhh!”

Jack groaned, his eyes rolling closed, his fingers digging into her hips, slamming her back hard and
fast against him. He growled, snarling his pleasure to the sound of their flesh slapping together.

“Harley, Harley!!”

Harley gasped. “Oh puddin!!!”

She peaked at the same moment that she felt him jerk, filling her, yanking her hard back against him.

*

Alfred had just finished up cleaning most of the skeet shooting equipment and the remains of Jack
and Harleen's brunch. He had just returned to the manor and was planning dinner in his head when
he decided to ask Master Jack how he would feel about Chicken Fettuccine Alfredo for dinner that
night when he stopped at the library door, his knuckles poised over the wood, ready to knock when
he heard the clear sounds of moaning and grunts of....

Alfred paled, then blushed quickly turning away. “I'll asked them about dinner...later.”

*

Friday night came quickly. Jack was visibly excited about going to the carnival, which made Harley
love him just that much more. They were in the process of dressing in Jack's room.
Harley grinned as she applied her makeup and watched Jack behind her from the mirror. Jack was practically giddy with excitement. He had told her stories about his plans to run away to join the circus any time he and Bruce's playing disintegrated into a fight. How he had always loved the clowns, the way they could make people laugh.

Jack wore jeans (which Harley found sexy, those long legs of his clad in jeans, clearly tailored to his slim build, like all his other clothing), a dark shirt which was a shade of blue so dark that you could only see the color of it when the light hit the material just right. The sleeves of the shirt were rolled up to his elbows (again, Harley was struck by how sexy he looked), the top couple of buttons were undone, giving a hint of his tattoo hidden beneath. He had paired the shirt and jeans with a black vest, buttoned up, along with a gold chain across the front. He wore a pair of brown and black oxfords with dark purple socks to finish the look. He was just finishing up slicking his hair back, running his fingers through his hair, assessing himself in the bathroom mirror. His blue eyes met hers in the mirror. Jack chuckled. “Here.”

He held his hand out. “Let me see your lipstick.”

Harley's expression conveyed her confusion, but she picked up the tube of lipstick, a liquid lip gloss called “drama red.” Jack twisted open the tube pulling out the applicator, then leaned forward and drew the soft applicator across his lips. Harley swallowed watching him. She caught her bottom lip between her teeth studying his reflection as he applied the deep red to his lips and wondered how that could be so incredibly sexy. Jack's blue eyes glanced at her reflection in the mirror beside him and grinned at her when he was finished. “What do ya think sweetheart?”

Harley pressed her lips together, pulling her teeth across her bottom lip before she replied. “I love it Jack.”

He grinned, the red framing his perfect smile made her feel a rush of heat. Jack leaned forward, studying his eyes and placing a finger under one, tugging the skin down for a moment.

“Eyeliner! I need eyeliner!”

Harley quickly looked through her make-up bag coming up with a thick liquid pencil (almost thick enough that it resembled a marker). “I use this to make cat eyes.”

Jack giggled. “Ooh perfect!”

Jack turned to face her. Harley leaned in close to his face, her left hand gently holding his chin to keep his face steady as she carefully traced his eyes, the thick dark lines that she drew around his eyes made the blue of his iris blaze more beautifully from his face.

Harley licked her lips and tilted her head to study her work before she declared. “You look amazing Jack.”

Jack laughed and grabbed her face between his hands to kiss her, her own laughs muffled against his lips. Luckily the gloss was fairly good quality and didn't smear much. Harley giggled, using her thumb to wipe away the slight smear on his bottom lip and Jack did the same for her, both of them gazing hungrily at the other.

* *

After Harley finished with her own make-up, she reached over and picked up her hair brush. She started to brush her long hair out, her eyes still on Jack. She simply couldn't get enough of him.

Jack glanced sideways at her taking in her overall appearance. She looked gorgeous in a red mini
dress that hit just at her thighs, showing off her gorgeous long legs. The rayon dress tied at the front (which he knew he was going to enjoy untying later) with a crew neckline and shift silhouette. She wore a pair of red bike shorts underneath, which was a shame as far as Jack was concerned. He had tried to convince her the fun they could have if she only wore a thong...or even better...nothing at all. But since there were going to be kids at the carnival, Harley insisted on being decent...despite Jack's pouting.

The dress itself was sleeveless, and since the evenings could still get very cool, Harley had a black sweater to cover her arms. The shoes she intended to wear were the boots that Jack had purchased for her yesterday. Right now the boots were sitting by the bed. She was standing in the bathroom barefoot, looking adorable...good enough to forget all about the carnival and for them to just have fun here. But Jack had told his brother they would show up...so... Jack reached out to take the brush from her hand.

“Here, let me.” He smiled and moved to stand behind her with the brush.

“I think tomorrow we should head into Gotham to work on designing you a ring.” Jack smiled happily at the thought as he ran the brush gently through her hair, followed by the fingers of his free hand.

“Designing a ring?” Harley frowned in confusion, but Jack only grinned. “No mere simple diamond for my girl, no. You need something special, unique—like you.”

“Jack, you know, I don't need a ring,” Harley assured him. “Just knowing you want to marry me is enough.” Harley met his eyes in the mirror, but Jack shook his head in disagreement.

“I want everyone to know that you're my girl, that no one...no one can touch you but me. That you are going to be mine.”

Harley smiled blushing. “I love you Jack.”

Jack set the brush aside and wrapped his arms around her from behind as he kissed her ear and whispered. “My Harlequin.”

*

When they arrived downstairs, Bruce was waiting for them. He looked nice, though Harley felt he looked slightly uncomfortable in his casual clothes. It seemed as if the man had been born in a suit. While Jack managed to wear suits and make them look comfortable and casual, Bruce seemed to have the opposite issue. There was just something about Jack...and not just because she was head over heels in love with him...he just had a way about him and a suit for him was just an extension of his personality.

But Bruce, Bruce wore his suits like they were suits of armor, protecting him from something. But what he was wearing tonight? Bruce was dressed in a pair of khakis, a button down white shirt and casual sports jacket thrown on over that with a pair of brown loafers.

He actually smiled when he saw Jack and Harley. “You two ready? Wait, are you wearing make-up?”

Jack laughed. “Yes I am big brother and don't I look divine? Don't answer that. Let the festivities begin!” Jack dramatically threw his free hand (the other holding Harley's hand) into the air with flair.

Bruce actually laughed. Harley realized it was the first time she had ever seen the other Wayne brother show any emotion beyond anger, brooding or annoyance. Bruce smiled at his brother. “I
haven't forgotten about you running off to the circus Jack.”

Jack laughed. “I still might, you never know. Can you just see the headlines? Younger Wayne gives up fortune to become a clown!”

Bruce chuckled. “You always were a clown.”

The brothers were laughing together as the three of them made their way to the car waiting outside.

*  

The carnival set up in Robinson Park was far larger than Harley had expected. Actually, she wasn't sure what she expected, but this wasn't it. The whole of the park had been cordoned off for the event. The entrance to the park had a large banner hanging above it announcing the event sponsored by Harvey Dent for District Attorney. Jack laughed with delight as soon as they walked through the entrance after purchasing their tickets. Bruce stopped for a moment after getting his tickets to look at the carnival spread out before them.

“They really outdid themselves. Reminds me a bit of that circus we went to as kids...remember Jack?” Bruce glanced over to his younger brother as he spoke.

Jack nodded. “Yeah...yeah I do.”

The smells of cotton candy, funnel cake and a million other scents that reminded Jack of his childhood along with the bright, multiple colored lights and the cranked music from the many rides. For a moment Jack's eyes looked distant. He murmured, his voice a little wistful, “Remember Dad taking us to play all the games?”

Bruce walked up to stand on Jack's other side. “Yes, I remember.”

Harley watched the two of them, for a moment, two boys, two brothers sharing a memory.

“And Mom laughing as Dad dragged her onto one of the rides.” As Jack continued to reminisce, his eyes shone.

Bruce nodded. “Mom always protested, but sometimes she was worse than Dad about the rides.”

The two men laughed softly.

“Boy, your friend Harvey Dent and his gang went all out here.” Jack took a breath and changed the subject. His arm around Harley's waist tightened, his fingers digging into her side, not painfully but firmly. It was clear to her, the doctor part of her as well as the girlfriend, that the memories Jack and Bruce had just been discussing were both pleasant and painful. She couldn't imagine what it must have been like for them to not only lose their parents, but to witness their murders. And now both men had a bridge between them...

Jack started walking, his arm tightening around her again as if he needed the reassurance of her. Harley snaked her arm was around his waist wanting to give him the reassurance that she was there with him, for him. She gave him a squeeze, pressing his body against hers. Jack glanced sideways at her, a soft smile on his lips. It was times like these that Harley remembered she had been brought to Wayne Manor as his doctor, that Jack was suffering, and deep down in a dark part of his soul Jack was still reliving that night. She frowned at the thought of the little boy lost in the darkness...the tragedy that shaped him...

*
As the trio walked deeper into the park they could see that families were everywhere, several news crews covering the event. Someone from the Gotham Free Press called out.

“Bruce Wayne!!! Jack Wayne!! Gotham Free Press! Give us a smile!”

Jack and Bruce both turned at the sounds of their names. Jack grinned, a perfect smile, holding Harley tightly against his side.

Another photographer yelled. “Gotham Gazette, who’s your lady friend? And did you come stag Bruce?”

Bruce just smiled and waved off the question.

Jack chuckled moving away as he waved his free hand at the reporter. “Hey now, not about me guys! Focus on the event!”

Bruce who had been answering a few questions from another reporter glanced at Jack with a nod that said he was happy with Jack's answer.

Harley grinned and pressed a quick kiss to Jack's cheek which made Jack laugh. “Look at me behaving myself!”

That was when Bruce heard a male voice that he recognized call his name over the reporters. “BRUCE! JACK! Over here!”

Bruce saw his friend Harvey, dressed in jeans and a white polo with his wife Gilda—who wore a long boho style flowered skirt with a matching dark blue blouse—on his arm and another woman, dressed in black jeans and a loose yet attractive halter black top with a leather jacket over the top, standing next to Gilda. Gilda was a petite brunette woman with short hair, but Bruce's attention was immediately drawn to the other woman, tall, well built, with short black hair and intense brown eyes. Their eyes seemed to catch each other immediately.

Harvey let go of his wife to pull Bruce into a hug, smacking him hard on the back. “So glad you could make it and you must be Jack?” Harvey stuck out his hand. Jack took it, giving his hand a good shake.

“Yep, I'm the younger and less responsible brother and this is my girl, Harley Quinn.”

Bruce frowned at Jack's introduction, but he held his tongue. This was the second time he had heard Jack refer to Dr. Quinzel as Harley and now the added Quinn was odd...pet name maybe?

Harvey took Harley's hand holding it between both of his. “Pleasure to me you too.”

Bruce's attention was drawn to the woman with Harvey and Gilda. Harvey smiled. “This is my wife and better half Gilda”

Gilda laughed and patted him on the chest. “Harvey!”

Harvey gave his wife a quick peck on the cheek before he continued. “Bruce, Jack, Harley, I would like to introduce you to a friend of my wife's, Miss Selina Kyle. Selina, this is Bruce and Jack Wayne and Harley Quinn.”

Selina gave a coy smile. “It's a pleasure.”

Bruce took her offered hand and surprised not just Selina but himself when he kissed her knuckles
instead of shaking it. “A pleasure Selina.”

Selina smiled with a light laugh. “A bit old fashioned don’t you think?” Her voice was rich, sultry, and had Bruce smiling. Selina was—svelte, was the term Harley would use to describe her.

Jack grinned. “Oh you seem to have my brother's full attention...you have no idea how difficult that is to get Ms. Kyle.”

Bruce released her hand, suddenly looking embarrassed. Harvey laughed.

“Well, have fun everyone. This is a night to raise money and enjoy some of the best that Gotham has to offer. Bruce, would you mind escorting Selina this evening?”

Selina started to protest, but Bruce smiled at her. “If you would allow me?”

He offered his arm to her. Selina looked at his arm then at him. She seemed to mull the situation over for a moment before she finally linked her arm through his. “Who am I to say no to a gentleman?”

Bruce laughed lightly. “Well thank you Miss Kyle.”

“Please, call me Selina.”

*

Jack and Harley slipped away from the other two couples to go explore the carnival. Harley's eyes were a little wide as they walked through the festival area. This was a new experience for her. Her family had never gone to carnivals...at least not with her. She remembered after her half siblings were born they would go, but Harley had always done something that annoyed her stepfather...she would end up grounded for such and such reason as the rest of the family would go. So this was extra special for her, her first time and it was with the man she loved.

Jack laughed. “I'm going to have to win you the biggest most obnoxious teddy bear tonight.”

Harley couldn't help the girlish giggle while she hung onto Jack's arm.

*

From the darkness around the edges of the carnival, a tall heavily built bald man with a red bandana wrapped around his head stood in the bushes along the edge of the event with another man, this one smaller, almost weasel-like in his thinness, but with a constant tick of one eye.

The bald man grinned. “There, that's him Weasel—from the picture.”

He grabbed the smaller man next to him by the shoulder and yanked him over to point at Jack Wayne laughing with some blonde while they fed each other cotton candy, Jack Wayne licking the blonde's fingers.

“That's the mark. Go tell the boss he's here. I'll follow.” The larger man glared down at the weasely man who nodded quickly.

“Gotcha Pinhead!”

The smaller man turned and ran deeper into the forested area of the park, away from the lights and sounds of the carnival, heading toward a large concrete pipe opening that ran under the park. There were rusted bars in front of the pipe's entrance, now mostly gone. The bars had originally been put there to keep animals and people out of the piping; otherwise people and animals could wander
down into the sewer and get lost, die and never be found again. A lot of people, the lost, lonely and uncared for wandered down into the Gotham's sewers never to be heard from again. At the entrance of the tunnel there were remains of a camp, the ashes of a fire, a scrap of clothing, a puddle of blood.

Now, this was a entrance to the domain of some of the gangs of Gotham.

The little weasel of a man looked around hurriedly to make sure no one saw him before rushing into the darkness of the tunnel. He stopped once he was inside, letting his eyes adjust before he started to move carefully, keeping one hand along the tunnel's rough surface. He could see his goal up ahead, an orange glow that caused shadows to dance along the curved walls. He didn't have far to go before he heard the sounds of their boss and the other members of the gang.

Waylon Jones picked his teeth with a piece of bone, his large frame slouched down in the tunnel. He and his men were not too far in the tunnel, but deep enough no one would stumble across them by accident; though if anyone did, they were deep enough no one would miss whoever found them either.

Waylon scratched his arm with a clawed hand. His skin was dark greenish grey, covered in the leather hide of a crocodile. He wore only a pair of jeans and that only because he was still enough of a man to need or want the protection. His mouth was full of deadly teeth which he was picking the remains of his dinner from while he waited for the signal. He had at least five other men with him milling around waiting, smoking and speaking in hushed voices. There were another four outside looking for their target. He heard footsteps before anyone else and glanced down into the darkness. Weasel saw the glow of Croc's eyes first before he came into the small pool of light made by the fire burning in the metal barrel next to Croc.

“We spotted him boss. He's with some blonde.” The smaller man nodded eagerly.

Croc grinned fiercely. “Get them both then. She might be worth something too. Go put the word out. It's time.”

* 

When Jack saw that a live band was playing and a makeshift dance floor had been set up, he grabbed Harley's hand and dragged her over grinning like a school boy.

Jack laughed, his voice warm and sending pleasant chills down her spine when he spoke.

“Never pass up a chance to dance, especially with my girl.”

Jack twirled Harley on the dance floor, bringing her body up against his, pressing his left hand to the small of her back, weaving his hips with hers while holding her other hand with his right, out from their bodies. Harley stared up at him, her eyes shining in the lights strung around the makeshift dance floor. Her free arm was around his shoulder, the fingers of her hand stroking the back of his neck, the world around them forgotten while they danced. Jack weaved, turning her in a circle, his gaze never leaving hers. The live band (called Ashes on Sunday) had just finished a rock song when Jack and Harley decided to step onto the dance floor. They had begun a slow song, the blonde woman, dressed in all black, short black miniskirt, fishnets, ankle boots and a black halter top, held the microphone close to her lips as she purred.

“A song for all you Gotham lovers out there.”

The song was a cover of Lana del Rey's “Ultraviolence.” The woman at the microphone, her voice smooth like warm honey sang with her lips almost brushing the microphone that she held between both hands.
He used to call me DN
That stood for deadly nightshade
'Cause I was filled with poison
But blessed with beauty and rage
Jim told me that
He hit me and it felt like a kiss
Jim brought me back
Reminded me of when we were kids
This is ultraviolence
Ultraviolence
Ultraviolence
Ultraviolence
I can hear sirens, sirens
He hit me and it felt like a kiss
I can hear violins, violins
Give me all of that ultraviolence...

Jack's smile was intoxicating. The red of his lips, the eyeliner around his eyes made the blue brighter than the stars, the lights dancing over his features made his lips shine, an alluring smile on those dramatically red lips. The effect had Harley wanting to kiss him, to grab his hair and force his head back, her mouth attacking his, smearing his lipstick...

Jack chuckled as if he sensed what she wanted. He pressed her hips against him, weaving to the music, turning in an easy circle, his long legs gliding them across the space with ease making Harley feel as if she were floating in his arms. Jack ran his tongue over his perfect teeth, grinning at her, doing a quick step spin before he dipped her low whispering at her and singing to her.

“I love you the first time
I love you the last time
Yo soy la princesa, comprende mis white lines
'Cause I'm your jazz singer
And you're my cult leader
I love you forever,
Later, they were walking along the edge of the carnival. Harley giggled and rubbed her nose into the huge pink teddy bear that Jack had just won for her at the water balloon game. He grinned proudly, his hand in hers. Here the colored lights were dimmer and they could talk, the music only a dull hum in the background.

“This is fun,” Harley said softly squeezing the fingers of his hand that held hers.

“Yeah, it is. What do you feel like doing next pumpkin?” Jack brought her hand up to kiss her knuckles.

“Hmmm...we did the Ferris wheel...AND almost got asked to leave...” They both chuckled.

“And we rode the carousel...and almost got asked to leave...” Harley giggled and Jack let out a belly laugh. “We're running out of places to make out!”

Harley giggled with him before she asked, “Hmm...do you want to ride the 'Vortex?'” She said the word “Vortex” in a deep scary voice.

Jack chuckled. “As long as you're not prone to vomiting...”

Harley started to respond when suddenly out of the darkness, a man grabbed Harley from behind, his hands digging into her hair, pulling her head back and yanking her from Jack so suddenly that her nails tore across Jack's palm. She dropped the bear as she struggled and bit down on the arm that had gone around her neck. Another man emerged from the shadows to immediately jab a syringe into Harley's neck in the next instant. She made a choking sound, but Harley was down before she could utter another sound, sinking into the arms of the man who had grabbed her.

Jack had started to lunge, a snarl on his lips. “Let her...”

Another three men that Jack hadn't seen grabbed him from behind, seeming to form from the shadows, one shoving the barrel of a gun in Jack's mouth while the other two grabbed Jack's arms, yanking them painfully behind his back. Jack started to fight, pulling his weight forward to throw the men behind him off balance, slamming his forehead into the nose of the man holding the barrel of the gun to him, breaking it with a loud crack. The man gasped dropping back to grab his nose as blood splashed everywhere. “He broke my nose!”

That man slammed his fist into Jack's face, knocking his head back. Jack giggled, opening his mouth to say something, his teeth bloodied, but the one holding Harley placed a knife to her throat, the point digging into her skin as she lay unconscious in his arms.

“Now, now, Mr. Wayne, don't want anything permanent to happen to your girl here now do you? I mean, if you don't care about her, by all means fight. I'll just stick this knife right through her throat and out the other side.” The man, tall, muscled with greasy black hair and a nose ring grinned brightly.

“I mean as far as we know she ain't worth a dime.” He pressed the blade to her neck to make his point, drawing a drop of blood that welled up before it slowly started to run down her pale neck. Harley never flinched.

Jack hissed and stopped moving, though his eyes danced with rage.
“I'm going to tear your throat out.” Jack's voice was low with menace.

“Yeah...whatever rich boy. Drug him.” The greasy man grinned.

The one with the broken nose glared at Jack as he pulled a syringe from inside his jacket and slammed it deep into Jack's neck trying to hurt him. Jack didn't react, taking the pain like it was an old friend.

The contents of the syringe hit his bloodstream like a bolt of fire, but just as the pain flared to life, it was gone, replaced by darkness.

* *

When Jack woke the first thing that assaulted his senses was the smell. It had to be the most disgusting scent he had ever encountered. He could taste it on his tongue, feel it on his skin. The next thing he noticed was that, oddly, whoever had taken him, they hadn't gagged him, which meant they must have him somewhere where they felt safe enough that no one would hear him yell for help. The next thing that he was aware of was the pain in his arms, which were held over his head. He could feel the rust of metal handcuffs pinching into the skin of his wrists. The chain between the cuffs was hung on a hook or nail—he couldn't be sure—but his own weight was pulling painfully at the muscles of his shoulders. Jack opened his eyes slowly, though the remains of the drug in his system made him dizzy as he tried to focus.

“Ah, yer awake.” The voice was rough and reminded him of the sounds of boulders rolling over concrete. Jack blinked several times as he tried to bring his vision into focus. It was dark, but he could see a faint light in here, a pale orange glow, though he couldn't determine it's origin. He did see the shadow of someone, someone huge whose eyes seemed to glow in the darkness, yellow eyes, staring at him, watching him.

The figured stepped closer, moving out of the shadows. The light danced across the man's features.

Jack blinked in surprised. “Holy shit...a crocodile?”

The creature laughed, the sound deep and grating. “Yer funny white boy. Everyone calls me Croc, Killer Croc.”

Jack frowned. “Dull, but to the point I suppose.”

“Ha ha...very funny keep it up and I'll take a bite out of you.” Croc stepped closer and grabbed Jack by the face, his claws digging into the smaller man's skin. “So how much you think your brother will pay for you, slightly damaged?”

Jack's eyes narrowed. “Who do you think I am?

Croc released Jack's face, but not before shoving his chin hard to the side, the tips of his claws dragging across Jack's skin leaving cuts over Jack's upper lip and along on his jawline, both deep enough to leave scars. Jack winced.

Croc chuckled deep in his chest. “I ain't stupid. I know who you are, Jack Wayne, the bad little brother to Bruce Wayne who I'm betting will pay top price to have his baby brother back.”

Jack followed Croc's movements with narrowed eyes. He could feel the sticky trickle of blood running down over his lips and his jaw.

Jack smiled. “Why won't crocodiles attack lawyers?
Croc turned, confusion clear in his alien looking yellow eyes. “What?”

Jack giggled. “Professional courtesy!”

Jack continued to laugh while Croc stared at him in confusion. Croc snarled as he took a large step forward and backhanded Jack.

Jack chuckled against the pain, spitting blood before he spoke. “Where is she?”

Croc grinned and showed rows and rows of deadly sharp teeth. “The woman?”

Jack's upper lip curled, making Croc laugh louder. “She's here, somewhere. Want to save us the trouble, tell us who she is...or isn't. If she ain't worth anything, told my boys they could have her for fun, though I might give her to them anyway. We can still make a buck off of her even if she is a bit spoiled when we give her back.”

Something in Jack's eyes, his expression changed. Croc saw the shift...it was...eerie and from what Croc had seen and done, eerie was not something he usually felt.

“You hurt her in any way...I will hunt you down and kill you slowly.” Croc was silent for a moment staring, unnerved by the sudden change in Jack Wayne's expression and demeanor, though he was quick to hide it. He laughed in his gravelly voice.

“Yeah, you keep telling yourself that pretty boy.”

* 

Harley was in a small, dank room with a damp floor that smelled horrible. When she came to, the first thing she did was get sick. Her head was pounding, her tongue tasted as if there was a film on it and she felt like shit. The room she was in felt to be made of bricks when she managed to feel around, determining that the space was small. There was standing water, which was where most of the smell was coming from and there was a faint hint of light in the distance that allowed her to see the bars in front of her. Harley made her way carefully over to the bars, stopping when she heard the sounds of tittering and scraping claws...rats...

Harley shivered with distaste. Where the evening air had only been slightly cool, this place was cold. She could feel the chill seeping into her bones. Harley leaned against the bars trying to figure out where she was, but also she was desperately hoping for a sign of Jack. But all she saw was more water and bricks.

“Hey!! Hey!!! HEY anyone there?!?” she called out.

A figure suddenly appeared in front of her, his rough dirty hands going over hers and pinning her hands to the bars.

“Hey there pretty!” he hissed.

Harley gasped in shock and jerked away, but her fingers were held, pressed painfully against the bars.

“Hey there pretty!” he hissed.

Harley leaned back as the man transferred his grip up her arms. “Come closer pretty girl. Croc says we all might get a taste of ya! I wouldn't mind getting a little taste now.”

Harley didn't scream. That wasn't her style. She was scared, downright terrified, but she wouldn't give this creature the satisfaction of knowing that so instead she hissed, “I'll bite your tongue off if
That was when a deep rumbling voice filled the space with laughter.

“You and your boyfriend are really amusing. I expected whimpering spoiled rich people, but you both got a little backbone...I like that.”

The man holding her arms was suddenly knocked in the head falling to the side and disappearing into the shadows. The sudden release of her arms had Harley stumbling backwards into her “cell” hitting the water of the floor and causing the smell to increase in intensity.

The figure didn't quite come into view since there was so little light, but Harley saw the glow of it's eyes. “Name's Killer Croc...remember that. You and your boyfriend are my pets until Bruce Wayne pays for you. If he doesn't pay...then you, sweetmeat, get to be mine and my boys. Though I like the look of you...might keep you for myself.” He chuckled leaning in to sniff at her.

“Where's Jack?!” Harley pushed herself to her feet.

The creature laughed. “Don't worry, he's fine. You really should start worrying about yourself now, shouldn't you?”

* 

Bruce was turning around from the cashier, two large soft pretzels in his hands. Selina Kyle was sitting at one of the park benches waiting for him. Selina Kyle had to be one of the most interesting women Bruce had met. She was simply fascinating, beautiful...and he was genuinely enjoying her company.

He was just about to walk toward her when a kid, no more than sixteen, dirty, looking like he might be living on the streets or worse caught his eye and grinned at him.

“You Bruce Wayne?”

“Yes, yes I am.” Bruce frowned as he watched the kid warily.

“I gots a message for you from Croc and his gang. He says he has your brother Jack and the woman. They want five million or you start getting body parts. Croc says he has your number, he'll be in touch within the hour. You get the cops involved, he says then he gets to have dinner...part of your brother and the girl.”

The kid gave Bruce a vicious grin before he took off at a run and disappeared into the crowd before Bruce could respond.

For a moment Bruce didn't move, the gears of his mind working in overtime. Croc? Who was Croc? And they claimed to have Jack and Dr. Quinzel?

Bruce dashed over to Selina to hand both pretzels to her. She opened her mouth to say thank you, but he shoved both pretzels at her before Bruce was digging his phone out of his back pocket. Selina frowned; by the look on his face, something was wrong, very wrong.

Bruce's fingers hit his brother's number. The phone rang, and rang and rang, but Jack never picked up. Which wasn't unusual, but his blood ran like ice through his veins. Bruce hung up and tried again...nothing.

“Bruce? What's wrong?” Selina reached out and laid a hand on his arm.
Bruce frowned as he slipped his phone into his back pocket. “I need...I need to go. It...it was a
pleasure, Selina.”

Bruce smiled absently at her and took off at a run, pushing his way through the crowds. Selina stood
up watching him go with a frown marring her features. Something was definitely wrong, she didn't
need to know the man to figure that out.

*

Bruce called the driver, the minutes waiting to get out of the park were some of the longest of his life.
He couldn't believe that someone had kidnapped Jack and Dr. Quinzel. Once he was in the back seat
of the car, Bruce pulled out his phone and put a call in to Alfred.

“Alfred, we have a problem.”

“Sir?”

“Jack has been taken.” Bruce frowned. “They are going to contact me within the hour.”

“Taken sir?” There was a slight edge of panic to Alfred's voice.

“Kidnapped. They want five million...I. Batman will take care of this, but if he fails...I want the
money gathered.” Bruce's voice had a hitch in it.

“I can't...I can't let anything happen to him Alfred. Not again.”
Batman's eyes narrowed. The lights from the computer screen danced across his masked face as he leaned against the console and examined the computer screen, his face a mask of concentration. Alfred stood behind him, his eyes going from the map of the sewer system that ran under Gotham, to Batman, worry clear on his face.

Batman reached out to run a finger along a highlighted red line. “This would be the most logical entrance into the sewers from Robinson Park.”

Alfred frowned as he stepped closer. “It is also the only entrance big enough to get two unconscious people through without being seen. That area is heavily overgrown, probably not easily seen from the main paths of the park.”

Batman nodded. “It looks like this area leads deeper into the old unused system of tunnels. It wouldn't take much to carry two people deep into that area...if you didn't know your way around, it would also be easy to become lost.”

Batman's voice was low as he puzzled out the problem.

Alfred glanced at Batman and then back at the computer layout. “Are you sure you shouldn't inform the police sir? There are only a few hours before morning and they could be anywhere under the city by now.”

Batman turned to look at Alfred. “I can do this quickly and quietly. The police will cause...” he held back a sigh of frustration. “It will be safer this way...” Alfred said nothing else, though a slight tightening around his eyes conveyed his disapproval. The phone on the console rang then; Batman reached for it, picked it up and held it to his ear.

“Bruce Wayne.” His voice changed to that of Bruce Wayne, a variation from the voice of Batman he had been using just moments before.

The voice on the other end was like gravel. “Ah, the famous Bruce Wayne.”

“Are you Croc, the one who has my brother?” Batman's hand tightened around the phone, the plastic making a groan of protest.

“Yes, I am and I do. Oh and the woman, don't forget about her. Unless you're not interested in paying for her—she has other uses.” Croc laughed. “Back to business. Five million for the two of them. You have twenty-four hours or I start sending body parts...I'll even be nice and start with a finger instead of an ear.” He laughed on the other end of the phone.

Bruce's mouth was set in a hard line. “Is this only about the money? I can't come up with that kind of money in twenty-four hours...And don't lay a hand on either of them...”

“Please, you're Bruce Wayne...you can do anything you set your mind to. Though if you want...I can go ahead and send that finger to you to get you motivated. Whose finger would you like? The pretty blonde's or your little brother's? Or both? I can send you one of each.” Bruce could hear the smile in the man's voice.
Bruce snarled in agitation. “I need proof of life.”

Croc snarled. “Calling me a liar?”

Bruce stood his ground. “I need proof of life.”

“Fine.”

Bruce could hear something in the background and then he heard Jack. “Bruce?”

“Jack! Jack! Are you alright?” Bruce tried to keep the panic out of his voice, but he his usually reserved and rigid demeanor cracked.

“I don’t know where Harley is Bruce...they have Harley.” Jack's voice, usually cool and collected— albeit with an undertone of mockery or amusement—now held an edge of panic to it when he spoke of Harleen.

“Don’t worry Jack...I'll give them the money and I'll get you both back. I promise.” Bruce started to say something else, but then Croc's voice came back on the line. “There, happy Mr. Wayne?”

Bruce pressed his lips together and then anger caused a tremor to his voice. “Where do you want the money?”

Croc laughed. “I'll call you back and let you know....twenty-four hours Mr. Wayne. Or your brother and the woman both lose a finger.”

The phone went dead.

Alfred looked to Batman whose voice came out in a low growl. “Twenty four hours...five million dollars or he starts sending me Jack and Harleen’s fingers.”

Alfred paled. “Sir...I...”

Batman tossed the phone down. Both of his hands dropped to grab onto the console as his head drooped down. For a moment he said nothing. If it had been Bruce there with him, Alfred would have tried to provide him some sort of comfort...but it wasn't Bruce right now; it was the Batman. Alfred frowned in worry, but said nothing.

Batman snarled. “You start calling in funds from any place you can find them at this hour until the banks open. I'm going to the sewers. I'm going to bring them home Alfred.”

* 

Harvey frowned. It was getting late and the carnival was beginning the slow crawl toward closing. The crowds were significantly thinner, a few odd couples and some families with fatigued children here and there. The cleaning staff were coming out of the wood work, so to speak, cleaning up the paths and pulling the trash cans along to clear away debris and trash. Harvey frowned deeper as he realized he hadn't seen Bruce for a while and the last time he saw Jack Wayne and Harley Quinn was when they had been on the dance floor—that had been a couple of hours ago. But after that, they seemed to disappear. Harvey didn't know Jack Wayne enough to say whether or not his behavior was unusual, but for Bruce, Bruce would have come by to say good night at least, not simply disappeared. He thought about calling Bruce to figure out where he was when he saw Selina walking swiftly toward him and Gilda.

“Selina? I thought you were with Bruce?” Now Harvey really was worried. Gilda, who had been
holding her husband's hand, let go to walk over to her friend. “Is everything all right?”

Selina frowned. “Something happened. I'm not even sure what exactly. Bruce was acting strange. I don't know him well, but this seemed pretty strange to me. One minute he was picking us up a couple of pretzels, the next...”

Harvey frowned as he stepped up beside his wife and laid his arm around her shoulders. “Strange how?”

Selina shrugged. “I saw some kid come up to him and say something. Looked like whatever it was upset Bruce. He was really distracted after that, said he had to go.”

“That doesn't sound good,” Gilda said looking over to her husband. Harvey pressed his lips together in thought. “Selina, do you mind taking Gilda home for me?”

“Harvey?” Gilda turned to lay her hands on his chest.

Harvey smiled at his wife and reached out to cup her face with one hand. “I'm going to drive by Wayne Manor, make sure everything is all right with Bruce and his brother. Something just feels wrong, honey.”

“I can come with you,” she said softly, but Harvey smiled and kissed her forehead. “You and Harvey junior...” He touched her flat stomach making her laugh. “Need your rest. I'm sure it's nothing.”

Gilda sighed and relented. “All right...I mean if you don't mind Selina?”

“Of course not!” Selina hooked her arm through Gilda's. “Don't worry, Harvey. I'll get her home safe and sound. Tell Mr. Wayne I hope everything is all right.”

Harvey nodded. “I will, thank you Selina. I'll be home before you know it honey.”

Gilda smiled. “Love you.”

“Love you too.” Harvey grinned and brushed her lips with a gentle kiss before he turned and headed off.

Selina and Gilda made their way toward the parking lot where Selina had parked her black Chevrolet Corvette. Both women slipped into the seats and Selina hit the gas to speed out of Robinson Park.

“So, Bruce Wayne...” Selina said with a smile.

Gilda laughed. “Oh, you won't get much out of me. I only just met him. All I know comes from Harvey and the papers. The papers paint him as a billionaire playboy with a head for business. Harvey said he is a lot more complicated than that.”

Selina smiled. “What about his brother?”

Gilda frowned. “I know even less about him. The papers paint him as a trouble maker. He was arrested not that long ago. Harvey invited him along with Bruce to help with the Wayne Enterprises public image. He seemed nice enough though. His girlfriend is pretty and seems sweet.”

Selina nodded. “For some reason, I had the impression this might have something to do with his brother...”
Gilda turned to look at her. “Really? Why?”

Selina shrugged. “Call it feminine intuition.”

*

Jack closed his eyes and took several slow, deep breaths to help himself focus his mind on the task at hand. Whatever they had drugged him with was still in his system, making it hard for him to focus clearly, but all he had to do was think about Harley. That Harley needed him. It was difficult, more difficult than he thought it would be, but he kept trying.

He worried about her. Where was she, had they touched her, had they hurt her? He hadn’t seen her, or heard her...nothing to tell him where they were keeping her. He had no idea what was happening to her.

Keeping his mind from wandering to the worst case scenarios was difficult. His mind kept giving him images of her hurt, bloody, or worse. He could feel the rage building, but he had to harness it...control the rage, but it was mixed with fear and fear was something he hated. Right now fear wasn’t useful to him. His fear for Harley threatened to overwhelm him. The rage was better.

Jack’s mind wandered a bit while he worked on his wrist, stopping for a moment when his fingers cramped. He jerked with pain when he put too much pressure on his opposite arm, the shoulder pulling dangerously close to dislocating. He smiled slightly thinking about Dante's Divine Comedy...because this certainly felt like a level of hell. He started to murmur to himself while the pain of working his wrist free became simply part of his current existence.

*

“Through me you pass into the city of woe:

Through me you pass into eternal pain:

Through me among the people lost for aye.

Justice the founder of my fabric moved:

To rear me was the task of power divine,

Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.

Before me things create were none, save things Jack muttered under his breath. “For she doth make my veins and pulses tremble....my Harley.”

Jack giggled and pulled his mind away from thoughts of Harley to put all his attention toward what he was doing again—which he acknowledged was incredibly painful—as he repeated lines of the Divine Comedy to himself. It gave him something to concentrate on besides the pain. His mind narrowed its focus on three things: the movement of his wrist; the lines he remembered from the Divine Comedy; and the pain. Oddly though, the pain was exhilarating.

Jack slowly worked the one hand, twisting his arm painfully, tugging down, then back to the slow back and forth motion of his wrist while he tried to keep his weight balanced. One of the cuffs was not as tight as the other, providing a possible opportunity, one which Jack would exploit given time. Back and forth, turning the wrist in its handcuff, one way, then the other. The rusted metal had begun to cut into the skin of his wrist slowly, tearing away the flesh until blood began to coat the metal, making it slick around his wrist. Jack giggled.
Jack's mind wandered again. Maybe this really is hell, he thought. He had been to hell before...

Darkness, pain, old memories surfacing and memories best left forgotten; the darkness and the pain made his mind drift back and he remembered his parents' funeral. Everything was black and grey as he stood beside Bruce with Alfred behind them, all of them dressed in black. Jack hated the color black though sometimes he wore it to remind him of funerals and death.

His parents' coffins, side by side, were the center of his attention. Jack cried bitterly, heart-wrenching sobs for his loss. His broken collarbone hurt, his arm in a sling held tight to his body, but his heart hurt worse. Hopelessness...a lost little boy, and Bruce had hit him in the shoulder, told him to stop crying, to grow up, but that had only made Jack cry harder. Bruce had focused his pain on anger...he was so angry.

Alfred had put his arm around Jack, let the boy lean against him for support while Bruce had stared at the two caskets, his blue eyes hard with something—determination. Jack remembered feeling weak...that his big brother was so much stronger than him. Jack was a cry baby, but Alfred had held him and whispered that it takes a different strength to show your emotions and that there was no dishonor in crying for his parents...

Jack's mind drifted again. The pain in his wrist, the painful tugging against his arms a distant thought as the memory of the wake floated through his mind...Bruce and him fighting. Jack crying and Bruce shaking him. Bruce telling him that he had to be hard...or else the bad man that killed their parents would win. Jack had pushed his brother with his free arm, yelling that Bruce was horrible...why didn't he cry?

"Why aren't you crying?!" Jack's little boy voice was shrill with pain.

Bruce pushed back and knocked Jack flat on his back, causing Jack's arm that was in the sling to jerk, sending ripping agony through the little boy. Jack cried out and Bruce ran away, yelling.

"You are stupid Jack!!! I hate you!!"

Jack was hurt and suddenly angry. He pushed his pain aside and gave chase. Adult Jack laughed. That was when they found a new hell of a different kind.

The well.

The two boys running from the manor, yelling at each other. Bruce heading into the woods on the property...and stumbling into the well. They fell together when Jack tried to grab Bruce. Jack landing on his brother...more pain...then the two boys huddled together in complete and utter darkness. Bruce calling for help, but no one hearing them...Bruce putting his arms around his little brother, Jack leaning against his chest. Both boys trying to protect and comfort each other when the bats came...

Jack's mind brought him back to the here and now. He could feel a trickle of blood as it gradually flowed down his arm; some of the of the blood was being soaked up by the cuff of his shirt while the rest trickled a crimson path down his arm. The burn of his skin tearing away from his wrist and the cool metal gradually wearing away the flesh, becoming sticky with blood, the flow of blood, the way his hand cramped, the heavy pull on his shoulders threatening to dislocate his shoulder—all of it was becoming a distant ache. He was aware of the pain, but it wasn't in the forefront of his mind. It
seemed as if Bruce always led him into dark places, Jack mused.

Then he smiled, followed with a giggle that bubbled up when he felt a new trail of blood begin the descent down his arm. He was hyper-aware of every detail of the pain, the slow warm roll of blood down from his wrist, the tearing of flesh, the tug against the ligaments of his shoulder. Jack visualized the drop of crimson traveling down, leaving a path, staining his shirt, traveling further down his arm, and then the blood made its way down his torso. Jack could visualize the tearing of his skin away from his wrist, the feel of the metal becoming slick, coated in his blood. Soon his hand would be free, and once he had one hand loose...

Then he heard the sound of someone lumbering down the tunnel. There had been someone in here earlier to check on him, but the man had only stuck his head in to make sure the captive still hung there by his arms before leaving Jack alone in darkness again.

Jack had been alone for the last half hour allowing him to gradually work on his wrist.

Jack heard the figure coming closer, then the muffled exchange of voices. He was immediately assaulted with the smell of reptile. Jack raised his head to look toward the entrance. The large shadow of Croc, his kidnapper, blocked most of the light that came from the tunnel as he stepped into the room. Jack stopped what he was doing, turning his head to face the shadow as it approached.

Croc's deep voice filled the small area where Jack was being kept.

“Well, your brother's got twenty-four hours. Which finger you want to lose first? Eh? Or maybe you want to pick for the pretty blonde? She don't need all her fingers for what I could do to her.”

Croc chuckled then made several snapping sounds with his jaws, his razor sharp teeth coming together much like the sound of a real crocodile—Jack guessed—closed its jaw. Croc laughed again.

Jack only smiled, but it was vicious, all teeth and no humor in his smile, not the smile of someone who was scared.

“You touch one hair on her head and I will make you beg for me to kill you,” Jack hissed.

Croc snorted. “You really are funny rich boy.”

Croc reached out and patted Jack's face with one clawed hand before he slowly dragged his clawed thumb over Jack's lips, bearing down at the last moment to cut deeply into Jack's skin, creating a thin bloody line. Jack glared back, never flinching at the pain.

Croc grinned and murmured. “Tsk, tsk, pretty boy. Looks like those cuts I gave you on your pretty face are going to scar. Too bad. Think your pretty blonde will still want you all scarred up, missing fingers?”

Croc didn't wait for an answer. He turned and yelled over his shoulder into the darkness behind him.

“Pinhead, get in here and watch him. I'm going to go check on his girlfriend. I might have my own deal to make with her. Girl might be craving some crocodile meat...”

Croc laughed and grabbed himself as he turned to Jack.

“I'll be back and we can decide on a finger.”

Jack followed him with his eyes as Croc left. Jack's eye twitched at the corner while his teeth ground
against each other.
*

Harley shivered. The cold was seeping into her bones, deeper even. She could feel the chill settling into her very core. She had heard the term “teeth chattering” before, but she had never experienced it until now; she was so cold.

She smelled him before he appeared. That thick reptilian smell along with something else...the sewer? She knew it was the leader who called himself Croc before he appeared at the bars of her cell.

“Hey there, pretty girl.” He chuckled as he opened her cell door and stepped inside. He was big enough that he took up nearly all the space inside. Her chest constricted like he was sucking up all the oxygen too. She was terrified, but she was going to be damned if she let him know that. As Croc entered the room, his sheer size forced her back against the wall. To further make her feel cramped and threatened, he rested his large clawed hands on the brick wall above her.

“So...waiting to see if Bruce Wayne is going to pay the five mill for the two of you...though now I'm thinking I should have asked for seven...or maybe I'll just keep you for a prize, eh? I like my meat soft and tender you know.” He chuckled again, the sound like rocks rolling together. “Or maybe you would like to make a separate deal...just between you and me?” His tongue came out and licked across his jaw...a forked tongue.

Harley was trembling from fear and the cold, but she glared up into his yellow eyes.

“You can try, but I'll make it the worst mistake you ever made.”

Croc laughed, reaching out to run his fingers through her hair, but Harley jerked her head away from him, glaring all the while. “You know girlie. I really like you. You got fire. Too good for that pretty rich boy. Why don't you stay...get to be a real...Croc's girl, eh?”

Harley spat at him. Croc growled in surprise. Even in the weak light, she saw the rows of razor sharp teeth. She pressed herself back against the wall ready to do whatever she had to do defend herself, but instead Croc pushed off the wall and yelled.

“MO! Keep an eye on her! I'm going to grab something to eat.”

Croc turned and smiled at Harley. “Think it over pretty. You, me...could be fun.” He winked at her just before he ducked through the door of her cell, stopping outside to lock it and say just loud enough for her to hear him.

“I might have to find someone to eat...” He chuckled and lumbered away.

Harley stayed pressed against the wall, shivering after Croc left. After a few moments, Harley lunged forward and vomited into the stale water around her.

*

She wasn't sure how much time had passed. In the darkness, it was endless...time had no meaning. Harley couldn't be sure if they had been kidnapped only a few hours ago or days ago. But she waited and listened, the damp and chill taking up residence in her very core to the point she wondered if she would ever be warm again.

Harley pressed herself into the corner of the room, crouching down despite the water, trying to make
herself small. Being trapped, alone, in the dark, with nothing to tell her how long this would last, reminded her of the times she had been locked in the closet when she was little, pressed into the corner of the small space, hidden behind the clothing even though she knew the monster put her here...he knew where she was....

When she would misbehave, (which could be anything, from a wrong word to a wrong look) her step-father would lock her in a closet for hours when she was. She would lose track of time...sometimes the darkness had seemed endless and empty. Other times it had crawled with fear...not knowing if or when he came back if he was going to ignore her or hit her.

Harley frowned and closed her eyes for a moment as the room seemed to shrink. No; that was a long time ago. She had worked past that...and besides. He was dead...because of Jack.

Harley's heart squeezed painfully in her chest. Where was Jack? Had they hurt him?

* *

When she was sure she was alone, Harley made her way over to the bars again, doing her best not to slosh the water around her too much as she tried to see how the door to her 'cell' was locked. She wasn't sure what she was hoping for, a way she could break it or maybe...she didn't know.

When she leaned against the bars, the light from down the tunnel was flickering, providing just enough light to see that every visible surface was covered in slime or rust. The bars were greasy with mildew and moss, but they were still solid. Harley leaned against the rusted bars, pressing herself hard against the metal, trying to see something, anything, but the dim orange light made the shadows heavy and thick, instead creating unnatural shapes in the shadows rather than illuminating anything with useful clarity. Wherever the light was coming from, it was too far away from where she was to be of any help.

Harley chewed her bottom lip in frustration. She felt disgusting, heavy, as if she could barely move her own body. She closed her eyes, calmed herself, and tried to listen, to see if she heard anything that might help her, to hear if anyone else was about besides her...anyone at all. But she heard nothing, just echoes of things far off; the water...the constant dripping sound that came from everywhere and nowhere...

She was about ready to return to the back of her cell to try to think about what she needed to do...trying not to worry about Jack (which was like asking herself not to breathe since Jack was all she could think about besides her own safety) when a hand shot out between the bars and grabbed at her yanking her back and almost off her feet.

“Hey pretty.” The voice had a leer in it.

Harley gasped in surprise and yanked herself away, the man taking a few strands of her hair with his fingers as she turned to face her attacker. The man who had grabbed at her grinned, pointing at her with his chin and ran his tongue over his upper lip. It was enough to make Harley's skin crawl even more that it already was.

This was a different guy from the one that she had seen earlier, the one who had grabbed her arms before Croc appeared. This one was younger, maybe twenty-something with his head shaved into an uneven mohawk that flopped dirtily to the side.

“Hey, hey you know...we don't need you...you be nice to me—I let you go.” The man grinned at her showing off teeth that probably hadn't seen a tooth brush in a decade.
“What do you mean be nice to you?” Harley asked, her arms wrapped tight around her chest. She had a pretty good idea what he wanted. She shivered with disgust...but...

He grinned and licked his lips. “You...you, ah do me a favor. I'll let you go.”

“What about Croc?” She stepped closer, swayed her hips a little, licked her lips seductively.

It was difficult to be “seductive” and not just because she was freezing, filthy and disgusted by the environment and the situation, but she ran a hand down her front, her attention on thoughts of finding Jack. His eyes went immediately to her chest and lingered there. Harley smiled. She realized that she had possibly found a way to get herself out of this cage.

*

Batman/Bruce downloaded a schematic of the sewers, both old and new, that ran under Gotham. He could only hope that the map was accurate enough to get him through the tunnels and to wherever the kidnappers were keeping his brother and Dr. Quinzel. Bruce tried not to think too much about Jack...what was happening to him at the moment, but instead Bruce focused on finding them.

He was just turning to head to his car when his cell phone rang. Batman grabbed it off his belt without looking at the display before he hit the button.

“Is he safe?” Bruce asked, his voice pitched low. “Bruce?” It was Harvey.

Bruce closed his eyes and pulled the cowl off, stopping to lean against the cave wall.

“Harvey I...I wasn't expecting it to be you.”

“Bruce, what's going on? Is who safe?” Bruce could heard the deep concern in his friend's voice as Harvey continued. “You left the carnival without a word of goodbye, stood up Selina. What's going on, buddy?”

“I...Harvey I just...” Bruce took a deep breath. “It's Jack and Harleen...I mean, Harley. A man calling himself Croc—he took them from the carnival and they are demanding five million dollars in the next twenty-four hours or they'll start sending me body parts.”

“WHAT? Bruce, did you call the police?” Harvey, who was driving while he spoke had his phone sitting in a speaker slot built into his car so that he could keep his hands on the wheel while talking. But when he heard Bruce's revelation, Harvey lost control of his car for a split second.

“I don't want the police involved Harvey. I...I can come up with the money. I just need time.” Bruce couldn't keep the choking sob out of his voice as a wave of fear washed over him...the fear that he might fail Jack yet again.

“Five million Bruce...I mean...in twenty-four hours...there's no way anyone could put that together in time.” Harvey frowned as he drove, switching lanes to head to Wayne Manor. “Look, I'm coming. I'll see what...”

“No...Harvey. Don't...it's...” Bruce struggled. “I have some of my people looking into it...I mean...”

“Bruce...we're friends. Let me help.” Harvey offered softly.

Bruce chewed his bottom lip. He wasn't used to asking for or accepting help, but he nodded.
“All right, but I'm not going to be at the manor while I try to get the money together. Just contact me by cell.”

Harvey smiled. “You got it. I'll see what I can do. Tell me what you know about who took your brother and his girlfriend. I'm going to head to my office and see what I can dig up on the kidnappers for you.”

“Thank you Harv.” Bruce smiled faintly.

“That's what friends are for, Bruce.” Harvey smiled before hanging up and making a U-turn back toward Gotham.

* 

“Hehehe, you do me a favor, I let you go, sure thing pretty.” The mohawk guy was leering at Harley and continued to lick his lips. Harley put on her best smile slowly pulling on the tie at the front of her dress letting it fall open.

“Well, if you want me to do you a little favor....?” She smiled raising a brow at him. “I'll do anything to get out of here.” She dropped her voice to a whisper, making herself look and sound sweet and defenseless.

The guy grinned. “They call me Mo...you know...Mohawk.” He laughed.

Harley gave him a sick smile, but Mo didn't seem to notice, his full attention on her breasts as she reached around to untie her dress, letting it fall just enough to show more of her breasts, keeping the guy's attention on her chest.

“Well, Mo....why don't you come on in here...and I promise I'll do you a really good favor.”

Harley ran her fingertips down her cleavage, licking her lips as she did so. Mo started to giggle and Harley heard the sound of heavy metal keys in a lock. Her heart was hammering in her chest, the fear was making her hyper alert, but there was something else, something more than fear...she was angry. Angry that she didn't know where Jack was, alive or dead...hurt...angry that this...this...fucker would think that she was that defenseless, that...desperate, that she would do whatever he wanted knowing that he wasn't going to let her go. Unless he really was stupid...that he would think he could waltz in here and use her. She was angry that this Croc person, monster...thing, had taken them both, that he would dare try to kidnap Jack! That he was teasing he was going to rape her! She was furious that anyone would think of her as just some plaything! Some scared powerless woman!

Well, Jack had not only taught her how to defend herself...he had just begun to teach her something else...like with her step-father...some people deserved to die. Mo stepped in, closing the door behind him with a soft clank of metal, but she noticed he didn't lock it. Clearly he didn't see her as a threat. Mo immediately reached for her, but Harley put a hand on his chest and shoved him up against the wall.

Mo chuckled at her action. “Oh I like that, anxious for a real man, eh? Tired of your rich boy?”

“Oh yeah...I promise to do you right,” Harley purred. “Pull your pants down for me...I'm going to make you feel something you've never felt before...” She ran her tongue over her teeth and smiled in the dim light. Mo swallowed and hurriedly worked at his pants, his dirty fingers stumbling in his hurry to get everything undone. Finally, with apparent glee on his face, he shoved his pants down to his knees, his erection clear in the dim light leaking into the cell. Harley grinned. She moved closer, pressing her body up against Mo. Mo was practically shaking with anticipation when Harley reached
down and grabbed his balls.

Harley didn't keep her nails long. Instead she kept them short and neat, but when she grabbed a hold of Mo's balls it was like she had taken five tiny daggers and shoved them under his skin. The man's reaction was instant. He sucked in a breath, his eyes going wide enough that she could clearly see the white's in the dull light. But Harley didn't stop there. She slammed her free hand over his mouth and nose, pressing her weight against him, muffling his screams, pressing his head against the wall with all her strength. Mo began to thrash, her fingers on his genitals dug in hard, squeezing with all her strength, her hand against his mouth pressing down hard enough that she could feel his teeth against her hand.

Harley sneered hissing. “This will be something you will never forget.” Mo lifted one arm as if to strike Harley, but she was quicker.

Then she twisted with all her strength. She didn't stop when she could have, not when his knees buckled and he started sliding down the wall, his muffled cries making her palm damp, slick with saliva and mucus. His hands grabbed at her hand that was currently crushing his testicles, but he didn't have the strength to pull her hand away, only to scrape his fingers uselessly against her hand as he tried to pry her off. Instead Harley followed him down the wall when he started to slide, continuing to twist as hard as she could, until her arm was trembling with the effort and she felt the dampness of blood against her fingers. Her eyes flashed with something primal, almost madness. That was when she let go of him.

Mo started to collapse, having dropped to his knees with a splash that sent the stink of the water filling the room anew. Harley snarled, took a step back, but then she rushed forward again to slam the palm of her hand up and into his face, shattering the man's nose in a burst of blood, knocking him back into the wall where his head hit with a sickening thunk against the slimy brick surface. For a moment Mo did nothing, he seemed suspended before he slipped down into the several inches of dank, mucky water that covered the floor of her cell.

Harley didn't realize that Mo was unconscious. She was just too scared and angry. But even if she had realized he was no longer a threat, her fear and anger were mixed in a dangerous, twisted combination of pure rage—which meant she probably couldn't have stopped herself if she had wanted, she would later realize. When he collapsed into the water of her cell, having ceased moaning moments ago, Harley snarled and started to kick Mo.

She kicked him and hissed, “You fucking piece of shit!! You—if you hurt Jack I swear to God I am going to come back and find you!! I'll cut your balls off and make you eat them!! You think I would ever let filth like you touch me!!?”

Harley kicked and kicked and kicked, angry tears cutting clean lines across her cheeks until the water began to turn a murky crimson, a slow puddle of red expanding from Mo's corpse. Harley seethed, her hands were clenched into fists at her side and her whole body trembled.

Harley took several deep breaths. The air tasted like sewage on her tongue, with a slight coppery flavor in the dank air, but it was enough to calm her down. She dropped down to her knees in the thick water and quickly searched the body. Mo had a couple of joints on him, a dull knife and nothing else...no gun or other weapon, just the dull blade. Part of her was insulted. Clearly he had not seen her as a threat, but to have it confirmed even more by his lack of weapons...she was insulted. Harley took the knife and stood. She only gave the corpse a quick glance before she rushed over to the bars, pushing until the door creaked open, the key still in the rusted lock but the door hadn't been secured by Mo when he came in here to take advantage of her.

Harley smiled, turning to grab the key and pushed the cell door closed, locking it before she spun
around to examine her surroundings. Wherever she was being kept, the tunnel only ran in two
directions, left and right, each end passing into darkness. From here she couldn't see anything else.
Down the left side of the tunnel she could see a metal trash can with something burning inside,
providing the orange glow she had seen from her cell, but beyond that, either end was nothing but
shadows.

She pressed her lips together. For a moment she was overwhelmed. Jack could be
anywhere...wherever here was, but she had to try. Jack would try for her. Harley, terrified but
determined, moved to the left, gripping the dull bladed knife in her hand.

* 

Batman arrived at Robinson Park at the rear entrance. He slipped the car inside the park, easily
finding a place to hide it among the thick undergrowth and densely packed area of trees where the
Batmobile's dark colors would prevent anyone from seeing it unless they simply stumbled over it. He
stepped out of the car and immediately hit the button on the side of his cowl that would bring up the
sewer map. The entrance he was looking for was perhaps a mile on foot from his current location.
He switched the map off, turned on his night vision before he took off at a jog, and moved off to
find the entrance to the sewers.

* 

It only took him a couple of minutes to find the entrance. The bars that were supposed to block
entrance into the piping were long gone. He frowned about to head in when his phone vibrated
against his hip. Bruce picked it up. “Bruce here.”

“It's Harvey. I wanted to let you know I discovered some information on your brother's kidnapper.”
The way Harvey spoke, it was clear he was slightly distracted.

“Go on,” Bruce said simply.

“Well, he is known as Killer Croc. His name is Waylon Jones, supposedly born looking the way he
does. He can hold his breath underwater for an extremely long time...expert swimmer, enhanced
strength...ex-wrestler. He's been arrested for robbery, murder...he supposedly ate someone. He has
been associated with the mob on more than one occasion...not sure if any of this helps Bruce.”
Harvey sighed.

But Batman smiled. “It does help Harvey. Thank you.”

“Is there anything else I can do Bruce?” Harvey asked his sincerity clear in his voice.

Bruce smiled. “Not right now, but I'll keep you in the loop okay?”

“All right. I'll be waiting by the phone if you need me Bruce.” Harvey hung up. Bruce smiled and
slipped the phone back in place. Harvey Dent was a good man.

Batman carefully stepped inside, but there was no one here, no guards...nothing. Which could only
mean that they were deeper down, someplace where they felt safe. Batman adjusted his night vision
and started to make his way deep into the sewers.

* 

Jack pressed his lips together, the pain racing down his arm, but his hand slid through the cuff, free.
He flexed his fingers, the pain from the torn skin around his wrist and hand made him smile in
satisfaction. Jack hissed slightly, the pain peaked for a moment, but he quickly ignored it, his eyes roaming over to the man guarding him. The big, muscle-head of a man stood with his back to Jack, a gun at his side, but he never moved...clearly he didn't hear anything or was simply ignoring Jack.

With Jack's hand coming free, the sudden shift in his weight had Jack's other arm pulling dangerously up, threatening to dislocate his shoulder when his weight unexpectedly tugged hard on his one wrist. He reached up with his now free hand and grabbed the bloody cuff, holding on and trying to distribute his weight. The tips of his shoes were just barely touching the damp ground, causing him to scrape the floor as he held on, keeping his weight from wrenching his arm out of the socket.

The sounds of his struggling finally drew the attention of the man who was supposedly watching him. The man was big, all muscles and little else as far as Jack could see, turned and glanced at him before turning away again. Pinhead...that's what Croc had called him. Jack smiled. Let's see how easy he is to provoke, Jack thought to himself with a vicious grin.

Jack laughed. “Pinhead...what kind of name is that?”

The man turned around to glare at Jack over his shoulder with a sneer. “Shut up you. Croc said to watch you, didn't say you had to be in one piece, so keep quiet or I'll make you sorry.”

Jack laughed. “You, make me sorry? Right. I'm terrified.... I'd like to see things from your point of view, but I can't seem to get my head that far up my ass.”

Pinhead frowned for a moment as if he couldn't quite figure out the insult. He glanced over his shoulder again at Jack before putting his back to him and started to leave.

Jack just continued. “Your birth certificate is an apology letter from the condom factory.”

Jack started laughing, his body swinging a little with his laughter.

Pinhead growled. “Stop it or I'm going to come over there and make you stop rich boy!”

Jack smiled, his blue eyes dancing, his body swinging just a little bit.

“The only way you'll ever get laid is if you crawl up a chicken's ass and wait.”

Jack grinned wider when he saw Pinhead's shoulders tense just before he turned and stepped over to Pinhead moved swiftly for a big man, pulling his gun up and held it to Jack's forehead. Jack smiled bigger clearly enjoying himself as he whispered in a sing-song voice.

“It looks like your face caught on fire and someone tried to put it out with a hammer.”

Jack giggled, his body swinging back and forth.

Pinhead snarled. “Shut up rich boy or I'm going to put a bullet through your head!!”

“Oh please...and piss off your boss Croc? Really? I'm worth far too much alive Pinhead baby...far more than you...” Jack giggled. “You know...I wasn't born with enough middle fingers to let you know how I feel about you.”

Pinhead snarled. “The boss won't care if yer a little beat up!”

That was when he hit Jack across the face with his pistol. The metal hit Jack hard in the mouth, splitting his lip. Jack tasted blood as the liquid flooded his mouth. Jack grinned, his white teeth stained red. “Oh hit me again baby. I like it rough.” Jack leered at him.
Pinhead looked disgusted and upset...he was used to people he pistol whipped...stopping...they stopped talking. But this guy...

Jack grinned. “Calling you an idiot would be an insult to all stupid people.” Pinhead snarled and hit Jack again, knocking Jack's head to the side in a splatter of blood. Jack laughed, his lips split, blood dribbling down his chin as he continued to laugh at Pinhead.

“SHUT UP!” Pinhead shouted.

Jack grinned. “Ohh! Make me big boy.”

Pinhead snarled. “You motherfucker...”

He hit Jack again, blood flying in an arc in the dim orange light, splattering across Pinhead's face, but Jack only grinned wider, seeming unaffected by the pain. Pinhead was about to hit Jack again, his pistol raised up high. Jack was grinning at him with red bloody lips, his eyes wild, but at the last second Pinhead thought better of it. He was shaking with rage, but Pinhead turned to leave and Jack hissed. “Big mistake.”

Jack dropped his freed arm, wrapping it around Pinhead's neck, yanking back as hard as he could to lock his fingers around his own shoulder creating a lock around Pinhead's neck. At the same time, Jack lifted his legs up and wrapped them around Pinhead middle, pressing his feet back against Pinhead's stomach, the heels of his shoes digging in and with all the strength he could muster, Jack used the muscles of his legs to press backwards so that Pinhead couldn't get a hold of Jack's feet to pull Jack's legs away.

Jack hauled back, his left hand still chained in the cuff, wrapped around the chain, pulling his body up with all his strength as he pressed his forearm against Pinhead's throat. Jack's fingers dug into his own shoulder painfully as he concentrated on strangling Pinhead. Jack's blue eyes were flat, devoid of emotion, as he pressed his advantaged, digging his forearm into the other man's throat.

Pinhead had dropped his gun during Jack's initial attack, but he reached up to claw at Jack's forearm. His fingers managed to wrap around Jack's much thinner arm, but Jack was surprisingly strong.

Jack laughed. “Oh no, come on—are you having fun yet?” he hissed in Pinhead's ear as the man gasped for breath, barely able to make a sound.

Jack pressed with his forearm, instead of pulling back, this time he hunched his body forward, his legs tightening around the man's middle pressing with all his might. Jack smiled just slightly as he closed his eyes focusing on choking the life out of Pinhead. The mass of Pinhead's body started to drag on Jack, yanking hard on Jack’s arm that was still cuffed above him.

Jack let the body go, releasing his choke hold and his legs at the same time. The large man continued to make a few oddly shallow noises before all signs of life disappeared just before his body hit the floor, the sound of splashing water was minimal. Jack looked down at the dead body with a grin. “Oops.”

**

Batman moved silently yet quickly, following the map overlay that his visor was displaying before his eyes. The smell of the place was incredible, but mixed with the stink of waste water, mildew and other scents he wasn't sure of, Batman smelled smoke. The burning smell wasn't clean, like the smell of burning wood. This was murky...as if someone was burning garbage. It wasn't just the smell that made navigating difficult, but the sounds too. They carried in these tunnels. The sounds of water,
rats, and who knew what else. He was sure he had heard someone moving behind him, but no one ever appeared and the voices he heard...whispers, could have come from anywhere. Batman took a few deep calming breaths and focused on the map; it was still his best bet.

Batman followed the scent of burning trash. It was a good possibility that the smell of burning trash could mean people were present and besides, it was the only clear thing to follow down here next to his map display. The map was giving him a basic route to follow, but he was quickly discovering that it wasn't accurate. The map gave him the known tunnels under Gotham, not the forgotten or, as he had seen several times already, a couple of 'new' tunnel openings, clearly made by someone digging with who knew what. The remains of bricks and debris lay in front of these new openings that led into the sides of other tunnels showed that people had indeed been down here, altering the environment. The new entrances led into old forgotten sections of the sewer.

Batman had stopped to examine the map when he heard the sound of voices ahead of him. He cocked his head and listened. It sounded to be four men and the sound of a fire crackling. He turned off his night vision letting his eyes adjust to the darkness. There, he could see a barely discernible flicker of light in the distance. Batman moved silently, following the tunnel toward the light, listening to the voices as they gradually became more coherent.

“I don't know about this, I mean...Jack Wayne fine, but that woman. I don't like it, she wasn't part of the deal. Should have drugged her and left her somewhere.”

Another voice laughed. “Oh come on, don't be such a pussy. The ransom went up from three million to five with the woman. Croc knows what he's doing.”

“If he gets it. What if Wayne don't want to pay?”

“Look, you worry too much, let Croc do all the thinking.”

“See now I don't like that either! Why are we working for that freak, eh?”

Batman heard the sound of smacking, like a hand hitting against clothing.

“Shut up, you want him to hear you. You know that stuff about him eating people...it ain't just stories. It's true. So let's do this job, get paid and get out of here.”

Then Batman heard the sound of running feet, clearly coming from a path somewhere ahead of him. He closed his eyes. Judging by the sound, the echo...it was a tunnel down to the left.

“Biggy! Come quick!” Another voice joined the group, younger...twenty? Batman frowned listening.

The one named Biggy growled in response. “What is it?”

“I went to take Pinhead a beer and he's dead!” the younger man had a whine in his voice as he spoke.

“Whatcha mean he's dead?” Batman could hear the frown in Biggy's voice.

“I mean he's dead” the young man repeated. “He's in that Wayne guy's cell. Lying on his face in the water...he ain't moving!”

* Batman frowned.
“Whose with that Wayne guy now?” Biggy asked.

“I left Job and Weasel with him. They got their guns on him, but all he is doing is swinging there and insulting them—and laughing a lot. It's creepy man. Biggy, you gotta come check it out...”

There was the sound of movement. Batman was fairly confident by the sound of flesh hitting flesh that “Biggy” had just slapped the other man. “Then how could he have...you know, never mind I want to see Pinhead for myself.” Batman heard the sound of boots on brick. He waited until the footfalls were faint. He figured that left him two, maybe three men...Batman came around the corner like a shadow, moving silently and swiftly.

He had been correct; there were three men standing around a metal trash can, the contents of which, were burning. Batman didn't wait. He rushed up on one man, a shorter man with a full dirty beard. Batman's fist shot out swiftly and caught that man in the side of the head; the bearded man was down before he knew what hit him, his head snapping to the side; he fell, hitting the floor hard, his head bouncing....and he didn't get up again.

One of the other men, tall, skinny, with a beak of a nose, pulled a gun, but Batman swooped down on him grabbing the wrist of the hand holding the weapon and yanked him forward, his other hand snapping out to hit the man in the nose, breaking his nose instantly. Batman grabbed him by the back of the head as the man groaned and fell forward. Batman brought his knee up at the same moment that he drove the man down, right into his upraised knee, knocking the air from his lungs and dropping him. Batman kicked the gun away into the darkness just as the other man, a big guy with long dark hair and missing an eye pulled a blade out and charged. He wore no eye patch to hide the empty socket, giving the goon the appearance of having a half-skull face.

Batman used his cape, twisting to the side while throwing the cape out; the knife became tangled in the cloth. Batman yanked on his cape to pull the man's tangled wrist toward him and making his attacker stumble forward. Batman grabbed him by the neck and lifted him off his feet to slam him forcefully against the brick wall of the tunnel. Held off the tunnel floor by the Batman, the one-eyed man started to whimper. “Don't kill me!!” “I'm not going to kill you...I'm going to hurt you, but how much I hurt you depends on how you answer my questions,” Batman growled. “Now, tell me where Jack Wayne is.”

*  

Jack grinned, his teeth still bloody from the pistol whipping he had received from Pinhead as Biggy (who looked as if he had been beaten in the face as a child), the young man who had come to get him named Brad (how boring Jack thought, just like a...Brad...brown hair, dirty...the kind of person you would walk by without a second look), Job (a little more interesting since the kid had dyed his hair purple), and Weasel all entered the small room and all of them looked down at the body of Pinhead. It was really comical, the looks on their faces, which had Jack laughing again.

Biggy dropped down to his knees to check for a pulse before he rolled Pinhead over. Pinhead's eyes were open, the whites gone completely red. His lips looked swollen and his tongue stuck out, making him look grotesque in the dim light. All the men in the room gasped and stepped back except Biggy who looked up at Jack, his eyes narrowed. “Tell me what happened.”

Jack grinned. “He didn't like my jokes...I thought they were pretty funny myself.”

Jack's laugh echoed off the damp walls.
Biggy snarled and reached out to grab Jack by the throat. “Tell me what happened rich boy!”

Jack choked for a moment, but grinned as Biggy pressed his fingers into Jack's neck.

“Oh, now you know you can't kill me.” Jack smiled sweetly.

Biggy hissed at the captive man. “I can hurt you.”

Jack grinned a bloody toothed grin. “You can try.”

Biggy snarled and pushed Jack's face to the side before he turned to the men in the room. “Weasel, you and Job get the body out of here. Brad, check his cuffs. I'm going to get Croc.”

With that Biggy stomped out of the room. Weasel and Job looked at each other and shrugged. They reached down, each grabbing an end of Pinhead and carried him out. Brad watched them go before he turned to look at Jack. Jack was swinging slightly as he smiled at Brad.

Jack made a kissy face at Brad, who frowned and stood there staring at Jack, unwilling to move. It was clear to Jack that he was calculating the risk of checking Jack's restraints versus what Biggy would do to him if he didn't check. Brad came to the conclusion that Biggy was the bigger threat as he quickly looked over his shoulder at the way his friends had gone, carrying Pinhead's body and then back at Jack. Brad still seemed unwilling to walk over to Jack, but he did, slowly approaching Jack with the same caution he would a snake. Jack only smiled wider.

Brad reached up, checking Jack's left hand first, then, as he reached up to check Jack's right hand, Jack's legs came up swiftly to wrap around Brad's waist, yanking the young man forward and causing him to lose his balance at the sudden shift of weight. Jack's free hand shot out, grabbing Brad around the side of his skull, Jack's thumb pressing into Brad's eye. The younger man started to scream while Jack pressed as hard as he could, until there was a sickening popping sound. Brad let out a blood-curdling scream as Jack chuckled gleefully.

* *

Batman encountered two men moving a dead body fairly quickly, and just as swiftly, he had both men unconscious when he heard the scream echoing off the walls.

He left the men he had knocked out on the floor and took off toward the sounds of pain. He followed the sounds the best he could when he turned around a corner to see another burning barrel. He heard another cry that abruptly stopped.

Batman stopped in his tracks. He looked around, but no one had responded to the sound of screaming. He frowned and made his way more slowly. He could see what looked like a darkened doorway. When he stepped around to peer into the room he saw Jack Wayne, his face bloody, hanging by one arm and giggling to himself, a body at his feet.

* *

Jack looked up and his eyes widened.

He giggled again, with a different quality in the tone. “What the hell are you? A giant bat? Though I suppose we have a giant crocodile man, so...why not!” Batman spoke quietly. “I'm here to rescue you.”

Jack swung on his one arm that was still held above him and giggled. Batman stared at him for a moment.
Bruce felt a spike of pain. Jack, his baby brother looked terrible. The dim light showed the blood on his brother's face and he could see the bruises and cuts that were littered on his brother's pale skin. But what really made Bruce’s blood run cold was the laughter...the giggling. He remembered Jack after the school incident, those times when he found Jack alone laughing and talking to no one...the violent outbursts, but it was the giggling that haunted Bruce. Jack had done that a great deal when they were younger...after their parents murder...laughing at nothing...except whatever it was that Jack was thinking about.

Bruce pushed his emotions aside. That was not Jack hanging there and right now they were not brothers. He was the Batman...that was a victim he was here to help. Batman dropped down to check the pulse of the man at Jack's feet. Jack watched him with a sudden frown on his pained features.

“He's not dead...blind in one eye now, but not dead...too bad really. If only I had gotten a better grip,” Jack muttered more to himself with a simple grin. Batman stood up slowly and walked over to Jack, but Jack's free hand lashed out to grab Batman by the shoulder. Jack's grip was powerful, surprising Batman with the strength of it. Batman did his best not to show his surprise at Jack grabbing him. He glanced down at Jack's hand gripping his shoulder. The wrist was a wreck, the skin gone leaving a bloody mess behind. The sight made Bruce sick...that Jack had done that to himself. No, he thought. Bruce had allowed it to happen...he hadn't been there for his brother. Batman shook his head slightly. No...focus.

Jack tilted his head with a knowing smile. “I remember you. You were at the party. You went after that gang. But why are you here?” Jack asked with genuine confusion.

“You brother sent me,” Batman said, his voice a low growl.

“Bruce...Bruce sent you?” Jack seemed confused as Batman pulled something from his belt and worked at the other cuff that held Jack suspended. Batman caught Jack when he released him. Jack stumbled into the larger man, allowing Batman hold him up as he wrapped his arms around Batman's neck. It took a couple of seconds for Jack to get his feet under him before Batman started to lead him from the room.

“We need to get you out of here,” Batman stated gruffly.

Jack reached out and grabbed Batman’s shoulder again. His blue eyes were filled with pain and what looked to Batman to be worry. For a moment Bruce was surprised at Jack's reaction. Jack never showed concern about anything, but this...

Batman stopped moving to let him speak.

Jack's voice was a plea. “No, no you can't...Harley...they have my girlfriend...my fiancee! You...you have to help me find her!”

Bruce frowned in confusion. “Fiancée?” Outwardly, he said nothing to reveal his surprise, but nodded. “I'll...I need to find that man, Croc, the one who took you. I need to get him into police custody. I'll look for her...she is probably with him.” <

Jack nodded. Batman took Jack by the shoulders. “I'm going to give you directions how to get out of here while I go and take care of this Croc. Go, don't look back, head straight to the police.”

Jack frowned, but then nodded.

Batman gave a quick nod and turned to leave, easily disappearing into the darkness of the sewers.

Jack stood there staring after him.
He smiled...there was no way he was going to trust a Bat to find his girl. Besides...he really wanted a pair of crocodile skin boots. Jack's smile turned nasty before he stepped out of the cell. Jack laughed and then slowly let out a sigh of satisfaction as he set off into the tunnels.

*

Harley stopped, her blue eyes wide.

The darkness was all consuming, she could see nothing, the little light that had been behind her was long gone...swallowed by the darkness. She used the wall to guide herself along, but every sound was amplified, echoed, and confusing. She kept stopping and turning, certain that she heard someone, or something. It was as if she could hear everything, every sound, her teeth chattering, the sounds of rats scurrying around her feet, ghostly voices, sometimes sounding close, other times far away and the constant sounds of dripping water.

She had just started moving again when heard what sounded like a growl.

Chapter End Notes

Dante's Divine Comedy 1472
We Are All Mad Here

Batman moved carefully, his boots making minimal sound as he stepped through the watery gunk that lined the bottom of the tunnel. He stopped for a moment to bring up the holo-map, then tried to determine where he was on the virtual map. Batman's eyes narrowed as he compared his location to his surroundings...which was turning out to not always be the same. According to the map, the old Gotham railway—dating back to the 1800's—was still under here somewhere. Some of the sewer tunnels were connected to it, though it was hard to see where. Batman almost groaned in frustration. That means Croc or Dr. Quinzel could be anywhere in this vast maze, he thought. The only saving grace was when he found an old generator.

The generator looked old, rusted, but a quick inspection showed him that it was still in working order. Batman frowned wondering why it wasn't in use, unless this Croc person had more mutations than simply his skin. Harvey had sent a photo to Bruce's phone a few minutes ago showing a humanoid crocodile-man, a strange hybrid. There a number of additional crocodile-like mutations that Killer Croc could have that would not require him to need the light to see. The other reason for not using the generator could also be a mental game with Croc; keep your people in the dark, use low tech lighting, a good way to keep them on edge.

Batman decided to take the risk of turning the generator on. The light could work to his advantage limiting Croc's own night vision, if indeed that was part of Croc's game...and perhaps the light would give Dr. Quinzel hope that someone was coming for her.

The loud roar of the generator coming to life echoed down the tunnel walls. The sounds raced further into the sewers...the echoing roar sounding for all the world like a great beast awakening. Anyone down here for hundreds of yards in all directions would probably have heard it, but Batman felt confident most of Croc's crew would have no idea where the source of the sound was coming from.

As Batman watched, the lights flickered on overhead, blinking into existence and leading down the old brick tunnel. The light wasn't great, a weak, yellowish glow that only illuminated small circles, leaving the surrounding area in darkness, thicker than before in their contrast with the light. Some of the lights didn't come on at all, while others exploded, leaving only a few circles of false safety leading into the darkness beyond.

Batman frowned and touched his ear piece. “Are you there?”

“Here sir.” Alfred's voice came through loud and clear.

“I found Jack, gave him directions to get out. Hopefully he will go straight to the manor or the police station.”

Bruce could hear the relief in Alfred voice, though the older man remained calm. “Thank goodness sir. May I ask why you did not escort him out?”

“Croc wasn't with him and Dr. Quinzel is still missing. She might be with Croc. Let me know when Jack arrives home,” Bruce said as he walked slowly, moving along the tunnel quickly and carefully.

“Will do sir. Miss Harleen is still missing?” Bruce could hear the worry in Alfred's voice.

“I...she wasn't with Jack. I'm looking for this Killer Croc now and hoping Dr. Quinzel is with him.” Batman moved carefully. The way sounds, even the smallest sound of crunching glass under his boots carried down here, and made it difficult to specify where the sounds were coming from or what
was making them.

He could hear the doubt in Alfred's voice.

“Sir, I don't think Master Jack is going to leave without her.”

Batman stopped, turning to look behind him, then forward again. “Why not? I'm on the case.”

“Sir, why should he trust Batman? And even if he knew your true identity...why sir would he trust you to find her? Master Jack knows how you feel about her and he hasn't always shown a...deep respect for the rules.” Alfred said the words calmly, but Bruce could sense that Alfred was...scared.

“Contact me in a hour if you haven't heard anything from him all right?” Bruce snarled. “I can't go back now or I will lose this chance to find Croc.”

“Will do sir—and sir, be careful. I hope you find her.”

*

The darkness was like a creature; it was watching her, breathing around her. Harley had stopped dead in her tracks when she heard the roar, the sound seemed to race down the tunnel toward her, but nothing happened, the sound dying away, leaving her skin feeling tight and her heart racing. She turned around, her eyes open wide, adjusting to the darkness, but she still couldn't “see” anything.

She whispered to herself only to hear her own voice...it was lonely yet a little comforting to hear herself speak. “Now what was that? Croc? A big rat? It...it didn't sound like Croc...did it?” she asked herself.

She went still and quiet, tried to listen over the sound of her own breathing, but nothing else roared, snarled or made any sound...except her. It made her doubt that she had even heard anything. She kept listening but now all she could hear was the dripping of water somewhere and silence...that dull hum of...nothing.

She was just about ready to start moving again, her mind on finding Jack, when she heard something strange behind her. The air had a weird electrical charge to it. As she turned around, it looked for all the world like the world's biggest lightning bug was racing toward her!

And then a series of lights seemed to come racing down the tunnel at her, snapping into life. Harley barely stopped herself from letting out a startled scream. The lights raced toward her just barely giving her time to shield her eyes from the yellow glare before the glow was racing away and heading in the other direction.

The lights flicked on, a few bursting into a spectacular blast of twinkling glass, then continued to race toward her and away. Harley turned and huddled against the slimy brick wall as the bursts of light hurried past her off into the other direction splitting the darkness into isolated pools of yellow light. Harley waited a few heartbeats, remaining crouched down as if she were afraid of the lights grabbing her as the glow raced away. She had covered her eyes instinctively from fear and that almost primitive knowledge that the lights were going to hurt her eyes. She kept her hands over her eyes, peaking slowly through her fingers before she finally stood up and removed her hands. Carefully, she unshielded her eyes, giving herself a chance to adjust to the illumination. She looked around...The light only provided small circles of “safety” or rather the illusion of safety, since once in the light you could see even less outside the circle's glow; the darkness on the edges was deeper and more menacing. She couldn't see anything down either end of the tunnel she was in...she couldn't tell how far it went, if there were any turns, rooms or alcoves....only more shadows.
Harley muttered to herself. “Great, just great. Well, I guess the lights can guide me? Maybe?”

She saw no one and nothing dangerous at the moment; so with a sigh, Harley stepped away from the wall and started to walk. She had just wrapped her arms around herself to try to stay warm when her foot hit something. She squeaked, jumping back as suddenly the tunnel echoed with the sounds of some object clacking against the wall and rolling along the floor of the tunnel. Harley shoved her fist into her mouth to stop herself from yelling. Whatever she had hit was hard. Metal?

She snarled at herself. “GOD Harley, stop acting so stupid!”

Harley looked down, trying to see what she had hit. There! The light glistened off of something at the edge of the pool of light. She stepped closer, crouched down and reached out to nudge it with her finger before jumping back, almost falling on her rear when the piece of pipe rolled away from the light and into the darkness again.

Harley snarled again. “Fuck a duck Harley! Stop acting like a scared little girl!”

Her voice echoed down the tunnel making her press her lips hard together and her eyes to widen. She giggled. “Oops,” she said softly.

Harley crouched down again, reached for and picked up the pipe. It was cold, slimy and rusted, but as she stood, holding it in her hand, she realized that it had a good weight to it.

Harley grinned as she took comfort in the feel of the pipe. “I could really bust some heads with this...”

She swung the pipe around a few times, feeling the way the metal cut through the air. She turned and slammed it against the wall; the pipe hit hard, sent vibrations up her arm, and echoed through the tunnel, but it felt good. She grinned, all teeth and no humor. She was going to crack some heads and when she found Jack...whoever had him was going to pay for it, for touching one hair on his head! Harley giggled and tossed the dull blade; this pipe was more her speed. Then Harley heard the growl again. She turned, trying to determine where it was coming from, but the sound simply reverberated down the tunnel walls...it could be from anywhere. And just as before...it was gone.

* 

Jack moved swiftly, but quietly. He could move without a sound when he wanted to; it was something about him that had always irritated Bruce when they were younger until Bruce started to do it himself...moving stealthily. Jack chuckled remembering how he and Bruce would play tricks on each other...moving up behind the other one and scaring them. It was all fun and games until Jack had tackled Bruce to the ground and surprised him by punching Bruce in the face, bloodying his nose.

Jack grinned at the memory. Bruce was good, but Jack was always just a little bit better at the sneaking around.

Jack ran his fingers along the slimy walls as he moved along the tunnels, his thoughts drifting as he walked. He remembered the cave again. Two boy huddled together, the sounds of bats shrieking around them. All he and Bruce could see were the tiny red eyes staring at them. Bruce held him whispering.

“I won't let them hurt you Jack. I won't let anything hurt you, I promise.”

Of course all of Bruce's promises had been lies...they (not the bats, the world...it was the world) had hurt Jack. The torture at school until Jack fought back. The whispers behind Jack's back...the
youngest Wayne is unstable...Bruce should let them put him away. Did you hear what he did to that other child at school? Didn't they say he was experimenting on some animals? If only they hadn't lost their parents. Blah blah blah...Jack snarled and muttered to himself, “They just never understood....no one understood me, until Harley.”

Jack chuckled to himself then. His beautiful Dr. Quinn...medicine woman! He giggled at his joke. She accepted him...loved him just the way he was...killed her step-father. Harley understood why it had to be done. And she was happy he had done it! Just imagine how she will feel about the others...about this. Jack had made up his mind—some how, some way, Croc was going to die for this.

Jack shoved those thought away for the moment. Right now finding Harley was the most important thing in the world, which led Jack's thoughts back to Batman.

“Mm...Batman,” Jack said aloud mostly just to hear his own voice in the darkness. “Now what is your story, Bats? What made you put on a batsuit and run around.? Inquiring minds want to know! I want to know...my brother sent you?” He giggled with a shake of his head.

Jack glanced around at the darkness that surrounded him. Why did everyone always fear the dark? The dark and clowns. He never could understand those fears. Darkness and clowns were both fun. When he had been sent away to boarding school, the bullies liked to use small dark places to try to scare the younger kids. He remembered getting locked in the basement by that bully Roger...it wasn't just being locked in the basement, it was being locked in “the room” in the basement.

The small room was located in the back of the basement. It had an old, rotten wood door. Jack remembered how creepy the door had looked when he was a child, the group of school boys going down into that basement to frighten each other. There was a rusted old padlock on the door, as well as a latch lock, and a warning sign that someone had nailed to it: “Do Not Open.”

Of course, as such things are, the padlock was never locked and it was always a game to dare someone to open the door or even to just touch it. The day that the bullies had shoved Jack into the room and locked him inside, Jack learned everything that was behind that old wooden door. The room didn't have much in it, a few old holiday decorations (long forgotten judging by their state of decay, along with a few odds and ends of long forgotten things.) Other than that, it was a dark, dirty, tiny room, nothing in and of itself that would be considered scary. There were a few pipes carrying water to the school above that made moaning, gurgling sounds, but that was pretty much it.

But this tiny room located in the school's basement had been the place where nearly all the ghosts stories and wild tales of murders in the school originated from that groups of boys told in the late hours of the night to try to scare each other.

Jack chuckled to himself. Everyone had been scared of him when he hadn't cried and screamed that day they locked him in the there. Jack had already faced his fears by then; that tiny room had been just that, a tiny, dark room. Though of course Jack had told the other boys horrible things about the room...so the day when he had finally put Roger in that room and locked him in (with a dead animal, of course, to make the situation more fun) Jack had received a couple of smacks of a ruler across his palms and suspension which had involved mostly solitary confinement, trapped in a small, dark room with only one window, barred like the window of a cell, a door locked from the outside, a sickly yellow light that hung from the ceiling and nothing else. Jack had told himself over and over again that he had preferred the solitary confinement...that he didn't mind the silence...it gave him time to think...

*
As Jack moved along, his mind continued to ponder the costumed crusader. Bats...the Batman...wonder what happened to that poor sap that he was running around Gotham dressed as a giant bat? Jack had seen the papers...the Batman had been around for a few months, going from an interesting side story to sometimes making the front page...such as with the events at the gala. Jack found him interesting, but until now he had just thought of the Bat as one of the blossoming crazies that lived in Gotham. But Bruce had sent him?

Bats...Jack mused. He had never given bats much thought until the day in the well with Bruce. Jack shook his head pushing those memories away and continued to walk. He had maybe traveled for what seemed forever when Jack had found a busted out section of tunnel. He could see the flicker of flames from that direction, so he stepped through and into this new area of tunnels, the bricks here seemed, older, the color a darker shade and the smell reminded him of the wet smell of ancient stone in a cavern. He followed the path indicated by the glow of fire light in barrels until he found the “cell.”

It was similar to the room he had been kept in, but this one was rank with knee-high stale water in it. There was a burning barrel down the way from it (the source of the firelight he had followed), though that didn't provide enough light to look inside.

Jack whispered. “Harley?”

His voice cracked and he could taste blood on his tongue from his split lip.

Jack narrowed his blue eyes, trying to distinguish shapes in the darkness of the little cell, hoping to see something. His blood ran cold for a moment as the thought that something might have happened to her...What if? Jack shook the thoughts away and again tried to see into the room, to see anything in the inky darkness of the cell to tell him one way or another if Harley was in there. His heart raced. Harley...she had to be all right. Jack's fingers wrapped around the rusted bars, he was holding them so tightly his knuckles were turning white as his gaze tried to pierce the darkness. Then, with a vicious snarl, Jack yanked on the bars at the same moment he thought he saw something moving in the water, a darker shadow among the blackness, but it was too dark to tell for sure. Jack growled in frustration.

“If they fucking...” He yanked back on the metal bars, for a split second letting panic drive his actions.

Jack had just decided to see if he could pull the barrel with the low burning fire closer to the cell when the lights above burst to life with a series of hisses and pops of a few ancient bulbs.

Jack ducked when a shower of sparks rained down on him, frowning and shielding his eyes. The light threw him off for a split second, but it allowed him to look into the cell, where he saw a body floating face down in the water that covered the floor of the cell.

For a split second Jack panicked...Harley? The light reflected off the body...no...it was male if the shape was any indication. The yellow glow allowed Jack to see the cell door more clearly and the key still stuck in the lock. Jack reached over and pushed open the door, the metallic sound of the cell door opening filled the small space with a loud rasp of ancient metal moving. He stepped down into the cell, sloshing water as he made his way toward the body. He frowned as he studied the floating corpse, he heard the sounds of rats skittering away in the darkness along the edges where the water didn't reach, their tiny claws scratching against stone.

Jack stepped closer to the body, his relief washing through him, settling his heart. He knew it wasn't his Harley, but he rolled the body over anyway and lifted a brow. The man's pants were down and his privates were a bruised and twisted mass of bloody flesh. Jack stared for a moment before he
chuckled, which quickly developed into a full blown laugh. He couldn't be sure, but something told him Harley had been here. He started laughing hard enough that he had to bend over, gasping for breath.

“What is the definition of pure agony my friend?” Jack asked the dead man.

Jack nudged him with his finger, watching the body bob in the water. “A meat mincer!”

Jack laughed more, tears pricking the corner of his eyes.

Smiling as his laughter died away, he looked around but there were no other clues to where Harley was or had gone. Nothing. Jack stood there for a moment staring at the dead man before he stepped out and looked both ways.

“Which way would you go?” Jack whispered to himself, obviously not the way he had just come or else he would have seen her... After a moment he turned to his left and began moving carefully. As Jack crept along the tunnel, the shaft began to widen until it was wide enough for four people to walk abreast. The smell here was actually worse and water started dripping from the ceiling in heavier drops. Jack lost track of the time, but it had that feel of endless walking. He could see that the brick was changing...looking older, more moss covered.

The further Jack walked, the heavier the water that ran through the bricks overhead became, until there were places where the water came pouring down, like miniature waterfalls, pooling on the ground and running downward. The sound of running water was not comforting. Jack stopped and looked up at the ceiling. There were only one or two lights working along this section of tunnel; most of the lights were out and the one over his head looked like the bare bulb was full of water, dangerous.

“Hmm...under the river maybe?” Jack mused as he studied the ceiling. He glanced back over his shoulder the way he had come, but there was little light that way. Ahead he could see a couple of turns, some alcoves. Here and there the brickwork reminded Jack of some he had seen up above in the older sections of Gotham, late Victorian maybe.

He had just started to walk again when he saw shadows moving ahead of him. He heard a voice drifting down the tunnel toward him.

“Croc said to go bring the prisoners to the main arena area.” The voice was male, thin, reedy sounding.

“Why?” A voice...maybe female asked, though it's gruff tones could have been male.

“I don't know. I don't question Croc...maybe he's going to show them to his pets. I heard he was going to start sending body parts to Mr. Wayne if he didn't pay up on time.”

The man who had spoken before chuckled. “That sure would scare the pants off some rich boy and his girl.”

The female voice answered. “I thought he said after twenty-four hours...it ain't been that long has it?” There was a pause before the woman continued. “Croc's pets scare the shit out of me.”

“Well come on, we better go get them before Croc decides to use one of us to feed those things,” The reedy voice man answered.

Jack pushed himself back into an alcove when he heard the footsteps approaching. It was difficult to judge with any certainty, but by the footsteps Jack would guess that there were four of them coming
this way. Jack pressed himself against the wall, letting the shadows drop over him. He held his breath and remained absolutely still.

Jack watched the group come into his view; two men, two women. They walked past him without noticing him, too busy talking among themselves. All of them were dirty, raggedy, but with that feral, hungry look that said they would tear anyone apart they needed to in order to survive. Jack narrowed his eyes watching from the shadows as they walked by...go after them or head toward Croc? Except he couldn't be sure of Croc's location...a guide would be helpful. Jack turned toward the “minions” making their way down the tunnel. And he smiled. The fact that they were coming for him and Harley meant that Croc didn't have her.

Jack pressed his lips together to suppress a giggle as he stepped out from the shadows to follow the four. He didn't need all of them—just one.

* * *

“I don't know why we have to go get that rich bitch and that millionaire brat,” one of the men muttered. This one sounded like a whiner, his voice high-pitched as if his voice had never gone through the adolescent change to a deeper tone. He was stomping, making enough noise that even if Jack hadn't been moving quietly, there was no way any of them could have heard him over the stomping and splashing of that one man. This guy was tall with an average physique, sported a buzzed haircut, the kind of cut that immediately yelled “asshole.” The asshole wore torn jeans and a leather jacket with patches sewn all over it. He wore two big hooped earrings and a chained nose ring that hooked from his nose ring to his left ear. The woman he was complaining to had short pink hair, wore shorts and combat boots along with an anarchy t-shirt. She had a knife she was flipping nervously in her hand.

“Shut up Joey,” she muttered.

The other man walking with them, the one who had been speaking when Jack first heard their group, laughed.

“Yeah Joey, shut up.” This one grinned sideways at Joey showing off two missing front teeth. “That blonde is kinda a cute...I might ask Croc to let me have a go at her.”

Joey snorted. “Lucky, you ain't that lucky. Besides, you ain't going to ask Croc anything—you're too chicken shit!”

Joey started to make chicken noises.

The woman next to him, short, brunette with a lopsided bob, her face pockmarked (Jack couldn't be sure, but he would hazard a guess that she was a drug addict...and by the look of her face, meth), pale and homely, dressed all in black, fishnets, motorcycle boots, shorts and a tank top all of which made her look even paler and sickly, punched Joey in the shoulder. She laughed, showing off rows of rotted teeth.

“Shut up Joey.”

“Make me Lucille.” Joey sneered as he rubbed his shoulder.

“All of you—shut up.” The pink haired woman stopped and glared at the three of them.

“Sorry Angel,” the three said together.

The one called Angel snorted. “Let's just go get them and bring them to Croc. Then Croc said we
could eat. I'm starved.”

The four started again, moving along quieter with Angel in the lead. Jack had stepped back into the shadows, watching them with narrowed eyes and a slight smile. This is going to be fun, Jack thought. The smile that danced across his face was the smile of a man who planned to be covered in blood soon...

*

The group walked slowly, occasionally speaking still, though much quieter now. Jack could tell by the way they were staying relatively close to each other that they were uncomfortable here in the sewers even if their movements betrayed a familiarity with their surroundings. He noticed none of them commented on the fact that the lights were on. Maybe they expected it?

Jack stayed in the darkness, moved quietly along behind the group and kept out of the pools of light, his steps taken with care as he walked. Once or twice he made a slight misstep that caused a pebble to skitter across the floor or a tiny splash of water. But if one of them stopped, saying something about hearing something or other, the rest of the group of laughed and made fun of the worrier. Jack grinned; their own fear was working to his advantage. Just as Jack hoped, one of the group slowed, dragging behind...not staying with the group. It was the meth-head...

Jack smiled as he saw his opportunity. He slipped up behind the straggler...the woman named Lucille. She had made the fatal mistake of stopping to light a cigarette. She had just finished getting the flame on her lighter to catch the cigarette, when Jack moved up behind her. He was taller, healthier, stronger, deadlier—despite his current ordeal—and determined to find his Harley. He wrapped one hand over her mouth, shoving the burning cigarette past her lips, smashing it against her teeth and into her mouth, ignoring the burn of the end against his one palm. She made a choking noise, but Jack cut the sound off swiftly, his fingers pressing down on her cheek, his thumb pressing hard against the other side of her face as he held her mouth closed.

Jack's other arm went around her neck locking his fingers against his shoulder creating an unbreakable lock. Jack stepped backwards, lifting her up off her feet. She struggled, her hands digging at his arms and her feet kicking, but he ignored her struggling and simply carried her by her neck as he slipped into the darkness. Once he had stepped away from the group, who were continuing to walk away from him and his victim, unaware that she was missing, Jack pressed his back against the wall, hidden in the shadows. He held her tight against his body, bringing his thumb and forefinger up to hold her nose, his hand still covering her mouth.

Jack leaned against the wall, smiling while he choked the life out of her. He didn't move, holding himself still while she struggled; the only effort Jack showed was in the twitch of his facial muscles and the occasional tremor of his arms. Her efforts to break free were growing less and less frantic. Jack kept his position, holding the woman against him as she slowly stopped fighting, watching her friends turn around a corner. Jack giggled in her ear. “There, there, just let go...let me tell you a poem from Keats...

Jack's voice was smooth, gentle, his lips against her ear like a lover's kiss...

*

“O soft embalmer of the still midnight,

Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,

Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes,
Or wait the "Amen," ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—
Save me from curious Conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed Casket of my Soul.
*
It only took fifteen seconds for her to lose consciousness, then Jack started to count mentally to himself, his arms trembling only slightly from the pressure he maintained.

“One-one thousand, two-one thousand...” he smiled while he counted, feeling the change as she started to struggled again, her body deprived of oxygen, convulsed, her hands grabbing desperately at his arm around her throat, though Jack was sure she wasn't truly voluntarily reacting...just her body's last effort to survive. He held her there until he finished counting, a complete two minutes had passed before he stepped down from the wall and eased her into one of several alcoves that provided darker shadows to hide her body. Jack searched her pockets, coming up with a switchblade. He grinned like it was Christmas morning, pushing the switch with his thumb, the blade popping out. Jack laughed.

“I bet you forgot you had this didn't you? Oh this is perfect! Thank you.”
Slipping the knife into one of his pockets, Jack moved her around, so that her legs her bent and her head rested against her knees. At first sight she looked to be sleeping. Jack grinned and patted her head before he turned and walked causally after the others.
*
Harley shivered. The cold and wet were making it harder and harder for her to move. She wanted to just stop and make herself small to try and conserve what little heat she had, but she kept moving instead. She was hoping she would find Jack, or a way out where she could go for help, but the tunnels seemed to move and twist endlessly in the darkness.

She turned into an archway and stepped through to find herself in a large room with a domed ceiling. Harley stood with her mouth hanging open as she looked around. The size of the place, tucked underground like this, was disorienting. She seemed to be standing on a balcony of some sort. There were several ways to get into this room; the large circle had at least four different entrances that she could see from her position on the balcony.

Harley frowned in confusion. This didn't look like part of a sewer system at all! If she were going to
take a guess, she would say it looked like part of a subway instead, and as she walked further in she
could even see the remains of rails down on the floor below her. As she looked closer at the ceiling
there looked to be the remains of tiles...like for a mosaic!

The floor of the room was covered in a thin film of water, with piles of broken bricks and other
debris littered around the room. Whoever had turned on the lights had turned them on in here too,
providing a safer route for her to walk around the balcony that circled the room. She could see some
of the safety blockades, metal pipes and other various debris. But along with the remains of a mosaic
on the ceiling she could see, under the grime what might have been painting, a mural on the walls.

Harley finally located some stairs that led down into the room. She took them quickly, hopping down
the stairs two at a time. When she arrived at the bottom of the stairs, she heard something moving
down here. She turned around and her eyes went wide as two shadows emerged from one of the
tunnels.

* 

Jack smiled to himself, taking a few silent steps as if he were dancing, a hand to his chest, his other
hand out as his waist weaved to a song only he could hear. He made his way closer to the man
named Lucky. Jack had to swallow down his laugh. Lucky wasn't so lucky since he was the next
person to die!

Lucky stopped and leaned against the wall of the tunnel.

“Come on Angel, can't we stop for a minute? I need a cig.”

Angel kept walking. “Lucky, stop whining and come on.”

Angel and Joey kept walking while Lucky continued to lean against the wall and muttered just above
a whisper, “Stop whining...blah blah...”

Jack leaned against the wall right next to Lucky. “Yes Lucky, stop whining—it isn't becoming.”

Lucky's eyes widened as he turned to stare at Jack just as Jack brought the switchblade up and let the
light catch the blade for a moment. In less than a heartbeat, the taller man's arm snapped out in
several quick thrusts; Jack shoved the blade into Lucky's gut, one, two, three, four, five times. Lucky
made a gurgling sound and started to slip down the wall. Jack shoved the blade into the man's
stomach again and ripped it upward as he smiled and opened Lucky's abdomen as if Jack were
gutting a fish.

“You know...here's a hard life lesson for you Lucky. A hard life and death lesson really...not that
you have much time to enjoy the knowledge—an epiphany in a minute!!” Jack laughed softly and
leaned in close as Lucky stared at Jack in horror. The dying man's mouth moved, but the only sound
coming from Lucky's mouth was the soft gurgle of blood bubbling past his lips and running from his
mouth down his chin.

“You really should pick better friends Lucky. I mean...seriously...look at them,” Jack said with a
glance in the direction that Angel and Joey were walking. “They didn't even turn around to check on
you. Such a shame...”

Jack yanked the knife out of the other man's gut and watched Lucky slip to the floor with blood
leaking from the side of the man's mouth. He continued to stare in horror at Jack, the light behind his
eyes gradually fading away. Jack grinned brightly just before the blade slashed out to slice Lucky's
throat open, a curtain of blood running down the man's front. A few drops splashed against Jack's
already soiled suit. Jack reached forward to search Lucky's pockets before he pulled out the pack of cigarettes. Jack searched again and came back with Lucky's lighter.

Jack smiled at the dying man. “Sorry, seemed to have lost mine somewhere.”

Lucky's eyes were still on Jack while he thumped out a cigarette, stuck it between his lips; the cigarette was stained with Lucky's blood as Jack flicked the lighter on and held it to the cigarette. He grinned as he lit it and took a long pull on the burning stick, then grinned down at Lucky.

“You know...you guys all brought this on yourselves. Taking me is one thing, but you took my girl. Can't let that stand.”

Jack stood and blew out a trail of smoke in the direction that Lucky's friends had gone. The last thing Lucky heard as he bled to death was Jack hushed, but sensual voice singing in a whisper as he walked away.

“If I didn't care more than words can say
If I didn't care, would I feel this way?
If this isn't love then why do I thrill?
And what makes my head go 'round and 'round
While my heart stands still?
If I didn't care, would it be the same?
Would my every prayer begin and end with just your name?
And would I be sure that this is love beyond compare?
Would all this be true if I didn't care for you?...”

*

Batman stopped and cocked his head at the sound. He couldn't be sure, but he thought he heard a woman's voice and then he could have sworn he heard...singing? Jack? It sounded like Jack, but in these tunnels it was difficult to discern anything with clarity. He brought up his map...then snarled in frustration and hit his earpiece. “Alfred.”

“Yes sir?”

“I need a map of the old railway stations that used to run through Gotham. I'm thinking these sewers connect to those old tracks. I keep finding tunnels not connected to the sewer. By the architecture I'm thinking this is late 1870's brick work...maybe a little later.”

“I'm on it Master Bruce. Any luck?”

Batman sighed. “Not yet but I think I just heard someone, going to check it out. Contact me when you have those blueprints.”

“Of course Master Bruce.”

*
Harley's eyes widened as the sound of steps came closer. She turned toward where she thought the sound was coming, realizing that the sounds were accompanied by the forming of shadows in one of the four entryways into the room. She ran across the room, dived into a pile of rubble and tried to make herself as small as possible. She dug herself quickly into the pile, hiding among the remains of bricks, tiles and just as she moved her head to the side, she realized that there were skeletons in the pile. Animal skeletons, and...human, she realized in shock. Human skeletons? Harley's eyes widened when she realized she was staring into the empty sockets of a skull...a human skull. She bit down hard on her bottom lip to prevent herself from making a sound as she realized what else was mixed in with this pile of trash.

There were other things she soon discovered; bits of meat, soda cans, take-out cartons, bottles and others bits and pieces of trash she couldn't identify mixed in the pile. Harley shuddered in revulsion. She had to press her lips together as the urge to vomit raced up her throat and burned the back of her mouth. She adjusted her position carefully, finding a spot where she could look into the main area. Two men—both average...nothing special—had entered to chamber, but they were both armed. Harley narrowed her eyes as she followed their movements. She could see that one of them was armed with a pistol which he carried in the back of his pants—not easy for him to get to if she moved quickly. The other man had a what looked like a bowie knife strapped to his thigh...she couldn't be sure from her vantage point, however.

Harley took a deep breath through her nose. On one hand she was relieved...neither of these men were Croc, but as she narrowed her eyes with hatred, she realized the one with the knife...he looked familiar. Harley frowned as she remembered. She had been grabbed from behind. She had twisted her head only catching a glimpse of her attacker before the other man had shot her full of something that knocked her out...the one with the knife—he was the one who grabbed her hair, who held her. And the other man...he might be the one with the syringe, but she couldn't be sure. Not that it mattered. Harley felt that dark, angry thing inside her twist and shudder. The thing that was happy that Jack had killed her step-father, that had taken joy in the violence...in killing that man who wanted to use her...and now...she knew that thing in her...that darkness wanted to kill these two men for what they had done to her and Jack. Harley closed her eyes as a spike of intense emotion bubbled up. Jack. Oh God, where was Jack? She needed to find him and one of these men might know where he was. Harley watched as the two men stepped further into the room; they were close enough now that she could hear their conversation.

“Croc is going to bring them here? Why?” the man with the knife asked. His accent was thick; he wasn't from Gotham, Star City maybe. He was taller than Harley, but not as tall as Jack or Bruce. He had muscles, but not the kind of guy who went to the gym. The other man was similarly built with greasy black hair and the kind of face that made Harley want to break his nose.

“Croc wants to tease them,” the other explained. “He is going to bring his pets in...do a bit of the “super villain” scare tactics for fun.” The man with the dark hair laughed. “It'll be fun!”

“I don't know....” The man with the knife rubbed the back of his neck, but his friend elbowed him in the side.

“Don't be getting soft.” The other man chuckled.

The two men had just made their way closer to where Harley was hidden. She knew she didn't have a lot of time to make a move before they were out of her reach...

Harley popped up from her hiding spot, her pipe in her hand held like a baseball bat. She slammed the pipe into the lower back of the man with the gun first, holding the pipe low and putting all her strength behind the swing. She then raised the pipe up, her teeth together in a growl, her fingers
already aching with how hard she was holding onto her pipe as she hit him hard across the back of the head. Blood blossomed on the back of his head before the man staggered and dropped.

The other man shouted in surprise and anger as he pulled his knife from his thigh sheath, but Harley shouted and swung her pipe at his hand, cracking his wrist. The bones made an actual snapping sound from the impact before she leapt over a large block of cement, her makeshift bat over her head as she screamed, bringing down the pipe on the man's shoulder. The guy with the gun had risen to his feet, staggering a bit, looking slightly disoriented, but he pulled his pistol out and raised his arm. Harley saw him from the corner of her eye. She twisted around gracefully and swung her pipe like she was about to hit a baseball, but instead the pipe slammed into the gunman's chest, knocking the air from his lungs and cracking his breast bone with the power behind her blow.

He stumbled backwards with a gasp of exhaled air from the strike Harley delivered. She laughed as she ran at him, swung her pipe low and smashed him across the knee, breaking the gunman's kneecap with a loud crack that echoed off the walls of the old room. She then snapped the pipe up, catching him under the chin, shattered his jaw, teeth, a spray of blood bursting from his mouth before he fell backwards and dropped the gun. Harley spun around on the balls of her feet, giggling madly and swinging her pipe already at the other man.

The man with the knife tried to take a stab at her in a desperate attempt to get under her guard, but Harley was moving in a dance of death, her pretty face covered in dirt, grime and now splatters of blood; the grin on her face would make Jack proud. Her bat swung left, slamming her attacker across the face, then right, then back again. Harley laughed loudly as she swung her club, back and forth, four times, smashing the man's face and turning it into a bloody mess, unrecognizable by the time she stopped and his body dropped to the floor. Droplets of blood had splattered against her face, against her soiled red dress, but she didn't care; she didn't care when she tasted the blood on her lips, or the sweat dripping down her brow. All she cared about was that this man stopped moving.

Harley was panting, breathing hard through her teeth, her giggles slowly dying down. Her whole body was trembling, the pipe feeling slippery in her hands.

She growled. “No one—no one touches me but Jack. Ever!”

That was when she heard the sound of applause. “You really are a spitfire, ain'tcha?”

Harley turned to see Croc standing in the archway, two large crocodiles at his side on chains that he had wrapped around each large, scaly fist. Behind him were four more of his gang, all of them armed. Croc grinned. “Take her boys.”

* 

Jack smiled serenely, following behind Joey and Angel, the two of them blissfully unaware that their friends were no longer behind them. Joey had looked back once and Jack, staying in the shadows had waved. Joey had simply grunted, with a quick wave back and a shrug before continuing on.

Jack started to hum as he made his way closer to Joey. If Joey thought anything was strange about one of his companions humming, he gave no indication.

Joey stopped for a moment to lean against the wall. “Angel, I think you took a wrong turn. I'm pretty sure we're lost.”

Angel, whose voice seemed to drift from further away snapped back. “I know where I'm going Joey, just shut up.”
Jack moved out of the darkness so quickly that Joey didn't have a chance to make any sound before Jack had grabbed the back of Joey's neck, the switchblade pressed between Joey's lips so far that the blade scraped against his front teeth. Jack smiled whispering. “Why so serious Joey? Mmmm?”

Jack wrinkled his nose with a sincere smile. Joey stared back at him, his eyes wide to the point that the whites glowed in the dim light. Jack grinned. “Let's put a smile on that face.”

Jack ground his teeth in a vicious smile and dragged the knife up one side of Joey's face, then, twisted his wrist elegantly, he slashed the other side before he winked at Joey, and moved the blade across Joey's throat, cutting off the cry that had just started to erupt from the man.

Angel frowned when she arrived at the cell where the woman was supposedly be kept. She peered inside, both hands on her hips, narrowing her eyes trying to see. She thought she saw a shadow of a body floating and bobbing in the water, but whatever it was, was at the back of the cell just out of reach of the light.

“Joey? Come look at this! I can't tell what it is.”

She felt Joey walk up beside her and Angel pointed. “That...”

But she didn't get a chance to finish her sentence when the shadow that she thought was Joey standing next to her formed into someone else. Jack dropped his arm around Angel's shoulders, his weight leaning against her, a bloody knife in his hand dangling easily from bloody fingers, casually almost, while Jack leaned against her.

“You know Angel. I knew who I was this morning, but, I've changed a few times since then.”

Jack grinned at her. Angel had gone very still, turning just enough to look at him. She recognized Jack Wayne, not just from the kidnapping, but she had seen his face plenty of times lately in the paper. Croc had showed them all his picture, talking about easy money and soft rich boys. Yet here he was with a bloody knife that she thought might be Lucille's blade. The handle...maybe...Angel started to shift her weight from one foot to the other, her hand moving gradually, but Jack felt the shift. Quickly he adjusted his hold on the blade, turning its point toward Angel. If the blade was not enough to halt her, the look in Jack Wayne's eyes did.

“No, no, no—we can't have that now can we? I need your help my dear. See, I'm looking for my girl AND you are going to take me to Croc to see if he knows where she is.” Jack smiled pleasantly and turned Angel around the way that they had come. For a moment, at the edge of the circle of light, Angel could see a slowly spreading pool of blood, mixing with the water on the floor. Her heart stopped as she whispered, “Yer crazy.”

Jack chuckled. “I believe it was Philip K. Dick who said, 'It is sometimes an appropriate response to reality to go insane.' And reality has always made me a touch...crazy. Besides sweetheart, we're dealing with a giant crocodile man. I think reality has little bearing on this situation.” Jack laughed softly. “Insanity aside... we find ourselves in hell and I am sure my girl has gone deeper. So...lead me to where the crocodile sits at the center of this labyrinth so that I can find her and you just might live through tonight.”

Jack gave her shoulder a squeeze and started to push her forward, but not before he disarmed her, taking away her knife she had tried to reach for and, after a quick search, he also removed her lighter and a pocket knife.
“All right, let's go,” Jack said pleasantly as if she were taking him on a tour. He giggled softly and recited in a sing-song voice that had Angel's blood running colder than the times she had seen Croc take a bite out of someone.

Jack whispered:

“How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!
How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in,
With gently smiling jaws!

Jack laughed as he held onto Angel's shoulder. “Don't you just love Lewis Carroll?”

*

Batman received the map of the old rail system from Alfred after only twenty minutes. The man was a genius when it came to research. Bruce smiled. There was no way he could be Batman without Alfred backing him up.

Batman gave the blueprints a quick study. They showed a vast system of 'caverns' and rails, but as Batman was quickly learning, there were unmarked doors, storm drains, and places where tunnels had collapsed, filling in the sections with impenetrable debris. But, with the help of the maps and blueprints Alfred had discovered, Batman was finally making headway toward what he suspected was the center. According to the blueprints, the center looked to be an old station, with four main entrances, though there also seemed to be a few smaller ways into the same large area. He didn't appear to be too far away from one of the entrances. He was hoping that Croc might be located at the center...it would make sense, being the biggest open space down here.

While Batman moved quietly, he paused when he heard voices. He stopped and listened; up ahead, the voices echoed, but he had a clearer idea of where the source of the sound was coming from...

*

“So you got yourself free, little girl.” Croc chuckled. He had Harley tied up in such a way she looked almost as if she were caught in a spiderweb. She was hanging upside down, her long blonde hair dusting the floor of the vast cavern they were in, her dress indecently hanging upside down, but the ropes had stopped it from showing more than her bike shorts she wore under the dress. He had tied her right next to the trash pile of bones and other remains. His two pet crocodiles rested, unmoving nearby. Waylon grabbed her hair forced her head up, though her blue eyes blazed with hate.

“Killed two of my men. Pretty good for a rich boy's girlfriend. Though I get testy when my people get killed.” Waylon flexed his claws, the tips of which scraped against her scalp painfully. “But lucky you. You still got time...and I want the money more than I want to eat you.”
Harley glared at him then sweetly, her voice a singsong...

“Never smile at a crocodile
No, you can't get friendly with a crocodile
Don't be taken in by his welcome grin
He's imagining how well you'd fit within his skin.

*

Waylon snarled at her, letting go of Harley's head which caused her to swing back against the brick wall. She winced when the back of her head bounced against the hard surface.

“Yer not funny girlie,” Croc hissed between sharp teeth.

“I don't know. I think I'm pretty hilarious.” Harley grinned.

Harley swung a little bit as she giggled. “You know, I have a PhD. I could help you. I mean clearly you have issues...eating people? In my expert opinion, you have EDNOS or you're a binge eater. It could also be that you're trying to consume to be human...you know like if you eat enough people it will make you human. I hate to tell you this...it don't work that way big guy.”

She grinned widely. “You clearly have some issues...kidnapping? And from the look at your pile over there, not just cannibalism, probably murder...unless you're a necrophiliac on top of everything. So I would also diagnose you with impulse control issues and maybe a good dose of schizophrenia...” Harley giggled again.

Croc snarled. “SHUT UP!” He backhanded her causing her body to swing back, slamming against the brick wall harder this time.

That was the moment that Batman came rushing into the room from above. He leaped over the side of the balcony and landed in a crouch, looking menacing in his black armored attire. “ENOUGH! Let her go Croc!”

At that same moment that Batman landed on the floor of the chamber, Jack came racing from one of the four main entrances, holding onto his captive by her hair. Angel, a knife to her neck started to try to pull away from Jack, but he yanked her backwards, releasing her hair to wrap his arm around her shoulders, yanking her against his chest. He narrowed his eyes at Croc and Batman.

“Let my Harley go or I will kill her.” He smiled sweetly, blood staining his lips and teeth. To emphasize his point, Jack pressed his blade to Angel's throat.
Much Madness is divinest Sense

For a moment, no one moved. It was as if all the air had been sucked from the room; time had stopped moving. Everyone looked at everyone else. Batman's gaze rested for a long moment on his little brother, whose face had blood on it. The eyeliner that had surrounded his eyes earlier than evening was now smeared in dark circles around his eyes, the red that had been on his lips was stained redder by blood and smeared across his chin and up one side of his mouth. The look on Jack's face made his stomach roil and his blood run cold. Jack had an odd, crazed gleam in his eyes that reminded Bruce of the way Jack had looked when he was younger, when Jack had problems...

Jack saw Harley hanging upside down, tied up like a piece of meat. He could see the beating she had taken reflected in the bruises and bloodstains on her face. Jack felt something in him spread, as if the darkness inside him that had been leaking out found a hole and flooded through him. Jack smiled and showed off his perfect teeth, seemingly out of place on his blood and make-up stained face.

Harley only had eyes for Jack; when she saw him her heart slammed inside her chest and her breathing picked up. He was the most beautiful thing in the room and he was here, alive...

Harley was the one to break the silence when she yelled, “JACK!”

Batman's gaze turned to Harley and then back to Jack. “Let the woman go,” he said to Croc and his gang. Then, “Mr. Wayne, we can do this without bloodshed.”

Jack looked at Batman and tilted his head to the side as if he didn't understand English.

“I don't know Bats—can I call you Bats? Or Batsy! That's even better!! Anyway, I don't really see any way out of this without some bloodshed. Do you?” He smiled at Batman and tightened his hold on Angel, the knife drawing a thin line of blood along her throat.

Croc snarled. “Kill the Bat! And get me Jack Wayne! ALIVE!”

That was when there was an explosion of movement. Croc loosened his hold on the chains that he had held around his fists, released the crocodiles and with a clawed finger he pointed at Batman.

“Dinner time timoun! Go get him!”

To Batman's surprise the two creatures immediately made their way toward him, moving surprisingly fast with their owner close behind them.

*

The four men that had been in the room with Croc when Jack and Batman arrived were each armed with some sort of weapon; two of the men, a ginger-head man and another with a shaved head, each held a couple of knives, another held a baseball bat over his shoulder and the last man had a couple of clawed hammers that he was flipping and catching by the handles with a grin on his ugly face. They moved toward Jack, spreading out as they walked.

“Croc didn't say ya had to be in one piece rich boy.” One of the men sneered. He had a shaved head and a fairly bushy mustache covering his upper lip. Jack grinned brightly as he pulled Angel tighter against him. Jack leaned close and giggled against her ear.

“I guess the next question dear, is how much do they care about your well-being?”
Angel's eyes darted back and forth, following their movements as they approached her and Jack. Angel felt the bottom of her stomach fall out and her bottom lip trembled. It was clear from the looks in their eyes that her safety was not their concern, she wasn't so sure her “pals” cared if this mad man killed her or not.

The small group of four spread out to flank Jack, trying to back him against a wall and take away any maneuvering room he had, but they were being obvious, which was rather pitiful Jack thought. Jack smiled as he continued to hold his blade against Angel's throat, his other hand around her upper arm, though he was fairly confident she was going to try to break free at any moment. His fingers dug into her biceps painfully as he slowly walked backward, letting them corner him, his blue eyes darting to each man carefully keeping an eye on them as well as quickly calculating what moves he might make to kill each one.

Jack surmised he had two choices where Angel was concerned—let her go or kill her, but that first option meant he would be facing five instead of four attackers. Killing her was just too easy, not really any fun and definitely not a challenge. Jack decided to break even. He grinned at his attackers before he hissed in Angel's ear.

"Some angels are destined to fall, I'm afraid."

With that, Jack shoved Angel before him, stepping back to drop into a crouch, and in one smooth motion, he hamstrung one of her legs. The switchblade slashed through her thigh muscle easily with the force of Jack's arm behind the sharp weapon. Angel screamed as she pitched forward, the one now bloody leg giving out and sending her crashing into one of the four coming for Jack, a ginger-headed man with too many facial tattoos to be attractive and a long couple of wicked looking knives. He looked startled as Angel pitched forward into him. Luckily for Angel he had enough sense to grab for her with the one hand not holding a knife or else he would have skewered her.

Jack grinned, waving the bloody knife at the four men. “Ah look, perhaps chivalry is not dead! Okay boys, who's up first?”

* 

The crocodiles moved surprisingly quickly, their short legs propelling them forward at an astonishing speed. Batman performed a back flip, managing to kick one of the animals in the snout, snapping its jaws closed just before he landed in a crouch. Bruce's eyes darted over to Jack, his heart pounding not for worry for himself, but for his baby brother. He was about to try to make a dash for his brother. (The worry about Jack killing anyone settled like a cold stone in Bruce's stomach...Jack's mental state was frail. Bruce could feel that fear like ice creeping through his veins, but he had to push those thoughts away, confine them. Right now he had to think about surviving this fight with his own life.) But his thoughts were shattered when his head snapped back with enough force that his neck cracked loudly and his saw stars before his eyes.

Croc's accent rolled out thicker as he chuckled having rushed Batman quicker than the vigilante had thought possible. The giant man caught him unawares, slamming his fist against the side of Bruce's head while Bruce's mind had been focused on his brother.

“My babies ain't the only crocodile ye get to play with ...Batman is it? Ain't that what the papers call you, the Masked Crusader or is it the freak with the wings? You know what they call me back home? They call me Killer Croc... Either way you're going to be my next meal. Never had bat before.”

Croc lunged at Batman, his jaws opened wide. His claws scraped across Batman's uniform, tearing the enforced fabric too easily, cutting into the flesh underneath. Batman hissed with pain; a minor
wound really, but he would have to be at his best during this fight. He threw his arms wide to knock Croc's hands away as he stumbled backwards, but he managed to keep his footing.

Batman dropped both his hands to his belt as he tried to put some space between him and Croc and Croc's pets while at the same time reaching for the weapons he needed. The fingers of both hands brushed against the items at his belt that he was looking for, two specially made batons. The batons were held to his belt in such a fashion that he could easily break them away and extend them fully with little effort. His fingers finally gripped the two instruments and he yanked the two collapsible weapons free from his belt. The batons were special, designed to autolock at the moment he jerked his wrists; the weapons extended to their full length and locked into place. Each one had a urethane rubber tip over the hard ends that made a hit from them painful...bone breakingly painful for a normal person. Batman wasn't really sure the effect would be the same on a man-sized crocodile.

Batman snapped the batons out with a practiced gesture, making sure to keep them parallel to his thighs, close to his body. The two batons expanded at once while Batman twisted his body with the skill and grace of an experienced martial artist to avoid Croc's next slash while at the same time crossing the batons in front of him. Bruce turned as one of the crocodiles rushed him, bringing both batons down with solid strikes on the crocodile's open jaws. He then spun around swiftly as the other crocodile came in close, snapping its jaws at his calf. Batman swung the batons down in a quick double strike, a hard cross hit, two fast strikes on the other side of its jaws, and then another hard smack on the creature's snout with enough force that when the jaws snapped shut, several of the crocodile's teeth broke off with the power of Batman's hit.

Batman was about to turn toward Croc, but the hybrid came in fast. For a large man, Croc had a disquieting swiftness that kept surprising Batman, who didn't really expect the big man to move that quickly; he had thought the first time attack from Croc had only seemed quick because he was distracted. He had thought the initial burst of speed had been a one time thing...but apparently not. Croc's lunge forced Bruce to backpedal. Bruce hit the wall, but he pushed back, using the solid surface to lunge forward. He knew he couldn't let himself be pinned in a tight area with no room to maneuver.

Batman raced forward, taking quick hard steps, his booted feet planting hard on the ground, his arms a blur in front of him as his batons slashed down through the air with punishing force, hitting each of Waylon's grasping claws, forcing the two-legged crocodile to take several steps backwards or risk taking several more hard hits to the shoulders and torso.

Batman was doing his best to force Croc into the more maneuverable open area, but Croc surprised him again when the large man jumped at Batman. The crocodile man's whole body swung toward him, clawed feet slamming Batman in the chest, knocking the air from his lungs, but also knocking him to the ground.

Batman hit hard and rolled with the collision. Bright spots sparkled in his vision, but he managed to get on his feet just as the two crocodiles, in a sort of swift wobbling gait that might have been amusing if not for the fact they were both deadly, raced toward him. The prehistoric looking creatures crossed the ground with frightening speed. Batman launched himself up from the ground, kicking up to his feet, but the creatures were already close enough to take a bite out of him.

* * *

Harley started to struggle with all her strength—she had to help Jack! She swung a little more aggressively with her struggles, but Jack needed her. It was difficult, not just because she was bound up so tightly that she could feel the beat of her heart between the pull of the ropes around her legs, arms and torso, but also because she was hanging upside down. In addition to the blood rushing to
her head, the swinging caused her vision to blur, which was slightly nauseating while she worked through the pain of trying to get her hands free. It became increasingly difficult for her to focus because her head was pounding painfully from hanging upside down for so long. She squeezed her eyes shut and focused on twisting her wrists back and forth, ignoring the way the ropes bit into her skin. Jack needed her. She could do this. She had to do this.

Jack grinned as he held his hands up in a close fighting stance, the knife held so that the blade was facing his forearm. He waggled his eyebrows at the four men who had just watched him hamstring their friend. He had glanced toward Harley once, his rage almost taking complete control of him, but he smiled and breathed through his nose. He would kill them all for what they had done, for hurting his girl, and especially for daring to even touch her.

Angel was crying, dragging herself across the ground between them, the ginger haired man having dropped her to face Jack. Jack noticed that none of them came to her aid.

Jack made a “Tsk Tsk” noise of shame watching her crawl away.

“Really? None of you are going to help her? Sad...very sad. Where is your chivalry?”

None of the men spoke, their attention on Jack.

Jack sighed and focused his attention on his adversaries. He winked at the man with the hammers.

“You wanna go first, handsome?”

The ginger elbowed his friend. “Go on Hammers, get him!”

Jack thought the man named Hammers was ugly...and that was being generous.

Jack laughed. “Hammers? Seriously? You guys really need to work on your nicknames...it's just sad.”

Hammers stepped away from his friends, spinning the hammers in his hands. He grinned, which as far as Jack was concerned, was really not something this Hammers guy should do a lot of...it was not a good smile. He had buck teeth, a couple of missing bottom teeth and greasy brown hair. He reminded Jack of a dog with mange.

Jack frowned with faked concern. “I have a very serious question for you...Hammers is it? What do you think of the human race? I mean as an outsider, what's your opinion?”

Hammers frowned, stopping in mid-stalk to stare at Jack. By the expression on his face, he clearly had no idea what Jack had just say. One of the men with a pair of knives started to laugh until one of his friends smacked him on the back of the head. “Shut up Steve, you asshole.”

Jack chuckled. “Ready Hammers?”

Hammers snarled. “I'm going to fuck you up rich boy!”

He raced toward Jack, who laughed.

“Oh promises, promises....”

Hammers swung his arms in a quick series of four slashes in the air, creating a sort of heavy swooshing noise with the backs of the hammers facing outward. Jack didn't move back, but instead
he bent his knees, leaning backwards gracefully, the claws of the hammers gliding over Jack's face and chest. Jack leaned dangerously far backwards coming up on the balls of his feet. He giggled, immediately coming back up, holding the switchblade so that the blade was upside down and its length faced his arm. Jack lurched forward, making a few quick slashes, leading with his right leg. He brought his right arm around in a smooth curve, sweeping under Hammer's guard, the blade cutting into Hammers' side when the man tried to spin out of the way. Jack danced past him and turned around as if he were simply finishing a dance move. The cut on Hammers' side wasn't deep, just enough to make Hammers jump back with a hiss of pain.

Jack smiled just before he glided around behind Hammers moving with the grace of a dancer. Hammers just barely blocked the knife with one of his hammers, but Jack ducked down and slid the knife along the metal neck of the claw hammer hard enough that sparks flew just before the knife stopped in the claw of the hammer. He moved under his opponent's strike, twisting and forcing Hammer's arm to twist with him. Hammers turned just as Jack pulled his knife free, but the whole maneuver threw Hammers' balance off. Jack came forward again using his shoulder and head to duck in under Hammers' side, driving the other man back. Hammers growled as he brought his elbows down on Jack's back, once, twice, and a third time before Jack let go and jumped back out of reach. Jack simply grinned at Hammers.

“You know, I'm slightly impressed. But considering that you are probably not the sharpest tool in the shed I wouldn't get too excited about it Hammers.”

Hammers cursed. “You motherfucker!”

Jack giggled. “Oh now tsk tsk, we don't have to bring our mothers into this...especially considering mine is dead Hammers.” Jack's voice dropped to a deadly hiss.

Hammers rushed at Jack.

Jack brought his arms up blocking furious man's first two swings with his forearms, the metal handles of the hammers striking Jack's arms. It was painful; Jack's face twitched with pain, but other than that he gave no indication he felt anything else and it certainly didn't slow him down. He swung his arms out, forcing Hammer's arms wide. Jack chose that moment to lash out, the heel of his left hand striking Hammers in the chest with a powerful blow that shoved Hammers backwards. The strength Jack had in his slim frame was surprising to Hammers, who was further taken by surprise when Jack followed this move with a front snap kick, hard in the stomach that sent the man stumbling back into his friends.

The man holding the baseball cursed. “This is stupid! Come on Hammers!”

Jack laughed. “Let me guess, your name is Baseball? Or Ball or just plain stupid?”

The man with the bat snarled. “Shut up!”

The two men rushed at Jack who just laughed. Baseball (as Jack was thinking about him), lunged in and swung his bat at Jack's head. Jack ducked under the bat, bounced up and twisted, his left elbow crashing into the Baseball's nose, crushing it. The man hollered in pain as a flash flood of blood came from his nose. But Jack immediately twisted to the right, his blade slashing across the man's face slicing open his chin to the bone. Jack danced back, panting from the exertion of the fight and his ordeal, but he still smiled. Baseball gasped in pain as he backed away, one hand over his nose and chin both, trying to use his bat one handed just as Hammers came at Jack from behind. Jack dropped into a crouch, twisting around on the balls of his feet, his right leg snapping out at the last moment to slam the heel of his expensive shoes into Hammers shin. Hammers toppled with a yelp of pain.
“I'm tired of this,” Jack growled as he stood and glared down at Hammers. For a moment Hammers saw something far deadlier in Jack Wayne's eyes than he had ever seen in Croc's, and it scared him. But he only had a reprieve of two heartbeats before Jack jumped on him to bury the blade in Hammers' thigh.

The man screamed.

Jack giggled while panting and a bead of sweat ran down his forehead, but his smile was radiant.

“There you go Hammers...you get to bleed to death...I'm pretty sure I hit the artery.”

Baseball yelled, “You son of a bitch!!”

He ran at Jack with his bat held high over his head, ready to smash Jack's head to pulp. Jack mused while moving...apparently they were losing interest in keeping him alive.

Jack hopped to his feet and turned just as Baseball brought his bat down.

* 

Harley worked furiously at her bonds. She could hear the sounds of fighting, but she knew if she opened her eyes she would be distracted or at worst, she would panic. Luckily her hands had been tied in front of her which made it easier for her to move them back and forth, working to loosen the rope. No one paid attention to her now, so Harley worked more vigorously at shifting her hands up and down, back and forth. The rope was rubbing against her skin, tearing away at her wrist, burning her skin, but she kept at it. When the ropes had started to grow slightly slack, she began to twist them back and forth even harder, crossing her wrists to the side. It hurt, burning so badly that she hissed with the pain, but she kept at it. She twisted and twisted and the burn was incredible. She brought her hands to her mouth grabbing onto the rope with her teeth; her body had began to swing back and forth while she worked causing her to swing dangerously close to the wall, but with her eyes closed she didn't notice. Her whole focus was on freeing herself so that she could get to Jack.

* 

Batman swung his batons for what would be a finishing strike on most opponents, but Croc blocked them with his forearms; the weapons made a dull thudding sound against Croc's hide. If it had been any other man, those impacts would have broken their arms, but Croc only laughed.

“Going to take a lot more than a couple of sticks to put me down Bat-boy.”

One of the crocodiles took a snap at Batman; he was forced to move out of the way, but as he took a sidestep, a large scaled fist slammed into his face, splitting his lip when his attention was distracted by the potential bite. Bruce tasted the coppery flavor of blood in his mouth as he danced out of the way; the second pass missed him, but just barely. This fight was wearing him out, but Batman kept going, he had to—he was not going to die down here and neither was his brother.

Croc chuckled. “You ain't so tough.”

Batman bared his teeth against the pain in his jaw from the punch and swung two hard strikes from the side at Croc. One strike caught the mutated man against the side of his face causing a ringing in Croc's ear that had him wobbling to the side, but Batman hit him again on the other ear, then again on the previous side, a couple of quick chops that had Croc grabbing his head and trying to back way from Batman.

Batman then leapt up, spinning in the air while tucking his legs and holding the batons over his head.
He brought his batons down on either side of Croc's head, smashing them into his shoulders. Croc lashed out, one clawed hand hitting Batman in the chest and sending him flying backwards, but Croc had felt those hits.

*

The baseball bat caught Jack in the shoulder with a loud crack. Jack absorbed the pain and stumbled back a step. He hissed through his teeth as the shock of the blow vibrated through his shoulder and down his arm. For a moment he almost dropped the knife, his fingers going numb, the hit weakening his arm. Luckily the man's swing wasn't hard enough to break Jack's shoulder or dislocate it, but Jack would have a hefty bruise within a few hours. Jack rolled to his feet, panting, his eyes narrowed, and his hand holding the blade trembled with pain, but Jack smiled. His voice was a hiss between his teeth.

“You are really starting to piss me off Baseball. Be a dear and just fuck off.”

Baseball's eyes widened in surprise...that was not the reaction he was expecting. He was expecting Jack to go down, to be whimpering in pain. For a moment he had no idea how to react to someone who didn't respond like he expected.

So instead he stuttered, “M-m-my n-name's Jake.”

(The ginger and Steve were both watching the fight with the confused look of two men not sure if they should help or get the hell out of there.)

Jack grinned widely as he wiped the back of his hand across his mouth, a smear of blood left a streak across Jack's hand. “Well, Jake...I'm afraid I'm going to have to kill you.”

“That's it! I don't care what Croc wants! Kill him!!” the ginger yelled.

The ginger and Steve held their knives at the ready, (both of them clearly having little experience with knives because they were holding them all wrong, Jack noted) came at Jack in a rush. Jack managed to back away from the first couple of wild slashes from both men. The one named Steve lunged at Jack again, slashing wildly. One of the slashes, more by accident than by design, connected. The knife cut across Jack's side, ripped through cloth and bit into flesh. Jack felt the warm spread of blood and the burn of the cut, but he again he didn't react like most people would under similar circumstances; instead he smiled wider.

Jake took a swing with his bat again, trying to knock Jack's legs out from under him, but Jack—despite his mounting wounds and fatigue—kicked up, hitting Jake's bat, causing the wooden bat to miss and for Jake's arm to jerk upward. At the same time, Jack slashed with his own knife, cutting across the forearm of the ginger opening a wide gash. Jack was panting from exhaustion, but he was grinning wildly, dancing under the guard of the man named Steve. Steve had a thick, almost military style flattop and was carrying a huge Bowie knife...but clearly he had no idea how to use the knife properly. Steve held it wrong, trying to stab at Jack with it. Jack smirked, hopping a bit on his left leg, he quickly brought his right leg up, pivoted to the side, his foot snapping out and striking the man in the throat. His attacker dropped his knife and grabbed at his throat gasping and choking for air.

Jack couldn't help the laugh that bubbled up, seeing that. “Yeah, those are handmade Sutor Mantellassi shoes! Almost three thousand dollars a pair and worth every penny!”

Jake took a another swing at Jack. The bat swung through the air with a heavy 'whoosh,' but Jack ducked under the bat. He popped up immediately, hopping lightly on his feet, taking a fighting
stance. He kept his blade in his right fist, his arms close to his body. Jack winked at Jake just before he twisted, bringing his back leg around and jumping up with the opposite leg to kick Jake in the chest, sending him flying to land in a heap of rubble on his back.

Jack chuckled. “Yeah, I'm going to have to get another pair of these shoes.”

The ginger was the last man standing.

He snarled, “Fuck this,” as he pulled out a gun and shot at Jack.

Harley gasped when her hands came free. She swung wildly as her hands snapped loose, her body twisting in a circle, but right now she was thankful for her gymnastics skills which allowed her to have the strength to curl upwards. Her fingers began the hard work of trying to loosen the ropes that held her upside down.

Bruce glanced to his brother at the very moment he saw the man shoot Jack with a smart sounding “bang bang” noise as the gun fired. The younger Wayne brother jerked to the left, then as Jack went down, the man shot him again. Bruce saw Jack collapse on the floor as Harley screamed.

Forgetting everything, Bruce started to go to his brother yelling. “JACK!”

Croc turned at the sound of a gunshots and yelled. “NO, YOU FUCKER!!!”

Croc twisted back to face Batman when he saw his meal ticket fall to the ground. He snarled at Batman and took a vicious swipe, not intended to kill. Instead the swipe slapped the Batman across the side of his head, knocking his face to the side. Batman felt the displacement of air, turned at the last moment back toward Croc, avoiding the claws cutting toward his face, but the swipe was still strong enough to knock Batman off his feet and send him flying across the floor to slam into a pile of debris.

Croc snarled in angry frustration just before he took off with a shrill whistle. The two crocodiles turned at the sound and moved swiftly, following their master as Croc vanished down one of the tunnels. The ginger who had shot Jack Wayne looked panicked and followed Croc, disappearing down the sewer with the one named Steve following close behind.

Harley had dropped free from her ropes at the same time the crack of the gunshots echoed off the walls of the enclosed chamber. She hit the ground hard, knocking the air from her lungs in a painful exhalation. She rolled onto her side, facing toward Jack at the moment the man shot him. Her scream was wrenched from her lungs when she saw Jack fall.

She forced herself to her feet, limping and stumbling, gasping for air, but she had to get over to him. Tears were falling from her eyes, but she wasn't aware of them when she finally arrived at Jack's side and dropped to her knees. “Jack! JACK!!”

He lay on his side, his eyes open with a smile on his face. Harley rolled him onto his back where she could see one gunshot wound that had ripped through his clothing at his left shoulder—he red stain was spreading, the fabric of his shirt soaking up the blood. She started to tear the cloth aside to see the extent of the damage.
Jack reached up to cup her face. “Harley. Harley, I thought I had lost you...” His thumb stroked across her lips. She smiled sadly and closed her eyes for a moment. “I thought I had lost you too.”

Jack chuckled weakly. “Still want to marry me?”

Harley giggled softly at his words. “More than ever. You need me. Look at all the trouble you get into.”

Jack chuckled again, but he winced in pain when he started to move, trying to sit up.

“Stay still,” Harley ordered. “Let me look at it.” She looked down at him, examining the wound. She was a doctor and had gone through the proper medical training, but her residency had not involved dealing with gunshot wounds. Still, she recalled that applying pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding was the first step. It did look as if the bullet had gone clean through the meaty part of Jack’s shoulder however, and from the level of blood loss and placement of the wound, his artery had not been struck. She didn't see a second bullet wound, just the one.

Jack growled and started to push himself up. “Did they hurt you?”

“Jack I'm fine—just—please stop moving,” Harley pleaded.

Jack started laughing then. “It's a flesh wound Harley. Even that close of a range, he only hit me the once, then that idiot missed?” Jack snorted in amusement. “How does anyone miss at that range?!”

Harley swallowed wiping her eyes with the back of her hands. “Jack, it's not funny!”

“I don't know sweets...It kinda is.” Jack grinned at her then, his eyes bright despite everything. Harley shook her head and cradled his head on her lap; then she kissed him.

Batman staggered over to Jack and Harley and dropped heavily into a crouch. “How bad is it?”

Harley brushed one more kiss against Jack's lips. “It looks like a flesh wound. Jack says he was only hit once.”

Batman nodded, his tone neutral. “All right. Can you both walk?”

They both nodded, though Harley carefully helped Jack to his feet. Batman frowned as he stood up. He went to check on the woman, unconscious, hamstrung. The other man had been stabbed in the thigh and was losing a lot of blood quickly. Batman hurriedly went to the man and did what he could to stop the bleeding, tying off the man's leg. The one with the baseball bat was out cold. It looked like they would all live.

“Let's get you two to the surface and call the police.”

Jack frowned as he studied Batman before he finally spoke again. “I guess...thank yous are in order.”

Batman shook his head. “No need—just doing my job.”

Jack narrowed his eyes. Something about the man was...somehow familiar, but he just couldn't put his finger on what it was right now.

*

The next couple of hours were a blur. Batman had contacted someone on the way out of the sewers and when they arrived at the surface, police and EMT’s were waiting for them. Jack and Harley were led over to one of the ambulances, the two of them refusing to be separated. Batman led a group of
police into the sewers to recover the woman Angel, the man Hammers, the man named Jake and the young man who Jack had blinded in one eye...the only bodies recovered came from Croc's debris pile but no other bodies were found nor mentioned. (Batman had neither discovered Harley's kills nor had he found the others that Jack had killed...the bodies lost in the maze of tunnels that made up the Gotham underground. Any bodies in Croc's trash pile had no direct connection to Jack or Harley...or at least the GCPD did not pursue further than to think Croc had a few fresh meals waiting for him, Jack and Harley would later discover.)

Statements were taken and the two of them were rushed off to the hospital.

* *

The morning sun shone into Jack's hospital room. The room was an expensive private hospital room with a large picture window that looked out onto the Gotham skyline. The walls were painted in a soft blue instead of the dull white of most hospital rooms, giving the room a more inviting feel. The room also came with a large flat screen TV on the wall and several comfortable chairs for visitors, and even a desk.

Jack sat up in bed and watched the sunrise from the window of his hospital room. He had his head leaned back against the pillows and soft, warm blankets lay across his legs. He had been cleaned up and sewed up, a bandage across his shoulder over the bullet wound, both his wrists wrapped up, stitches and another bandage along his side, and a few tiny stitches on the cuts to his face from Killer Croc (that was what he had overhead one of the nurses call the monster that had kidnapped them. She had said the cops had started calling him that after Batman had given them the name.) By the time they had arrived at the hospital the press had already arrived. Jack and Harley had been brought into the emergency room under flashes of lights from cameras and the shouts of reporters.

Jack closed his eyes for a moment. Bruce hadn't been at the hospital when he and Harley arrived. Jack wasn't really sure exactly when his brother had arrived. Something about the fact that Bruce hadn't been at the hospital when he arrived bothered Jack more than he would like to admit. Did it hurt to not have his big brother waiting for him when something this...dramatic had happened? Did Bruce not care? Or was this just..? Jack didn't know...Maybe he expected something like this from him, that Bruce thought so little about his brother that his being kidnapped hadn't really phased him?

When Bruce did arrive, he acted oddly and Jack had noticed that Bruce looked as if he had been in a fight. Bruce had laughed it off when Jack noticed...a bad date, he had said. They hadn't talked much beyond that, just a few quick words to make sure Jack was all right before Bruce went outside to speak with the press.

Jack sighed as he opened his eyes again. Jack's left arm was in a sling and he had an IV stuck in his arm. It was all rather annoying. He hadn't been able to see Harley yet either and no one would tell him where she was or how she was doing. Once they had arrived at the hospital, the two of them had been separated immediately. He had heard Harley yell for him and he had punched one of his nurses in the face trying to get free of them, until someone had shoved a needle into his arm, sedating him. He didn't remember much after that until he woke up here.

Jack let out a breath staring out the window again. The pain killers that were being pumped into his system from the IV were making him sleepy though he was trying to fight it...he was waiting until they thought he was calm before he tried to make a break for it and find Harley. He had tried to leave once already, but there were police stationed outside his door who were under orders for him to stay in his room. The flash of anger had nearly been more than Jack could control...he had almost made a grab for the nearest cop's gun, but he had gone back inside his room reluctantly. Getting himself thrown into the nut ward wouldn't get him any closer to Harley, so he had behaved himself...for
now. That had been only a couple of minutes ago.

There was a knock at his door just before someone opened it.

Jack looked over and nearly bolted out of the bed when he saw Harley. She wore multiple bandages too, Jack noticed, which made the simmering anger he had burning in his chest flair for a moment. He was going to find Killer Croc and he was going to kill him, Jack promised himself. She was being wheeled in by a young woman with long brunette hair and mocha colored skin. Harley grinned brightly when she saw him.

“PUDDIN!” She immediately jumped from the chair and rushed over to him yanking her own IV with her, which elicited a surprised yelp from the nurse. Jack had his arms open and enveloped her in a hug pulling her close to him and burying his face against her neck.

“Oh God Harley.” He held her tightly.

Harley squeezed him back careful of his wounded shoulder.

Her voice cracked with emotion. “Oh Jack, Jack...”

Jack scooted over and Harley immediately crawled into the hospital bed with him pulling her IV stand with her to rest it next to the bed. Jack lifted his arm allowing Harley to nestle into the crook of his arm, her body against his as he pulled the blankets up to cover them both. He held her close ignoring the other woman, all his attention on Harley. He caressed her face holding her chin for a moment and stared into her eyes. No one and nothing else existed for that moment but Harley.

The woman who had wheeled her in chuckled softly. “Be careful. Not sure how long I can give you guys before I'm forced to take Harleen back to her room. But I did hear you are both going to be released in the morning, but you didn't hear it from me.” The woman walked over and did a quick check of Harley's IV, adjusting the tubing to make sure Harley wasn't pulling it too much before walking around and doing a quick check of Jack's IV as well.

Harley turned to the woman and smiled. “Jack, this is a friend of mine. We were in a few college classes together. This is Holly Vest—she is a nurse here at Gotham General...well obviously, but she was able to get me in to see you.”

Jack smiled at Holly. “Thank you.”

Holly blushed and shrugged. “Well, when I realized it was Harleen who was brought in along with the press and then she told me about you two...of course I had to get her in to see you. You both went through a traumatic experience. It's my professional nurse's opinion that you both need each other. Besides, Harleen said you two are engaged?”

Jack, who was only looking at Harley nodded at Holly's question. “Yes we are.”

“Wow, engaged to a Wayne...” Holly shook her head then seemed to come to herself. “Well, I will be back in an hour...maybe longer if I can finagle it. I might be able to bring you guys some breakfast.”

“Thanks Holly.” Harley smiled, but Holly just waved her off. “Don't mention it.”

Holly moved the wheelchair to the corner of the room before slipping out quietly, letting the door swing closed behind her. Jack and Harley didn't notice, their eyes only on each other. Jack cupped her face sliding his hand out of his sling (careful of his IV and the bandages on his shoulder) his touch gentle, his blue eyes gazing into hers. He didn't say anything, just brushed his nose against
hers, his lips caressing along her lips not quite kissing her yet.

“Are you sure you're all right? You look adorable in a hospital gown...though I want to get a look at
the rear view sometime,” Jack said in a whisper with a light chuckle, his eyes roaming over her face
then back to her eyes again.

“Yes. I'm fine. You?” Harley was tracing his face with her fingertips as if she wasn't quite sure he
was real. Her touch gently grazed over the bandages on his face and the concern in her eyes made
Jack smile. No one had never been this concerned about him before, not like Harley. Jack kissed her
then, his lips dancing over hers, his tongue meeting her tongue, the warmth of her kiss making him
smile.

Jack pulled away from her mouth with a chuckle. “I'm good, I promise. Though...I'm angry too. That
Croc got away....him and the man who shot me. I really hate unfinished business,” Jack concluded
with a slight narrowing of his eyes.

Harley was quiet. She shifted her position in order to rest her head against his chest, her hand against
him stomach. “Jack, I need to tell you something.”

“Hmm?” Now that Harley was here with him Jack had relaxed enough that the pain medication in
his IV was starting to make him feel drowsy..

“When we were trapped down there...I—I did something terrible.”

Jack ran his fingers up and down her arm drowsily. He sighed, contented for the moment, not
worried overly. “What did you do?”

Harley's voice was quiet. “I killed...someone...actually more than one person. I—I killed three
people.” Harley said it in a whisper. She wasn't sure what she thought would happen by confessing,
but she wanted—no—she needed Jack to know.

“I killed this man who wanted me to...” She shivered. “Anyway, I killed him. Then I killed two other
men...I beat them to death with a pipe.”

“Do you feel bad about it?” Jack asked. He was smiling, but Harley couldn't see it from her position
with her head on his chest, his fingers continued their lazy caress along her arm making her drowsy
too.

“I...no,” Harley said quietly, realizing that she did not feel bad about killing those men. “And I'm not
sorry I killed them Jack...not the least bit sorry. They deserved to die and—I enjoyed it. I wanted
them dead...it was...” She searched her tired mind for a moment, then said, “Exhilarating.”

Jack was quiet, but then he started to laugh. The sound started low, then gradually exploded into a
full on belly laugh. Harley sat up to look at his expression. He grinned at her, reaching for her and
covering her mouth with his, his tongue sliding into her mouth pressing her close. His mouth moved
hungrily against hers, taking the breath from her before he released her. His hand cradled the back of
her head holding her close, his nose pressed against the side of hers.

“I killed four of them Harley.” He giggled softly before he continued. “I'm so proud of you. You're
strong enough that you don't need me, which means more because you want to be with me. You're
not with me to protect you. You don't need protecting. Besides, do you have any idea what it does to
me to know you—you can kill Harley? How do you feel?” He licked her lips and Harley purred. “I
feel...good. Powerful. Do you think they know?” Her eyes darted toward his hospital door.

Jack laughed. “I don't think so. No one has said anything. That Batman person didn't mention it
either.” Harley giggled and Jack grinned in response. “It's our secret, pooh bear.”

Jack kissed the top of her head; his smile was huge and gorgeous. Harley settled back down against his side smiling too. Jack tugged the blankets a little higher over the two of them. That little ball of darkness in her seemed to crack open and spread. Harley couldn't find the compassion to care that she had killed those men. It didn't matter. What mattered was that Jack was happy with her and she was happy with herself. Wrapping her arm around his waist she sighed, content. She could feel the way he was relaxing as he held her close. It wasn't long before the two of them had dozed off.

* Batman was down in his cave, more relieved than he could possibly express that Jack and Dr. Quinzel were relatively unharmed—considering. Croc's hideout was still being sifted through by the police, but Batman had tapped into their computers to follow the investigation. It was clear from a debris pile that Killer Croc had killed at least two or more people. Two fresh bodies had been found in a pile with the remains of others. It would be a while, but Batman was sure DNA would connect some of the bodies to missing persons in Gotham. Batman had no idea how long Croc had been in Gotham planning his kidnapping. There might be more victims down there, but the sewer system was massive. His brother's victims; Angel Mendez, Jake Hills, Brad Scott and Erik “Hammers” Perkins were all going to live, though it looked from the hospital records that Angel, Brad and Erik were going to be maimed for life, and Jake Hills...the man with the baseball bat, was going to be disfigured.

Bruce sighed. It could have been so much worse. He had to be relieved that at least no one had died on his watch.

* The next day Jack and Harley were both released from the hospital. (With a little help from the nursing staff and a few words from Bruce Wayne, Jack and Harley were taken out a back entrance to avoid the press.) Jack, dressed in a pair of loose fitting dark blue sports pants and a plain white t-shirt (his arm was going to be in a sling for a few more weeks) and Harley, who was dressed in a pair of yoga pants and a red t-shirt (clothes bought and sent over by Alfred) were each in a wheelchair waiting at the front of the hospital. While they sat on the curb outside the hospital waiting for their ride, Jack had reached across the short distance between them with his good arm and took hold of her hand. Harley looked over at Jack with a broad smile just for him. He squeezed her hand, his eyes only on her.

Alfred pulled up in the Wayne family's Bentley Mulsanne, a long, stylish gold colored car. Alfred stepped out of the vehicle once he had pulled up, the relief in his expression clear as he saw the two of them.

“Master Jack, it's good to see you in one piece.” Alfred smiled at the younger man.


Alfred smiled. “It's nice to see you well too, Miss Harleen.”

Harley let go of Jack's hand and stood up. She walked over to Alfred and wrapped her arms around him. “It's nice to see you Alfred.”

Alfred gave her a quick squeeze with a whispered, “It does this old man good to see the both of you.”
Harley gave him a kiss on the cheek which made Alfred blush. Jack who had just stood, laughed. “Hey now, no making moves on my girl.”

“Never Master Jack. Why, it would be unfair.” Alfred smiled and Jack burst out laughing.

* 

Jack was surprised to come home and find Bruce waiting for them; he hadn't really expected to see his brother at all. Bruce stood in the doorway, dressed casually in a pair of dark navy slacks and a button down white shirt. He looked—off—to Jack, though Jack couldn't put his fingers on the reason why exactly. The swollen lip...supposedly from a woman, didn't sit right with Jack, but what Bruce did in his private time wasn't any of Jack's business...just like what he did wasn't any of Bruce's. But when Jack stepped out of the vehicle, Bruce hurried up to him and wrapped his arms around his brother.

“I'm so sorry this happened Jack.”

Jack frowned and hugged Bruce in return awkwardly with one hand. “It's...ah, not your fault. Guess we shouldn't be surprised considering who we are.” Jack smiled awkwardly.

Bruce stepped back and walked over to Dr. Quinzel and took her hand between both of his. “I'm sorry you were dragged into this Dr. Quinzel.”

Harley smiled. “It's fine. I'm just glad neither of us were more seriously hurt.” She glanced at Jack, her gaze resting on his bandaged shoulder for a moment.

Bruce smiled and then turned. “Well, I'm sure you two need some rest. I've hired some extra security to walk the grounds around the manor. And ah, Dr. Quinzel, before you go rest, may I speak to you in private?”

Harley frowned slightly and glanced at Jack once before she turned back to Bruce. “Of course.”

Bruce offered her his arm before he led her inside. Jack frowned as he watched them step inside, a crease forming between his brows. Alfred frowned. “Come along Master Jack. Let's take you upstairs, then I'll bring you some tea and you can relax.”

* 

Bruce led Harley over to the drawing room, escorting her to one of the plush winged back chairs that sat near the fireplace that dominated one of the walls. Harley sat down and glanced around the room. It was a warm, comforting room decorated in browns and burgundies, with a few old portraits on the walls, paintings of past Wayne patriarchs, a few landscapes and of course, more books. Bruce walked around the long walnut table that dominated the middle of the room. Bruce sat down and leaned his elbows on his knees, bringing his fingertips together. He was quiet for a moment staring at the hardwood floors of the drawing room.

Harley waited patiently, her hands folded in her lap. She looked down at her wrists, which were covered in bandages at the moment from where she had worn them raw getting loose from the ropes that had held her. She studied the way the white gauze was frayed at the end; the medical tape looked old already. Finally Bruce spoke.

“What you and Jack have been through is...horrific. I would like to have someone come and talk to the both of you, to help you both through your situation. I would usually have asked you to help Jack, but given the change in your...relationship...plus the fact that you too were kidnapped...” Bruce sighed. “Sorry, I'm doing this wrong. I have asked Dr. Joan Leland from Arkham Asylum to come
by and speak to both you. Help you both through the events of the kidnapping.”

Harley frowned for a moment, then nodded. “That is probably a good idea. Thank you Mr. Wayne.”

Bruce’s expression was not quite a frown, yet not a weak smile either. “Call me Bruce.”

Harley looked taken aback, but she nodded. “Bruce.”

Bruce nodded then quietly said, “I know I haven't been supportive of your relationship with my brother. I...well...” he sighed and sat up straight. “You make Jack happy from what Alfred has said and I can't—I can't be angry about that. Though I wish your relationship had come about in a different way I won't stand in the way of my little brother's happiness. I just wanted to make sure you knew that.”

Harley nodded. “Thank you...Bruce.”

Bruce took a breath and stood with a nod. “Well, I'm sure you would like to rest. Dr. Leland will be coming by tomorrow afternoon.”

Harley stood as well. “Thank you, for...everything.”

Bruce nodded again and quickly strolled out of the room to leave Harley feeling not accepted so much as on the road leading toward acceptance. She wondered how he would feel if he knew she had killed three men...no matter how justified...or about Jack's killings. Then she smiled and shrugged.

* 

Harley made her way upstairs to Jack’s room. She knocked lightly on his bedroom door before she stepped inside and then she closed the door gently behind her. She found Jack sitting at a card table set up at the foot of his bed. There was a tea set on a trolley next to him along with a plate of what looked to be cherry scones. He was playing with a deck of cards one-handed.

Harley thought a moment how innocent he looked. His usually slicked back hair had fallen to the side of his brow. He was still wearing the sports pants and t-shirt, but he had tossed the shoes and socks into a corner of the room as he sat with his legs stretched out, his feet crossed at the ankles playing with the cards.

With his good hand, Jack was using his fingers to slide the cards into two stacks in the palm of his hand, his long fingers making the movement look easy. Then, weaving the cards together before he cupped his hand, and held the cards upside down and shuffled them again. He was doing the one handed shuffling easily, gracefully, clearly an expert at it. He continued to shuffle one handed before he switched to doing a one-handed spin cut, spinning the cards with his fingers forming a butterfly then folded them back into a deck, easily, and doing so with the easy grace of someone who had done the trick a great deal. He continued until he turned and noticed Harley standing there watching him.

“Never saw anyone do that with cards one handed before,” Harley said with a smile. She walked over to him, swinging her hips just a little. Jack gave her a lopsided grin as he watched her walk over to him and marveled at how even after having just been released from the hospital an hour ago, she managed to look seductive in her yoga pants and a t-shirt.

Jack purred. “Mm...I can do a lot more card tricks, if I get a treat for it?”

Harley chuckled. “Oh, you want a treat do you?”
Jack chuckled. “Course I do!”

Harley strolled over to him and Jack lifted his arm, allowing her to carefully sit on his lap. She ran her fingers along his jaw. “Did you take your pain pills?”

Jack made a face. “I don't need those things. I have an extremely high threshold for pain.”

Harley kissed the tip of his nose. “Just promise me to take them before sleeping.”

He sighed, but he smiled at her. “Sure thing, cupcake. Anything for you.”

Harley giggled and tilted his face up to brush her lips across his, but then her smile fell. Harley suddenly grasped his face between her hands, her kiss becoming desperate, pained. Jack tossed the cards onto the table, wrapping his one arm around her. Harley caressed the sides of his neck, her smile returning as she leaned in to nip at his lips. At first it was soft and playful, but then her emotions overwhelmed her. She had almost lost him...she couldn't imagine her life without Jack. Her kisses became desperate, her fingers nearly clawing at his hair while she kissed him, tugging him toward her. Jack had closed his eyes at the start of the kiss, but when she choked on a sob he opened his eyes to study her. Harley's eyes were still closed, but tears were streaming unchecked down her cheeks causing him to frown. His poor little harlequin.

Jack reached up with his one hand and gently tugged on her hair, pulling her mouth away. He looked sternly at her when she finally, willingly released his mouth and sat back a little to make eye contact with him. She rested her hands on his shoulders as her fingers gently caressed his neck.

“We're all right Harley. No crying. Nothing can hurt us. Remember, we hurt them back....we gave them what they deserved. No one can mess with us...no one. And, we got away with it...no one knows what we did.” He grinned brightly and reached up to stroke the corner of her mouth with his lips. “No one but you and me against the world.”

Harley smiled with a small chuckle. “I don't care about them, I don't care that I killed any of them. It was...fun. Is that terrible of me to say?”

Jack laughed. “No, because I thought it was fun too.” He chuckled again. “I never thought I would find someone like you...someone who understood. You and me, we are like two peas in a pod.” He reached over and touched the tip of her nose with his, brushing his nose against hers.

Harley giggled and ducked her head. She took a breath. “When I saw you get shot, Jack...I...I can't live without you. I won't live without you.”

Jack laughed gently at that and gave her a wink. “I'm hard to kill my little dumpling...very hard to kill.”

He stroked her face, his thumb brushing her lips once more. “I won't live without you either...ever. Together, always and all the world shall burn if it tries to keep us apart. Love is merely a madness...”

Harley smiled as she laid her forehead against his. “Quoting Shakespeare?”

Jack chuckled. “Only the best. I am going to show you things Harley...all sorts of things. Just you watch. I have secrets that only you will ever know...”

Harley frowned slightly then whispered to him. “I will burn everything to the ground Jack, everything, if it meant being with you.”

They kissed, slowly, tenderly as if just discovering the wonders of each others tongues and lips for
the first time again. Harley's mouth moved over Jack's, tasting deeply from him, her tongue caressing his, stroking, swirling and twisting with his tongue. She couldn't get enough of his mouth, his tongue, his lips. Jack pressed his hand to her back, his hips jerking up just enough that she could feel how hard he was for her, how much he wanted her. She cooed softly and pressed back. Jack smiled against her lips.

Harley groaned as her hips began to move of their own accord and rubbed against him. She grabbed the back of Jack's chair, her hands on either side of him, and ground her hips against his erection even harder. The intensity of need he sparked in her always made her feel out of control. Her need for him was overpowering; her desire was a hot intense flame that was threatening to consume her if she didn't have Jack. God, she had almost lost him! She needed to take him, to know he was alive, that they both were alive. Harley dug her fingers into the back of the chair continuing to grind against Jack, her hair framing her face, her eyes half lidded watching him. Her grinding caused the chair to creak and groan. The feeling of her on top of him, the way she rubbed herself against him...he wanted to tear her apart...to have every part of her. He growled, jerking his hips up, the damn clothing between them was preventing him from feeling more of her, it was killing him! He urgently needed her, needed to feel her engulfing him, surrounding him.

Damn it all, he needed to fuck her! Needed to know they had won, they were both alive. It was gloriously thrilling.

Jack growled and his hand on her rear squeezed. “Get your clothes off Harley.”

Harley stood up, shoving the table out of the way with her rear just before she began to strip. Jack lay sprawled across the chair his erection clear by the bulge in his pants as he watched her with intense blue eyes, studying her every movement. He pulled his teeth over his bottom lip with a grin. “You are so beautiful,” he hissed watching her pull her shirt over her head, the creamy mouthwatering reveal of her breasts driving him mad with want. Then as she slid her pants down her hips, his breathing picked up at the sight of her. She stood in front of him naked, his Venus, his harlequin. Harley blushed, smiling softly and reached out for his hand.

“Come on,” she purred and tugged him to his feet. She led him over to the bed where she turned him to stand with his back to the bed. She gently lifted his shirt over his head, careful of his arm and the sling, but with a few seconds work, they had it off him. She stroked her hands down his chest, standing close, close enough that he could feel the heat radiating off her body, but not close enough that her body was touching his. The tease, he thought.

Once she had his shirt off. Her fingers caressed over his pecs and along the flat plain of his stomach feeling the muscles contract under his skin at her touch. Harley smiled; his skin was like satin. She traced each of his nipples with the tip of a nail, his nipples tightening with the contact. Jack licked his lips, but didn't touch her, letting Harley do what she wanted.

She dragged her fingers down his torso, tracing the bandage at his side. She leaned in, kissing him, her mouth pressed to his and her tongue rolling with his, causing Jack's knees to go weak with need. Her hands wandered lower until she wrapped her thumbs over the band of his pants, slowly lowering them at the same moment she gradually went down on her knees breaking the kiss. Jack watched her, his gaze steamy while her eyes stayed locked with his.

Harley gently lifted each of his legs helping him to step out of his pants, tugging them away and tossing them to the side. She gradually ran her hands up his legs, squeezing his thighs, her thumbs stroking his testicles gently, but firmly, drawing an excited hiss from Jack, his hips arching a little. Harley grinned and brushed her face against his erection, her lips teasing past the head of his shaft, her nose brushing over the tip before her cheeks passed over him feeling the hot satin of his shaft
against her cheeks. She gazed up at him licking her lips, then ever so gently scraped her teeth over the head of his shaft causing Jack to shudder.

“Harls,” he grunted with a shudder.

She smiled up at him and then her tongue slowly licked the under side of his erection like she was licking an ice cream cone, her eyes fluttering close. Her hands slid up his hips again, her thumbs pressing against his hips while she pulled him forward into her mouth with a muffled groan. Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip as he watched her. Harley grinned at him and her eyes danced while her tongue twirled around him, licking and flicking, thrilling him until his knees struggled to keep him upright. Jack groaned and reached down with his one hand to grab her hair and ease his erection into her mouth slowly. Harley sucked harder. His reactions had her body aching, her groin tightened with need.

She dragged her teeth along him which had Jack's legs going wobbly. She caressed his stomach with one hand, the flat of her hand traveling up his torso, pinching a nipple before she dragged her hand back down. She didn't bob her head this time, she simply sucked hard on him until he was shuddering. “Damn it Harley! You're going to suck the life out of me.”

She gave him one more hard suck, lowering her mouth until she had him all the way to the back of her throat for a brief moment, then dragged her tightened lips up, enjoying the salty taste of him pooling on her tongue when he jerked.

Jack groaned. “Almost Harley, almost...”

She rose to her feet, causing Jack to growl, his head dropping back with the intense pleasure of that teasing tongue of hers. When she was standing again, Harley grinned at him.

“Lie down Jack,” Harley cooed softly placing the tips of her fingers against his chest and pushing him back against the bed gently. He grinned and lay down, careful of his arm. Once he was on his back Harley crawled onto the bed, straddling his hips.

She licked her lips and ran her hands along his chest. “I love you Jack. I love you.”

Jack smiled as he reached up with his one hand to caress his fingers over her breasts and relished in the way she arched her back. “Ti amo Harley...Sei tutto per me. Never forget you're mine. Mine alone.”

“Italian?” Harley's giggle made Jack grin wider and wrinkle his nose playfully at her. “Senza di te la vita è un inferno,” he whispered, reaching up to drag his thumb over her lips. “La tua bocca mi fa impazzire.”

Harley had no idea what he was saying, but it didn't matter in the least.

“Oh Jack...always yours!” Harley rolled her hips, sliding up and down his shaft which was pressed toward his stomach. She groaned; he felt so hard, so hot. Jack groaned too as he watch her while she used him to pleasure herself, feeling the wet slide of her against him. He reached up, his fingers dragging across her lips, pulling her bottom lip down. His smile was seductive, snarky almost. Harley groaned as she licked the tips of his fingers when he dragged them over her chin and down her throat. Jack wrapped his hand around her throat, squeezing softly and causing Harley to roll her hips over him. She reached down and dug her fingers into his skin.

Jack moaned and squeezed her neck just a little harder before he dragged his fingers down between her breasts. “Hurt me Harley, hurt me good.”
Harley groaned in response and drove her hips harder, sliding up and down his length. It was torture to feel how wet she was and not be inside her, but watching the way she used him, feeling that wetness of her...it was almost like when she was licking him...it had Jack grinning with anticipation for when she did start to fuck him.

Jack hissed when her nails dug in hard against his chest; she dragged her nails down, leaving angry red marks in her wake. Her thrusting over him, sliding along his length, rubbing her intimate lips against him, the waves of her movements intensified. She was bringing herself quickly to an orgasm, jerking with pleasure each time she moved along him, her nails breaking the skin as she clawed at his chest. His reached up again to drag his thumb over her bottom lip hard. Harley groaned and bit his thumb, pressing her teeth down on the digit, swiveling her hips when she came.

“Yes Harley yes...” Jack watched her, his voice low and warm like honey, his expression one of enamored worship watching her take her pleasure. He pulled his fingers down her throat, then over her breasts, pinching one of her nipples which made Harley cry out, her body bending like a bow. He felt the sweet warmth of her fluid coating him when she came again.

She jerked and gasped, her orgasm causing her body to vibrate, but it just wasn't enough. She lifted her hips and grasped him with one hand, holding him steady, their eyes meeting just before she pierced herself on him.

Harley cried out loudly when she plunged him deep inside her. “PUDDIN!”

Jack cried out. “Harley! God Harley!”

Harley dropped forward on her hands smiling down at him, her blonde hair forming a golden curtain while she slid her hips up and down his length, pumping him hard, then slow. Jack wrapped his one arm around her, sliding his hand down to her rear and squeezed while she continued to move. Jack thrust his hips up to meet her, both of them gasping together. Jack's hand caressed her back, stroking her silken skin along her back. His hand glided up her spine to her shoulders where he grabbed a fistful of her hair yanking her mouth down to his, devouring her kisses while he thrust up into her, pounding her in quick movements. The sounds of their gasping breath, the occasional creak from the bed and the wet sounds of their bodies coming together filled the room.

Harley stopped and grinned at him as she pull herself off of him. Jack gasped at the sudden loss of contact. “Harley, what...?” he started to ask, but before he could finish the sentence, Harley had turned her back to him, sliding back onto him. Jack growled with pleasure. Harley leaned forward, her hands on either side of his legs, her hips moving up and down as she rode him. Jack panted as he watched her, the way she was grinding her hips, her round smooth backside. He reached out and squeezed her rear with a grin, watching the way his erection appeared and disappeared inside her in a warm, wet thrust of her body. She twerked her hips a few times causing Jack to jerk and shudder, grinding his teeth together.

The new position had Jack hitting her in new ways. Harley tightened around him, her hips undulating against him, then she surprised him when she leaned back all the way until she was lying against him. She rolled her body a little more heavily to the right to avoid his wounded arm, but Jack didn't care. She felt incredible and the small amount of pain was well worth it. Jack groaned against her ear and then he pressed his teeth into her shoulder. Harley gasped, her inner muscles holding him inside her. Jack grinned and licked her neck while his free hand squeezed her breast, then tickled along the flat plains of her stomach until he could slide his fingers between her legs. He rubbed slowly at first, listening to her little gasps of breath, feeling the way her body jerked against him when he rubbed a certain way.
Harley whimpered, the feel of his fingers touching her, stroking her clitoris.

Jack continued rubbing until he had her mewling.


Jack purred. “You're so wet Harls...”

She giggled as she looked over her shoulder at him. “That's what you do to me puddin.”

He was enraptured by her as she turned back around to face him, her hair a mess, her lips bruised, her perfect skin marred by their shared experience, but damn she was gorgeous.

Once she was facing him again, squeezing him inside her, making him shudder with her very expression, he yanked her down to him, his fingers tangled in her hair again holding her hair tight in his fingers.

“Fuck me Harley,” he hissed softly.

Harley's smile was slow and sensual, a coy grin. She rolled her hips, then started to pump him faster, with long, flowing, gliding, arching thrusts against him. Jack hissed, yanking her head closer, grabbing her bottom lip with his teeth holding her lip painfully, but she loved it, climaxing with a loud groan. “UH, Puddin!”

The intensity of her orgasm had Jack releasing her lip, throwing his head back against the pillows, his hand fisting in her hair tightly, his body jerking into hers as he spilled himself inside her in a hot rush.

“Uhh...fuck Harley!”

Harley continued to thrust, but her movements were slowing, lazy almost. Jack jerked again and hissed with pleasure; every moment of her hips was almost too intense for him to process. He closed his eyes with a moan, “Harls...”

Harley peppered his face and neck with kisses.

“I didn't hurt you did I?” she asked softly.

Jack laughed. “I could have sworn I asked you to hurt me.”

She giggled and lightly smacked his chest. “You know what I mean.”

Jack grinned brightly. “You hurt me just the right amount pooh bear.”

Harley's giggles changed to a moan as she slowly pulled off of him. Jack made a low growl. She moved over to his side curling up against him. Jack smiled as he wrapped his good arm around her.

“Oh...Bruce wanted me to tell you. He has asked a Dr. Joan Leland to come to talk to both of us.”

She felt more than saw Jack make a face. “What about?”

“Our shared traumatic experience,” Harley said softly while she ran her fingers over his chest and traced the angry red marks she had made. Then she sat up. “Let me get something for us to clean up.”

Jack nodded with a frown as he put his hand behind his head. “Can you grab me a cigarette?”
He grinned as he watched Harley walk across the room naked. She grinned over her shoulder at him. “Sure puddin—where are they?”

“There should be some over on the desk.” Jack’s eyes followed her every movement across the room as she walked into the bathroom. He heard the water running for a few moments before she returned with a damp rag.

She smiled. “Let me puddin.”

Jack smirked watching her clean him off, running his teeth over his bottom lip, watching her handling him, cleaning then leaning down to place a kiss on the tip of his shaft.

“Mmmm...give me a couple of minutes and I want to go again.” Jack grinned.

Harley giggled. “You’re terrible.”

“Yes, yes I am.” Jack laughed, watching her toss the rag into the bathroom and walk to the desk. She pulled a cigarette out from the pack she found next to his notebook. She made her way back to the bed, sitting on the edge and placing the cigarette between his lips before she opened the lighter and flicked it, a flame springing into existence that she held against the cigarette’s end. Jack moved his arm back and held the cigarette taking a few puffs on it until the flame had started the end burning nicely. Jack took a long pull holding the smoke inside his lung for a couple of seconds before letting it out slowly.

“So, we get to meet a doctor together.” He laughed as he held his cigarette between his teeth and reached out to grab Harley just before she started to get up. Even one handed, he was strong as he yanked her back causing her to stumble and land on top of him.

“Jack!” She laughed, but he refused to let go! “In bed, woman! We’re traumatized!”

Harley laughed and crawled into the bed. She settled herself down beside him after tossing his lighter and cigarettes onto the bedside table. “Mm...puddin.”

Jack took another pull on the cigarette then softly murmured.

“Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness.
’Tis the majority
In this, as all, prevails.
Assent, and you are sane;
Demur — you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain. “

* 

Harley, who was slowly becoming sleepy curled against Jack's side and murmured, “What was that puddin?”
Jack smiled and blew smoke at the ceiling. “Nothing dear, just a little Dickinson.”

Harley giggled sleepily. “DICKinson.”

Jack chuckled. “Harley, you have a dirty mind.”

“I know.” Harley giggled and snuggled closer. Jack leaned over and put his cigarette out in the ash tray by his bed. “You want to know what the volcano said to the other volcano?”

Harley smiled kissing his side as she murmured sleepily. “What?”


Harley gave him a light smack in the side. “That's terrible!”

Jack grinned, lying back to wrap his arms more securely around her. He could see a glimmer of the sun through a small gap in the curtains as he said quietly:

“I know, but it's true.”
Harley woke to the sounds of Jack singing to himself. She smiled at the sound of his voice; she thought he had an elegant singing voice that simply moved through her very soul. She rolled over onto her side, her hair a curtain of yellow gold over her eyes. She could see him sitting at his desk, wearing only his boxers, his bare feet crossed at the ankles under his chair, his torso bent over his desk. He seemed to be writing (easily with his left hand she noticed) while he sang. She smiled contented, watching him. She could only see his back and the halo of smoke that surrounded his head when he set the pen down and picked up the cigarette in the ashtray beside him. She liked Jack's back; it was a very nice back she thought. She loved the way the muscles created a sculptured look down his spine, curving out to his hips and ass. She grinned wide, her eyes lingering on his lower back thinking about his naked backside and her nails raking across it.

She could see some bruises that she hadn't noticed before, marring his shoulders and of course at his right shoulder were the bandage that covered the exit wound sat, a dark bruise hinted at under the bandage. For a moment the pain and image of him being shot raced through her mind making her chest constrict and her eyes sting. She had come so close to losing him. Never again, she swore silently to herself, never again.

She stayed on her side watching and listening to him. Jack set the cigarette back in the ashtray and started to sing again in that low whisper. After a few moments she could hear the words of the song he was singing to himself in a low melodious voice.

*  

"Why do birds suddenly appear, ev'ry time you are near?  
Just like me, they long to be close to you.  
Why do stars fall down from the sky, ev'ry time you walk by?  
Just like me, they long to be close to you.  
On the day that you were born the angels got together.  
And decided to create a dream come true.  
So, they sprinkled moon dust in your hair of gold,  
And star-light in your eyes of blue.  
That is why all the boys in town follow you all around.  
Just like me, they long to be close to you... "

*  

Harley couldn't stop herself from sighing. Jack stopped singing; It was clear he sensed her watching him. He turned around to look at her over his shoulder and grin at her.  

"Morning sleepy head,” he said quietly.
Harley giggled, immediately letting the images of Jack falling, the sight of his blood, fade away as she sat up and stretched her arms over her head. Jack watched with appreciation as the sheets fell away showing her naked torso, her blonde hair falling down over her breasts, the pink nipples only barely visible through the tangles of her golden hair.

“What time is it?” Harley asked with a yawn.

Jack reached over on top of the desk and picked up a discarded Patek Philippe watch. Jack held it up examining the face with a slight frown.

“It's nearly eleven,” he said before tossing the watch carelessly back on the desk.

“Eleven! Oh crap! Dr. Leland is coming this afternoon!” Harley jumped out of bed. Jack grinned as he watched her race to the bathroom naked. That was a sight he could get used to, a naked Harley running around his room all the time, Jack thought to himself.

After a few minutes he heard the water turn on in the shower.

* 

Harley had just turned on the water, the warmth washing over her exhausted figure as she leaned her head back and let the water run down her with a long drawn-out moan. She closed her eyes and smiled as she let her thoughts drift. She had killed three people. She had never thought she would kill someone, but she had, and she felt nothing, at least no guilt and perhaps some satisfaction. The only thing she thought about was that it was funny how she felt no guilt at all, and on top of that, Jack was proud of her. Jack thought it was funny too. She giggled softly and moved her face back and forth under the water when something occurred to her. She should have started her period.

It should be around the time, but nothing had happened. She frowned for a moment, then pushed the thought away. The way periods worked, she could just be late because of all the drama that had been going on in her life lately. She had been late in the past. The thought was quickly forgotten when she reached for the shampoo...

* 

Jack sat at the desk for a long minute...finish what he was working on or jump into the shower with a naked Harley? He glanced down at his notes. He was writing down the details of those he killed during his kidnapping, details of the way he did it, the way they died. He also had a list of those he wanted dead, he had added a few names while he sat here writing and Harley slept. It was all very interesting information and pretty darn funny he thought. Here these kidnappers thought they had a fool-proof plan yet he had come in and killed nearly all of them! It was funny. Funny how plans could change...upset the order and everything fell into chaos, he thought. He grinned as he closed the notebook. He could work more on that later, right now there was a gorgeous naked woman in his shower, a naked blonde he couldn't resist. He jumped to his feet and hurried into the bathroom, sliding his boxers down as he went. He kicked them to the side as he walked into the bathroom and pulled his arm out of it's sling while he yelled.

“Hey wait for me Harley!”

Harley hadn't quite heard him since her head was under the water. She squealed with laughter when Jack hopped into the shower and wrapped his arms around her from behind to lift her up off her feet.

“HA!! Caught you!!” Jack laughed and swung her around in a circle in the shower.

“JACK!!” Harley giggled, her eyes squeezed closed since she had water and shampoo running into
her eyes.

“Put me down! You'll break your stitches!” She giggled, but Jack continued to hold her up off her feet.

“Jack your shoulder!!” Harley started to panic and Jack reluctantly put her down, but spun her around to face him. With a swift movement he shoved her up against the wall, pressing a deep kiss to her mouth before she could protest further. She groaned, feeling the length of his naked body pressed against hers—every naked inch of him. He smiled against her mouth as he rubbed his hips up and down against her groin. She could feel how hard he was, that burning heat of his erection teasing her. He shoved a hand between her legs, forcing her to spread her legs further, and then he dipped his finger into her causing Harley to gasp, her body arching into his hand.

“You like that Harley?” he asked licking her lips as he did so.

“Oh Jack...” Harley ground her hips against his fingers, thrusting along with Jack.

He thrust his fingers into her a couple of more times, smiling with pleasure at how wet she was for him. He didn't shove hard, but slow, ever so slowly, teasing her as he slid his long fingers in and out. Harley hissed with pleasure, but then Jack pulled his fingers away. Harley made a soft whine that quickly melted into a gasp when Jack pushed himself between her wet legs. The heat of his erection seemed to radiate up through her groin, making her want him even more, if that was possible. Jack chuckled against her mouth as he slid his hands up and down her torso.

“Wanna get a little dirty first?” Jack purred before the tip of his tongue tickled over the front of her teeth.

Harley groaned. “Yes but I don't think we have time.”

Jack made a pouty face. “Why not? I can wash your hair at the same time.”

Harley giggled and walked her fingers down his chest. “Oh you can, can you?”

“If that's what you want Harley girl, though I'm hoping to be a little more distracting...” Jack grabbed her bottom lip in his teeth pulling for a moment before letting her lip go and crushing his mouth to hers. Harley moaned. She ran her hands down his stomach, then to his groin, wrapping her hands around him. Jack moaned at her touch when she started stroking him, her wet, still slightly soapy hands moving up and down his shaft; she made him jerk his hips slightly.

Jack hissed again with pleasure at the feel of her wet hands on him, he thrust his hips into her hands' embrace, growing harder with each stroke.

“Mm...baby, pumpkin pie...my Harley girl.” He moaned against her mouth. Harley knew she should stop him. She should tell him no, they didn't have time, he would pull his stitches, but damn it she wanted him. She was weak, letting Jack lift her leg up over his good arm pressing her back against the shower wall. She was weak against him, Harley knew she would do anything for him, anything he asked. She would kill a hundred people if he asked her.

When he shoved himself inside her, Harley cried out in delight.

“JACK!” He filled her to her core shoving her leg back against her torso.

Jack smiled against her lips. “Mmmm...Harley...my Harley girl.”

Jack's thrusts were hard and fast. Harley climaxed quickly, sliding up and down the wet shower wall
with each of Jack's thrusts, her hands digging into his biceps. Within minutes, she was ready to slide down the wall and melt into a puddle.

“Puddin! Jack, Jack! Puddin!!” Harley climaxed with a sob of pleasure. Jack shuddered at the sound of her cry. He came hard, bursting inside her, his teeth embedded in her shoulder when he did. Harley dragged her nails over his ribs, both of them heedless of the cuts and bruises they had, taking each other with reckless abandon.

Jack groaned easing her leg back to the shower's floor.

“Okay, now you can shower.” He laughed softly.

Harley giggled. “You're funny.”

“I do try.” Jack chuckled before he kissed her again.

* 

They remained leaning against each other, their foreheads pressed together and catching their breath while the warm water ran over them. Jack rubbed his nose against her playfully.

“Think you can do the eyeliner and lipstick again?” Jack asked. “I really enjoyed that.”

He grabbed the soap and lathered up his hands before he started to run them down her body. Harley hummed happily, wiggling with the movement of his hands. She grabbed the shampoo and poured some into the palm of her hand before reaching up to start rubbing the thick liquid through his hair.

“Course I will puddin, makes your eyes pop. I love it. If we have time I'll paint your nails too. Black would look good.”

Harley smiled contented, her fingers working over his scalp.

Jack chuckled closing his eyes and enjoying the feel of her fingers in his hair. “I would like that a great deal Harls.”

She smiled. “Anything for you puddin, anything in the world.”

* 

Downstairs, Alfred was just setting tea out for Jack, Harley and their guest (Bruce had informed Alfred of the doctor that would be coming to talk to them both about their experience. Alfred hadn't said much about it, though he didn't feel Master Jack would enjoy the idea. As for Miss Harleen, he wasn't sure. Perhaps Dr. Leland was a colleague?) Alfred had just finished setting out the plates, tea cups and was making his way back to the kitchen when he saw Jack holding Harley's hand, their fingers threaded together, coming down the stairs with a slight bounce in their steps like a pair of happy children. Despite what they had been through, they looked like a lovely young couple. (Though it pained Alfred to note the sling on Master Jack, as well as the stitches on his handsome face. Miss Harleen had bruises and cuts as well...it bothered him to see them both hurt like that despite how cheery they both were right now.) Jack had his hair slicked back, eyeliner around his eyes making the blue of his eyes appear electric (even his lips seemed to have a red tint to them though Alfred couldn't be sure and Alfred noted the nail polish on Master Jack, black, matching Miss Harleen's. Young people, he thought with amusement.)

The young master looked handsome and well despite the sling that held his left arm or the cuts on his face that had visible stitches. Alfred sighed; Master Jack had clearly removed the bandages from his face on his own. Jack wore a white button down shirt, with a slim fitted double vest that had two layers to it. The outside layer was a warm tawny brown, with gold colored buttons on the corners in
the front—though that part of the vest was unbuttoned—and pockets on the sides. The inside layer of
the vest was a taupe and black plaid with four gold colored buttons running up the “v” of the vest
(these buttons were buttoned up, the inside vest was shorter than the outside layer leaving a section
that showed the bottom half of Jack’s white shirt.) This morning Jack was lacking a tie, his white
shirt opened, a few buttons showing off his slender throat. The sleeves of his shirt were also rolled up
to his elbows. He had paired the shirt and vest with a pair of taupe slacks and a pair of Italian calf-
skin Oxford Brogue wingtip shoes. Jack looked casual yet maintained a clear air of wealth about
him.

Harley looked like a breath of spring. She wore a tea-length swing dress with a boat neckline. The
top of the dress was black and sleeveless, but the skirt was red with large white pokadots. (Unlike
Jack, any bandages she had were still in place). She wore the dress with a pair of round toed, chunky
heeled black shoes that had a strap around her ankle. Her long blonde hair was loose around her
shoulders. Most of her bruises and cuts were hidden by makeup (or bandages). But it was her smile
and the twinkle in her blue eyes that really made her look devastatingly beautiful, Alfred thought.
They were a perfect couple.

Alfred was all smiles. It did his heart good to see the way Jack and Harley looked at one another.
Now only if Master Bruce could find someone to make him smile like that.

* 

Bruce was on his way to meet with Lucius Fox. He was dressed in a sleek Ermenegildo Zegna navy
blue suit with a pair of Salvatore Ferragamo black leather loafers clearly communicating the rich
playboy look of Bruce Wayne. Bruce tugged at the bottom of his jacket and ran his hand over the
deep black colored tie he wore. Fox had some new tech that he thought Bruce would find interesting,
which is why Bruce was heading to Wayne Tower. After that he was supposed to have lunch with
a new investor...a man whose name he couldn’t recall at the moment, but he was sure he would
remember once he saw him. Bruce was contemplating what he should do after lunch, what would be
fitting of a playboy such as Bruce Wayne, something that would have the papers complaining about
him and his attitude so quickly after his brother's kidnapping. Bruce hated to do it; he didn't want
Jack to think that his Bruce Wayne persona was a reflection of his true feelings, but he was trapped
—in order to save Gotham, and his brother, he needed to be the Batman, and Bruce Wayne needed
to be his persona. His thoughts were interrupted by his phone ringing. He pulled it out of his pocket
to examine the caller id and frowned. It was not a phone number he knew well, though he
recognized it. It belonged to Selina Kyle. The memory of him getting her number rose to the surface
of his thoughts. Bruce felt his heart speed up a few beats remembering her that night at the carnival,
black hair and green eyes like he had never seen before...Bruce held the phone to his ear.

“Miss Kyle, how may I help you?”

Her voice was like a purr, deep and soft. “Hi Bruce. I heard about your brother. I just wanted to call
and let you know how happy I am that everything worked out all right, that he is safe and Dr.
Quinzel too. Are they both doing all right, Bruce?”

Bruce looked out the window watching the city streets of Gotham flash past while he spoke. “Yes,
you seem to be.”

“I heard Jack had been shot.” Selina’s voice held real concern.

“Yes, luckily it was not as bad as it could have been and...Batman was there,” Bruce finished.

“I had heard that on the news, that Batman was responsible for finding and rescuing them. I’m just
glad someone got to them before anything worse happened. I mean, I heard that the kidnapper was
some guy they are calling Killer Croc? The papers said a lot of gruesome things, but anyway, you've probably heard more than enough about that. How are you doing?” Selina's voice was, Bruce was learning, always sultry, but also held a strong note of sympathy.

“Me?” Bruce sounded completely stunned. “I...I'm fine, just happy to have my bother back.”

Selina purred into the phone. Her voice held a teasing ring, but Bruce could hear the true and deep compassion behind her words. “Well, I would like to assess that for myself. I was curious if you were free for dinner?”

“Tonight?” Bruce asked surprised.

He could hear the smile on her lips by the tone of her voice. “Well it doesn't have to be tonight, but it can be if you would like.”

Bruce frowned, but then nodded. “Tonight.”

Selina laughed softly. “Perfect! How about I pick you up tonight around eight?”

“Ah...sure. Do you need my address?” Bruce asked. He wasn't used to being the one who was picked up.

“Oh I know where you live Bruce. See you tonight, and wear something fancy.” Selina hung up, leaving Bruce chuckling. “This should be fun,” he murmured to himself.

*

Jack and Harley walked into the reception room where Alfred had set up tea for their afternoon “meeting.” The room was small. For the manor it was a small room, Harley noted. She thought it would make a nice size studio apartment! The walls of this room were painted an eggshell white, with four love seats situated around a low sitting oak coffee table. The loveseats were all a soft cream color with thick plush cushions that made you want to sink into them. The room's floors were hardwood with a large oriental rug in golds and reds that both softened the floor's appearance and gave the room a cozy atmosphere. It was one of those rooms that could easily be sterile, but whoever had decorated this room had made sure to add little touches that gave the room a homey feel, from throw cushions that matched the colors of the rug, to paintings of landscapes that littered the walls among the family photos of the Wayne boys when they were little. The windows in this room were tall and thin with heavy beige curtains that were currently open to let the sunlight into the room. Everything in the room was aimed toward comfort and intimacy.

On the table, surrounded by the loveseats, sat a three tiered silver tray which held sandwiches cut into tiny squares on one level. Jack stepped close and examined the contents of the tray with a grin.

“Alfred made a great traditional high tea it seems.” Jack smiled at Harley and pointed at the top tier. “These are Irish baked ham, wholegrain mustard on white bread. These next to them are egg and cress sandwiches with mayonnaise and granary bread, really, really good; I highly recommend.”

Jack pointed to the second level. “Here we have cherry scones and shortbread, and the last tier here has honey shots and mini raspberry and white truffle cheesecakes.”

Harley groaned. “Everything sounds fantastic!”

Jack laughed in agreement. “When Alfred does tea time, he always goes all out.”

There was a large china tea pot sitting on the table with a tea cozy of soft grey over it and from the
smell, the tea was earl grey. Alfred had set out the best china dessert plates and tea cups along with the silverware. Harley was impressed—everything looked perfect.

Jack flopped down onto one of the sofas and yanked Harley's hand so that she fell beside him. He grinned happily, wrapping his arm around her waist and pressing her hip close to his.

“Ready to lie through our teeth honeycakes?”

Harley giggled. “Yes I am puddin’.”

They both giggled, leaning their heads together. Jack stroked her jaw gently with his free hand. “‘Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.’” He licked her lips, tracing them with his tongue. Harley giggled her eyes staring into his. Jack gently traced her bottom lip with his thumb. Harley snapped at his thumb, causing him to chuckle, snatching his hand back. He let go of her chin and reached for the tea. Next to the pot sat a china sugar cup and a container of creamer which Jack moved closer before he started to pour; that was when they heard the deep bong of the front door bell.

“Oh! I guess the doctor is here!” Jack grinned, seemingly eager now to meet with the psychiatrist.

A few moments later, after Jack had poured Harley's tea and was in the process of pouring his own, Alfred stepped into the room. “Master Jack, Miss Harleen; may I introduce Dr. Joan Leland from Arkham Asylum.”

The woman who entered the room and stood before them was lovely, with flawless dark skin, her black hair cut in a no nonsense pageboy that hit just under her ears. She had large light brown eyes and an easy smile. Jack was actually surprised by how young she was to be a doctor but then again, so was Harley. Dr. Leland was dressed in a knee-length dark navy pencil skirt, a simple light blue blouse and her doctors white coat which held her name tag precisely in place, which Harley thought was a bit much for a house call, but different doctors had different quirks...Dr. Leland wore her lab coat—Harley killed bad guys. In her hand she carried a simple briefcase. She smiled as Jack and Harley stood to greet her. Alfred left quietly, bringing the doors to a close without a sound.)

Jack stepped over to their visitor and put his hand out to her. “Pleasure to meet you Dr. Leland or can I call you Joan?”

Leland took his hand. “Joan is fine.”

They shook hands. Jack noticed she had a firm handshake and her smile seemed genuine.

Joan's first impression of Jack Wayne was that he was an extremely handsome man. Tall, slender, the makeup on his eyes made them leap out from his face. He was already a dynamic individual, she could tell that just from looking at him, his posture, body language; there was definitely a magnetism about him. The touches to his face, the black eyeliner and if she wasn't mistaken, lipstick on his lips highlighted his best facial features. She could see a shadow of his older brother in his looks. The two men were quite attractive, but whereas Bruce Wayne had a more “playboy” feel about him, Jack seemed much darker, as if a shadow lurked in Jack Wayne's psyche. But Leland would bet her career on it that both men had a “darkness” about them. She had read about the murder of their parents. Hell, everyone who lived in Gotham knew the story. She had to wonder how that event had really affected both men. But that was not what she was here for today.

Dr. Harleen Quinzel stepped forward and offered her hand. “I've read several of your articles and papers Dr. Leland. Especially your article on violence and mental illness,” Harley said with a smile while they shook hands. Dr. Leland actually blushed. “Well thank you Dr. Quinzel. I looked up your
work before coming here. You wrote a very expressive article on how criminals need mental health counseling in lieu of retributive options. Quite impressive.”

It was Harley's turn to blush. “Thank you.”

Joan's first impressive of Dr. Quinzel was mostly based on Dr. Quinzel's scores in college and the papers she had written. And intelligent young woman like herself, pretty, the kind of woman who could have gone an easier route in life by using her looks, but instead had chosen a degree in mental health. Seeing Dr. Quinzel in person did not alter Joan's impression; a bright, attractive young woman.

Jack laughed softly. “You two need to compare notes sometime.” Then, with a bright smile, Jack motioned Joan over to the sofa across from them and picked up the tea pot again. “All right you doctors, come sit down. Tea, Joan?”

“Thank you, yes.” Joan sat across from them while Jack grinned and poured the tea easily with his off hand into the teacup that faced Dr. Leland. He set the pot down and pointed, “Sugar, cream and of course help yourself to the tray of foo— if you don't Alfred will pout.”

The three of them laughed. Dr. Leland made herself a modest plate while Jack and Harley did the same. Jack crossed his legs, resting his ankle against his opposite knee. Harley sat right against him, their shoulders pressed together. Leland opened her briefcase, pulled out a notebook and a small hand-held recorder. “Do you mind if I record our conversation?”

Jack glanced sideways at Harley who shrugged. “Not at all Dr. Leland, go right ahead.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wayne.” Leland set the recorder down on the table between them.

“Oh call me Jack, please.” Jack grinned.

“You can call me Harley instead of Dr. Quinzel, or Harleen works too,” Harley piped up just before she took a small bite of scone and snuggled in against Jack.

“Harley?” Leland asked.

Harley blushed glancing at Jack. “It's a nickname Jack gave me.”

Dr. Leland was actually burning with questions about how Jack Wayne and Dr. Quinzel met, but, that was not what this meeting was about either. She would have to bite down on her own personal curiosity and focus.

“Oh I see. So, Jack, Harley. Mr. Wayne, I mean your elder brother Bruce, tells me you two are engaged.”

Jack nodded. “Yep...though oddly I don't remember telling him.” He glanced at Harley. “Did you?”

Harley shrugged. “Certain things over the last day or so are a bit cloudy.” She giggled apologetically.

Leland nodded. “Well, all right. So you are both engaged. That's nice. May I ask how you met?”


Harley giggled lightly and nodded. “Yes, we just ran into each other.”

Jack stroked Harley jaw, gazing into her eyes. “True love is finding someone whose demon's play well with yours.”
Harley smiled staring back at him. It was clear, that for a moment, they forgot about Dr. Leland in the room with them.

Joan had a lot more question, but she didn't pursue them at the moment. “Now I'm only going to ask a few questions today. Please feel free to tell me anything you wish, but don't feel that you have to communicate anything that makes you uncomfortable.”

Leland opened her notebook, folding the top away and pulled a pen out from her briefcase. “Well, I guess the first question I will ask is do you both feel that you need to see a psychiatrist after your experience?”

Jack, who had leaned back against the cushions of the sofa, his arm in its sling resting against his stomach looking completely relaxed. Harley was leaning against him. They both had their legs crossed, but they somehow looked like two of a kind to Dr. Leland. She couldn't put her finger on it, but there was something...united about them, more than simply a loving couple. It was as if they shared a secret.

Leland pushed the thought away; she didn't want to make assumptions.

Harley held Jack's other hand in both of hers, their hands resting on his lap. Jack glanced at Harley who smiled, the two of them seemed to share a moment, a communication, as if they were speaking without words. Leland noticed how careful Harley was about Jack's wounded shoulder, getting as close to him as she could without causing him pain. Their hands, held together, seemed sweet on the surface, but she just couldn't shake the fact that something about their relationship, just from this first meeting was...abnormal. They were close, clearly, but she felt as if there was an underlayer of something—something else. Again she scolded herself, she was making judgments based on little to no information.

“No, I don't think either of us feels the need for a doctor,” Jack spoke softly.

Leland wrote this down then continued with a note that the two of them seemed to be able to silently communicate together. “So, I know it hasn't been that long since your experience, but any trouble sleeping?”

Harley giggled. “Nope, not at all.”

Jack grinned down at Harley wrinkling his nose at her playfully, then looked back at the doctor.

“Nope, we both sleep like the dead.”

They both laughed. Leland glanced over to Harley. “Surely you as a doctor know that therapy after such a difficult experience can be helpful.”

Harley smiled. “Yes, for people who actually need it. Not everyone needs therapy, doctor.” Harley gave Leland a steady yet challenging look. Leland frowned ever so slightly and wrote that down in her notes.

Jack grinned down at Harley before he leaned in planting a quick kiss against Harley's nose. Harley smiled, gazing into Jack's Wayne's eyes with something that Leland would have labeled almost...madness. A chill ran up her spine, but Leland quickly dismissed the thought. Wrong word and poor assumptions, she told herself. She didn't have a lot of experience with love herself, this was probably just that they were deeply in love with each other, still in the stages of lust too; that would explain the feeling she had, that was all. Harley tilted her head up. Jack growled softly just before he kissed her again, but this time on the lips. Despite Leland being in the room their kiss immediately transformed from innocent into something else. A deeply passionate kiss, the kiss was intimate enough that Leland felt uncomfortable. She turned her head away when the two seemed disinclined
to stop their kiss. A quick glance showed that Jack had removed his hand from Harley's and had grabbed her knee tugging her closer, their tongues sliding against the other...neither one of them seemed concerned about her presence.

Leland frowned dropping her gaze and making a few notes. It was a little odd to her how dependent they seemed on each other, not the normal dependency of a couple, but something deeper, possibly problematic, especially considering their recent trauma. Granted this was a first meeting, but...They definitely seemed to be presenting a united front against her. At least that was what it felt like. She glanced up at them again. No, they were still kissing. Jack's hand had moved up to Harley's hip and Harley was holding onto him desperately, her hand on his throat, almost as if she were about to choke him. Harley's whole body turned to him in a sensual curve, as if she wanted to crawl right into his lap.

For Dr. Leland it almost felt as if she were being pulled into the eye of a storm.

On the outside they looked like a perfectly normal happy couple, but there was definitely something that seemed off. Leland averted her gaze again. She just couldn't put her finger on what it was, just a vibe. Perhaps it was just that they were being particular relaxed about their situation, which in and of itself could be a coping mechanism, and they were a newly engaged couple who clearly had different views about pubic displays of affection than most people. Maybe she was being old-fashioned. It wasn't like the rich weren't known for being eccentric. That was what this could simply be, an eccentric behavior, an intense coping mechanism, throwing themselves into their passion for each other after a near death experience.

Leland told herself to stop being judgmental and simply wait...hoping the kiss was all that was about to happen. Jack cleared his throat. “Sorry doc, after thinking I might have lost her...” Jack smiled as he traced Harley's jaw once more.

Harley giggled softly. “Sorry Dr. Leland.”

“It's quite all right and very understandable.” Leland had made note of Jack's statement and she sighed with relief; that was probably all it was that was bothering her. They had lived through hell and came out the other side with a greater appreciation of life. That made sense.

“Have you had any other issues since the incident? Fears that you did not have before? Like I say this is a short time after what happened, it may be too soon for either of you to recognize anything about your experience being reflected in your everyday life, but that is why I'm here, to help you through anything that might come up.” Leland smiled, making another note in her notebook.

“Anyway, today I am going to leave you both some reading materials. I want to stress, this is not homework, just some information on PTSD for the two of you to look out for in each other. I told your brother that I will arrange a series of five visits over the next five weeks so that we can get together and talk, see how the both of you are doing. Does this sound good to the two of you?”

Jack and Harley looked into each others eyes. But it was Jack that spoke. “Sure thing doc!”

*Leland went over the reading materials and then the lists of behaviors that they both needed to watch out for: agitation, irritability, hostility, social isolation, destructive behavior, flashbacks, fear, anxiety...after a bit, everything she said seemed to run together until Jack was ready to groan loudly with his boredom. But finally Leland stood.

“So, would the same time next week work for the two of you?” She had put everything back in her briefcase and was straightening her skirt. Again she noticed the way Jack Wayne and Dr. Harleen
Quinzel looked at one another before he spoke. “Same time next week is fine with us doc!”

Jack stood, tugging Harley up with his good hand. “We'll walk you to the door.”

“That's not necessary.” She smiled, but Jack made a rude noise. “Of course it is! Besides, you say that, but I guarantee you that you'd get lost.” He chuckled, then said, “Everyone does.”

* 

Jack and Harley stood in the doorway of Wayne Manor watching Dr. Leland drive off. Jack groaned. “God, five weeks of pretending!”

Harley laughed. “It'll put your brother's mind at ease.”

Jack made a face, a shadow crossing over his eyes. “I don't know about that. I think he is just looking for reasons to commit me to an asylum.” Harley frowned at the bitterness in his voice, but then Jack grinned making a complete turn around in his attitude. “I think we should do something fun now.”

“Fun?” Harley smiled running her hand up and down his back.

Jack grinned. “We are going to go to the Gotham City Country Club!”


Jack laughed. “We are going to play some tennis!”


Jack made a rude noise and waved his free hand in dismissal. “Blah, minor difficulty. Besides sweets, I'm ambidextrous! Come on, we need to change into our country club tennis costumes!” Jack giggled hurrying back inside. Harley hurried after him.

“I don't have a tennis outfit Jack!” Harley frowned and Jack laughed, starting toward the stairs. “Harley haven't you figured it out yet, one phone call I can have anything I want! You will have a hot sexy tennis outfit in a manner of minutes!” Jack kept giggling, taking the stairs two at a time with Harley grinning, stopping to yank her heels off so that she could keep up with him.

* 

Within the hour Jack had a tennis outfit delivered for Harley.

They were upstairs in Jack's room and he was lying across the bed in his bedroom waiting for her to come out of the bathroom to model the outfit for him. Jack laid on the bed propped up by the pillows, wearing a pair of white shorts with deep purple stripes along the sides that almost looked black. He also had on a white polo shirt with an purple embroidered “J” on the breast; the white shirt had the same shade of purple trim along the ends of the short sleeves and along the edge of the collar. He wore a pair of Louis Vuitton Regatta sneakers, which had a Velcro strap instead of ties, also in white with the almost black, purple trim and a pair of purple socks. He wore a pair of round, purple-lensed sunglasses on the tip of his nose and had the heel of one foot lying on the toe of the other, his arm in the sling, his fingers tapping against his stomach while he waited.

Jack groaned loudly. “Come on Harley!! Don't make me go in there after you!”

“Shush! I'm hurrying!” Harley called back.
Jack groaned loudly again before he reached over and grabbed his cigarettes. He pulled one out, stuck it between his lips and was just about to light it when Harley finally came out. Jack stared, his mouth falling open, the cigarette disappearing into his sling. Jack had ordered her a sleeveless tennis dress, with crossed straps in the back. It fit against her perfectly, showing off the beauty of her figure. About mid-hip it dropped into a pleated skirt. Underneath she had on a pair of short white bike shorts (more like tight panties than shorts) paired with a pair of brightly colored Adidas tennis shoes. Harley had pulled her hair back into a high ponytail which bounced when she walked. As she came into the room she did a spin for him. Jack sat up and gave her a long, loud wolf-whistle. “Now that is sexy.”

She giggled. “You know I haven’t played tennis since—well, I think high school! Geez! And only a few times before I focused on gymnastics.”

Jack grinned. “You'll be fine! Come on, we have some rackets hanging on the wall in the gym. AND we are going to take the Lexus! It will be fun!”

“Jack, tell me you aren't planning on driving?” Harley asked, stopping to look at Jack with her hands on her hips just as Jack jumped up easily from the bed and headed to the bedroom door.

Jack rolled his eyes. “Fine, I'm not driving. You are.”

Harley frowned. “Please tell me it's an automatic.”

Jack paused in the doorway and looked over his shoulder at her with a smirk. “Ah, I'll have to teach you how to drive manual one day...Come on, pumpkin!”

* *

When they arrived outside the front of the manor, Harley was carrying the tennis bag with the rackets, some tennis balls and a few other odds and ends in one hand, her other hand in Jack's hand. She stopped dead upon seeing the car waiting for them on the gravel drive.

Harley gasped at the sight of the vehicle. Never had she seen such a gorgeous automobile, and since coming to Wayne Manor she had seen some nice cars. Jack grinned brightly like a kid with a new toy.

“This, my sweets, is a 2018 Lexus LC 500 delivered this morning for Bruce, BUT since he isn't here we are going to test it for him!”

Harley couldn't help but stare. The car was gorgeous, painted a dark caviar color that seemed to shimmer in the sunlight. Jack opened the driver's side door for her. “The interior is black leather with satin metallic trim AND it's an automatic.” Jack giggled.

Harley stood and stared inside the car. “Jack, Bruce is going to kill us if we take this car.”

Jack burst out laughing. “Oh, come on Harley! No he isn't. He'll be annoyed—he is always annoyed—but come on! We nearly died, we need to live!”

Jack held the keys in front of her face. “You know you want to drive it Harley. No one in Gotham has one.” Jack wiggled the keys making them jingle. “It can go zero to sixty in four seconds.”

Harley giggled and snatched the keys from him. “Get in!” she urged him with a giggle.

* *

Harley, wearing a pair of oversized sunglasses, whooped loudly in excitement. “WOOPEE!!”
Jack yelled too. “YAHOO!!”

The Lexus sped down the road into Gotham with the two of them laughing. Jack was nearly in tears laughing while Harley hit the gas and the car raced into Gotham moving smoothly and nearly without a sound. They headed to the outskirts of the city where the Gotham City Country Club was located, where Harley took advantage of the lower traffic volume and wider lanes to open up the car.

* 

Jack grinned as they approached the country club. He pointed at the tall stone fencing that surrounded the place; a plaque on the outside showed the name, Gotham City Country Club est. 1890. “Supposedly a Wayne has been a member of this country club from it's beginning in the 1890's with Bruce and me being the most recent, obviously. I haven't been here in ages, though; I was banned for a year after I set off fireworks inside the indoor pool when I was sixteen.”

Harley laughed. “You didn't?”

“I did. It was hilarious!! You should have seen everyone run!!” Jack slapped his knee laughing at the memory. “Bruce was so mad at me! Of course when is Bruce not mad at me? I figure if he is going to be constantly pissed, I might as well give him a reason.”

Jack chuckled and reached over to squeeze Harley's knee as he continued.

“Then I was banned again when I was twenty-two for putting flash grenades in the holes on the golf course. I was banned for two years that time.” Jack grinned brightly.

“Are you sure they are going to let you in?” Harley chuckled, glancing sideways at Jack as they pulled through the gates.

“Fuck yes! I'm a Wayne! They can't keep me out permanently as much as they would like to. The name carries too much weight and money and they fucking love Wayne money. So they can only ban me for short periods of time. Though I haven't been back since the flash grenades. So it's been...” Jack counted on his fingers flamboyantly. “Six years.” Jack laughed. “They will be so happy I'm back!”

* 

The main building of the country club was a vast stone building with two floors that contained an elegant restaurant, a gym with all the latest in exercise equipment, an indoor pool and an inside running track. Outside, the club had a vast golf course, tennis courts, outside swimming pool and tracks for horse riding.

Jack pointed. “Just pull up through the drive there.”

Harley drove up and turned the car off as Jack instructed. A young man in a uniform with thick black hair, green eyes, the sort of face that would make cheerleaders swoon, wearing black slacks, a light blue polo shirt with the name of the country club on the breast, eagerly came out to the car which he was looking at like it was a naked woman who had just pulled up. Jack grinned getting out of the car at the same moment as Harley.

The young man had moved around to the driver's side and gone still when Harley stepped out. Harley wasn't paying him any attention, but the young man was staring at Harley like a hungry dog. Jack glanced over the roof of the Lexus, and stopped, staring at the young man. Jack's eyes narrowed, twitching slightly, watching the way the valet's stare had moved from the car to Harley. He was giving Harley a clearly visible up and down stare that Harley didn't notice at all. She bent
over, reaching into the back to pull out the tennis bag. The kid looked right at her ass without even trying to be sneaky about it. Jack's hands balled into fist, pain rushed down from his wounded shoulder, but the pain only intensified his rage.

Harley stood up, turning around with the tennis bag when she noticed the man standing behind her.

“Oh hi! I'm guessing you want the keys right?” Harley smiled at the valet, who grinned. “Yes, ma'am. I'll go and park the car for you.” Jack's lip curled when Harley placed the keys in the young man's hand with a smile. The man's eyes kept following Harley even after she dropped the keys into his hand. She made her way around the car on her way to Jack, a seductive roll to her hips that was just for Jack, but the kid was staring at her hips openly. Jack's gaze was hard, but he was smiling. Harley walked into his embrace without another look at the valet, completely unaware of his staring at her. Jack turned and smiled, gazing over the rim of his sunglasses at the young man. “What's your name?”

The young valet, whose gaze had been on Harley's legs in the tennis dress, realized he was being spoken to and his eyes shot back up. “Oh, I'm Roger sir.”

Jack nodded. “Roger. I'll remember you.”

Jack grinned with a wink before he turned Harley toward the country club entrance.

Harley glanced at Jack with a question in her eyes, but Jack turned her around wrapping his good arm around her waist. “Let's go get a court Harls.”

He glanced over his shoulder once as the young man drove off with the car. The smile on his face did not reach his cold, now hard eyes.

* *

The lobby inside the country club was a semi-circular room with a large information counter dominating the back end. The room had a high domed ceiling that held a large modern crystal chandelier. The room was decorated with several comfortable looking chairs and sofas scattered throughout the room and long glass coffee tables that all held vases full of fresh flowers. The windows circled both the ground floor and the second floor allowing a large amount of sunlight to shine into the lobby, which made the highly polished wood flooring, the vanilla walls and of course the glass tables, seem to shine and reflect the light back into the room, creating an illusion that the room was much bigger.

Jack led Harley up to the counter with a bright smile across his stitched face. “So, any of the tennis courts open today?” Jack leaned on the counter with his good arm and looked at the young woman standing behind the counter, whose name tag read, “Charlotte.”

She smiled, perfect lovely white teeth, long brown hair that had been perfectly styled, Charlotte wore a uniform similar to Roger outside. “Yes, we do. Please sign the book sir and may I have your member card?”

Jack grinned as he pulled out his wallet, opening it with one hand easily and sliding the card out with his thumb before flipping it to her between his forefinger and middle finger. He handled the wallet and card like Harley had seen him doing last night, easily and with one hand. She grinned, always impressed with him. Jack set his wallet on the counter and signed the book in a fanciful script. “Jack Wayne and fiancee,” he said out loud while he wrote, glancing sideways at Harley and winking at her.
The young woman had taken Jack's member card over to the computer where she was typing information in when she stopped and stared at the computer. “Could you excuse me for a moment, Mr. Wayne?”

Jack smiled with a twinkle in his eyes. “Of course!”

The young woman smiled at them both, though Harley thought that the woman had a slightly confused look on her face.

Harley frowned and watched Charlotte leave. “What's up you think?”

Jack giggled. “She's going to get the manager because I'm sure there is something in my file that popped up on the computer when she put my name in.” Jack leaned against the counter. “Then he will come out and lecture me about behaving myself even though it's been six years. Or at least warn me about doing anything that might get me banned again.” Jack chuckled and then muttered. “I wonder if the manager is still Mr. Dulmacher?”

“Mr. Dulmacher?” Harley asked, but that was when a portly man in a black suit exited from a set of doors off to the right (probably offices Harley mused) and stepped up to the counter. He had thick hair that was brushed back with an almost pompadour style, clearly dyed blonde. (At least Harley was pretty confident it was dyed. She had never seen that shade of blonde in nature; plus it made his hair look like a wig, it was so unnatural looking on him.) He had a perfectly trimmed mustache and goatee that were nearly white and a pair of half-circle silver framed glasses perched on the end of an impressively long nose.

When Jack saw the man, he burst out into laughter. “OH MY GOD!! Bobby, you're still the manager?”

The older man pressed his lips together forming a hot, white line of anger. “I would appreciate it, Mr. Wayne, if you would call me Mr. Dulmacher—or at least my proper name, Robert.”

Jack chuckled shoving up his sunglasses so that the light reflected off the purple lenses. “Sure thing Bobby. So, you here to lecture me?”

Mr. Dulmacher's eyes twitched with annoyance, but he continued. “I'm sure you are aware of the rules, Mr. Wayne; they haven't changed a great deal since last you were our guest.”

Jack waved him off with his good hand. “Of course, of course.”

Mr. Dulmacher took a deep breath turning his attention to Harley. “And you are?”

Jack piped up. “My fiancee, Harley Quinn. We are just here to play a little tennis Bobby. I promise, no trouble.” Jack had dropped his good arm down and elbowed Harley. She glanced down and saw that Jack had his fingers crossed.

Mr. Dulmacher sighed. He glanced at Jack's arm in the sling and thought to himself, “Maybe Mr. Wayne will behave. He's been away from the club for a few years perhaps... and he is here with his fiancee. She might be the calming effect Mr. Wayne needs. Besides, I can't keep him from the club.”

Jack was smiling in satisfaction. He knew there was nothing Mr. Dulmacher could do to him until he actually did something, and then the only thing he could do would be to ban him for a set period of time. Bobby was screwed. Jack's smile widened a fraction.

“We—I—appreciate your paying attention to the rules. Please enjoy yourselves.” Mr. Dulmacher said stiffly. He gave Jack and Harley a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes just before he walked
off. Jack chuckled.

“I think that man was here on the day they opened the doors in 1890's! He probably came with the land.” He giggled.

Harley chuckled too as she picked up the bag. “You are bad Jack.”

Jack smiled pleasantly. “I know.”

Jack glanced at Charlotte. “I'm assuming the tennis courts are still in the same location?”

“Oh, yes sir.” Charlotte giggled. “You can either walk out this way and take the path to the left or you can use a golf cart, sir.”

“Thank you ever so much Charlotte.” Jack smiled pleasantly, eager to be off.

“You are very welcome Mr. Wayne, Miss Quinn. Have a good time!” Charlotte waved with a bright smile as they walked away.

* *

Jack and Harley walked to the tennis courts, hand in hand while the sun shone down brightly. The walking path was crushed white stone with brightly colored flower beds running along the sides. The courts were located a short distance away from the main country club building. There were six sets of clay tennis courts, all with a faint bluish tint. There was a high black chain link fencing that surrounded the courts and the whole area was then surrounded by carefully groomed pine or spruce trees; Harley couldn't be sure since she little about trees, but she admitted that the view was pleasant. When they arrived at the courts there were only a couple of people out here playing. One person was actually using a ball machine by themselves, the balls flying across the court. Jack had to stop himself from bursting out laughing when one of the balls hit the guy in the stomach.

Harley snorted on a laugh too. Jack, snickering, quickly motioned Harley over to the side where the entrance gate stood partly open.

They chose an unoccupied court to the far left, away from everyone else—that way no one would bother them and they could play any way they wanted. Harley set the bag down at the corner of the court and pulled out the two rackets, handing Jack one and taking the other. She pulled out the container of fresh, new tennis balls and the two of them walked onto their court.

Jack chuckled. “I guess you're going to have to do the servicing pumpkin.”

Harley grinned. “Will do puddin!”

They each took their side of the court. Harley grinned at Jack and held her racket and ball ready as she wiggled her hips playfully. “Ready?”

“As I'll ever be!” Jack called back, holding the racket in his left hand and grinned brightly. Harley laughed and tossed the ball up, smacking it easily across the net. Over the next half hour Jack and Harley played. Harley was laughing whenever Jack would jump up and hit the ball yelling at the top of his lungs. “YAHTZEE!!”

His antics had them receiving dirty looks from the other people on the courts, but Jack wasn't paying any attention. Harley was laughing and started yelling “YAHTZEE” back every time she hit the ball until they were both laughing to the point of tears. They were having such a good time just messing around that they completely forgot about anyone else being on the courts.
Jack ran across the court, hitting the ball one handed back at her and yelled.

"Jump higher Harley!! It makes your skirt go up!! I love it!!" Jack laughed.

Harley giggled turning around and bending over after she hit the ball, wiggling her butt at him.

"Hit this Jack! I dare you!"

"Oh I will, just wait 'til we get home!" Jack waggled his eyebrows at her suggestively and hit the ball back. Harley squealed, twisting around and barely hit the ball back in time. Jack yelped laughing, missed the ball and turned around. He saw a couple standing there watching them with smirks plastered on their faces.

"Jack Wayne. Now isn't this a surprise?" The man's voice dripped with clear derision. He was what Harley considered a “Ken doll” type of guy. He was tall, blonde with hair styled to the point it resembled plastic or synthetic hair. He had dark blue squinty eyes, a chiseled jaw and a sculpted nose. He had one of those tans that spoke to hours in a tanning booth rather than being outside, and the type of body that said he had paid for a lot of it, with every inch of him being sculpted to perfection, but with a clear artificial look to him. He wore a tennis outfit that had that polished, expensive look, every inch of him in pure white. He held a tennis bag over his right shoulder with his hip cocked and an arrogant sneer on his lips.

Harley felt her lip immediately curl in irritation; this was definitely the type of guy she had encountered in college who felt that he could buy anything, including people. Next to him was a young woman that came up to his shoulder. She was slim to the point of not looking healthy with a bleached, almost white blonde ponytail and watery light grey eyes, but with that fake cheerleader smile, her teeth so white they looked plastic and breasts that had that “too perky” look that was usually associated with breasts that were probably more plastic than flesh. She also had the perfectly sculpted nose and lips that had had one too many botox treatments.

Jack stopped and grinned. “Well if it isn't Troy Randell and his little girlfriend Tiffany.”

Tiffany, who surprised Harley with her high pitch whiny voice, droned back. “His wife now.” She held out her left hand showing off a diamond the size of an acorn.

Jack snorted. “Oh shit! Really? Well, I suppose you two are a match made in hell. So what do you want Troy?”

Harley had walked around the net to stand beside Jack. Jack reached around Harley with his good arm, wrapping his arm around her waist and noticing the way Troy was looking at her, a look that was a cross between a sneer and very clear lust.

Troy narrowed his eyes at Jack. “I thought my eyes were deceiving me when I saw you. Aren't you supposed to be in Arkham or something by now?"

Tiffany jeered. “Didn't you see on the news the other day Troy? Someone kidnapped him.”

Troy laughed in what Harley thought was a slightly higher pitch than was comfortable to bear; she had a quick image of her smashing her tennis racket into Troy's perfectly bought teeth. “Guess they couldn't stand you either,” the blonde man said with a smile that was anything but pleasant.

Harley felt Jack stiffen next to her, his arm tightening around her slightly, the tennis racket pressing against her a little painfully as he tried to control his temper.

“So, Jack, who'see your friend?” Troy raked his eyes over Harley. Harley could feel the building
fury in Jack, the tension in his muscles, the way his arm tightened around her waist, even the subtle change in Jack's breathing.

“This is my fiancee Troy.” Jack managed to say the name in such a way that uttering the name sounded as if it tasted bad on his tongue. Jack smiled, though it was a flat smile. Then Jack hissed a whisper at Harley. “We were in school together and here.”

Troy gave Harley a jerk of his chin. “Hello Harley.” He said her name with a curl of his lip.

Tiffany pursed her lips together and gave Harley a haughty look. “You clearly don't belong to the club do you?”

Harley frowned, but Jack responded. “Is there something you actually wanted Troy or are you just going to stand around sucking in all the oxygen and breathing out bullshit? If it's nothing important, go away.”

Jack started to turn around when Troy hissed, “You know what Wayne? You are a blight on the good name of this club. They shouldn't let crazy people like you in here. Doesn't matter how much money your family has—it can't make you have any class.” Troy frowned glancing at Jack's hand holding the racket. "Is that nail polish you're wearing? What are you some sort of fruit?"

Jack smiled pleasantly. "You know Troy, acting like a dick won't make yours any bigger."

Jack turned around with Harley, rolling his eyes as he continued. “Geez Troy, you just cut me to the quick. I don't know how I will ever recover from that insult.”

“You know what, you think you are so great Jack? I challenge you to a game of tennis. Winner stays at the club, loser never shows up again.” Troy grinned, wrinkling his nose.

Harley hissed under her breath at Jack. “I'm not that good at an actual game Jack.”

Jack leaned in close to her ear and whispered back. “Oh, we aren't going to play to win.” He gave her a bright grin and winked. “We are just going to hurt them.” Harley gave him a quizzical look and a small smile before Jack turned back to Troy. “You know, Troy, I’m jealous of people that don’t know you. Anyway... playing against a wounded opponent just makes you look pitiful, but because I hate your guts, I accept.”

Troy grinned. “Be prepared to lose you loser.”

Jack made like he was going to vomit. “Ouch. I hurt Troy. Geez Troy, I bet your brain feels as good as new, considering you never use it.” With that Jack walked with Harley to the other side of the net.

Once they had put some distance between themselves and the Randell's, Jack leaned into Harley giggling. “Okay cupcake, this is what we are going to do. It's true: in our current state we can't beat them and I'm betting Troy knows that. Which is why he is doing this. If I was at my best he knows I would mop the floor with him. So we aren't going to worry about winning, we are just going to concentrate on hurting them.”

“Hurting them how?” Harley glanced over to see Troy and Tiffany stretching and bouncing in place like they were about the participate at Wimbledon.

Jack giggled. “I want you to aim for them. Hit the ball toward them—legs, torso, face...whatever, just try to hit them as hard as you can with the ball.”

Harley snorted and then laughed. “Okay Jack!”
Jack grinned at her, dropping his racket to grab her by the back of the head and plant a knee melting kiss on her lips. He pulled back with a grin. “Let's teach them a lesson baby.” Then he smacked her on the rear.

* 

Troy took a few practice swings. “Why don't you losers serve.”

Jack tossed the ball to Harley with a grin. “Go ahead pooh.”

Harley smiled and winked at Jack taking up her position. She narrowed her eyes, looking toward Tiffany. Jack happily watched while Harley bounced on her feet just before she tossed the ball up once, twice then on the third she slammed the ball with her racket right to Tiffany. The ball zipped through the air and slammed hard into Tiffany's thigh before she could deflect it with her racket.

Harley giggled and yelled. “YAHTZEE!”

Jack burst out laughing.

Tiffany squealed. “OW! You STUPID BITCH!”

Harley pushed her sunglasses up her nose and shrugged with a perfectly innocent smile. “Fault. Sorry?”

Troy grabbed the ball and threw it back over the net; Jack caught it one-handed.

“Tell your girl to serve it right!” Troy yelled.

Jack grinned at Harley over the top of his glasses. “I guess I'm to tell you to serve it correctly.”

“Oh dear, did I serve poorly. Sorry!” Harley giggled. “I'll do better this time!”

With a wicked grin at Jack, Harley served the ball and Tiffany hit it back, but Jack was the one to hit the ball when it came over the net, aiming it for Troy. Troy dashed forward, but the ball hit him right in shoulder with a dull WHACK!

“Ow!” Troy yelped with a stumble and nearly dropped his racket.

“Yahtzee!” Jack snickered and shot a glance sideways at Harley. “Hey Troy, you should really try smiling more!”

Troy narrowed his eyes and rolled his shoulder. “You idiot! Fine, we're serving!”

“Oh you go right ahead, Troy!” Jack waved with his racket and whispered out of the corner of his mouth to Harley. “He'd raise the entire IQ of the state just by leaving it. Wonder how long it will take to figure out what game we're playing?”

Harley giggled “Too long, I'm sure.”

Jack laughed and smacked Harley playfully on the rear with his racket before they moved back to position. Harley bent her knees, holding her racket at the ready and winked at Jack, which had her fiance grinning brightly. Troy took a few moments of pretending to hit the ball until he finally served the ball toward Harley. She danced across the court, hitting the ball with all her might at Troy. The ball flew over the net and smacked Troy in the hip. Troy yelped and stumbled. Jack and Harley laughed until they were tears in their eyes.
Tiffany yelled, “You did that on purpose!”

Harley blinked, looking innocent. “I would never! I'm just not very good, I'm afraid.”

Tiffany jerked her shoulders in what Harley supposed was intended to be indignation. “Obviously, you cow!”

Harley blinked in disbelief, standing up with one hand on her hip and her racket over her shoulder. “Whoa, cow? Really, that the best you got Tiffany? I swear you are proof that evolution can go in reverse!”

Jack snorted, nearly doubling over with laughter. “That’s my girl!”

Tiffany wiggled with frustration. Harley laughed. “Shut up Tiffany! You'll never be the man your mother is! You gonna serve or just stand there looking like an ostrich?”

Tiffany's bottom lip trembled as she looked at Troy. “What did she just call me?”

Troy growled in frustration. “Just serve the ball Tiffany!”

Tiffany, pouting, grabbed up the ball and served without even attempting to line up the shot. This time Jack hit the ball back, a normal hit. Harley smiled guessing where Jack was going, take a few normal hits at the ball before aiming again...throw the victim off and make them think it was over before you whammy them again. The ball bounced, making a smart smacking sound as it hit the court or was swatted by rackets. They played normally for a good two minutes before Jack took a hard slam at the ball when Tiffany smacked it back toward him. Jack sent the ball ricocheting across the net and straight into Troy's chest knocking the air from him with the bonus of knocking Troy off his feet, his ass slamming into the court with a satisfying smack.

Jack grinned brightly and whispered only loud enough for Harley to hear, “Yahtzee!” before out loud he said, “OOPS! Sorry!”

Troy coughed a few times, struggled to his feet. Tiffany raced over to him and rubbed his back as Troy stayed bent over for another minute trying to catch his breath.

Troy finally stood up and growled, “Get another ball Tiffany.”

Tiffany looked ready to argue, but she pressed her lips together instead and ran over to their bag. She pulled out a container of tennis balls, rolled one out and moved back over to Troy who stood straight again. He snatched the ball from Tiffany and narrowed his eyes at Jack. He didn't give Jack and Harley a chance to get into position before he served the ball. Harley was the one to get the ball; she raced over, leapt into the air. For a moment, Jack was entranced at the sight of Harley as she leaped into the air and the little skirt ruffled up. Her bike shorts underneath highlighted her ass perfectly, which brought a big grin to Jack's face. Harley slammed the ball hard enough that it made a whooshing noise through the air and slammed hard into Tiffany's fake boobs with a hard smack. Tiffany flew right off her feet to land on her ass, then flat onto her back with a low groan.

“Uhh...” She laid there and didn't get up.

Troy was so angry that he grabbed the ball without checking on Tiffany and returned it with a hard hit, the ball zipping quickly over the net at Jack, but Jack grinned brightly and was ready as he held his racket in his left hand like a bat. When the ball raced toward him, Jack's grin widened just a fraction before he swung. He hit the ball with enough force that the sound it made was like a bullet zipping through the air. Troy raced like a fool—yet again, Harley and Jack noted—toward the ball. He swung his racket wide throwing himself to the side to hit the ball, going too far, just as Jack knew
he would. The ball raced right where Jack wanted and slammed into Troy's groin with a sickening, dull thudding sound.

Jack grimaced and giggled at the same time. “Oooo...wow.”

Troy went down like a sack of potatoes, hitting the court and curling into himself.

Harley made a face. “Wow, that had to hurt.”

Jack giggled as he walked over and took Harley's hand. “Let's go!”

The two of them jogged over to their bag, threw their stuff in to the chorus of groans behind them. Together, laughing and holding hands, they took off at a run back to the country club's main house.

Chapter End Notes

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Only Happens When I Dance With You

Bruce was thankful for the shower that he had installed in the back room of his office and for the change of clothing he kept in an adjoining closet. Otherwise he would have been late for his date with Selina Kyle. Bruce smiled while he worked his tie through the loop. She was a devastatingly beautiful woman, intelligent, and intriguing, he thought. There were layers to her that he hadn't found in any other woman, and that was after only one meeting!

Bruce had texted her earlier to let her know he would be at Wayne Tower instead of at his home since she was going to be picking him up. That was another aspect he liked about her, it made him feel as if he was being taken out instead of the...taker-outer...Bruce laughed at himself. It was nice to feel like he was the one being treated this time. When he had been finishing up some last minute work in the office this afternoon, trying to free his schedule in order to go to the race track for some driving practice, he received the call from the country club complaining about Jack and Harley attacking some of their guests. But once he had gotten the details, Bruce had been hard pressed not to laugh. Bruce had to admit he had been a little bit amused when the manager described the attack.

Fairly typical Jack and if Bruce knew his brother, the couple had probably deserved it, though Bruce would never admit that to Jack. He was the elder brother and had to present a more level head where Jack's antics were concerned. After the call, Bruce had almost called the date off. The management had wanted to ban Jack yet again, but Bruce had come up with a compromise—he would get Jack and Harleen to apologize to the Randells. The management and the Randells had agreed on the condition that it was a public apology at the country club. Now Bruce only had to convince Jack to do it. But Bruce wasn't going to worry about that tonight. This evening he had a date with a beautiful, fascinating woman.

Bruce looked at himself in the mirror and ran his hands over his hair one more time. His outfit was a cross between formal and casual. He decided to go without the tie after he had finished tying it and realized how stuffy he looked with the tie on. He removed it and tossed it. Now, he was just wearing the white shirt with the top buttons undone, light khaki pants and a two-button navy blue blazer. He still looked to be made of money, but without rubbing it in anyone's face. He had just put a few dabs of cologne on when the buzzer went off.

The voice of Bruce's secretary, Mrs. Caroline Crown, drifted into the room through the intercom.

“Mr. Wayne, sir, you have a guest here to pick you up.”

Bruce pushed the button. “I'm on my way, thanks Caroline.”

* 

Bruce arrived downstairs and was about to head out the door when he saw Selina Kyle through the glass front of Wayne Tower; she was leaning against a black convertible Mazda MX-5 Miata. She wore a short, sleeveless black evening dress and a pair of knee-high black boots. Her smile was gorgeous when she saw him through the glass and there was something about the way she had done her make-up around her eyes that made the green color seem to glow. Bruce found it to be highly alluring. As soon as Bruce stepped through the door, she waved. “Over here!”

Bruce felt something he never felt with other women—butterflies in his stomach. There was simply something about Selina Kyle that made Bruce feel like a young man who had somehow managed to get the prom queen to notice him. As he approached, Bruce took her hand and kissed her knuckles. “That is quite a dress Miss Kyle, and quite a car.”
Bruce smiled, his voice warm with genuine pleasure.

Selina laughed and if Bruce wasn’t mistaken, he thought he saw a dim blush on her cheeks. “Why thank you Bruce, get in!”

* 

Selina drove them to the Gotham Bar and Grill on Twelfth street and Vine. She moved and weaved through the traffic with the ease of a seasoned race car driver. Bruce did his best not to grab onto the door frame while she drove.

Once they had parked and made their way inside the restaurant, they were met by the greeter at the door. The man was a tall, medium built man with muscles sculpted for looks more than function, with dark hair and a dark, pencil thin mustache, wearing the typical outfit of black slacks and white shirt. When he saw them he waved and laughed.

“Selina! It's been a while, come on in—and who is your handsome companion?”

“Hey Samuel, this is the one and only Bruce Wayne.” Selina grinned as she took Bruce's arm.

Samuel stopped short, his hand extended in mid-shake, looking frightened or was he simply intimidated? Bruce could not be certain, but he took the man's hand and shook it, smiling pleasantly. “Pleasure to meet you.”

Samuel seemed to come back to himself, returning the gesture. “Pleasure to me you Mr. Wayne.”

“Please, call me Bruce.” Bruce smiled again and Samuel visibly relaxed. “Your usual table Selina?”

“Yes please,” she purred giving Bruce's arm a squeeze while gracing him with a pleased smile.

Samuel led the two of them over to an intimate table that was located in a corner, near the window looking out onto the street. It was a lovely, clear night outside with couples walking hand in hand, people just enjoying the rare cool of an early summer evening in Gotham.

They took their seats with Selina ordering a bottle of wine. She glanced at Bruce. “I'm sorry, you don't mind if I pick the wine?”

Bruce shook his head. “Not at all. I trust your tastes.”

Selina grinned. She folded her hands in front of her and rested her chin against the interlocked fingers. “So, everything is happy at home now?”

Bruce nodded. “Yes, well...yes, I believe so. Dr. Quinzel and Jack seem to be recovering. I'm just glad the whole incident is over and my brother was returned home safely.” The wine came then and Selina picked up the bottle to examine the label. It was a bottle of Sandlands Syrah. She nodded her approval to the waiter who smiled before leaving. Selina returned her attention to Bruce while with a smile, she popped the cork and poured some wine into his glass before pouring her own. She set the bottle down between them picking her glass up and taking a sip. “So, tell me about Bruce Wayne.”

Bruce chuckled softly, glancing at his menu. “Not much to tell. Most of what there is that's worth knowing has usually been printed in the papers.”

Selina laughed. “Please. That is a persona. I'm curious about the real Bruce Wayne.”

Bruce glanced up. “What about Selina Kyle? Now that is a subject that I'm interested in.”
Selina laughed. “Oh you know...small town girl, runs to the big city to make it big. Realizes that was all a dream and chooses a different path.” She sipped her wine before setting her glass down and picking up the menu. “I highly recommend the steak and Australian lobster.”

Bruce nodded with a twinkle in his eyes. “Then steak and lobster it is.”

Selina grinned. “I like a man who listens to a woman.”

Bruce returned her smile. “I listen to anyone who gives me good advice.”

Selina chuckled. “I’ll remember that.”

* 

Back at Wayne Manor that same evening, Jack was downstairs in the kitchen with Alfred, who had an apron over his butler uniform, and held up a spoonful of creamy potato soup for the younger man to take a sip from. Jack, now dressed in grey pinstriped slacks and a white button down shirt, leaned forward to taste it. He glanced at the ceiling, rolling the substance over his tongue then grinned. “That is perfect Alfred!”

Alfred smiled. “Thank you, Master Jack.”

“Is the table set up yet?” Jack asked as he walked over to open the refrigerator and take a look at the dessert inside, a hazelnut chocolate cheesecake.

Alfred stirred the soup as he glanced over his shoulder. “I had a couple of the gardeners take one of the dessert tables and a couple of chairs out to where the willow tree sits. I even had them set up one of the umbrellas from the patio. I also had them put a vase of cut roses on the table.”

Jack grinned pleased. “I appreciate your help Alfred. Harley will love the roses!”

Alfred turned around with a smile. “Is this a special occasion, Master Jack?”

Jack grinned brightly. “Nope, just wanted Harley to feel special.”

Alfred smiled softly in approval and nodded.

* 

Upstairs Harley was putting on the dress that Jack had bought her without telling her. She found it hanging on the back of the door of her bedroom door when she had come inside to pick up a few things to move into Jack's room. Jack had told her he wanted her to stay in his room from now on. She had just grabbed a pile of clothing when she turned around to see the dress hanging there. The dress was an A-line scoop neck chiffon evening dress in black. The dress was asymmetrical; the front part of the skirt fell just below her knees then flowed back into a lovely floor length. The sides of the dress at her waist were cut out showing off the sides of her waist and wrapped around to expose her lower back. There was a note attached to the dress that stated:

“Get ready, I will come pick you up. J.”

Harley giggled as she took the dress down and hurried to get ready. She showered, dressed (the dress fit her perfectly when she put it on) and had just sat down to do her hair and makeup when she noticed yet another gift sitting on her vanity, a long velvet jewelry box. Harley reached forward and picked it up, opening it slowly. Inside the box was a diamond and ruby drop pendant. The ruby was pear cut dangling from a diamond on a silver chain. Harley sucked in her breath reaching out to
touch the necklace, her fingertips just barely stroking the gem. “Oh Jack,” she said breathlessly.

She swallowed, finishing her makeup before she took her hair, parting it and with the help of a curling iron, Harley styled her hair to look a great deal like Rita Hayworth's with thick curls around her shoulders. She had just finished with her lipstick, leaning down to slip on a pair of deep red high heels with a bow on the side of her ankle where there was a strap, when there was a knock at her door. Harley hurried to her feet rushing for the door and opened it.

Jack stood at the door wearing fitted double vested dark grey pinstriped suit. He paired it with a silver and purple paisley striped tie and a pair of two-tone leather wing-tip Oxfords. Harley noticed that this time he had done his own make-up, with elegant lines highlighting his eyes and a shade of red that made her want to kiss his lips even more than usual. He had even freshened up his nail polish from earlier. Having his arm in the sling did not take away from the smart, attractive image he projected. Jack bowed at the waist. “My lady?”

Harley giggled. “Jack, you look amazing.”

Jack wrinkled his nose at her with a chuckled, “You look pretty darn amazing too my little harlequin. And you do the necklace justice I must say.”

He held out his hand taking hers and tugged her toward him; her body lined up perfectly with his (despite the arm in the sling.) “So my sweet thing, dinner with me tonight under a weeping willow? Dancing afterward and hot fucking later?”

Harley laughed. “Yes to all of the above!”

Jack grinned brightly showing off his perfect teeth. “Then come along sweets! A night of enchantment awaits!”

*

Selina smiled tilting her head at Bruce. Their food had been served and Bruce smiled. “This smells delightful.”

Selina laughed lightly. “It tastes even better.” She picked up her knife and fork cutting into the thick meat. “So how do you know Harvey and Gilda?”

“Well, I'm supporting Harvey's bid for the DA and hopefully in the future, mayor of Gotham. I think he can do a lot of good. We have become really good friends, seeing eye to eye on a lot of things that need to happen in Gotham.” Bruce popped a bite of steak into his mouth.

Selina nodded as she picked up her wine glass. She was about to say something when she saw Harvey and Gilda working their way over to their table. “Well speak of the devil.”

*

Jack led Harley out to the gardens, past the more formally tended gardens, out past the walking trails of crushed rock that twisted through the gardens and heading toward an ancient looking willow tree with branches heavy with yellow green leaves. Under the tree was a round table set with a white table cloth and two chairs. Hanging from many of the branches of the willow tree and providing a soft warm glow on the table were lanterns. On the table were covered platters and a bottle of wine chilling in a bucket of ice.

“Oh Jack, it's beautiful!” Harley gasped in astonishment.
Jack grinned pleased with himself, leading Harley over to the table, pulling her chair out for her.

“This was my mother's favorite spot. I remember coming out here with her. She would sit under this tree with me on her lap and read me stories for hours on end. Just the two of us.” Jack's voice was soft with memories. Harley reached out and touched his hand. Jack looked into her eyes and gave her a wide smile. “Now this tree is going to be all about you and me.” Jack brought her hand up and kissed her fingertips before releasing her hand.

He took his seat across from her and reached across the table to take her hand again. “Will you marry me?” Jack asked with a wide grin.

Harley laughed. “Didn't you ask me that already?”


“Yes Jack, yes yes yes I will marry you!” Harley squeezed his hand.

Jack laughed. “Good! Now that you're going to be my wife, I want to make new memories.” He kissed her hand before pressing her knuckles against his cheek. “My soul-mate,” he said in a hushed voice. “My partner in crime, my lover, my girl.”

“Oh Jack...” Harley's eyes stung a little, causing her to blink rapidly.

* 

“Bruce! Selina! How great to see the two of you!” Harvey reached over grabbing Bruce's hand. Bruce swallowed his bite at the same time standing up with a chuckle. “Harvey, nice to see you! Gilda!” Bruce took her hand and kissed it.

Gilda blushed, her hand resting on her stomach. “Sorry to bother you, but Harvey insisted on coming over and saying hello, even though I told him not to—I hope we're not ruining anything.”

Selina laughed glancing at Bruce. “It's fine. Why don't you two join us?”

Bruce nodded. “Yes, please.”

Gilda started to protest, but Selina hooked her arm though her friend's and guided her to a seat. “Come on Gilda—it's fine. The more the merrier.”

It took a couple of moments, but a waiter brought over a couple of extra chairs and the four of them were sitting around the table together, Selina ordered more wine and asking for a couple of menus.

Harvey patted Bruce on the arm. “I'm glad we ran into you. I was hoping that I could invite you and your brother to dinner next week. I wanted to extend my apologies to your brother and Miss Quinn over what happened.”

Bruce frowned. “But Harvey,” he protested, “it wasn't your fault.”

Harvey frowned. “Well, I feel like it was, and I would love to treat you, your brother and Miss Quinn to dinner.” Harvey smiled at Selina. “We could have a couples' dinner. If you want, Bruce, we can make it a working dinner, I have some things I wanted to discuss with you, like my stance on masked vigilantes...I would like your input since Batman had a bit part in rescuing your brother.”

Bruce paled slightly at the mention of Batman, but his smile masked it. “I think that will be a wonderful idea. I mean, if you would like to go Selina?”
Selina smiled and purred. “Sure thing Brucie.”

Harvey grinned. “We can go to that new French restaurant that's opening next week. I just happen to know the owner.”

Selina lifted an impressed eyebrow. “Really?”

Gilda smiled. “Yes, Harvey helped him with some legal troubles a while back and they have been friends ever since.”

“It's always good to have friends.” Harvey smiled.

“Indeed.” Bruce returned the smile and sipped his wine.

* 

Harley giggled softly as Jack leaned over to feed her a bite of lobster. He grinned a little lopsided, his blue eyes glued to her lips. He liked to watch the way her lips moved, the simple act of her chewing; licking her lips with that pink tongue of hers was enticing.

Jack whispered. “You ever see those women that have sushi eaten off their naked bodies?”

Harley chewed and swallowed before she answered. “I've seen articles about it, why?” Harley picked up her wine to take a sip.

Jack licked his lips, his eyes raking over. “It's called nyotaimori and I want to do that with you...naked in my room while I eat sushi off of you, and then eat you, slowly.” Jack emphasized the point by running his tongue over his lips.

Harley giggled, a blush blossoming across her cheeks which had Jack laughing. “Why Miss Harley, did I embarrass you?”

Harley laughed. “No,” she protested and then said, “maybe...”

Jack waggled his eyebrows. “And after the things I've done to you...and plan on doing?”

Harley giggled taking another sip of her wine. Jack smiled, stood up, took his sling off and tossed it onto his chair. “Dance with me Miss Quinn?”

He put his hand out to her. At first, she thought to protest him taking the sling off, but instead Harley stared up at him. “Why thank you Mr. Wayne.”

She placed her hand in his, wrapping her fingers around his hand. Jack tugged her to her feet and into his arms. There was no music playing, just the breeze through the tree, and the distant sounds of night insects. Jack tugged her body against his; if it hurt him at all he didn't show it. He wrapped one hand around her waist, the other holding her hand against his chest while he started to sway with her. Jack hummed softly then sang under his breath while he weaved Harley back and forth under the lanterns.

“It only happens when I dance with you

That trip to heaven till the dance is through

With no one else do the heavens seem quite so near

Why does it happen, dear, only with you? “
Harley smiled into his eyes completely enamored. Jack spun her around, then out before he pulled her back into his arms, weaving in place. He pressed his lips against her ear continuing to sing to her.

“Two cheeks together can be so divine
But only when those cheeks are yours and mine
I've danced with dozens of others the whole night through
But the thrill that comes with spring when anything can happen
That only happens with you ...”

He turned her around with him, kissing her cheek and then down to her neck, brushing his lips up the slope of her neck before he whispered with a smile in his voice, “I think tomorrow we should go ring shopping.”

Jack turned, caressing his nose against hers. Harley licked his lips and purred a response. “That sounds fun Jack...”

Jack laughed, nibbling her lips. “My girl deserves a proper ring on her finger, let the world know who you belong to...”

“You Jack, I belong to you,” Harley murmured against his lips.

He twirled her around with a whispered, “I belong to you Harley.”

Jack then surprised her when he dipped her back. Harley laughed as Jack explained. “We are quickly approaching the fucking part of the evening.” Jack growled with a waggle of his eyebrows just before he brushed his teeth across her bottom lip then over her chin.

Harley squealed and giggled when Jack brought her back upright. He twirled her around again right toward the willow tree. He pressed her up against the trunk of the tree, his mouth covering hers. The kiss was hot, passionate, greedy. Harley kissed him in return with just as much vigor, her teeth sliding against his tongue. He rolled his body along hers, his pelvis thrusting against hers, pressing her back against the tree. Harley gasped and hissed, pressing her hips back against him. Through their clothing she could feel the heat of his body, making her desire spike. She wanted, needed to claw at him.

Jack pressed her back, breaking the kiss to lean down and mouth her breasts through the dress, his hands slipping down, then up her sides, grabbing fistfuls of her dress, shoving the cloth out of the way. He lifted her dress further until he could hook his hands under the skirt. Jack grinned pulling back just enough to brush his nose against hers.

“Why Miss Quinn, you aren't wearing any panties.”

Harley gave Jack a sly look. “Why Mr. Wayne, I ain't wearing any panties am I?”

Jack laughed. “My little minx.”

He purred just before he brushed his teeth over her chin. “You're a bad girl and I love it.”
Harley groaned, her hands sliding into his hair. “I'm all yours Jack, all yours.”

She pulled his head down to her neck where Jack bit down on her skin, sucking at the same time his fingers stroked against her, sending shivers of delighted heat through her entire body. Jack teased, rubbing hard, his finger dipping into her which earned him a cry of pleasure from Harley.

He thrust his finger into her with a whispered, “That's my girl.”

Harley whimpered, pressing against his finger, his thumb stroking over her until she cried out again. “Jack!”

He pulled his fingers away, causing Harley to shudder breathlessly. He scrambled a moment or two to pull his slacks open, shoving them down to his knees at the same instance as he lifted her up higher, sliding her against the trunk of the tree and shove himself deep inside her. Harley gasped the moment Jack entered her. He grabbed one of her legs under his good arm, lifting her leg high and giggling in appreciation of how flexible Harley was while he thrust hard and fast, burying himself deep into her yielding body, the warm wet sounds of him entering her, pulling out and entering her again mixed with their desperate panting. His free hand, Jack wrapped around her throat, squeezing just slightly, not enough to hurt her, but firmly, and causing her to grin at him.

Jack moaned. “You're beautiful Harley, my pumpkin, my poo, my baby girl.”

Harley whimpered, her fingers grabbing fistfuls of his hair, her head back against the tree completely ruining her hair do.

“Oh Jack!! Jack!” Her whole body bounced up and down against the tree.

He pounded harder into her hissing. “Harley...My Harley!”

Harley dropped her hands to Jack's shoulders holding on, grabbing fistfuls of his suit jacket in her hands while Jack bounced her up and and down against the tree trunk. Harley came with a loud groan.

“Oh Puddin’!”

Her body clamping down hard around his member caused Jack to burst, pressing his body tight against her hissing. “Harley, oh god Harley...”

*

The rest of the dinner had been nice if not exactly what Bruce had been expecting. Harvey and his wife stayed the whole time with him and and Selina, talking about this and that. It had been, well, normal, something Bruce realized he was lacking in his life. Bruce had decided to get Gilda something nice for the baby she was expecting though he wasn't sure what; he would have to ask his secretary. But part of Bruce felt sad, this was all an illusion...normal. No one knew what he did most nights....no one could ever know but Alfred. Then there was Jack.

Bruce pushed his thoughts aside as he drove up to the gates of the manor, hitting the button inside the vehicle that opened the gates. Bruce drove through, heading toward the manor when he saw what looked like lanterns hanging from the old willow. Bruce frowned, curious. What on earth, he thought to himself. He slowed his car down trying to see what was going on when he slammed on the brakes.

The light wasn’t perfect, but he didn’t need it to be to see that Jack and Harley were up against the willow...
Bruce quickly turned away and hit the gas a little too hard speeding up the drive.

*

Harley woke with a start, squealing when Jack wrapped his arms around her and blew raspberries against her shoulder. “Wake up!” he yelled.

“Ack!! Puddin!!” Harley squealed.

Jack nibbled on her shoulder. “Come on!! I wanna go ring shopping!!” He started tickling her until Harley was squawking for him to stop. Jack kept at it until Harley kicked him. He laughed, but let go, giving her a chance to roll right out of the bed and onto the floor.

“JACK!! Ouch!” Harley yelped.

Jack propped himself on his elbows looking over the side of the bed at her. “Shouldn't have kicked me now should you pooh.”

Harley stuck her tongue out at him. “You're horrible.”

“Yes, yes I am.” Jack grinned brightly. “But so are you.”

Harley wrinkled her nose at him and hopped to her feet. She was completely naked (just like Jack). She turned and ran to the shower. “Last one in the shower is a rotten egg!”

Jack jumped up. “Hey!! Harley!! No fair, I gave you a head start!”

“You're just a sore loser!!” Harley yelled back.

Jack laughed as he ran into the bathroom where Harley was squealing and soon the both of them were laughing together.

*

Soon, the two of them were dressed for the day. Today, Jack was in a pair of black trousers, a white dress shirt with a black blazer over that and a pair of black and purple two-tone wingtip Oxfords. Harley thought he looked good enough to drag him back inside and rip his clothing off.

Harley wore a pair of red business causal pants that had a bow around the waist and a sleeveless lace black top and black high heels that had a strap around her ankles. Her hair was down and loose around her shoulders and she wore the ruby necklace from last night around her neck.

Both of them had their makeup on, nails painted and grins in place, ready to attack Gotham in the day light.

Jack, refusing to put his sling back on after last night despite Harley's protests, grinned. “I feel like taking the bike today!”

He held the door open for Harley who frowned. “Jack, do you think that is a good idea with your shoulder?”

Jack laughed with a shake of his head. “Nope.” He giggled causing Harley to laugh despite herself.

*

The day was turning into a warm one in Gotham as Jack drove the motorcycle into the downtown
shopping area of Gotham, weaving in and out of traffic easily. Neither Jack nor Harley were wearing helmets, letting the wind blow through their hair. Harley tightened her thighs around Jack's hips and held her arms up and yelled, “YAHTZEE!!” as loud as she could, bringing a laugh to Jack's lips as they zipped between a couple of cars and rushed through an intersection just as the light changed.

Jack pulled up in front of Gotham's Graff jewelry store, a high end jewelry store known for its diamonds. This particular store was known for the jeweler Anton Ricci, who was on staff here. Jack hopped off the bike, grabbed Harley around the waist and nearly lifted her off the bike before yanking her against him.

He kissed her hard on the mouth and whispered, “You make me happy Harley.”

Harley wrapped her arms around his neck, her hands smoothing his hair back as she hissed softly. “You make me happy too Jack.”

Neither one of them cared that people were staring (or that a few people, who clearly recognized them from the news, were taking pictures or video.) Jack grabbed her rear, yanking her hard up against him, biting her mouth while growling softly. Harley responded by grinding up against him.

Jack sighed happily, finally releasing her mouth. “Let's go get you a ring my sweets.”

* * *

The inside of the jewelry store was all marble and dark wood glass displays with lighting designed to give the place a warm and comfortable atmosphere, with the light in the cases designed to make the gems inside sparkle and glitter with an almost unrealistic glow. Jack was practically skipping as he came inside, his hand in Harley's.

Harley looked around, her eyes wide. She had never in all her life seen so many jewels, gems, gold or silver in one place. It was a little intimidating to know how much money was in this place—and the people! She looked around seeing a few couples in here, and though she wasn't an expert on clothing, it was clear to her that everyone shopping in here wore expensive outfits. Harley felt slightly under dressed, but Jack completely ignored everyone as he headed straight to one of the woman standing behind a display, tugging Harley along with him.

The woman at the counter was tall, thin to the point that her cheekbones looked like they would cut anyone who dared to touch her. Her hair was styled to the point of stiffness, pulled too tightly back, tugging her skin back in the most gruesome way. She wore a black pencil skirt and matching black blouse, but when she saw Jack, her stony face broke into a rather frightening smile. Harley immediately thought...Stepford wife, yup.

Jack grinned, leaning on the counter. He glanced at the woman's name tag. “Helga. I need to talk to Ricci.”

Helga's smile dropped. “Anton Ricci only talks to patrons with appointments.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “Tell him it's Jack Wayne. He'll see me.”

Helga looked unsure for a moment; she started to protest again. Jack held up a finger at her as his eyes narrowed. “Do it.”

Haughtily, Helga snapped her mouth closed and turned around to march into the back. Jack grinned watching her go before he stood up and wrapped his arm around Harley's waist. “So I was thinking, something with diamonds and rubies, what do you think?”
Harley had just opened her mouth to reply when a young man came dashing out from the back.

“JACK!!”

The young man that came rushing out was wearing a pair of black slacks, matching black vest and a white shirt. He was short, maybe five feet four, with a black, thin, handlebar mustache and goatee that ended in a point as if he were trying to be an old time devil or vaudevillian. The shorter man ran around the counter and nearly slammed into Jack, wrapping his arms around him. Jack laughed hugging the man in return. “Anton!!”

Anton laughed and stood back looking up at Jack. “Ah, man I heard about the kidnapping. Geez, you know how to get yourself into trouble don't you man! So, when are you going to hook me up with One-armed Alex again. I haven't hit the races since the last time you, me and Frank were there causing trouble.”

Jack laughed. “Well, you know what they say, you aren't having any fun unless you're getting into trouble. I promise, I will get you in contact with Alex soon, but right now...”

Jack patted the man's back before he turned Anton around to face Harley. Jack threw his arm out like a game show host. “Anton, I would like you to met my fiancee, the magnificent Harley Quinn.”

Anton's eyes widened as he looked Harley. “Wow, you are the woman that's agreed to marry Jack?”

Harley smiled doing a little curtsy. “Yep, that's me.”

Anton walked over and took her hand, kissing her knuckles.“Well Miss Quinn, you must be crazy to marry this guy.” Anton grinned pointing over his shoulder with a thumb at Jack.

Jack laughed walking around Anton to wrap his arm around Harley's waist. “Yes, yes she is...” Jack turned to look at Harley stealing a soft kiss before directing his gaze back to Anton. “How is Frank by the way?”

“Oh my baby is doing good. He is off in Central city doing some business, though he will back for the weekend.” Anton grinned then motioned them to follow. “Come on you two, come to my office and let's talk.”

Anton led them into the back of the jewelry store where Anton's office was actually his work space. The space was dominated by his workbench and several locked cabinets that Harley guessed contained precious metals, jewels and the tools of his trade. Anton pulled a couple of folding chairs from against the wall, setting them up near his workbench. Jack sat down in one of the chairs, but instead of having Harley sit in the other chair, Jack tugged her over to his lap causing her to giggle. Jack wrapped a hand around her thigh, his other hand on her hip. Anton sat at his workbench and steepled his fingers, his elbows resting on the bench.

“So, what can I do for you, Jack? Are you here to have a ring designed for a certain beautiful woman?” Anton winked at Harley.

Harley blushed as Jack gave her a squeeze, his arms tight around her. “Yes indeed, I want you to design my girl here an engagement ring.”

Anton grinned happily pulling out a drawer at his workbench. From the drawer Anton took out a pad and pencil. “So, tell me what you have in mind.”

* 

After nearly forty-five minutes they had a design; a black gold band that held a circle of rubies and
diamonds, all radiant cuts and in the center a large 2.15 radiant cut diamond. Jack and Harley looked over the design that Anton had put together on paper.

Harley squeaked. “Oh Jack it’s too much!”

Jack grinned. “It's perfect! Nothing is too good for my girl.”

Anton grinned pleased with himself and looked between the two of them. “Give me two weeks and the ring should be ready. This will be my top priority.”

Jack stood and pulled Anton into a hug, not your typical “guy” hug, but a genuine, affectionate hug. “Thank you Anton. Maybe we, the four of us, can get together and do some betting or a game of cards?” Jack winked at him.

Anton laughed. “Oh I know better than to play cards with you Jack, but yeah, that would be great.”

Anton stepped away from Jack and turned to Harley. He grabbed her, wrapping his arms around her in a snug hug. Harley looked startled, but she hugged him back just as affectionately. Anton let go and held Harley at arms length.

“You must be something pretty special to hook our Jack.” He leaned close to her and whispered against her ear. “Keep him safe, he has a gift for finding trouble.” Anton stepped back with a gentle pat to her arm. Harley smiled in return. “I plan on it.”

Anton nodded and turned back to Jack. “Frank is going to adore your girl. So when can I expect an invitation to the wedding?”

Jack and Harley both smiled and said together. “No idea.”

Anton put his hands on his hips and stared at the two of them like a scolding mother. “Well, get to picking a date you two.”

* *

Jack and Harley had just stepped out of back room, and into the main showroom of the jewelry store, leaving Anton in the back to get to work. Jack was discussing where they should go for lunch when two people walked into the jewelry store. Jack stopped dead in his tracks and his arm around Harley's waist tightened. Harley frowned at the shift in Jack's face, her eyes following Jack gaze. There, having just walked in, were Troy and Tiffany. Troy was dressed in a pair of white slacks, a white polo with a pink blazer over the top, his hair still maintaining that “Ken” doll look. Tiffany wasn't any better. She wore a pair of bright reddish-orange slacks with a leopard print, sleeveless top and beige ballet flats. It was clear to anyone that the clothing was expensive, even if the taste of the Randell's clothing was questionable.

Harley started to open her mouth to say something, but Jack hissed back without looking at her. “This is going to go one of two ways. Either Troy will see us and stomp over here to hit me, Tiffany might even try to hit you. OR—and the mostly likely choice since Troy is a coward—he will try to start a battle of wits, which will include being extremely loud as he tries to draw as many people into the fight as he can while hurling insults. Either way, this is about to get messy.” Jack's grin was wide. “It's gonna be great.”

No sooner had the words come out of Jack's mouth than Troy turned and saw Jack and Harley standing there smiling. The way Troy's face fell was comical, but Tiffany's was even better. Her hair looked as if she had had it done at “The Wives of Orange County” boutique, her make-up was too perfect, her nails too long and whoever had outlined her lips looks as if they had been going for the
“evangelical TV pastor wife” look. When her expression dropped, Harley giggled thinking Tiffany was in serious trouble of losing her entire face with the way her expression struggled not to fall from all the botox (as with everything the Randell’s did, Harley guessed, moderation was not something they believed in), but gravity was winning.

Troy recovered first and sneered. “Well if it isn't Jack Wayne, you cheating pile of shit and his bitch.”

Jack lifted a brow at Troy with a grin. “Whoa there Troy, such language.”

People in the jewelry store turned to look at the confrontation between the two couples.

Troy walked over to Jack and pushed him in the chest. “You and your paid for cunt here did that on purpose yesterday.”

Jack’s eyes narrowed slowly. “What did you call Harley?”

Troy sneered again. “You heard me.”

Tiffany, in a surprising moment of common sense, hurried over and grabbed Troy by the arm. “Troy not here! Not like this!”

Troy yanked his arm free from Tiffany. “You're just a sad little throwaway son, you know that Wayne. I'm sure your parents were glad to get killed just to get away from a whiny little brat like you.”

Jack’s eyes narrowed. Only Harley saw the slight twitch in his cheek, but Jack continued to smile. “Oh Troy. Do you realize that people just tolerate you? That Tiffany here is only with you for the money?”

Tiffany let out a little squeak which made Harley snicker, thinking to herself that apparently Jack had hit the nail on the head with that last remark.

Tiffany’s tiny little eyes flashed at Harley. “What are you laughing about you...you gold-digger!”

Harley made a face at Tiffany and stuck her tongue out. “Oh shut up Tiffany, you're not pretty enough to be this stupid.”

Tiffany’s mouth flopped open and closed, she clearly didn't know how to respond to Harley's insult. Harley smiled. “I have a PhD, don't even try Tiffany.”

Jack snorted grinning at Harley. That was about the time the manager, a short, bald man in a black suit came hurrying over, putting himself between the two couples. “I'm going to have to ask you both to leave if you are going to continue this behavior.”

Troy turned on the manager. “Shut up! I could buy this shop and kick you on the street, you urchin.”

Jack sighed directing his attention to the manager. “Sorry about my friend here, I'm not sure how he even survived infancy.”

The manager glanced sideways at Troy, but smiled at Jack. “Indeed. Could you move outside please?”

Jack smiled with a little nod. “Of course.”

Jack started to guide Harley around Troy and Tiffany, when Troy grabbed Jack’s upper arm, digging
his fingers in as he did his best to hurt Jack, but Jack didn't respond to the pain except to raise an eyebrow at Troy, glancing down at Troy's hand then back at Troy. “You should move that unless you want to lose it. And believe me Troy,” Jack's voice was low and devoid of emotion. “That is not an idle threat.”

Troy hissed low, dropping his hand but kept his voice pitched low so the manager didn't hear him. “You are nothing Wayne...” He shoved Jack's shoulder forcing Jack to face him (Jack letting him) and stepped right up to Jack's chest thrusting his own chest forward in an effort to intimidate Jack. “You will never be half the man that your brother Bruce is.”

Jack just continued to smile, not moving an inch back from Troy. Jack's calm response to Troy caused the other man to feel a chill run up his spine. “Troy, you are one of those people who would be enormously improved by death.”

Troy blinked at the insult, but Jack continued. “Your biggest problem is that your little brain is primitive, you have no self-control, or maybe it's because you took three-fourths of your penis and shoved it into your personality?”

With that Jack took Harley's hand in his (Harley had her free hand over her mouth trying not to laugh too loudly, but she was having a difficult time of it) and walked around Troy and Tiffany, heading for the door. Troy yelled back at him making a spectacle of himself. “Yeah, walk away Wayne! You know you couldn't beat me in a fair fight!” Jack stopped. Harley felt the tension in his muscles. He turned to glanced over his shoulder at Troy. “You know Troy, I don't care enough about you to hate you.” With that Jack pushed the door open and stepped outside, but just before they were out of ear shout Harley turned and waved, shouting. “I hope your day is as pleasant as you are!”

* 

Once they were outside Jack sighed. Harley looked at him with concern. “Are you all right?”

“Yes, just...you know I think we may have to do something permanent about Troy and Tiffany.” Jack mused walking with her down to the parked motorcycle, but he stopped short beside the car that was pinning the motorcycle in...which had to have been deliberate. The car was a white convertible 2017 Mercedes-Benz AMG SL Base with black leather interior. Jack smirked tilting his head, letting go and walking around the car, studying it. Whoever owned the car had parked like an asshole, angling the car in such a way that no one could accidentally scratch the paint by parking near it (besides the fact that whoever owned the car was pinning Jack's motorcycle in. He would have to carefully walk it out of the spot in order for them to use the bike).

Jack stopped when he came to the front of the car and grinned. “Now will you look at this.”

Harley walked over to look at what Jack had noticed. He pointed and Harley saw the vanity license plate that read “TroysBaby.” Jack laid his fingers against his chin tapping it.

“Oh let me guess who this belongs to.”

Harley wrinkled her nose. “Those vanity plates are creepy.”

Jack laughed then slowly grinned. “How much time do you think we have?”

Harley tilted her head looking at Jack before she glanced at the jewelry store. “They just walked into the store. After that little confrontation, I would say they are going to want to spend a little more time than they were planning just to show off and to make sure the manager knows they have money to
Jack's grin was wicked. “I think I can work with that.”

Harley smirked narrowing her eyes. “What do you have planned?”

Harley stood guard watching the Randells through the store's picture window, while Jack took off down the street at a jog. He was gone a good twenty minutes. Harley started to become worried, but when he returned he had a brown paper bag full of supplies that he had said he needed to 'fix' Troy's car.

Jack came jogging up with his bag. Harley had been leaning on the bike, pushed up when she saw him. Jack grinned. “They still inside?”

“Yes, I think they are looking at necklaces or something. It looked like Troy was arguing with Anton about something earlier. They are still in there. So what did you go get?” she asked pulling down the side of the bag to look inside. Jack giggled. “I bought us a cornucopia of pranks my sweet!” Jack set the bag down on the sidewalk. “The first thing we are going to do is dump this pound of sugar into Troy's gas tank. Then I bought a gallon of paint and some wire.”

Harley frowned. “What's that for?”

“Oh you'll see and I bought some spray paint for each of us too.” Jack was giggling. “And! A tennis ball for the exhaust.” Jack tossed her the ball which Harley caught easily.

“Would you do the honors my sweetling?”

Harley giggled and hurried over dropping down to a crouch behind Troy's car and shoved the tennis ball as far up the tail pipe as she could, standing up and giving it a few good kicks before grinning at Jack.

Jack took the can of paint and set it carefully in the backseat, he pulled the lid off, then set it on top of the paint can, lifting the handle. From there he tied the wire around the handle carefully drawing it out before he tied it around the stick shift of the car. Next, Jack poured the sugar into the gas tank, all of it, careful not to spill much on the sidewalk.

A few people walked by and glanced at them, but did nothing to stop them or even stopped to ask them what they were doing. Harley figured it was a case of “not wanting to get involved” or “crazy rich people.”

Jack then eased his way out of the car. He grabbed the two cans of spray paint and tossed one to Harley. She grabbed it out of the air easily, giggling.

“Pink?” she asked.

Jack grinned wide. “Of course, you saw his jacket. Had to be pink. Mine is orange in honor of Tiffany's God awful pants.” They both started laughing.

“What should we write?” Harley asked examining the car.

“Eh, let's not write anything...just draw dicks...you know my sweet, the classics.” Jack grinned which caused Harley to burst out laughing.
After well over an hour, Troy and Tiffany left the jewelry store in a huff. Troy was complaining as he stomped out. “I just can't believe the service in that place! I guess I shouldn't be surprised, I mean they let trash like Jack Wayne walk in there.”

Tiffany saw the car first, stopping in her tracks, though Troy kept walking around to his side of the car before he noticed the brightly colored orange and pink dicks painted all over his new car. For a moment Troy didn't do anything but stand there staring. Tiffany, her hands over her mouth watched him in horror waiting for the explosion, which came a split second later.

“WHAT THE MOTHERFUCKING HELL!!! Who did this??!!” Troy started screaming. People on the sidewalk (who had been walking by snickering at the penis graffiti on the car for the last fifteen minutes, a few stopping to take pictures) either hurried away or a few stopped to film as Troy literally stomped his foot and screamed. “WHO DID THIS??!”

Tiffany rushed over. “Troy, Troy stop it! You're making a scene.”

“A scene!! A SCENE!! Do you see my car??!” Troy kicked his car. Tiffany grabbed his hands. “Troy, come on lets go home, it's just some paint you can have it fixed.”

Troy breathed heavily through his teeth before he finally yanked the door open. “Fine, get in Tiffany.”

Tiffany hurriedly ran around the car and hopped in, buckling her seat belt. Troy slammed the key and revved the engine. The moment he did, the tennis ball shot out of the tailpipe like a bullet, smashing into the headlights of the car behind them shattering the glass. Troy and Tiffany yelped turning around. Troy cursed, turning back around and ripped his car out of the park space, as he did so, ripped the gear shaft back and forth, the wire became taunt and the gallon of paint in the back was ripped off the seat, bright pink bubblegum paint spilled across the black leather. The bright pink paint splashed Troy and Tiffany. Tiffany screamed as did Troy at the same time that he yanked his car into traffic to the sounds of honking horns and cursing people. Troy tore down the street disappearing, accompanied by the sounds of honks and screeching tires.

*  

A week later.

*  

There next session with Dr. Leland would be tomorrow, but right now Harley had other things on her mind.

Harley was in the bathroom with the pregnancy test that had arrived that morning. She had ordered it online and managed to hide it among her things until she could slip it into the bathroom with her. She didn't want Jack to know; she wasn't sure why, except she was scared. She had it sitting on the counter waiting. The little white stick seemed to dominate the bathroom sink glaring in its whiteness.

Jack had gone downstairs to wait for the delivery of their outfits for the dinner tonight with Harvey Dent and his wife. They were going to the opening of a new restaurant, just a casual dinner between friends.

Jack was just excited to dress up again. He had insisted on new clothes for them both. Harley smiled. Jack loved playing dress-up; his love of clothing was fun and she found she enjoyed playing dress-up too. She picked up her toothbrush and squeezed some toothpaste onto the bristles focusing on the
task of brushing her teeth and NOT on the test that sat near the sink. She was hoping the results would be ready before Jack came back up the stairs with the new dress.

She spit and rinsed her teeth before she started to pace back and forth again. What would she do if she was pregnant? Would Jack be happy or furious? Harley stopped and looked at herself in the mirror. Today she was looking younger than usual with light makeup and her hair was up in pigtails. She wore a simple pair of red shorts and a buttoned white blouse that she had tied around her middle. Jack and she were supposed to go out and play some miniature golf today before going out to dinner.

Harley stared at the test. It was angled in such a way that she couldn't see it from where she was presently standing. She licked her lips, then nervously started churning her bottom lip. She slowly reached for the pregnancy test, picked it up, and wrapped her hand around it so that she couldn't see the results. She took a deep breath, looking at herself in the mirror. “You can do this Harley,” she said out loud staring into her blue eyes before she nodded with false confidence. She opened her hand then turned the test around and looked down to see the two pink lines that indicated that she was indeed pregnant.

* Jack walked into the room carrying two garment bags with a big smile plastered on his face. In one bag Jack held his new suit and the other held Harley's new dress. With his other arm, he held two shoe boxes with new shoes in them. Jack called out happily: “Harley, our costumes for the evening are here!”

He hummed, grinning as he laid the garment bags across the bed. He had purchased Harley a gorgeous A-line/princess, off the shoulder dress with a sweep train of chiffon and a ruffled split front to show off her sexy legs. He had purchased for her a pair of black high heel sandals with cutouts along the sides that were decorated with rhinestones and a strap that wrapped around her ankles—he loved ankle straps, they made Harley's legs that much more sexy. Jack's suit for the evening was a navy blue three piece suit, slim cut to highlight his own figure with a vest that buttoned at an angle, a white shirt, a striped navy and silver tie along with a pair of two-tone wingtip navy blue leather oxfords. He had even bought Harley a new ornament to wear, which was a surprise, a pair of square and pear ruby teardrop earrings, set in rose gold. Jack held the jewelry box in his hand smiling down at the earrings, tracing his fingertip along the red jewels when Harley came out of the bathroom. Jack looked up smiling, ready to show her the earrings when he saw that she looked...wrong. Jack frowned, his Harley looked pale and stunned.

“Harley? You all right pumpkin?” Jack snapped the case closed and tossed the earrings down onto the bed. He walked over to take Harley into his arms. “Hey, what happened pooh bear?”

Harley's bottom lip started to quiver. She thought she knew how she was going to tell him, but instead she simply placed the pregnancy test in his hand. Jack frowned in confusion turning the plastic stick over and stared at it. The two pink lines seemed to leap out at him. Jack stared, unable to form a coherent thought for a few seconds before he spoke.

“Harley? Are you—are you pregnant?” Jack's voice had dropped to a mere whisper.

Harley nodded just as tears started to flow down her cheeks. “Yes. I noticed I was late last week, but when I didn't start...”

Jack tossed the test onto the bed and grabbed Harley's face in both hands, pressing his mouth to hers. His kiss was slow, just a sweet pressing of his lips over hers, first one angle, then the next, his mouth traveling lightly over hers as if he was using his lips to gently feel each inch of her own in a loving caress. With just the tip of his tongue, Jack licked her lips urging her to open her mouth. Harley let
out a soft moan, her arms going around Jack's waist holding him tight against her.

After another minute Jack laid his forehead against hers. “Thank you Harley,” he whispered.

“Thank you?” Harley asked confused.

Jack smiled brushing his nose against hers. “You've made me so happy. I have you and now we are going to have a baby. A little Jack or Harley, a person created by the two of us. Our own family.”

Jack laughed and reached down grabbing her under her rear and lifted her up in the air, spinning around with her. “We are going to be parents!! How awesome is that?”

Harley laughed with Jack carrying her to the bed and tossing her down before jumping on top of her heedless of the garment bags or the earrings. Leaning on his arms above her, Jack grinned. “I think instead of miniature golfing we are going to do something else to celebrate you making me a daddy.”

Harley giggled, her previous fears completely vanished. “What's that?”

Jack waggled his eyebrows and shimmied down her body, his fingers working at her shorts. He loosened them before grabbing them around the band and yanked them off of her. Harley squealed and laughed. “Jack!”

She was about to say something else, but before she could utter another word, Jack's tongue was taking long, slow licks from her that had her body vibrating with pleasure.

*

Jack stepped up behind Harley, wrapping his arms around her waist and gazed at her in the mirror. She was dressed in the long red dress he had purchased for her, the earrings dangling from her ears, the top part of her hair pulled back and held in place with a small gold clip, the rest falling in soft blonde waves around her shoulders.

“You look good enough to eat,” Jack whispered against her shoulder, placing a kiss there. The kiss left a perfect lipstick mark of his lips which he almost wiped away, but then decided against it. Then he chuckled. “Oh right, did that already.”

“Jack!” Harley laughed.

Jack winked at her licking his lips. “Mmm...”

Harley giggled and blushed. Jack turned her around to face him, cupping her face in his hands. “We should tell Bruce tonight.”

“Are you sure?” Harley looked pale at the mention of telling Bruce about her pregnancy.

“Yes, positive!” Jack grinned stealing a quick, careful kiss so as not to mess up either of their lip sticks before he took her hand. “We should get downstairs. I'm sure Bruce is about to have a fit and while that would be as funny as hell to watch, I'm actually looking forward to some dinner and dancing with my girl.”

With that, Jack took her hand tugging her along with him as he swept from the room.

*

Bruce was indeed waiting for them downstairs. He was dressed in a fairly typical black suit, white shirt affair, but he had taken extra care with his hair and had even added a gold tie clip to his suit.
Alfred was with him by the door, the two men talking when Jack and Harley, laughing and holding hands came rushing down the stairs.

“Sorry Bruce! Harley was repainting my nails for me to match my suit.” Jack laughed holding up his free hand to show that the nails were now indeed a shade of dark navy that looked almost black until the light caught the color and showed the deep blue.

Bruce made no comment on his brother's nail polish, but he did smile. “You two look very nice.”

Jack bowed while Harley curtsied, both of them giggling.

Bruce frowned, curious. “You two seem inordinately happy.”

“Well, I got some good news today which I'm going to share at dinner so everyone can share in our happiness!” Jack gave his brother a mysterious look. Bruce's frown deepened as he studied his brother and Harley. They both seemed to be excited about whatever this news was they had for him, but they wanted to wait until the restaurant, Bruce shrugged. “All right well, let's get going.”

The three of them walked out where one of the Waynes' cars was waiting. This time the vehicle was a seven-seater Volvo XC90 in a metallic blue color. The inside of the vehicle was cream colored with leather seats. A gentleman in the front wore a driver's outfit complete with black hat and black suit.

The three of them stepped into the vehicle, with Jack carefully handing Harley in. Bruce sat down in front of them while Jack and Harley took the back seats. After the driver turned down the driveway and headed out of the gate, Bruce turned around. He smiled at both of them leaning on his arm.

“Apparently this restaurant has an old-fashioned floor show. I believe Harvey said the show was acrobats? Not sure now, sort of a Cirque du Soleil type of performance.”

Harley grinned. “That's sounds fun.”

Jack nodded clearly distracted. Bruce frowned at his brother. Acrobats would have usually had Jack excited, but he didn't seem to care as much as usual. Bruce cleared his throat. “Jack?”

Jack glanced at Bruce, his attention had previously been on Harley, whose hand he was holding in his lap. “Yes?”

Bruce eyed his brother carefully. “Are you all right?”

Jack glanced at Harley with a smile on his face. She whispered encouragement to him. “Go ahead. I can tell you can't wait 'til the restaurant.”

Jack smiled widened before he turned to his brother. “Harley's pregnant!”

“What?” Bruce's voice dropped to a hushed tone, the shock on his face clear as day.

Jack continued grinning, his smile bright. “My Harley is pregnant! I'm going to be a dad!”

Jack brought Harley's hand up to his mouth where he kissed her knuckles leaving a light red print of his lips behind. Bruce stared then slowly he smiled. “You are going to be a daddy?”

Harley nodded affirmation. “Yes, he is.”

Jack waited. He would never admit it, but he was worried about Bruce's reaction. There was still that little boy deep down, hidden in the darkness, that wanted his big brother's approval and whether
Bruce approved or not, Jack was happy that his girl was pregnant, that little boy still wanted Brucie to be happy with him and for him.

Bruce smiled at the both of them. “I'm going to be a uncle.”

All three of them laughed.

* *

The new French restaurant was called The Monte. Tonight was its opening night and the place was filled to capacity. The driver dropped them off in front after a lengthy wait, but soon Bruce was leading them inside to where a maitre d' waited at a pulpit looking up names in the reservation book. The man was tall, thin with white blonde hair and grey eyes, but with a nice, friendly smile, wearing a tuxedo. When he saw them, it was clear he recognized the Waynes immediately.

“Ah, Mr. Bruce Wayne, Jack Wayne and friend. I will have someone escort you to your table in just a moment.” The maitre d' waved his fingers and a hostess in a french maid's outfit seemed to appear out of thin air. The young brunette smiled at them. “Right this way please—the Dents are already waiting for you.”

The inside of the restaurant was elegant, with cream colored walls, crystal chandeliers everywhere and round tables with crisp white tablecloths and cushioned chairs. In one corner was a piano, and of course a stage that was just slightly raised above the main floor and extended into the middle of the dining area. The wall that faced out toward the street had large curved windows with elegant, lacy white curtains while the other walls were decorated with classic Monet paintings.

Harvey and his wife had a table right along the stage area, close enough to provide a perfect view of the stage, but not so close that any performers would accidentally cross the table. Bruce's eyes immediately zeroed in on Selina who sat at the table with Harvey and Gilda. She smiled, her cat-green eyes focused on Bruce. Selina wore an asymmetrical black evening dress, a black lace choker around her slender throat and her lips were ruby red as she smiled at him.

Harvey was leaning close to Gilda whispering something to her over the sounds of a live four string quartet that was currently playing “Anything Goes” when she caught sight of Bruce and company being led to their table.

Harvey stood. “Bruce, Jack, Harley! You all look so wonderful tonight. I'm happy you three could make it.”

Harvey was dressed in a silver grey suit while Gilda, who didn't stand, her hand resting on her belly, was wearing a forest green maxi dress that looked simply stunning on her with her pregnant belly. For a moment, when Harley saw her, she was struck by the idea that she would look like Gilda in a few months. Harley glanced at Jack who was clearly thinking the same thing. Jack brought her hand up and kissed her knuckles smiling at her, his blues eyes dancing.

“Come on everybody, sit and let's order some drinks!” Harvey smiled and motioned everyone to sit. Bruce took the seat next to Selina who purred, “Hello Bruce—you look very handsome tonight. Black suits you.”

Bruce smiled taking Selina's hand and kissing it. “Black suits you as well Selina.”

Jack sat next to his brother with Harley on his other side; he pulled her chair closer so that their knees were touching. Under the table he stroked the chiffon away from her thigh and placed his hand on her bare leg giving her thigh a squeeze. Harley giggled glancing at Jack through her lashes while
Jack's hand slid up her thigh.

* 

Outside on the roof of the building next to The Monte, Lester Buchinsky, or as he was called by his professional working name, the Electrocutioner, prepared to enter the restaurant. He adjusted his suit allowing the electricity to arch over his fists and up his arms for a moment as he grinned. He was being paid good money by Mayor Hill to go in there and kill Harvey Dent.

Mayor Hill had been made aware recently that Dent was doing a lot of digging, digging that was starting to make connections between Hill and the mob in Gotham. If Dent made the connections, his making district attorney would give him the power to go after Mayor Hill, and Hill really couldn't afford that...there was far too much money at stake. Electrocutioner didn't really care about any of it. He was getting paid a great deal of money, and it was fun getting paid for something he would be happy to do for free. Flexing his fingers one more time, Electrocutioner backed up and took a running leap across the roof, landing on the roof of the restaurant. He walked across the roof, finding the door that led down from the roof and made his way inside.

* 

Dent smiled, looking over the top of his menu. “All right, I want everyone to order whatever they want, this is my treat and before either of you Waynes try to protest, I won't hear it. This is something Gilda and I discussed, so no arguing. Now, I hear the roasted salmon with lemon saffron sauce, provencal style vegetables and fresh herbs is excellent.”

Selina grinned. “Oh I do love fish. I think that's what I'll order.”

Gilda smiled. “The same for me.”

Bruce chuckled. “Well I think I will order the filet of turbot with Comté crust and Champagne sauce.”

Jack and Harley, shoulder to shoulder were looking over the menu together. “Hmm...I think grilled filet mignon with black truffle sauce what do you think my sweets?”

Jack glanced sideways at Harley.

Harley grinned. “That sounds...”

Before Harley could finished her sentence there was an explosion of electricity that ripped across the ceiling of the restaurant, shattering the chandeliers. Screaming started as the lights went out, there was another arc of lightning that ripped through the ceiling, this time the jolts of lightning created cracks in the plaster above, sending hunks of plaster raining down on the people below. Customers started to flee, but no sooner had the lights gone out and the crowd started to panic, than Electrocutioner dropped down smashing into the table where Dent and the others were sitting.

Electrocutioner stood up, electricity racing up and down his arms and along his back and head. He laughed, turning to face Dent. “Say good bye, Mr. Dent.”

Harvey had been knocked back to the floor. He looked up into the crazed killer's face just as electricity shot out toward him him. Gilda screamed, but at the last moment, the electricity arced, looking as if it would slam into Dent, but at the last second, Harvey was yanked out of the way—but not far enough, the electricity ripped through half of Dent's body.

Bruce was hit with some of the jolt when he dragged Harvey out of the way, the blast missed his friend's heart but still hit Harvey hard. The jolt raced from Harvey, traveling up and into Bruce. The
electricity threw Bruce backwards into another table causing him to slam into it hard enough that the table broke in two.

Jack and Harley had been blasted backwards from the table, large chunks of ceiling falling down on the two of them. Jack gasped, pushing himself to his feet, trying to dig himself out his only thought for Harley. He cried out for her. “HARLEY!”

He didn't see her at first as he stood up, stumbling slightly, but then he saw her, the electricity arcing through the place highlighted her red dress. She was still by the table, still standing, weaving in place, and had started to take a step toward him when Electrocutioner reached out and grabbed her, yanking her off her feet and against him. The man yelled. “GIVE ME DENT OR THIS WOMAN DIES!”

The electricity was arcing from the man, lighting up the whole of the restaurant as he yelled again. “WHERE IS DENT?!”

Harley screamed, not in fear, but like a crazed animal. Her lessons with Jack rushed back to her as she tried to get a hold on the man, a hit, anything. The man had her around the waist which freed Harley's arms and legs. She drove her elbow up and back, catching him painfully in the chin. Buchinsky hissed in pain when his jaw snapped shut, causing him to bite his tongue, the coppery taste of blood filling his mouth. Harley kicked, then slammed her heeled shoe down on his instep which resulted in Buchinsky howling in pain. Buchinsky growled. This woman was proving to be more of a handful than he had thought she would be. She was fighting his grip, kicking, hitting, biting. Buchinsky finally hissed at her, “Shut up, ya cunt!” He gave her a zap against the side of her head that knocked her out, her body going limp.

* 

Bruce had pulled Harvey and Gilda to the other side of the stage. Half of Harvey's face was covered in black and angry red burns that traveled down his face and over that half of his body. Harvey's suit was smoldering in places and the flesh visible beneath was blackened. Harvey was unconscious, his head in his wife's lap. Gilda was sobbing. Bruce crouched near them, watching the Electrocutioner, cursing when he saw the man grab Harley.

Bruce turned to Gilda. “Stay here, try not to make a sound. I'm going to get help.”

* 

Jack saw Harley go limp and his rage started to blind him. He stood, snarling, his whole body trembling with the urge to kill this man, to rip his throat out. Jack hissed in fury, “I'm going to kill you!”

* 

Bruce debated leaving for a moment, but this situation needed Batman, not Bruce Wayne. He just needed enough time to change into his suit. Just as Bruce stood up, staying slightly crouched, ready to find a way out to call for the Batmobile, he saw his brother. Jack had walked closer to the Electrocutioner.

Jack snarled, his eyes flashing with hatred. “LET HER GO!”

The Electrocutioner turned, dragging the unconscious Harley with him. The man smiled at Jack. “Bring me Dent and you can have the blonde back.”

Bruce cursed. He needed to go now while Electrocutioner was distracted, while he could, but his
brother... Bruce shook his head and turned, he had only minutes for Batman to get here and stop this.

* 

Jack reached down picking up a steak knife from the debris around him, his knuckles around the knife were white. Jack's eyes turned deadly and he smiled, but it was cold. “Let her go, now.”

Electrocutioner wrapped his hand around Harley's neck lifting her up off her feet. The electricity arced near her, though Buchinsky kept it from hitting Harley just yet.

“You heard my demands little man, give me Dent and you can have your bitch.”

In the next breath of each man, there was a crash and Batman dropped through the ceiling in front of Electrocutioner to land in a crouch.

Buchinsky cursed. “Fuck! One step closer and I kill the woman!”

Batman hissed, his voice deep and menacing as he stood, a creature of darkness, the arcing lightning from Buchinsky actually making Batman seem more menacing. “You have nowhere to go—let the woman go.”

For a moment it looked like Buchinsky would let her go. He looked around realizing that his choices were limited. Jack for a moment felt something like relief when he saw Batman, the same man who had helped save both him and Harley weeks ago.

But then Electrocutioner smiled. “Let's see which you want more Batman, to catch me or save the woman.”

With that Electrocutioner held Harley up by her neck, brought his other fist back, electricity dancing around his fist in a dance of deadly light. Jack’s eyes went wide. He screamed, his voice going shrill. “NO!”

Batman charged forward, but it was too late. Electrocutioner's fist slammed Harley in her diaphragm. For a moment her whole body was lit by the electricity before she flew across the room to land hard against the stage where she lay unmoving.
The sound of complete rage and anguish that ripped from Jack's throat when Harley was thrown almost stopped Batman in his tracks. He watched his brother race across the dining room to fall to his knees at Harley's side; she wasn't moving. Jack scooped her up, turning to glare at Batman.

“What are you doing? Go after him!” Jack nearly screamed in his rage. Bruce could see the madness rear its ugly head in Jack's gaze. Bruce felt his heart plummet...if Dr. Quinzel was...No...he couldn't think that way. He couldn't let personal feelings stop him from doing the job he had to do.

But, for a moment, it was Bruce and not Batman that almost stayed, stayed to help his brother, his friend Harvey, the people he cared about. Jack was right, however; he had a job to do and that was to capture the Electrocutioner. Batman glanced toward Jack, his voice deep as he yelled, “Call 911!”

Then the Batman disappeared to follow the Electrocutioner.

Jack watched him go, rage at the man who had done this, who had hurt his Harley, seemed to fill every part of his being. Jack turned back to Harley cradling her in his arms. Her dress was burned and blackened. He could see her stomach underneath in patches where the dress was destroyed, burned; the tattoo on her stomach was barely visible through the remains of the burned dress. There were angry red blisters forming on her skin where her attacker's gauntlet had touched her. Jack reached for his phone, then stopped when he felt something hot and wet against his legs where Harley's body lay across him. He looked down and saw the blood covering the bottom of her dress, soaking through and into the material of his slacks. Jack stared with a hushed, “No...”

He wrapped his arms around her, cradling her head gently against his chest and whispered, tears starting to smear his make up as they ran down his cheeks. “Don't you dare leave me Harley, don't you dare.”

*  

Batman could see the Electrocutioner; the man wasn't subtle. The man was pounding down the street using his powers to throw cars and people out of his way. Batman couldn't be sure if he was trying to escape or not, or perhaps he was just stupid. Batman was betting on stupid because no one smart would leave a trail like that to follow. Bruce cursed as he used his grappling hook to lift himself up higher just as a flying SUV that Buchinsky threw down the street towards him sailed by Batman, just missing him. The SUV continued tumbling head to tail down the street, scattering onlookers, until the vehicle crashed against the side of a building to the sound of shattering glass and crumpling metal. The man was causing more damage and chaos out here, as if failing in his murder attempt he just wanted to destroy as much as possible. Batman muttered to himself, ”Stupid.”

His mind flashed back to Harvey and Harley, hurt or worse back at the restaurant, but most especially his mind went back to the look on his brother's face, the pain visible in his expression. Bruce had not seen a look like that on his little brother's since the death of their parents. He needed to stop Buchinsky before anyone else was hurt. He had to stop Buchinsky for Jack, especially for Jack, whom Bruce knew could not suffer another loss of someone he loved. Batman pulled out a batarang from its clip. He hand landed on a light post, his eyes flashing toward Buchinsky, looking for that tell-tale weakness. There. Batman saw it when Buchinsky turned, there was a power pack on his back helping to generate the electricity he used to attack. Batman needed to hit the power pack on Electrocutioner's back, disable it, which would take away Electrocutioner's only advantage, then Batman could subdue him.
Batman pulled his arm back, ready to throw, the batarang held between his fingers, when Buchinsky turned and threw his hand out, a bolt of lightning arced and raced along the pavement toward Batman. The man roared. “You're going to die Batman!”

Batman threw himself to the side, diving out of the way just barely in time. He dove off the side of the light post and landed hard on the roof of a car, denting the roof in the process. The sound of the electricity hitting the spot Batman had just occupied, blasting the light pole into a rain of sparks, caused it to fall, crashing into several parked cars. The bolt continued blasting a hole in the pavement around the now downed light post. The charge in the air made Batman's hair stand on end under his cowl.

“You're no match for me Batman!” Buchinsky yelled with a laugh.

“Give it up Electrocutioner!” Batman yelled back calmly.

Batman stepped forward and threw his batarang. The sharp-edged device flew threw the air, the blades ripping through Electrocutioner's shoulder. The man jerked back with the impact, the blade cutting through not just his flesh, but through the wires that ran from his pack through his costume cutting off the supply of electricity. The cut wires snapped and hissed next to Buchinsky's ear causing a couple of shocks, but nothing that he couldn't handle. He hadn't made it this far without a number of shocks in the past. What Buchinsky didn't see was Batman rushing toward him until at the last second when Buchinsky turned and the Bat slammed his entire weight into Buchinsky, driving the man back and into one of the parked cars along the edge of the sidewalk. Buchinsky brought his other hand up, which still had power, slamming the fist into Batman's side, directly in the ribs.

Batman hissed, his teeth clamping together as the shock wave of electrical current raced through his body. The pain hit him in a jolt as the electricity arced over the entire half of his body where the Electrocutioner's fist hit, but thanks to Alfred and Fox, the suit was insulated not just against heat and cold, but also electricity. So while he still felt a shock of the electricity, it wasn't the disabling jolt that Buchinsky had hoped it would be.

Batman hissed and grabbed Buchinsky around the throat.

“That's enough,” he snarled before he slammed Buchinsky's head against the hood of the car, once, twice until Buchinsky stopped moving, the big man's body going limp in Batman's hands. Batman let go and the large man sank to the ground. Batman rolled him over and cuffed him before letting himself lean against the car, panting. This superhero stuff was a lot harder than Bruce anticipated when he made the decision to become the Batman. The police raced towards him and the downed Buchinsky, guns drawn. No time to rest, he thought as he aimed his grappling hook and yanked himself off the street, disappearing into the darkness. He had to admit, it felt good to put the bad guys down.

* * *

Harley eyes flew open and she immediately cried out, sitting straight up in bed. Buzzers and beeping starting going off on the medical monitors that were stuck all over her body, monitoring her heartbeat, blood pressure, and who knew what else.

Harley snarled and cried out. “JACK!”

She immediately started pulling IV’s out of her arm and throwing herself out of the bed, only to hit the floor as her knees gave out and she stumbled.

A nurse came rushing into the room. “Miss Quinzel, Dr. Quinzel please!! You need to go back in
bed now!"

“Where’s Jack!! Where’s Jack!” Harley screamed and surprised the nurse when Harley’s fist snapped out and knocked the nurse off her feet when her fist connected with the nurse’s jaw. Two more nurses burst into the room, each moving in such as way as to try to surround Harley who had grabbed her IV stand to use as a weapon. Both the nurses were shocked that the slim blonde was being so...combative. One of the nurses yelled for a doctor while the second tried to calm Harley down.

“Miss, it's all right—you're in the hospital. No one here is going to hurt you.” On Harley's right, that nurse had her hands up trying to keep her voice soothing. “You need to get back into bed, you were hurt during an attack.”

Harley looked around panicked. “Where's JACK!”

A second later, Jack came racing into the room sloshing coffee as he burst through the hospital room door. He was still in his suit, though the jacket was missing and he had a couple of bandages on his face from cuts he had received. He looked tired and pale, but when he saw Harley he smiled. “Harley?”

Harley let out a squeak, dropped the IV stand, and rushed forward, stumbling into Jack's arms. He dropped his coffee onto the nearby table and grabbed her up, lifting Harley up into his arms. He grabbed her legs carrying her bridal style back to the bed, holding her body tight against him. Harley nuzzled his neck, burying her face against him, her arms around his neck. If the burns on her hurt, she gave no indication, all her attention on Jack.

“Oh Jack,” she whimpered softly.

“Shhh...I'm here now,” Jack said, his voice soothing. He laid her down and despite the nurses’ protests, climbed into the bed with her. He held her tightly though he gently tugged one of her arms from around his neck, laying the arm out so that the nurses could put her IV back in.

Jack cooed softly to her. “It's all right, no one here is going to hurt you. I won't let them, you know what I would do, don't you?” He brushed his fingers down her jaw. “You are my only one, you know that Harley, the only woman I have ever been with...there has never been anyone but you...”

Harley groaned softly. He could tell she was in pain and he wasn't sure if she could hear him, but he continued to speak smoothly to her, easing her head down against him. Jack held her head against his chest and stroked his fingers through her hair. One of the nurses injected something into her IV and Harley slowly eased back to sleep. Jack held her, turning to get more comfortable in the hospital bed, but he never stopped stroking Harley's hair. After a few minutes, when she seemed to be resting again, Jack sighed. He should never have left for the coffee. That was stupid, he thought to himself. He should have been here when she woke, the first thing she saw should have been him.

Jack sighed again. The pain in his chest rushed though him turning his blood cold. He would have to tell her when she woke up about the miscarriage. He closed his eyes, though he suspected she knew by her reactions just now.

Jack closed his eyes against the pain in his chest. Each time he found happiness—each time something happened that was good, something equally evil happened to take it away from him. He was tired of it, tired of letting this city take from him. First it took his parents and twice it tried to take Harley from him, but now, it took his child. Jack closed his eyes, tears forming under his lashes and slowly ran down his cheeks. Life is full of random injustices, he thought. He was not going to let the city take anything else from him, ever. Jack closed his eyes and tightened his arms around Harley.
An hour later when a nurse stepped into the room, Jack was still holding Harley, his long fingers working gently through her hair. The only movement he had made to make himself comfortable was to kick off his shoes, leaving them to lay on the floor. He was humming softly, alternating between the humming and singing words gently.

“Only you can make this world seem right
Only you can make the darkness bright
Only you and you alone
can thrill me like you do
and fill my heart with love for only you...”

The nurse smiled. She hadn't seen anything as sweet as Jack Wayne holding his girlfriend and singing to her while she slept; it was precious the nurse thought. The nurse made her way over to the bed and checked Harley's vitals, then put another dose of something into her IV. Jack glanced over at the nurse, his eyes narrowed slightly. The nurse smiled. “It's just a mild sedative to let her keep sleeping and an antibiotic for the burns. I will need to change her dressing soon, but not right now. You're fine Mr. Wayne, you don't have to move.”

Jack whispered, “Thank you.”

She gave him a smile. “Can I get you a blanket? Or would you like me to turn on the TV for you?”

Jack started to say no then changed his mind. “Sure, the TV on would be great, thank you.”

The nurse walked over to get the remote that was hanging from the bed, handed it to Jack before she walked over and stood on her tip toes to turn the set on.

“Just call if either of you need anything. The call button is on the remote too.” The nurse smiled and slipped out again.

Jack settled back against the pillows holding Harley when the Gotham nightly news came on. The top story was the attack on The Monte restaurant and the assassination attempt on Harvey Dent.

Vickie Vale was reporting. Jack grinned watching her wondering when they would hear from Ms. Vale again for another family interview. He figured after he was hauled off to jail and then the kidnapping she would be dying to get through the gates of Wayne Manor again.

Vale continued with the news cast while Jack mused about the interview, Jack only partly paying attention to what was being said.

“There has been no update on Dent's condition. All we know at the present is that Dent is in Gotham General Hospital, under the best care. In related news, the Electrocutioner had been apprehended by Batman, the new vigilante who had been stalking the Gotham streets and was associated with the rescue of Jack Wayne from a criminal called Killer Croc. The Batman...” Vicki stopped, putting her hand to her ear. “Wait, we have a story just in. Apparently the Electrocutioner was being transferred to Blackgate prison when there was an attack by several masked men, all heavily armed. Several prisoners escaped, including the Electrocutioner. We have confirmed that two police officers were killed in the escape.”
Jack sat up straighter in the bed, his eyes widening in rage. He escaped? The man who murdered his child and hurt his girl escaped?? Jack ground his teeth, hissing under his breath. “Batman.”

The news story changed with the promise of updates on the developing story, but Jack wasn't paying attention any more. He was focused on the fact that Batman had failed him. Killer Croc escaped and now Electrocutioner. If Batman had just taken that extra step...

Perhaps it was Jack Wayne's turn to bring a little justice...

“Are you all right?” Jack asked as he drove.

It was two days later. Harley had been released from the hospital and Jack was driving them home. He had picked her up in Alfred's car instead of one of the Wayne cars in order to cut down on them being noticed by the press. The press had pretty much started camping out, waiting for news on Harvey Dent and hoping for a chance to talk to anyone else who had been at The Monte. Jack didn't trust himself not to lash out at any reporter who harassed Harley.

When the doctor released Harley, she had suggested another few days of rest and that Harley might want to talk to someone about her loss, but otherwise she was doing well. As for the burns, Harley would only have light scarring. (Nothing a few tattoos wouldn't cover Harley had joked). Jack hadn't told Harley yet that the man who had attacked her had escaped. He didn't tell her because he wanted her to focus on healing. But he also wanted to surprise her, because when he found The Electrocutioner, Jack wanted to bring Harley with him for a bit of...justice. But that was later—right now she needed to heal.

“I'm all right Jack. I'm just—I'm sorry Jack.” Harley still looked pale and right now she looked so very young sitting next to him in the car. He had brought her some comfortable clothing from home, yoga pants and an oversized t-shirt of his, along with some bunny slippers he had bought special just for her, bright pink slippers with happy bunny faces on them. They made little squeak noises when she walked which had her giggling. He loved her smile and her laugh. If she could giggle at the slippers, then she would heal.

“Why are you sorry?” Jack asked with genuine confusion.

“Just...the...” Harley rapidly blinked back her tears before she was forced to start wiping them away with the back of her hand.

Jack reached over and squeezed her thigh. “Hey, we can try again sometime. Yeah? I'm just happy you weren't hurt worse. I...I couldn't live without you Harley. You're my girl. My only girl.”

Harley covered his hand with her own. “The same. I couldn't live without you Jack.”

Jack smiled. “We need to do something fun together, get your mind off of gloomy things. Put a smile on your face.”

Harley smiled and leaned against his shoulder. “You always make me smile puddin, but yeah, you're right. Something fun.”

When they arrived home, Alfred was waiting at the door. (Bruce had sent flowers that were waiting...
upstairs for her since he couldn't be there when Jack brought her home.) The butler put his professionalism aside and embraced Harley as soon as Jack helped her out of the car. The older man wrapped her in his arms and hugged her like he would his own daughter. “Miss Harleen, are you well?”

Harley squeezed back. “Yes, I promise I'm fine Alfred.” Her face was muffled against his shoulder, but he noticed a hitch in her words. Alfred gave her one more squeeze. Master Jack had told him about the pregnancy and the loss of it. Alfred had felt the loss almost as keenly as Jack. To have children in the house would have been...Alfred dismissed the thought as he hugged Miss Harleen one more time.

Alfred released her and stepped back. “I made some macaroni and cheese under Master Jack's advisement as some comfort food you might enjoy, along with an apple pie. I can bring them up to your room if you like Miss Harleen.”

Harley, holding Jack's hand, smiled. “That sounds fantastic Alfred, but actually I would like to eat in the kitchen with both of you. I just...this is home to me.”

Jack grinned pulling her hand up and kissing her knuckles. “That sounds perfect my sweet and this is your home, forever and always.”

Jack then tugged her into his embrace, stoking his hand across her cheek whispering. “My little harlequin.”

*

Jack and Harley were sitting at their usual spot in the kitchen, each with a plate of macaroni and cheese, large slices of apple pie with vanilla ice cream on top and large, tall glasses of chocolate milk. Alfred was brewing some coffee as well. He had his own plate of food on the counter at the insistence of Jack and Harley.

“So what could we do for fun, you think? Croquet maybe? Or we could shoot clay pigeons again?” Jack asked before putting his apple pie laden fork into his mouth.

“I like both ideas.” Harley smiled. Just being home with Jack made her feel better. This, right here, was enough to make her feel as if the last few days were nothing but some bad dreams.

Jack sat up straight then. “I know what we can do tomorrow!”

Harley blinked at Jack over the rim of her chocolate milk glass. Jack smiled brightly. “There's a polo match tomorrow, a charity event! I forgot all about it! We should go. I know I can still get us VIP tickets! We can dress up and I can introduce you to one-armed Alex—he will definitely be there!” (Jack had intended to contact Alex regardless, but a day trip for Harley would be perfect).

Harley's smile was bright. “That sounds fun Jack! I've never been to a polo match before.” Though she smirked at the name of this friend of Jack's...one-armed Alex? But meeting someone Jack considered a friend was not just interesting, it made her feel closer to him each time he showed her some aspect of his life like this...meeting someone he called a friend.

Alfred nodded. “Ah yes, a good polo match. Yes, you could both have a wonderful afternoon. I highly approve.”

Jack grinned. “We can play a board game today and we can paint each others nails.” Jack held one of his hands up showing that the polish was chipped before he giggled and reached for her hand. Harley smiled at him; the love in her eyes for him was beautiful Alfred thought as he watched the
two young people. If only Master Bruce...

* 

Bruce was in his office. He had his eyes closed as he attempted to use some of his training to calm his breathing. He was angry about Electrocutioner's escape. Not just the escape, but the death of those police officers too. He blamed himself. He had been racking his brain for the last few days trying to come up with something that might have prevented the escape, but he couldn't think of what it could be. He hadn't counted on whoever Electrocutioner's employer was having the means to break him out of prison before he even arrived. The only way that man could have escaped was if he had had help on the inside. After some quick research with the batcomputer, Bruce had learned that Buchinsky was mostly just a hired thug. Dent had no ties with the man and had never been involved with any of the Electrocutioner's prior arrests or prosecutions. Therefore, the only reason for him to attack was that he was hired to...but who hired him?

Bruce chewed his lips. He was supposed to be emptying his thoughts, trying to find inner peace in order to allow him to focus, not thinking more about what had happened, but he couldn't seem to avoid wondering who hired Buchinsky to go after Dent. What was so important about Dent that someone would want him dead? When Harvey was better, Batman might have to pay him a visit.

Bruce stood up to start pacing when his cellphone rang.

He saw the number and a smile spread across his face as he answered with surprise. “Selina?”

“Yes it is. I thought I would call in and check on my favorite billionaire.”

Bruce laughed. “I'm all right.”

“Oh good. How are your brother and Harley? I was worried about Harley—she looked bad.”

That was the moment Bruce realized he didn't remember seeing Selina after the chaos started. Like a cat, she had just disappeared.

Bruce debated telling her about Harley, but at last he said softly, “Harley was pregnant. She wasn't far along, but she miscarried.”

Selina was quiet for a heartbeat. “Poor Harley.”

“She's fine otherwise,” Bruce added, feeling as if the words were hollow in light of the news.

“I'll send her some flowers,” Selina said.

They were both quiet before Selina found her voice again. “Would you be free for lunch tomorrow at say...the Gotham Charity Polo event?”

Bruce smiled. “Yes, yes I would.”

* 

Upstairs in their room (Jack moved all of her things into his room while she was in the hospital, made space in his closet for her, which Harley found to be the sweetest gesture), they were sitting across from one another, the chess board set out between them. Sitting on the table were two bottles of nail polish as well. Harley had enjoyed painting Jack's nails. This time they decided to match their colors painting each others nails red and black, alternating the two colors. Jack took his time painting her nails, somehow managing to make the simple act of blowing on her nail polish sexy. The way he
would purse his lips, then gaze up at her with his intense blue eyes had Harley feeling all quivery and happy inside.

Right now though, Harley was looking over the chessboard, studying it. Alfred had just been by, dropping off some mail that had arrived for Jack and delivering the bottle of bourbon that Jack had requested.

Jack took a long pull on his cigarette glancing through the mail when he stopped short. One of them didn't have a return address, which Jack found strange. He removed the cigarette, tapping off the ashes in the ashtray before he opened the letter. As he scanned the pages his eyes narrowed.

Harley glanced up immediately seeing the shift in his features.

“Jack? Everything all right?”

Jack handed her the paper. Harley took it while Jack poured himself a shot of bourbon.

Harley frowned. “It's a bill for $4000 from Troy for damages to his car.”

Jack snorted. “Yep.” He picked up his cigarette, taking a long drag.

“How does he even know it was us?” Harley asked handing it back to him.

Jack shrugged setting the end of the paper on fire with the end of his cigarette. “He may not; just taking a shot in the dark.”

“So what are we going to do?” Harley asked.

“How would you feel if we pay in person. Not right now. I want you to rest, but later, when you're feeling better?” Jack gave her a decidedly wicked grin.

Harley giggled. “That sounds perfect.”

*

Later that night Harley laid curled on her side asleep. She was wearing the red negligee Jack had bought her, making her look soft and sexy lying in his bed. Jack was standing at the side of the bed, wearing only his pajama pants and watching her. He reached down and stroked his fingers through her hair with a smile. She is beautiful, he thought to himself, so beautiful. He couldn't sleep yet—he had work he needed to do. Jack walked over to his desk and pulled out the laptop that he kept in a drawer.

Once the computer was up, Jack started to hack into the Gotham City Police files looking for information on the Electrocutioner. Jack was good at computer hacking. Not as good as some who did it for a living, (such as his friend Alex) but he was decent enough not to get caught and hacking into files at the police department was one of the simpler hacking jobs. He found the Electrocutioner's file easily enough and leaned forward reading it. Nothing extraordinary was in the file; the man's real name was Lester Buchinsky, basically a hired thug with an electricity producing suit. Jack smiled. So someone hired Buchinsky...going to the polo match would serve two purposes tomorrow then, to take Harley out and get her mind off things, but to also find his friend Alex.

Alex was a numbers guy, he was who you went to in order to place bets, buy weed, but Alex's main source of income came from information. Alex was an information broker, and not just any information broker, but THE information broker in Gotham. If Alex couldn't find it, it simply couldn't be found. If anyone could get Jack information on finding Buchinsky, it was Alex. The only
downside was that Alex was expensive, but hell, Jack thought, it's only money.

*

After shutting down the computer, Jack went to check on Harley once more. He enjoyed looking at her, watching her sleep, knowing that she was safe here with him. He leaned down and kissed her forehead. She looks so peaceful, he thought. He wanted to crawl into bed with her, wrap his arms around her and hold her tightly against him, losing himself in her scent, but he needed to go outside to his secret place first. He needed to practice something that he had been working on since the night after Harley was hurt, since the night Gotham had tried to take from him again.

Jack slipped on his tennis shoes and grabbed a t-shirt that was lying across the back of his chair, pulled it on over his head, and then he made his way silently down the stairs. The manor was quiet at this time of night. Jack made his way outside, easing the front door closed before he turned along the path that led to the back and around the gardens. It was pitch dark; no lights highlighted the area. He found his way by memory until he was at the door to his secret place. He ran his hands over the door, finding the lock easily as he had so many times in the past, opened the door silently, and slipped inside. He had recently cleaned out his...experiments, their bodies gone where no one would find them and no trace left of them ever being here.

He picked up a flashlight he had resting on a table just inside the door and made his way to the back of the area where the electrical muscle simulator he had purchased online sat. With a few adjustments, he had altered the device, making it into what he needed, a way to arm himself against the Electrocutioner.

He picked the device up and set it on a tray table next to the chair he had, an old dentist chair rigged up with straps. Jack flopped down onto the chair, strapping down his ankles before he pulled his shirt off over his head, laying it across his lap and then reached for the device. He pulled the wired pads out carefully, attached them to his chest, biceps and his abs. He then strapped down one wrist, he would have to leave the other free. Jack reached over and set the flashlight down so that the light shown straight up to the ceiling. He adjusted the device, picked up the mouth guard that had been on the tray and stuck it between his teeth. Jack grinned. When he met the Electrocutioner face to face, he would be ready. With a wide grin, Jack hit the device causing bolts of painful electricity to race through his body.

*

The next morning broke bright and warm. They would be heading out to the Gotham Polo Classic Charity event and Jack, as usual, had ordered new outfits the day before. (Costumes, you always needed the right costume, he reminded Harley). He had bought Harley a red wrap Issa sundress with a matching pair of red wedge sandals along with a wide brim straw hat that had a large red daisy on the side and large red-framed sunglasses. Jack wore a pair of white slacks, a white polo and a blazer in a shade of purple so deep that it almost looked black with a pair of white dress shoes and his purple shaded sunglasses, and a white, straw telescope hat adorned with a purple band. Jack grabbed Harley's hands and spun her around the room once they were both dressed.

“You look incredible!” He grinned happily at her. Jack let her go long enough for Harley to do a spin, the skirt of the dress fluttering in a gorgeous way around her long legs.

Harley stopped and admired Jack with a giggle. “You look good enough to eat.”

Jack pulled her into his arms and dipped her back kissing her softly.

“My girl,” he whispered.
Harley reached up and ran the tips of her fingers along his cheeks then back over his ear whispering back, “I love you Jack.”

“And I love you my cupcake.” Jack smirked lifting her to her feet again. “All right! A day of rich food, making fun of snotty people and watching horses! Oh, and let's not forget,” he added with a waggle of one eyebrow. “Illegal gambling!”

With a laugh, Jack hooked Harley's arm through his and together they danced out of the room and down the stairs.

*

Today Jack decided since they were going to a polo match that they should look every inch the rich couple. So they were taking the Rolls Royce Wraith coupe, a slick black and silver vehicle with a red leather interior.

Jack drove nearly silent running car through Gotham, heading to the outskirts. Luckily the polo charity event was not being held at the country club, but instead was being held at the Gotham Hill Polo Club.

Harley was impressed as Jack drove up the road to the main entrance of the club. Like the country club, the Polo club had a large stone fence with a huge metal gate that had the images of polo riders twisted into the metal. Once they were through the gate, they were directed along with several other expensive cars to a large open space that was being used as a parking area. Once Jack had parked the car, they followed the other guests to an area where golf carts were being used to transfer people out to the polo field.

Harley leaned closed to Jack and whispered, “There is a lot of money here.”

Jack grinned. “Yep. This is one of those events, like the ones my brother likes to hosts, where all the who's who of Gotham come out to watch polo and donate money. A chance for all of them to feel good about themselves and to look good too. Bunch of hypocrites really. Some of them are here to wash away their guilt over how they actually make their money, others are here to simply try to look good, but most are here just to show off how much money they have and wallow like pigs in their own self importance. None of them really see what they are. I mean, I have money—why feel guilty about it? Besides, like everything, it's fleeting...none of it will really matter in the end.” Jack curled his lip.

“I hate most of them,” he said and then tilted his head. “No, I take that back. I pretty much hate all of them. None of them are 'real,' not like you.” Jack pressed a kiss to her ear.

Harley sighed happily wrapping her arms around Jack's arm and leaned her head against his shoulder really examining the people, trying to see them as Jack did. Jack was correct, of course. She could see it, most of them were whispering, hissing and pointing at each other. Watching them through the lenses of how Jack saw them, they were disgusting. All of them trying to be more important that the other one, bloated with their deformed sense of values...and self-importance. They didn't care about the charity; all they cared about was how they looked by donating large sums of money, trying to buy morals and to gain recognition as someone of importance.

The golf cart dropped them off at the field where Harley could see that there were folding chairs set up in the fenced off area and from here she could see large tents where people were milling about.

“I bought us VIP seating yesterday; just follow me my sweet.” Jack curled her arm through his and led her off down one of the paths that snaked around the areas where people were standing around
talking, to another area that was cordoned off. This area had a very large series of covered areas along the length of the polo field. Inside, under the canopy, were several seats that were shaded under it. At the entrance to this area, a young man dressed all in white, took tickets and gave them each a lanyard with a pass hanging from it.

Once inside the VIP area, Harley could see that there were couches and armchairs instead of the fold-out chairs she had seen coming up here. These chairs were arranged in little intimate spaces, each circling its own private table. There was a young woman stationed at the entrance to each covered area. When Jack and Harley walked up the young woman smiled. She wore a black skirt, white shirt and black blazer with a name tag that stated her name was Georgia.

“May I see your tags please?” Georgia asked with a bright smile.

“Of course Georgia dear.” Jack held up his lanyard and Harley did the same. Georgia checked them out then pointed. “You are located in section C—enjoy your afternoon.”

Jack grinned. “We will Georgia, thank you.”

Jack led Harley to their section. The seating was the same here, but there was an open bar as well as food being served. Jack escorted Harley over to their set of seats. “I will be right back with our drinks my sweet. You just sit there and look pretty ’til I get back.” Jack winked at her before he set off toward the bar. Harley grinned watching him walk away. She loved the way Jack walked; he had an elegance about him that was enticing and, well, it made her want him...badly.

With a sigh, Harley took that opportunity to look around. She recognized a few people from TV, Mayor Hill, the present DA...there were a couple of news personalities and a LOT of socialites, wealthy men and their...she could only guess mistresses by the way they looked and the extreme age differences. There were a few wives too. Harley thought she saw Selina Kyle, but the woman was lost in the crowd fairly easily.

*  

Jack walked up to the bar and leaned against it, glancing back at the crowd of wealthy people while he waited his turn to order drinks. He had just started to turn back to the bar when a voice he recognized yelled.

“Well, if it isn't fucking Jack Wayne.”

Jack turned to see One-armed Alex. Alex didn't look like he belonged among these people at all. He was tall, a little pudgy with a mop of unkempt brown hair and, as his name implied, Alex was missing an arm (he had an artifical limb, but Alex never wore it.). Unlike everyone else here, Alex was wearing jeans, but he at least had on an old white polo with a navy blue blazer over the top, and a pair of old, dirty, beat-up high tops that might have been white a few decades back, all of which looked like it had been purchased at Wal-mart. It always impressed Jack with how Alex could get into these VIP events looking the way he did, but Alex knew people, a lot of people and he knew secrets, a LOT of secrets. Jack just made sure that Alex didn't know any of his secrets. He liked the guy and didn't want to have to...dispose of him for knowing too much.

Alex grinned downing his glass of liquid; from the looks of it he was drinking a vodka martini. Jack chuckled at the drink. “Bit high class for you Alex?”

Alex grinned. “Hey, the fucking drinks are free for me, might as well get the fucking fancy ones. By the way, like your fucking nails.” Alex chuckled motioning at the bartender with his empty glass, while Jack gave Alex the middle finger getting a few looks from people milling around close to
Jack laughed placing his order to the bartender. “Give me a 100-year old cigar and a long island ice tea.”

“So I got your message. You want me to do some hunting for you? This guy fuck you over?” Alex asked after Jack had picked up the drinks and started over to the cheese table. The table was loaded with plates and several types of expensive cheeses and crackers. Jack filled up a plate.

“Yes. I need everything you can tell me about one Lester Buchinsky. Most importantly, I need to know where to find him. He also goes by the moniker, the Electrocutioner.” Jack spoke softly glancing at Alex.

Alex nodded. “So what you want this fucking guy for...whoa, wait a minute. Electrocutioner? Ain't that the fuckhead who fucking tried to kill Dent? You were there or something?”

Jack turned balancing the plate and drinks. “Look, you don't want to know right?”

“Fuck right I don't want to know. That's how I stay alive.” Alex smirked.

“Then don't ask. Just tell me where to find him.” Jack spoke softly, but his eyes were deadly serious.

Alex nodded. “Whatever you say Jack. Fuck that guy.”

Jack started to walk toward Harley with a chuckle. “The usual fee?”

Alex shrugged. “Sure thing man.”

“So come on, I want you to meet someone.” Jack grinned starting to make his way toward Harley.

Alex immediately saw her sitting there with her legs crossed, his mouth fell open. “Who the fuck is that?”

Jack grinned. “That's my girl.”

Alex blinked. “Seriously? Fuck man, this whole time I thought you were gay or something.”

Jack laughed with a slight shake of his head. “Or something? Harley...she is someone special. She owns me and I own her.”

Alex frowned glancing sideways at Jack. There was something about the way he said it, that they owned each other...but the rich were weird, something Alex had learned a long time ago.

Jack grinned at Harley setting the drinks on the table. “A long island iced tea for the most gorgeous woman here and I brought some cheese and crackers too.”

Harley smiled reaching for her drink glancing toward Alex. “You must be One-armed Alex,” she said.

Alex smirked. “What gave it away?” he asked with a motion of his stump that gave Harley the impression he was pointing at her with it.

Harley laughed. “The one arm.”

Both men laughed as Jack motioned for Alex to take a seat. Jack sat next to Harley picking up his drink and putting a hand on her thigh.
“So you're Jack's girl. I have to say he has fucking good taste.” Alex grinned reaching out and taking Harley's hand surprising her by kissing the back of her hand.

“So what do you do exactly?” Harley blushed at the compliment taking her hand back.

“Oh I am the fucking numbers guy mostly. You want to place a bet, I'm the guy you come to, at least here in Gotham.” Alex grinned leaning back with his own drink in hand.

“You need some information, want someone found? I'm your fucking go to guy.”

Jack smirked. “And if you haven't guessed, he likes the word fuck.”

Alex chuckled. “Fucking right I do.”

The three of them laughed together.

Bruce arrived at the event a little later than he intended, but as he stood at the tent entrance looking around for Selina he was caught by surprise when he saw Jack and Harley. They were speaking with One-armed Alex. Bruce Wayne didn't know the man, but Batman had heard of him. An information broker who dealt with anyone from politicians to crime bosses. He frowned wondering what Jack was doing with the man when his attention was diverted by the stunning vision of Selina Kyle sauntering his way. She was wearing am ankle-length sleeveless sundress in leopard print. She had on a wide brim black straw hat and large sunglasses. She glided over to him with a gorgeous smile on her perfect lips. She stopped when she was in front of him and tilted her sunglasses down. “Glad to see you made it Bruce.”

Bruce smiled. “Lunch and polo with a beautiful woman? I wouldn't miss it.”

Selina chuckled reaching out and taking his hand. “Come on, let's go get a drink.”

Selina led Bruce to the bar. She signaled the bartender.

“So what would you like?” Selina asked leaning on the bar and removing her sunglasses. Bruce again was struck by how beautiful her eyes were, a cat-like green.

“Ah, how about a Summer Scotch.” Bruce smiled.

“Mm...nice choice. I will have a Barbados Rum Punch please.” Selina smiled at the bartender then brought her attention back to Bruce.

“So, when are you going to invite me to dinner, just the two of us?” Selina grinned.

Bruce looked a little flustered which had her laughing. “Oh you are sweet for a billionaire playboy and most eligible bachelor in Gotham.”

Bruce frowned which only made her laugh more. “Oh please, I read Bruce. Saw you were voted most eligible again this year. What is that, six years straight?” Selina asked picking up their drinks and handing Bruce his with a grin.

“Five, but who's counting,” Bruce said with a chuckle.

“Mm..” Selina walked over to a set of chairs and sat crossing her legs. Bruce sat opposite from her with a smile that seemed natural with her nearby.
“So polo?” Bruce asked sipping his drink.

Selina smiled. “I just like the outside and the horses.” (To herself she thought that she also liked to practice her old skills, like picking pockets while she was here too.)

Bruce chuckled. They were quiet for a little bit watching as the game began, the horses and their riders rushing across the field. Bruce found himself to be more nervous with Selina Kyle than he was with other women. There was something dangerous about her, something that drew him. He sipped his drink looking over at her and smiled. “How would you like to have dinner at my place this Friday?”

Selina, who had glanced out at the game, turned back to him grinning ear to ear. “I thought you would never ask.”

*

Jack was rubbing Harley's leg while Alex was telling some story that involved a group of prostitutes and a priest, when Jack saw Troy Randell. Jack felt his jaw stiffen. The man was dressed all in white and he was talking to the some senator. A second later, Jack saw Tiffany in a white, extremely short sundress stepping up beside him with a couple of drink. Jack narrowed his eyes watching the two of them. Apparently the universe was trying to tell him something since this was the third time the Randell's had managed to show up in the same place as him and Harley. Suddenly their lazy afternoon seemed soured.

Jack watched them for a couple of heartbeats before he stood.

“I think it's time for Harley and me to get going.” Jack tore his eyes away from the Randells, but not before Harley followed his gaze and saw the couple. Jack felt her squeeze his hand.

Alex stood up, grinned and patted Jack on the back. “I'll get a hold of you soon man.”

Jack nodded. “Thanks Alex.”

Jack and Harley had almost made it out when a hand landed on Jack's shoulder. Jack turned, his free hand forming into a fist, but then he stopped when he saw it was his brother.

“Bruce?”

Bruce smiled. Standing behind Bruce was Selina.

“I didn't know you were going to be here,” Bruce said in a friendly tone. He surprised both Harley and his brother by reaching out and touching Harley on the shoulder. “How are you feeling?”

Harley smiled softly. “Better, thank you.”

Bruce squeezed her shoulder. “I'm so sorry Harley.”

Harley smiled. He used her name, she noted with pleasure, the one Jack gave her. “Thank you.”

Selina smiled and stepped forward. “Why don't you guys join us?”

Jack glanced at Harley; they both glanced toward Troy and Tiffany who had yet to notice them. “Thanks Bruce, but I think Harley and I have had enough of the snobbishly rich for one day. Besides, Harley is a little worn out.”

With that Jack gave his brother a smile before he and Harley took off. Bruce watched them go with a
quizzical look, but Selina wrapped her arm through his. “They probably just need time together Bruce. Come on—let’s finish our drinks.”

Bruce watched his brother go before he turned around and went back to their seats with Selina.

*

Two weeks passed. It was two weeks of Jack and Harley just spending time together while she recovered. Jack took her horseback riding, delighted to learn that Harley knew how to ride a horse. They set up their own miniature golf course on the Wayne Manor lawn and played well after dark. Jack purchased a badminton set which turned into a game of them trying to hit one another with the birdie instead of really playing. They spent afternoons where Jack taught her card games and magic tricks, with their evenings spent curled in bed together watching horror movies and laughing together. They had gone into the city to pick up Harley’s engagement ring and a lazy afternoon of a picnic lunch at Robinson Park, with Harley now wearing her engagement ring.

Dr. Leland had called to see if they needed to reschedule their talk, which happily for Jack and Harley she was more than happy to do. (After the loss of the pregnancy, the good Doctor didn’t want to push the suffering couple until they were ready.) They both knew they were going to have to continue their sessions, but not right now. Now was all about the two of them.

Today they were outside with paint guns that Jack had bought that morning, playing in the wooded part of the manor grounds.

Harley had her hair up in pigtails, dressed in a pair of red overall shorts with a white t-shirt. She had on a red baseball cap with red-tinted goggles over her eyes. She had cut holes in the hat for her pigtails which Jack had found adorable. There were already a couple of splats of different colored paint on her hips, thighs and back where Jack had hit her, but Jack was equally rainbow splattered from the hits Harley had managed to make on him.

Harley pressed her back against the trunk of a tree with narrowed eyes as she listened for Jack.

Jack was wearing a white t-shirt (splattered with paint) and purple jeans, his own purple baseball cap on backwards and purple tinted goggles over his eyes. Harley had seen him creeping through the trees and had quickly dashed behind a thick oak tree, but he had gone silent. She edged her way around the tree, her eyes narrowed more.

They were running even, six to six. Jack was thrilled that she was keeping up with him. He had seen her from the corner of his eye and dived down silently into some thick bushes. That was when he saw her turn around the trunk of a tree. Jack licked his lips and aimed for her hip. He wanted to get her ass, but she was in the wrong position for that, so hip it was....Jack took aim and...

WHACK! Harley yelped jumping in the air when a ball of yellow paint smacked into her hip.

She threw herself into some bushes, thankful that there were no thorns and growled, “JACK!”

Jack laughed from his hiding place.

Harley yelled. “I’m going to get you!!”

“You can try, monkey face!” Jack yelled back with a snicker.

He was exceptionally happy today. Harley was pretty much back to her old self, though there were a few nights he held her when she cried still. Those nights, his rage burned bright, but he held it in check, knowing he could get his chance for revenge and so would Harley. He smiled wickedly, just
thinking about it. Jack moved in a crouch, trying to see where Harley had gone to when he heard a zip, then yelped as something hit him in the back.

“YAHTZEE!!” Harley's giggling voice yelled. Jack, grinning, spun around on the balls of his feet and fired. He still didn't see her, but he heard Harley yelp.

Laughing Jack yelled back. “YAHTZEE!”

“I don't know how you did it, but you cheated!” Harley yelled back with a giggle.

Jack took off toward the sound of her voice. He could hear her cursing under her breath and it sounded like she might be struggling with her gun. He crept quietly, taking each step with care until he saw her. She was cursing at her weapon; her paint gun seemed to be jammed. Jack grinned walking up carefully behind her until he had the paint gun aimed at the back of her head and whispered, “Yahtzee.”

Harley cursed, “Shit,” and dropped her weapon.

Jack was grinning from ear to ear. “Turn around slowly.”

Harley stood up and turned, sliding her goggles up on her forehead before holding her hands up at her sides. She was smiling, but doing her best to look serious, but she couldn't seem to hold the frightened look, especially when she kept giggling. Jack chuckled too, holding the paintgun on her.

“Hmmm...now that I have you what should I make you do?” Jack asked her.


Jack waggled his eyebrows at her. “Anything I want, eh?”

Harley giggled again taking a step backwards. “If you can catch me that is...” With that she took off turning on her toes and dashing away. Jack stood there for a moment staring.

“You did not just run...”

He burst out laughing and tossed his gun down, yanking off his goggles and tossing them away as he took off after her. Harley hadn't gone far before Jack tackled her from behind, the two of them going down on the grass at the edge of the forested area. Harley struggled, kicking and twisting, laughing the whole while, but Jack turned her over, pinning her body under him.

Jack curled his body over hers, one hand resting against the top of her head while his other cupped her face, taking a kiss from her. Harley stopped her struggling, seeming to melt against the grass. Jack kissed her softly, taking his time to fully explore her mouth with his tongue. Harley sighed happily, her hands tracing down his sides. She groaned when Jack moved his mouth down her throat, planting kisses along her neck while his hand snaked up her body, squeezing her breast through her clothing, he pressed against her, undulating his hips in slow easy movements, causing Harley to gasp when he rubbed just right.

Harley groaned. “Right here?”

Jack giggled against her neck, his nimble fingers unhooking one of her overalls straps. “Right here, right now Harley. That's what I want...”

Harley closed her eyes, arching her head back while Jack's tongue licked up her neck just before he unhooked the other side of her overalls. Harley's hands moved over his shoulders, her hands coming
up to cup his face again. “I love you Jack, I love you...”

Jack rubbed his nose against hers.

“You are the only one for me Harley, there was never anyone before you...it will always be you.”

Harley frowned staring into his eyes as the meaning of his words sunk in.

“Oh Jack...” Harley sighed softly, pulling his mouth down to hers again. His kisses were passionate, his tongue sliding against hers, lips gliding over hers. Harley melted beneath him.

Jack pressed his hips against hers, pressing between her legs; she could feel the hardness of him struggling against his clothing.

She thrust back with a groaned, “Jack!” her moan caressing his lips.

Jack pulled away from her mouth, sitting back on his knees and grabbed her overalls yanking them down her body and off her legs, then he grabbed her panties, pulling them down just as he had with her overalls. Harley lifted her legs letting Jack pull them off of her. Jack tossed the overalls and panties aside giving her a wicked grin before he laid down between her legs, hooking them over his shoulders and sliding his hands under her rear, lifting her up to his mouth. Harley arched trying not to cry out too loudly when Jack's tongue licked up her, causing her whole body to jerk.

Jack chuckled pressing his whole mouth to her, sucking on her clitoris, his tongue rolling around gradually. He alternated from moving his tongue quickly to slowing his movements down to the point that Harley was whimpering.

She pulled on his hair panting. “Puddin! Puddin!”

Harley's hips thrust against his mouth as Jack's sucking became more vigorous, almost bringing her to climax before he would stop, teasing her mercilessly. He liked the way her shoes felt on his back, the press of her soft thighs against his cheeks, the way her legs jerked and vibrated when she came close, just before the muscles of her legs tightened before orgasm, the roughness hitting against his still healing wound sending a shock of pain through him. It was all delicious. Everything about her made him hard, needy. She is perfect, he thought sucking deeply on her. He dropped her rear down gently before laying himself flat on the grass, continuing to suck and caress her with his tongue. His hands glided up her sides, stopping at her waist where he ran the tips of his fingers along her sides.

Jack pressed his whole mouth to her again, running his tongue in gentle licks, sucking on her clitoris slowly, just as he would kiss her mouth or suck on her tongue. Harley threw her head back with a groan of pleasure, her hips rolling with the movements of his tongue.

Harley's whole body arched. She reached down grabbing fistfuls of Jack's hair, her hips thrusting against his tongue. Jack let one of her legs go, letting her lay it down flat against the grass while wrapping his arm around her other leg and laying his cheek against the inside of her smooth, warm thigh. He continued kissing her, running his tongue in gentle licks, using the whole of his tongue, flat against her, but now he added a finger to her, thrusting his long forefinger into her, slow and gentle. This was their first time having sex since her miscarriage and he wanted it to be all about Harley. All about the woman he loved.

He adored the little gasps of pleasure she was making, the groans, the way her body rolled under his touch. Jack continued to move his finger in and out, twisting it just a little, almost agonizingly slow while his lips and tongue moved over her in gentle passionate kisses. He careful added another finger, sliding his fingers slowly into her, then almost out, twisting them around and sliding them back in. Harley whimpered, groaning when his fingers entered her again, but added his mouth again,
creating a seal and sucking while moving his fingers just a little, not fully pulling his fingers out, just small movements, hitting her perfectly, that which someone had called the g-spot.

Harley cried out loudly, her whole body arching. “Uuhhhh...Uuhhh...oooh...JACK!!”

Jack continued sucking and licking at her, when she came, drawing out her orgasm into another, feeling the delightful pull of her fingers in his hair until she let go and dug her fingers into the grass and dirt beside her hips, jerking against his mouth and fingers. Finally he released her, grinning down at her, his mouth and chin covered in her fluid.

“That's my girl,” Jack hissed. Harley dragged her teeth over her bottom lip. “Oh Jack, that was amazing.”

Jack chuckled. “Been reading up on how to do better. I want you to always feel like putty in my hands baby girl.”

Harley giggled and blushed. “Come here Jack.”

Staring down at her, Jack slowly undid the buttons of his jeans. Harley watched, still breathless rubbing her lips together until he had pushed his pants down. She loved his erection, loved how hard and thick he was, how he felt inside her. Waiting these last few weeks had been agony, but now she reached for him greedily. Then he surprised her, forcing her over on her stomach. Harley gasped and then giggled. Jack yanked her up on her knees, spreading her legs with his thighs. He grabbed her hips, yanking her toward him to shove himself inside her wet and yielding body. Harley's back arched, her fingers digging into the grass when Jack entered her. “JACK!”

Jack growled in pleasure. “Harley!”

He had wanted to go slow, but he couldn't, he just couldn't. He needed to pound her, to bury himself deep into her as far as he could.

Harley groaned. “Yes, yes, yes! Jack!! Harder!!”

Jack growled again, digging his fingers into the soft flesh of her hips and yanked her back against him pounding harder, the sound of flesh slapping against flesh and their mixed moans and pants mingled together until Jack felt Harley's body tighten around him. He shuddered when Harley yelled. “JACK!! YES!!” She came with a long low moan of his name on her lips. “Jack...oh Jack, I love you!”

He yanked her back one more time and burst, his body giving her everything he had until his body grew weak and he fell forward driving her down to the grass, his weight on her back. Harley struggled to find her breath again, made a little more difficult with Jack's body on top of her, but she loved it. Jack covered her ear and shoulder with kisses.

“Mm..I love you Harley,” he whispered against her shoulder.

*  

Later that same day, Jack and Harley were at the inside pool in the manor. Jack was watching Harley swimming back and forth, doing laps across the pool. She was wearing a 50's style polkadot red and white bikini, her blonde hair pulled back into a ponytail. Jack was lying in one of the lounge chairs, a bottle of Bowmore fifty-four year old scotch and a glass on the table beside him. He was sipping his drink watching Harley swim, thinking about getting her out of the swimsuit when his phone vibrated. Jack picked it up glancing at the text message.
“Found what you are looking for...A.”

Jack smiled and texted back. “Where?”

The text back read. “Go to My Alibi in center city. He will be there.”

Jack texted back. “Any news on the croc?”

“No yet, slippery, still working.”

Jack’s smile widened, he texted back. “Thanks for the one, expect transfer within the hour.”

“Always a pleasure...A.”

Jack looked up, watching as Harley lifted herself out of the pool. He grinned wide, watching the water running down her back, knowing how excited she would be for what they were going to do tonight.

* 

Harley stood in front of the mirror, her hair up in pigtails, wearing only her bra and panties. “What does one wear to go killing puddin?”

Jack was dressed in black slacks, a dark forest green vest, white dress shirt and a long black jacket with tails that reminded Harley of a Regency era coat. He even had on a pair of black and white wingtip oxfords with a matching set of black leather gloves. He had dark eyeliner around his eyes and his lips were a bright glossy red. Harley loved the way he looked with his nails painted too. He was sliding a long knife into an inner pocket of the jacket as he glanced over at her.

“Well, I would be perfectly happy for you to go just like that.” Jack giggled and Harley grinned wrinkling her nose at him.

“Perv.”

Jack belly laughed. “Oh, you know it my sweets.” He winked at her and moved over to the closet with a hand to his chin in thought. “Mmm...let me see.”

Jack started flipping through clothing in the closet. “Ah, here we go.” Jack pulled out a pair of black leggings and a red and black striped corset with black lace over the top of it that Jack had bought for her, but she hadn't worn yet. He next pulled out a pair of black leather boots.

“Oh and before I forget...” Jack grinned standing on tiptoe to pull something down from the top of the closet. He grabbed the item then set them down with the corset. Harley glanced down to see a pair of elbow length, black leather gloves. Harley grinned, pressing her teeth into her bottom lip, her cheeks rosy with pleasure that Jack had bought her gloves.

“There you go sweets! Now you just need a couple of weapons.” Jack grinned, sliding another knife into his jacket on the other side where there was another inner pocket. Jack walked over to his desk searching around until he came up with something. “Harley, here catch!”

Harley had just pulled the leggings up when she snatched the item out of the air. She grinned when she saw that what he had thrown was a pair of brass knuckles. Jack grinned and winked at her. Harley giggled setting them down near her boots. “Thank you puddin.”

Jack dropped down to a crouch, pulled open the drawers down below and pulled out two .45 semi-
automatic pistols. He balanced on the balls of his feet checking the chambers and reaching inside the
drawer to come up with ammunition for the weapons, loading them. He slipped off his jacket and
pulled out a shoulder holster, one under each arm. He slipped both the guns into the holsters before
slipping his jacket back on. Jack opened another drawer and pulled out another pistol, this one
smaller, a .380 along with a shoulder holster. He walked over to Harley and set them down next to
her.

Harley took her bra off, grabbed the corset and wrapped it around herself, hooking the latches in the
front while she spoke. “I’m not sure if a knife would work for me. When I was in the sewers, I really
liked the pipe I used.” She grinned as she remembered beating those two men.

Jack frowned picking up his cigarettes and thumping the pack against his palm, sliding one out and
putting it between his lips. He pulled his lighter out and lit the cigarette, then slowly smiled.

“I know the perfect weapon for you! Come on, we need to go to the garden sheds.”

*

It was almost midnight when the two of them slipped out of the manor and made their way to the
shed located around back and down one of the paths from the manor. Jack opened it and turned the
flashlight on that they had brought with them. Inside there were a variety of tools, all deadly if used
correctly, but Jack was after one item in particular. He shined the light around with Harley standing
behind him until the beam of light landed on the item he had in mind. There, leaning against the wall
was a long handled ten pound sledgehammer.

Harley squealed when she saw it. She walked over and picked it up with a broad grin. “Oh Jack, this
is perfect.”

Jack motioned her to follow him out of the shed. “Give it a few swings,” he encouraged her. “See
what you think.”

Harley hurried out and almost immediately started to swing the sledgehammer around with a squeal
of delight. “Oh, I love it!!”

Jack watched her with a smile of delight. His girl was perfect, he thought watching her. After tonight
he was going to tell her about his experiments, his other killings and his ideas for making Gotham a
better place. He giggled as she made a swing that was slightly too wide that had her almost losing her
footing, but she squealed and laughed, recovering quickly. Her gymnastics training definitely helped.

“Ready Harls?” Jack asked with a grin.

“I'm more than ready,” she said with a growl as she winked at him.

*

Jack drove the motorcycle through downtown Gotham city, heading toward the Alibi. The bar was
located on a corner of an old brick building dating back at least three decades. The outside was
covered in old concert fliers, sales ads and job offers along with a healthy dose of graffiti. There were
a handful of motorcycles out front, maybe a half-dozen, a couple of old cars and a bicycle. There
was a bouncer at the door, a short, but stout bald man with a denim vest on, jeans and biker boots.
Nearly every inch of him was covered in tattoos. He was leaning against the wall near the door
smoking a cigar when Jack and Harley pulled up, parking their bike at the far end. Jack's knives
were concealed, but Harley had her sledgehammer strapped to her back over a leather jacket that
belonged to Jack. They walked up to the door, the man giving them a once over, but when Jack
reached out to push the door open, the man did nothing to stop them.

Inside the bar was all cheap wood paneling, neon red lights, and sticky floors. The bar was a fairly typical old wood bar with a few stools, the back wall lined with a mirror and shelves with bottles of alcohol. There was a cheap pool table in one corner, an ancient looking jukebox, some scattered tables and maybe about a dozen people in here, all of them men except two women who Harley immediately pegged as cheap whores. The walls were decorated with old framed pictures; someone had put a stuffed deer head up with a stuff boar next to it. There were some nude posters on another wall, all looking like they had been hanging there since the 70's.

Everyone in the bar turned to look at the newcomers, including the large man sitting at the bar, Lester Buchinsky. Lester, Jack noticed as he and Harley stepped up to the bar, didn't have his full electrical suit with him, but he was still wearing a couple of gauntlets. Even in the dim light Jack could see the power pack at the small of Buchinsky's back that powered the gauntlets he wore. Jack smiled, taking a seat on the stool next to Buchinsky while Harley sat down next to Jack. The mercenary gave no indication that he recognized either one of them. The ancient jukebox was playing Metallica's “Turn the Page” as all eyes watched Jack and Harley with undisguised scorn.

Jack motioned at the bartender with two fingers. The bartender came over, an average size slim, long haired man with sleeve tattoos and a wife-beater shirt on.

Jack smiled. “A shot of Jagermeister and a Manhattan for my lady here.”

The bartender sneered. “We don't do fancy drinks, bub.”

Jack’s smile never wavered. “You don't do them 'cause your stupid or because your patrons have no taste?”

The man stared at Jack, then shrugged. “Fine.”

A couple of minutes later Jack had a shot of Jagermeister and Harley had an perfectly acceptable Manhattan sitting in front of her. Jack picked up his drink, took a sip, and glanced over at Lester. Harley turned on her stool to face the bar, smiling pleasantly at the small crowd who was watching the two of them warily, some with open hostility. A few had moved their jackets aside, or adjusted their stance to show that they were armed, whether with blades or guns. Harley counted; with Buchinsky and the bartender, there were a thirteen people in the bar.

Harley smiled and pulled out her brass knuckles, sliding them over her gloved fingers like she was putting on a ring before reaching back and loosening the sledgehammer, moving it to the side to let it fall head down next to her stool with a heavy thunk. Buchinsky glanced sideways at Jack who was openly staring at him.

Jack smiled at Buchinsky. “You're the Electrocrutioner correct?”

Lester turned his head to sneer at Jack. “Whatcha want pretty boy?”

Jack downed his drink and motioned at the bartender who poured him another. “You were at The Monte a few weeks back remember?”

Buchinsky turned around to fully look at Jack, his eyes glanced to Harley sitting behind Jack, then back at Jack again. Buchinsky sort of recognized the woman, but he couldn't place where. Jack's smile was cold. “You did two things that night that I simply can't forgive. First: you hurt my girl; and second, you caused her to lose our baby.”

Lester sneered. “Yeah, well maybe you should be thanking me so you don't have that cunt hanging
around with some squealing brat, eh?"

Jack’s eye twitched as he said in a low voice, “And you're rude on top of it. Manners maketh man or so said William Horman.”

Buchinsky frowned in clear confusion. “Who the fuck is that?”

Jack sighed. “Harley?”

The music on the jukebox had just changed to “I'm Going to Hell” by The Pretty Reckless, when Harley stood up.

Harley moved surprisingly swiftly, grabbing up her sledgehammer and with a strength born of rage, she came around Jack with a yell.

“YAHTZEE!” and using her whole body to swing, she swung the sledgehammer in a half circle, the head of the hammer slammed into Buchinsky's shoulder with a sickening sound of bone breaking. Harley let go of the handle as the hammer knocked Buchinsky off the stool. That was when the bar erupted into chaos.

Jack hopped off his stool, crossing his arms under his jacket, grabbing his pistols in a smooth practiced move and flung his arms out. He fired at the bartender just as the man came up with a cut-off rifle, two shots, one to the gut, the other to the face. With his other gun facing out to the bar, Jack shot the nearest man, an average built guy with a faux mohawk who had stood up, reaching for his pistol, but Jack shot him in the gut, then two bullets to the face. The whole while Jack was grinning, a laugh bubbling up. Jack ran at the polo table in the split second it took him to shoot the mohawk guy, surprising the four men there when he hopped up onto the table, kicking a pool ball hard enough that the ball flew up and struck one of the men in the chest, the ball’s impact knocking the air from his lungs and causing that guy to stumble backwards, falling to the floor. Jack grinned, aimed his gun at that man and shot him in the chest.

Jack spun around, going down on one knee while the other three men at the table were struggling to pull their weapons out. Jack shot another man struggling to yank his knife out, this one short, chubby and bald. Jack did two quick shots to that man’s throat, then jumped on the dead man (who hadn't fallen yet, not realizing he was dead) wrapping his arms and legs around him. Jack spun the man around, using him as a shield against the bald man's friend, a mangy looking blonde. The blonde man had managed to free his own gun, bringing it up to fire at Jack.

Jack spun around, twisting the dead man’s torso and holding on so that when the blonde man shot, he ended up shooting his friend's corpse instead. Jack rode the dead man to the floor, shooting the blonde man in the hip before he somersaulted to his feet, now between two tables. The doorman came stumbling in with his own gun, but Jack, giggling, shot him in the head.

*  

Harley moved swiftly after letting go of the sledgehammer. She didn't have time to check on Buchinsky before she dropped into a crouch and rolled on the balls of her feet, pulling her own pistol and shot a tall skinny man with an eye-patch. Her shot hit the eye-patch man in the kneecap shattering bone. Harley followed that by racing toward him and hitting the same man in the face with her fist that was armed with the brass knuckles. The eye-patch went down and Harley leapt on him before he could fall completely, riding him to the sticky floor where she pounded into his face with her brass covered fist as hard and fast as she could. One of the women in bar, a brunette, heroin-addict skinny, had yanked a knife out and screamed at Harley.
“GET OFF HIM YOU CUNT!”

The smile Harley gave her was all teeth and vicious, with little speckles of blood on her cheeks. Harley brought her forearm up, blocking the brunette's first swing with her knife that came down at Harley. (The background music changed to “Wicked Ones” by Dorothy, whoever had put money in the thing must have done so just before Harley and Jack stepped inside.)

Harley rose to her feet at the same time and punched the woman in the stomach with her fist as hard as she could, once, twice, three times in quick succession, then Harley swung around to the woman’s back. The brunette managed to slash out when Harley spun around, the blade slashing across Harley's thigh to leave a deep, bloody cut. Harley snarled, grabbed the brunette around the back, twisted the arm holding the blade with her, trying to pin the brunette’s hand that had the knife between them. Harley reached for the brunette's knife hand, but the brunette twisted with her so the two woman were facing one another again. The brunette, with her free hand, hit Harley across the face, her fist striking Harley in the mouth busting her lip. Harley still managed to drive the woman down to the sticky wood floor, having greater strength.

They struggled, rolling for a bit, knocking into some of the chairs. The other woman, a blonde, screeched, “Let her go!”

The blonde woman rushed to help, but Harley twisted off the brunette just enough to do a backward kick, catching the blonde in the chest and knocking her back into a table while she and the brunette struggled with the blade in the brunette's hand. Harley had managed to get the other woman twisted around again and on her back, using her own hand to hold the brunette's hand that held the knife. They struggled for a couple of seconds before Harley's superior strength won. (The background music had changed to Lynard Skynard...the jukebox was skipping songs quickly, simply adding to the chaos.) Harley hissed down at the brunette.

“I fucking HATE this music!!” spitting blood from her bleeding lip as she snarled.

Harley put all of weight on the other woman's outstretched arms and forced her arms down. The brunette's arms gave out under Harley's weight, the knife plunging straight into the hollow of her throat.

* *

Jack started laughing. He shot another man with a buzz-cut in the eye and that man's friend, an average looking guy, twice in the chest. He chuckled when he heard Harley yell how much she hated the music, so he shot the jukebox which caused the machine to jerk and the song to jump and change to an Iron Maiden song “The Evil that Men Do”. Jack snorted before he slid both guns back into their holsters, yanking out his knives when another man—this one was built like a linebacker—had pulled a bat from somewhere. The linebacker took a swing at Jack who ducked it, taking several graceful steps, dodging the bat swings with an easy weaving back and forth.

“Oh, this is getting fun! Oh, hey gents.” Jack chuckled when his back hit the wall.

The linebacker with the bat cornered Jack, two of his friends moving to flank Jack. One of the men with the linebacker, a bald man who sported an impressive beard, Jack thought, had also pulled a knife, and their last friend, a man with a wild unkempt head of hair drew a small pistol.

“Oh, you must be the Moe, Larry and Curly of the evening.” Jack grinned.

The linebacker snarled. “Laugh it up. I'm going to crack your head like a melon.”
Jack chuckled. “Oh, you think stupid?”

“Who you calling stupid?” The man with the frizzy hair leered.

Jack giggled. “I don't think you're stupid. You just have bad luck when it comes to thinking.”

“Larry” snarled and started to bring up his weapon, but Jack ducked under his arm, holding his blades facing downward. Jack came up under the man's gun arm and slashed his throat, blood spurting out in an arc as the man gurgled. The linebacker, “Moe” took a swing at Jack hissing. “You son-of-a-bitch!”

The bat nicked Jack's shoulder with enough force that Jack spun around to face the man, but Jack was grinning.

Jack charged forward, stepping to the side to avoid “Curly's” lunge with the knife and buried one of his blades to the hilt in “Moe's” gut. Jack swiftly brought his second knife up and slammed it in an upward stroke, deeply under the man's jaw. Jack drove the body around toward “Curly” before he yanked his blades out to throw Moe at his friend. “Curly” went down to the floor under his friend's weight. But before Jack could lunge in and finish “Curly” a man jumped onto Jack's back.

Harley narrowed her eyes watching the blonde woman with a knife in her hand.

“Come on bitch,” the blonde woman hissed.


The blonde jerked in response, lunging and slashing forward. Harley ducked and stabbed the woman in the side, but hit nothing vital. Harley jumped back yanking her blade with her, taking several quick steps back. The blonde woman surprised Harley when she kicked out, her foot catching Harley in the knee, sending her crashing backwards to the nasty (now even nastier with blood on it) floor. Harley rolled out of the way just as the woman lunged down on her. Harley rolled away and into her sledgehammer.

Harley sprang to her feet, dropping her blade and grasped the sledgehammer handle with both hands. She twisted around with a yell. “AAHH!!!”

Harley swung the hammer to the side, catching the blonde in the hip with a loud crack of metal hitting muscle and bone. The woman went down with a scream. Harley let go of the hammer, the impact sending the hammer flying past the blonde into the bar with the loud splinter of wood. Harley turned, searching frantically for her knife. She dived under a table grabbing at her blade.

It was the blonde man whom Jack had shot in the hip who jumped onto Jack's back. He still had his gun and tried to shoot Jack in the head, but Jack yanked his head back hard, crushing the blonde man's nose. The shot slipped and ripped across Jack's front, burning a bloody graze, but otherwise doing little damage. Jack buried one of his knives in the blonde's thigh, which caused the man's grip on Jack to loosen. Jack let go of the blade leaving it in the man's leg and grabbed him with his free hand, twisting the blonde around and then slamming him into the edge of a table.

Jack grabbed the man's hand that held the gun, slamming it three times in quick succession until the blonde dropped the gun. During this, Jack dropped his other knife, but he managed to yank the one
Jack grinned. “Wanna see a magic trick?” Just before the man could respond, Jack slammed the blade with all his might into the blonde man's eye.

Harley scrambled to her feet to turn just as the blonde woman, one leg dragging, slashed at her. The blade cut across the top of Harley's breasts, painful, but not deadly. Harley lunged back avoiding the worst of the blade and kicked out, her booted foot hitting the woman in her hip that Harley hoped was broken.

The blonde stumbled back with a screech of pain. “SHIT!! YOU BITCH!”

Harley grinned with bloody teeth. The blonde, losing all sense, tried to charge Harley, but Harley only laughed and charged her back. The blonde held her blade up high, too high, her eyes crazed with pain. Harley, at the last moment wrapped her arm around the blonde's arm that held the knife, yanking her forward then with all her strength, Harley brought her fist down on the bend in the woman's arm using her fist with the brass knuckles. The blonde screamed as her arm broke with a loud snap of bone. Harley let her go, doing a spinning kick to her already damaged hip that sent the blonde crumpling to the floor.

Jack stumbled back with a laugh, yanking his blade out of his latest victim's eye when a shot rang out, hitting him in the shoulder, ripping through the cloth of his outfit. Jack jerked with the shot, ripping across the skin of his shoulder, another flesh wound, just burning across his shoulder and through his nice jacket.

Jack didn't waste time, he spun on the balls of his feet like a dancer in the middle of a tango spin and threw his blade, striking “Curly” in the throat. Jack laughed as he saw the shocked look on “Curly's” face as he sank to the floor, blood bubbling from between his lips and out of his neck.

Jack stepped backwards, still laughing and ran right into the arms of the Electrocutioner. Lester snarled wrapping his beefy arms around Jack. The gauntlets sent a shock through Jack's body. Jack jerked with the initial current of electricity, but the weeks of shocking himself provided him with a level of tolerance Lester wasn't prepared for when he grabbed Jack.

Jack laughed while the electricity raced over his body.

Harley turned as the lights in the bar flickered in response to the suddenly influx of electricity from the Electrocutioner's gauntlets. She saw the Electrocutioner's back, arcs of electricity racing from the pack on his back and along his arms. She heard Jack's laugh.

Harley screamed. “JACK!”

She raced toward the bar and grabbed her sledgehammer. She picked it up and swung with all her might, her hammer smashing into Lester's back and into the electrical pack at the small of his back. There was a burst of light as electricity shot from the pack and raced up the Electrocutioner's back and down the handle of the sledgehammer. Harley screamed as a jolt of electricity raced up her hammer causing her arms to jerk. Her hands clenched, then released in a spasm causing her to let go of the handle. She dropped to her knees with a gasp of pain, her arms aching all the way to her shoulders.

Lester let go of Jack, jerking, spasming with the overload of electricity. Jack broke the man's hold on
him and stepped back for a moment to watch the smoke as Lester's hair burned until he saw Harley on her knees behind the Electrocutioner.

Jack, a few burns on his clothing, rushed over to her, dropping down to one knee. “Harley?”

She smiled. “I'm fine Jack.” She giggled. Jack helped her to her feet holding her close for a moment and kissed her.

“Give me a second cupcake.” Jack walked over to where Lester had fallen face first to the floor. Jack checked his pulse. “Ah, still alive sweets.”

Jack pulled one of his guns, sliding his hand into his slacks pocket and pulled out a handful of bullets, he slipped them into the nearly empty magazine. After that, he pulled out his pack of cigarettes, lighting one and took a long pull, blowing out a long line of smoke. Harley hopped onto one of the stools, spinning herself around giggling. She expected him to shoot Lester, but instead he walked around the bar, putting a bullet in the head of each person in the bar, making sure they were dead. Harley jumped up, sliding across the remains of the bar, looking over the liquid that was still intact, grabbing a bottle of whiskey and two glasses. She poured the amber liquid into the glasses, leaning on part of the bar that was still there after shoving the bartender out of the way and sipped on her drink watching Jack. Jack walked back over to the Electrocutioner.

“So baby, what do you want to do?” Jack walked over and picked up his drink, downing it in one swallow. Jack smiled sliding his weapon back into its holster before reaching over to take Harley's hand and helped Harley to walk around the bar, just as the music on the jukebox changed. They were both bloody and hurt, but Harley smiled.

“I wanna make him suffer puddin.” Tears appeared in her eyes as Harley whispered. “I want him to suffer for what he did to us.”

The music on the jukebox had changed to something mellow, the sounds of “Wicked Game” started to play, but a version by a group called Stone Sour.

“Dance with me puddin?” Harley grinned at him, tears running down her cheeks, smearing her make-up and the blood that streaked her face.

Jack ran a finger over the tops of her breasts, smearing her blood across his fingers. He slowly brushed her blood over his bottom lip before he grinned. “Of course my sweets.”

Jack held her hand, the two of them walked in a circle smiling and staring into each others eyes as they moved among the bodies and blood. Jack came up behind her, his hands placed gently on her shoulders, they weaved together for a moment before he took her hand and spun her out from him. He tugged her into his arms, Harley placing one bloody gloved hand in his equally bloody gloved hand, her other hand resting on his shoulder, Jack's other hand on her waist. They smiled into each others eyes weaving back and forth as the music played.

* 

The world was on fire and no one could save me but you

It's strange what desire will make foolish people do

I'd never dreamed that I'd meet somebody like you

And I'd never dreamed that I'd lose somebody like you
Jack spun her out again then back into his arms lifting her up, wrapping his arms around her rear, neither of them bothered by the wounds they had as he smiled brightly up at her and spun her around. Harley put one arm out, her other around his neck smiling down at him with such love that it made Jack's heart swell. Jack lowered her slowly, running his hands up her back, pressing her against him. Harley wrapped her arms around him, staring into his eyes while the song played. Both of them, their faces bloody, their lipstick and eye make-up smeared smiling at each other. Jack kissed her, moving his mouth over hers, their tongue sliding together while they weaved in place to the music.

What a wicked game you played to make me feel this way
What a wicked thing to do to let me dream of you
What a wicked thing to say you never felt this way
What a wicked thing to do to make me dream of you ….
Lester came to slowly. His head felt heavy, but the first thing he was aware of was that his body was
wracked with pain. He was fairly sure his shoulder was broken, or at least dislocated. He had been
burned, he could smell it, the smell of burned hair that seemed to float around his head. But the next
thing he was aware of was the smell of blood, cigarette smoke and alcohol. The next thing that he
focused on was the sound; it was quiet except for the sound of “Sympathy for the Devil” playing on
the jukebox, and the clink of balls on the pool table, rolling hitting each other.

When Lester tried to move, he found that he was tied up tight enough that he could only move his
head. He was sitting up, tied to one of the chairs in the bar. He tried again to move, but he was
bound up tightly, his arms twisted behind him, wrapped with wires from ...well he had no idea what
they were from; the only reason he knew they were wires was that he could feel them against his
skin on his forearms, he knew the feel of wires from his work with them, it was as if he could feel the
current that ran through them vibrate against his skin.

As he opened his eyes, his vision focused slowly in the dim light from the bar, he looked around
carefully, not wanting to move his head too quickly, it hurt too much to move with any speed. What
he saw made his heart rate increase. Everyone in the bar was dead.

Lester pressed his lips together in shock at the mess around him. There were bodies lying
everywhere, seeming to cover every inch of the bars floor space. Blood was splattered across the
floor, the few tables that were still standing upright and along the walls. But what made the whole
scene even more eerie was the giggling and whispered voices of the only two people alive in the
place. Lester glanced over to see the two people that had walked into the bar earlier, the pretty boy
and the blonde woman who had come in with him. They were by the pool table, the man showing
her how to play, leaning across her body in an intimate fashion. Even among the carnage, they
seemed like a silly happy couple, the man flirting with the woman playfully.

* 

Jack smiled and licked Harley's ear, catching the lobe of her ear in his teeth and pulling gently before
he let go. He leaned over her, enjoying the feel of her backside pressed against his groin. “Now, hold
it steady and let it go easy.”

Harley giggled, glancing sideways at Jack. “You know I know how to do this right?”

Jack grinned, wrapping his arms around her waist and licking her ear again pressing his groin against
her rear. “But I love showing you how to, my pumpkin.”

Harley giggled and wiggled her backside against Jack, enjoying how her playfulness made Jack
growl playfully. Jack turned her around, causing her to drop her pool stick as he lifted her up and set
her on the table pressing himself between her legs. Jack grabbed her backside pulling her to the edge
of the table. Harley grabbed Jack's head, her fingers digging into his hair as they kissed long and
hard. Jack's hand snaked up her torso to squeeze her breast, making Harley groan loudly. Jack purred
against her mouth especially when Harley wrapped her legs around his waist, locked her feet behind
him, and forced his mouth closer, her teeth dragging across his tongue. Jack chuckled, his fingers
wrapping around the edge of the corset she wore and pulled the garment down just a little to yank
her closer. For a moment Lester thought they were going to go at it right there on the pool table, but
after a few moments of intense, heated kissing, the man stepped away from the woman.

Jack licked her lips with a purred, “When I get you home I'm going to fuck you long, hard and
deep.”

Harley giggled. “Good,” she hissed back as she ran her gloved fingers down his chest.

Jack let go of her reluctantly and walked around to where he had an ashtray balanced on the edge of the pool table. He used the tip of his shoe to push one of the bodies out of the way as he picked up his cigarette that was balanced at the edge of the ashtray, burning a trail of smoke into the air. Alongside the ashtray sat a bottle of Evan Williams Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey and two shot glasses. Jack picked up the bottle, poured two shots and handed one to Harley. She slipped off the pool table and strolled over to him taking the drink. She downed it with a shudder.

“Ack, the stuff is harsh puddin.”

Jack chuckled taking his shot before putting his cigarette back between his lips and hopping up on the side of the pool table to face Lester.

Lester snarled at his captors. “Let me go, you fucking crazies!!”

Harley dropped her shot glass on a table as walked over to position herself between Jack's legs, running her gloved hands up and down Jack's thighs as she leaned back against him. Jack wrapped an arm around her shoulders, pulling her against his torso, blowing out a line of smoke from between his lips before leaning down and licking her ear again.

“Oh look puddin,” she said casually. “He's awake.” Harley giggled and glanced up at Jack. Jack smiled, kissing the top of her head. “Well so he is, my pudding pop. Ready to play?” Jack asked and Harley gave him a beatific smile in response. Jack grinned at her, his hand moving to glide up her throat, pressing her head against his chest as he leaned over her and kissed her, his mouth moving over hers in an upside down kiss. Harley purred at the flavor of cigarettes and cheap whiskey on his tongue, her arms going up to wrap around him and her hands threaded into the hair at the back of his head. Jack's hand slid down her neck and over her breast, then down lower...

Lester frowned, watching them kiss and thinking to himself that they were really nuts, when the man slid his hand down her neck and over her breasts, squeezing one causing the woman to moan against the guy's mouth again. For the second time in a matter of minutes Lester thought the two of them were going to go at each other right there in front of him. Lester was about ready to yell something else at them when they stopped, seeming reluctant to part before they both looked at him and smiled. That gave Lester the creeps. For the first time since he regained consciousness, Lester was beginning to doubt he would get out of this alive.

Jack hopped down from the table after Harley moved from between his legs. As he jumped down he took Harley's hand in his, weaving his fingers with hers. Together, they both waltzed over to the Electrocutioner, each of them pulling up a chair to sit in front of him. Harley sat and crossed her legs. This close Lester could see that she was covered in speckles of blood that had dried across her face like freckles and had even sprayed into her blonde hair. Jack sat beside her. Lester could see he was covered in blood too. They both smiled at him again. He was wishing they would stop with the smiling, it was really making him uneasy.

To cover his building fear, Lester snarled and spit, but neither Harley nor Jack reacted with anything but smiles.

“What the fuck is wrong with you people?! What do you want from me?” Lester hissed and struggled against his bonds. “When I get free, I'm going to rip your fucking heads off!”

Jack picked up one of Lester's gauntlets that had been sitting on a table nearby, ignoring the outburst
as he held the gauntlet up for the larger man to see. “While you were out, I played around with your gauntlets and what was left of your power pack after my sweet Harley here hit you in the back. I’ve taken the power pack, and made ourselves a sort of poor man's electric chair.” Jack grinned with pride.

Harley smiled. “My puddin's gifted.”

Lester snarled. “What the fuck do you two want? Money? I got money...”

Jack snorted. “Pffft...money? Please. You know who I am? I'm Jack Wayne—I hardly need your money Mr. Buchinsky. No, no, I”m here for something much more fulfilling...Revenge.” Jack smiled and whispered to the bound man. “They say, revenge is a confession of pain and you, Mr. Buchinsky, have caused us pain.”

Harley nodded in agreement.

Buchinsky frowned in confusion. “Revenge? For what?”

Harley stood up so quickly that Lester didn't see her move, but before he could react, she was right in front of him and had slapped him hard across the face.

“For what you took from us!!” she hissed, nearly screaming. Jack hurried over putting his arm around her shoulders and guiding her back from Buchinsky.

“What the fuck are you talking about, you crazy bitch?” Buchinsky spit blood out, her slap hard enough with the brass knuckles on her hand that she had split his lip.

Buchinsky looked at them both with genuine confusion.

Harley grabbed his face again breaking free of Jack's hold, her nails (despite the gloves) digging into his cheeks. “You took our baby, that's what.”

Jack gently tugged her away again from Buchinsky and into the cradle of his arms. Harley wrapped her arms around Jack and shuddered, burying her face against his neck while Jack glared at Buchinsky.

“Harley was pregnant when you attacked her, tried to use her as a shield against Batman at The Monte; remember now?”

That was when Buchinsky realized where he knew these two from, that job a few weeks back...the failed attempt on Harvey Dent's life. Buchinsky stared at the two of them, clearly not sure what to say or do when Jack smiled, pulling something from his pocket while keeping one arm around Harley. Lester saw the power pack for his gauntlets; he traced the wire that led from the power pack, to the floor and up to the chair that he was tied to...where he lost track of it.

Jack giggled. “We are also here to correct a grave error on the Batman's part. I mean, really? Giving you to the Gotham police. Well, we saw how that turned out. Batman really needs to think before gives criminal low-lifes like you over to them. It's really sad, Batman could do so much more, but he is only a half measure.” Jack sighed. “Well, now that we're here everything will be as it should be.”

Jack handed the power pack to Harley.

“Would you like to do the honors, my love? The first hit to see how my little experiment works?” Jack purred.
Harley lifted her head seeing what Jack was handing her. “Yes, I would puddin.”

She took the device with a vicious smile.

Lester hissed. “You two are crazy!”

Harley and Jack both burst out laughing. Jack chuckled, stepping close to his prisoner and slapped Buckinsky across the face. “You know, whatever doesn't kill you makes you stranger. That is why madness is a clearly underrated concept. Madness is just a different sort of sanity! When everything becomes too much...when the “order” of things makes no sense at all, you realize you’re just differently sane! Then you see the world as it is, understand that reason and logic are just illogical! But, I also like to think that madness is just a new way of seeing the world...the correct way of seeing the world. You see, Batman letting you live? That was crazy!! You managing to escape from the cops? Madness! Harley and I are just correcting a grave error. We are just putting the world on a track that we see as the correct one. You may see that as crazy, but Harley and I see it as the correct way, the way of true justice.”

Jack smiled and walked back over to Harley wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her close.

Buchinsky thought he was ready for whatever these crazies had cooked up. He wasn't the Electrocuitioner for nothing. He had worked with electricity for a long time, he had been electrocuted dozens of times. There was nothing they could do to him, he thought, that was until that bitch flipped the switch on the power pack.

* Jack and Harley stood back as bolts of electricity ran through Lester Buchinsky lighting him up like a Christmas tree. While the man was jerking around in his chair, his muscles spasming and seizing, Harley giggled. “You think he will bite his tongue off? I mean, I read about electroshock therapy where they forgot the tooth guard and the patients bit their tongues off.”

Jack laughed. “Oh hell, that would be funny.”

They both laughed sitting back in their chairs and watched Buchinsky twitch and jerk.

Jack frowned tapping his finger against his chin when Harley turned off the juice. “You know sweets. The more I think about it, the more I realize, killing him would be too easy.”

Harley, her face lit up by the dance of lights as the lights in the bar flickered. She watched Buchinsky jerk and twitch with a certain gleam of pleasure in her eyes when she flipped the switch on for a few moments longer, then flipped the switch off. (Harley was only dimly aware of how far down the rabbit hole she had gone when she was enjoying torturing someone, but this man had stolen something precious from her and Jack, something...beautiful. She wasn’t sure what it said about her...she would think she would know being a doctor of psychiatry and all, but it was hard when she was so in love that she couldn't see beyond that.)

“What do you mean puddin?” Harley dropped the power pack on one of the tables as she stood up.

“Killing him for what he did is just too easy.” Jack repeated and turned to face Buchinsky. “So, why were you there at the restaurant that night?”

Panting, Buchinsky looked up at Jack. “I tell you, you'll let me go?”

Jack glanced over his shoulder at Harley who shrugged signaling that the situation was Jack's to
control at the moment.

“All right,” Jack nodded agreement. “We'll let you go if you tell us.” Jack pulled his chair closer to Buchinsky and sat, crossing his legs and rested his elbow on his knees, his chin in the palm of his hand to give Buchinsky his undivided attention. Harley walked around to the back of the bar looking for something better than cheap whiskey to drink.

“I was hired by Mayor Hill. To get rid of Dent.” Buchinsky groaned, adjusting his shoulders as much as his bonds would allow.

Jack pursed his lips. “Really? Now that's interesting...you know why?”

“Because Dent was digging into things he shouldn't have been, that's all I know. Now let me go!”

“Of course we'll let you go, but first we have to make sure you won't tell anybody about us.” Jack smiled and stood up.

Harley giggled watching Jack with a look of complete love and devotion.


Jack stood up and walked over to where Harley was pouring herself a small glass of peppermint schnapps she had found behind the bar. Jack searched around as Harley sipped her drink until he found the ice box. He opened it up and dug around until he came up with an ice pick.

Jack grinned brightly. “Even this shitty place has an ice pick, isn't that just grand my sweets?”

Harley frowned with a questioning tilt of her head. “What are you going to do with an ice pick?”

Jack skipped around the bar with a broad grin on his lips. “Well, there was a time when I went through a phase where I was fascinated with mental illness. During that precocious time, I read about how they used to do lobotomies using a special tool called an orbitoclast. You see...” Here Jack had walked around in front of Buchinsky showing him the ancient looking ice pick he had found. “Now Harley is a psychiatrist, so she already knows all about lobotomies, but I'm sure you are curious aren't you Lester?” Lester shook his head vigorously back and forth, fear tightening his stomach muscles almost as much as the electricity had.

Jack smiled and continued. “You see, what you do is you go through the eye-socket, placing the pick just so...” Jack illustrated where the pick was placed by placing it against the inner corner of his own eye. “And then, you use a hammer to break through the thin layer of bone to enter the brain. You twirl the pick around to cut the fibers, maybe twirl a bit of brain matter along with it. Then, you repeat the same procedure through the other eye.”

Jack grinned like a kid who just aced his class presentation as he continued. “It's called a transorbital lobotomy...takes maybe ten minutes, in and out. Boom! You're a whole new person! Or...a non-person I suppose...it all depends on how good I am.” Jack beamed at his captive.

Harley giggled. “Oh, I remember reading about lobotomies. The transorbital lobotomy can have all sorts of results. It's one of the reasons they aren't really done any more...but I've always been curious about how they were done.” Harley smiled pleasantly.

Lester looked between the two of them. “No, no, no!! Please!”

Jack chuckled. “Oh, stop being such a big baby. Harley—want to help me lay our patient down? It
comes with a money back guarantee...geez.” He grinned at Lester with a waggle of his eyebrows. “Though I suppose if I mess up, you'll be too much of a vegetable to ask for your money back. Win win.”

“Sure thing puddin.” Harley walked over and together, with Lester struggling. They laid him back on the floor, still tied securely to the chair. Lester jerked and fought, but he was weak from the electrocution and he was tied up too thoroughly. Jack grabbed Lester's legs, pulling him out a bit before he straddled Lester's chest.

“Harley my love, I need something to hammer with...something small.” Jack smiled down at Lester. “If you don't mind waiting a moment. Actually, how would you like to hear a joke while you wait?”

Jack grinned. “A man sat down at a bar and told the bartender, "I bet you three hundred dollars that I can piss into the cup all the way over there on the other side of the bar and not miss a single drop." The bartender said, "There is no way you can do that. Sure, I'll bet you three hundred dollars." The man then begins to undo his pants and begins pissing. He starts pissing all over the bar, spraying on the bottles and the bartender, not making a single drop in the cup. The bartender starts smiling and laughing and says,

"That's it, you owe me three hundred dollars." The man then gets up and walks over to the pool table and starts laughing and shaking hands with the men standing there. He walks back to bar, sits down and starts laughing at the bartender and hands him the money. The bartender asks, "Why are you laughing? You just lost the bet." The man said, "I'm laughing because I bet those guys over there one thousand dollars that I could piss all over you and your bar and you would still be laughing when I was done."

Jack started laughing. Harley popped from from behind the bar giggling. “Jack, that is terrible!”

Jack grinned. “I know!”

Lester started to yell and thrash. Jack, still laughing, jerked with his movements. Harley, giggling, dropped back down behind the bar again, still looking for something for Jack to use as a hammer for the ice pick, when she came back up again and tossed Jack a dish rag. “Here—for his mouth.”

“Thanks sugar plum.” Jack caught the rag out of the air and jammed it deep into Lester's mouth. The man choked on it, continuing to jerk and thrash, but at least now he was quieter about it Jack thought. Harley, who was looking under the bar, searching for anything that Jack could use as a hammer blinked in surprised when she saw the wooden mallet, a tiny thing, laying under the counter. She reached for it wondering what on earth it could be for when she remembered seeing something about kegs of beer being opened with mallets. That must be what the little wooden mallet was for, opening kegs. As she stood up with the mallet in hand, Harley grinned thinking to herself, the sledgehammer was too heavy, but this...a little bigger, that might work. She mulled this over as she walked over to Jack.

“Look what I found.” She smiled as she held up the mallet.

Jack grinned. “Perfect—just like you Harls.”

Harley blushed handing Jack the mallet. He reached out, but instead of grabbing for the mallet, he grabbed her wrist pulling her down and stealing a kiss. Harley started to yelp, but the noise was quickly sealed off by the press of his lips against hers. Harley reached out with her free hand and wrapped it around Jack's head, tugging him even closer to her as they kissed over Lester.

Jack reluctantly let Harley go with a sigh. “Okay Harls, you want to watch or do?”
Harley grabbed a chair and scooted it closer. “You do one side, I do the other?”

Jack smiled at her. “Perfect my sweets. So equitable! Okay...” Jack looked down at Lester. “Let me know if this hurts, will ya?”

Lester struggled, but he simply couldn't move except for his head. Harley came over after a couple of seconds, squatting down behind Lester and grabbed his head none-too-gently. The large man continued to struggle, but the tiny blonde woman was surprisingly strong. She grabbed his head, her fingers digging her nails in and held his head in place.

“Okay puddin, here ya go.” She grinned brightly at Jack who steadied the pick over Lester's left eye.

Jack grinned down at Lester with a whispered, “Yahtzee,” just before he brought the tiny hammer down.

*

An hour later, Harley was straightening up Lester's clothing as they stood outside the bar. She stood on her tip toes with a cloth and wiped a trail of blood that had started to flow down his cheek from one of his eyes. Harley grinned patting Lester's chest. “There ya go big guy.”

Lester stared down at her while Harley grinned. His face was slack, his eyes had a dull vacant look; there was clearly no one home inside. He just stared at her, his mouth hanging open.

Harley smiled again and whispered, “I hope some part of you is still in there, seeing all this, but now you're trapped in your own head. You can't speak, you can't feed yourself or go to the bathroom without help. This is what happens when you take something, something precious. You get to live the rest of your life like this...trapped in a hell you can't escape.” She grinned up at him patting his slack cheek. She then turned him around and gave him a little shove. Lester started walking, slowly, with sort of a Frankenstein's monster gait. He never turned around, simply kept walking. Harley grinned brightly watching him walk away before she turned on her heel and headed back into the bar. Inside, Jack was taking bottles of liquor and pouring them all over the bar, over the bodies while the jukebox—sounding like it was on it's last legs—began to play “Arson's Lullaby.” (While Harley had been busy sending Buchinsky off, Jack had gone around picking up anything that the two of them had dropped; knives, guns, and the sledgehammer, which now sat by the door.) When Jack saw Harley step inside, his face blossomed into a bright smile. “There she is: the most beautiful woman in Gotham. Get our little boy on his way?”

Harley giggled walking over and throwing herself into Jack's arms. “Yep, he is now wandering the streets as helpless as a baby.”

Jack wrapped an arm around her waist, yanking her up on her tiptoes just before he took a kiss from her. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck tightly. Jack spun her around while he kissed her, the two of them holding on to each other as if their lives depended on the contact. Jack finally sat her down on her feet, tossing the bottle of booze he had been holding with a bright grin and the shattering sound of glass breaking.

“I think this place is ready to burn. I found some cotton balls back in someone's office. Perfect fire starters; I swear someone was just begging for us to burn this place to the ground. They also had so much cheap rum, vodka, tequila and whiskey back there it's a wonder this place never burned down before us.”

Harley grinned. “Can I start it?”
Jack laughed, pulled out his lighter, and handed to her. “There you go pumpkin pie.” He giggled softly. “Burn the place down.”

Harley giggled too and walked over to where Jack had set up the cotton balls on the pool table. She could smell the heavy odor of alcohol that he had liberally sprinkled on the table and she could see that some of the balls were soaked in the fluid while others were dry. She flicked the lighter to life and carefully, she held it to the balls of cotton. The cotton swiftly caught on fire and almost instantly the fire spread out from the small pile of cotton balls which were quickly consumed. The fire rapidly followed the flow of alcohol and within a few heartbeats, the fire had already quickly spread.

Laughing, Jack grabbed Harley, hauling her off her feet and out of the bar—grabbing the sledgehammer with one hand—to the outside slamming the door shut behind them. Laughing they both ran for the motorcycle, with Jack getting on and swiftly shoving the key in and hitting the gas almost at the same time. Harley grabbed the sledgehammer, and with a little help, strapped it to the side of the bike. The engine purred to life as Harley climbed on behind Jack.

Inside the bar it took less that four minutes before the place was engulfed, flames burning through the ceiling to lick up through the cheap roof shingles.

*  

Harley yelled, her hands out over her head crying out with joy. “WOOHOO!!! FASTER JACK!!”

Jack grinned broadly, hitting the gas and sped the bike through the streets of Gotham both of them laughing as he weaved dangerously through traffic.

At one point Jack reached back. “Come here Harley.”

Jack pulled her around to the front of the bike, managing to keep the bike from skidding as Harley pushed herself up and while holding onto his shoulder she spun herself around so that she was facing him while he drove. She wrapped her arms around his neck, covering his mouth with hers. Jack reached up with one hand, grabbing a fistful of her hair while he kissed her, keeping one eye on the road. Harley leaned back, grinning wickedly at him as she leaned on his shoulder with one hand and with the other she started to undo the front of her corset. Jack grinned biting his tongue between his teeth as he watched her.

She finished and tossed the corset away, the garment falling to the highway, instantly disappearing under the wheels of a passing car so that she was wearing only the leather jacket of Jack's. Jack growled. “Mmm...Harley...”

She giggled in return. “Jack...”

Jack revved the bike taking the turn to head back to Wayne Manor while Harley wrapped herself around him, her lips, teeth and tongue moved over his throat biting and sucking while she pressed herself against him, her skin feeling on fire with the need for Jack to touch her. Jack ran a hand up her back under the jacket, his gloved fingers caressing down her spine while Harley's hands moved through his hair. Harley grabbed his bottom lip with her teeth, wrapping her legs around his waist and grinding against him while Jack drove. She let go of his lip, her fingers grabbing fistfuls of his hair and forcing his head to the side so she could suck on his throat. Jack groaned, his eyes rolling at the feel of her teeth on his neck. She sucked hard, leaving a bruise in her wake, her tongue dragging down his neck. Her fingers worked at the collar of his shirt opening the top two buttons in order to allow her to lick his collar. Jack hit the gas, the bike picking up speed as Harley bit down on his collarbone with enough force that Jack hissed in joyous pain. She moved her hands down to unbutton his vest, then back to the buttons of his shirt, yanking it open, the wind whipping his shirt.
and vest back exposing his chest. Harley purred running her gloved hands over the skin of his chest.

Jack groaned at her touch. “Harley, my girl...” He hissed when she bit down on his nipple. His hand moved up to her hair, holding a fistful of the thick blonde locks while she ran her tongue over his nipple before biting again, her sharp teeth holding his nipple while her tongue played over the sensitive surface. Jack jerked when she moved to his other nipple, taking a bite of him that had him pressing his teeth into his bottom lip, wincing with pleasure. She licked his chest one more time and grinned at him looking into his blue eyes just before she lowered herself backwards.

Harley laid back against the bike, her hair framing her face. Jack's lips twitched gazing at her, hot, sexy, lying back just asking him for it. Jack grinned running his free hand down her torso, then up again, running his gloved fingers over her breasts which caused her to arch her back dangerously. Harley groaned. She wanted him badly; her body aching for him. After what they had just done together, she wanted Jack so badly that the ache for him was painful.

Jack covered one of her breasts with his mouth, sucking hard, which caused Harley to groan reaching back to grab the handles of the motorcycle. Jack chuckled squeezing her breasts together and circling his tongue over her nipples.

“Harley,” he hissed against her skin, his teeth scraping against her nipples sending goosebumps of pleasure up her spine. He leaned back, grabbing one of her legs, placing it over his shoulder as he reached for the zipper on the back of her boot, tugging the zipper down and tossed her boot down beside the bike. He did the same with her other boot before he grabbed the sides of her leggings, pulling them down her hips, stripping her naked on the side of the road.

Harley groaned, giving Jack a seductive look while she grabbed the handles of the bike again laying back, the leather jacket falling open. Jack undid the front of his slacks grabbing one of her legs and settling it on his shoulder, wrapping her other leg around his hip before he thrust into her. Jack used his long legs to balance on the bike while thrusting into her hard and fast, pressing himself as deep as he could into her, needing to be buried inside her. His need for her was overpowering.

Jack hissed. “Damn it Harley, uuhhh...Harley!”

Harley arched, using the handles of the bike to keep her balance while Jack moved. The leather of his gloves skated across her skin, his fingers digging into her hip, holding her steady while he pounded into her with reckless abandon. Her eyes rolled closed, for a moment the feel of him made her want to cry, to scream, to lose her mind...perhaps she was losing her mind to him but she just didn't care. He made her feel powerful, beautiful; his thrusts filled her, sending ripples through her entire body which caused her to gasp into an almost instant climax. “Jack...uuhhmm...puddin!”

Harley rolled a little, her leg on his hip dropping to the ground. Jack grabbed the leg that was on his shoulder, wrapping his arm around her leg, holding it pressed against his chest and his other hand
held her hip while he continued to thrust hard and fast, keeping her balanced on the bike. Harley reached up with her hand, grabbing fistfuls of his shirt and his vest, holding onto him. The entire bike bounced with their movements. Jack slid his hand from her hip, over her stomach, to rest between her legs, his thumb rolling over her clitoris in a gentle caress. Harley groaned, the warm tickle of her building orgasm rippled through her from her groin spreading out to suffuse through her entire body. Jack's eyes rolled closed as he thrust deeply, the warm wet feeling of her surrounding him made him feel more alive than anything, these moments of intense happiness and contentment were something he still wasn't use to having and now...she was fully part of him. She had killed with him without any reservation, no hesitation...it was one more of the many things he already loved about her. Jack opened his eyes to look down at her, the dim streetlights cast a soft glow over her skin, her eyes closed, her mouth open in complete abandon, fucking in the open where anyone could see them and she didn't care.

When he touched her, rubbing his gloved thumb over her clitoris again, stroking up and down alternating between a slow circle, and a rough stroke, Harley cried out, her knuckles on the bike handles turned white when she came with a loud moan.

“JACK!! Uuuhh...Jack.”

Jack's grin was wide, pumping her hard until he felt as if his very being would explode. He rolled his thumb over her, pounding a little faster until they came together, both of them cry out into the darkness as one. Jack yanked her back up to him, wrapping his arms around her, holding her tightly as he leaned her back down against the bike, both of them panting.

He chuckled, nuzzling her neck. “Let's go home pumpkin pie.”

Harley purred against him, her arms tight around her neck. “Okay puddin.”

*

Jack gathered her boots and leggings from the side of the bike handing them to her after he had zipped up, though he didn't allow her to dress, or to move behind him. He wanted her to stay right where she was, naked except for the leather jacket, facing him. Harley giggled wrapping her legs around his waist, the boots and leggings between them. She wrapped one arm around his neck, pressing her face to his neck while he drove them the rest of the way home.

Once they arrived at the manor, Jack parked the bike out front. Then, both of them giggling, Jack threw Harley over his shoulder and snuck in, trying to be quiet and get up the stairs without waking Alfred or Bruce (if he was home, Jack never knew most of the time). They made it up the stairs, both of them continuing to giggle loudly like a couple of kids out past curfew.

*

It was nearly seven in the morning as Jim Corrigan watched the Gotham City Fire department put out the last of the flames at The Alibi. He took a drag on his cigarette as the fire chief walked up to him. The man had said his name, but Corrigan hadn't really listened.

“So how many dead?” Corrigan asked.

“Hard to tell, but I think maybe a dozen or so. But we found some bullets. I don't think the fire killed all of them. Won't know for sure. The fire burned the bodies pretty badly, don't know if we'll ever be sure what happened.”

Corrigan threw his cigarette butt on the pavement and crushed it with his toe, ignoring the dirty look
he was getting from fire chief Joe next to him.

“This place is a known bed of crooks and hired thugs. Probably just a drug deal or worse, gone wrong and everyone got caught up in it,” Corrigan muttered. The fire chief started to say something, but Corrigan sneered. “Look, you did your job; now let me do mine.”

The man glared at him then shrugged. “Fine, no skin off my nose.” He muttered quietly to himself, walking away from Corrigan. Corrigan sighed. It was too much paperwork to go chasing down blind alleys looking for who might have killed whom in that shit hole and he sure as hell didn’t care about the lives of a bunch of lowlife thugs. He would just pass the coroner a little dough to just write this off as death by fire. Some asshole probably set the place alight with a misthrown cigarette butt...who really cared. No one was going to mourn for these ass wipes. With that, Corrigan walked back to his car, slipping behind the wheel and headed back to the office to write up his report, thinking about what he wanted for lunch.

*

The next morning Jack and Harley were lying in bed naked together, only a hint of morning sunlight shining through a space in the curtain. They had a bag of gummi bears resting between them and were feeding each other the candy and giggling. Harley rolled over onto her stomach licking the back of one gummi and sticking it to the end of Jack's nose. He grinned crossing his eyes looking at the red bear on the end of his nose. He grinned at her then rolled over to grab her, causing Harley to squeal as he attacked her pressing his mouth to her stomach and blowing loudly making terrible noises. Harley kicked her feet, laughing hard enough that tears were running out of the corner of her eyes.

“JACK!! Stop it!!”

Jack blew another raspberry onto her stomach. He lifted his head smiling at her. “How do you feel this morning?”

Harley grinned down at him, popping a gummi bear into her mouth then feeding him one as she whispered. “Is it weird that after last night I feel...free?”

Jack laid his head on her stomach. “No. You are finally free of the shackles of society my sweet. You now see that the world and its laws and rules are all just fabrications...there really aren't any laws or rules except the ones we make for ourselves.” Jack kissed her stomach. “It's just you and me against the world, as corny as that sounds.”

Harley stroked her fingers through his hair. “It doesn't sound corny at all puddin.”

Jack smile squeezing her. “I think today we should go wedding dress shopping.”

Harley blinked stunned. “What?”

Jack kissed her stomach and sat up. “I mean, I know you're usually supposed to go with your girlfriends and your mother, but I thought since you didn't have any of those that you would like to go with me?” Jack smiled lifting his brow at her, looking innocent and so incredibly handsome with his hair flopping over his brow. Harley giggled blushing.

“Oh Jack, I would love to go with you!”

Jack's grin widened even more as he sat up and straddled her. “I think we need to set a date! Our actual wedding date! Like next week...no...next month? Gotta have time to plan a HUGE wedding! Make everyone who is anyone in Gotham come. It will be the wedding of the ages!! A spectacle!!"
Sitting on her naked, Jack threw his hands into the air.

Harley laughed wrapping her arms around him and dragging him back down to her. “Where would we have it?”

Jack laid on top of her, resting his elbows on either side of her head, grinning down at her. His blue eyes seemed to glow with merriment as he reached out with his teeth and playfully brushed them over her chin before he spoke.

“Here at the manor, we could have it in the ballroom or outside on the lawn. It will be gorgeous! I can just see it, you walking toward me...”

Jack smiled in contentment before he continued. “I mean, we have the money, might as well spend it and make a big splash in the society papers! They love that shit. Besides, I want everyone to see my girl. To see that the most wonderful girl in the world is going to be my wife!”

He wrinkled his nose playfully at her. Harley giggled stroking his hair back behind his ears before she pulled a gummi bear out of the bag next to her and fed it to him.

* 

Bruce looked at himself in the mirror and straightened his tie. He ran his hand lightly over his hair and smiled before he left his bedroom. He came trotting down the stairs whistling. He was in a good mood, despite the fact that the Electrocutioner had escaped or that he still hadn't found Killer Croc. Today he was able to put his “Batman” worries aside.

Bruce couldn't remember the last time he had been in a good mood, not like this anyway. He was meeting Selina again today for lunch, then he was taking her with him to look at some paintings he was thinking of buying; particularly a Picasso. “Nude, Green Leaves and Bust.” Actually Bruce wasn't very much interested in the painting itself, but Selina seemed rather interested and while Batman would never be swayed by a pretty face and big green eyes, Bruce Wayne was, which was why they were heading to the auction house for a look at the pieces that would be up for auction this weekend. Bruce had planned on going to the auction anyway to purchase a couple of paintings to donate to the Gotham Art Museum in his mother's name, but with Selina's help he might make a larger donation of artwork. Selina knew her stuff when it came to art.

She had mentioned several other pieces that she thought Bruce might be interested in, Picasso's Moulin de la Galette...there was quite a list of expensive paintings at this particular auction, many of which the Gotham Art Museum would be pleased to have added to their collection by Mr. Bruce Wayne.

Bruce had just turned to head into the kitchen to grab a cup of coffee when he heard Jack and Harleen laughing...and was Alfred laughing too? Bruce lifted a brow. He could only recall a handful of times he had actually heard Alfred laugh fully. He smiled and made his way to the kitchen.

When Bruce stepped through the doorway and the first thing that he noticed was that Jack and Harleen had decided to dress in such a way that they matched. Jack was wearing a deep red suit, with a black dress shirt underneath that was opened just past his collar showing off a bit of chest and black on black wingtip oxfords. Jack was always noticeable, but today he had outdone himself.

Harley was dressed in a vintage style summer dress that was red and white polkadots with black trim. The dress was a backless halter style that hugged her figure in all the right places. She had her hair done to the side to show off her back and she wore a pair of vintage black heel peak toe heels. She was also quite noticeable.
They both looked good, Bruce had to admit, a young, wealthy couple, happy and healthy. He had to chuckle to himself on the last part. If he had known the best way to keep Jack from spiraling further down into possible...well anyway, if he had known the best medicine was to find him a girlfriend, Bruce would have done it long ago.

Jack was the first to see Bruce when he walked into the kitchen. He jumped up and surprised Bruce by throwing his arms around him. “Bruce, Bruce I'm getting married!!!” Jack was excited like a child at Christmas time.

Bruce chuckled hugging his brother back a little uncomfortably. Bruce and Jack were not huggers...at least not to each other, so this sudden display of affection was...odd. But

Bruce smiled and went along with it. “Yes, so I've heard.”

Jack grinned, letting Bruce go and taking his seat again where he grabbed up a slice of toast that had been cut in half, covered in butter and strawberry preserves, taking a huge bite as he continued grinning at his brother. Bruce smiled in return. (Jack could eat his weight in chocolate and never gain an ounce Bruce mused. He was always amazed that Jack stayed in peak physical shape despite his eating habits, not that toast and jam was bad, it just made Bruce aware that Jack could eat just about anything he wanted without consequence, a far cry from Bruce's daily workout regimen.)

“So what are the two of you doing today?” Bruce asked as he reached into the cabinet for a travel mug for his coffee. He smiled in appreciation; the coffee today was kopi luwak.

Harley grinned, her cheeks rosy. “Wedding dress shopping.”

Bruce stopped in mid-pour of his coffee. “Really? I mean...have you two set a date?”

Jack grinned. “I want it to be next week, but since I want a huge wedding that will leave Gothamites talking for decades—next month.”

Bruce tried not to show his shock. “Next month? I—I mean...isn't that a bit fast? If you want enough time to plan and...”

Jack gave his brother a quizzical look. “Why not? I mean, money can buy speed as well as everything we need for a wedding, AND it's not like Harley and I aren't already like man and wife...I mean we fu...”

Bruce held up a finger in warning. “Don't you dare finish that sentence.”

Jack grinned. “Anyway...I want her to be officially Mrs. Jack Wayne...or I could be Mr. Harley Quinn...Oooo I like the sound of that!” Jack reached across and took Harley's hand.

Harley giggled, folding her fingers with his, the two of them staring at each other.

Bruce frowned. “Wouldn't it be Mr. Dr. Harleen Quinzel?”

Jack made a face. “Blah, that sounds wretched. We should get your name legally changed.” Jack turned to Harley, who was smiling, though the look in her eyes was thoughtful at the suggestion.

Bruce sipped his coffee before putting a lid on it. “Well, we can discuss it later if you like Jack, but I need to get going.”

Jack grinned. “Oh, we must, because Harley and I want to be married here at the manor. Have fun Brucie.”
Bruce stopped in the doorway (the thought of the two of them getting married at the manor actually was a wonderful idea. Their mother would have been tickled. Bruce could almost hear the whisper of his mother’s voice, filled with happiness and excitement to have one of her boys getting married. Their father would be the same way, though he wouldn't show it as much).

Bruce turned to his brother in the doorway of the kitchen. “You too Jack, Harley...” He nodded his head to Alfred before he stepped out.

* 

Harley was waiting for Jack in the doorway of the manor. She had a red scarf tied around her hair which she had grabbed under Jack's advisement. She had her sunglasses on, a little black clutch purse, and she was even wearing little black matching gloves. She looked as if she stepped right out of the 1950’s. As Jack always said, costumes, costumes, costumes!. She was beginning to wonder where he was when she heard the purr of a motor, and Jack came around the corner in a 1952 Buick Skylark convertible in shining black with white leather seats. Jack had another pair of round-lensed sunglasses on, but these had black lenses instead of his typical purple (Jack liked to make sure everything went together...themed costumes!) and a pair of black drivers gloves. He tilted his sunglasses down to look at her over the top of them and gave her a wolf whistle. Harley giggled.

“So what do you think?” Jack draped an arm across the seat and grinned at her.

“How many cars do you two own?” Harley asked while she stepped up to the car to run her black gloved hand over the hood. Jack's grin was wickedly naughty.

“Well, this one isn’t supposed to be driven, but how can we not?! It matches our clothing!” Jack patted the seat next to him. “Get in my little sex kitten, let's go find you a dress.”

* 

They drove (within the speed limit this time) to one of the most expensive and well-known wedding boutiques in not just Gotham, but in the world. The establishment was one of those stores where people would book appointments years ahead of time, but Jack, on a whim had called and somehow had arranged them an appointment. Harley was always amazed at Jack's skills at talking people into things; the money helped, but Harley suspected that it had a lot more to do with Jack's charm than his money.

Jack parked the car in front of the store to a great deal of stares. The two of them looked like they were actually part of a movie set with their matching color scheme clothing and car. A few people even took pictures before they stepped into the Gotham Brides and Soiree shop.

* 

Harley had to stop herself from gasping when they stepped inside. The place was huge and immediately reminded her of a museum. The ceiling was high and vaulted, with a large crystal chandelier hanging from the middle of the room and track lighting everywhere, all of it soft giving the place a light, clean feel. Everything was white, or champagne colored—the walls, the lights, the pillars, even the desks were some shade of white. The only color came from the light brown or white plush couches everywhere and the occasion colored wedding dress on display. As soon as Jack and Harley walked in, an older woman dressed in a black dress, with hair so black it was clearly dyed that color, came rushing up to them.

“Jack Wayne and Miss Harley Quinn I presume?” She had a slight British accent.
Jack’s smile was beautiful, Harley thought, as he took the lady’s hand and bowed over it, kissing her knuckles. “That's us and you must be Mrs. Archer, the lady to whom I spoke via the phone?”

Mrs. Archer smiled. “Yes, but please call me Martha.”

Jack grinned. “Well, we insist that you call us Jack and Harley.”

Mrs. Archer smiled again. “Well, you must be the bride?”

Mrs. Archer stepped up to Harley surprising her when the older woman embraced her. “You are a very lucky young lady; he is quite the catch! Not anyone could call me up and get a special appointment.”

Harley giggled. “I know. He is very special—you have no idea.” Harley looked at Jack when she said that, her eyes sparkling.

“Now...” Mrs. Archer stepped back. “You're here for a dress?”

Jack took Harley's hand. “Yes, we are planning on getting married next month.”

Mrs. Archer beamed. “Oh how lovely, well if the two of you will follow me I have set aside a private room for the both of you. Now being so close might limit our choices, but you have such a lovely figure my dear, I am sure we will have no problem finding you something.”

The room the lady led them to was cozy, more like a private boudoir. The room came with a sitting room for Jack and a large dressing room for Harley to try on dresses behind closed doors. The room also had three mirrors around a small pedestal that would allow Harley to step up and see the dress from all angles.

The young couple sat on the couch in the sitting room, facing the consultant who had taken the seat across from them.

She smiled. “May I offer you each a glass of champagne?”

Jack glanced at Harley who nodded.

“Yes thank you,” Jack said with pleasure. Mrs. Archer brought her hand up and waved with two fingers at someone neither Jack nor Harley had seen until she stepped out for a moment and nodded leaving the room quickly.

Mrs. Archer smiled at the two of them. “So tell me what you are looking for in a dress.”

Harley glanced at Jack blushing. “A ballgown, sleeveless with a sweetheart neckline.”

Jack beamed at her. “That was just what I had in mind. Though I want something one of a kind, something no other bride will be wearing. Only something extra special for my girl.”

The two of them giggled. They held hands, their fingers interlocked when they spoke. Though at the mention of unique, they could both almost see the dollar signs appear in Mrs. Archer's eyes.

Mrs. Archer smiled. “Perfect. All right, while my assistant Meg brings you your drinks I will go and pull a few dresses to get us started.”

The older woman stood up and left with a big smile on her face. A few moments later the aforementioned Meg showed up with two flutes of bubbling champagne on a serving tray.
She was a beautiful young woman with raven black hair done in a modern 40's style (naturally black, unlike Mrs. Archer), with deep blue eyes and an hourglass figure. The way she bent over to hand Jack his glass, clearly displaying her cleavage in her tight black dress, had Harley hating Meg instantly. There was just something about the way the woman was smiling at Jack with her thick red lips, perfect white teeth...Jack took the flute with a smile. “You know they say champagne is like duct tape—it fixes everything.”

Meg twittered, bringing her fingers up to her lips with a giggle. “Oh, that's so funny.”

Harley narrowed her eyes. Oh, she could see what this one was doing. Jack Wayne, wealthy younger brother to Bruce Wayne, handsome, elegant and rich... and just because he was here dress shopping with his fiancee clearly didn't mean a thing to this Meg who was standing next to Jack's chair. Harley squeezed her flute until the glass groaned in protest. She had to make a conscious effort to stop herself, taking a sip instead. Harley had felt jealousy before, but this, this was white hot rage that someone would dare to flirt with Jack, her Jack. No one—no one touched Jack. He was hers. (It didn't occur to Harley that her thoughts were following the same lines that Jack's had on the day they had received their tattoos...)

At least Jack seemed oblivious to Meg's obvious flirting when he leaned over and grinned at Harley. “A toast my sweets?”

Harley smiled in return and clinked her glass against his as Jack murmured, “To us against the world.”

Harley's smile widened. “To us against the world,” she repeated as she took a sip glancing up at Meg who frowned, giving Harley just the barest of a sour look. Harley thought to herself, Yeah, you better just give up sweetheart or I will make you sorry.

That was when Mrs. Archer came back, her arms loaded with dresses which she began hanging up on the hooks against the wall. “All right, I brought some of our one-of-a-kind dresses. These are the only ones, the designers had these on display at their runway shows only.”

The dresses were gorgeous, Harley thought. Jack and Harley stood up walking over to inspect them when Jack stopped, his eyes widening. “Harley, look at this one.”

Mrs. Archer smiled. “That is a Lazaro. This dress is an ivory and wisteria embroidered bridal ball gown, strapless sweetheart neckline, natural waist, box pleated skirt, chapel train.”


Jack grabbed the dress and shoved it at Harley. “This one, you have to try on this one.”

Mrs. Archer led Harley over to the dressing room. “Well, let's not keep your fiance waiting!”

Harley giggle and let herself be led into the dressing room. While Harley was busy changing, Meg walked over to Jack. Jack was sitting on the edge of his chair, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees and his fingers steepled between his legs. Meg leaned against the side of his chair, taking on a stance and expression that she knew were seductive.

“So ah, how long have you two been together?” she asked with a smile.

Jack looked over as if just noticing Meg. “Not long, but long enough.”

Meg nodded. “That's nice; don't feel like you're rushing into this then?”
Jack didn’t look at her as he whispered. “Not at all.”

Meg pressed her lips together. She had managed to seduce a handful of wealthy husbands-to-be. It was fun taking men right out from under their brides-to-be while the dumb bitches were trying on their wedding dress! But it was also a great way to make a few bucks on the side, whether it was lavish gifts, payoffs not to tell the fiancées or blackmail...men were so easy. But this one...this was Jack Wayne, she had heard about him and his brother. Lots of money, one of the wealthiest families in the world. Now, if she could just get him to just pay attention to her. She reached up, unbuttoning a few buttons when the dressing room door opened.

That was when Harley stepped out of the dressing room. Jack’s mouth fell open. He knew Harley was gorgeous, knew without a doubt that she was the most beautiful woman in the world. No one could tell him otherwise, but seeing her step out in that wedding dress, Jack was sure his heart stopped.

Harley smiled and performed a little spin, the dress flared out beautifully spinning with her. Meg stepped back giving Harley a hateful look.

Harley giggled. “It fits perfectly, do you believe it?”

Harley glanced over to Jack, her cheeks red and her eyes sparkling. Jack stared back at her. This is the man I am going to marry, Harley thought. The man who sees my darkness, who brought it out and loves me even more for it. Harley smiled at him, her heart pounding inside her chest.

Jack stood slowly before he walked over and took her hands. He held her arms out, looking at the dress before he started to walk her around then tugged her into his arms. He grinned, taking her right hand in his and danced her slowly around the room, his eyes only on her. Harley smiled up at him as Jack sang very softly.

“Something in the way she moves
Attracts me like no other lover
Something in the way she woos me
I don't want to leave her now
You know I believe and how...”

Mrs. Archer was grinning. She had seen a lot of people in love, but these two, they were something special. She had never seen anything like it before, but they were definitely different, cut from a different mould. Meg frowned, narrowing her eyes at the two of them, thinking to herself that this one wasn’t going to be easy, but she was up for the challenge because the payday would be even bigger. All men were weak and not any of them was ever really “in love.” Not even these two. She just had to find a way...

*  

Jack spun Harley around then held her out at arms length. “I don't know about you sugar plum, but I think this is it.”

Harley smiled and looked down at herself. The dress really was perfect. The ivory looked good against her skin and the wisteria, the light purple reminded her of Jack. It wasn't a traditional dress and it wasn't perfectly white...it really was perfect.
“This is it,” she said in a whisper. “This is my wedding dress.”

Jack danced her around the room one more time singing softly.

“Somewhere in her smile she knows
That I don't need no other lover
Something in her style that shows me
I don't want to leave her now
You know I believe and how…”

* 

Bruce was smiling just a little as he walked around the auction house with Selina on his arm. She was stunning today, wearing a black and white Japanese inspired sheer bottom white floral maxi dress with a pair of high heel black sandals that made her the same height as Bruce at the moment. Her green eyes flashed brightly from under the wide brimmed black straw hat she wore with cut-outs along the brim. Bruce noticed that she was receiving quite a few looks as they walked the auction house together. They were done looking at the paintings and Selina was trying to convince Bruce that he should have a party. “It would be fantastic! A huge party to show off the paintings. You could have a masquerade party.” Selina grinned. “Since you said you want to donate whatever you buy to the art museum, you could even ask for donations for the museum or for arts in schools...something like that. Rich people love that.”

Bruce burst out laughing. “You're right, rich people do love that. Actually I was going to donate the paintings I buy in the name of the Martha Wayne Foundation...a charity event might not be a bad idea. Allow a personal showing of the paintings, raise some money with a silent auction on some additional artwork…” His mind turned with the possibilities.

Selina grinned. She could see the thoughts swirling through Bruce Wayne's mind. She almost felt guilty for what she was planning because she actually liked Bruce Wayne, a lot. He wasn't at all what she was used to in rich, philanthropist playboys. Bruce Wayne actually cared. But, she had been hired to do a job and stealing from a private home was so much easier than an auction house. Now, if Bruce held the party that would make her job even easier still...but there was that nagging part of her that liked the guy...a lot.

* 

On the way home, the wind in their hair, Harley asked. “What are you going to wear for our wedding?”

Jack grinned. “Something purple, a shade that matches your dress I think.”

Harley, who had a hand on top of her head against the wind blowing off her scarf grinned. “I like that Jack, a lot.”

When Jack and Harley arrived home they were both surprised to find Dr. Leland's car in the driveway. Jack looked sideways at Harley. “Did we have an appointment?”

Harley giggled. “I guess we did, I don't remember.” They both laughed climbing out of the car. Once inside they found Alfred was waiting for them. “There you are Master Jack, Miss Harleen. Dr. Leland has been waiting for twenty minutes I believe. I tried to reach you, but you were not
answering your phone Master Jack.”

Jack laughed that off. “Sorry Alfred, but I have good news.” He glanced sideways at Harley who was grinning like a cat.

Harley grabbed Alfred in a hug. “I found my wedding dress!”

Alfred looked shocked for a moment as he stood within Harley's embrace, but then he hugged her back, tears in the older man's eyes. “You did Miss Harleen?”

“Yes!” Harley squealed. She let Alfred go with a broad smile. “Would you walk me down the aisle Alfred, when Jack and I get married? I mean...I don't have a father and you have been nothing but supportive and I would understand if you...”

Alfred pulled the younger woman close, hugging her again. “I would be honored Miss Harleen.”

Harley felt her eyes sting with unshed tears. “Thank you Alfred.”

Jack wrapped his arms around both of them hugging them together. “This is going to be epic Alfred! Just epic!”

Alfred smiled and stepped back after Jack released them and quickly wiped his eyes. “Well, you two should go into see Dr. Leland. She has been most patient.”

Jack took Harley's hand. “Come along cupcake!”

*

Dr. Leland was sitting on one of the small sofas in the same room they had met in before, dressed in navy blue slacks and a light white summer blouse and her white coat. She was working on something in her notebook, sipping her tea, when Jack and Harley entered. Jack grinned. “We are so sorry Dr. Leland, your visit completely slipped our minds!” She smiled. “It's quite all right. I had called asking if this would be all right, though we had agreed to wait a couple of weeks, but since I am going out of town I wanted to see you both before I left. I left a message.”

Jack flopped down tugging Harley with him onto his lap, both of them giggling. Dr. Leland smiled. “You two seem in good spirits.”

Jack grinned. “Yup. Just returned from dress shopping.”

“Dress shopping?” Leland set her cup of tea down. Harley nodded. “Yes, picked out my wedding dress today.” She held out her hand with the engagement ring. “I didn't have this last time you were here.”

Dr. Leland took Harley's hand and examined the ring. “That is very unusual and beautiful.”

Harley blushed. “Jack designed it for me.”

Leland smiled releasing her hand. “So, I can assume you are both feeling fine after the events at the restaurant?”

For a moment, Leland noticed the shadow that passed over both their features, but it was quickly gone. It was Harley who spoke. “It was...devastating, but Jack showed me how to deal with the pain. It was a revelation.”

Leland picked up her pen. “And what was that?”
Harley smiled closing her eyes, her smile was small but lovely. “He showed me how to focus, how to use my pain and how to let go.”

Leland frowned. “Let go?”

Jack giggled and sang, squeezing Harley tight against him while with the other hand he dramatically threw that hand out and sang, his voice surprising Dr. Leland with how pleasant it sounded.

“Let it go, let it go

Turn away and slam the door

I don't care

what they're going to say

Let the storm rage on.

The cold never bothered me anyway…”

*

Jack and Harley giggled together like school children. Leland frowned. “So, you are just letting your feelings about the miscarriage go?”

Harley grinned. “Not in the way you're thinking, but yes.”

Leland frowned writing this down. “And you Jack, how do you feel about it?”

Jack squeezed Harley. “That the world is full of injustice and that sometimes we have to right the wrongs ourselves.”

Leland wrote that down then looked up at the two of them. “What do you mean by that?”

“Well, look at Batman for example. Isn't that what he is doing? Righting wrongs...though I don't think he goes far enough. Sometimes he fails...more than sometimes.” Jack muttered the last bit under his breath.

“What was that?” Leland looked up from her notes.

Jack motioned. “Nothing doctor.”

“So you don't feel that the law rights wrongs?” Leland asked.

Jack tilted his head at her with a smile. “There is what is right and there is what is just. Often two completely different things and sometimes what is “law” isn't always right. Besides, none of it matters. All of it, laws, right, wrong, justice...it's all arbitrary. What's a law in one country is considered a sin in another. If something were to happen to that, if our laws were to vanish, people would turn on each other in a heartbeat. Where do you think justice, law, right and wrong would be then? No, it's all just imaginary.”

Leland nodded. “Why do you feel this way?”

Jack was gazing at Harley. He leaned towards her to kiss her softly across the lips. He was about to answer when Dr. Leland's phone started to vibrate from where she had placed it on the table. She picked it up and made a slight face. “I'm sorry, I need to get back to the asylum.”
She stood gathering her things, shoving them into her briefcase, clearly whatever reason she needed to return to the asylum for was important.

“That’s quite all right doctor,” Jack said as he stood up with Harley.

“Same time in say, three weeks?” Leland asked as she slipped her notebook into her case, locking it with a smart snap.

“Of course,” Jack agreed taking Harley’s hand. They walked Dr. Leland to the door and waved good bye.

Jack snorted on a laugh. “She would be so disappointed in us.”

Harley giggled. “Yes, yes she would.”

*

Since the evening was warm and Bruce hadn’t come home, after a light dinner with Alfred, Jack and Harley went skinny dipping in the pool. Jack was watching, treading water, while Harley dived under the water, her blonde hair floating around her like a mermaid’s as she swam up to grab his hips. She had just opened her mouth to lick him when his damn phone went off...again.

It had been vibrating on and off all night with text messages and nude photos from Meg from the bridal shop. He hadn’t mentioned them to Harley because they had had a pretty wonderful day and he didn’t want to upset her, but....

Harley's head popped above the water when she had felt he was distracted. She saw him toss his phone back onto the tiles.

“Again?” She glared at his phone. “What is going on?”

Jack pulled her close. “It's nothing sweets. Just...that assistant from the bridal shop.”

Harley wrapped her arms around his neck and her blue eyes flashed dangerously. “What? Meg?”

Jack nodded. “I'm not sure what's up with her, but she's been sending me text messages and...photos.”

Harley actually snarled. Jack blinked in surprise, but a grin spread across his face. She was angry! Harley shoved Jack in the chest, pushing him away from her and pulled herself out of the pool picking up his phone. Jack watched her, standing there naked, water running down her body. He watched her as she went through the texts, which had become more and more explicit, the last few accompanied by photos...extremely risque photos of Meg. Harley could see that Jack hadn’t responded to any of them, but that wasn’t the point. This bitch thought she could move in on her man, on what was hers. Harley’s eyes narrowed as she turned to glare down at Jack in the pool.

“We're going out.” She tossed the phone at him. Jack easily caught it before it fell into the pool.

“Tell her you'll meet her, pick someplace private, someplace no one is going to hear us.”

Then Harley stomped off. Jack grinned, watching her go before he whispered to himself.

“My girl is so damn sexy.”
Jack hummed softly as he drew the straight razor along his jaw, then wiped the razor on the towel that hung across the sink before he drew the blade again across the other side of his jaw. He was standing in front of the mirror wearing only his purple and black striped boxers while he shaved; his suit was in the bedroom lying across the bed. It was a Brook's Brothers suit of light tan, with a plaid white and dark brown vest, and white shirt with a brown tie. The suit was expensive and eccentric. Jack had a pair a brown and white oxfords sitting on the floor by the suit and a pair of matching dark brown leather gloves laying across the shirt and vest. While Jack shaved he watched Harley in the mirror where she stood behind him.

Harley had just finished with her hair. She had piled it on top of her head holding it in place with a couple of lethal looking hair sticks (though Jack had stressed that they needed to think of another way to kill Meg that didn't involve bashing or poking her eyes out with hair sticks. Something that would leave little or no evidence of their interference.) Jack smiled while he shaved and watched her, the look in her eyes, the way her tongue stuck out from between her teeth in concentration. He thought she looked adorable, especially since she had on an old pair of glass-lensed glasses and one of her own dresses (not one that Jack had bought her) as part of her disguise. The dress she was wearing was a spaghetti strap, A-line mini pink dress (sans bra) that showed an almost indecent about of her back, with a pair of pink heels (all of which she had bought ages ago). Jack preferred her in red and black, but she looked good in pink and white too, he thought.

Jack had finished her outfit by giving her a pair of white gloves (they had been his mother's but Jack never mentioned that to Harley.) All he said was that they should wear gloves, just like the night at the bar—no prints. Jack continued watching her behind him as she put the final touches on her hair and make-up, watching the way she drew the lipstick across her lips. The image of those lips on him, leaving red marks behind...He grinned.

“"You look so cute," Jack said as he finished with the razor.

Harley giggled and stuck her tongue out at him. “So you said we were going to drug her? With what?” Harley asked as she walked back into the main part of the room to grab her shoes. Jack turned the faucet on and cupped his hands with water to give his face a vigorous wash and dry before he walked back into the bedroom to dress.

“I'll show you before we leave and tell you just how to administer it.” Jack grinned at her as he picked his slacks up from the bed and stepped into them. Harley walked over to him with a slight slink in her step. Jack watched her, loving the way the short dress showed of her long shapely legs.

“Don't let her kiss you," Harley whispered as she wrapped her arms around his neck. He could see she was deadly serious. He also noticed how good she smelled, like vanilla cookies. It made him want to eat her up.

Jack smiled. “I won't.”
Harley brushed her nose against his with a whispered, “Good.”

She grinned, brushing her lips against his, her tongue snaking out to lick his lips slowly. Jack grinned, purring, his hands grabbing her hips and yanking her back against him. Harley grabbed the back of Jack's head, her fingers seizing his hair, yanking him into a hard kiss, punishing in its desperation. Jack dropped his hands from her hips, sliding them under the skirt of her dress and around to grab her rear which he squeezed hard. Harley growled in response before she pulled away.

“We better get going,” she whispered. Jack sighed, his eyes dropping closed for a moment as if he needed a second to get himself back under control. “Let's go get this taken care of sweets.”

Harley sighed, her anger quickly returning. “Where are we going again?”

She walked over to grab her purse while she spoke. Jack grabbed his shirt and started running his fingers up the buttons. “It's a nightclub called Luscious. Known for its sex, drugs, and drinking. More of a nightly rave where pretty much anything goes. The Gotham PD has busted the place I forget how many times, yet it keeps coming back in a different location.”

Harley smiled, giving Jack a significant look. “And how do you know about the place?”

Jack looked innocent. “Me? I know nothing about it.” He giggled when Harley glared at him. “I might have gone a time or two with Alex for a high stakes, illegal poker game...maybe.”

Harley giggled. “Next time there's a game bring me?”

Jack reached out and grabbed her hand to tug her close. “Of course. You're my girl—wherever I go, you go. Anyway, I thought it would be a good place to start, put her at ease thinking this is going to go as she plans. That is until we spike her drink.”

Harley giggled. “We better hurry if we're going to get there early enough to make our purchases.”

Jack stole another kiss. “Yup you're right my sweetling. First though, let me show you what I have in mind for her drink.”

After they were both dressed, Jack led Harley by the hand outside. He took her around to his special place. Harley said nothing, letting Jack lead her to the old, mostly hidden servant house. He unlocked it and stepped inside, still holding her hand. He picked up the flashlight he had left by the door and turned it on, spanning it over the walls. Harley looked around with her mouth open. The place was like a mad scientist's lair complete with a chemistry set. No, Harley corrected herself, calling it a set was a disservice. Jack had a full-fledged lab. The room contained several hospital beds, an old dentist's chair, and other equipment that she couldn't even begin to identify in the dim light.

“What is this place Jack?” Harley turned around slowly, her eyes wide, but what made Jack's heart do a little flip was the smile on her face. She understood, he knew she would understand! That she would be excited.

Jack motioned her over to where Harley could see what looked like a small refrigerator unit. Jack dropped to a crouch and opened it up. Inside she could see several vials of a glowing green liquid. Jack's smile was infectious as he pulled a vial out. “This is my own invention. I call it laughing gas...which is a really dull and stupid name, I know, but until I come up with something better, laughing gas it is. Anyway, storing it like this keeps it dormant and once it warms to room temperature it becomes active for twenty four hours before it begins to degrade.”

“What's it do?” Harley asked in a hushed voice.
Jack grinned at her. “Well in high doses, it causes the patient to laugh themselves to death. Their faces become rigid with this wide grin. Their skin becomes pale, their lips blood red...”

Harley gasped then giggled. “That body! The one they found months ago...the laughing person...that was you?”

Jack stood up handing Harley the vials before he took a bow. “That was me sweets.”

Harley giggled. “Oh Jack.”

Jack grinned; Harley got him. “Anyway, in low doses, a drop or two, it makes the patient very susceptible to suggestion...my suggestion. They become euphoric, inhibitions decline...like most drugs. You put a couple of drops in Meg's drink she'll do anything we want.”

Harley held up one of the vials up examining it in the light of the flashlight. Her smile was wicked and it made Jack want to throw her down and take her right there on the floor of his private sanctuary...his girl...his perfect girl.

*

They took the Lexus Sedan since it would allow enough room for the three of them when they left the club and the car wasn't so unusual that it would be noticed. Jack drove with Harley sitting beside him. She kept sliding her hand down between his legs, squeezing and massaging as if to remind him what he had waiting when they were finished tonight.

Jack rolled his eyes with a groan. “Damn it Harley.”

She giggled. “Sorry, I'm excited.”

He giggled too and whispered, “My little murder kitten,” which made Harley beam with pleasure.

*

When they arrived at the Luscious, Jack parked along the street down from the club. The club was located in a less than stellar Gotham neighborhood, but Jack wasn't worried about the car. Luscious knew where its money came from and made sure that their patrons' vehicles were well watched. They had arrived half an hour before Jack was to meet Meg, more than enough time for the two of them to split up and make a few illegal purchases. Jack had told Harley illegal drugs were available in the nightclub as readily as purchasing alcohol.

Before they exited the car, Jack grabbed the back of Harley's neck, yanked her to him and kissed her hard. Harley moaned and leaned into the kiss, melting against him in the front seat of the car. Jack pulled away just enough to whisper. “It makes me feel good that you would kill for me Harley.”

Harley smiled and stroked his face gently. “Anything for you puddin.”

He grinned brushing his nose against hers. “All right, let's go.”

*

The inside of Luscious was huge, not at all what Harley was expecting, though she wasn't sure exactly what she was expecting. The lighting was all reds, purples and blues. The place was two stories, though the second floor was more of a balcony that wrapped around the entirety of the club. Littered throughout the place were other smaller dance floors, where poles had been placed. Women were dancing on the poles as well as a few men. There was a large packed dance space with a stage
that took up the whole back end of the club. A live band was playing a cover of Broken Bells “Holding on For Life” while couples, or large groups of people danced with each other.

Around the edges of the dance floor were booths with purple leather seats (at least in the lighting they looked purple) with round tables and the walls around the booths were covered in a quilted looking material which only cut down on the music slightly. There were a few free standing tables and chairs, along with a large free standing bar off to the right with a wrap around counter and stools all around. The bar was manned by four bartenders, two women and two men. People on the dance floor had neon colors painted around their eyes and on other portions of their faces, blacklight makeup making them glow in the clubs lights.

Jack brushed his hand down Harley's arm, clearly reluctant to leave her, but they both knew for their plan to work Meg couldn't see them together. Harley glanced at Jack briefly watching him walk off to the bar. Her chest tightened and she sighed before taking a deep breath and headed out onto the dance floor. The music had just changed to a cover of Katy Perry's “Bon appetit.”

Harley moved with the music, her body weaving sensually among the other dancers. She closed her eyes letting herself go for a moment, letting the music dictate her movements. A couple of guys approached her and tried to dance with her, but Harley just ignored them and moved away while she kept an eye open for someone selling drugs.

A short, average built, plain looking guy with longish brown hair and simply dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, while sporting a fanny pack (which really made Harley lift an eyebrow as she saw him over her shoulder) came up behind Harley and ran his hands up her hips. “Hey gorgeous, I love that cute little librarian look you got going, wanna check my books out? I like the gloves too...kinky.”

Harley spun around about to slap the guy, but when she saw his face she knew she had found who she was looking for. The man had the look of someone who sold and used party drugs, (the look being that he didn't exactly blend in with the rest of the crowd. He looked “too normal”and the fanny pack was a dead giveaway.) Even in the dim club lighting she could see that his pupils were dilated and there was an alertness to him that was unnerving. Harley put her arms over her head, weaving her hips back and forth with a sensual smile on her lips. “I might if you have something to check them out with...”

The guy grinned. “Hey, I got anything you need sweetheart. I got ecstasy, cocaine, heroin...even some weed. You name it, old Walter's got it for you or can get it.”

Harley grinned wider, her eyes dancing with mischief over the top of her frames. “Well Walter, I want a little bit of everything.”

Jack was doing his best not to watch Harley, but it was next to impossible. The way she moved her hips back and forth, the arch of her back when she turned around, the dress exposing nearly all of her back right down to...Jack growled low in his throat. He could imagine himself running his fingers down her spine, following that seductive curve, biting, sucking on her skin, hearing those little moans she made. His eyes traveled down her torso where he imagined himself buried between her legs taking slow deep licks of her, tasting her on his tongue. He was so involved in imagining Harley that for a moment he was unaware of Meg until she reached out and squeezed his knee.

“Hey handsome.”

Jack didn't jump, but he turned so swiftly that Meg was the one to jump. She saw the look in his eyes —deadly—but just as quickly it was gone, replaced by the seductive blue.
“Well, hello there.” Jack gave her a grin that she thought could get him on the cover of GQ.

Meg was dressed in a tight, short black dress with a neckline that plunged nearly to her navel. She was attractive, Jack supposed, but she lacked the luster, the beauty that Harley possessed. He grinned to himself as he thought that Meg was like a rock next to a perfect rare red diamond like Harley; there simply was no comparison. But Jack put on his face and smiled, letting his eyes roam over Meg while keeping his real feelings in check. Though he didn't have to fake his laugh of delight when Meg smiled. “So, what did you have in mind tonight Mr. Wayne?”

“Oh, a little of this and a little of that.” Jack laughed again. “Can I buy you a drink?”

Meg smiled scooting her stool closer to Jack and laying her hand on his thigh. “I would like that very much.”

Jack motioned the bartender over. “Give me a whiskey straight and for the lady?”

Meg smiled. “A rum and coke.”

Just before Jack turned to face Meg, he caught a glimpse of Harley from the side. He saw a man reach out for her, grabbing her around the waist and yanking her up against him. Jack ground his teeth; the rage that shot through him was hot and burning, the need to lash out, to cut that man's throat and watch him bleed was strong enough that Jack almost stood up, but at the last moment caught himself. No, no, Harley could handle herself and they were here to deal with the Meg problem...though he might add that little man to the list...maybe have Harley bring him along. Two killings were as easy as one...

*

On the dance floor, Harley had managed to slip Walter the money he wanted for the drugs, which she surreptitiously concealed in her purse. Harley was becoming angry with Walter though, since the man would not keep his hands off of her no matter what she did. She had stopped herself from slapping him, no need to draw unwanted attention, but damn he was handsie! Harley supposed he thought she was playing hard to get or something. She did her best to ignore him. She bent down and rolled her body up with the music, the skirt of her dress flipped up which gave a nice view of her rear and the tight bikini panties she had on underneath, blood red just like Jack liked.

The music changed again, this time to something slower by Lana Del Rey “Body Electric.” Harley started to walk off the dance floor, catching a glimpse of Jack at the bar with Meg which sent a spike of rage through her. Harley pressed her lips together in a thin white line, but Walter came up behind her, wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her up against him, grinding along her back side. The look on Harley's face might have been comical except for the murder in her eyes. She moved with him for a few seconds letting the man grind himself against her while her eyes were glued to Jack. She could see Meg squeezing Jack's thigh, her hand creeping up his leg. Harley was trembling with rage, but she swallowed it down turning around to face Walter. She smiled, dropped her arms on Walter's shoulders while she weaved her body to the music, moved with a seductive curve of her hips which allowed her skirt to flip. She caught her bottom lip between her teeth as she slinked down, her hands moving down Walter's chest, partly to play her part, but also because she was livid with rage that Meg was touching Jack, that Jack was letting her touch him!! The more “sane” part of her thinking told her he was playing a part too, he had to play a part if she was going to get to kill Meg later, but that didn't stop the insane anger at the Jack from flaring up in her chest.

At the bar, Jack pretended to laugh at something Meg had said while doing his best acting at not shuddering at Meg's touch. He wasn't even really sure what she had said because he had taken the opportunity to turn and see Harley shimmy down Walters body, an action that sent fury burning
through him. He snarled, physically rising out of his seat, but Meg grabbed his arm. “Oh hey, you wanna dance?”

Jack turned to look at her like he had forgotten all about her (which he had for a split second) before he sat down. “No, no, sorry. Thought I saw someone... anyway, you were saying?” He pulled his pack of cigarettes out of a pocket, took one out and put it between his lips before pulling out his lighter and lighting it. (The Luscious allowed smoking as well as all the other things that went on inside). Meg reached over and snagged Jack's lighter. He lifted a brow at her in surprise. She tried grinning seductively at Jack. “Light me one?” She handed him back the lighter. Jack barely controlled his sneer, pulling his pack of cigarettes out and removing one for her. Meg took it, licking the end of the cigarette suggestively. For a moment Jack thought he might actually get sick, right there or he would burst out laughing. Either option was possible, it was hard to decide on which reaction or both, but instead he pressed his lips together to prevent either reaction and lit Meg's cigarette for her while she fluttered her eyes at him. He supposed that to a regular guy she was attractive, but he found her repulsive and needy.

Mentally Jack fumed, his mind distracted by the image of Harley on another man. If Harley didn't get over here soon to spike this bitch's drink, he was going to go over there and kill that man dancing with her with his bare hands, put his cigarette out in his eyes, or thrust his thumbs through the man's jugular and tear out his throat—fuck the consequences! That made Jack smile, the image of himself choking the life out of the man touching Harley, watching as the plebeian choked out his last. Jack chuckled which made Meg smile flirtatiously again.

“What's so funny Jack?”

Jack grinned wide, displaying his perfect, white teeth. “Oh, you have no idea.”

*  

Harley pushed Walter away from her with a coy smile as soon as the song changed. “I need a drink.”

The band changed to a song by Kongos “I'm Only Joking,” the beat of the music vibrating through the club. Harley didn't wait to see what Walter did, but she quickly made her way over to the bar, pushing people out of her way. She was careful, going around Meg by putting other people between her and the other woman until she was at the bar, taking a seat right behind Meg. The woman was focused completely on Jack, unaware of Harley sitting right behind her. Harley kept herself from sneering, just barely as she glanced at Meg's drink at her elbow.

Harley motioned for the bartender with a gloved finger. “Yes, can I have a Mai Tai?” Harley asked with a sideways glance at Meg who was completely oblivious, her attention fully on Jack and on touching him. Harley had to bite her tongue to stop herself from lashing out when she saw Meg lean in and rub her hand along Jack's chest making some coy comment about how he felt under his clothing. The bartender gave Harley a grin and a nod as he came over to take her drink order.

“A Mai Tai, anything else?” The bartender, a handsome guy Harley supposed, but she didn't really care. That was when Walter's voice piped in. “And give me a Mind Eraser! The lady's drink is on me.”

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“Sure thing Walts!” The bartender grinned and set about making their drinks. Harley had to suppress a groan. God, this man was like a fucking cockroach! She thought to herself. She frowned wondering how she was going to spike Meg's drink without this dope seeing her when an idea came to her. She smiled and opened her purse, fingerling the syringe inside with the vials of Jack's concoction glowing softly. She glanced at Walter as the bartender set their drinks down in front of
them, a wicked little grin on her ruby red lips as she carefully stuck the syringe into the vial in her purse.

“Hey, Walter, you wanna try a new drug?” Harley asked, gazing at Walter from under her lashes. Her smile promised Walter things she would never deliver on. Walter had picked up his drink taking a sip when he glanced sideways at Harley and lifted an eyebrow at her. “Oh, whatcha got? I mean I’ve tried nearly everything and I provide nearly everything.”

Harley grinned. “Oh, this will knock your socks off! It's new, not even on the market.” She pulled the syringe out of her purse and showed it to him. Walter’s eyes widened at the softly glowing liquid. “What is that?”

“It's... it's called...the giggles.” Harley smiled. She and Jack needed to work on a name, but it wasn’t like Walter was going to get to tell anyone else about it anyway. Walter’s eyes followed the sensual movement of Harley’s hand as she weaved the drug in front of him.

“What's it do?” he asked.

Harley giggled. “It drops all your inhibitions, makes you giggle, everything is funny. You have no fear, nothing can stop you. It's the perfect high. And the best part is that it's untraceable, and lasts for hours.”

Walter frowned and shrugged trying not to look overly excited by something new. Besides, he thought, maybe this would be something he could add to his inventory. “Sure let's give it a go.”

Harley grinned and squeezed half the green liquid into Walters drink. He watched as the liquid swirled through his drink like a snake and seemed to fade like gas, disappearing into the liquid.

He smiled. “Giggles, eh?”

Harley grinned. “Go ahead, give it a try.”

Walter downed his drink in one swallow, which only gave Harley a heartbeat's amount of time to put the rest of the drug into Meg's drink that was at her elbow while both the bartender and Walter's attention was elsewhere. Jack had said it would take less than half the drug to caused the effects they wanted. Harley hoped he was correct. Jack saw Harley squirt the green glowing liquid into Meg’s drink, watching it dissolve in a matter of seconds. He glanced over Meg's shoulder to see Harley leaning forward across the bar and the two of them shared a silent exchange. Harley smiled then gestured ever so slightly over her shoulder. Jack shifted his position and caught sight of the man she had been with on the dance floor. As if they could read each others minds, Jack knew instantly what Harley had done...His grin widened as he thought to himself, “God, I love that woman.”

* 

After finishing her drink (and Walter finishing his as well) Harley was back on the dance floor, moving with Walter to the sounds of Lady Gaga's “John Wayne.” She was smiling, her arms over her head weaving her hips and keeping an eye on Walter. She was watching for when he started to react to the drug. She was about ready to vomit or claw his eyes out every time the guy grabbed at her. Luckily, he would get distracted selling drugs here and there to patrons in the club, but once he was done he was grabbing for her again!

The little weasel, she thought.

Harley smiled when she finally noticed that Walter's movements were slowing down and he was giggling a LOT. Harley danced to the music, rolling her back, sliding her hands down her legs and
arching her backside while licking her lips, her eyes wandering over to Jack and Meg where they still sat at the bar. Her flirty gazes and movements were for Jack who was burning with jealousy and desire watching Harley from the corner of his eyes. Harley couldn't help her giggle. Making Jack jealous was fun. She could see the burning rage in Jack's blue eyes every time Walter grabbed for her, grind against her or ran his hands down her legs. Jack's rage was mixed with pure lust for her in his eyes. It thrilled Harley to her core. She was doing her best to not completely turn around and dance for Jack, but it was difficult. She turned around once, arching her back and sliding her hands down her legs, bending over for Jack to see her red panties. Jack's eyes narrowed as he watched her. Jack had grabbed Meg's hand at one point, dragging her giggling out to the dance floor. He was a ball of rage and lust. He wanted Harley right now, he wanted to tie Harley down and do filthy things to her with his mouth and fingers, the image of her on her knees with his dick in her mouth...or his dick inside her, his hands around her throat while she grinned up at him, her blonde hair a tangled mess around her face while she dragged her nails painfully down his stomach. God, he was seething with need for Harley but at the same time he wanted to break every bone in that man who was all over her! He could imagine dragging a knife over that man's throat, watching the flesh separate and the blood running down, making him watch as he bled to death while Jack took Harley...fucking her up against the wall. Jack growled. Meg giggled thinking the lustful growl was for her.

Jack shoved Meg around a little roughly, but she didn't seem to care. Meg started to dance, doing her best to seduce Jack, (though with Jack's drug in her system, her attempts were clumsy, which made Harley snicker.)

Jack's dancing was graceful, but not as sensual as usual, far more sedate, Harley noticed. Meg kept throwing herself at him, or rubbing herself against him trying to get Jack to grind against her, but he was barely willing to touch her. (Now if this had been Harley, Jack would have been all over the dance floor. He loved to dance, but he just couldn't bring himself to do it here with Meg. He wanted Harley in his arms.) Luckily with the way the woman was acting, it was clear his drug in her system was working.

Harley giggled when Jack caught her eye and he crossed his eyes with a grin at Harley just as Meg wrapped herself around him and started a slow grind against Jack's pelvis, leaning in to try to kiss him. Harley's eyes narrowed dangerously when she saw Meg was rubbing her body against Jack, grinding and pressing her breasts against Jack's chest while whispering something against his ear, right before Meg ran her tongue along his jaw. Harley felt that white hot spike of hate shoot through her. The image of cutting Meg's tongue out flashed before Harley's mind making her smile.

Jack maneuvered Meg closer to Harley, whose attention had been diverted back to Walter who kept grabbing her rear and yanking her hips against his pelvis no matter how many times she pushed him away. Jack caught Harley's eye and motioned with his eyes.

It was time to go.

* Jack arrived at the car with a giggling Meg first. He opened the back door. “Okay, in you go!” He practically shoved her into the back of the car.

Meg giggled. “Where are we going Jack? Someplace more private? Oooh, is this real leather?” She rubbed her hands along the seat with a snicker.

Jack chuckled. “Oh yes, much more private.”

Jack slid into the driver's seat which had Meg pouting. “Don't you have a driver or something? I
mean, you're rich right? We could have some fun in this back seat.” She licked her lips at him. Jack barely suppressed rolling his eyes.

Jack turned around to grin at her. “I am very rich my little peanut, but you'll see why I don't have a driver soon enough. Oh, here comes the rest of our party now!”

Harley was almost carrying Walter as he leaned heavily on her, his arm around her waist. “This is the best night of my life!!” Walter giggled. “I ain't never got the hot girl to go home with me before! I mean, usually I would have gotten slapped by now! Or they only wanna fuck for free drugs! But you are different!” With that Walter slapped her ass hard enough that Harley yelped, jumping a little. She ground her teeth opening the back door and shoved Walter in.

“Oh yeah, I'm different all right,” Harley muttered. “Go on in there Walter and we can get to the real party.” Harley opened the back door, shoving him inside and slammed the door before getting into the front seat with Jack.

Meg looked confused though not “alert.” “Who are these people baby?” Meg smiled with a confused, dazed look.

Jack grinned. “It ain't a party without friends, Meg. I mean, you're up for anything right? Isn't that what you said? Anything I want?”

Meg seemed to have problems focusing her thoughts until she giggled with a nod. “Yup, anything!”

Walter giggled. “Hey another hot chick! This is my lucky night! We gonna have an orgy or something?”

Harley shared a giggle with Jack. The two of them looked at each other with their shared secret before they both turned to look in the back seat and at the same time said,

“Or something!”

Jack reached over to run his hand up Harley's leg giving her a squeeze, then he hit the gas yanking the car out into traffic causing his passengers in the back to go flying to the right side of the car. They heard Meg and Walter slam against the door. Harley and Jack giggled in expectation of the fun to come.

* *

Before they headed off to their ultimate destination, Jack drove them to a twenty-four hour liquor store located a couple of miles from the club. Jack parked the car, leaning over to whisper to Harley.

“Watch this, they should be quite susceptible to suggestion right now.”

Jack handed Meg some cash while Walter just laid in the backseat occasionally giggling to himself.

“Now Meg dear, since we're going to have a private party, I need you go pick up some drinks. Can you do that for me Meg?”

Meg giggled. “Sure thing handsome.” She stumbled a little getting out of the vehicle, but she managed to navigate herself into the store. Through the store's glass front, Jack and Harley could see her picking up bottles of booze and stumbling to the counter. The young man at the register, maybe twenty-four, was watching her, his eyes firmly on Meg's hips and breasts. He rang her out without asking for an ID. A minute later she was back with a paper sack full of drinks. She dropped into the backseat and handed the bag to Jack.
“I did it!” She giggled, clearly pleased with her accomplishment.

Jack and Harley opened the bag to peer inside. Jack chuckled. Inside were two bottles of spiced rum, a bottle of Absolut Vodka, a bottle of Seagrams whiskey and lastly two bottles of Beefeater London dry gin. Jack grinned at Harley then turned around. “Ya did good Meg, very good.”

Meg squealed with happiness and Harley grinned. “Now it's a party!”

* 

The satellite radio in the car was playing “Carousel” by Melanie Martinez. Harley giggled singing along, leaning against Jack's shoulder.

“And it’s all fun and games,
'Til somebody falls in love,
But you've already bought a ticket,
And there’s no turning back now....”

* 

Jack grinned and sang with Harley, his hand on her thigh, slipping up higher until his gloved fingers were teasing at the edge of her panties.

* 

“This horse is too slow,
We’re always this close,
Almost, almost, we’re a freak show
Right, right when I’m near,
It's like you disappeared,
Where’d you go? My dear, you're a freak show!...”

* 

Meg was listening to them thinking that something was wrong, as if she should be feeling something...fear? But she didn't feel anything except humor and she wanted to laugh at anything and everything. “Oh Jack, you have a great singing voice. Would you sing for me?”

Jack glanced in the rearview mirror. “Sure thing Meg.”

Meg grinned and leaned back, her dress riding up. The man next to her had lit a joint and didn't seem to care at all what was going on. Maybe he was right. She reached over and snagged the joint making Walter frown. “Hey man, you could ask.”

Meg took a hit and passed it back with a smile and a nod. Walter nodded. “I only sell the best.”

Meg giggled. “Yeah you do.”

Walter squeezed her leg. Meg thought for a moment she should protest, but it seemed too much of an
effort as she leaned against Walter, the two of them giggling.

Jack drove into a seedy part of east end Gotham. The place he took them to wasn't the nicest, but the motel was used to having fancy cars staying for a couple of hours at night. The motel had a huge blue neon sign that read. “Gotham's Moonlight Rendezvous” across the top. The sign underneath read the rates starting at $10 per hour. Jack turned around and smiled at Walter. “Walter old boy, I'm going to give you money to rent us a room for the next twenty-four hours. You head on in there, but only tell them it's for you and your girl.”

Walter looked dazed. His giggling had increased during the drive, as had Meg's fits of giggling and laughter.

“Okay!” Walter giggled again, sliding out of the car once Jack had handed him the money. While Walter was inside Harley frowned in thought. “How did you know about this place?”

Jack laughed and squeezed her knee reassuringly. “Alex brought me here once for my birthday. Bought me a girl and everything. It's one of the reasons he thought I was gay or not interested in sex because I wasn't too pleased with his gift.” That was the moment that Walter came out again, weaving a little bit with his giggling, key in hand. As soon as he was back in the car Jack took the key and drove them around to the back of the motel. The four of them piled out and Jack, with Meg hanging on him like a rag doll, and Harley holding up Walter, headed into room 13B.

Jack unlocked the door, standing aside after opening it, grinning at Harley. Meg and Walter headed in first, but when Jack and Harley stepped into the room, the two of them burst out laughing. The room looked like it had been decorated with the cheap “brothel” aesthetic firmly in mind, as if the proprietor had seen one too many vintage erotica pictures and tried to decorate the room accordingly. The walls were deep red and black velvet wallpaper with a large red bulb light in the dead center of the ceiling's light fixture which made everything look as if it had been covered in a light film of blood (at least to Jack and Harley). The bed's comforter was a truly horrible shade of puce and the furniture was all dark cheap wood with the same shade of puce in the cushions of the chairs.

Jack giggled. “Well, here we are kiddies! Who wants to have a party?!”

Harley turned and locked the door balancing the paper bag of booze on her hip, while Jack gave Meg and Walter a little push toward the bed.

Jack grinned motioning at Harley. “Harley my sweet!”

Harley, with a wide smile, turned and handed Jack the paper sack of liquor she had carried in, which Jack placed on a table beside the bed, proceeding to take out the bottles of alcohol. After setting them down, he went over to the bathroom that contained a large sink, a mirror and a plastic ice bucket with four little plastic cups wrapped in plastic. Jack unwrapped two of the little plastic cups carrying them back over to the table of liquor setting them down.

Harley walked over to the small table that had a couple of chairs, hooking her foot around a leg and tugging the chair out from the table. She set her purse down as she slid into the seat, then pulled out another vial of Jack's drug, setting it on the table before she pulled out the syringe she had used earlier at the club.

Meg frowned in confusion, watching Jack, then Harley. Jack and the woman who she thought she
recognized, but couldn't place seemed to command her attention though they had said or done nothing unusual. When Meg could grab and hold onto a thought, Meg realized she felt odd; her face was beginning to hurt from smiling, but no sooner would her brain lock onto that thought than it would slip away, fluttering from her grasp. Meg had wandered over to the bed to sit on the edge of the flat mattress. When Harley placed the vial of glowing liquid on the table, Meg seemed mesmerized by the glowing green fluid. Meg's pupils were fully dilated and her smile seemed...stiff, as if the muscles in her face were fighting not to smile.

“What's that?” she asked, pointing at the vial in Harley's hand.

Harley took out the syringe and broke the seal on the vial by stabbing the needle into the top of the vial and slowly filling the syringe with the glowing green liquid.

“It's something that is going to make tonight even more fun,” Harley said with a smile and a quick glance toward Jack.

Walter started giggling. “Oh, more of that! Cool!! It's called the 'giggles,’” he said, clearly proud that he remembered what Harley had called it.

Harley smiled at Walter. “Come here,” she said seductively motioning with her finger. Jack pulled out a cigarette, lighting it from where he leaned against the wall watching his girl work her magic.

Walter came right over, pulling up the other chair to sit in front of Harley like an eager child about to receive a gift.

Harley motioned at Walter. “Give me your arm.” Walter did so willingly holding his arm out to her with an excited grin. “Oooh, you're going to inject it this time!! Cool!”

“Give me your belt there Walter.” Harley smiled setting the syringe down on the table.

Walter lifted up his fanny pack and quickly slipped his belt off which Harley took and used to wrap around his arm. For a moment she was reminded of when she was a doctor. The times she helped administer sedatives to patients, as she looked for and found a vein. With a professional air, Harley tapped Walters arm until she found a good vein and picked up the syringe. Easily, and with professional skill, she slid the needle into the vein—careful not to jiggle the needle—and injected the fluid. Walter jerked, hissing in pain when Jack's invention hit his blood stream, but in the next breath he was giggling.

“Aw man, this stuff is great!”

Jack watched Harley work, blowing out a ring of smoke, grinning. She looked damn sexy in that too-short dress, her legs crossed, dosing up that ass Walter with Jack's own concoction. It was enough to make a man laugh. Jack grinned with a soft chuckle before he pushed himself off the wall, turning back to the bottles of booze, holding the cigarette between his teeth while, with gloved hands, he opened the spiced rum and poured one of the cups full of the golden liquid.

Meg looked at Jack as he handed her one of the cups of rum. There was a question in her eyes that hadn't quite reached her lips.

“Oh, I promise I'll go next Meg. I mean, unless everything you told me you would be willing to do was a lie Meg. I really hate liars.”

Meg stared up at Jack confused as she took the plastic cup of rum, but, once Walter had vacated the seat, she stood up and walked over to Harley, downing the rum as she sat down. Harley grinned and refilled the syringe. She took Walter's belt and wrapped it around Meg's upper arm, then felt around
until she found a vein. Harley wasn't gentle this time; she plunged the syringe into Meg's arm hard, causing the other woman to yelp and try to yank away. But Jack had moved to stand behind Meg. He dropped his hands onto her shoulders and leaned down, the smoke from his cigarette creating an eerie effect around Meg's head.

“Now now Meg dear, you wanna be my friend don't you?” Jack pulled the cigarette out, his lips against Meg's ear were like a gentle caress. “Don't be such a baby. You said you would do anything for me didn't you?” He ran his other hand down her arm in a caress. Meg stared into his haunting blue eyes and nodded. “Yeah, yeah I will, anything you want.”

Jack's smile was cold, wicked. “Good.”

Harley was smirking at Jack, a laugh in her eyes, but she said nothing.

Meg gasped in pain again as the liquid burned through her veins, but in the next instant she was giggling. “I did it. Anything you want, anything at all.” Meg smiled up at him.

Jack laughed, and the breath from his laugh tickled her ear. “Now don't you feel better?” He patted Meg's shoulders straightening up and taking a long drag on his cigarette.

Meg giggled. “I do.”

Harley took all the drugs she had purchased from Walter out of her purse, laying them across the table like candy. She glanced over at Walter who was giggling almost uncontrollably while staring at a painting of what looked like a gas station or something on the wall. Harley smiled and cooed.

“Oh Walter, come here.” She crooked a finger at him while Meg stood up and wobbled a bit, giggling, back toward the bed.

Walter turned with a hiccupsing giggle, stepped over to Harley. “This giggles stuff is great!”

Harley wrinkled her nose playfully. Jack turned around from where he had been leading Meg back to the bed and poured her another drink. “Giggles?” He gave Harley a questioning look.

Harley laughed. “We really need to work on the name.”

Jack chuckled. “I like giggles.”

Harley winked at Jack, bringing her attention back to Walter. “Walter, can I have your fanny pack?”

“Oh sure thing!” Walter took the pack off handing it to Harley. Harley took it, opened the zipper, and her eyes widened in surprise. The inside of the pack was stuffed. Not only did Walter have more drugs, but he had syringes, plastic cards for dividing the cocaine, plastic spoons for the heroin and money...lots of money.

Harley took all the money out that she had paid for drugs, dropping it back into her purse though she left the rest of it in the pack. She set the rest of Walter's drugs out on the table then turned to Jack who was playing with the radio next to the bed. He was flipping through channels while Meg giggled and rolled on the bed like a little girl, from one end of the flat mattress to the other.

Harley leaned on the back of her chair watching Jack. “What are you doing?”

“Every party needs music!” Jack announced before he settled on a station.

“Ah, here we go!” Jack grinned and turned. Jack started to dance across the room, his cigarette
dangling from his lips, one arm out, the hand of his other arm on his chest as the jazzy voices of the
Andrew Sisters started to play, “Near You.” Jack grinned at Harley waltzing over to her and taking
her hand.

“Dance with me sweetling.”

Harley giggled as Jack took her hand, lifted her to her feet and spun her around, waltzing with her
and singing softly. Walter clapped his hands watching them while he giggled.

*  

“There's just one place for me!

Near you!

It's like heaven to be

Near you!

*

Times when we're apart

I can't face my heart!

Say you'll never stray

More than just two lips away!

*

If my hours could be spent

Near you

I'd be more than content

Near you!

*

There is just one place for me!

I'm happy when I'm near you!

It's wonderful as heaven!

A special kind of heaven

But only when I'm near you!

*

Jack danced with Harley, laughing as he sang around the cigarette. “Rest of my days...all of those
happy, happy days...Near you!”

He swung her out and back into his arms at the same time reaching over to put his cigarette out in the
tiny ash tray by the bed, just before he dipped her at the end of the song. Holding her there, Jack gave her a deep, mouth-watering kiss. Harley groaned; it felt like it had been hours since they had kissed, days, ages—too long. Walter immediately started laughing and clapping his hands even louder while Meg simply kept giggling.

The song on the radio changed to Louis Armstrong. Jack lifted Harley back to her feet, brushing her chin with his leather clad fingers before he let her go. Holding a hand to his chest and his other hand out, Jack danced over to the radio and turned the music down so that “When Your Smiling” played softly in the background. Jack turned. “Now, Meg, Walter, you two are going to take all the drugs on that table.” He pointed at the table where Harley had set everything out.

Walter giggled. “Really? Cool.” He walked over and flopped down into the chair that Harley had vacated just moments ago to dance with Jack. He grabbed up the bundles of cocaine and started to empty them onto the table.

Meg was smiling as she reclined on the bed, but she looked confused. “Why?”

Harley sat down on the bed next to Meg. Her glasses had slid to the end of her nose as she studied Meg over the top of her frames. “Well Meg, you're going to take all those drugs with Walter because you have a borderline personality disorder and bipolar tendencies. Which is why you go after men who are already taken. You have deep-seated daddy issues, I think. You have real or imagined abandonment issues, which is sad really. I mean, did daddy leave you and your mommy behind for another woman? Or did daddy used to sneak into your room at night?” Harley smiled, walking her fingers across her palm, but there was a bit of a sadistic edge to her lips when she smiled at Meg. “You have chronic feelings of emptiness which you try to fill with men, money, alcohol and drugs. I mean, walking over there and taking all those drugs and drinking all this liquor is really just what you've been trying to do all along. But now you feel out of control. Your life is spiraling away from you Meg. It's time to end it.”

Meg stared at Harley. Jack's drug in Meg's veins made everything this woman said make sense. She was empty and she had always been empty. Her dad had abused her and no one would listen, she had felt unwanted and she had wanted to destroy all those fake happy couples. If she couldn't be happy then why should they?

Walter was already snorting the cocaine, having sloppily chopped it up into lines, leaning down to snort the white power, then breaking out into giggles which simply blew some of powder across the table. Walter licked his fingers and wiped the table of the drug before sticking his fingers in his mouth with a child-like grin. Jack chuckled walking over to sit by Walter, pouring him some of the vodka and sat the bottle and the plastic cup down in front of Walter.

“Have a drink my friend. Vodka is awesome water.”

Walter, his face covered in cocaine, grabbed the whole bottle of vodka and started to chug it down with a grin. Jack snickered watching the guy with a shake of his head. Harley stood and made her way back over to the drugs. She stopped at Jack's chair, leaning over to kiss him. Jack growled reaching up, making a fist in her hair, pressing her mouth down on his, the kiss hot and passionate. He let her go slowly, reluctantly with a whispered, “I love you Harls.”

Harley smiled and whispered, rubbing her nose against his. “I love you puddin.”

Jack whispered back, “I wanna get you home and fuck you.” Harley giggled reaching into his jacket and taking his lighter just before she reached over to grab a couple of the little balloons of heroin, one of the spoons, and a syringe, along with a handful of ecstasy. She winked at Jack, then walked over to sit by Meg again. Jack watched the swing of her hips like a hungry man.
“Now Meg, you want to fill that void don't you?” Harley asked as she opened some of the heroin and set the little rock on the spoon before lighting the flame from the lighter under it.

Meg seemed confused as she watched the flame from the lighter dancing under the spoon. She had leaned over to grab a bottle of alcohol while Harley had walked over to the men and was nursing the bottle of spiced rum against her chest.

“I—I guess...yeah. I do...” she whispered.

“Daddy didn't want you. Mommy didn't want you...nobody wants you Meg. Why are you still here?” Harley's voice was soft, gentle, almost hypnotic as she spoke. Jack's drug working through Meg's system made Meg giggle and nod. “Yeah...yeah, you're right.”

“You want to feel good again Meg?” Harley asked filling the syringe.

“I...I do...” Meg frowned though she still giggled in little fits. “I want to feel good again.”

Harley reached out and took Meg's arm, her voice soothing. “Let me help you.”

Harley plunged the heroin into Meg's veins.

* 

Across the room Jack was laughing and watching while Walter grabbed a handful of ecstasy, shoving them all in his mouth and downed them the vodka.

“Walter my friend, you have no limits do you?” Jack laughed crossing his legs and clasping his knee. Walter giggled, his chin and cheeks covered in cocaine. “Oh hell no, man! I like to party!!”

Jack's smile was slow, seductive. “Why don't you go lay on the bed there with Meg. I think she is ready for you now.”

Walter grinned stupidly, standing up and waddling over to the bed. Harley had just put a handful of ecstasy in Meg's hand. “Go ahead, take the pills. You will feel good again.”

Harley's tone was gentle, almost tender.

Meg did as she was asked, taking the handful of pills with a swallow of rum, just as another song came on the radio, Doris Day singing “Again.”

“Ah, my Harley girl, come dance with me.” Jack stood up and walked across the room to take her hand and twirl her into his arms. Harley laughed. “Again?”

Jack twirled her around the room. “What can I say? I love to dance with you.”

While the music played Jack slow danced with Harley moving in a graceful circle while Doris Day's voice drifted through the room.

“Again, this couldn't happen again

This is that once in a lifetime

This is the thrill divine

What's more, this never happened before
Though I have prayed for a lifetime
That such as you would suddenly be mine
Mine to hold as I’m holding you now and yet never so near
Mine to have when the now and the here disappear
What matters…

* 

Jack stared into Harley's eyes, smiling softly his arm around her waist, his hand holding hers against his chest while they moved together. Jack grinned. “Only you forevermore, my sweet Harley Quinn.”

Harley giggled, smiling into his eyes. “Only you my puddin, my Jack…”

Jack spun her around and whispered. “You were always meant for me. There was never anyone else.”


Jack grinned. “My girl.”

* 

“When this doesn't happen again
We'll have this moment forever
But never, never again (never, never)
We'll have this moment for ever But never, never again (never, never)”

* 

On the bed Walter's teeth clenched down tight, biting off the tip of his tongue. Blood spilled down his chin as his jaw locked in place. In the next few moment, Walter's body started to seize. Jack and Harley spun slowly around in their dance. Jack swayed with Harley, brushing his lips against hers, but not quite kissing her. Their eyes were only for each other.

The song ended, flowing into Bing Crosby singing “Temptation” catching the last of Walter's seizures that were violent, thrashing on the bed like a fish out of water before he stopped altogether, absolutely still.

Meg tried to push herself up to a sitting position, but she was having trouble, as if her body would not obey her commands. Harley stepped away from Jack and sat on the side of the bed as Meg started to struggle to speak. Meg couldn't get her mouth to work; it was if everything in her body was out of her control. She was slobbering on herself as she stared up at Harley.

Harley smiled. “A year ago, this is where I would have called 911, but you made a big mistake going after my puddin Meg, a big mistake. And now you are going to learn a lesson, a permanent and short learned lesson which doesn’t give you a lot of time to enjoy your new knowledge, but there it is Meg. Don’t mess with anything that is mine.”
Harley smiled watching Meg struggle. The other woman weakly grabbed at Harley's arm. “But, but…”

Meg started gasping for breath, her breathing slowing, the gasps becoming less and less audible until Meg convulsed, then went still her eyes staring at nothing. Harley grinned then sighed and stood up.

“Beating her to death would have been far more satisfying,” Harley muttered standing up and walking over to where the remains of the syringe and vial with Jack's concoction lay. She flopped, pouting, into the chair, shoving the vials and syringe with Jack's drug into her purse.

Jack laughed pulling her to her feet and into his arms. “I'm sorry, pooh bear. But this way it just looks like a junkie and her supplier overdosed. A tragic death that happens all the time in Gotham.”

Harley stuck her bottom lip out which had Jack laughing. “Come on sweetie. I know something that will make you laugh again.”

* *

Jack drove to a convenience store where he bought all the toilet paper they had in the store, duct tape, a couple of bars of soap, all the boxes of plastic forks they had AND plastic wrap, along with all the cartons of eggs. Harley frowned helping Jack load everything into the back of the car.

“What are we doing?” she asked again after getting into the passenger seat.

“While you were in the bathroom at the convenience store, I called Troy and Tiffany's house. They aren't home.” Jack giggled waggling his eyebrows.

Harley pressed her lips together trying not to smile. “Are we going to tepee their house?”

Jack giggled. “Yes, yes we are!”

* *

Troy and Tiffany Randell had a predictably expensive home located right outside the Gotham City limits inside a gated community. With a couple of hundred dollars, the guard at the gate (who Jack and Harley learned hated the Randell's) let them through with a grin.

“I don't know what happened. I didn't see anything.”

Jack laughed handing the man another hundred. “Good man.”

The house was only a few years old, with grey brick and white siding, two towers, twelve bedrooms and eight bathrooms with a huge front lawn that had that almost plastic look of green grass too green to be natural and a long grey brick driveway. The house didn't look like a place anyone would actually live in.

Jack drove up the driveway and stopped, parking behind the Randell's Lykan Hypersport. Jack leaned close to Harley as they both looked out the windows at the place.

“Do they have security cameras?” Harley asked.

Jack grinned. “Yup.”

“So, they're going to know it was us?” Harley asked.

“Yup.” Jack giggled.
Harley laughed. “Well, what are we waiting for?” Harley kicked her heels off and jumped out of the car barefoot, racing to the back. Jack yelled. “CHEATER!!”

He leapt out and raced around to the back door on his side. Harley had already pulled the back door on her side open and was pulling out the boxes of plastic forks. “So what do I do with these?”

Jack giggled. “Break as many of them as you can and spread them everywhere! Stick them in the grass, anywhere they'll go!”

Harley giggled and set to work, spreading the plastic knives around the huge lawn breaking a few every so often. She dumped them on the lawn, in the bushes, racing back to grab another box as she continued to litter the forks everywhere in the flower beds, throwing them in the tree branches.

Jack grabbed the soap and rubbed the soap over all the windows he could reach on the house and on the car. He rubbed soap on the front door and the door knob before he headed back and grabbed the plastic wrap, then walked over to the car. He grinned, opening one box of the plastic wrap and started to wrap it around the car. Harley, finished with her forks came over to help Jack. They were both laughing as they raced each other around the expensive car, wrapping it in layers and layers of cheap plastic wrap.

Giggling, Jack pointed at their car. “Grab the duct tape will you sweets?”

Harley skipped over to the back seat of their car, pulling out the couple of large rolls of duct tape Jack had purchased and together they finished up with the car by duct taping the plastic to it.

Jack grinned standing back with his hands on his hips. “That is good work, my sweetie pie. Good work indeed.”

Harley giggled, grabbing the corners of her short skirt and curtsying. “Thank you Mr. Wayne. I do try to help.”

Jack grinned and growled at her. “I was having some pretty damn dirty thoughts about you tonight...”

Harley giggled. “Oh, you were, were you?”

Jack waggled his eyebrows at her. “Oh I was...but before we go...two more things to do, the toilet paper!!”

Harley squealed running back to the car, the two of them pulling the toilet paper from the back seat and the trunk. It required a few minutes of yanking the plastic wrapping on the paper off, but soon Jack and Harley were doing their best to be quiet and failing as they ran around the house and yard of the Randell’s throwing toilet paper everywhere laughing as they chased each other across the lawn, throwing toilet paper at each other too!

After about half an hour, the two of them had successfully covered the whole front the house, all the bushes, flower beds, the car (an additional layer of toilet paper just for the fun of it) and the trees in toilet paper. Harley stood with her hands on her hips, barefoot in the Randell's front yard when they were done, admiring their work.

“It's kind of beautiful,” Harley said softly as a breeze blew through the toilet paper. Jack wrapped his arm around her waist. “I suppose it is.” Jack smiled, gazing at Harley's profile. He whispered softly, “I was proud of you tonight.”

Harley turned to face him, a blush on her cheeks. “Really?”
Jack chuckled. “The way you pried Meg's brain like that...pulling her apart. That was a thing of beauty my little murder kitten.”

Harley squeaked with pleasure wrapping her arms around Jack's neck. “You think so puddin?”

Jack nodded brushing his nose against hers. “Oh yeah, it was gorgeous.” He held her tightly brushing his lips against hers. “It was hot.”

Harley giggled, flicking her tongue over his lips.

Jack purred holding her tighter. “Wanna go back to the club? I wanna dance with you some more before I fuck you silly.”

Harley nipped at his lips. “Mm...yes puddin, sounds fun.” Jack, his eyes roaming down to her breasts pressed against his chest, his hands on her waist rolled down to grab her rear. “Mm...Harley...”

She giggled, she could feel how turned on he was, but she pulled away from him and took one of his hands tugging him toward the car. “Not here on the Randell's lawn...eeeww....”

Jack laughed. “All right let's go.”

They walked to the car and started to get when Jack saw the cartons of eggs on the back seat. “Harley! We can't leave yet! The eggs!”

Harley, who had pulled her door opened stopped. “The eggs!”

Giggling, they both grabbed a couple of cartons of eggs. Jack grinned at his girl. “You take one side of the house and I'll take the other?”

Harley wrinkled her nose at him, her eyes dancing. “Sounds like a plan puddin!”

It only took the two of them maybe ten minutes to go through six cartons of eggs, covering the front of the Randell home (and the plastic wrapped, duck taped, toilet papered car) in the splattered remains of eggs. Jack laughed. “It's a masterpiece!”

Harley laughed. “Come on puddin, let's go!”

* *

Jack, all smiles now, escorted Harley back into the Luscious. The music pounded, the lights flashed, people gyrated, and Jack, with his arm around Harley's waist, took her to the bar. “So sexy, what can I get you?”

Harley laughed. “Mm...how about some sex on the beach?”

Jack laughed. “Yes please.”

He motioned at the bartender and ordered her drink along with his, a White Russian. They sat at the bar sipping their drinks when the music changed to Lana Del Rey's, “Gods and Monsters.”

Harley smiled standing up. Jack reached out for her frowning. “Harley?”

Harley took his hand. “Follow me.”

She led him over to a pole that wasn't being used at the moment. Harley grinned, pushing Jack into a chair positioned in front of the pole before she walked over to the pole. She started to move with the
music, holding onto the pole, arching her back, smiling at him while she spread her legs wide and slowly swayed her hips. Jack flopped back into the chair with his drink, watching while Harley walked slowly around the pole, her eyes on Jack as the lights, purple, blue and red danced across her. Jack smiled when Harley stopped, wrapping a arm around the pole and leaning backward reaching up to pull the sticks from her hair and toss them away, allowing her blonde hair to fall down in thick gold waves. Harley licked her upper lip, pulling the glasses down to the tip of her nose, smiling seductively at Jack, spreading her legs and shimmying down to a wide legged crouch, holding onto the pole with one hand while she ran a hand along her thigh before she stood up again and tossed the glasses away.

Harley twisted around, leaning backwards to grab the pole, spreading her legs and while still leaning backwards as far as she could, her torso undulated as she smiled at Jack. Jack licked his lips watching her. Harley smiled, using her teeth to pull the gloves off her hands while she stared at him, lifting one of her legs and swinging it around, then she pulled herself up gracefully, twisting around. She grabbed the pole again and lifted herself up the pole, spinning with her legs out, once around the pole before she brought her legs in, wrapping them around the pole to do a full spin. She raise her legs up so that she was upside down and spread her legs, spinning around, the skirt of her dress falling back to show her red panties.

Jack's breath quickened watching her (he was unaware that her dance had caught the attention of a few other men and a couple of women who were watching with fascination and a little bit of lust). Harley demonstrated her gymnastic skills as she wrapped one leg around the pole, pointing her other leg out as she spun to the music. She switched legs, doing another spin before she brought her free leg back, catching her foot with her hand and spun around the pole in a sensual arched twist.

Jack caught his bottom lip in his teeth painfully, the lust in his eyes burned brightly while he watched her. Harley let go of her foot and spun herself down, dropping her feet to the floor. She arched her back, one hand touching the floor as she held onto the pole with her other hand, whipping her hair back out of her eyes, her gaze only on Jack. She straightened up, walked around the pole once, weaving her hips before she caught the pole with both hands, pulling herself up sideways, then further up the pole, hooking one foot around the pole, her other leg straight out, spinning slowly. She dropped herself to the floor again, then lifted herself upside down, parting her legs and spinning before wrapping one leg around the pole again. She couldn't quite see Jack's face with her hair in her eyes. She hooked a leg around the pole, bringing her other leg around, but not hooking it around the pole and spun again, upside down, lowering herself slowly down the pole until her hands could touch the floor. Harley left one leg hooked to the pole and arched her back, her other leg arching backwards, before she brought the leg back to the pole, finishing the slide down to the floor. She rolled onto her stomach and grinned at Jack.

The few other people who had been watching clapped and hooted. Jack walked over to Harley taking her hand, lifting her up to her feet and into his arms. He grabbed a fistful of her hair, kissing her hard. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck returning his kiss savagely. Jack lifted her up, wrapping his arms under her rear and carried her to one of the booths at the back of the club, a little off to the left of the pole Harley had just used. There were a few other people in the booth since it was a large one that formed a half square against the wall. The seating was large enough for maybe ten to fifteen people, but when Jack walked in carrying Harley a few people quickly vacated the booth.

Jack turned around sitting down, his hands running up her dress, squeezing her backside, pulling her panties down just a little to run his fingers along the cleft of her rear, tickling her softly. Harley grinned arching at his touch. She hissed. “My Jack...”

Jack shifted his position to settle her more securely on his lap, squeezing her rear and pressing her up
against him. He grinned against her lips when Harley cupped the sides of Jack's neck, running her thumbs along his cheeks, stroking slowly, nipping at his lips and tongue. She ran her fingers around to the back of Jack's head, grinding her pelvis against him.

Jack groaned softly, his clothing felt tight, burning against his skin. He needed to feel her, touch her. Jack pulled away from her lips, breathless.

“I hated seeing you dance with him. I hated him touching you,” Jack growled, his mouth brushing against hers when he spoke, his fingers digging in painfully when his brought his hands up to grab her waist. “I hated it with every fiber of my being Harley. I hated you for letting him touch you. No one touches you Harley, no one but me,” Jack hissed. There was a combination of anger, lust and hurt in his eyes when he stared up at her. He reached up and grabbed her throat in a sudden painful grip. Harley stared back, her lighter blue eyes reflected much the same feelings as Jack's. She grinned when he grabbed her neck, loving the feel of his fingers pressing into her skin.

Harley hissed. “I hated her touching you. I wanted to break each of her fingers. I wanted to hurt you for letting her Jack! I wanted to hurt you badly!” Harley's fingers in his hair scraped against his scalp, the nails hurting slightly as she held his thick hair in handfuls, forcing Jack's head back. Jack grinned at her. She ran her tongue up his throat, feeling the slightly rough texture of his shaven skin against her sensitive tongue. Her teeth scraped the skin of his chin, then she bit him, not painfully, but just enough to warn Jack that she could hurt him. Grinding on his crotch became harder almost as if she were fighting with him more than caressing him as Jack's fingers skimmed down to her body from her throat until he came to her hips. He grabbed her hips, pressing her forcefully down on him, his grip both pleasurable and painful.

He suddenly let go. Jack reached up to grab a fistful of her hair and yank her head back. Jack forced her face to his, staring hard into her eyes. “I'll kill whoever touches you.” With his other hand he dragged his fingers firmly down her throat again, and over her breasts, pinching her nipples through the thin fabric of her dress, rolling the sensitive bud between thumb and forefinger in a caress that was a mix of pleasure and pain.

Harley's eyes fluttered closed. “Puddin, only you, only ever you…”

Jack let go long enough to yank the straps of her dress down, exposing her breasts and pulling her closer, his mouth covering the nipple of one breast while his hand in her hair forced her head back. The two of them forgot anyone else around them; their need for each other was all consuming. Jack switched breasts, sucking hard on her other nipple, the tip of his tongue twirling the hard bud causing Harley to arch and groan. She started to undulate her hips, brushing back and forth across the hardness of him between her legs. (The music playing in the background had changed to “Dangerous Woman” by Ariana Grande.) Harley moved with the rhythm of the song, her fingers pulling at his tie, popping the buttons of his expensive shirt to get to the skin underneath. Jack released her hair, letting her sit up a little straighter which allowed her to unbutton the vest, yanking it open, digging her nails down his chest through the fabric of his shirt. Jack hissed feeling the sharp press of her nails through the fabric.

“Harley…” He groaned her name looking up at her, his blue eyes burning with lust and maniacal love. Harley smiled down at him running the tip of her tongue from his lips, over his nose, rolling her pelvis against him. Jack tugged her dress a little lower until Harley pulled her arms through the thin straps. (They were both completely unaware of the man who had started taking pictures. He worked for the club, taking stills of the dancers for the website, but when he saw Jack Wayne going at it with some woman, the man turned his attention to them. The flash of his camera mixed with the other lights. They were completely involved in each other, ignoring the rest of the world around them.) Jack reached down between her legs, his fingers sliding under the thin fabric of her panties, caressing
the curling hair before delving deeper.

Harley moaned arching backwards, her hands on his shoulders. Jack held her, one hand on her back the fingers spread while his other hand rubbed her slowly. The warm leather of his glove stroked slowly up, then down, his fingers moving just slightly. Harley gasped breathlessly. “Oh Jack...uhh...yes...”

Jack grinned watching her, the lights dancing around her skin as he continued to stroke her, his fingertips rolling in gentle circles against her clitoris until she was panting, her hips moving against the strokes of his fingers. Jack caught his bottom lip in his teeth watching her. She was completely his...

“Harley...come for me Harley. Tell me you're mine...”

Harley dug her fingers into his shoulders painfully, while rolling her hips against his fingers. “Uhhuhhuhhh...Jack...oh Jack...ahhahh...yes, yes...I'm yours, always yours puddin, always...UUuuhhh forever...JACK!”

Jack yanked her against him with his free hand when she came, his fingers still pressed against her, feeling her vibrate against him, shuddering. (The background music changed to Meg Myer's “Desire.”) He slowly extracted his fingers, releasing his hold on her long enough to slip himself free from his confining slacks. With a shift of position, he pulled her panties aside and plunge into her warmth and wetness. Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, his eyes rolling with pleasure at the feel of her around him.

(The man taking pictures moved around to get a few more good shots.)

Jack pressed her down hard. “Harley, my girl, say it.”

“I'm always your girl Jack, always.” Harley hissed rolling her hips, throwing her head back while she rode him, pulling up just a little before sliding down slowly on him. “Oh Jack..” Harley groaned arching her back.

Jack shuddered tugging her down to kiss her, his hands traveling up her back, a deep kiss, his tongue playing along hers, his teeth scraping along her tongue. “Touch yourself Harley, I wanna watch you play with yourself.”

Harley giggled brushing her nose against his whispering. “You are so naughty Jack.”

“Only for you Harley, only for you.” Jack grinned at her in a way that Harley knew was special, a smile all for her. She thrust her hips forward on him and caused Jack to roll his eyes partly closed with the pleasure of feeling her. Harley caught her lip with her teeth. He watched her fingers stroke down to where her panties were pulled aside. The music thumped in time to their thrusting, the light twisting and weaving of their hips as the two of them fucked for anyone to see.

Harley leaned back, one hand on Jack's shoulder, holding on tightly, grasping hard, feeling the muscles underneath his clothing, while her free hand glided down her stomach, under her skirt and between her legs. Jack lifted her skirt up, holding the cloth against her stomach, his other hand cradling her rear. He watched her fingers stroke down to where her panties were pulled aside. The dim lights danced over her, making her movements seem dream-like, the feel of her, the squeezing and thrusting of her body had Jack jerking upward, his thrusts struggling to meet hers.

Jack watched, his breath shallow, while Harley rubbed her fingers over herself, the lights dancing over her. He loved the way she groaned with her bottom lip between her teeth. She was all his, his,
he thought, feeling her inner muscles contract, squeezing him while she touched herself.

Jack hissed. “God Harley yes...”

Harley’s eyes rolled closed, her body arched as her fingers brushed over her clitoris. Jack gazed at her, his little murder kitten he had called her earlier tonight, it made him grin. His baby, his girl, his pumpkin pie.

Jack groaned, his voice breathless, thrusting up with each breath. “Mmm, yes Harley yes...”

Harley cried out. “Aah!! Puddin! Jack!! Oh, Jack I love you!”

Jack grabbed her, wrapping his arms around her, pressing her body up against his. (The music had changed to “Crazy in Love” by Sofia Karlberg). Harley barely had time to pull her hand away from herself, wrapping her arms around Jack's neck before he had yanked her close.

He twisted around, laying her on the seat of the booth. When her back hit the cushion of the booth's seat one of her legs dropped to the floor, the other went around Jack's waist. He grabbed her leg that was pressed against the back of the booth, forcing it back against her body while he reached up to smooth her hair back from her face. He groaned fisting his hands in her hair. He thrust hard and deep staring into her eyes.

“I love you Harley,” Jack whispered just before he surprised her by biting down on her shoulder. The bite was hard, painful, but it felt so good at the same time. Harley gasped arching her back, throwing her head back and held onto Jack groaning. “Yes, Jack yes!”

Her eyes rolled closed when another orgasm rippled through her, a building burn that crashed and spread throughout her body in a warm wave of pleasure. Jack pressed in hard, wrapping his arms around to cradle her head. His hips rolled in hard, short thrusts then he slammed hard into her when he came with a heated burst of passion that felt almost as if it was ripped from his body.

They stayed laying on the bench staring at one another. Jack chuckled brushing the tip of his nose against hers, his tongue caressing her lips while his thumbs gently stroked her temples. “I never thought I would find someone who would see the world the way I do Harls. I thought I would be alone, forever. But now...” Jack reached for her hand that had her engagement ring on it and kissed the knuckle of the finger right in front of the ring and whispered. “Vena amoris.”

Harley smiled. “What does that mean?”

Jack grinned. “It means, vein of love. That is why the ring goes on this finger, or so the stories say. The Romans thought a vein from here ran straight to the heart. You, Harley, are my heart.”

Harley tenderly ran her fingers along his cheeks before tracing the shape of his lips. “I love you puddin. Forever. You'll never get rid of me.” She giggled. Jack grinned capturing her mouth in a passionate kiss while the music played around them. (“Mama Forgive Me” pumped through the club).

*

The man sneaking pictures grinned and took off. He would have the pictures ready in a matter of hours and then he would be making a pretty decent wad of cash by the time the morning sun was high in the sky.
Dream a Little Dream

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Bruce was humming to himself as he showered, scrubbing the shampoo through his hair, his thoughts on his date last night with Selina Kyle. He had had a lovely evening with Selina, one of those dates that was so good it almost didn't seem real. He had rented out the entire Gotham Art Museum for the evening, paying to have the restaurant that was attached to the museum cater dinner for them. He had even arranged for a string quartet. They had eaten lobster with Beluga caviar, white truffles along with white burgundy. Then they had danced. It had been one of the most wonderful evenings that Bruce could remember. Selina was an elegant dancer; Bruce smiled at the memory. Selina was everything he could possibly want, beautiful, intelligent, funny...Bruce sighed as he stepped out of the shower and toweled off.

He walked over to his closet and lifted out his clothing for the day and began dressing. He had just slipped into a pair of expensive black slacks and he had just pushed his arms into his dress shirt when he sat down at his desk thinking to check his email while buttoning his shirt. He had just brought up his email when he saw an message from Gail Simone.

Gail worked for the local gossip paper, The Gotham Star. She, unlike many of her fellow reporters for the Star, tried to make sure any stories she published at least held a grain of truth. Most of what the Star published were indecent pictures of local and not so local celebrities, kept tabs on the local Gotham elite, looked for scandalous stories about local politicians, and pretty much told tales about the love lives of the rich and famous. Bruce himself had ended up in the paper on more than one occasion, usually in small articles discussing his latest fling, but Gail always tried to keep any stories on the Wayne family neutral and to warn him of any potential...issues that involved the Wayne family.

As Bruce opened the email, he saw that Gail had added several attachments to the email. Her note was simple. “The Star just bought these pictures, wanted to give you a heads up. These were taken at the Luscious, a notorious night club known for its drugs, drinking and other activities.”

Bruce frowned and downloaded the images, then expanded them on his computer. When he saw the pictures Bruce's face flushed bight red. He started to click them away but had to stop himself. No, he needed to go through them...no surprises. He clicked through the pictures, his ears burning red with embarrassment. The photos were of Jack and Harley being intimate in the nightclub...in public.

Bruce clicked the pictures away and pinched the bridge of his nose. He sighed thinking to himself, at least they're engaged. At worst this is just a few pictures of Jack and his fiancee having public sex. Embarrassing (if not to them, then to Bruce at least), but not detrimental...though it might cause another vote on whether or not to let Jack stay on the board. Bruce could only hope that the board would dismiss it as vulgar, impulsive and nothing else. Bruce sent a message back to Gail.

“Thanks for the warning.”

No sooner had he sent the email than he received another email from Gail. This one had the title line “And another”

Bruce groaned. “What now?” he muttered and opened the email. Gail had written. “Received these just half an hour ago.”
Bruce reluctantly clicked the pictures and groaned out loud. These were of Jack and Harley throwing toilet paper...and plastic wrapping a car? The photos weren't good, probably from a security camera. The only reason Bruce knew it was Jack and Harley was because he had just seen the sex pictures (which were of much better quality.) Bruce groaned out loud. “God damn it Jack!”

As Bruce sat there he thought to himself that it was odd; he had hired Dr. Quinzel to help his brother, yet there she was, engaged to him, having public sex and vandalism...Jack was definitely having a stronger influence on Dr. Quinzel than she was having on him. Bruce rubbed his jaw. It worried him, to say the least. Jack was out in the public eye more and more with Dr. Quinzel. Granted these things, public indecency and vandalism were minor, but where would it stop? Would it stop there?

Bruce closed his eyes then went back to checking his other emails. There was one from Lucius Fox. “Hi Bruce, I just wanted to let you know that there has been a missing person report filed for McDermott by a cousin of his... Seems he never came back from vacation. No one has heard from him. Just thought you would want to know before you came in. Fox.”

Bruce frowned. He was about to reply when his phone rang. Bruce stood up, tucking his shirt in as he walked over to where he had left his phone on the bed. He smiled when he saw it was Selina. All his worries melted away.

“Selina.” Bruce smiled holding the phone between his shoulder and ear while he reached into his closet to pull out a dark red tie and the jacket that went with the slacks. Unlike Jack, Bruce seldom wore a three-piece suit, it just wasn't his thing. Jack on the other hand, always took dressing up very seriously. An outfit for every occasion and Jack always took pains to look his best at all times. Jack had been like that when they were children, but after their parents' death it almost became an obsession for Jack. He was always talking about costumes to hide the real you...Bruce frowned then dismissed the thought.

“Hey Bruce, just wanted to see if you are free for dinner tonight. My treat this time.” Selina's voice was a soft caress against Bruce's skin even through the phone. He liked listening to her talk.

“Sure, what did you have in mind?” Bruce smiled wrapping his tie around his neck and started tying it.

“I thought maybe you would like a home cooked meal,” Selina ventured softly.

Bruce stopped moving. Did that mean what he thought it meant?

“Maybe we could finish with breakfast...if you wanted. We could discuss what sort of party to have after you buy the painting...” Selina sounded as if she was trying to find a good excuse to have Bruce stay over without being obvious.

Bruce grinned at himself in the mirror. “I would love to Selina.”

*

It was late afternoon before Jack and Harley decided to get up. Jack reached over and picked up his phone that was lying beside him on the bed. The song, “The Knight” by Disturbed was playing telling Jack who was calling before he picked the phone up. He looked at the screen seeing Bruce's name and sighed. After a couple of moments of reluctance Jack answered. “Hey Bruce.”

Jack was sitting up in bed completely naked, his dark hair was lying parted to the side, flopping over his brow, he kept threading his fingers through it and pushing it out of his eyes.

Harley was naked, lying on her back, her arms under her head on the pillow as she watched Jack
paint her toenails. Jack grinned at her as he put the phone between his shoulder and ear continuing to paint her toenails.

Bruce sighed. “I tried calling you earlier.”

“I was sleeping with Harley.” Jack replied as he held Harley’s foot up with one hand and blew on the nails which he had pained a bright, cheery red.

Bruce sighed again. He is always sighing around me, Jack thought. “I received two emails this morning from Gail at the Gotham Star.”

“Ooo, anything interesting?” Jack knew about Bruce’s friend Gail and what her job was..to keep the Waynes out of the gossip columns as much as possible.

“Someone sold the Star pictures of you and Harley...” For a moment Jack panicked. Had someone seen them leave with Meg and Walter? “...having sex in public at that club the Luscious.”

Jack blinked, then giggled slightly. “Are you serious?”

“Yes, I am,” Bruce said in his serious tone, the tone Jack usually heard while speaking with his brother. “Some amateur photographer who worked at the club snapped some photos of the two of you and they are pretty...revealing. But that isn't the worst of it. I also received some photos from a security camera of the two of you vandalizing a house?”

Jack giggled, his gaze meeting Harley’s. “Yeah we did. It was the Randell's house.”

“What?” On the other end Bruce groaned. “Are you serious?”

Harley covered her mouth, giggling against her palm while Jack laughed and answered. “Yeah we did, BUT we didn't break anything!”

Bruce hissed back. “Jack, we just had a vote about your behavior and whether you should stay on the board of directors. This...this is going to force another vote.”

Jack smiled continuing to paint Harley’s toenails. “Bruce, if they call a vote just let me know.”

“I might not know...” Bruce started to say, but Jack cut him off. “Don’t even pretend you wouldn't know even if they tried to keep it secret from you. If they tried to hold another vote, you let me know. I know exactly what to do to sway the vote, okay?”

On the other end, Bruce did not look happy and that translated in his tone. “Just—damn it Jack—can't you just stay out of the papers? Act responsibly and look what you've done to Dr. Quinzel? She is going right down that path with you. Don’t you even think about her reputation as a doctor?”

Jack made a face mocking Bruce's words. Harley could hear what Bruce had said, but she was laughing at Jack's antics.

“Fine Bruce, it's not like I do it on purpose you know, and Harley is my girl. We do things together. That's what couples do, not like you would know though, would you?”

Bruce started to snap back, something cruel about Dr. Quinzel, but he stopped himself.

“Fine, just...stay out of trouble.” Bruce hung up.

With a sigh Jack resumed what he had been doing, tossing the phone onto the bed.
“You okay?” Harley asked softly.

“Apparently someone took photos of us fucking at the club last night,” Jack muttered. “Sold the photos to the Gotham Star.”

Harley frowned. “Gotham Star? Seriously?”

Jack nodded. “Oh and there was a security camera—like we thought—showing photos of us vandalizing the Randell’s house.”

Harley laughed. ‘Well, we knew that was going to happen.” They both chuckled. After a couple of seconds Jack sighed. “Think we may have to find out who this photographer is...have a happy little chat about respecting boundaries.”

Harley grinned. “You're right puddin, you're always right.”

Jack smiled at her, then changed the subject.

“I thought today we would go out for coffee...have lunch...go shopping...you know, like a normal couple.”

Jack giggled, glancing up from Harley's foot to her eyes. Normal was something they were way beyond now, Harley thought as she smiled at him. She giggled too and wiggled her toes. Jack kissed the tip of her toes before he continued. “And then we could go skating!

“Skating?” Harley frowned. “Like ice skating?”

“Pffft! Nah! Roller skating!” Jack grinned. “We're going to go out for coffee, lunch, shopping for skating outfits and a pair of good old-fashioned roller skates! None of those roller blade things!!”

Harley laughed. “Because we have to have the right costumes for roller skating.”

“Exactly, my precious!” Jack grinned picking up her other foot and started to paint the nails. “But first toenails!”

Harley giggled wiggling down into the soft mattress and blankets watching her puddin. “Can I paint yours?”

Jack smiled looking up at her. “Of course my sweet, it's always good if our make-up and nails match isn't it?”

* 

Harley had finished dressing before Jack. She gave Jack a kiss after she had finished with his makeup and headed on downstairs to let Alfred know what they were up to today and that he wouldn't be needing to make them lunch, but they would be home for a late dinner...maybe.

Jack had given her a playful smack on the rear when she left.

“Love you toots.”

Harley had spun around, her face alight with love and happiness. “I love you too puddin.”

* 

She found the older man in the kitchen sitting at the counter polishing the silver. Harley skipped into
the room with a bright smile. “Hey Alfred!”

Alfred was in his butler's uniform, but he had laid the jacket over the back of the chair and was wearing rubber gloves and an apron as he polished the silver utensils.

Harley frowned. “Wow, why all the silver?”

Alfred smiled when he saw Harley. She was looking rather adorable this afternoon dressed in a white with black geometric patterned silk-jersey dress with a split V neckline and short cap sleeves. The dress was short, stopping just at the top of her thighs and she had on a pair of black nubuck leather, thick heeled sandals with a thin ankle straps, her toe nails and fingernails painted a bright red. Her long blonde hair was worn loose and her make up was light and fresh. Alfred thought she looked young, lovely and in love. He was so happy to see her recovering from the trauma of a few weeks ago and he was doubly happy to see the engagement ring on her finger.

“Good afternoon Miss Harleen what can I do for you? Oh, I decided to polish the silver because I suspect Master Bruce may be having a party soon. Just butler intuition.”

Harley grinned. “Oh really?” She frowned slightly in thought, but continued. “I just wanted to let you know that Jack and I are going out for lunch, shopping and skating!”

“Skating?” Alfred asked with a slightly confused look.

“Rolling skating!” Harley clapped her hands.

Alfred chuckled. “Really? That sounds fun my dear.”

“It does doesn't it? Jack wants to go buy skates and skating outfits...not sure what that is, but he says...” together she and Alfred repeated the same lines. “Always wear the correct costume for the correct event.”

They both laughed. “Master Jack has been doing that since he was quite young. He has always had a love for dressing up. It's nice to see him have someone to share it with Miss Harleen.”

Harley blushed. “Thank you Alfred.”

He smiled and nodded. “Will you both be home for dinner?”

“Not until late, Jack said.” Harley smiled and Alfred nodded. “Just call me dear and I will have something ready, no matter the time.”

“Thank you Alfred.” Harley started to leave, but she quickly came back and hugged Alfred surprising him (careful of the silver and the polish in his hands). “You are like the father I never had, you know that. I mean...”

Alfred set everything down and hugged her back (without putting his hands on her back, just using his arms). “I know exactly what you mean Miss Harleen. I feel the same about you and Master Jack and Master Bruce. You three are my family.”

Harley squeezed him one more time. “Thank you.”

Alfred smiled. “Of course.”

* *

Jack came trotting down the stairs. He wore a light cadet blue suit with a white dress shirt, minus vest
or tie this time. He was also wearing a pair of matching white and blue striped socks with a pair of light cognac colored leather derby shoes. He stopped on the last step when he saw Harley waiting for him in the front entrance. She had her phone out and a pair of ear buds connected to the phone in her ears. She was dancing in place listening to something he couldn't hear. He grinned watching her, the way she was moving her hips, her body weaving to the music. He sighed smiling, his features capturing a combination of lust and happiness gazing at the woman he loved and who loved him in return. Harley made him happier than anything or anyone ever had until now...She filled something in him that he hadn't realized had been missing, empty until she stepped in. She was his soulmate, his red thread of destiny, the person who had been fated for him always. His killing partner, she understood him, understood everything. He leaned on the banister watching her move around, then she started to sing which made Jack smile even wider. Her voice was lovely.

*I couldn’t love a man so purely
Even prophets forgave his crooked way
I’ve learned love is like a brick you can
Build a house or sink a dead body
I’ll bring him down, bring him down, down
A king with no crown, king with no crown
I’m just a Holy Fool, oh baby he’s so cruel
But I’m still in love with Judas, baby
I’m just a Holy Fool, oh baby he’s so cruel
But I’m still in love with Judas, baby...

*Harley put her hands behind her head as she rolled her hips, sang and turned around. Her eyes were closed while she sang, rolling side to side, her legs set wide apart moving to the beat of the song when she opened her eyes. Harley squeaked jumping a foot when she saw Jack leaning casually against the bannister, holding his left wrist with his right hand and watching her with a grin on his handsome face. After his blue eyes roamed up and down her figure, Jack waggled his eyebrows at her with a broad smile.

She yanked her earbuds out of her ears. “Jack! How long have you been standing there?!”

Jack’s grin was wide. “Don't stop, I was enjoying the show sweets. Particularly those hip sways...I really enjoy those...”

Jack swayed his own hips in imitation taking the last step down with a slight bounce.

“I do love how you move,” Jack purred grabbing her hips and yanking her up against him. He weaved a few times, his fingers pressing into her hips, enjoying the feel of her.

Jack growled. “Grr...my pretty girl...”

Harley blushed, dropping her arms around his shoulders holding her phone and ear buds in one hand.
while she ground her pelvis against his...the man made her want him constantly. His blue eyes stood out looking almost electric with the dark eyeliner around them. He smile was cherry red and oh how she wanted to have him leave lipstick marks all over her body.

“Are you ready?” she purred jerking just slightly when Jack's hands roamed behind her to grab her rear and squeeze.

“Mmm. Yes...I suppose...” He chuckled gazing down at where their bodies where pressed together. “I can't wait to taste you on my lips again,” Jack whispered, gently rubbing his nose against hers. “I want to drag you upstairs and throw you down on the floor, push that dress up and fuck you hard Harley,” Jack growled. He was giving serious consideration to hauling her back up the stairs and doing just like he wanted BUT he had promised her a day out.

Harley was squirming. Just his voice, the warm and liquid way he spoke ran like slow, thick drops of honey on her skin. She ached for him. If he had said they were going back upstairs she would have gone willingly, but instead Jack sighed letting her go.

“Wanna take the bike?” he asked when he let her go.

Harley pouted a little, her bottom lip sticking out. Jack laughed. “I promise later to spend hours tonight between your legs; teasing… sucking, sipping, tasting you...”

Harley giggled. “Promise?”

“I swear my sweets.” Jack grinned. “So, the motorcycle...”

“In this dress?” Harley asked looking down at herself.

Jack grinned. “Oh yeah, in that dress, we might not make it home...you could ride up front...remember?” Jack grinned, his tongue at the corner of his mouth.

Harley giggled. “You're bad.”

Jack took her hand. “That's one of the things you love about me!”

Harley grinned. “One of many puddin. I'm crazy for you.”

Jack brushed the back of his fingers along her cheek. “I'm crazy for you too my pumpkin.”

*

Soon they were heading into the city, Harley was sitting on the back of the bike, her arms around Jack's waist, her head laying against his back. She was wearing her sunglasses, casting everything in a warm darkness. She loved the way he felt, her arms around his body, she could smell his cologne, the delicious scent of his clothing, his hair, his skin...the man drove her nuts—he was intoxicating. She squeezed her arms around him and kissed his back.

With a cigarette in his mouth and sporting his round purple shades, Jack grinned when he felt the pressure of his fiancee’s lips against his back. He had one hand on the bike, the other behind him on her leg, feeling the warm silk of her skin under his fingers. Harley had pulled the bottom of her dress down as much as she could, but it still road up her long legs. Jack caressed her thigh as he drove them into Gotham, happy to feel her bare-skin under his fingers. He pinched her playfully before he brought his hand back to the hit the gas, rev the bike, and speed dangerously through the Gotham city traffic on their way downtown.
Harley giggled and let go of Jack once to throw her arms up in the air, the wind whipping her hair. Harley yelled at the top of her lungs. “I LOVE JACK WAYNE!!”

Jack laughed zipping between cars, his smile was all perfectly straight white teeth and bordering on maniacal happiness.

* 

They ended up pulling in front of Gotham's Caffè Coffee Shop and Bakery.

Jack snorted as he hopped off the bike, removed his sunglasses, and slipped them into a pocket of his blazer. In a sarcastic tone Jack said. “I love the name, Gotham's coffee, coffe shop and bakery. But I'll let it pass because they have great coffee.”

Jack laughed then as he helped Harley off the motorcycle. He held her hand, while with her other hand she pulled her dress down and straightened herself up. Jack reached forward with his free hand to push a lock of her hair behind her ear and stared into her eyes.

“My beautiful girl,” Jack whispered. Harley brought his hand up that was holding hers and kissed his knuckles. “My puddin,” she whispered in response.

Jack grinned, tugged her close and weaved her arm through his before they headed into the shop.

* 

The inside of the cafe was busy. Harley took her sunglasses off and looked around with a smile. The smell of rich coffee filled the air around them. She could hear music playing softly in the background, Lana Del Rey's “Because of You.” The walls of the cafe were all exposed brick, with a dark tile flooring and an exposed grey ceiling. The counter was also exposed brick with a nice, curved, light grey marble top. The baristas behind the counter had what Harley thought of as a “typical” hipster look, with one man having on a pair of skinny jeans, a long, squared off beard and a red and white plaid shirt. Another was also dressed in skinny jeans, a white short sleeved button down shirt with his hair shaved on the sides. The last man behind the counter wore jeans, a red and white striped t-shirt with a sweater vest, a little bowler hat and a handlebar mustache. All of them were so pale the sun might actually reflect off of them, Harley thought. The young woman who was working at the register had on a pair of bright yellow overalls, a white and black striped shirt and a HUGE pair of black framed sunglasses.

Holding Harley's arm, Jack leaned close. “What would you like, my sweets?”

Harley smiled looking up at the chalkboard menu that hung above the registers.

“Mm...a large cold-brew vanilla caramel?”

Jack grinned. “Then that is what you shall have.”

He brushed her chin with his fingers, a gentle caress, his eyes only for her; Harley almost melted on the spot. Jack grinned and nipped at her lips softly before they walked up to the counter coming within ear shot of the four baristas who were having an intense discussion of the merits of veganism and the ills of dairy. The young woman had just stated that she thought one could still eat meat or dairy and that it could be done humanely.

Sweater-vest groaned and cut the young woman off. “You know that's a lie! The happy cow is a myth! Don't you know anything Jill?”
The young woman frowned looking as if she had been slapped. Jill started to say something in protest when the sweater-vest moved his hand in front of her, snapping his fingers in her face in a dismissive gesture, clearly giving no regard to her opinion as he muttered, “You don’t have any idea what you’re talking about Jill. People like you are the problem.” Jill started to open her mouth when she saw that they had customers. She stopped and smiled at Jack and Harley.

Jack and Harley stepped up to the counter, Jack holding Harley’s hands, his fingers threaded with hers. The young man glanced at them, his eyes roaming over their clothing, noticing Harley’s engagement ring. For a moment his lip curled slightly; clearly he had made a judgment about them based on the way they looked. Jack blinked in surprise at the look the kid was giving the two of them. Wayne Enterprises donated money to the ethical treatment of animals and as far of Jack knew, Wayne Enterprises did not involve itself in animal experimentation or inhumane treatment, but this kid had made a decision on what kind of people they were in an instant. Jack really hated that. He had been experiencing that sort of treatment his whole life, the less stable Wayne brother...

The young man asked with a dismissive tone.

“What’s your order?”

Jack narrowed his eyes slightly glancing at the young man's name tag. “Hello, Zane. My girl would like an iced vanilla caramel and I would like an iced coffee with a shot of cream (usually Jack had his coffee black, but since this kid was having a fit about dairy, Jack decided to push a button just for the hell of it.)

Zane frowned slightly. “Soy milk?”

Jack grinned. “Nope, cow milk please.” Jack leaned his hand on the counter grinning from ear to ear. “I have a question Zane: If vegetarians eat vegetables, what do humanitarians eat?”

Zane frowned looking disgusted and ignoring Jack's joke. “Do you have any idea how bad dairy is for you? People like you are promoting cruelty to animals. It's because of the blindness of people like you that dairy continues to be consumed by the blind and stupid public!”

Jack and Harley continued to stare Zane, then Jack whispered. “What do Vegans fear the most? Nutritionists with facts.”

Zane glared and snarled. “Fine.”

Zane turned away and returned to his discussion. “You know how bad dairy is for you Jill?” Zane had turned to the girl, but his voice was carrying throughout the coffee shop. “Anyone who drinks dairy is a killer! They may not have done it themselves, but they are perpetuating the killing of cows and the systematic torture of them.”

The young man with the squared off beard frowned. “You going to the protest in Bludhaven against that dairy farmer convention?”

Zane stopped in the middle of making a drink. “No man, I ain't got the time for a rally. Besides I have to work ’til close tonight and tomorrow night.”

Jack, who had led Harley over to a table, narrowed his eyes watching Zane. As he watched he noticed the young man put soy milk in their orders.

Jack whispered. “You know, I really hate people who push their views onto others, but then have no time to stand behind them, especially when they are being a jackass to everyone else.”
Harley giggled. “I agree puddin.”

Jack sighed with a smile. “I think later tonight my dear we might have to come back here and teach our little social justice warrior a thing of two about standing behind your words and not fucking with other people.”

Harley giggled. “I hate that guy...and that sounds fun puddin.”

Jack grinned catching her chin between his thumb and forefinger as he whispered close to her lips. “My little murder kitten.”

Harley giggled blushing. Jack leaned in to brush his lips across hers when Zane called their order. Jack rubbed his nose against Harley’s before he walked up to get their orders. He didn’t pick the order up; instead he stood there looking at the drinks, then with a smile he called.

“Hey Zane. You did these drinks wrong.”

Zane turned around. “What are you talking about?”

“I watched you, you put soy in them, which I’m fairly confident I said ‘no’ to earlier.”

Zane walked back over. “What is your problem man?”

Jack smiled serenely. “Clearly my problem is you, Zane sweetheart.”

Zane hissed. “Don’t call me sweetheart.”

Jack grinned pushing the drinks back at him. “All right darling. Why don’t you make the drinks the way we requested or if that is too hard for you, why don’t we ask Jill, she is clearly the more intelligent of the two of you.”

Jill who was reloading the front display with scones looked over at the exchange, her eyes going wide but she was trying not to smile.

Zane started to open his mouth to say something else, but Jack held his finger up. “It’s so simple to be wise. Just think of something stupid to say and then don’t say it Zane.”

Jill hurried over because it was clear Zane was about to lose his temper. Jill smiled taking the drinks. “I will make you new ones and a coupon for two free coffees next time you are in.”

Jack grinned at her. “Why thank you Jill. It’s nice to see someone who can act with some intelligence and civility.” Zane lifted himself up to his full height and haughtily walked away.

* *

Across town at the Gotham City hospital, Bruce took the elevator up to the floor where his friend Harvey Dent was being kept. Dent was still in the hospital, though Bruce had heard from Gilda that they would be releasing Harvey in the next week. Bruce had been up to see him since the accident, but Harvey had been on so much medication that he didn’t even know Bruce had come to visit.

Today Bruce carried a vase of flowers with him to give to his friend, but he stopped at Harvey's hospital door; he could hear crying inside. Bruce frowned, it sounded like Gilda. Bruce took a step back when the door opened and Gilda came rushing out running right into Bruce.

“Gilda? Is everything okay?” Bruce caught her, nearly dropping the vase of flowers “Oh Bruce!” Gilda wrapped her arms around him. “It’s Harvey. He...he just isn’t himself right now.” She realized
she was holding onto Bruce and released him taking a step back wiping at her tears.

“Gilda, you know you can tell me anything.” Bruce gave her a reassuring smile.

Gilda looked at him, then noticed the flowers, for some reason that caused her to burst into tears again. “Oh Bruce, Harvey just isn't the same anymore. Since the accident it's as if there are two different people in there. My Harvey, my husband, the man who was so honest and good—but, but there are times it's as if there is another Harvey. Oh Bruce, he even sounds different at times. He told me to leave, that he never wanted to see me again. I just...I don't care how disfigured he is, I still love him, but he doesn't believe me!”

Gilda started to cry again. Bruce frowned walking over and setting the flowers down at the nurses station and pulled Gilda into an embrace. “It's all right Gilda. Why don't you go home? I'm sure you need the rest. I'll go talk to Harvey all right?”

Gilda nodded taking a step back and running a hand down her pregnant stomach. “Okay, okay, thank you Bruce.”

Bruce smiled. “Anytime Gilda.”

Bruce watched her walk down the hall to the elevator, crying the whole way. Bruce frowned turning back toward Harvey's hospital door. He waited a heartbeat before he pushed the door open and stepped inside.

Harvey was lying in his hospital bed turned away from the door when Bruce came in. “Hey Harvey?”

Bruce stepped closer and moved around the foot of the bed.

He wasn't prepared for what he saw.

The last few times he had been in here to see his friend, Harvey had had half his face covered in bandages, but the bandages were gone showing that half of Harvey's face was destroyed—not destroyed, Bruce realized. Half of Harvey's face was gone. The eye on that damaged side of Harvey's face was still there, though the lids around it were completely gone leaving a watery, bloodshot angry orb; his upper lip was pulled back, creating a permanent sneer, the flesh burned away and replaced by red, angry looking muscles and only bits of healing melted skin. Bruce could see the bone of Harvey's jaw exposed beneath the remaining skin.

“Harvey?” Bruce stepped closer and Harvey's eyes finally focused on him.

“What are you doing here?” his friend's voice was deep, strange, completely unlike the voice Bruce was accustomed to hearing.

“I ran into Gilda, she seemed upset.” Bruce looked around for a chair and pulled the one near the wall closer.

“I told her I don't need her any more,” Harvey snarled.

“Do you want to talk about it Harvey?” Bruce frowned, but Harvey smiled at him, a gruesome glimmer in Harvey's eyes.

“Bruce Wayne, the handsome playboy. Are you thinking about stepping into my shoes? Becoming Gilda's shoulder to cry on?” Harvey hissed the words at him.
Bruce frowned. “Harvey what's wrong—this isn't like you.”

Harvey sat up. “Get out! I don't want to talk to you! GET OUT!!”

Bruce stood. “Harvey...”

“GET OUT!”

Bruce frowned, but he left. He wasn't sure what was wrong with his friend, but this wasn't at all like Harvey. Bruce sighed as he stepped onto the elevator. He wasn't sure what he could do to help Gilda, but he would at least offer.

But for now he was going to focus on his date with Selina; it was selfish, but Bruce didn't know what he could do.

* 

In the hospital room Harvey snarled, his voice deep. “You know he is going to take your wife don't you?”

Harvey's voice reverted back to normal. “Bruce is my friend. He wouldn't do that.”

The other voice hissed. “You have no friend Harvey, only me.”

* 

Jack and Harley were walking down the sidewalk, looking like a stunning, high class couple with their sunglasses on smiling in the late afternoon light. They had had lunch in a small sandwich shop and now Jack had stopped and bought them ice cream cones at a local ice cream shop. He was grinning brightly, his arm around Harley’s waist. He had never been so happy, at least not that he could remember, not since he was very small. He remembered getting ice cream with his parents and Bruce once, not too long before his parents had been murdered. It was funny, now that he thought about it, Jack hadn't had an ice cream cone since that time. But today it had felt...right. Harley was his “new” family.

She was all he needed, all he would ever need he thought.

Jack smiled watching Harley walking beside him, studying the way her pink tongue slid across the white cream, the way she licked her lips, her lips pressing against the white...

“I could watch you lick an ice cream cone all day,” he whispered against her ear.

Harley giggled, his lips tickling her ear. She gave him a wickedly seductive look, licking the ice cream slowly. Jack purred. “Harley, you are going to cause me to drag you down an alley and take you right now if you don't stop.”

“Promises, promises.” Harley giggled moving her tongue up and down the ice cream.

Jack grinned.”Woman! You are tempting me!” he warned her around his growing smile, which only made Harley giggle more, licking her ice cream slowly. Jack sighed. “Shoot, we have reached our destination.”

Harley looked up at the store's sign. The place was called Gotham Five Stride Skate shop. From the window she could see not just roller skates, but skateboards, inline skates, knee pads, helmets, you name it, it seemed this place had it, along with t-shirts and other clothing for casual skaters and outfits
for people who participated in roller derby. Jack stood looking inside the window, licking his cone with a contemplative air.

“I would love to see you in a roller derby outfit.” He said it softly, but Harley grinned. “If you want I will wear one...it would be fun.”

Jack grinned at her, his blue eyes dancing. “You're making all my little boy sex fantasies come true Harley Quinn.”

Harley wrinkled her nose at him. “I intend to make every single one come true, puddin...Every. Single. One.”

Jack giggled. “God I love you.”

Harley laughed as she leaned over and licked his cone making Jack shiver.

* 

Once they were finished with their ice cream, they headed inside the shop. The guy at the counter had the typical “skater guy” look. He had long blonde hair that reached to his waist, long black skater shorts, red and white checked socks and a t-shirt with a large marijuana leaf on the front and a pair of round John Lennon glasses. When they came in, the man was all smiles. “Hey there! I'm Trey, let me know what I can help you with. And by the way man, I dig the suit!”

Jack grinned. “Why, thank you Trey. My girl and I are here for skates, clothing and a roller derby outfit for my girl.”

Trey grinned. “All right man. Hey you gunna go to the tryouts today at the rink?” Trey smiled at Harley who glanced at Jack. “Tryouts?” she asked turning back to Trey.

“Yeah man, the Gotham City Sirens are having tryouts...I think they might be starting in the next hour or so.”

Harley grinned at Jack who gave her a significant look and whispered. “Little boy sex fantasy.”

Harley giggled. “Guess I’m trying out for the Gotham City Sirens.”

* 

After nearly a hour of picking out clothing and skates, Jack and Harley left with two pairs of roller skates. Jack's were white with little pink pompoms on the toes which had made Harley giggle. He had the box with them under his arm. Jack was wearing a pair of black skater shorts with a purple, athletic-cut t-shirt which highlighted his trim figure and the sleek muscles of his calves and arms, along with a pair of pink and purple striped socks and a pair of purple high tops. Somehow he managed to look elegant even dressed like a skater. Harley thought he looked adorable.

Harley's skates were black with red laces. She was wearing the outfit that Jack had bought her for the derby try-outs, a pair of red and black striped socks that reached up to her knees over a pair of black fishnets, a pair of extremely short booty shorts in red and black sparkles, a black and white striped sleeveless tank top with a red sports bra underneath. While inside the store, she had pulled her hair up into pigtails which stuck out the sides of her black helmet that was littered with glittery red hearts, along with black knee pads and elbow pads.

Jack grinned at her looking her up and down slowly as he bit his bottom lip. “You 're hitting a lot of my kinks, Harley. My little boy sex fantasy come to life...” He laughed with glee making a grabby
motion at her while he stepped closer. He grabbed her hip with his free hand, tugging her up against him. Jack ran his hand down her side and then moved it around to squeeze her rear.

“Mmm...” he purred.

Harley blushed and giggled wiggling in his grasp. “Perv.”

“Mm...that alley...but with your skates on...” Jack’s grin was wide. “Me tugging those short, shorts down, sliding my fingers between your legs...”

Harley giggled, wiggling against him. She could feel how hard Jack was while she ground her pelvis against him, wanting to let him drag her down some dirty alley and take her up against the wall.

She shivered, reluctantly asking, “Are you ready?”

“More than ever.” Jack pinched her backside making her squeak.

*  

Harley had her arms wrapped tight around Jack enjoying the speed of him driving the bike swiftly through the Gotham City traffic until they drove up to the front of the Gotham City River Rink. The place was a large, older building which was about the size of two football fields. The outside sign looked like it would have been perfect back in the 1970's. The sign was neon with 70's aki style font done in white, pink and blue neon that wrapped around the sign, forming an arrow that pointed at the roller rink with the name Gotham City River Rink in blue neon and a flaming roller skate wheel over it along with a smaller sign underneath that announced that this rink had two, equal size skating rinks inside.

They stepped off of the bike and headed into the rink. They pushed the metal double doors open together and stepped inside.

*  

The interior of the rink was much cooler than the outside. The lights were dim, which helped lower the temperature, and created a muted atmosphere. As they walked in they could see the the entry way which led to the two skating rinks, one for everyday skaters, then the other rink where the derby tryouts were being held.

The young woman at the ticket booth had hair dyed a white blonde with a bright pink streak in the front over one eye. She had thick eye make-up and was wearing a purple halter top that read “Gotham City Sirens.” When she saw Harley and Jack walk up to the counter to purchase tickets she grinned, popping her bubblegum giving Harley a once over.

“You're just in time! The tryouts are about to start.”

Harley glanced at Jack and grinned. “Great!”

The girl sold them their tickets and pointed down the hall toward the entrance. “Your fella can watch on the sidelines, but just go on to the far end, there is going to be a red-head named Ivy, she is taking down the names of those trying out.”

The young woman leaned in close. “And don't let her intimidate you. She's a scientist and she sometimes comes off as huffy. Okay, well good luck!”

Harley took their tickets and the two of them headed off toward the indicated direction.
Jack bumped her hip with his. “You know anything about derby skating?”

Harley grinned blushing. “A little...I might have actually gone to a match or two when I was in college.”

Jack chuckled. “Oh, you are full of surprises my sweet. I love it.”

Harley grinned at him.

* 

The all-skaters floor wasn't too full they noticed as they walked by. This rink and the derby rink both had benches positioned around them. There were a few skaters on the floor of the all-skaters rink, Maître Gims “Mayweather” was playing as the skaters danced or simply skated around the rink. Jack and Harley kept going, heading over to the other rink which was designed slightly different than the regular rink. While the common rink was just a flat surface designed to be skated on, the one that Jack and Harley were approaching was designed for speed and derby competitions.

The roller derby rink had a “track” that stood in contrast to the floor where the skaters had to stay during a game. Right now there were several women on the floor of the rink warming up. As Jack and Harley walked closer, they both saw the woman who was standing near the entrance of the rink with a clip board. She was a beautiful woman, her looks the sort that made people do a double take. Her vibrant red hair was pulled back in a ponytail. She wore an almost completely green outfit of booty shorts with a little skirt ruffle, a t-shirt with Gotham City Sirens across the chest, along with black and green knee socks. Her skates were black with green stripes. She was in the middle of writing something and speaking to a young woman standing in front of her when Harley and Jack stepped near.

The woman looked up from her writing and narrowed her eyes.

“No men allowed,” she muttered.

Jack grinned. “I'm just here to cheer my fiance on.”

“Are you Ivy?” Harley asked.

“I am. My name is actually Pamela, Dr. Pamela Isley, but on the team I'm known as Poison Ivy. So are you wanting to try out?” Ivy asked, only sparing Jack a brief glance.

Harley giggled and nodded. “Yep.”

“Okay, what's your name?” Ivy smiled.

“Harley, Harley Quinn.” Harley grinned.

“Okay Harley, get your skates on and start warming up, we'll be starting tryouts in just a sec.” Ivy wrote her name down, then walked off. Harley hurried over to sit with Jack who had sat down on the lower bleachers and was pulling her skates out of the bag he had carried in for her.

“You going to be okay? These are new skates. I don't want you hurting your cute little feet” Jack asked with a smile, but Harley laughed. “I'll be fine I promise. This will be fun!”

* 

Harley finished tying up her skates and stood up. Jack's grin was a little lopsided, his eyes roaming
over her. “You look incredible. Now get out there and kick some ass sweetheart.”

Harley giggled and wiggled her rear at Jack before heading out onto the floor. All the women who were trying out were doing laps on the track. Harley hadn't been skating in a while, but it only took her a few minutes to get herself into a rhythm that had her gliding across the floor.

She grinned brightly. She had forgotten how much she liked skating. She had skated a lot as a kid before things became really bad at home. Then she had skated a few times in high school along with her gymnastics. The last time she had been roller skating was in college when she and a couple of girlfriends had gone skating on a lark at one of the parks. They had been wearing inline skates. Her friends had wanted to go to the park to try to pick up guys, but Harley had just wanted to skate, have fun. It had ended badly...Harley shook her head, no, no looking back, only forward. She came around the circle picking up speed as she did so and saw Jack, his eyes glued to her. When she skated by she waved. Jack blew her a kiss.

Ivy came skating out onto the floor. “Okay ladies, I'm going to break you up into two teams of five. We are going to do a series of jams, both teams need to designate a jammer. Each team's jammer scores points by lapping members of the opposing team. Each team attempts to hinder the opposing jammer while assisting their own jammer to get around the floor. The more laps your jammer can make the better.” Ivy stopped for a moment to look at each of the women before she continued. While she was speaking, she was joined by a couple of other women, both of whom wore T-shirts with the “Gotham City Sirens” logo on them.

Ivy put her hands on her hips as she continued to speak, skating slowly down the line of women. “Everyone else on your team is called a blocker, you have one jammer and four blockers, got it?”

Everyone nodded. Ivy smiled. “A jam usually lasts about thirty minutes, but we're not going to go for that long since this is just a tryout. I want to see what you can do and quickly because I have better things to do than watch a bunch of little girls.” She stared at each of them in turn.

“I will call time when I'm ready. Jammers, you will focus on lapping the other team's members; after the first couple of minutes, someone has to switch with the jammer. We will do this until everyone has been in the jammer position. The rest of you, blockers, you can use any form of physical force, body contact, changing positions, shoulders, hips, thighs, whatever helps to get your jammer to score while keeping the other team's jammer from making any points. You cannot use upward or downward motions with your elbows, no grabbing, pulling or holding, no hitting above the shoulders, no hitting in the back of the head, or legs, no intentional tripping, and lastly, you cannot use your head to block or hit anyone else in the head.”

Ivy looked around at each of them. “Okay, let's get out there and skate.”

One of the women who had joined Ivy, a short woman with long dark auburn hair and a tattoo on her chest just visible above her tank top, walked over and started pointing out individuals, dividing them into teams of five.

“I'm Aggie, just do what I tell you and we'll get along fine. Remember ladies, this is fun!” With a smile, Aggie began to point each woman into her position. They gathered in a tight circle, small, tight groups of four, four from Harley's group, four from the opposing group, the two jammers were next to each other, ready to move as quickly as possible. Once everyone was in position Aggie grinned. (In the background Sweet's 'Ballroom Blitz' started to play, clearly whoever was in charge of the music was having fun.)

“Okay, get out there and skate!” Aggie motioned just before she blew her whistle and immediately organized chaos ensued.
Harley was among the first women to try out, taking up the position of a blocker. Harley and two of her teammates created a barrier, trying to block the other group's jammer, but they only managed to block her for a couple of seconds before she broke through their block. Harley took off after the jammer, her feet flying across the smooth surface, grinning when the other team's jammer broke free of their group. She loved the feel of the wheels under her feet, the power in her legs; the rush was wonderful and the speed was exhilarating. Her other two teammates rushed to catch up with her, each of them catching the other by the shoulders and spinning around to try to form another blockade. Harley and her three teammates, their hands on each others shoulders tried to form a wall to block the opponent jammer from getting past them. The jammer slammed her shoulder into their group then twisted around, just barely managing to leap to the side, staying in the lane while avoiding becoming stuck by the blockers.

Harley hissed, but then she saw one of the opponent blockers gaining on their jammer. Harley broke free of her teammates and put on some speed as she took off after the woman who was hot on the heels of their jammer. Harley skated around, twisting her body to the side to put herself in front of the other team's blocker. Harley used her shoulder and her hips to slam into the other woman's side. The young woman, a brunette with an asymmetrical bob, lost her footing when Harley rammed into her, her skates going out from under her, dropping her on her rear. Harley grinned skating around the fallen woman once before taking off to try to protect their team's jammer from further interference. Two of the opposing team members were rushing up swiftly, twisting around and blocked Harley's team's jammer. Harley rushed forward and slid into one of the women using her body to knock the blocker to the side before twisting around and used her body again to block the second one.

(Whoever was in charge of the music was having fun picking songs for the derby tryouts; the next song was Bombshell Blonde by Owl City)

* 

Jack was watching from the bleachers, his legs crossed and his chin resting in his hand, his elbow on his knee, and a wide grin on his face. Harley was gorgeous skating across the floor, using her body like a weapon; the way she twisted around and threw herself against her opponents was a thing of beauty. Jack grinned like a school boy, Harley was his dream girl in every way possible. He was so turned on right now that he actually squirmed a bit. The only way he could be turned on more was if she was bludgeoning these women...Jack grinned imagining Harley with a bat, skating back and forth cracking the bat across the back of her victims' legs... Jack sat up straight for a moment. That's what his girl needed! A bat!

* 

The whistle blew; a couple of women were motioned out of the group to be replaced by others who were trying out. The next woman in Harley's group took up the jammer position. Harley, along with two others were left on the floor to keep skating as blockers. This time the women on Harley's team, locked into a group of three and their hands on each others shoulders acted as a moving blockade to the other team's jammer, their formation was tighter. One of the opponent blockers tried to make a break through them, trying to provide an opening for her jammer to get through, but Harley broke off and swung around, ramming her hip and her torso into the other blocker hard enough that the woman fell. Harley then swung around putting herself in the way of the opponent jammer, skating backwards as she continued to make a nuisance of herself to the jammer and any of the other team's blockers. She wasn't afraid to use her hips and shoulders to slam blockers aside. Harley grinned wickedly, clearly enjoying herself.

* 

At the edge of the rink, Ivy had her eyes on Harley. She was impressed. Not only was Miss Quinn
pretty, which was always a plus, she had a killer figure and looked good out there on the floor, but she had a knack for this...with her trained up even better, they just might get to the world cup competition. Ivy grinned and blew the whistle. Time to see if she could play all the roles. “Quinn!! Take up the jammer position!”

Harley glanced over at Ivy and nodded. Everyone stopped and took up their new positions. The whistle blew and the match began. Harley took off and almost immediately two women skated in front of her putting their shoulders together to block her getting past them. Harley grinned, narrowing her eyes and skated right up into them. She slammed her shoulder sideways into the space at the two women's waists, twisting her body sideways before she forced her way between them using her hips to knock the space open, just before she skated through, completely breaking the block. Harley took off, putting on speed having broken free, but as she came around the curve of the lane, a redhead seemed to come out of nowhere to rush up to block Harley's progress. Harley crouched and leaned heavily to her left, twisting her body at an angle, and slammed herself to the side, right into the left hip of the red-headed blocker hard enough that Harley sent the redhead rolling off her feet and crashing into the bleachers.

That was the moment the whistle blew again. All the ladies stopped, Aggi and Ivy motioned them all to the center of the rink. “Okay ladies, we have made our decision.”

Ivy held up her clipboard. “All right. Rachel Smitters, Alice Geha, Harley Quinn and Jessie Frain, welcome to the Gotham City Sirens! Training camp starts at the beginning of September and lasts ten weeks, you'll get information sent to your email. As for the rest of you, we have another tryout day in two weeks, feel free to try again. Until then, all of you get free passes to the next five games, watch how it's played in action. Just see me or Aggi for details. Welcome aboard ladies!”

Everyone clapped. Jack leapt to his feet and yelled. “THAT'S MY GIRL!! WOOHOO!!”

Harley blushed bright red smiling at Jack when Ivy came over. “So who is that guy again? He looks familiar.”

“My fiance, Jack Wayne.” Harley smiled glancing back at Jack.

Ivy frowned. “As in Wayne Enterprises Wayne?”

Harley nodded. “Yep, Bruce Wayne is his older brother.”

Ivy nodded narrowing her eyes at Jack before she turned back to Harley. “Well, it's nice to have you aboard. Let me get your email and phone number.”

* 

Harley skated back to Jack after exchanging her information with Ivy. Jack was standing on the edge of the rink with his arms wide open. Harley skated right into them.

Jack grinned. “You looked amazing out there! You can slam into me anytime, good looking.”

Harley laughed wrapping her arms around his neck. "I'm glad you thought so.”

“I'm looking forward to coming to every game and getting embarrassingly turned on by watching my girl on a pair of skates.” Jack grinned waggling his eyebrows.

Harley laughed. “Get your skates on and come skating with me.”

Jack chuckled and nodded eagerly. “Right away pumpkin.”
Across town, the sun was just starting to set when Bruce pulled up in front of Selina Kyle's apartment building. He had just stepped out of the black and blue BMW i8 he had just recently purchased. Alfred had “jokingly” told him that he was going to need to add an addition to the garage at the rate that he bought cars. Bruce had laughed, but as he drove the BMW to Selina's apartment building Bruce contemplated the Alfred was probably right. He should be thankful that Jack didn't use his own money to buy cars, but was content to use whatever vehicles Bruce bought. For a moment Bruce frowned in thought, he had no idea what Jack did spend his money on...except clothing and more recently, Harley. Bruce smiled. He had to admit it was nice to see Jack getting out and spending time around people with Harley. Though he really needed to stress to Jack about appropriate behavior in public...Bruce lost his train of thought as soon as he pulled up in front of Selina's apartment, his mind instantly on the beautiful brunette.

Inside Selina was looking around to make sure everything was just right. This wasn't her place. As much as she liked Bruce Wayne she would never take him to her actual place. This place was part of her cover. Not only would it destroy the illusion of who she was if Bruce saw her real home, but she didn't like anyone knowing where she really lived, let alone what she really did for a living. The apartment wasn't too grand, but it was nice. It belonged to a friend of hers who was an art dealer and part time fence. The place had only one window that faced out onto the street, a small living room space with flat screen TV, comfortable couch, that was attached to the equally small, though fully functional kitchen and one bedroom with a bathroom a short way down the narrow hall. The walls were plain white, but decorated with local artists' work.

Despite the false home, false job, her name was...real and she had actually cooked dinner tonight for him. She had made Striped Bass, asparagus, turnips and littleneck clams. Cooking was a skill she had ended up picking up for a job she had worked in France. She grinned, the smell of the bass was delicious, if she did say so herself.

That was when there was a buzz from downstairs. Selina hit the speaker. “Yes?”

Downstairs Bruce hit the respond button. “Bruce Wayne.”

Selina laughed. “Come on up.”

Jack was skating backwards with his hands behind his back as he grinned at Harley. The music that was playing was Katy Perry's “Swish Swish” which Harley was taking to heart, swishing her hips back and forth while deliberately staying out of Jack's reach. She wasn't wearing her helmet, but she still had the knee and elbow pads on which Jack found incredibly sexy, his gaze raking over her. She grinned at him turning, weaving her legs back and forth, her arms over her head as she winked at Jack, then she spun around and wiggled her rear at him teasingly.

Jack groaned with a laugh. “Killing me! My little killer!”

Harley stuck her tongue out at him. He looked adorable with the pink pompoms on his white skates, his slim, muscled legs...she wanted him, but making him wait for it was fun. Jack grinned at her knowing exactly what game she was playing.

He smiled, running his tongue along his upper teeth hissing. “You tease.”
Harley smiled, her body moving sensually just before she did a spin, swishing her hips back and forth again.

She giggled and skated close enough that Jack could finally grab her. He brushed the tips of his fingers along her sides, skating backwards, then he surprised her by twisting away and around her, his left leg back like a figure skater as his fingers reached out and brushed against her arm in a sweet caress. He did a full turn around her, keeping his eyes on her, a wide grin on his face, before twisting gracefully back around, returning to skating backwards in front of her waggling his eyebrows.

“I had an idea, my delicious little cupcake.”

Harley giggled weaving her hips, lowering herself down to a crouch. She grinned looking up at him while swishing her way back up. “What was that puddin?”

Harley turned to skate backwards next to him. His blue eyes were dancing with mischief.

“I think before we go home tonight we need to buy you a baseball bat AND...” Jack turned around, skating a circle around her again, his hands behind his back. He returned to skating backwards next to her and said in a quieter tone, “I think we should try your new bat on a special vegan.”

Harley giggled liking where this was going. That little prick Zane had annoyed her more than she had let on. “Oh?”

Jack nodded. “Yup. Heard he had to close tonight...”

Harley giggled. “Oh, the poor baby.”

Jack turned to face forward, reaching for Harley. This time he did grab for her, yanking her off her feet and throwing them both off balance. With a squeal of laughter from Harley and a couple of chuckles from Jack, they both lost their footing on the wheels for a moment and then both went down in a heap laughing, tangled in each other’s arms. Jack was on his back with Harley having landed on top of him. He grinned up at her.

Harley gasped. “Jack are you all right?” She checked his head, her fingers moving delicately in his hair.

“I’m fine Harley really.” Jack grinned squeezing her hips.

One of the other skaters stopped. “You two all right?”

Jack smiled. “Never better.”

Harley grinnned down at Jack dropping down to kiss him. Jack wrapped his arms around her pressing her down on him. She could feel how turned on he was pressing between her legs. Jack grabbed her rear, squeezing. His tongue slowly explored her mouth pressing her hips down on him. Harley wrapped her arms around his head her hands in his hair, her hips grinding against him, without her really thinking about the fact they were in the middle of a skating rink. They were starting to become completely lost in each other when a whistle was blown.

“HEY! Not on the floor!”

Jack and Harley looked up to see a young man in a polo with the rink’s name across the chest glaring at them. Harley looked down at Jack, taking the time to run her thumb along his chin where their lipstick had smeared together. Jack wrinkled his nose at her, reaching up to do the same. They both giggled getting to their feet, holding hands as they quickly skated off the floor.
Once they were off the skating floor, Jack held Harley's hand, pulling her past the bleachers.

“Where are we going?” Harley asked glancing around. That was when she saw the restroom doors.

“Jack what are you doing?” Harley was giggling when Jack went over to the women's bathroom. He knocked, rapping his knuckles against the door. When no one answered, he looked around before opening the door and dragging her inside with him. Harley giggled.

Jack quickly yanked her in with him turning around to lock the door. It was a one stall bathroom with a medium size, typical counter that had a sink embedded in the counter, a toilet and a fairly large mirror. Thankfully, it appeared to be fairly clean too. Jack immediately pressed Harley up against the wall covering her mouth with his own. Harley groaned wrapping her arms around him, they both slipped a little bit on their skates, the floor in here just a tad slicker than the one for skating.

Jack hissed. “I want you. I couldn't wait, seeing you out there on those skates...the little shorts...you are such a tease Harley.”

Harley giggled running her hands along his back and down to snake her fingers past the band of his shorts. “Mm...me a tease? What about you? Those little pink pompoms on your skates?”

Jack laughed. “What can I say, I like pompoms.”

Harley giggled. “Ooh? Is that another little boy sex fantasy I need to know about?”

Jack kissed his way down her throat, reaching up under her tank top to shove her sports bra up, exposing her breasts. He shoved her shirt up attacking her breasts with his mouth. Harley groaned, his tongue doing slow, tender figure eights over her nipples.

Jack switched breasts, smearing his lipstick across her skin, with a breathy reply. “Yes...get you a little cheerleader costume..one of those little skirts...nothing underneath...”

(The roller rink's music filtered in through the bathroom. Cheap Trick's “I Want You to Want Me.”)

Harley moaned as Jack's teeth scraped along her nipples, his hands sliding down her torso, his fingers pressing hard against her skin. Jack pulled away spinning her around to face the mirror, the wheels of their skates making the spin easy. He pushed her up against the sink counter grabbing her shorts, the top of her fishnets and yanked all of it down past her hips to her knees. Harley gasped, grinned in the mirror at him. Jack smiled at her in the mirror, dragging his hands down her backside just before he slid his fingers between her legs. He stroked her watching her reactions in the mirror. Harley threw her head back, her lips parted as she groaned, thrusting her hips back when Jack's fingers entered her. He grinned watching her expressions in the mirror. He loved the look of abandon on her face, her lips red, the blue of her eyes glowing with desire, his fingers moving in and out of her feeling her warmth and wetness on his hand. She cried out, arching her back with a cry. Jack couldn't continue, he needed to be inside her.

Jack shoved his shorts down and thrust into her without preamble. Harley cried out arching her back, her hands gripping the edge of the counter. Jack buried himself deeply, dropping his hands over hers, their fingers interlacing. Jack thrust hard watching Harley's face in the mirror, watching her body jerk with his hard thrusts. She groaned, gasping when he thrust, her blue eyes locked on his in the mirror. Jack grinned at her, his blue eyes alight with lust. He pressed a kiss to her ear, then her neck, then her shoulder, biting down on the flesh of her shoulder, catching exposed skin and the cloth of her shirt in his teeth, his lipstick leaving red smears on her skin and clothing. The bite hurt, but in a way that sent
shivers down her spine. She wanted more.

Harley gasp. “Jack! Harder Jack, harder!”

Jack grinned, looking at her in the mirror, her skin under his teeth, jerking his hips upward burying himself deeply into her. He let go of her shoulder leaning back, continuing to hold one of her hands down with his while he dragged the other hand down her side to her hip. He gripped her hip painfully, only breaking contact with her eyes in the mirror in order to glance down, to look at their bodies connected, to watch the way he slid into and out of her. The way her backside jiggled when he slammed into her. Harley reached behind her with her free hand, grabbing his hip, digging her nails into his flesh, urging him to thrust harder, tearing her nails across his skin leaving bloody marks. Jack's hiss turned to a groan of pleasure at the spike of pain, thrusting harder, pressing her forward against the sink.

Harley cried out, her orgasm rippled through her hard and fast. Jack hissed again, the roller skates caused them both to roll a bit with each thrust. Harley grabbed a hold on the faucet with her free hand, her other hand was being pressed hard against the counter with Jack's hand over hers holding it down against the flat surface, his fingers between hers. Jack wrapped his arm around her waist thrusting hard, the slap of flesh against flesh mixed with the sounds of the music from outside filled the small space. Their eyes met in the mirror. He gazed at the bounce of her breasts, the jump of her pigtails when he slammed into her. Jack grinned, his lipstick smeared along his chin.

“Again Harley, I wanna hear you cum again...” Jack grinned showing all his teeth. He reached up to grip her throat, grabbing her under her jaw. Harley arched her back, her eyes rolling back while Jack pounded against her. She climaxed again with a cry which was drowned out by the sounds of Bohemian Rhapsody playing outside the bathroom door. Jack came with her, shuddering. For a moment he was sure he was going to collapse, his knees felt weak, the skates causing them both to slide forward against the sink. Jack wrapped his arms around her laying his head against her shoulder.

“I love you Harley.” He whispered. “I love you.”

Harley whispered. “I love you puddin...I would die for you. I would do anything for you.”

Jack chuckled, pulling out, causing them both to groan at the loss of contact. He turned her around, one hand going up to grab one of her pigtails and giving it a playful tug.

“I would die for you, but living with you will be far more fun.”

They both burst out into giggles.

* 

It was nearly 8:30 pm when Jack and Harley left the roller rink. They had taken the time to go retrieve their clothing from the bike and change back into what they had been wearing earlier that day. After changing, Jack drove them to a sports store on the corner of 5th and SW Knox St.

* 

When they arrived at the sports store, Jack, held Harley's hand as he led her over to where the baseball bats were on display. They had wooden bats, aluminum bats...pretty much anything someone would want in a bat.

Jack grinned. “Pick out whatever you want pumpkin.”
The grin that Harley gave Jack had his heart racing. His little murder kitten, he thought. His little killer. He was so proud of her, pleased with her. He giggled, how could he have been so lucky?

He watched as Harley picked up a bat and swung it, making a face as she did so. Jack leaned against the wall watching her picking up bats and swinging them. She was like a work of art, he thought to himself. The thrill it gave him to see her swinging that bat, imagining what she was going to do it with it sent pleasurable chills up his spine. Harley was on her fifth bat, this one a black aluminum one, and had just started to swing it when a young man came over to them.

He wore a blue polo and black slacks with a name tag that read Kevin. “Hi! I notice you've been trying to choose a bat—maybe I can help you?

Jack narrowed his eyes for a moment at Kevin. The kid couldn't be more than twenty-one, and he seemed harmless enough.

“My sweetie here is looking for a good bat.” Jack smiled.

Harley stopped swinging the one she currently had and used it to lean on as she gave Kevin a once over, though she didn't say anything which unnerved the young man.

“Well, what sport do you play? Baseball, softball...” Kevin looked between the two of them.

Harley grinned. “I want a bat that I could use to smash the head of a rat.”

Jack snorted on a laugh, but didn't say anything.

Kevin swallowed. “Well, ah..I could recommend a good baseball bat.”

Harley grinned. “Okay, whatcha got?”

The young man walked over and pulled a bat from a rack and handed it to Harley. Harley squealed when she saw it. It was painted red with a black handle. She glanced at Jack with a significant look. Jack only smiled. Harley's best colors...

Kevin smiled at Harley's reaction. “Umm...The Northern Yellow Hard Birch is a great bat. It has been proven to be flexible and have a high surface hardness, making it great for rebounding and extremely durable. Bats of this kind are great for both practices and games and you'll find that they don't splinter when broken. Birch is also an excellent choice for a fungo or fly ball hit.” Kevin looked proud of himself when he finished.

Jack and Harley snickered. Kevin had clearly memorized his little pitch for the bat, but Harley didn't care; when she took it from him and swung it, the bat felt “right” in her hands.

“Puddin, I think this one is it!” Harley grinned and swung it again, the bat making a nice “swoosh” sound through the air.

Kevin grinned pleased because this would be over a hundred dollar sale! “Is there anything else I can help you with?”

Jack smiled. “Yes Kevin, there is. I would like a cricket bat.”

Kevin looked between them. “For cricket?”

Jack grinned showing all his teeth. “For rats.”

“Ooh okay...just follow me.” Kevin smiled and led them over to the cricket bat display. He pulled
one down. “Well sir, I would say judging by your height...6'2’”?” Jack grinned and nodded. Kevin continued. “You want a long handled bat with a long blade.”

Kevin turned examining the cricket bats that were hung on the wall for display before he pulled one down. “Here sir, try this one. This is a Kookaburra Surge 100, has been handmade using Grade 5 English willow with a Pro Shield Face and painted back.” Again Kevin seemed to have flawlessly repeated his little speech with a smile.

Jack took the bat and held it by the handle. The cricket bat was purple and white with black across the handle. When Jack swung it, he did a nearly perfect cricket batter stance. Kevin smiled wishing to himself...please buy it, that bat would be another hundred and forty dollar sale! His boss might consider him for the assistant manager position if he made this sale!

Jack swung the bat again, a grin spreading across his face. “Perfect. We'll take them both! You my friend Kevin are a very good salesman.”

Kevin beamed with pleasure. “Thank you sir!”

*  

Jack hopped on the bike holding Harley's hand as she climbed on behind him with the bats in her arms. Jack grinned. “How about tomorrow I teach you to drive this motorcycle?”

Harley grinned. “I would love that!”

Jack laughed. “I would like that too! Get to hold onto you while you're driving...sexy.”

They laughed moving through traffic back to the coffee shop.

*  

Bruce laid on his side running his fingers down Selina's back. She purred and snuggled into the pillow. “That feels nice,” she whispered.

Bruce smiled. “Everything you do feels nice.”

Selina chuckled and rolled over onto her side. They were both naked having just made love. Selina reached up and stroked his face thinking to herself...damn him. Damn Bruce Wayne for being such a great guy, sweet, considerate, fantastic in bed...she knew she shouldn't have invited him over, but she just couldn't seem to help herself. As with most things, if it seemed unattainable, she wanted it all the more, but with Bruce, she had him...and still wanted more. That was really bad in her business. Bad for her all around because attachments were dangerous...but...Selina smiled. “Want to stay for breakfast? We could finish discussing the masquerade party for the paintings you're buying.”

Bruce wanted to tell her he couldn't, wanted to give her one of his old excuses he had used on so many women, but he simply couldn't, because unlike all those other women, he did want to stay...

“I would love to Selina.” Bruce smiled laying down and tugging her into his arms. She nestled her head against his chest and wrapped an arm around his waist.

Bruce sighed thinking to himself that maybe Gotham could wait...one night.

*  

Zane had his earbuds in as he walked out the back of the coffee shop, jumping down the steps to
throw a bag of trash into the dumpster. There was one weak, backdoor light on over the door to the shop that did little to illuminate the alley. His bike was parked back here too, chained to the dumpster. He sang along to The Strokes as he walked over and lifted the dumpster lid.

* 

“Some people think they're always right
Others are quiet and uptight
Others they seem so very nice nice nice nice (oh-ho)
Inside they might feel sad and wrong (oh no)
Twenty-nine different attributes
Only seven that you like
Twenty ways to see the world (oh-ho)
Twenty ways to start a fight (oh-ho)
Oh don't don't don't get up
I can't see the sunshine
I'll be waiting for you, baby
Cause I'm through
Sit me down
Shut me up
I'll calm down
And I'll get along with you...”

* 

Zane was so involved in his singing that he didn't notice the two people standing in the shadows of the alley both of them smiling, a halo of smoke around the two figures. Zane turned, hopping back up the steps to lock the coffee shop door and turned to walk back to his bike, when a shadow lurched at him and something struck him in the knees, the pain almost incomprehensible.

Harley giggled bringing her bat around in a vicious swing and hit him hard enough that his knees made a loud crack, the knee jerking inward at the moment Harley snarled, “I hate that song!”

Zane yelled falling over and off the step to hit the pavement. He started to reach out (for what neither Harley or Jack could guess), but Harley brought her bat down on his arm with a satisfying “thunk” and “crack” accompanied by Zane's scream of pain. Harley quickly put her heeled foot on his mouth smothering any further cries.

Harley looked down at him with a grin. “You upset my puddin. I don't like that.”

Jack walked up to Zane, tapping his cricket bat against the toe of his shoe, taking out his cigarette
and blowing a long line of smoke. “You know...Zaaannnnnee...” Jack drew the young barista's name out. “I came all the way back here because your superior attitude and your lecturing others on daaaairrry, was annoying, YET you stated you just didn't have the time to go to a rally against the things you say you despise so much.”

Jack drew the word “dairy” out as he smiled down at Zane while he leaned on his cricket bat, crossing his left foot over his ankle. “See, now I stand by my beliefs. I came ALL the way back here just to kill you. You know why? Because—and it's worth saying again—I stand by my beliefs, Zane. One of which is taking down superior assholes such as yourself who are going to be lecturing others, yet can't stand by his beliefs...I mean...if you're going to be an asshole, commit to it! Go to the fucking rally! Get out there and make yourself heard instead of fucking with peoples orders and trying to make your fellow baristas feel like shit. Don't you agree Harls?”

Harley looked down at the whimpering Zane, her baseball bat on Zane's ear while her shoe was still on his mouth. “I do puddin, I agree completely.”

Jack sighed taking a drag on his cigarette. “Well, considering I want to get home and have sex with my lady again, we are going to hurry this along.” Jack smiled and stepped closer. Zane was looking up at Jack and Harley his eyes wide with fear and pain. “Say goodnight Zane.”

Jack grinned and lifted his cricket bat up over his head with both hands, holding his cigarette between his teeth, a wild grin on his face, just as Harley moved her foot away, Jack brought the bat down before Zane could voice one more protest.

The loud crack that filled the alley was accompanied by the wet sounds of something splattering against the pavement.

*

Jack laughed, Harley was holding on tightly as they drove home, holding their bloody bats between them.

When they arrived back home, the house was quiet when Jack pulled the motorcycle into the garage. Jack wiped the bike down once they were inside, then the two of them carried their bats with them upstairs to their room.

“I don't know about you hunny bunny, but I had a great day with you.” Jack smiled tossing the bloody bats into a corner to be cleaned later. He kicked his shoes off, pulled his phone out of his jacket pocket and started to strip out of his bloody clothing. He dropped everything into a pile together.

Harley grinned watching him for a long moment. She loved watching him undress, every movement turned her on. She giggled and started taking her sandals off tossing them onto the pile with Jack's clothing and shoes. She pulled her dress off over her head, stripping out of her panties and bra. Jack had already walked naked into the bathroom. She could hear that he had started the water and she could hear the sounds of Doris Day singing.

“Stars shining bright above you

Night breezes seem to whisper I love you

Birds singing in the sycamore tree

Dream a little dream of me
Harley realized it wasn't the sound of the water running for a shower. Harley followed him in to find that Jack was running them a bath...with bubbles!

“A bubble bath puddin’!” Harley clapped her hands which caused Jack to laugh. “Yep! Bubbles!” With that Jack grabbed Harley around the waist lifting her off her feet as he stepped into the tub with her. Harley squealed with delight.

Jack sank down into the water setting Harley down at the same time. Once they were both in the warm silky water, Jack laid back with a groan of contentment. Harley started to move to sit opposite from him, but he grabbed her hand tugging her over to him. “Oh no you don’t, over here with me sweetie.”

Harley giggled and turned to lay back between Jack's legs, her back against his stomach and her head on his chest. Harley sighed happily.

Jack's voice joined Doris Day's, singing along with the music while he held her tight against him. “Stars fading but I linger on, dear
Still craving your kiss
I'm longing to linger till dawn, dear
Just saying this
Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you
But in your dreams whatever they be
Dream a little dream of me…”

* Jack wrapped an arm around her shoulders leaning down to kiss her ear, then her neck, using his teeth to nibble at her skin, humming the song while he did so. He could see the bruise he had left earlier from their tryst in the bathroom. The bruise made him smile. He then stuck his tongue in her ear which had Harley wiggling and squealing.

Harley giggled loudly. “Jack!”

“What?” Jack's voice brushed across her skin in a warm hushed tone. She could feel the warmth of his smile against her neck. “You're ears are kissable,” Jack whispered. “Just like every part of you. I want to taste every inch of you Harley. I want you on my tongue. I want you always. You belong to me.” His voice dropped lower until she barely heard the last part.

Harley giggled. She could feel his erection against her back. The feel of him made her body ached to be filled with him. Jack leaned in to steal a kiss from her mouth, deepening it until Harley turned fully around to face him.

She shifted her position in order to straddle Jack's lap, wrapping her arms around his neck. Jack pulled her up against him, moving his mouth over hers in a sensual, primal kiss. Jack's hands glided over her wet soapy back, luxuriating in the feel of her wet skin under his hands. She cradled his
head, her fingers in his hair, her tongue delving into his mouth. She loved the way he tasted on her tongue. The flavor of Jack's tongue was a mix of expensive alcohol, tobacco and something that made her shiver. He tasted like forbidden fruit and darkness...if madness had a flavor or a scent, it would be Jack Wayne. Harley rubbed against his erection her voice breathless. “You belong to me Jack...always.”

Jack whispered, his hands gliding over her slick rear, “Always Harley. No matter what comes.”

Jack clinched his teeth, his eyes rolling closed while Harley continued to rub against his erection. Jack's breath came in deep pants; she was slick, warm and just when he thought he needed her to stop, Harley slid down on him. Jack groaned throwing his head back against the edge of the tub, his fingers pressing hard into her skin, holding her down on him, feeling her warm wetness engulf him.

Harley couldn't help herself, she needed him. She started rolling her hips, splashing water when she moved a little more vigorously. She slowed her movements down, clenching her muscles around him.

“Jack, my puddin...” she smiled against his mouth easing her thrusts; she wanted this to be slow and exquisite.

Jack groaned, wrapping his arms around her shoulders, one hand sliding down her spine to caress her rear. He held her close while she piston her pelvis in a slow up and down motion. Jack smiled at her pressing his perfect teeth into his bottom lip gazing at her when she pulled back enough to look down at him. Harley loved the way he looked, damp, his hair falling around his features, wet and shining in the bathroom light. He lowered one hand down between them, his thumb pressing on her clitoris. Harley gasped, jerking in response, sitting back, thrusting her hips slowly forward. Jack rolled his thumb against her while Harley continued to move, her hip rolls becoming just a tad faster. Jack hissed with pleasure. “Harls...”

(The music had changed from Doris Day to Halsey's Gasoline.)

“Oh Jack,” she groaned, sliding one hand to his shoulder, her fingertips grasping at his skin. She moved her left hand up to press against the wall above Jack's head. Jack growled watching her, her damp hair was sticking to her face and shoulders, her tongue caught between her teeth. She moved faster, the water splashing. Jack brought both his hands up to grab her breasts, eliciting a moan from Harley. “Puddin!!”

Jack grabbed her throat with one hand, pressing his fingers into the delicate skin while squeezing her breast with the other.

Harley hissed, “Yes Jack!”

He growled in response. “Harley, my Harley...”

He thrust upward, meeting her thrusts. She dropped her mouth to his, their tongues playing against each other in a slow delicate dance. Harley pressed her mouth down, moaning into his mouth. Jack responded with his own groan. They climaxed together sharing their cries, their mouths pressed together.

Harley continued to roll her hips, but slower, drawing out their pleasure further. Each movement made Jack moan softly. She ran her fingers over his face tenderly, brushing her lips over his mouth, nose, eyes. Jack closed his eyes smiling, his hands moving slowly up and down her back. “I love you Harls.”
Harley pressed a kiss to his lips. "I love you puddin."

* 

An hour later they were bathed, their bloody clothing bagged up to be disposed of, Jack telling her that he would burn it later. They had cleaned their bats together, leaving them propped in a corner and were now in bed together. Jack had his laptop on his knees with Harley curled beside him.

"So what are you doing puddin?"

"Well, I'm looking at the Gotham Star site to see what I can find out about who took those pictures."

"Oh? Are we going to go kill him? Maybe we could use your formula again?" Harley grinned and Jack laughed. "Look at you! All eager to go killing again."

He kissed the tip of her nose.

Jack was about to say something when his phone vibrated. Jack frowned picked it up and saw Alex's name.

Jack answered. "Hey Alex."

"Jack!! I just found out about a fucking gold mine!" Alex sounded excited.

"Alex, what are you talking about?" Jack closed his laptop gazing at Harley.

"Okay, you gotta come tomorrow. It's a fucking FIGHT CLUB!!" Alex sounded excited.

"What? A fight club? What are you talking about?" Jack frowned, puzzled.

"Okay you and Harley have got to fucking come tomorrow night. It's epic man! And there is money to be made betting on the fighters! It's fucking genius!" Alex chattered excitedly.

"A fight club—who's running it?" Jack asked.

"Fucking Penguin! I mean, sorry. Fucking Cobblepot! He's running out of the basement of that club he just bought, the Iceberg lounge. Anyway, it is brutal man. It's invite only so I'm inviting you and Harley to come with me tomorrow night." Alex chuckled.

"Cobblepot, you don't say? Okay, Harley and I are in." Jack grinned, already thinking.

Alex laughed. "That's fucking great! I knew you would be! Okay, just pick me up tomorrow night around 11 p.m. I'll be at a card game at Amusement Mile...unless you're going to be at the game?"

"No, no I won't be, but we'll pick you up tomorrow. See you then Alex." Jack smiled and hung up. He glanced at Harley with a grin. "I think we are going to be doing something fun tomorrow night."

Chapter End Notes

I have nothing against Vegans!! :)
I'm Meaner than my Demons

Harley was lying on a doctor's couch, but she couldn't remember how she arrived here. She frowned in confusion as she looked around and then looked down at herself; she was wearing her wedding dress. She ran her hands down the dress, a small smile on her face at the thought of marrying Jack. As she looked around, she examined the couch she was lying on. It was a deep mahogany with a couple of worn places on it as well as a handful of missing buttons. The couch reminded her of the old lounger that her thesis adviser, Dr. Bishop had in his office. She remembered him laughing about the old couch telling her it was one of the first things he bought when he started his own practice.

Harley smiled at the memory. He was a kind man who used to like to quote Nietzsche. “One ought to hold on to one's heart; for if one lets it go, one soon loses control of the head too.”

Harley frowned as the words drifted through her mind. She glanced up at the ceiling, her hands lying crossed on her chest trying to figure out where she was. She heard music playing...the Halsey song “Control” a soft whisper, a tickle in her ear floating in the air around her when she heard a woman's voice. Harley smiled to herself; she liked that song...

“Now tell me again, why did you think murdering those people was acceptable?”

Harley jumped a little and frowned at the interruption. The voice was familiar, it sounded like her own. Harley turned her head to see herself sitting in a tall winged-back chair wearing a black pencil skirt, red blouse and white lab coat. Her golden blonde hair was piled onto the top of her head in a professional looking bun, her black framed glasses on the end of her nose.

She held a notepad resting against her knee as she wrote something down with a thin, black pen.

“Murdering? What are you talking about?” Harley pushed herself up to a sitting position.

Harleen smiled. “You deliberately killed three people Harley, that's not even counting what happened in the sewers.”

“I was protecting myself!” Harley protested, but Harleen gave her a steely look. “What about Meg, Walter and Zane? Were you protecting yourself in those cases? Tell me Harley, who is really in control? You—or him?”

Harley frowned as Harleen smiled. “You are past the point of no return Harley. Should you be scared of yourself or him?”

Harley looked down at her wedding dress. It was covered in blood. She heard a soft laugh and turned to see that standing in the dark corner was Jack. He looked handsome, his eyes outlined in black, his lips red, and there was blood on his teeth when he smiled at her. Harley gazed at him longingly whispering to Harleen.

“There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness.”

(The music in the background changed flowing into a wordless tune of “Hush Little Baby”.)

Harleen frowned and glanced over her shoulder to look at Jack. “You will never be able to come back Harleen. He has taken you down a path and you can never come back. Is that what you want? Is he really what you want?”

Harley frowned. “I'm not Harleen anymore. I'm Harley. Harleen is gone.”
Harleen pushed her glasses up her nose, turning back to look at Harley lying on the couch. “Are you even sure this is love? Are you sure he loves you?”

Harley ripped her gaze from Jack. She pushed herself up and stood. She was still in her wedding dress, but now she had her bat in her hand, the one Jack had bought her. She walked closer and stood over Harleen.

Harley smiled down at the other woman. “I have another quote for you, bitch, “When love is not madness it is not love.” That's from Pedro Calderón de la Barca!”

(The tune of Hush Little Baby continued, but Harley heard herself singing to it in a soft whispery voice, the words were completely new...but they spoke to her....)

Hush little baby don't say a word
Mama's gonna kill for you the
whole damn world And if the
world should wonder why Mama's
gonna make it cry and cry
All the weirdos and freaks won't
lay a finger on me cause everyone
knows who's my baby. Hahahaha!
And if they start to run away,
Momma’s gonna paint the streets with blood.
And once the blood starts to wash off,
Momma’s gonna blow some more heads off.
And if the world still doesn’t laugh,
Momma’s gonna go and poison them.
And once the poison does its job,
Momma’s gonna show you your legacy.
And if the world still tries to fight,
Momma’s gonna burn their houses down.
And if you grow up with his smile,
Momma’s gonna be so…proud of you…..”)

* 

With the lyrics dancing in her head, Harley swung the bat. The wood connected with Harleen's head to the sound of a loud crack and a thunk like a melon splitting open. Blood and brain matter sprayed
across Harley's face. She started laughing, her amusement rapidly turning hysterical. That was when the shadow of Jack stepped up behind her to wrap his arms around her waist. He laid his chin against her shoulder, his lips brushing her ear as he whispered softly.

“Find what you love and let it kill you...”

* 

Harley woke up with a start. her heart pounding against her chest hard enough that it hurt. For a split second she didn't know where she was, but she could still hear the tune, a haunting melody that seemed to flow through her mind...

Harley shook her head and looked around frantically trying to grasp onto something that would tell her she wasn't still in that dream. The sunlight was streaming through a break in the curtains, brushing along the floor of the room and across the bed. As Harley calmed down, she saw Jack lying on his side beside her. He was facing her, still asleep. He looked so young and innocent, without a care in the world. Harley smiled and lay back down, letting the soft pillow mold around her, facing Jack, gazing at his handsome face. There was a small smile on his lips in his sleep. She reached out and gently traced the scars now lightly visible on his face that were a reminder from the kidnapping, then along his jaw and over the hint of the tattoo at his neck.

“I love you Jack, no matter what happens, I love you always.” Her voice was a low whisper filled with pain and longing.

She wrapped her arms around Jack. Jack snuggled up against her and murmured in his sleep. She shifted her position moving his head to rest between her breasts and then stroked her fingers through his thick brown hair.

“I don't care Jack. I know I should, but I don't care. I'll follow you anywhere.” Harley closed her eyes and whispered again. After a few moment, she felt the change in his breathing that indicated that he was awake. He shifted his position, his arm slipping around her waist.

“You okay pumpkin?” Jack asked softly, lifting up enough that he could see her face.

Harley opened her eyes to see Jack's blue ones studying her.

“Just a bad dream,” she answered in a hushed tone.

“What kind of bad dream?” Jack asked pressing his forehead lightly against hers. Harley chuckled at him. “Well, there was a lot of quoting Nietzsche, Pedro Calderón de la Barca...you made a quote too, one I didn't know.” Harley spoke softly.

“What was it?” Jack asked as he reached up and ran his fingers through her hair; he shifted his position to pull her into his crook of his arm pushing himself up on his elbow.

Jack gently caressed the side of her neck, his fingers just barely dancing over her skin, his fingertips feather light as he listened to her talk. He dragged his fingertips down to caress the side of her thigh, then back up over her hip.

“You said, 'Find what you love and let it kill you,'” Harley recalled, speaking softly.

Jack laughed. “That's Bukowski, a poet. I've never quoted him to you before?”

Harley shook her head and Jack frowned. “How odd, but I like his work...especially his quotes about love... “Those damn eyes fucked me forever...” Jack laughed dragging his thumb lightly under one
of her eyes.

Harley giggled. “Is that a real quote?”

“Yes it is, from his poem The Days Runaway like Wild Horses, so there.” Jack stuck his tongue out at her.

Harley laughed and Jack rolled on top of her nibbling at her neck.

“Love breaks my bones and I laugh...”

Jack whispered before he bit down hard on her collar, his teeth sharp against her skin, sucking on the flesh until she knew he would leave a bruise.

Harley dragged her nails down Jack's back thrusting her hips up at him as she hissed. “I killed myself in the dream with a baseball bat...or at least I killed the me I used to be...bashed her brains in...” Harley giggled at the absurdity.

Jack pressed himself between her legs, biting at her neck and down her to her breasts. He chuckled when she whispered about killing herself in the dream. Before he answered her, he worked at leaving another bruise on her breast causing Harley to groan, reaching up to bury her hands in his hair.

“You just destroyed the part of you that you don't need anymore Harls...you released yourself to be who you truly are...” Jack breathed, his whisper a tickle along the fine hairs of her skin.

Harley groaned feeling Jack thrust teasingly between her legs, the last fragments of her dream falling away. “Who I truly am?” she asked.

Jack flicked his tongue over the nipple of one breast, slowly running his lips over her nipple, tugging with his lips before pressing a kiss down on the sensitive skin.

“Yes...love is merely a madness and you have given yourself over to our love Harley....” Jack squeezed her breasts together, kissing, dragging his lips and tongue over them tenderly, exploring the gentle curves and slopes of her, his thumbs brushing over the hard nipples while his lips moved down her torso, carefully making his way up again, littering her body with kisses.

When his mouth found hers again, Jack reached down between her legs, his fingers stroking against her, diving between her folds. Harley groaned, her body drawn to his touch. Jack smiled against her lips. “Tell me you want me Harls...tell me you need me.”

“Oh Jack, you know I do,” Harley moaned, her fingers sliding across his back feeling the ripple of muscle under her touch. Jack smiled and pushed himself down, dragging his tongue flat across her skin as he did and then moving lower. When he brushed against her stomach with his lips, he open his mouth wide to bite down on her skin. Harley jumped at the feel of his teeth, her hands having moved into his hair. She pulled his hair with a gasp. “Puddin!”

Jack chuckled as he bit his way down lower, pulling at the curling hair at her groin with his lips, then lower still, nestling between her legs. “I want to taste you on my tongue Harley...” He smiled brushing her clitoris with his nose then flicked the tip of his tongue over her sending a jolt of electricity through her body. “Jack...uuhhh...Jack...”

He smiled pressing his lips against her then sucked hard, pulling on her clitoris with his lips. Harley shuddered in pleasure, her fingers tightening in his hair. Jack grinned as he felt the pull on his hair. He sucked slowly causing Harley to shudder again, her body tensing. Jack grinned and whispered...
against her, the tickle of his breath sending shivers up her core.

“So pretty Harley…” He chuckled wrapping his arms around her thighs, using the tips of his fingers against her skin to pull back the soft flesh of her folds, widening her for him so that he could run the flat of his tongue against her clitoris in a long, slow drag.

Harley whimpered. “Oh puddin...ohhh...” Her hips arched toward his tongue. Jack giggled, pleased with her reaction. “You want more Harley?”

“Yes Jack, please.” Harley words came out in a shudder.

Jack looked up her torso as he whispered. “Watch me Harley. I want you to watch what I’m doing to you.” His grin widened, touching the tip of his tongue to his upper lip.

Harley swallowed, her cheeks red. She pushed herself up on her elbows, her blonde hair in a mess of tangles that Jack found so appealing. Her eyes met his, gazing down to see his face between her legs, a wicked smile on his face, his blue eyes danced with lust and mischief. His eyes never left her face, as he rolled his tongue over her in a slow figure eight, gliding and caressing her with his tongue, his eyes watching her reactions. He pressed his mouth to her sucking harder, then pulled back to lavish her with his tongue over her clitoris again. He raised his head to meet her eyes, a string of saliva from his tongue to her clitoris connecting them. Harley gasped crying out, jerking her hips as the climax rode over her. “Ooooh...Puddin...”

Jack smiled, pleased with himself. He pressed a kiss to her before he crawled back up her body, pushing her back down against the pillows as he reached between them, brushing her entrance with his erection. She looked up into his eyes; the blue was compelling...pulling her toward him, causing her to fall deeper, spiraling down with Jack. Harley stroked his face, her fingertips running over his lower lip, glistening with her fluids. She smiled rubbing her forefinger back and forth on his bottom lip.

“I’ll go wherever you go Jack, no matter what happens. I will follow you anywhere.”

Jack grinned. “I know Harley...I know.”

Harley raised her legs, spreading them wide for him. Jack slowly eased himself into her, both of them sharing a groan of pleasure, then Jack placed his hands on either side of her head. He hissed with pleasure as her intense heat surrounded him. He leaned forward to press himself deeply into her with a shuddering groan. “Ooo pumpkin...” He grinned and his eyelids fluttered closed for a moment with the feeling of her surrounding him. Harley ran her hands gently down his back, grabbed his rear and pulled him closer, her feet running down the back of his legs while they kissed, sharing their tongues and their breath. Jack rocked his body up and down, staying embedded in her.

He brushed his nose against hers smiling and whispered. “I’ll love you with all the madness in my soul.”

Harley whimpered in delight. “Puddin...”

Jack sat up on his knees, grabbed Harley by her wrists, and pulled her up with him. He wrapped one arm around her waist, his hand pressing into her lower back, splaying his fingers to touch as much of her lower back that he could and provide support. He leaned his weight back on his right arm, thrusting his hips up. Harley groaned, her legs around him and rolling her hips with each of his thrusts. Their panting mixed together as if they were sharing one breath. Harley dragging her hands along the side of his neck staring into his magnetic blue eyes, bouncing in response to each of his thrusts. She was lost in his eyes...Harley suddenly thought of a poem by Sanober Khan she had read
in college...in a book called, “Turquoise Dreams.”

“I wish to stay drenched forever in those rain-blue eyes in those...soul-reaching crystals not moving a muscle or breathing just savoring this turquoise ache against my heart.”

That was exactly how Harley felt...she wanted to live forever in Jack's gaze.

Harley had wrapped her legs around him, but now she moved her legs to sit on her knees and started to bounce on Jack's shaft, rolling her hips at the same time giving herself over to the pleasure of feeling him inside her, of knowing he was completely hers. She loved him with her very soul and Jack belonged to her...he was her other half and nothing—murder, death, madness...none of those things would change that...he was hers.

Jack hissed, pressing his teeth hard into his bottom lip, watching her breasts bounce with her movements that were becoming faster, almost frantic. She had started out slow, but her fucking was becoming faster, harder, desperate. Harley dug her nails into his shoulders, gasping for breath, the ripples of pleasure seemed to move in a constant state between them, a neverending circuit of heightened pleasure that blinded them both to anything but each other, until both of them climaxed together, their cries mixing together in one passionate sound, their bodies becoming rigid for a second, paralyzed in ecstasy. Harley wrapped herself around Jack while he pressed hard into her, wanting to be as close to her as he possibly could.

Harley groaned dropping her head to his, pressing her forehead against him. Jack smiled reaching up to stroke her face lovingly, delicately brushing long strands of gold behind her ears, away from her face so he could gaze at her.

“No more bad dreams my sweetling...you're safe with me, always.” Jack chuckled, grabbed her and dropped her onto her back with him on top of her, careful to stay within her.

Harley laughed. “You're right...no more bad dreams.”

Jack grinned and scraped his teeth delicately along her chin with a whispered. “My girl, always. My girl.”

*

Later that afternoon, with her hair gathered at the nape of her neck and falling down her back in a long golden ponytail, Harley stood outside waiting. She had a helmet on her head, a purple one that was an old one of Jack's, the visor up, wearing a pair of jeans, red tennis shoes, and an over-sized purple T-shirt (that belonged to Jack too.) She had it tied so the shirt set around her waist displaying just a hint of her stomach. She was wearing her knee and elbow pads from roller skating, and a pair of black leather driving gloves. Her lips were painted a light bombshell pink and she had done her eye make-up with soft purples and her eyeliner with a thin cat-eye. She was looking and feeling good. She was rocking on her feet, her hands in her front pockets humming the lullaby from her dream to herself as she waited for Jack.

A couple of minutes later, Jack came around the side of the house pushing a motorcycle (not the one that they had been using, but a much older bike). He was wearing a pair of jeans too, which was extremely unusual for him and had Harley salivating. The jeans made his rear even more bite-able she thought as he shoved the bike up beside her and turned a bit to put the kickstand down. He wore biker boots (which Harley also found was a new turn on) and a white t-shirt that read “My most expensive shirt” across the chest, along with his own pair of purple driving gloves. He had his round purple lensed sunglasses on and a cigarette dangling from his lips. He stopped beside her grinning.

Jack pulled the cigarette out and blew smoke upward into the air.
“This was my first bike. When I wouldn't give up on wanting to learn to drive a motorcycle Alfred gave me this one. It's a Honda CB250. Alfred said he bought it in...I think he said 1968. It was his first bike.”

Harley giggled. “Alfred on a motorcycle?”

Jack grinned. “Apparently he used to be a wild man. I have heard there are actual pictures of him on the bike, but I have yet to find them.” Jack giggled wagging his eyebrow conspiratorially at her. “And believe me, I tried to find them, but that man could be a spy! Wherever they are hidden, they remain safe.” They both laughed. Jack then directed her attention back to the bike. “Anyway, he gave me the bike when I was sixteen, taught me how to ride even though Bruce thought it was a bad idea.”

Harley frowned, stepping closer and running her hands over the seat of the bike. The body of the motorcycle was a light blue with the flat, black leather seat that would make it more comfortable for her to learn. “Seems like Bruce thinks anything you want to do is a bad idea,” Harley said softly.

Jack snorted. “Tell me about it. Don’t know if he is being over-protective or an asshole. Probably a little bit of both.” Jack smiled and patted the seat. “Come on pumpkin, on you go.”

Harley smiled at him and Jack found himself staring at her. She was beautiful, looking adorable with the helmet on, the visor up so he could see her lovely face framed in purple. Jack grinned, hopelessly in love with her. She hopped onto the bike, throwing her leg over and adjusting her position. Jack watched her wiggling her rear around as she searched for a comfortable spot. It was very entertaining.

“Okay, so what do I do?” she asked glancing sideways.

Jack smiled, tearing his attention away from her backside, running his left hand up and down her back as he spoke, taking a drag on the cigarette. “Okay, you know how to drive a stick shift?”

Harley nodded. “Yep, learned from a friend in college.”

Jack nodded. “Good, then this will be easy for you. Okay....first let’s turn the bike on.”

As Jack spoke he pointed at the bike’s key ignition at the same time that he tossed the last nub of cigarette down on the driveway, crushing it with the toe of his shoe. Jack pointed. “You want to hold the clutch in.” He pointed at the handle on the left, showing her the clutch. Harley turned the key then settled back on the seat.

“And you want to kick start, here on the right, then give the bike some gas.” Jack pointed at the right grip. “Twist back and that increases the fuel flow, just like a gas pedal in a car.” Harley twisted the grip back and then jammed her foot down on the kick start pedal, smiling when the motorcycle engine roared to life, feeling the purr of the engine between her legs. Jack smiled and caressed her back. “Okay, now put the bike in gear...” He pointed at the gear lever by her left foot. “Press upward with your toe once to put it into first gear. Give it a little gas again.” Harley did as Jack instructed. “Now while giving it gas, slowly let the clutch out. You don’t want to do it quickly or you're going to go zipping down the drive way faster than you want.”

Harley started to release the clutch very slowly. Jack nodded in approval. “Okay, just slowly start moving, place your feet here and here.” Jack pointed. “Hold them there like you would in a car on the gas and the brake.”

Harley did as Jack told her, the bike moving slowly down the driveway. Jack jogged beside her.
“Good, good. You're doing great sweetie!”


Alfred had been in the front entry sweeping when he heard Jack's and Harley's voices through the door and the purr of a familiar engine. He opened the front door to see Jack jogging beside Harleen, the two of them heading down the driveway as Jack taught her to drive Alfred's old motorcycle. The older man smiled. He remembered doing almost the exact same thing while teaching Master Jack. Alfred shook his head with a smile before he slowly closed the door.


Harley was grinning brightly behind the visor. She made it all the way down the driveway to the gated entrance to the estate without mishap.

Jack clapped. “There ya go! Okay, you want to try it a little faster?”

Harley giggled. “Yeah, okay.”

Just as she turned the bike around (with a little assistance from Jack), a police car pulled up at the gate. One of the police officers stepped out of the car; Jack saw him from the corner of his eye recognizing officer Frost from that night Jack and Harley had ended up in jail, but Jack's attention was quickly brought back to Harley. She had adjusted herself on the bike, but this time, before Jack could stop her, she let off the clutch a little too quickly.

Jack yelped as Harley suddenly zipped away from him. Harley let out a squeak of surprise, the bike racing swiftly up the driveway, leaving Jack behind. She struggled, trying to slow the bike down, but she was panicking just a little. She twisted the wheel too hard to the right, and the bike fell over; she and the bike skidded across the gravel that was part of the driveway this close to the gate, then over the pavement. Harley let go of the handles just as the bike and she fell over skidding across the drive throwing bits of gravel up in the air and across Harley. Harley rolled to a stop off of the pavement and into the grass.

Jack yelled, “HARLEY!” taking off at a run after her.

Jack dropped down next to her running his hands over her, yanking the helmet off and grabbing her face gently in his hands. “Harley! Harley are you alright?”

Harley was giggling. She eased up with Jack carefully helping her to a sitting position as she muttered, “Oops.”

Jack held her face between her hands. “Are you all right?”

Harley grinned. “Just a few scrapes, bruises and my pride.”

Jack laughed, tugging her face close for a kiss. He didn't stop at a simple kiss of relief, but kissed her passionately. Harley moaned against his lips. “Mmm....” reaching her arms around him. That was when they heard Officer Frost call out. “Ah, you okay miss?”

Jack helped her to her feet before picking up the bike, while Harley grabbed the helmet, and walked back to the gate. Harley smiled. “Yeah, I'm fine, thank you.”

Jack was grinning at her, pride clear in his expression, before he turned his attention back to the officer. “What can I do for you Officer Frost.”
Frost looked surprised. “You remember me?”

Jack smiled. “You laughed at my joke, of course I remember you.”

Frost grinned before his smile dropped. “I’m to serve you with a summons to appear in court.” He handed the envelope through the gate. Jack took the envelope opening it up. It was a summons to appear in court on the charge of vandalism...from the Randells.

Jack rolled his eyes handing the summons to Harley who read it over. Jack smiled. “Thanks Officer Frost.”

Frost tilted his hat at Jack and Harley. “Nice to see you two again; sorry it was under these circumstances.”

Jack waved it away. “Don't you worry about it, just doing your job.”

* 

Back at the house, Jack threw the summons onto a table, promptly forgetting all about it as he led Harley to Alfred's miniature doctor's office. He made her hop onto the examination table so he could examine her wounds.

Harley sighed. “I'm fine Jack.”

Jack narrowed his eyes at her as he removed her elbow guards for her, inspecting the scrape along her forearm.

“I'll be the judge of that Harls. Sit...by the way...” He grinned. “Nurses uniform.” He said the phrase with a decidedly lustful look in his eyes. Harley chuckled blushing before she let out a small, “Ouch” when Jack touched her forearm. She had scraped the skin off one small patch of her left arm. It wasn't huge or deep, but it would require a bandage. While Jack worked on cleaning the small wound Harley asked, “So what are you going to do about the summons?”


Harley tilted her head then hissed as Jack dabbed some antiseptic on the scrape. “Ow!”


“Take your pants off,” he ordered, tossing the cotton ball he had used to apply the antiseptic into the trash.

“Oh Jack, in here?” Harley giggled.

Jack's smile was wide. “Don't give me any ideas toots. And no, I want to check your legs.”

Harley hopped off the table, removing her knee pads and shimmied out of her jeans. Jack crouched down to inspect her legs. “I haven't decided yet. I'll pay the fine just to get the courts out of it, but I haven't thought of a way to take care of Troy and Tiffany yet. But I will.”

He cleaned a few nicks and scrapes Harley had, nothing major and gingerly touched a spot on her upper thigh where she hit the gravel. “That is going to leave a nasty bruise.” He murmured softly. Harley held her t-shirt up looking down. “Eww...yeah...”
Jack smiled and placed a gentle kiss on the bruise's location lifting her leg to place another one on her thigh, then her knee. “I think that is enough motorcycle training today. How about we clean up and have lunch. Though if you want to run around in my shirt and your panties I will not complain at all!” Jack gave her a wide grin with a goofy eyebrow waggle.

Harley laughed. “Jack! I don't think Alfred would appreciate it.”

Jack giggled. “Oh, I don't know about that...anyway... I thought maybe we could talk about our wedding.” Jack waggled his eyebrows again, grinning brightly. Harley blushed with pleasure, the warmth of feeling that ran through her filled her with happiness...banishing any lingering feelings still with her from the dream. Jack took her hand helping her down off the examination table and together they headed upstairs to change for lunch.

* * *

Across town at the auction house, Bruce, with Selina, were finalizing Bruce's purchases of the paintings. He had ended up buying three of them, the most expensive being Pablo Picasso's Nude, Green Leaves and Bust, which he had paid over 106 million for...It was to be the highlight of the party he was planning with Selina. They had decided to hold the party the following weekend at Wayne Manor, then on Monday he was to make a public donation of the painting to the Gotham Art Museum in his mother's name along with the donations from the party this weekend.

It had been a while since Bruce had held a party at his home, but he agreed with Selina, it would be nice...as long as there was no trouble from Jack and Harley. Bruce sighed as the thought of them being photographed having public sex at the party came to mind. That would be just the sort of publicity his donation didn't need. Bruce sighed making the final transfer of funds and signing papers to arrange for the transfer of the paintings, as well as hiring security and a million other little details he would have to take care of between now and the weekend of the party, sending out invitations, catering...

Selina smiled, watching Bruce as she leaned her head on his shoulder, her arms wrapped around him. So far everything had gone according to plan...except her stupid, stupid feelings. Selina sighed as she reached up and stroked her fingers along Bruce's jaw. “Let me help you with the details Bruce.”

Bruce frowned looking down at her, kissing the tip of her fingers. “Are you sure?”

Selina smiled. “I would love to—planning parties is fun!”

* * *

Jack, now dressed in a pair of light khaki colored slacks, a white button-down shirt that he had tucked into the slacks, light brown belt and a navy and light blue striped vest, which he had buttoned up, was pulling some white porcelain salad bowls down from the cabinet while Harley, dressed in a pair of red denim shorts and a light blue with red flowered, racer back, rayon sleeveless top, was pulling down some heavy base highball glasses for some freshly made iced tea. Alfred smiled watching the two of them setting up lunch for the three of them at what Alfred now referred to as their counter.

They had asked him to eat lunch with them to discuss their wedding. Alfred was stirring a large bowl, making an arugula, dried cherry and wild rice salad with a lemon dressing (which was separate and in its owns small ceramic pitcher already on the table.) He sprinkled some fresh shaved almonds over the salad and walked over to set it on the counter. Jack was setting the bowls down, turning on the balls of his feet like a dancer and grabbing the drawer with the silverware while Harley danced
her way over to the refrigerator to pull out the glass pitcher of tea and set it down on the counter. Alfred grabbed a few napkins to lay them at the side of each bowl.

He used a spoon to scoop out the rice and arugula mix into each of their bowls. Jack pulled out Harley’s stool for her and brushed the back of his fingers along her cheek before he took his own seat, Alfred and Jack faced each other with Harley between them.

“This looks fantastic Alfred.” Jack smiled as he mixed his salad, after having poured some of the lemon dressing onto his meal.

Harley smiled in agreement. “It does Alfred, thank you.”

Alfred smiled with a slight blush on his cheeks. “Thank you both.”

Harley took a bite making a groan of pleasure. “Oh, this is so good!”

Jack chuckled around a mouthful of rice and dried cherries. Alfred took a small bite and smiled. “So what do you need my help with Master Jack, Miss Harleen? Have you settled on a date yet?”

Jack took a sip of his tea. “Well, I was hoping for next month, but I want a huge wedding. I want all of Gotham to see us.” Jack grinned. “A huge spectacular on the back lawn with lots and lots of flowers, balloons and the biggest cake Gotham has ever seen!”

Harley giggled and glanced at Alfred. “I think he is starting to realized he can't do all that by next month. I mean we have my dress, but Jack needs a suit, a cake, balloons...”

Alfred chuckled and nodded. “Indeed. So when would be a good date? I believe we could plan the wedding for a few months from now, if you perhaps hired a wedding planner?”

Jack pouted stirring his food. “Months?” He sighed, clearly disappointed, but then in the next instant it was clear that Jack had an idea. “We could have an engagement party before then.” Alfred and Harley silently watched Jack and waited since it was clear he wasn't done. It was almost as if the two of them could see the gears moving in Jack's head as he smiled. “What about Halloween for our wedding?”

Harley and Alfred stared at him. “Halloween sir?” Alfred asked with a tone of confusion.

“I don’t mean we have to have to wedding on Halloween, but what about October? That's less than four months away, that should give us plenty of time to get everything in order for a full on spectacle of a wedding! And before that we could have a huge blowout of an engagement party right here in the manor!” Jack grinned brightly, gazing across the counter at Harley. She giggled.

Alfred smiled looking between the two of them. “I think that is, as they say, doable sir, to both ideas.

Jack pushed his seat up and rushed around to pull Harley to her feet and into his arms, covering her mouth with his while Alfred looked away smiling.

Jack cradled the back of Harley's head in his hand, his other hand tight around her waist. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck holding on until Jack finally pulled away to let her breathe.

“Soon you are going to be my wife...Mrs. Jack Wayne...” Jack dropped his voice lower so only Harley could hear him. “My one and only madness...”

Harley traced her fingers along the lines of his face. “Til death do us part Jack.”
Jack sighed smiling happily. “Maybe we should get married on Halloween Harls. I mean, what better holiday for us to be married on than one where we get to dress up?”

Harley giggled glancing over at Alfred. “What do you think?”

Alfred smiled. “Well, Halloween always was Master Jack’s favorite holiday as a child.”

“Then it’s settled!! Halloween it is!! The day I’m going to marry the best girl in the world! My soul mate, my other half...my partner in crime!”

With that Jack wrapped an arm around Harley’s waist, grabbing her right hand in his and started to dance her across the kitchen like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, both of them laughing together. Alfred smiled thinking to himself it was so nice to have one of the Wayne brothers happy for once.

Alfred smiled watching the two of them for a couple of moments before he spoke. “Though we could have the engagement party in the next few weeks Master Jack. If you and Miss Harleen would like...”

Jack and Harley turned to face Alfred both of them grinning like happy children. Jack let go of Harley and yanked Alfred to his feet. “You are a genius Alfie!! Yes!!” Jack put his arms around both Harley and Alfred dancing them in a circle. “It will be epic!!”

Harley laughed with joy. Never in her life had she felt so happy, so loved and in love...and free. Jack was right...she was free...she was finally her new self.

* 

Later that afternoon the two of them had retreated to their room, Jack deciding that it would be fun to play some games until it was time for them to go pick up Alex and check out this “fight club” he had called them about last night.

Jack had taken the time to hang their cleaned “weapons” on the wall, his cricket bat and her baseball bat side by side next to the desk in his room. The bag of bloody clothing had been shoved under the bed for later disposal; right now they were playing a game together while they made a list of things they wanted at their wedding.

Harley laid on the bed with her hands behind her head and watched Jack finish hanging their 'weapons' when she murmured, “Jack, how would you feel if I decorated my bat?”

Jack had just settled the cricket bat onto its hooks. He turned around. “How?”

“I don’t know, but I think it needs something...like...'good night' written across it...” she giggled. Jack jumped down from the footstool he had been standing on and walked over to throw himself down on his stomach across the bed beside her, kicking his shoes off at the same time. “I like it...'good night'...then WHACK!” Jack giggled.

Harley grinned humming softly and started to sing under her breath.

* 

“Hush little baby, don’t say a word.
Momma’s gonna kill for you the whole damn world.
And if they don’t laugh at our jokes,
Momma’s gonna stab out their goddamn throats

Hush little baby, don’t say a word.

Momma’s gonna kill for you the whole damn world.

And if they don’t laugh at our jokes,

Momma’s gonna stab out their goddamn throats.

All the weirdos and freaks won’t

lay a finger on me cause everyone

knows who’s my baby, hahaha!

*

Harley started giggling. Jack scooted closer wrapping an arm around her waist. “What's that?” he asked softly pressing his lips to her ear.

Harley shrugged and brought one hand from under her head to stroke his face idly, tucking his hair behind his ears. “I don't know...just making it up I suppose. I heard something similar in my dream.”

Her voice sounded slightly lost when she spoke. Jack kissed her cheek, then pressed his lips against her cheek hard and blew, making a terrible noise. The vibration tickled causing Harley to squeal. “PUDDIN!!”

Jack giggled. “Come here you!” He rolled on top of her, grabbing her arms and pinning them over her head. “You are going to play twister with me and get into some really sexually explicit positions...” He grinned wickedly.

Harley laughed bouncing her hips trying to dislodge him. “Puddin!” She smiled softly at him, her gaze full of love. “Off!!” She giggled. But Jack only held her down and nibbled on her chin making her giggle more.

“Oh no you don't my little harlequin. You will never get rid of me!” Jack laughed.

Harley laughed. “I don't ever want to get rid of you my puddin.”

Jack grinned staring down at her. He brushed his nose against hers and whispered.

“If love is madness may I never find sanity again my harlequin.”

*

Half an hour later, Jack, with a cigarette in his mouth, had cleared the space in the middle of their room and had laid out a Twister game mat on the floor.

Harley was sitting on the edge of the bed, kicking her bare feet against the side of the bed tapping out a tune with her heels as she watched Jack. “Twister?” she inquired skeptically.

Jack grinned at her and winked. “Yep, Twister,” he said as he took the cigarette out and put it out in the ashtray sitting on the floor next to him. He picked the ashtray up, placing it on the table out of the way, and gave her a wicked little boy look that had Harley giggling.
Jack set the spinner on the floor next to the mat, and another spinner with numbers from another boxed game and dropped his cellphone beside both spinners after setting it to play some music. The sound of The Flamingos filtered through the cellphone's speaker. Jack started to sing under his breath.

“My love must be a kind of blind love
I can't see anyone but you
Sha bop sha bop
Sha bop sha bop
Are the stars out tonight
I don't know if it's cloudy or bright
I only have eyes for you dear
Sha bop sha bop
The moon may be high
Sha bop sha bop
But I can't see a thing in the sky
I only have eyes for you....”

He grinned and reached out for Harley's hand. She hopped off the bed as Jack pulled her into his arms and danced her in a circle once before he stopped singing, then tugged her down to the floor where they both sat crossed-legged while the music continued to play in the background.

Harley laughed making herself comfortable. She frowned picking up the spinner with the numbers. “Why do you have this one?”

Jack shrugged. “Don't remember actually, it was just in the box too.” Jack spun the numbered spinner.

“Oh, I know another way we can play that game!”

Jack grinned playfully at her. Harley scooted closer to Jack playing with the numbered spinner. “How about we spin it and whoever gets closest to ten goes first?”

Harley giggled and mock smacked him on the shoulder. “Just spin it.”
Jack chuckled. “Fine, evil woman.”

Jack spun the spinner, glancing at her and grinned.

* 

After about fifteen minutes, Harley was on her back, her left foot on green, her right foot on yellow, her right hand on blue and her left hand on red. Jack was on top of her, his left hand on blue, right on yellow so that his face was in between her legs.

He was grinning. “Now this is a very interesting situation I find myself in.”

Harley giggled. She couldn't see where Jack's legs were, but she had a pretty good idea that he was cheating. Jack licked her thigh causing her to shiver.

“Don't you do it Jack!” Harley giggled trying to hold her position.

“Do what?” Jack smirked and bit her. Harley squeaked collapsing on the mat.

Jack grinned. “Oh, I should have thought to play this game naked! I'm such a fool!”

Jack flopped down on her burying his head between her legs, rubbing his face back and forth vigorously against her groin. Harley gasped, laughing at the same time, the pressure of his mouth against her, the feel of him, heat of his breath against her skin—even through her shorts—traveled through to excite her.

Jack wrapped his arms around her waist, moving his mouth up and down on the cloth of her shorts, providing enough pressure that Harley groaned and threw her head back. Jack giggled against her, grabbed her thighs, his fingers pressing into the soft silky skin, pressing his mouth harder. The heat of his breath and pressure from his mouth made her groan and drop her back against the floor, and then Jack's phone rang. The ring tone was Bruce's. Jack ignored it for a few seconds, transferring his mouth to the exposed skin of her inner thigh, running the flat of his tongue along her skin, tasting the slight salty favor, the silken softness of her flesh against his mouth. Harley's hand had just reached down to grab a fistful of his hair when the phone rang again...and again...and again.

Jack growled and stopped what he was doing to sit up and grab his phone. “What on earth could Bruce want?” he muttered. “We haven't done anything illegal or morally shocking today...” he added with a smirk.

Jack hit the button. “Bruce, I'm a little busy...” Harley sat up watching Jack on the phone. His expression went from annoyed to pleased in a couple of beats. Jack grinned as his eyes met Harley's gaze. “A costume party? Are you serious? Selina? Tell her I love her!” Harley's eyes widened and she sat up fully to smack Jack in the shoulder.

Jack laughed yelping. “Ouch! No sorry, Harley smacked me for saying I love Selina. Ouch! She just did it again!” Harley growled playfully and smacked Jack hard with her fist in his shoulder. “Sure Bruce. No, no, not a problem. Harley and I don't have plans until tonight. Yes. Okay, will do. Sure, bye.”

Jack disconnected the call with a grin. Harley frowned. “What was that all about?”

Jack shook his head in amazement. “Bruce is going to throw a costume party. It's a party slash fundraiser for the Gotham Art Museum. He bought a bunch of paintings at that auction he mentioned and Selina Kyle convinced him to throw a party! A costume party! You know what that means?”
Harley grinned. “Oh, so that's why you love her, eh?”

Jack tackled Harley. She squealed fighting him off with some fairly aggressive punches, kicking her legs as well, but Jack used his own legs, wrapping them around hers, pinning them together. Jack managed to twist her around, forcing her onto her stomach rather painfully, wrinkling up the Twister plastic sheet under them and pinned her arms against the small of her back just before he sat on her rear.

Jack growled playfully in her ear. “I win...” He hissed and grabbed her earlobe with his teeth. He pulled just a little. The whole situation had Harley groaning with need. Jack giggled. “Oh this is giving me all sorts of fun ideas Harley.” Jack licked her ear. Harley squirmed giggling. “It means...” he licked her ear again. “It means we get to dress up!”

Harley grinned. Jack released her, rolling off of her and pulling her into his arms. Harley nuzzled against his chest, but not before she smacked his cheek hard, yet playfully. “Costumes? What would we dress up as?”

Jack was smiling. “Bonnie and Clyde my sweets, Bonnie and Clyde!”

Harley laughed. “I love it! Was that why Bruce called, to tell you about that?”

Jack shook his head. “Nope, he asked if we could go pick up the invitations for him at the printer. Guess he isn't going to have time and Alfred is already doing something else in regards to the party. Thought it might be fun to go pick them up. We could look at designs while we're there for our invites since we are going to need them for the engagement party AND the wedding. Mark one item off the list! And that means also we get to stop at Milano's to get some costumes!”

Harley smiled, closing her eyes for a moment as the thought of her marrying him washed over her again. She was going to be Mrs. Jack Wayne...then her eyes popped open with a grin. “Milano's! We can tell him we're engaged too!”

Jack laughed. “Oh God, he will be excited! Though he is going to be upset about not helping with the dress.” Jack moved to let Harley up.

“Maybe he could help you with what you're going to wear?” Harley asked.

Jack grinned. “That's a perfect solution. And he could help with outfits for our engagement party we need to plan as well.”

Harley beamed. “We could have a 1920's speakeasy themed engagement party.”

Jack stared at her for a moment with no expression at all. For a moment Harley thought she had said something wrong, but then Jack's face slowly transformed into a huge, almost maniacal smile of glee. “Woman, you are the most brilliant person I know next to me!”

Jack tackled her again, covering her face in kisses, which changed to biting and soon morphed into some highly intense sex with Harley on her stomach and Jack pressing her against the plastic sheet.

*  

They both changed clothes before heading out to the printers. Jack was wearing a three piece white linen suit with a light blue button down shirt underneath, minus a tie, with a pair of black and white brogue wingtip oxfords along with a pair of white leather gloves. Harley wore a white skater dress with a circle neckline and a pair of barely there red suede heeled sandals that had a thin strap around the ankle. Her hair was braided in a soft rope braid along the side of her head.
Jack took her to the garage with him to pick out their ride for the day. They were walking along holding hands, examining each of the cars as they went by them. It still amazed her how many vehicles the Waynes actually owned. She was sure that some of them had probably belonged to their parents, but there had to be nearly two hundred or more vehicles in this house-size garage alone. One day Harley swore she was going to have Jack tell her exactly how many they owned.

Jack swung her hand as they walked inspecting cars until he stopped in front of a convertible Porsche 911, a silver and black car with steel grey leather seats. The car had a light film of dust on it which demonstrated that the vehicle hadn't moved from its current location in a while.

“Oh look at the poor thing will you Harley? She hasn't been out in a long time?” Jack ran the flat of his hand along the hood of the car creating a streak through the thin layer of dust. He blew on the fingers of his white glove.

Harley laughed. “She?”

Jack nodded. “Bruce bought this one after a model named Bianca dumped him, at least that's what the papers said; it was as a gift to himself to cover the pain of their break up” Jack put his hand to his breast in a theatrical pronouncement of his brother's broken heart.

Jack laughed and continued. “The press clearly doesn't know my brother's track record with women well. Anyhow, Bruce drove it around for a few weeks before he met this newspaper reporter...Jill Alexander. I think that was her name...anyway, after that he stopped driving her.”

Harley walked over and touched the car, the smooth lines flowed under her fingertips. She grinned and drew a heart in the dust. “So it's a she because Bruce bought it after a woman dumped him?” Harley asked.

“Nah, she just looks like a she to me.” Jack grinned at her. “ I think it's time we took her out for a spin don't you Harls?” Jack smiled with a wink at Harley before he walked away heading over to the safe where the keys were kept. Harley watched him go, disappearing and reappearing in the garage lights like a spook. The lights reflected off the white suit making him look ethereal. A few minutes later Jack came strolling back holding the keys up and jiggling them.

“All right Harls, let's go!”

*

Selina stood beside Bruce, watching as he spoke with the caterer. They had arrived here just half an hour ago and had been talking food nonstop since they arrived. He was smiling and talking to the young woman who she could tell was staring at Bruce with open mouthed admiration, though Bruce seemed completely unaware of the young woman's attraction. He was discussing the menu for the party, pointing out some things that he want served, cocktail services as well as chef stations. He had already stated that he would be providing the alcohol himself from the Wayne cellars, but that he would need a bartender, maybe two. The conversation had moved from drinks to food. Now Bruce was talking about the baked brie and puffed pastries that were going to be served as well as a list of other foods. Selina's attention was diverted when she thought she saw a flash through the front display window of the caterers.

She glanced over toward the window while Bruce was discussing whether or not to have classic shrimp cocktails served at the party. If he noticed, he made no indication, which she supposed was normal for him. Bruce Wayne was in the papers a great deal, constantly being photographed. Selina narrowed her eyes as she looked out the window. She didn't see anyone at first, but then as she continued to stare out the window, she saw movement across the street. A woman slipped out from
behind a tree; that was when she saw Vicki Vale.

“Shit,” Selina thought to herself, quickly shifting her position in order to make it difficult for anyone to take her picture. They would see a dark-haired woman holding onto Bruce's arm, but that would be it. Not that anyone seeing her would necessarily draw any lines between her and her persona, Catwoman master thief, but there was no point in taking any chances...

* 

Jack pulled up in front of the printers, taking his sunglasses off to turn and examine the place. It was a small little son and pop store, one of the few still around. That the place had still managed to stay in business in Gotham despite the online printers and big chain stores was a credit either to their work or their tenacity. The place was located in a corner store in one of the older buildings in Gotham, still retaining that old storefront look that dated back to the early 1900's. The place was called The Calendar Man's Space. Jack hopped out of the car and walked swiftly, his long legs getting him quickly around the car so he could open the door for Harley. Jack took her hand, completely ignoring the stares they were receiving from passersby. They cut quite the dramatic figures in their all white outfits. Jack led Harley inside, holding her hand in his as he pushed the door open for her.

The bald man behind the counter looked up from what he had been doing with a smile. “Good day. I'm Julian Gregory Day, how may I help you two?”

“Well, Julian Gregory Day, we are here to pick up some invitations my brother ordered earlier this afternoon, and we were hoping to discuss wedding invitations and invitations for our engagement party while we are here.” Jack put a hand on the clear glass counter and leaned toward Mr. Day with a grin.

Day smiled brightly. “Oh yes, that was quite a large order from Mr. Wayne and he wanted them within hours instad of days. Quite the rush, but I think he will be happy. He did call to say his brother was picking them up. May I see some ID?”

“Of course.” Jack pulled his wallet out to show his drivers license. “Very good Mr. Wayne. I shall retrieve those from the back. If you wish, I have several binders with examples of the types of wedding invitations I can do. Why don't you and your lovely fiancee take a look while I retrieve the invitations?” Day smiled, indicating a table in the corner. Jack nodded and walked over to where Day had a small table and two chairs set up along with four heavy binders of sample invitations and other types of print work. Harley sat down after Jack pulled her chair out, each of them grabbing a binder to flip through.

Jack laughed softly after only a few moments of perusing his binder. “Some of these are just ridiculous.”

Harley grinned. “Oh I don't know, maybe gold with an individual diamond on each invitation is just not enough...” Harley turned the binder around to show Jack. The invitation was “classy” with laser cutting, gold paper and one teardrop shaped diamond on the invite. Jack grimaced. “Can you imagine having to bribe your guests with a diamond to come to your wedding?”

Harley laughed. “It's unique though.”

“True, true...oh Harley, what about this one?” Jack turned the binder he had in front of him around to show her. The invitation was laser cut in white and gold, an intricate 3d castle design. It was quite stunning Harley thought as she looked at it. Jack pointed. “It says here that you can have any design you want. What about a carnival? You know a Ferris wheel with a carousel? Oh or these for our engagement party?” Jack flipped the page over showing her an invitation that was done in a style of
a flier announcing a speakeasy party in a Metropolis style of lettering. The invitation included silhouettes of a man and woman in twenties style clothing.

Harley stared at the invitations, she was about to say something when the bell over the door jingled and another couple walked in.

Harley and Jack turned. Jack muttered under his breath, “Fuck me running and call me Susan.”

Troy and Tiffany Randell stepped into the shop. Harley's eyes widened. What were the fucking chances?! She thought looking over at Jack. Jack's eyes narrowed, though he smiled. “Now this isn't funny?” he whispered.

Troy and Tiffany saw Jack and Harley a split second after Jack and Harley had spied them. Troy stepped forward. “YOU!”

Jack stood up taking Harley's hand as he did so with a broad smile. “Yep. Me and don't forget my darling fiancee.”

Troy started to stomp forward, but Tiffany grabbed his arm. “Not here Troy! Not here!”

Troy hissed. “You low class fucker! I got you on film trashing our house!”

Jack and Harley both laughed. Jack smiled as Harley, who had laid her hands on Jack's shoulder leaned against him and smiled coyly at the Randells.

“Aww, now Troy honey, you hurt my feelings! Oh, a little bit of toilet paper and plastic wrap ruined your home? Seriously?” Jack gave Troy an expression of mock distress.

Troy hissed again. “I'm going to make you pay for what you did!”

Jack laughed. “Oh Troy, I'm so scared. Aren't I scared Harls?”

“Just terrified puddin.” Harley giggled.

Troy narrowed his eyes still letting Tiffany hold him back (though it was clear to both Jack and Harley that Troy wasn't really trying hard to get at the two of them.) Jack gave Troy a mock frown. “Does this mean we can't be besties anymore? I thought we were going to share everything, but now those dreams of being best friends are dashed. Oh darling, you have broken me!” Jack giggled putting the back of his hand to his forehead. Harley burst out laughing, pressing her mouth to Jack's shoulder.

That was the moment that Mr. Day came out from the back of his shop carrying three boxes of invitations. He frowned at the two couples before going into the back and returning with two more boxes. “Here are the invitations Mr. Wayne.”

Day set them on the counter, then frowned when he saw and felt the tension in the room. Day thought about heading into the back again, but thought better of it.

Jack smiled turning to Mr. Day. “Thank you so much Mr. Day. I assumed my brother paid for these already?”

Day frowned glancing at the Randells who he knew were also here to pick up some invitations for a cocktail party they were having; well, not exactly invitations, more of reminders to come to the party. The Randells did that every time they threw a party, invitations and reminders. Mr. Day had to wonder if the couple had problems getting people to come to their events. Based on what he knew
about them, it would not surprise him in the least. He pressed his lips together to avoid smiling. If he remembered correctly it was the same day as the Wayne event.

Day glanced again at the Randells before returning his attention of Jack Wayne. “Ah...yes, Mr. Wayne. Would you like to inspect the invitations?” Day glanced at the Randells then back at Mr. Wayne and his female companion.

Jack smiled at Troy and strolled over to the counter. Day pulled out one of the invitations, black paper with gold lettering. Jack smiled and read the invitation out loud. “You are invited to a masquerade and charity event at Wayne Manor this weekend in honor of the Gotham City Art Museum and private showing of Pablo Picasso's Nude, Green Leaves and Bust.”

Jack glanced over to Troy who was frowning.

“When is that again?” Troy asked.

Jack smiled innocently as he looked down at the invite. “Oh, it looks like it's this weekend.”

Tiffany paled. “But that's when our cocktail party is being held Troy!”

Troy huffed. “You can't just suddenly throw that kind of party!! Those things take weeks and weeks of planning! We—we sent out RSVPs weeks in advance and are sending out our reminder invites tomorrow. You—you can't do that!”

Jack giggled fanning himself with the invite. “Goodness Troy, apparently you don't know the Waynes very well do you? Or exactly how much money we Waynes have...though I suppose...wait. You know I was going to insult you Troy, but I'm afraid I won't do as well as nature already has.”

Troy stared at Jack for a moment, the insult clearly not sinking in enough for Troy to get that he had been insulted before he barreled forward. “Well, no one will come at that short notice! Not for a stupid masquerade party over some stupid painting!! All of who's who in Gotham has already agreed to come to our cocktail party this weekend!!”

Jack raised an eyebrow and glanced over at Harley who was having a difficult time not laughing out loud. She shared a look with Jack who grinned.

“All right Troy, you just keep telling yourself that.” Jack picked up three of the boxes of invitations while Harley grabbed the last two.

“All have fun at your party this weekend Troy.” Jack smiled pleasantly turning around to push the door open with his back. Harley followed him and winked at Troy and Tiffany.

*

Before heading home, Jack and Harley headed over to Milanos, thrilling the man to no end with their requests for not one, but two period costumes.

“I will have the Bonnie and Clyde sent over tomorrow, but the 1920's outfits...give me a week.” Milano smiled.

“Sounds perfect!” Jack grinned handing Milano cash.

Milano nodded, putting the money away. “Now...your wedding attire. I have several ideas—I could sketch up a few things, how do you feel about a top hat and a cane?” Jack's eyes sparkled. “I feel that it would be perfect! I want something unique unusual, something no one has ever worn before,
like my darling's dress.”

Harley was smiling as she sat on a stool listening to them discuss Jack's wedding attire, the light sounds of Benny Goodman's “Moonglow” playing in the background as she sipped from a glass that held a black Russian drink that Milano had made her. Milano was quickly jotting down some notes for Jack's tuxedo. “All right, plum colored vest to match the flowers in Harley's dress, black on black pinstripes, the jacket with the slightly longer tails, and a blood red ruby stick pin for the tie to match Harley's shoes...” (Harley had decided just the other day that a pair of sexy, secret red shoes under her dress would be funny.) Milano and Jack nearly had their heads together in discussion while Harley finished her drink smiling contently.

“All right...” Jack grinned standing back, his hands on his hips. “That sounds perfect!”

Milano grinned. “I will make whatever I can't find for you Jack, don't you worry my sweet boy. By the time you and my little queen there are walking down the aisle, you will look like a billion dollars.”

Jack grinned yanking Milano into a quick embrace. “I knew I could count on you!”

* *

Jack and Harley didn't have to wait long after completing their errands (stopping at home to change clothes again for going out that evening. Jack was wearing a deep blue on blue checked three-piece suit with a two button jacket, black and white oxfords, a light silver blue tie, with a pair of black leather gloves. Harley changed into a pair of skinny black slacks, a light grey vest, with a white shirt with one of Jack's purple ties, and a fitted men's style jacket that Jack had bought her with a pair of black riding style boots, her hair pulled back in a high ponytail and her own pair of black leather gloves) before it was time for them to drive over to the Amusement Mile and pick up Alex.

They found Alex waiting outside the dark carnival, his hand in his pocket. He was dressed in a bright blue t-shirt with colorful tropical fish all over the shirt with a plaid button down shirt thrown over the top, jeans and the whitest, ugliest pair of dress shoes Harley had ever seen. He was smoking a cigar, the cigar clinched between his teeth, his hair slicked back looking like he had a bit too much product in it, when Jack and Harley pulled up in their Porsche convertible.

Alex grinned. “Hey there, how you two fucking doing? You two looked like you stepped out of the fucking Kingsmen movie.”

Jack laughed. “We're great, get in and thank you. Gotta look better than the riffraff.”

Alex climbed into the back of the car. “Oh haha, you fucker, I know you mean me. Hey I like the fucking make-up Jack, you two look fucking cool. I sure the fuck couldn't pull off eyeliner anyway. Man Jack, this is one fucking nice car!”

Harley giggled shaking her head slightly at Alex as Jack turned around leaning his arm on the back of the seat smiling. “Thank you buddy. How'd you do at the game?”

Alex rolled his eyes and gagged before taking a drag on his cigar “I'm out a fucking grand, but hopefully I can make it back tonight at Cobblepot's fucking fight.”

Jack smiled, only Harley noticed the slight twitch at the corner of Jack's mouth at the mention of Cobblepot. “So where to?”

Alex grinned. “Just go on down to fucking Chinatown. I'll tell you where the fuck to go from there.”
The drive to Chinatown was pleasant. The Gotham evening was cool as the breeze coming off the water brought the temperature of the whole city down. The sky was surprisingly clear above the city lights and Jack had the music turned up loudly. Harley and Jack were almost in tears laughing as Alex sang at the top of his lungs to a cover of “Bad Romance” by Halestorm that started to play over the car's speakers, with Jack joining him about halfway through. Harley was laughing hard enough that tears had sprung to her eyes and she was fighting to save her makeup. Jack was gesturing with one hand as he sang, driving with one hand. Alex was singing terribly, waving his cigar around with his one hand, weaving smoke in the air.

They arrived at Chinatown just as Jack and Alex had started singing Queen's “Killer Queen” with equal loudness, though Jack's voice was gorgeous, singing along in a clear voice and hitting every high note without once breaking, where Alex needed to find a note and stick to it.

Jack winked at Harley singing to her.

“She's a Killer Queen
Gunpowder, gelatine
Dynamite with a laser beam
Guaranteed to blow your mind
Anytime
Recommended at the price
Insatiable an appetite
Wanna try?”

Jack grinned, his tongue touching his upper lip seductively as he sang.

Harley giggled continuing to struggle with her makeup smearing while laughing, which was difficult to avoid, especially as Jack and Alex started to sing Queen's “Don't Stop Me Now.”

Alex leaned forward, his head against Jack's as they both grinned at Harley singing loudly. Alex closed his eyes singing completely off tune while Jack was perfect.

“I'm a shooting star leaping through the sky
Like a tiger defying the laws of gravity
I'm a racing car passing by like Lady Godiva
I'm gonna go go go
There's no stopping me...”

Jack grinned at her, beating out the tune with his gloved fingers on the steering wheel his voice carrying lightly on the night air.
“La da da da daah
Da da da haa
Ha da da ha ha haaa
Ha da daa ha da da aaa
Ooh ooh ooh…”

Alex laughed, sat back, and pointed with his only hand, speaking around his cigar. “Down that fucking street Jack."

He continued to give directions until they reached an abandoned Chinese restaurant called The Mandarin. The windows of the restaurant were boarded up, though the statue of an ancient Chinese dragon stood outside next to a man who was standing unmoving like a statue himself. He had to be at least six feet five inches and he was massively built. Harley figured he would give Killer Croc a run for his money in terms of width and weight. The man had long auburn hair that he had pulled back into a man bun and was standing like a wall with his arms crossed in front of his chest.

Jack parked the car, putting up the top and engaging the lock when they all hopped out. Alex walked up to the big man with a smile sticking his cigar in the side of his mouth.

“How the fuck you doing Mark?”

The man narrowed his eyes looking down at Alex. “What have I told you about calling me that?”

Alex stuck his cigar in his mouth and threw his hand up. “Calm the fuck down. Sorry Blockbuster I just forgot. Fuck man.”

Blockbuster glared. “You forget a lot for a man who supposedly wants to live a long life Alex.”

“Ah come the fuck on, Blockbuster. Don't I treat you well, get you those cigars you like and didn't I get you into that game last week? And let's not forget my sister. You wanted that fucking date with her and didn't I come the fuck through?”

Blockbuster smiled. “Yeah you did, which is why I never pop your head.”

Jack leaned close to Harley and whispered in surprise. “Alex has a sister?”

Harley giggled. “That's a scary thought.”

They both laughed.

That was when the big man noticed Jack and Harley. He gave Alex a quizzical look. “Who yer friends Alex?”

Alex grinned. “This here is fucking Jack and Harley. They came to get in on the fucking fights man. Check it out, make some fucking money. You know, the fucking usual, but Jack here is loaded.”

Blockbuster glanced at Jack, though his eyes lingered a little too long on Harley for Jack's liking. Jack reached out pulling Harley against him, his eyes going flat and dangerous. Blockbuster sneered, but he stepped back and removed a large board revealing a door behind it.

“Go on in.”
Alex grinned. “You're the fucking best. Thanks Blockbuster.”

The three of them walked past, with Blockbuster winking at Harley. Jack’s lip curled, but he let it go without a word, for now. Though he wouldn't forget.

*

The inside of the restaurant looked exactly as one would think an abandoned restaurant would look. There were still tables and chairs scattered throughout the place, the floor was covered with debris, broken furniture, bits of the ceiling that had fallen to the floor, though there were a few working lights. Alex led them through the middle of the room, pulling back two double doors in the floor that revealed a set of stairs that descended into darkness. Alex took the stairs, igniting his lighter to provide a little more light.

As the made their way down, they could see lights and hear the sounds of shouting and cheering.

Alex hopped off the last step clipping closed his lighter and grinned.

Jack and Harley found themselves in a basement that ran the whole length and breadth of the restaurant. It was a large space that had been cleared of everything except for the large group of people, which was an equal mix of men and women, forming a circle around two men, shirtless, both of them bloody and beating the hell out of each other.

Alex grinned. “Welcome to Cobblepot's fucking fight club.”

Jack saw Cobblepot. The crowd had cleared a space for the little man where he sat on some God awful looking chair that resembled some sort of throne-like chair. He had two beautiful women on each side of him as he leaned forward, his hands on the top of his walking stick, watching the fight with undisclosed glee.

Alex motioned Jack and Harley to follow him over to a short man with a thick “porn star” mustache (at least that was the immediate impression of the man's mustache that came to Harley's mind when she saw him.) He was dressed in a nice suit (though nowhere near as nice as Jack's) and he was talking a mile a minute, taking bets, exchanging money back and forth as the two bare-knuckled men fought in the center of the room.

As Alex walked up, the short man grinned. “Hey Alex, you made it.”

“How the fuck you doing Warren?” Alex grinned pulling out his wallet.

“Come on, Great White Shark...I'm trying to copyright it dude! That's my bad guy name!” The man named Warren whined a bit with a grin.

Alex snorted. “What the fuck ever Warren. I asked how you were doing?”

“Oh I'm great man. Whatcha playing?” the man named Warren asked while writing down someone's bet.

Alex grinned. “Hundred down on Martin there.”

Jack was ignoring the betting, his eyes on the fighters. Harley snaked her arm round his waist watching beside him. “You could take on any of them puddin.” She said softly to him.

Jack grinned glancing down at her without a word. The fight took maybe a solid fifteen minutes before one of the men went down and didn't come back up. The crowd broke into a chorus of cheers
and boos as the unconscious man was dragged, bleeding out of the center of the room. Alex came back to stand beside the two of them.

“There rules are...”

Jack turned on Alex with a grin. “If you say the first rule is not to talk about fight club I swear I might hit you.”

Alex chuckled. “Hey, not my fault Cobblepot watched the fucking movie one too many times. But yeah, ya don’t talk about it. There is a lot of money to be made here...and a lot to fucking lose too, so no one talks about it beyond these doors.”

“What happens if you do talk about it?” Jack asked with a grin.

“No fucking clue.” Alex laughed. “Anyway, only two people fight at a time, if someone goes limp, tells ya to stop or taps out, the fight is over, no shirts, no shoes and that includes the ladies though bras are allowed.” Here Alex grinned wider. “Though I've seen a couple of fucking ladies fight bare breasted. Best fight ever. I love it when the ladies fight. Oh and Cobblepot has the fucking rule where it's your first time here, ya gotta fucking fight, but ain't nobody enforcing that one.”

Jack smiled at Harley lifting his brow at her in question without uttering a word. She smiled slowly. The idea of a full on fight, to beat the living shit out of someone...Harleen would have been appalled but Harley only smiled. “I'm in.”

Jack laughed kissing her on the cheek. “Okay Alex, we're in.”

Alex looked between the two of them and shook his head. “Okay, but I ain't fucking betting on you.”

Jack's smile was wide and vicious. “Then you are going to lose more money tonight my friend.”

* 

Alex led them through the crowd and over to Cobblepot's chair. If someone new was going to fight they had to go and say hello to the man who ran the show. When Cobblepot saw Jack Wayne and his girl walk up to him, it was clear he was torn between a wicked grin and a nasty sneer.

“So Jack Wayne, eh?” Cobblepot smiled.

Jack grinned. “Well hello, Penguin. I see you found a way to get back a smidge of the family fortune...”

“Don't call me that! And yes I'm finding I have a knack for making money.” Cobblepot started to stand, but then sat down. Jack narrowed his eyes as he realized the cane wasn't for show...interesting.

“So Wayne, come to fight, eh?” Cobblepot leaned back in his 'throne' as one of the women beside him reached out to run her fingers over his shoulder. Cobblepot glanced up at her with a smile then back to Jack.

Jack smiled. “Sure, why not.”

Cobblepot smirked. “Her too?”

Harley grinned. “Of course.”

Cobblepot motioned to the crowd. “All right my fine ladies and gentlemen. We have a couple of new
fighters. Who wants to take on the pretty boy first?”

Alex shook his head leaning in close to Jack. “You're fucking mad Jack, the both of you have fucking lost your minds.”

Jack grinned stripping off his jacket, vest and shirt handing them to Harley. “Everyone new fights right?” Jack asked Alex, who nodded. Jack's eyes narrowed and then he said, “You'll have to tell me about your fight, my friend.”

Alex just smirked and said, “Fuckin’ right...sometime.”

As Jack removed his clothing, a few of the women in the audience started hooting and whistling when Jack took off his shirt to reveal his lean, muscled frame. Harley pressed her lips together in a hard line of anger, but she consoled herself by telling herself that soon she was going to get to beat the living shit out of one of them, thanks to Jack teaching her to defend herself...

Jack ignored the whistles and yells as he took off his shoes and handed them to Harley. He grabbed her around the back of her neck, yanking her close to kiss her, a deep tongue plunging kiss that had the crowd yelling and whistling.

Cobblepot narrowed his eyes; the crowd's reaction just made him hate Jack Wayne all the more and when thedamn asshole took his shirt off and showed off a lean muscled body that had even his four girls staring at him, Cobblepot hated him that much deeper.

Jack walked into the center of the “ring” with a huge smile.

“All right boys, who wants a go?” Jack smiled as he walked around the ring with his arms out looking at each of them, his blue eyes dancing, his confidence almost frightening. “Oh come on now, no one?”

Cobblepot motioned a small man over, Harley noticed from the corner of her eye. She turned with a frown watching the little guy lean close to Cobblepot as the Penguin whispered in his ear. After a second or two the little man took off. A few moments later, she saw Blockbuster walking down the stairs. Harley hissed under her breath and muttered, “God damn cheat.”

Alex who was standing beside Harley whistled. “Fuck that guy! Cobblepot must really hate Jack to bring Blockbuster down here. Blockbuster only fights when Cobblepot wants someone taught a fucking lesson or dead.” Alex shook his head. “Well I'm going to fucking place my bet. Tell Jack I'm fucking sorry man.”

Harley smiled. “I wouldn't bet against him if I was you Alex.”

Alex stopped and turned around to look at Harley. She glanced over her shoulder and smiled. Alex frowned. For a moment the look in her blue eyes was...scary. Alex nodded.

“Okay Harley, okay.”

*  

The crowd moved out of the way to let Blockbuster through and into the ring. As the big man was taking off his shirt and shoes, Cobblepot yelled. “Remember, no biting or gouging!”

Blockbuster smiled at Jack while pulling his shirt off over his head. “Hey, little rich boy.”
Blockbuster was muscled, but Harley smiled. He lacked the real strength that Jack had...she chewed on her bottom lip, the thought of Jack beating this man made her excited.

She smiled, her teeth pressed into her bottom lip.

Jack narrowed his eyes at Blockbuster with a grin. “I'm going to hurt you for the way you looked at my girl. No one looks at her like that but me.”

Blockbuster laughed. “Well after I beat your ass, I'm taking your girl. How you feel about that, ya little prick.”

Jack laughed. “You clearly don't know Harley. Well you know the old saying, the bigger they are the harder they fall. Give me your best shot.”

Jack bounced lightly on his feet, bringing his arms up, his hands held in loose fists, a smile on his face when Blockbuster swung at him. The larger man's fist struck Jack across the cheek twisting his head to the right, then he hit Jack again causing Jack's face to snap to the left. Jack stumbled, dropping to a knee, blood dripping from his nose and his bottom lip.

Blockbuster laughed. “Down already?”

Jack started to move, but Blockbuster surprised him with a quick lunge and grabbed Jack, lifting him off his feet and threw him into the crowd. Harley yelped bringing Jack's clothing up to cover her mouth when she saw him thrown. Blockbuster turned to face the other side of the crowd with a laugh.

“Those pretty rich boys never know what they're doing!” He shouted at the crowd throwing his arms over his head. The crowd cheered him, but behind him Jack had jumped to his feet, a bloody, lipstick smeared smile on his face. Jack stretched his arms over his head and cracked his neck, grinning while blood dripped down from his nose over his lips and off his chin.

He brought a hand up, motioning with his fingers at Blockbuster with a smile. “That all you got big boy?”

Blockbuster turned with a snarl, taking a swing at him, but Jack blocked him, smacking the larger man's hand hard and away, tossing Blockbuster's arm to the side with a disgusted look on his face. Blockbuster twisted around with his fist, but Jack ducked and moved in low and to the side to slam his fist into Blockbuster's kidney, then another to his stomach, causing the larger man to stumble backwards. Blockbuster took two wild swings at Jack, which the slimmer more graceful man dodged easily. Jack's hands snapped out blindingly to land two more hard punches into Blockbuster's side with a laugh.

Harley watched her lover fight, a vicious grin on her face, licking her lips as her eyes ran down Jack's figure, watching the mix of blood and sweat run down his body which made fire run through her blood, exciting her. Her eyes were glued to Jack, her heart beating with excitement; her groin was on fire, the nipples of her breasts tight and hard with desire. Just watching him was turning her on. She was so excited that the thought of having her way with Jack, running her fingers through the blood running down his torso, biting him, tasting his blood on her tongue had her squirming. Harley squeezed her fingers into his clothing with a wide grin.

Jack grinned, dancing around the larger man just before his arm snapped out, hitting Blockbuster in the face, once, twice, a third time, splitting the skin on the big man's cheek, busting his lips while scraping his own knuckles against Blockbuster's teeth. The larger man stumbled back into the crowd as Jack followed him, hitting Blockbuster continually in the face, refusing to let up. But Jack's next
swing missed as Blockbuster managed to lean back far enough that Jack's fist overshot his target. Blockbuster brought his ham-sized fist up and struck Jack in the face, his knuckles glancing against the smaller man's chin, but it was hard enough to knock Jack's head back. Jack spun partly to the left; the crowd was going wild, some cheering for him, others for Blockbuster. Blockbuster hit Jack again, this time a glancing blow to the eye, the man's knuckles scraped across Jack's brow splitting the skin and sending a trickle of blood down the side of Jack's face.

Jack kept his footing, turned around and laughed. “Oh hit me again big man, you know you like it.” Blockbuster snarled. “You're crazy!”

Jack grinned showing off bloody teeth. “Oh, so I’ve been told.”

Harley grinned and yelled. “Kill 'im puddin!!!”

Jack's blue eyes glanced to Harley and blew her a kiss.

Blockbuster took another swing, but Jack, bringing his attention quickly back to the fight, ducked under the attack and danced to the side to hit him in the kidney again. The larger man tried again to hit Jack, but Jack swerved and ducked, moving faster than any fighter Blockbuster had ever seen before. The smaller man came up under Blockbuster's guard and slammed his fist into Blockbuster's stomach hard enough that he caused the big man to double over with a grunt. Jack grinned wildly and performed a full, roundhouse kick, his leg connecting to Blockbuster's side again, working the damage up on the same side he had been kidney punching and causing the bigger man to stumble.

Jack next swung his arm up, going for a head shot, but Blockbuster brought his arm up and around, hooking it with Jack's, twisting him around and getting his own hit into Jack's side. Jack winced only slightly and brought his free arm up, and with a power no one would have thought the slender man had, he punched Blockbuster hard enough in the face to break the big man's hold on him, busting Blockbuster's upper lip and sent him stumbling backwards into the crowd. That was when Jack, grinning from ear to ear, spit blood onto the floor and started a cycle of hitting Blockbuster in the face, over and over again with each fist.

Blockbuster went down, hitting the concrete floor like a ton of bricks, his head bouncing on the floor, but Jack didn't stop. He rode the man down to the floor and continued to hit him over and over again, breaking the man's nose, splitting his lips further, cutting his cheeks open. Jack was laughing the entire time as he just kept hitting the man as he sat on his barrel chest.

Harley was watching with a smile when she heard Alex beside her hiss. “Fucking fuck fuck, look at him go.”

Harley hissed back, “Told you not to bet against him.”

Alex glanced at her and smiled. “I bet I shouldn't fucking bet against you either, eh?”

“Nope.” Harley smiled.

Someone from the crowd yelled. “Hey, he is going to kill him!”

Someone else shouted. “Stop him!”

Harley was the one to race forward, tucking Jack's things under her arm and grabbed Jack's arm. “Jack, Jack stop—you won!”

Jack grinned with an unsteady look in his blue eyes, stumbling up and letting Harley tug him to his
feet. Blockbuster groaned, rolling over to his side gagging and spitting blood, barely conscious. Jack smiled looking around and then his eyes landed on Penguin who was glaring at him. Jack blew him a kiss.

Penguin smiled. “Now let the woman fight.”

Jack wrapped his arms around Harley. “You don't have to do this cupcake.”

Harley giggled shoving his clothing and shoes at him. “Are you kidding me?”

Jack laughed. “That's my girl.”

Harley stripped down to her deep red bra, earning herself several whistles. Jack growled, reaching out and pulling her to him pressing his forehead to hers. “Be careful my little minx and kick the ass of whoever she is.” He smiled and kissed her. Harley grabbed his head with both hands, her fingers grabbing handfuls of his hair, pressing her lips against his damaged lips hard. Jack dropped his free hand to her rear, pressing her up against him and squeezed.

The crowd roared their approval. Jack let her go with a smack on her ass as she walked out into the middle the fighting floor. That was when the crowd parted and Harley's mouth fell open when she saw the woman she was going to be fighting.

Ivy smiled. “Well, hello again Harley.”
Harley blurted out, her blue eyes huge with shock. “What the actual fuck?!”

Ivy had her hands on her hips and grinned at Harley without a care in the world. She was dressed similarly now as when Harley had seen her at the roller rink; short shorts, fishnet stockings and a Gotham Siren’s t-shirt in a deep forest green, the name of the roller derby group emblazoned across her breasts, and a pair of wedged heeled sneakers in white.

Ivy laughed. “Well, besides roller derby I like to fight. It helps me drain myself of my pent up...energies.” Ivy smiled. “So Harley, what are you doing here?”

Ivy started to untie her shoes, watching Harley with a smile.

Harley frowned. “Well, actually Jack and I just came here with a friend.” Ivy’s smile widened as she tossed her shoes to the side and began to prowl slowly around Harley. She pulled her t-shirt over the top of her head, then tossed the garment into the crowd that let out a roar of approval, some of them fighting over the shirt. A few others started to chant. “Poison Ivy! Poison Ivy!” Ivy smiled seductively at the crowd, running the tips of her fingers along the jaws of a couple of men and a few women while she walked around the edges of the crowd, still circling Harley as she did so and licked her lips. She was wearing a deep green sports bra underneath that she somehow made look just as sexy as the lacy red bra that Harley was wearing.

Ivy smiled. “You could just give up now. I mean, I haven’t lost a fight yet...and I don't think I’m about to lose one now.”

*

Warren was swiftly exchanging money as betting began in earnest. Jack glanced once toward Warren with narrowed eyes. He motioned at Alex pulling out his wallet and handed some bills to Alex. “Put this on Harley.”

Alex frowned; it was a LOT of money. “You sure man? I know she's your girl and all, but Ivy has fucked up everyone she has fought against.”

Jack's blue eyed gaze slid to Alex. He didn't say a word.

Alex cringed under Jack Wayne's scrutiny. “Okay man.”

Alex made his way over to Warren, watching the exchange of money before turning his eyes back on the two women. He trusted Jack, so with a deep breath Alex pushed his way forward and yelled at Warren smacking Jack's money down, and adding his own to the wager. “Put it all on the new girl Harley.

Warren stared at him for a heartbeat before he shrugged. “All right, new girl it is.”

That was when someone from the back yelled. “Get Ivy's music playing!!”

No one was sure where the music came from, but Penguin motioned with his hand and the sounds of deadmau5 featuring Gerard Way's Professional Griefers started to play, filling the tight space with
the thump of the music. The music seemed to feed the crowd even more, the beat running through and over the assembled patrons and fighters, the excitement for the fight becoming palpable.

Harley licked her lips with a smile at Ivy. Ivy bounced on a her feet a little, her hands in loose fists, the music clearly jazzing her up for the fight.

* 

Jack glanced back looking for the source of the music and frowned, curling his lip a little while shrugging back into his shirt. He didn't bother to button it. He shrugged on his vest and jacket as well, leaving everything hanging open, much to the appreciation of several of the women (and a few men) in the crowd.

Alex walked up beside Jack after placing their bets. “Okay man, I placed your fucking bet, but are you sure you wanna bet on your girl? I mean she ain't going to fucking know if you wanna bet on Ivy. Ivy's the sure fucking winner. She wasn't fucking lying when she said she ain't lost yet. I mean, this thing ain't been going on a fucking long time, but still...”

Jack speared Alex with his eyes. “I always bet on Harley. Always.”

Alex took an involuntary step back. “Okay man, it's your fucking money,” Alex muttered. “Don't know why I bet on her, but whatever...”

* 

Harley followed Ivy with her eyes, smirking. “I don't give up, I never give up,” Harley purred sarcastically and twisting round to follow Ivy with her eyes.

Ivy smiled and shrugged. “Fine, I'll do my best to avoid your face.”

When the music had started to play Harley chuckled. “You have your own theme song or something?”

Ivy shrugged again gesturing with her hands, a small self congratulatory smile on her lips. “What can I say? I've never lost, so I get to pick my own music.”

Harley had to laugh again. “Well I guess I will do the same and try to avoid your face...if possible.”

Ivy grinned and brought her hands up into fists, lifting her eyebrows up mockingly at Harley before she leapt, her fist catching Harley by surprise. Harley stepped back, but still took a hard hit in the shoulder knocking her backwards off her feet.

* 

Jack yelped and started to move forward, his instinct to defend Harley, but Alex grabbed him with his one hand surprising Jack with the strength in it as he fingers pressed down on Jack's shoulder holding him in place.

“Hey man, I don't know your girl, but I get the feeling she will fucking kill you if you interrupt.”

Jack snarled, his head whipping around to glare at Alex, his lips pulled back from his teeth. Alex let go of him in surprise, but just as quickly Jack calmed muttering. “You're right Alex...she would...”

Jack chuckled then and said, “One of the many things I love about her.”

*
Harley rolled to her side when she went down, hitting the concrete floor hard, but not hard enough to disorient her. Her roll allowed her to avoid Ivy's next hit. Ivy's fist hit the concrete just as Harley had rolled away and then she surged to her feet smoothly, her gymnastics training lending her movements grace and skill obvious to the fight patrons. Harley followed her ascent with a swift one-two punch at Ivy's neck. Ivy spun on her knee and leaned back just in time to avoid the full impact of Harley's punches, the knuckles of Harley's fists scraping against Ivy's collarbone as Ivy leaned backwards. The hits hurt, but weren't enough to knock Ivy off her knees or to cause any real damage.

Ivy twisted her body to the side and brought her left leg around for a swift snap kick that caught Harley low, hitting her in the lower abdomen. Harley stumbled back from the impact, stopping herself at the last minute from falling into the crowd. She kept her wits about her and threw herself to the left, avoiding another kick as Ivy came to her feet.

Harley took a swing at Ivy, but she overextended her arm as she missed. Ivy leaned out of the way, caught Harley under her arm. The red head lifted Harley off her feet with her shoulder digging into Harley's armpit. Ivy spun her around and with a roar, Ivy tossed Harley. Harley yelped as she slammed into the crowd; her body knocked several of them down and the harsh impact forced air to expel from her lungs in a painful whoosh. Harley groaned lightly though she took the throw in stride, rolling to her feet. She only wobbled a little, spitting blood onto the concrete floor, her teeth having cut the inside of her mouth. It only took Harley a couple of breaths before she took several fast steps toward Ivy, followed by numerous rapid swings at her opponent with her fists.

*  

Ivy managed, just barely, to knock Harley's fists away with the flats of her hands, the young blonde surprising her with her speed. Harley kept pressing herself forward, forcing Ivy to move backwards, staying on the defensive against Harley's attack. Ivy batted one fist out of the way, then the other, but Harley was forcing Ivy to continually have to move backwards, pushing her across the cleared fighting space. The crowd was moving out of the way while Harley continued a barrage of swift strikes, continuing to force Ivy backwards. Ivy hissed, realizing that Harley was forcing her into a virtual corner. Ivy ducked, fully dodging one of Harley's swings and ducked under Harley's arm to bring her knee up to try to hit Harley in the stomach.

Harley smacked Ivy's leg down with a growl, but Ivy grabbed Harley by the shoulders, forcing Harley forward at the same time trying to bring her knee up into Harley's diaphram. Harley hissed, bending her body forward into Ivy's grip with enough power to throw them both into a somersault. The two women struggled when they fell to the floor, twisting and turning, each trying to get an advantage on the other but instead, the struggle rolled them both across the floor.

Harley laughed then, grabbed Ivy by the hair and slammed her forehead against the red head's. Ivy winced, for a moment disoriented by the head butt. Harley started to slam her forehead forward again, but Ivy pitched herself forward, keeping her hold on Harley just barely, her fingers digging painfully into Harley's shoulders as she rolled them across the floor, slamming into a wall hard enough that the impact forced them to separate. Both women came out of the impromptu somersault, panting as they surged to their feet. Ivy reached for Harley again, trying her best to use her knees once again as a battering ram into Harley's stomach.

With both hands, Harley slammed Ivy's knee to the side hard enough that she caused Ivy to lose her balance. Harley maintained her hold on Ivy's knee and pushed upward with all her strength in order to flip Ivy backwards. Ivy tried to control her landing as she flipped over backwards, but when she landed, she ended up taking several steps backwards as she attempted to maintain her balance. She fell to the floor hard, her breath forced out of her lungs in a painful rush.
Ivy hissed in pain, but she threw her arms back and turned her fall into a somersault, pushing herself up on her hands for a split second, bringing her legs around to come up on her feet again with a smile, panting, blood trickling from her nose.

“Oh, you're good.” She grinned at Harley.

Harley was panting as well, two trails of blood running down from her nose while she hopped lightly in place her hands in loose fists, but she grinned back at Ivy clearly impressed. “You're not bad yourself.”

* Jack was gnawing at his split lower lip as he watched Harley. He could see the trickle of blood running down from the corner of Harley's mouth, the blood smeared across her upper lip from her bloody nose, the sight of which had Jack growing hard for her. He smiled, his eyes traveling along her sweat slicked form. Watching her fight was beautiful he thought to himself...she was an angel, a Valkyrie, an Amazon...Jack's smile was wide with pleasure and lust. He didn't really think Harley would lose, but even if she did, watching her, half naked, the blood...all of it...it was worth it just to see her like this...his desire for her increased ten-fold.

* With a wide smile on her face, Ivy took a few hard swings at Harley. Ivy's arm's were well muscled and she clearly had some kickboxing training which was demonstrated in the way she held herself and the quick smart, snap of her arms when she tried to punch Harley. But Harley moved quickly too, her gymnastics background, her training with Jack and her natural instincts made Harley ready for Ivy this time. Harley ducked away from a few of the punches and slapped the others to the side. Ivy's eyes glowed with anger and a little bit of admiration. She continued to try to get a hit in, but even as tired as she was, Harley was still managing to avoid her punches.

Ivy ducked, using her shoulder to throw herself into Harley's side, sending both women tumbling off their feet. They rolled together on the floor to the deafening cheers of the crowd. Ivy managed to get Harley under her and straddled her. She started to swing her fists down at Harley in quick succession. Harley yelped and brought her arms up trying to use her forearms to block Ivy's punches. One of Ivy's fists caught her in the side of her brow, but Harley managed to block the others, her forearms taking the brunt of Ivy's fists, each a painful impact.

Harley hissed. She had to break this up or Ivy was going to win just by wearing her down! Harley took a deep breath, then, in that split second between punches, she lashed out with one hand to grab Ivy by her shoulder, her fingers digging painfully into Ivy's skin. Harley put all her strength into the move, hauling Ivy to the side as she pulled her opponent with her arm and simultaneously pushed up off the floor, tossing the red head down to the concrete while rolling with her so that Harley ended up sitting between Ivy's legs. (She had meant to straddle Ivy, but Ivy was strong, nearly breaking away from Harley during the roll.)

Harley smiled, her lipstick smeared across her chin, her eye make up was a mess now, the effect of which caused Harley's blue eyes to stand out in startling contrast to the dark smears of eyeshadow and eyeliner. It gave the illusion that Harley was wearing a dark mask across her eyes. Blood trickled from her nose and over her lips as she swung her fists down at Ivy.

Ivy growled, “You blonde bitch!” She brought her legs up to wrap them around Harley's neck. With her legs, Ivy brought Harley's head down toward her and squeezed, cutting off Harley's air.

Harley's blue eyes bugged in surprise. Ivy's thighs around her neck were tight, cutting off her supply
of oxygen. At this rate she would pass out. She slammed her fists against Ivy's thighs, but they seemed like granite, unmoving. And then, in the only move that Harley could think of to loosen Ivy's grip on her neck, she reached up and grabbed Ivy's breasts and twisted.

Ivy screamed, her legs loosening.

*

Jack’s eyes widened at Harley and he burst out laughing, while Alex hissed grabbing his crotch.

“Ah fuck man! I felt that in the gonads!”

Which only made Jack laugh more. “That's my girl!”

Jack grinned, pumping his fist in the air and yelled. “Get her Harls!!”

He chuckled to himself. Watching Harley fight was his newest turn on.

*

Ivy cried out, releasing Harley, who jumped to her feet, staggering backwards away from Ivy as she took quick painful breaths, fighting off a wave of dizziness. Ivy hopped to her feet, baring her teeth in rage, her hands held protectively on her sore breasts. Both women eyed each other for a couple of seconds, stalking each other as they moved in a circle. Ivy's green eyes were flat with pure rage while Harley giggled. Ivy made a grab for Harley. Harley reached out at the same time, both women grabbing each other around the back of the neck, each snagging handfuls of hair between their fingers in the process.

“That was a low blow Harley!” Ivy hissed, her green eyes glinting with malice.

Harley giggled with a grin and a wink. “I would say I'm sorry, but I'm not!”

The two women twisted around together, staggering in a circle. They ran into the crowd which shoved the women back into the center of the makeshift ring, causing them to break apart. Harley jumped back from Ivy and swung her body around, snapping at out Ivy with her right leg at the same time. She kicked Ivy in the side with a well placed snap of her foot. Ivy hissed in pain, stumbling with the kick, but she didn't go down.

Ivy grinned. “Oh, so going to play that way are we?”

She smiled and with a hop, snapped her leg up and out, catching Harley between the breasts and knocking her backwards. Harley gasped as the air was knocked out from her lungs. She dropped to her hands and knees for a second; from the feel of it, Ivy's kick had come dangerously close to breaking her breastbone.

Ivy grinned, hopping in place, her hands still in fists ready to take another swing at Harley.

“Had enough? There's no shame in tapping out you know? Especially when you're beaten. It's always good to known when you're beaten by the better woman, doll face.” Ivy winked at her which had the crowd whistling and shouting.

*

Jack growled low and deep. He didn't care how this match turned out, he hated that woman with every fiber of his being. Not only did she rub him the wrong way, but he would swear she was
flirting with his Harley at the same time. Jack's hands formed into fist, his blue eyes blazing with jealous fury.

Alex, who had lit himself another cigar, grinned standing next to Jack. “God, I fucking love it when the women fight.”

Jack narrowed his eyes at Alex who shrugged. “Hey man, I can't help it! I'm a fucking low-class dude.”

Jack stared at Alex before he burst out laughing, “Yeah, you are.”

Alex grinned merrily.

Harley narrowed her eyes as she pushed herself up to her feet. She wiped the back of her hand across her mouth, tasting the blood on her tongue. Harley grinned licking her lips (unintentionally seductively, which made Ivy's eyes bug for the briefest of moments. Jack saw it and burned angrily, not at his lover however, for Harley was completely unaware of what she had done.).

Ivy snarled and tried to kick Harley again, but this time Harley was ready for her; she knocked the first kick aside with a simple, yet effective forearm block, then the second. On the third kick, Harley grabbed Ivy's ankle. Her instinct was to slam her fist or elbow down on Ivy's kneecap to break her leg, but she had to calm herself enough not to do it. (Being this savage was something fairly new to Harley, but damn if it didn't feel good she thought briefly.)

This woman might be a friend or a foe in the roller derby and right now, while it would be satisfying to break her leg, Harley had to think about the future as part of the derby team...so she stopped herself at the last possible moment and threw Ivy's leg to the side. Instead she went for a series of quick punches to Ivy's diaphragm. Ivy yelped, managing to back away from Harley enough that she could swing her leg in a low roundhouse kick, catch Harley in her side and send her stumbling away. Harley snarled and maintained her balance, barely. She turned to face her foe, but Ivy rushed her, grabbing Harley by the shoulder and trying to ram her knee into Harley's stomach by forcing Harley's torso down. Harley leaned forward with the shove, tightening her stomach muscles as she did in preparation for the strike to her diaphragm. In the same instant, Harley brought her hands around to block Ivy's attack. With her next movement, Harley violently shrugged out of Ivy's grasp and snapped her hands out to grab Ivy by her upper arms, spinning her around and flung the red haired woman away from her.

Harley followed the swing with a leap, bringing her fist down in a move trying to put Ivy down for good. Ivy shifted away at the last second, Harley's fist hitting her with a glancing blow in the shoulder which still managed to knock her off her feet. Ivy spun herself on the floor coming up onto her feet in a flash. She reached up at the same time she was getting to her feet and grabbed Harley. The two women struggled, turning in a circle together, both of them bleeding from their noses, blood covering their lips and teeth as they both struggled, panting, to get a better grip on the other.

Harley broke free first, slamming the side of her fist down on Ivy's forearm. Ivy gasped in pain and took a swing at Harley, but Harley just barely dodged Ivy's fist. Harley wasn't able to dodge the knee that Ivy brought up between her legs, using her knee to hit Harley in the inner thigh forcing Harley's leg to go wide. Harley stumbled which gave Ivy a chance to use her knee again, but this time the red head's knee caught Harley in the stomach.

Harley coughed painfully and spit blood on the floor, stumbling backwards trying to put some distance between her and Ivy to give herself a chance to regain her breath. Ivy, grinning like a cat,
moved quickly trying to press her advantage. She reached out, snagging Harley by her right arm. Ivy took Harley's arm, spun around, lifted Harley off her feet and threw her back down to the floor. Harley hit hard with a shout of pain and a hard exhale of breath; pain raced through her entire body. Ivy fell on Harley thinking she had her this time. Harley reached out when Ivy dropped on top of her, catching Ivy's arms, keeping Ivy from doing any real damage to her. The two women struggled for a few intense moments, but Ivy prevented Harley from getting up, pressing the pretty blonde down on the cement floor. They struggled, Harley shoving with all her strength for a few intense moment until finally Harley snapped a leg up, displaying her flexibility as her thigh smashed into one of Ivy's arms, breaking her hold, on Harley. Harley snapped her leg up, connecting her shin and knee with Ivy's bruised breasts to throw Ivy off of her. Ivy grabbed one of Harley's arms as she stumbled back, forcing the blonde to come with her when Ivy rolled onto her back. When she rolled, Ivy twisted her opponent's arm and slammed Harley down between Ivy's legs again. Ivy grinned as she wrapped her legs around Harley neck, trying to choke her into giving up. Harley gasped in surprised. Ivy's thighs were like iron!! This was twice now that Harley ended up being choked by Ivy's thighs! Harley could feel her breath being cut off, her lips turning blue as Ivy choked her.

"Come on blondie! You don't stand a chance against me! I'm a pro and I haven't lost a fight yet." Ivy smiled at her. "You give up and I'll even kiss you better."

Harley wasn't listening. She struggled, beating uselessly on Ivy's thighs trying to get her to loosen her grip. She balled her right hand into a fist, using the side of her fist, Harley slammed it down hard on Ivy's knee in the soft area between the knee cap and calf. A second strike to the same spot before Ivy could block her strike and she felt Ivy's grip loosen. The pain raced up Ivy's leg, numbing it for a split second, but that was all Harley needed. She broke free rolling to her feet again.

"God Red! You're such a bitch!" Harley grinned.

Ivy, who had risen to her feet as well chuckled. "You have no idea Dollface."

The two women walked slowly around each other, both of them breathing hard. Both women shook their arms out, each with scraped and bloody knuckles. Ivy attacked first. She brought her left knee up and pivoted, turning fully to her side and snap kicked. Harley gasped throwing herself backwards, only the breeze from Ivy's kick brushed across her skin.

* * *

"Man, that is some fucking kung-fu shit Ivy's doing," Alex said around a puff of smoke coming from his open mouth.

Jack frowned watching Harley. "Harley has a few tricks up her sleeves."

* * *

Harley came up and lunged forward to kick Ivy in the shin, then following that with a knee to the stomach, forcing Ivy to stumble backwards, but Harley kept coming with another knee kick catching Ivy in the stomach again. Ivy hissed and replied, attacking Harley with a series of quick kicks, but this time Harley met Ivy's kicks with her own, the two women's legs meeting in mid-air as they blocked each other. Ivy finally ducked low and kicked Harley in the side, but Harley did the same, crouching down slightly on one leg, bringing her other leg up and taking Ivy in the opposite side, causing both women to fall. When they hit the ground they both gasped and huffed with exhaustion.

"Would you consider a draw?" Ivy asked.

Harley laughed.
They were lying side by side, their heads almost touching, panting and laughing, when Cobblepot stood up. “NO! No ties!! You two keep fighting until there is a winner!! Those are the rules!”

Ivy snarled. “FINE! You little Birdman!”

She turned to Harley. “Going to have to finish you off unless you want to tap out?”

Harley laughed. “No fucking way Red!”

Both women rolled gracefully to their feet and immediately began attacking each other, though they were both exhausted and moving just a little slower. Ivy came at Harley hard and fast, thinking to end this swiftly, swinging her fists in rapid succession. Harley slapped Ivy's hands away with forearm blocks and tight circular hand deflections, backing herself up. Ivy pressed her attack, unrelenting. Harley, with a slight bounce in her step, twisted her right leg back behind her, then brought her knee up as high as she could, it was a pose she had done many times in gymnastics, a scorpion pose, but this was the first time Harley had ever thought to use it in a way other than as a gymnastics pose. Ivy threw herself forward, slamming her body into Harley's and wrapped her arms around Harley's waist, trying to take her down once and for all. But Harley jerked her leg straight up, arching her back with a slight twist to the side and brought her foot around rapidly, smashing Ivy in the face with as much force as she could.

The impact of Harley's foot to the side of her face snapped Ivy's head to the side, splitting her lip and sending a trail of blood flying into the air. Ivy let go, her eyes dazed by the kick as she stared at Harley with a confused look before she dropped to the floor, unconscious.

Harley giggled. “I know you said no faces, but what can I say...I lied.”

For a moment, no one reacted except Jack who yelled at the top of his lungs with joy. “THAT’S MY GIRL!!!”

That was the moment the crowd broke out into chaos of angry snarls, cheering and a lot of disappointed people who had bet on the wrong woman.

Jack rushed forward wrapping his arms around Harley just under her rear and lifted her off her feet. “You were the most glorious creature in the entire world Harley!!”

Harley giggled looking down at him. “Oh puddin!”

Jack slowly lowered her, letting her body slink against his as he put her on her feet again and grabbed her face between his hands planting a hard kiss on her bloody lips. The two of them forgot about the world around them, the sounds of the enraged crowd died away while they kiss. Jack purred against her mouth taking his time to fully taste the blood on her lips, to caress her tongue before he finally let her go. “You taste like blood and strawberries my sweet cupcake,” he whispered. “Intoxicating.”

Harley giggled pressing her forehead against Jack's. He grinned as he brushed his lips against hers, taking small nips of her lips when Alex came up to the two of them laughing.

“Oh man, that was fucking bad ass! This fight club shit has only been going on for a short time, but that Ivy chick, she ain't lost once—until now! That was fucking majestic! AND I won my grand back plus!” Alex grinned while slapping a wad of bills into Jack's hand. “You did fucking great Jack. I swear to fucking God I will always listen to you!” Jack grinned stuffing the money into his front pocket as Alex dropped a hand onto Jack's shoulder. “Who wants drinks? I'm buying!”

(During all of this a couple of young women came over to Ivy's prone body and lifted her up,
removing her unconscious body from the fighting floor.)

Cobblepot stood up and started yelling. “THAT’S ENOUGH!! Everyone calm down!!” That was when a gun shot was fired. The sound not only echoed through the basement deafeningly, but chunks of the ceiling came crumbling down. Jack turned, pulling Harley protectively against him to see Cobblepot with a pistol pointed at the crowd. “Now settle down!”

The crowd started to quiet down, their voices dropping to muffled sounds. Warren had moved over to a corner, the money flying back and forth, though much quieter now.

Cobblepot sneered. “All right, so the two newbies won.” Cobblepot turned his little black glare on Jack.

Jack stepped forward, his arm around Harley's waist. “So now what Penguin?”

Penguin snarled. “You're done for the night Wayne. No more fighting for you, those are the rules, but you are welcome to stay and bet on other fighters. BUT you are both required to show up for the next meeting.” Cobblepot held his fingers up to emphasize the word 'meeting.'

Jack lifted a brow. “We do, eh?”

Cobblepot narrowed his eyes. “Yes, you will get to fight any 'new' members when next we convene.”

“What about you? Do you just sit there on your little throne and squawk? Or do you actually have something to contribute to this little bit of theater?” Jack smiled, releasing Harley long enough to allow her to throw on her shirt, vest and jacket. She buttoned two buttons on her shirt, but left the vest undone while Jack spoke.

Penguin looked like he was turning red as he hissed back at Jack. “You make it through two more fights...then yeah, you'll get to fight me.”

Jack grinned. “Ah, something to aim for then. Who do I fight after a newbie?”

Penguin grinned. It was a vicious smile full of glee and malice. “Oh I think I will have a surprise for you. Just make sure you show up for it, Jack Wayne.”

Jack laughed. “Oh, I would never turn down such a tempting date.” Jack blew Oswald a kiss and winked at him, which had both him and Harley laughing. Oswald snarled as he flopped back in his seat while Jack turned Harley around and headed out with a gleeful Alex right behind them.

*  

They made their way back up the stairs and headed toward the car. Jack had to admit to himself that he was a little surprised that the car was still there, intact...must be a testament to Oswald's security or the threats against anyone who robbed from a participant in the club. Either way Jack was pleased to not have to explain a stolen car, or missing hubcaps to his brother.

“All right most glorious lady of the evening and Alex.” Jack laughed as Alex rolled his eyes with a smile. “I think we should go celebrate our victories!”

Alex grinned. “I love a fucking victory celebration!”

*
Just as when they were driving to the fight, the three of them had the music blaring out of the car's speakers, but this time it was the three of them singing at the top of their lungs to A-ha's “Take On Me.” Jack and Harley put their heads together and sang perfectly, hitting the high tones.

“Take on me, (take on me)
Take me on, (take on me)
I'll be gone
In a day or two…”

While Alex, his one hand waving around dangerously, threatening to topple him right out of the convertible as he sang loudly and off key, caused Jack and Harley to stumble over the words laughing at Alex.

* *

They ended up driving to the east end of Gotham heading to a place call The Cafeteria, a twenty-four hour diner/restaurant with a basement bar that was also open all hours. When they arrived, Jack and Harley were both still bloody. Jack's shirt and vest were still hanging open, while Harley was only barely covered, a couple of buttons fastened on her shirt, but her vest was open and her cleavage was on full display; Alex still looked like Alex with a big happy grin. The waitress didn't bat an eye. She simply smiled and escorted them to a booth and handed them each a menu.

Alex plopped down and slid across from Jack and Harley who sat down sliding in close to each other. Harley leaned in closer, covering Jack's mouth with hers. She was still riding the high from the fight and she wanted Jack badly. She snaked her fingers into his hair, grabbing tightly, but not so tightly that hair would come out. Her left hand came up to grab a handful of his shirt and jacket, gently tugging Jack closer. Jack growled, his left hand going to her throat, leaning into kiss her deeper, the two of them groaning breathlessly as their kissing became harder.

Alex, paying no attention at all to them, grinned and grabbed up his menu, his eyes reading down the items swiftly. “All right! They serve fucking cocktails and alcoholic coffee drinks. I can fucking deal with that!”

Harley chuckled, pulling back from Jack's mouth, her eyes gazing over his face, settling on Jack's lips for a moment which she traced with her tongue before she sighed and leaned against Jack's shoulder. Jack, who had picked up a napkin, was gently wiping the blood from her face, alternating with licking the blood from her lips, to wiping a little bit of the blood away with the napkin that had dribbled down her neck and over her cleavage. Alex was too busy looking over the drinks to worry too much about the way Jack and Harley were acting. Jack was running his tongue over every bloody place on Harley's face and down her neck where blood from her mouth had dripped down. Harley giggled and purred alternately snuggling up close to Jack and wrapped a leg around his thigh.

Alex grinned reading from the menu. “Oh man, they have fucking Inferno Bloody Mary's! And fuck! This Master Cocktail sounds like just what I fucking need! It has fucking grade A maple cayenne! Man I think I need one of each! Oh fuck me standing, they got Cafe Don Juan which has dark rum in it! Oh fuck it, I'm ordering all three!”

Alex dropped his menu and rubbed his hand over his hair, only then noticing Jack was busily licking Harley's neck moving lower, clearly heading toward her cleavage.

“Oh come the fuck on you two! At least wait until you drop my-soon-to-be-drunk ass off
somewhere!” Alex groaned covering his eyes with his one hand.

Jack chuckled running his tongue one more time along Harley’s lips. She purred softly rubbing her thumb along his slightly swollen lip, her own tongue snaking out to lick the blood from the corner of Jack’s mouth as she whispered. “What other coffee drinks do they have?”

Alex picked up the menu shaking his head at the two of them and muttering. “You two are like a couple of fucking horny teenagers...” Alex glanced back at the menu. “Well they have an Amaretto coffee. Sounds like something you might like,” Alex said glancing up at Harley.

Harley purred, her tongue flicking across Jack’s lips. “Mm... Amaretto coffee.”

Jack rubbed the tip of his nose against hers, his fingers playing along the swell of her breasts and further down her cleavage. “Anything you want my sweet. Think I’ll have straight black coffee.”

Jack reluctantly stopped playing with Harley’s cleavage to pick up the menu. He glanced over the items listed in black that ran the length of the laminated menu. “So what would you like to eat my darling pumpkin? After your epic fight, I’m sure you’re hungry. I know I am.” He waggled his eyebrows suggestively at her.

Harley giggled and leaned her head against his shoulder. “How about smoked Gouda and bacon macaroni and cheese?”

Jack chuckled. “Perfect! And I’ll add some old school meatballs! What about you Alex, or are you having a liquid meal?”

Alex chuckled. “I’m fine with a liquid meal, but go ahead and add some blue crab toast to that. Might as well add a cushion to my acholol.”

Jack and Harley had just started to laugh when the waitress returned. She was a bleached blonde with a nice smile and a sweet figure. Alex swallowed letting his eyes run down her. She was a little heavy, but he preferred women with a fuller figure. Her eyes glanced toward Alex and her smile widened as she cocked her hips and pulled out her pad and pencil. “I'm your waitress for the evening. My name is Alice. So what can I get you all to drink?”

Jack grinned. “Well, my dear Alice. My boy Alex there needs a cafe Don Juan, a master cocktail and an Inferno Bloody Mary.”

Alex beamed. “You were listening!”

Jack grinned. “I always listen to my friends.”

Alice chuckled turning her attention to Alex. “Three drink just for you?”

Alex grinned at her. “I'm on a liquid diet and I'm celebrating!”

“Oh, may I ask what?” Alice looked around at the three of them.

Alex grinned. “My friends here just won me a lot of money! Well, at least his girl did.” Alex winked at Harley who giggled. Alice noticed the blossoming bruises on both Jack and Harley, plus the traces of blood, but if she found it unusual she made no comment and no facial reaction Jack noticed. All part and parcel of working the nightshift in Gotham Jack supposed; she had probably seen weirder. Jack turned back to Harley, his arm draped over her shoulders. He leaned in and nipped playfully at her lips. Harley purred running her hand over his still mostly exposed chest.
Alice smiled. “Well that's wonderful.”

Alex grinned and winked at Alice. “So expect a big tip.”

Alice giggled smiling brightly at Alex before turning attention to Jack and Harley. “What can I get the two of you to drink?” She smiled, her pencil poised over her pad.

Jack smiled. “My sweet lady here need an Amaretto coffee and a black coffee for me.”

Alice wrote their orders down and nodded. “All right, I'll get those right out to you.”

* 

After they placed their order, Alice headed off to put their drink orders in. When she returned, setting Jack's and Harley's drinks down in front of them, she leaned over a bit more than necessary toward Alex setting each of his drinks down in front of him. Alex gave her an appreciative grin.

“Thanks Alice. These look fucking fantastic!”

Alice giggled. “Enjoy.”

She hurried off, but glanced back to smile at Alex.

Alex watched her with a pleased grin. “I bet I can get her fucking phone number...”

Jack grinned. “Just make sure she never hears you sing.” Harley snorted almost spilling her drink she had just picked up. Alex stopped halfway to his mouth with his Inferno Bloody Mary and made a face at Jack. “Oh ahaha, some of us ain't as talented as a Wayne.”

Jack laughed as he sipped at his coffee. “So, Alex my friend. You know anything about this surprise Cobblepot hinted at?”

Alex smiled after taking a large sip of his drink. “Nah, he's been hinting around about it for the last week or two, but no one seems to know anything about who or what that surprise might be. I mean I haven't really done any real digging, but I could if you want...”

Alex took another big swallow of his drink. Jack nodded. “Yeah, do it. Usual fee?”

Alex grinned. “Of course!”

Jack took another few sips of his hot coffee before he asked. “You think you can get Troy Randell to show up at Cobblepot's fight club?”

Alex nearly sputtered on his drink “What are you talking about? Why would you want that fucking walking, talking bag of shit to show up there?”

Jack smiled squeezing Harley around the shoulders. He could tell by the way she started to giggle when he mentioned Troy that she knew exactly what he was thinking. Jack sipped his coffee. “Didn't old Penguin say that the next club meeting...” Here Jack chuckled as he continued. “I would have to fight a newbie that showed up? Well, why not make sure the newbie is someone I would really get a kick out of beating to a pulp? Besides, Troy has been making himself a large thorn in my and Harley's side. I think it's time I gave him a lesson.” Jack smiled and took another sip of his coffee while gazing over the rim at Alex. Jack lifted a brow at Alex in a questioning look after he took a sip.

Alex groaned. “Yeah, yeah I could probably get him there. Hell, he would fucking come knowing exactly what it was if he knew you were there and had won your first fight! The few times I've
talked to that walking douche bag to place bets or grab him some drugs, all he did was fucking complain about you. He really has a stick up his fucking ass where you're concerned Jack.”

Jack and Harley shared a look, both of them with identical grins. Alex frowned. There was something frightening in their shared glance, but Alex quickly dismissed it.

Jack smiled turning back to Alex while rubbing his hand down Harley's shoulder as he hissed. “Actually, that's what I'm counting on.”

Harley giggled licking her lips. “Poor Tiffany. I almost feel sorry for her...almost.”

Alex looked between the two of them then shrugged. “What the fuck ever man. Yeah, I'll get him there. The next fight is four days from now.”

Jack grinned. “Perfect. It will be after the masquerade. Troy's ass will be burning after the failure of his little cocktail party. He will be wanting revenge even more.” Jack chuckled and Harley giggled.

Alex frowned. “Man, I ain't fucking drunk enough for you two being so creepy.”

Jack laughed. “Don't worry Alex. I'll make it worth your while.”

Alex smiled and picked up one of his drinks. “Thanks Jack, that's one of the fucking reasons I like you, you always pay up without fucking trying to fuck me over.”

Jack lifted his coffee, Harley her drink and Alex his, the three of the clinking their glasses. “To friends you can count on,” Jack said.

Alex grinned. “Fuck yeah!”

Harley smiled. “To friends.”

* *

Jack and Harley ended up having to carrying Alex back to the car after he ended up ordering five more drinks, but he did leave with Alice's phone number in his phone. Jack drove Alex to an apartment building over in Old Gotham district. The building was called the Daytonian with an old brick front, all the windows were small, but with ancient looking eaves over the windows. The year 1901 along with the building's name were carved into the brick over the main door leading into the apartment. By the time they arrived, Alex was three sheets to the wind, passed out in the back of the car.

Jack chuckled. “Think you can help me with him Harls?”

Harley laughed. “Sure thing puddin.”

They both stepped out of the car and hauled Alex out. Jack took a few moments to search him until they came up with a set of keys. Together, Jack and Harley leveraged Alex up, their task made slightly more difficult since Alex only had one arm to drape over their shoulders.

“How do you know where Alex lives?” Harley asked as they made their way up to the apartment building. Jack smiled. “Actually I'm not really sure he 'lives' here. Alex has several 'locations' he can be found at, but he likes to stay on the move. This the last place I remember meeting him, so here is hoping he still uses this place.”

When they came up to the main door they found that it was locked. Jack, balancing Alex with one
arm and with Harley's help, managed to make his way through the several keys on Alex's key ring before he found the correct one.

Once inside it was only a matter of looking at the mailboxes. None of them had the name Alex, but one had the name Mr. Vaffanculo Cazzo. Jack snorted nearly dropping Alex. “Okay, that's his apartment right there. 5B."

Harley narrowed her eyes at the name. “How do you know that's him?”

Jack chuckled. “Because that's Italian, the first word is the phrase 'Go fuck yourself' and Cazzo is just Italian for 'dick' but it can be used as 'fuck' too.”

Harley started laughing as they hauled Alex to the elevator.

They managed to find the key on Alex's key ring after taking the elevator to the fifth floor where they opened Alex's apartment and unceremoniously dumped him onto his couch before heading home themselves.

*

It was nearly five in the morning by the time they arrived back at Wayne Manor. Jack just parked the car up front in the drive way, the two of them nearly stumbling out as exhaustion started to hit them.

When they reached their room, the first thing they both did was strip and head straight for the shower.

*

Harley sighed closing her eyes when she stepped into the shower with Jack. The warm water felt wonderful on her sore, bruised body. Jack was standing in front of her, his eyes closed, letting the warm run over him as well, his hands resting on her hips and his head back.

“How are you feeling toots?” Jack asked opening one eye to look down at her after they had been standing in the shower quietly for a few minutes.

Harley smiled wrapping her arms around his waist and pulling herself closer to lay her head against his wet chest. “Sore and tired. And my knuckles hurt a lot.”

Jack smiled with a light chuckle, kissing the top of her wet hair. “Me too pumpkin, me too. Though it was a lot of fun beating the crap out of that Blockbuster.”

Harley giggled in agreement. “It was fun beating Ivy.”

Jack caught her chin between his thumb and forefinger lifting her face up. “You were magnificent out there,” Jack whispered.

Harley smiled up at him her eyes warm with affection. “You were amazing Jack. It was so hot just wanting you.”

Jack laughed and purred. “I felt the same way watching you my lovely cupcake. You were gorgeous.”

Jack kissed her, taking soft, light nibbles of her lips. Harley groaned reaching up to wrap her arms around his neck. They kissed long and deep for what seemed forever before Jack pulled away.

“All right my Harls. Let's get cleaned up.”
After their shower, Jack surprised Harley by lifting her up into his arms and carrying her bridal style to the bed. They snuggled down in the cool silk sheets wrapping their naked bodies around each other. Jack stroked her face kissing her softly, the tips of his fingers brushing down her throat and across the tops of her breasts in a gentle caress that lulled her, making her eyes heavy. Jack whispered to her, kissing her cheeks, then her lips. “Go to sleep Harley. We can pick this up in the morning.”

She smiled sleepily up at him, her arms wrapped tight around his naked body. “I love you Jack.”

“Mm...I love you my Harl-girl. Close your eyes,” he whispered pressing his mouth to hers kissing her sweetly. It wasn't long before they fell asleep in each others arms.

* 

Harley dreamed she was back at the fight club, dressed the same as she had been when she was fighting, but instead of Ivy standing before her it was Harleen dressed in her physician's clothing. Harley growled. “I thought I killed you.”

Harleen frowned and tilted her head to examine Harley. “I'm not that easy to get rid of Harley, because I'm the you you started life as, you won't ever be able to completely get rid of me.” Harleen followed Harley with her eyes, her expression one of doctorly concern. “You took a great deal of pleasure in beating Ivy up...would you have stopped if you didn't have to?”

Harley frowned. “I...I don't know.”

Harleen smiled softly. “That's what concerns me so much Harley. You just aren't yourself.” She took her glasses off to clean them with the edge of her lab coat.

“Is there any way I can convince you to stop this madness? You know what Jack is planning on doing to the Randells. He will probably right out kill Troy Randell and he'll expect you to do the same to Tiffany. Unless someone stops him. If he doesn't kill Troy, he'll at least beat him as close to death as possible...you know that's the truth. These are innocent people, Harley!”

Harley smiled walking in a circle around Harleen. “Please, one person's madness is another person's reality—or something like that.” Harley giggled. “And the Randells, innocent? Are you serious? They are as far from innocent as you can get!”

Harleen frowned watching her. “This isn't you. You don't hurt people for no reason Harley.”

Harley stopped, examining Harleen as she stood with her hands on her hips. “You aren't me either Harleen. Jack has showed me so many things! Besides, I've been hurt by plenty of 'innocent' people. My mother, my stepfather, my half-siblings, people who I thought were friends...strangers. And no one ever pays for it. NO ONE!!” Harley's rage bubbled to the surface causing her to growl. “I'm tired of being the victim in my life. Jack has shown me another way. He showed me the humor in everything, in life...everything is unfair! That's the punchline! Life is unfair and you die! So why take anything seriously? Why obey laws put in place that don't protect anyone!” Harley shuddered and started to walk around Harleen again. “Jack said that by killing you I was freeing myself, but you're still here! That isn't FAIR!”

“You won't ever really be free of me Harley. You know that right? You can't just kill off part of yourself—it's not possible.” Harleen smiled and reached out a hand to her. “Let me help you find your way back.”
That was when Harley rushed forward and hit Harleen in the face with her fist as hard as she could trying to break that part of her, trying to separate Harleen from Harley.

“If I can’t kill you, then I’m going to lock you away and bury you so deep that you’ll never find your way back!”

Harley hit Harleen again, dropping her to the floor where Harley pounced on her. Harley straddled Harleen, tears running down her cheeks, her teeth clinched as she hit her over and over and over again until Harleen’s face unrecognizable, a bloody mess.

Harley stood up, her knuckles covered in blood and watched with a smile as an iron box formed around Harleen’s prone form. The metal sides of the box popped into existence around Harleen, folding up, squeezing her, folding her into the box until, in place of Harleen, sat the metal box with a barred opening at the top. Harley walked over and looked in. All she could see was darkness and one blue eye looking up at her.

Harleen’s voice drifted up from the box. “I will always be here—always Harley, always.”

Harley snarled back. “I’m going to bury you so deep you will never bother me again.”

With that, a hole opened up underneath the box and it fell into the darkness below accompanied by Harleen’s screams. “I’M STILL PART OF YOU!!!”

*

Harley woke with a start and a gasped. “No you’re not!”

She felt the rumble of Jack’s laugh against her cheek where she had her head nestled against his chest.

“There you are. I was beginning to wonder when you were going to wake up. You all right sweets, because you seemed to be having a fight in your dream, the way you were jerking around. Who were you talking to? ‘No you’re not?’ Do you remember what that was about?.” Jack brushed her hair from her eyes as he spoke, shifting his position in order to rest her head in the crook of his arm.

Harley yawned rubbing her eyes. “Oh it was...it was nothing.”

She shifted her position so that she could look into Jack’s face. She smiled. His hair was rumpled, falling across his brow and he smelled so good, a scent that was spicy and sweet at the same time. She smiled happily and ran her hand in a gentle caress across his chest.

Jack frowned with concern. “You sure pumpkin?”

Harley smiled continuing to run her hand over his chest. “Yes, I promise. It was nothing to worry about; just a dream.”

Jack nodded continuing to stroke his fingers through her hair before he said softly with a smile. “I had a fantastic idea for this afternoon.”

Harley giggled. The expression on Jack’s face was child like naughtiness. Jack wagged his eyebrows at her. “We should do yoga.”

“Yoga?” Harley frowned confused because that was not what she was expecting.

Jack chuckled. “One of my first therapists had me doing yoga as a way to ‘calm my anger.’” Jack lay
on his back and put his hands together and moved them apart as if he were creating a rainbow of the phrase.

Harley laughed. “I’m gathering from the way you’re saying it, yoga didn’t work?”

Jack shook his head. “Nah. Annoyed me more than it actually helped. Which was why I had a violent outburst one afternoon when he was making me do a series of poses. His voice was the most annoying thing I had ever heard! I wanted to rip his tongue out! Instead I just broke his Adam’s apple.” Jack chuckled while Harley squealed with laughter. “Jack that’s terrible!”

“I know. I’m a troubled person.” He laughed hugging her tight against him. “BUT yoga with you will be fun!”

Jack grabbed her and rolled her onto her back, laying his entire body on top of her. “I thought, after seeing how amazingly flexible you are...I might be willing to try yoga again, you know...for part of my therapy.”

Harley grinned up at him. “Oh you did, did you?”

Jack’s grin was wide, his eyes dancing with mischief. “I do!” That was when he snaked himself down her torso and blew on her stomach until Harley was squealing with laughter. “JACK WAYNE!! YOU ARE TERRIBLE!!”

Jack laughed. “Oh, you don’t know the half of it Harley Quinn!”

They laughed having an impromptu tickle fight when Jack’s head, which had been buried between Harley’s breasts, popped up.

“I almost forgot! I received a text from Bruce earlier. We have been asked to have dinner with him and Selina tonight.” Jack grinned, resting his chin between her breasts.

Harley raised her eyebrows in mild shock. “Really?”

“Yup. I think Bruce wants us to play nice.” Jack sighed rolling off of her, but he pulled her into the crook of his arm as he did so.

“Do you want to play nice?” Harley asked softly.

“Well, sure, I guess we can be good for a night. Bruce has never wanted me to have dinner with any of the women he has dated before.” Jack said slightly confused, as if just realizing this point.

Harley smiled and ventured, “Maybe it will be fun? Where are we going?”

Jack made a rude noise that caused Harley to laugh. “We are heading to Eleven Robinson Park.”

Harley whistled. “That place is expensive and very hard to get into!”

Jack grinned. “Yep, Bruce must really like Selina, going all out on this one.”

“We get to dress up.” Harley said it like she was holding out a treat to Jack. “I can paint your nails, do your make up...”

Jack wrinkled his nose then giggled. “Okay fine, we’ll go...but first you have to...”
Bruce had a million last minutes details to do for the party tomorrow night. Everything had come together quickly with Selina's help and he was confident that the party would go off without a hitch. He had the caterers ready, the decorations, Alfred had perused the wine cellar and picked out several cases for the party, and with the help of the secretary pool here at Wayne Enterprises, the invitations had been sent out first class and he was already receiving RSVP's, the guest list growing by the hour. Bruce had only two details left to take care of before tomorrow night: music and his costume, both of which he hoped to have taken care of before he left the office since after that he would be at his...other job. Selina had her costume; she had sent him a picture earlier this morning showing him that she was wearing a traditional Venetian masquerade dress of black and silver taffeta with painted silver garlands and matching stomacher and petticoat along with an ornate black and silver mask that Bruce could tell was going to make her eyes pop. She was going to look beautiful.

Bruce had decided to match his costume to hers, black and silver with a coat, waistcoat and knee breeches all embroidered with silver, along with his own ornate silver and black mask (though masks were not required at the party), but he really didn't have time to go to pick up the outfit himself. Thankfully Alfred knew exactly where to go and had told Bruce to leave everything to him. So now Bruce was making final arrangements for the music. Bruce sat at his desk in his office making calls to find a string quartet that was free for that evening.

Bruce had just found a group, a local group of young people, all in their early twenties who were not only talented, but free that night when he received a text from Selina.

“How's my Bruce doing, ready to party?”

Bruce chuckled looking down at the text, his heart doing a little flip at the thought of her. Selina did things to him that no other woman did, made him feel something real. This one, she might be the one, she certainly felt like the one, Bruce mused to himself as he texted back.

“Ready to dance with you.”

Selina texted. “Dance the night away under the stars? You have a date Mr. Wayne.”

Bruce texted back. “Still on for dinner tonight? Meet the family?”

There was a bing as he received Selina's text. “Wild horses couldn't keep me away.”

Bruce smiled and texted back. “Thank you Selina. I will pick you up at eight.”

“Where are we going?”

Bruce smiled. “We are having dinner at Eleven Robinson Park restaurant.”

Selina texted back. “How on earth did you get us a table?”

Bruce smiled as he responded. “One of the benefits of being Bruce Wayne.”

Selina sent back. “LOL. See you then Bruce xxx.”

Bruce smiled, but then frowned slightly. He was hoping that dinner tonight with Jack and Harley would be a good bonding experience, for both him and Jack as well as playing a bit of damage control. He knew he didn't know everything that Jack and Harley got up to, which only made him more wary and more worried—he worried constantly about Jack. He felt as if what little grasp he had on his brother had been slowly slipping away and now with Dr. Quinzel...Bruce shook his head, he just didn't know, but maybe—maybe this dinner would be good for them both.
Harley was bent over with her hands under her feet, completely naked. Jack was beside her doing the same pose, also stark naked.

Harley turned her head to look at him with a giggle. “I don't know how you talked me into this!”

Jack chuckled. “It's me, that's how.” He waggled his eyebrows. “You know, I'm finding yoga is still not calming at all—it's rather...erotic.” Jack giggled like a schoolboy. Harley laughed and shook her head.

“Okay, now I want you to watch me and lie flat on the floor.” They both laid on their backs, arms at their sides flat on the floor. Jack grinned watching her as he spoke. “Now press the flat of your feet to the floor and the palms of your hands flat to the floor too.”

Harley did as he instructed. Jack did the same then said softly rolling his head to the side so that they were eye to eye. “All right, raise your rear into the air.” Harley pressed her teeth into her bottom lip with an impish grin, watching Jack lift his hips up, her eyes following the tight line of muscles in his rear, following those lean muscles along his thighs and over his hips, her mouth actually watering.

“Harley, are you paying attention?” Jack grinned. He was a little distracted watching the way her breasts moved as she lifted herself up. Harley giggled. “Yes and no. You're distracting Jack.” Harley waggled her eyebrows at him in an imitation of him which had Jack chuckling. He pushed up on his hands, stretching his back as he formed his body into a perfect arch, with one very noticeable physical difference. Harley’s eyes were right on Jack’s quickly hardening erection, catching her bottom lip in her teeth as she mirrored his pose, her blue eyes taking in every desirable inch of Jack’s body. She had never felt this much need for anyone in her life. She needed Jack like she needed oxygen. He was her everything and right now everything looked damn good she thought.

Jack chuckled then surprised her by bringing his legs around and over his head, placing them flat on the ground before he stood up as gracefully as any gymnast. Harley laughed. “I didn't know you could do that!”

Jack grinned, pleased with himself. “Nice to know I'm still full of surprises.”

Harley giggled doing the same exact move, coming up onto her feet gracefully. Jack sighed. “That was just beautiful. Okay,” he said with a nod, “now for out next position—press your hands flat to the floor and slowly raise your left leg straight into the air behind you like a standing split.”

Harley smirked and did as he suggested, holding the pose. Jack, continuing to be impressed by her flexibility and wondering how far he could push her, slowly walked around her figure his eyes raking over her body, his desire clear in his hardening erection and the way that Jack licked his lips walking a full circle around her.

“All right sweets, now put both feet on the floor, then your hands, with your rear in the air.” He smirked watching her. Harley giggled watching Jack walk around until he was behind her. He stepped in close and she could feel him behind her, a gentle brush of silken hardness against her backside. Jack reached forward and ran the flat of his hands along her lower back first, then over the curve of her rear and down, feeling the satin texture of her skin under his fingertips, the creamy feel of her pale flesh as well as the lean muscles of her body.

Jack purred. “So soft, yet strong Harley, I just want to take a bite out of you..”

He smiled, his eyes picking up each bruise she had received from last night’s fight, each cut,
Jack pressed his hands against her, squeezing gently, his thumbs rolling against her skin, sliding his hands along the back of her thighs and up again causing Harley to exhale a groan of pleasure.

“Mm...perfection,” he whispered.

Harley’s eyes rolled closed with the pleasurable feeling of his fingers against her skin. She pressed her teeth into her bottom lip with a tiny moan. “Hummm...”

Jack rubbed up against her, prodding softly, teasing her damp opening, but no more than that, just a gentle probe while his hands skated up and down her backside. When Jack spoke again his voice was heavy with want...

“Now...” Jack swallowed. “On your knees and bend backwards to wrap your hands around her ankles.”

Jack stepped back to allow her to change her position, watching her move, licking his lips and running the top of his teeth over his bottom lip; his blue eyes glittered with desire. “That’s it Harley.”

Harley bent backwards and smiled at Jack. He stood there unmoving just watching her when Harley whispered. “Come closer Jack.”

Jack grinned gazing down at her, stepping closer. Harley’s blue eyes twinkled. She gazed up at him grinning when Jack wrapped his hand around his shaft and eased the head of his erection along her mouth, tracing the shape of her lips slowly. Harley smiled and then her tongue flicked out. The tip of her warm wet tongue eased along the tip of Jack’s shaft, rolling along the smooth surface of his sensitive skin, teasing him. Jack groaned. “Uhh...”

Jack stepped closer, pressing against her lips. Harley opened her mouth wider and Jack eased himself past her lips.

Jack groaned, his eyes rolled up, and his eyelids fluttered. He arched his back, sliding himself into her mouth, shuddering when he felt the warm wetness of her lips and tongue around him. Harley sucked, her tongue gliding up and down feeling him press against the roof of her mouth. Her teeth pressed back lightly, just enough to add a little spice to her sucking on him.

Jack hissed and spread his legs a little over her just before he bent forward over her body until his mouth was level her groin. He leaned over, trying to use his legs to steady himself while wrapping an arm around her hips, tugging her pelvis up just a little more in order for his tongue to snake between her folds. When she felt his tongue against her, Harley jerked and groaned around him in her mouth, which sent both of them into a fit of giggles, especially when Harley started to lean to the right and Jack lost his balance, falling to the left. Harley released Jack with a laugh as her arms wobbled for a moment and she fell sideways. Jack grabbed her around the waist falling to the floor at the same time.

“HA! Now I can have what I want!!” With that declaration, Jack buried his mouth between her legs. Harley squealed her laughter that quickly morphed into deep moans of pleasure when Jack’s hot wet tongue lavished her with deep licks and probes.

Harley scooted herself a little closer, resuming her oral attentions to Jack’s erection. She tugged one of his legs against her shoulder, her cheek against his inner thigh while she sucked slowly pulled her lips along his length in an agonizingly slow draw of her lips. When she stopped at the head of his penis, she swirled her tongue, covering him in saliva making sure he was wet before she gentle ran her teeth over the tender skin.
Jack rolled onto his back, his hands on her hips taking her with him. Harley almost choked on him when Jack yanked her with him, but she quickly recovered, adjusting herself over him so that she was on her knees and elbows; her sucking, now that she was in an upright position, became more vigorous, alternating between deep-throated sucks to little delicate nibbles and flicks of her tongue. She leaned heavily on one hand while wrapping the other around Jack's shaft, using her hand to punctuate her sucking, with strokes up and down while wetting him with her saliva to create a smooth slippery motion with her hand. Jack groaned; everything was wet and slippery sending chills up his spine.

Jack's moans were sprinkled with the occasional, “Oh Harley, Harls....uuhhh...pumpkin...Oh GOD Harls!!”

She bobbed her head vigorously for a few seconds before she stopped and pressed her lips against him in a sweet, tender kiss, drawing her lips up, until she reached the head where she circled her tongue around him, flicking her tongue against the sensitive spot at the tip of his penis.

Jack whimpered. “Harls...aahh...”

He threw his head back against the floor, unable to process for a few seconds. Harley knew exactly what she was doing and damn if she didn't make him feel like he just might black-out!

Jack focused enough to gaze at her above him, her legs spread presenting him with the beautiful sight of Harley completely exposed to him. Jack grinned, gliding his hands along her smooth rear, digging his fingers into her flesh and pulled her cheeks apart providing him the perfect diving ground for his tongue. Jack's tongue snaked out to take a long, warm lick of her—his soon-to-be-wife he thought—his everything. Jack licked the entirety of her, starting low and dragged his tongue over her like he was licking an ice cream cone, with the same delicate dedication she had shown him. He grinned when he felt her body give a little shudder.

Harley groaned. “Uuggoo...” She shuddered at the soft, wet heat of his tongue moving against her. She arched her back, her mouth full of his swelling mass as she did so. “Mmm...”

Jack caressed his fingers along her lower back continuing to dive and lick, taking his time, enjoying every little detail of her, enjoying the taste of her on his tongue, the muffled little groans of pleasure she made, even the scent of her drove him wild with the need to pound, to feel that ultimate pleasure of being buried inside her, to feel the tightness of her muscles surround him while he thrust hard. He felt the change in her body, the wetness of her surrounding him, the tension that was starting to build. Jack grinned, alternating his licks with tender nips which earned him muffled exclamations of pleasure from Harley that vibrated down his erection and through his groin.

Harley groaned around the silken hard pressure of his shaft against her tongue. “Hmmm...” just before she took him as deeply as she could, relaxing her gag reflex, her one hand pulling up and down rolling and tugging on him before dropping down to cup his balls in her hand and squeeze gently. Jack couldn't take it any longer.

“Oh god Harley...stop!! I need to fuck you!” Jack shoved on her.

Harley released him with a slight “pop” of her lips which caused Jack to groan loudly.

Jack groaned louder still. “God damn!”

Jack gently pushed her forward off his legs so he could get to his knees. He grinned at her, his lips wet with her. She started to roll onto her back, but Jack stopped her.
“Just stay on your side my sweet,” Jack purred. Harley grinned at him and lifted her bent leg. Jack guided himself into her, then hooked his right hand under her thigh while gripping her rear with his other hand.

He moaned. “Uuuhh...” with each thrust, the sound of him slapping against her flesh, the wet sucking noise of his erection moving in and out of her wetness sent goosebumps racing over his skin.

Harley whimpered, arching her back and raising her leg high, her bent leg against his chest. Jack grabbed her leg wrapping his arm around the limb and pressing it against his chest, increasing the speed of his thrusts.

Harley cried out as her orgasm rippled over and through her. “UuhuhUHHH....puddin!”

Jack was panting, thrusting harder, the slapping sound, the wet suction of her body holding onto him made Jack growl. “Yes, yes...Harley.”

She rolled just a little so she was facing him more. Jack slowed his thrusts down into smooth rolls of his body, his hips, using the whole of his body to roll into her. Harley smiled up at him. “Uuhh...uh Jack! Uh Puddin! I love you.”

Jack grinned down at her. “I love you too Harls...uh...you feel so good!”

“Uhh..Jack fuck me harder!” Harley reached up to run her nails down his chest. Jack's eyes rolled up at the exquisite mixture of pleasure and pain. He leaned forward dropping his arms to the side, her leg across his stomach and hissed, “Your wish is my command Harls...” Jack giggled, which turned into a deep growl of pleasure at the feel of her increased wetness. He caressed her throat with his fingers, reaching up to drag the tips of his fingers along her bottom lip. He continued to thrust slowly, but deeply, making Harley dizzy. For a moment she felt as if she couldn't breathe. He felt so good that all she could do was making inarticulate sounds of pleasure.

Jack suddenly leaned back and rolled her the rest of her way onto her back so that she was facing him. He dropped onto his elbows over her, their noses touching. He attacked her mouth with a kiss so deep that his tongue felt like it was completely in her mouth. Harley shivered; he tasted like cigarettes and coffee with a hint of something she couldn't identify, but it was uniquely him. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck, her legs wrapping around his waist, her toes pointed with the extreme intensity of their lovemaking.

Jack groaned into her mouth, surrounded by her taste, sweet vanilla and musk, the sweet feel of her wet tongue stroking his tongue, enveloped in the scent of her, the scent of warm vanilla.

Harley whimpered. “Oh Jack.” He felt her clamp down around him, her body struggled to arch toward him. Jack pressed his teeth into the soft section of flesh between her neck and shoulder. His thrusts picked up, becoming harder, deeper as he came rushing toward his orgasm.

Harley hissed. “Jaaack!!”

She came again, her entire body going tight. Jack thrust hard and fast a few more times before he came, bursting with a rush of hot liquid into her. Jack would have sworn he blacked out for a split second between his orgasm and his collapsing on top of her. The idea of which had him giggling for a few moments as he wrapped his arms around her, holding her tightly against him and settled down peppering her skin, her face, and neck with light butterfly kisses.

They were quiet for a few moments, struggling to catch their breaths went Jack whispered. “Best. Yoga. Ever!”
Harley started giggling. “I agree.”

Jack smiled, stroking her hair back from her face tenderly and gazed down at her. He spoke softly, barely a whisper.

“And for that moment of pure darkness, I see your soul shining brighter than it ever has. I love the weirdness in you and the gentle way you make me go insane.”

He rubbed his nose against her, brushing nips and kisses across her lips.

“Who wrote that?” Harley asked softly her hands stroking up and down his back, fingers playing along his spine. Jack frowned then whispered. “I think Jordon Sarah Weatherhead, though I can't be sure…”

He nuzzled her neck, nibbling on and off as he whispered again. “The world is filled with horrible things that will eventually kill you. Laughter is the best way to tell the universe: 'Not today you bastard.'” Jack giggled. “I like that one quite a bit.”

Harley giggled wrapping herself around him. “I think we should stay here all day until dinner.”

Jack licked her ear and hissed against it. “I think that is a fantastic idea my little cupcake. Should we stay right here on the floor or move to the bed?”

Harley giggled. “The bed, though the floor is a lot of fun too.”

Jack started to laugh, tickling her sides until Harley was squealing for him to stop.

*  

Several hours later, Harley stood by the mirror in the bathroom examining her reflection. She turned left then right admiring the dress that Jack had had sent over that afternoon. The dress was a deep shimmering ruby red, with matching bicep long red gloves. The skirt of the dress was an accordion-pleated tulle with a double V-neckline with a pair of black ghillie strap four inch heels. Underneath she wore only a pair of lace panties, sans bra. She had her hair in an elegant low ponytail, a lock of her hair wrapped around the tail with loose tendrils framing her face and simple diamond studs in her ears.

Her eye makeup was done in a dark metallic smokey eye that made her light blue eyes standout against her pale skin and her lips were done in a neutral shade with just enough shine to make her lips desirable. She did one more spin before she walked out. Her nails were painted a flat shade of black that matched Jack's nails.

Jack was finishing with his tie when Harley stepped out. He stopped to stare at her. “You are a vision, Harley.”


Jack laughed. “Well, thank you my sweet.”

Jack was dressed as he preferred, in a three-piece suit, black on black pinstriped suit, with peaked lapels. The shirt underneath was white, but the tie was a black with deep purple polkadots. His socks matched the tie as he walked over and slipped his shoes on, a pair of black, pointed toe, monk-strapped dress shoes. Jack had matching black leather gloves to go with the suit and had even put a deep purple rose into his lapel. His dark hair was slicked by and Harley had outlined his eyes and
glossed his lips.

Jack chuckled putting his arm out to her. “Ready to go play nice with the big brother's new girlfriend?”

Harley laughed as she took Jack's arm. “Are we riding with them or meeting them there?”

“Bruce has already left to pick up Selina, so we are meeting them there.” Jack turned her toward the bedroom door. “Bruce must actually be nervous!” Jack chuckled at the thought. “He must really like this one too, since he took off to go pick her up.”

*

They headed out to the front where Alfred had brought around a plum colored Bentley Flying Spur with black leather interior. Alfred smiled when he saw the two of them walking down the stairs just as he walked in the front door from delivering the car up front. “You two are a vision.” Alfred said with a smile, unknowingly echoing their compliments to each other upstairs.

The young couple laughed.

“Thanks Alfred!” Jack wrinkled his nose, pleased with the compliment.

“Well, I hope you have a nice dinner with your brother and Miss Kyle,” Alfred said as he held the keys up for Jack. Jack grinned as Alfred dropped the keys into Jack's open palm. “I promise to behave Dad.”

Alfred chuckled. “Thank you Master Jack, I appreciate it. As I'm sure your brother will.”

Harley let go of Jack's arm to take Alfred by the shoulders, giving the older man a peck on the cheek.

“I promise to take care of him Alfred.”

Alfred chuckled. “Thank you Miss Harley. I appreciate it.”

Harley giggled lightly, taking Jack's arm. Alfred watched them leave, waving as they pulled away.

He sighed thinking to himself. “Please let the boys get along tonight.”

*

Bruce was doing his best not to 'beam,' but since picking up Selina he couldn't keep the smile off his face. She looked amazing. Well, he thought, she always looked amazing, but tonight especially so. She was wearing a black, off the shoulder sheath column dress with white gold appliques on her waist that highlighted her trim figure. Her black hair was styled to frame her face. She had paired the dress with a pair of black stilettos which made her nearly as tall as Bruce.

Bruce walked into the restaurant beside her smiling. He wore a stylish black suit with a solid black tie and black dress shirt and shoes, the two of them looking perfectly matched.

The restaurant was decorated in black and golds, with chandeliers that resembled exploding glass flowers. The lighting was warm and subdued, almost dark, and there was a piano player in the corner playing some light jazz in the background that drifted over the restaurant patrons. There was a small dance floor where a handful of couples were dancing slowly to the music. A waiter dressed in black slacks and vest with a crisp white shirt and a name tag that read Alfie smiled with a slight bow before leading them into the main interior of the restaurant. He was cheerful as he led them to their table in the corner, away from most of the other patrons, giving them a little more privacy.
“When will your brother and his fiancee arrive?” Selina asked as Bruce pulled her seat out for her.

Bruce smiled gently pushing her seat back in once she was seated. “I should think they will be here any time now.”

That was when he heard Jack's voice carry across the restaurant with that slight sing song that Jack liked. “Hey Brucie!” which was accompanied by Harley's giggling. Bruce closed his eyes and took a breath before turning around. Jack and Harley came walking across the restaurant looking stunning. They were both dressed to the nines, smiling and happy; Bruce had to concede they were both dressed impeccably, a dashing and elegant couple.

“Jack, Harley glad you both could make it,” Bruce said with a smile as they approached the table. Bruce frowned slightly in curiosity as he noticed a healing cut on Jack's lip, but he said nothing about it.

Jack laughed. “Wouldn't miss a chance to play family!”

Jack pulled Harley's chair out for her, kissing her cheek and then licking her ear (which made Bruce cringe, but Selina actually found it amusing) before taking the seat next to her and scooting his chair closer to Harley. Bruce frowned for just a brief moment at the way Harley and Jack were looking at him, as if they had a deadly secret that the two of them found entertaining. He felt a tickle run up his spine, a sensation he usually had when there was something vital staring him in the face, but he couldn't see what that vital piece of information was...Bruce shook the feeling away and took his seat again.

The waiter was waiting patiently for the two couples to become settled before he smiled and said. “I'm your waiter for tonight, Alfie. What can I get everyone to drink?”

Bruce smiled. “I will be sticking to water this evening. Selina?”

Selina smiled. “May I have a glass of Bartenura moscato?”

“Of course miss and for you sir? Ma'am?” Alfie turned toward them.

Jack smiled, taking his gloves off as he spoke and sliding them into a pocket inside his jacket. “Oh I love the name, Alfie. I call our butler that sometimes.”

Alfie smiled as Jack continued. “Whiskey, neat. And a grape soda with two straws. Harley?”

Harley smiled, but giggled at Jack's request for a grape soda out of the blue. “Mm...a Rob Roy please.”

Bruce pressed his lips together. He was fairly sure that Jack had driven here, so he was upset that Jack had ordered a drink. He wanted to say something, but he refrained from saying anything. No point in starting out the evening with an argument.

Jack leaned back in his chair, crossing his long legs and folding his hands across his knee. “So, Selina, you and Brucie seem to be getting along really well.”

Harley leaned close to Jack, her red gloved arm went through the circle of his hands resting on his knee. Jack reach up with one finger to stroke her hand.

Selina smiled. “I like to think so.”

Bruce smiled speaking softly, reaching over to take her hand and kiss Selina's knuckles. “I think we
are too.”

“So, what are your intentions toward my big brother?” Jack asked as Harley leaned close and kissed his ear. Jack smiled leaning into her. Selina frowned slightly, the two of them were extremely...affectionate. Jack continued. “I mean, you can't escape the fact that there are billions of dollars attached to the Wayne name. None of that is enticing?” “Intentions?” Selina asked glancing at Bruce. (She took a calming breath. This would be tricky because the money was the attraction, but now...damn it Selina! You cannot fall in love with Bruce Wayne, you can't, she told herself.) Bruce frowned at Jack and started to open his mouth, but Jack continued. “Well I figured it's my job to grill you about what your intentions are toward my brother, since he felt the urge to do the same to Harley. On more than one occasion.”

(While they were speaking, the waiter returned with their drinks, placing them on the table in front of their respective owners.)

Harley pressed her fingers against Jack's knee, not to stop him, but to support him. It had been—nasty—the way Bruce had kept questioning her, questioning Jack...both of them, as if Harley had something up her sleeve. Though Harley supposed she really couldn't blame Bruce. He had only just reluctantly started to accept her...

Bruce hissed. “Jack! That's enough!”

Selina smiled and rested a hand on Bruce's arm. “It's fine. I understand. I don't have any 'intentions,' Jack. I just enjoy your brother's company. We have fun, we understand each other, like a lot of the same things and...well that's all I want for right now. I'm not after Bruce's money.” (Which Selina reminded herself was the truth.) She smiled at Jack.

Jack lifted a brow and grinned. “Oooh...a mostly honest answer! Surprising.”

“Mostly?” Bruce narrowed his eyes at Jack who chuckled. “Please Bruce, everyone has their little secrets, even you.” Jack smiled tilting his head at Bruce. Bruce noticed the way his younger brother's blue eyes seemed to bore into his...the deeper blue of Jack's eyes were steady and for a moment Bruce felt a chill run up his spine. For a tense moment Bruce thought Jack might know about Batman...but then the waiter came over again and the spell was broken.

“Is everyone prepared to order?” Alfie smiled.

Bruce picked up his menu. “Yes, ah, I'll have the ribeye steak with peppercorn and blue cheese. Selina?”

Selina perused the menu with a smile. “Yes, I will have the grilled chicken and papaya salad.”

“And for the two of you?” Alfie turned his attention toward Jack and Harley. Jack smiled glancing to Harley. “What would you like my sweet?”

Harley smiled at Jack reaching up to trace his jaw with her gloved finger. “Mm...I think the chicken roulade.”

Jack kissed her cheek, then handed the waiter the menu. “The same for me Alfie dear.”

“Very good.” Alfie smiled and headed off to put their orders in.

Selina smiled after the waiter left. “So, Jack, Harley when is your wedding? Bruce tells me you two are engaged.”
Harley smiled. “We are planning for a Halloween wedding, but we are going to have an engagement party soon.”

Jack grinned at Bruce's reaction though Bruce said nothing. Jack turned to Harley. “Would you like to dance before dinner? My pumpkin?”

Harley smiled taking a sip of her drink and setting it down before she answered. “I would love to.”

Jack stood and held out his hand to Harley. The two of them walked out onto the dance floor, Jack spinning Harley into his embrace. The piano player started to play John Legend's “All of Me.”

Jack smiled weaving slowly, one arm around Harley's waist, the other holding her hand against his. He smiled, his voice dropped to barely a whisper against her ear adding the lyrics to the song that was being played, singing just for her.

“'Cause all of me
Loves all of you
Love your curves and all your edges
All your perfect imperfections
Give your all to me
I'll give my all to you
You're my end and my beginning
Even when I lose I'm winning
'Cause I give you all of me
And you give me all of you, oh oh....”

* 

Bruce frowned watching his brother and Harley for a moment. Selina smiled. “I don't think I have seen two people that much in love before. They seemed...I don't know...” she let the thought trail off.

Selina tilted her head examining them. Bruce frowned deeper; something unsettled him about them, and had from the beginning of their steamroller of a relationship. He just didn't know what it was.

He mentally shook his head clearing his thoughts before turning to Selina. “Would you like to dance?”

She smiled. “I thought you would never ask, Bruce.”

The piano player had started a new song, a piano cover of “A Sky Full of Stars.” Jack and Harley seemed completely unaware of anyone else, continuing to dance, moving in a slow circle in one corner of the dance floor.

Bruce watched his brother for a few seconds before he wrapped his arm around Selina's waist. “Jack—he worries me.”

“Worries you?” Selina frowned and glanced over at Jack and Harley.
“It's...it's a long story.” Bruce turned her around slowly.

“Well, whenever you feel like telling me Bruce, just know I'm here for you.” Selina smiled and kissed his cheek. She surprised herself with how much she meant it.

*

After another dance, their small group headed back to the table for dinner. Jack took a sip of his whiskey and asked, “So, what costumes are you two wearing tomorrow night? Harley and I are going as Bonnie and Clyde.”

Selina laughed. “Oh, I love that! Wonderful idea! Bruce and I are both wearing traditional Venetian costumes.”

Harley smiled. “Ah that's cute! Couple costumes too!”

Bruce blushed taking a sip of his water before cutting into his steak. “So, Brucie, how much security is going to be crawling about the estate for this party tomorrow night?” Jack cut a bite of his food and fed it to Harley, playing with it across her lips before she opened her mouth, giving Jack a suggestive look while he gradually slipped the fork between her teeth.

“Enough,” Bruce said taking a sip of water. “The paintings will each have two guards, though the Picasso—that is the highlight of the party—will have four, plus just some wandering extra security.”

Selina kept her expression neutral. She had been counting on two guards. “Will you be keeping the paintings overnight?” Selina asked between bites of her salad.

Bruce smiled. “Yes, simply because I expect the party to run late. These things always do, but I do have a safe in a secure room on the manor.”

Selina smiled and nodded. Okay, that at least was part of the plan. She had paid a pretty penny to get access to the Wayne Manor blueprints and a list of the security systems that were used at the estate. She could deal with two extra guards, no problem. Selina glanced sideways at Bruce and for a brief moment, a shadow passed over her features, but just as quickly was gone.

*

Jack and Harley decided to leave before dessert. Jack was feeling just a little uncomfortable and irritated. Something about Selina was bothering him; he just couldn't put his finger on what it was about her that had him so irritated. He thought maybe it was the way Bruce seemed to leap to her defense at the slightest hint of an insult...or perhaps it was the double standard. Selina, whom Bruce had only known a short time, (just as he had only known Harley a short time when they became a couple) was more trustworthy than Harley? As if since Bruce had chosen her, Selina was fine, perfect! But because Jack had chosen Harley, Harley was suspect, as if because he loved her, clearly there was something wrong with Harley. Because Jack Wayne could never make a 'good' choice! That thought wormed its way under Jack's skin, pissing him off more and more as the evening wore on.

As far as Jack was concerned, there were definitely some secrets behind that woman Selina's smile, but anytime Jack started to steer the conversation toward asking Selina questions about herself, Bruce would come charging in like a protective bulldog. It was clear that Bruce felt as if Jack was being a prick.

Jack stood abruptly, taking Harley's hand to bring her to her feet. He let go only long enough to slip his gloves on. He smiled, but with an undercurrent of sarcasm when he turned his gaze to Bruce.
“Well, it was a wonderful evening, but Harley and I should be going. We are both looking forward to seeing you tomorrow evening at the party.” He smiled flatly at Selina.

Harley reached out for Jack's hand after he slipped his gloves on. She could feel the tension that seemed to rush up his arm to hers. She glanced sideways at him, could see the stiffness in his jaw, the ice in his gaze. She turned back to Bruce and Selina. “It was nice. See you tomorrow.”

With that Jack turned stiffly, tugging her with him.

They walked out to where Jack had parked the car along the back of the restaurant. He was walking quickly and stiffly, dragging Harley behind him.

“Jack?” Harley spoke softly.

Jack didn't say anything until they had reached the car. He opened the door for her on the passenger side nearly tossing her into the car before he walked around and threw himself behind the wheel shoving the key into the ignition.

Harley reached out and stroked his shoulder. “Jack?”

Jack ground his teeth. “Bruce is such a fucking hypocrite! Because she's a woman he picked, then clearly everything is perfect with her. But because you are mine! BECAUSE I chose you, Bruce has to throw doubts on our love, on our relationship as if I can't have anything GOOD in my life! That I am such a fool, such a lost cause, there is no way I could do anything GOOD!” Jack slammed his fists against the steering wheel hard enough that the vibration raced up his arms.

Harley reached out and grabbed Jack's fists, but he turned on her with a snarl, his eyes flashing. For a moment she saw the madness that nestled in the back of Jack's personality like a small black creature crouching in the shadows.

“Jack?” Harley asked timidly, not out of fear for herself, but in worry for the man she loved.

Jack's frown slowly transformed into a snarl as he gazed at her. Then he reached out wrapping his hand round the back of her neck, grabbing a handful of her hair and yanked her toward him, pressing his mouth punishingly against hers. Harley let out a whimper of surprise and pain as her lips pressed painfully against her teeth. Jack crushed his mouth against hers, forcing his tongue past her lips. She could feel the rage in him, in the painful way he held her hair, the force of his kiss, but there was something else there mixed with the rage. Fear and pain...Bruce's disapproval hurt Jack more than he would ever admit out loud while he struggled to dismiss it at the same time.

Harley reached over grabbing Jack's head with both her gloved hands returning his kiss just as hard. Jack fumbled with his other hand, finding the handle and knocking the front seat back as far as it would go before he yanked her over onto his lap. He shoved her dress up to the sound of tearing fabric. Harley groaned, biting hard at his lips, tasting blood when her teeth brushed against the healing cut on Jack's lips and the flavor of whiskey on his tongue. He growled in response which was accompanied by the sound of more tearing fabric when Jack reached under her dress, using both hands to rip her panties away, tossing them to the floor of the car. Harley groaned digging her nails into his skin dragging them down the sides of his neck before she started tearing at his tie, working it free, nearly choking him as she ripped the tie away and threw it to the back of the car. She then peeled his vest open aggressively, popping one of the buttons when she yanked the fabric aside. Next, she grabbed his shirt with both hands and simply tore it open, the whole while biting and sucking at Jack's neck.

Jack’s groan was more animal than human as his hands worked to undo his slacks freeing himself
and without preambling he shoved her down hard on his erection. It didn't matter; Harley was wet for him, soaking, aching with need to feel him inside her. Harley gasped at the sudden feel of his body inside hers, but at the same time he felt incredible when he speared her, arching her back with a gutteral gasp of pleasure.

Jack brought his hands up from under her dress and grabbed the front of her outfit with his hands and wrenched, tearing the fabric in two directions, causing a rip to race down from the point of the V that was her neckline, tearing down as Jack continued to pull and tug until the dress was only hanging on Harley by the straps.

Jack attacked her breasts hungrily, sucking and biting in equal parts, tugging at her silky skin with his teeth, pulling back on her skin until she yelped, then he would kiss her skin tenderly, rolling his tongue over the spot he had bitten down on, leaving teeth shaped bruises on her skin. He leaned the seat back as far as it would go, one hand on her thigh, his fingers digging into her skin painfully while his other hand reached back into her hair.

Harley put her hands on the seat behind Jack, grinding her hips to meet his hard upward thrusts. She couldn't think straight; all she could do was feel, the mixture of pleasure that was accentuated with the sharp moments of pain. They fucked hard and fast in the front seat, kissing each other with a greedy desperate need until Harley gasped, arching with the heated explosion that ripped through her. She groaned loudly, indecently loud, digging her fingers into Jack's shoulders with enough strength that she was going to leave bruises. Anyone walking too close would have seen and heard her explosive moans.

(A couple making their way to their vehicle after dinner heard the sounds of grunts and cries. The man had tugged his girlfriend closer to the car where the sounds were emitting from, wondering if someone was in trouble, only to have one of the lights in the parking lot give the couple an explicit hint of what was going on in the Bentley...) Jack grinned watching her climax, her back arched, her lips parted, red from the bruised kisses they had shared, the complete abandon in her expression, the yellow light from outside dancing across her milky white breasts. He pressed both hands against the back of her hips forcing her down on him while he continued to fuck in a series of hard, fast upward thrusts that caused her to bounce slightly, her head knocking lightly against the roof of the car.

“Oohuhuhhh!! Jack!! Puddin!! YES!” Harley whimpered. She continued to feel the intense ripples of pleasure running through her as if her orgasm was just a continuing wave of pleasure rising and crashing over and over again.

Jack was panting hard, his fingers holding her painfully down on him, gazing up at her through his thick lashes, a wide hard grin on his face. “Harley, pumpkin...my girl...Grrr...uuhhh...”

His climax was an explosion, as if his entire body was emptying into her, all his emotion, every ounce of rage, fear and anguish mixed with the intensity of his lust, possessiveness, and love for Harley.

Jack dropped his head back against his seat with a few more thrusts into her body, his eyes closed against the intensity of his orgasm. He groaned letting out a deep sigh as his entire body went limp. Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders burying her face against the hollow between his neck and shoulder.

“I love you Jack,” she whispered.

Jack stroked his hands up and down her back in slow, lazy movements. “I love you Harley.”

They were quiet for a long while, their breathing returning to normal.
“Sorry about the dress,” Jack said softly.

Harley giggled. “Don't be.”

Jack smiled then, his fingers going into her hair using a fistful of the thick blonde locks to lift her head up. She was smiling, her lips bruised. “Ready to go home?” Jack whispered.

“Mm...Yes puddin...home.” Harley smiled leaning in to nip his lips. Jack chuckled. Harley started to move off his lap, but Jack stopped her. “Just lie back down sweets. I think I can drive home like this.”

Harley giggled pressing herself against him as Jack turned the key and started the engine.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for this chapter being late! Had a SUPER early appt. at the hospital. Next weeks chapter might be late as well. Going to be having injections in my right shoulder. Doc said I might not be able to use my arm for a few days...but who knows. Going to try and get the chapter done on time! :)
See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jack was awoken the next afternoon by an incoming text. Jack was lying on his stomach, naked in bed, with Harley nearly on top of him. Her leg was across his lower back, her hand in his hair, her body almost rolled on top of him. Jack smiled, content feeling Harley next to him as he reached over blindly for the phone. He managed to pick it up without dropping it and examined the incoming text; it was from Alex.

“Guess who has a date with the fucking waitress!!”

Jack chuckled texting back using just his thumb. “You should bring her tonight.”

“To that fucking party at yr place?”

Jack grinned. “Yup.”

“Oh fuck yeah! Guess who is getting laid tonite!!”

Jack chuckled again. “LOL”

“Hey wht kinda costume should we wear?”


“Cool. See ya 2nite!”

Jack smiled and tossed the phone onto the bedside table when he heard Harley's muffled voice. “Who was that?”

“Alex, he's bringing the waitress from the other night to the party.” Jack shifted position which forced Harley to move her arm and leg. Harley's head came up. “Really?”

Jack chuckled when he saw her; her blonde hair looked as if it had been in a fight with the pillows, sticking up all over her head making her look incredibly adorable. Jack laughed yanking her over to him. “Come here you!”

Harley squealed as Jack hauled her over on top of him, covering her face with kisses when he had her resting across his chest. Harley giggled, wiggling against his body. Jack grinned enjoying the feel of her silken skin moving against his, feeling both erotic and comforting. He had never—not since the night his parents died—known comfort, but with Harley...she was his home now, his life...everything. She was the one light in his darkness.

Jack grabbed her face between his hands, squeezing just a little to make fish lips with her mouth, grinning at how adorable she was before he deepened the kiss further. Harley groaned and wrapped her arms around his neck and under his head, her hands cradling the back of his skull. The kiss was passionate, yet also tender. Jack's hands wandered down her sides, his fingertips moving back and forth slowly, caressing her tenderly when there was a knock at the door.

Jack groaned rolling his eyes as he pulled away from Harley's mouth. “Yes?”

“It's me Master Jack. Your costumes for tonight's gala have been delivered,” Alfred called from the
other side of the door.

Jack’s eyes glittered like a kid on Christmas morning. “They are?!?”

He grinned at Harley wrinkling his nose just before he pressed a large, loud kiss on her lips before he unceremoniously rolled her off of him and jumped up, grabbed his pants, and slid into them as he walked to the door. Harley laughed watching him, rolling herself up in a sheet and sitting up watching Jack hurry to the bedroom door.

Jack opened the bedroom door to find Alfred standing there with two large garment boxes wrapped with a large red bow. Alfred smiled. “Master Milano said that these garments are the 'real deal' as he so eloquently put it.” Alfred then motioned with his head at two sets of shoes boxes sitting on the floor beside him. “Along with the shoes.”

Jack laughed. “This is fantastic! Thanks Alfred.”

Alfred nodded with a smile. Harley called from the bed. “What are you dressing up as Alfred?”

Alfred peered into the darken room to see Harley wrapped in a sheet on the bed, her hair having that ruffled 'just woke up' look and her lips slightly swollen from kissing...

The older man quickly averted his eyes with a blush. “I shall be in attendance as a butler Miss Harleen.”

Harley laughed. “Oh come on, aren't you at least going to wear a mask?”

Alfred smiled. “For you Miss Harleen, I shall wear a mask.”

Harley giggled and clapped her hands. “Thanks Alfred!”

The older man smiled and bowed his head. “I live to serve.”

Jack snorted. “Do I hear sarcasm there Alfred?”

“Never Master Jack.” Alfred smiled and heading off down the hall.

Jack chuckled as he brought the boxes into their room and set them on the floor near the bed before hurrying back to get the shoe boxes. “Let's see what Milano sent over!” Jack untied the bow while Harley laid across the bed, her head dangling off the side, as were her arms, watching Jack open the boxes. When Jack removed the lid, he found on top of the first outfit was a folded note. Jack picked it up and read out loud:

“These are not exact Bonnie and Clyde outfits, but they are clothing from the era that I picked. I wanted to capture a combination of the Bonnie and Clyde period, the feel of the wardrobe from the many films, but to also choose outfits that I felt were a reflection of you and your lady-love's personalities. So I tailored my choices to your personalities while still keeping with the theme.

Love, Milano.”

Jack grinned and set the note aside. “Milano is always such an artist!”

Harley giggled. “Oh and I like the idea, it's more like...what we would dress like if we were the real Bonnie and Clyde!”

Jack grinned. “You're right sweetie!”
The first outfit was Jack's. The first thing he lifted out of the box was a dark navy blue fedora. Jack grinned at Harley as he placed the fedora on his head. Harley smiled. “It suits you. You look so handsome!”

Jack chuckled. “Why thank you, my sweet cupcake...now let's see what else...”

He gently unfolded the clothing and laid out the suit that Milano sent over, piece by piece, across the bed. The suit was a 1930’s style drape cut: extra fabric in the shoulders that allowed more freedom of movement, a nipped waist, and full sleeves that tapered at the wrist. The suit was a double-breasted, dark navy blue pinstriped suit, with matching vest, crisp white shirt, with the trousers also being tapered at the ankle. The last piece of the outfit that Jack laid out was the tie. It was a silk, silver, blue and purple diagonal stripped tie.

Harley kicked her legs in excitement. “Oh Jack, it's perfect!”

Jack grinned, nodding his head in agreement while adjusting the fedora so that it sat at a jaunty angle. “It is toots!”

He grinned widely and winked at her before he reached down to open the box with her outfit inside. Jack pulled out a black beret first, tossing it to Harley just as she was sitting up. She caught the beret, but she lost her sheet at the same time. Jack stood up holding the red bolero jacket that went with Harley's outfit, but stopped to stare as his girl put the beret on top of her messy bed hair, completely naked and smiled at him.

“I am one lucky man,” Jack declared with a lopsided smile.

Harley giggled pulling the sheet back in place. Jack wrinkled his nose at her. “My darling you're silly. I've seen everything...and believe me...it is perfect.” Jack grinned licking his lips.

Harley giggled blushing. “Oh puddin.”

Jack redirected his attention back to the outfit that he lifted out of the box. The next part that Jack lifted out was the skirt, which was the same shade of red as the jacket and would hit Harley mid-calf. Next he picked up the collared black tunic blouse that she would wear underneath the bolero jacket. The last pieces of Harley's costume were a thick black belt for her waist, a red and black silk scarf for around her neck, and a pair of silk stockings with a black garter belt and the line up the back of the legs.

Jack's grin was lopsided with clear glee. “You are going to look smashing Harley! Milano knew just the colors for you too! It's going to be hard to let you go to the party.” Jack waggled his eyebrows at her.

Harley giggled blushing, pleased with the outfit and Jack's reaction. “Let's see the shoes!”

Jack grinned grabbing the shoe boxes and flopped onto the bed beside her. The first box he opened held a pair of women's Cuban heeled black leather one-strap or Mary Jane shoes.

“Oh, those are darling!” Harley picked the shoes up when Jack handed her the box. Jack grinned. “They are gonna look sexy on you my sweets.”

Harley grinned and wrinkled her nose at him. “Let's see yours.”

Jack opened his box revealing a pair of shiny leather black and white wing tipped oxfords. Jack grinned. “Now all we need are the Tommy guns!”
“You think Bruce will let us have fakes?” Harley asked as she hopped to her feet and walked over to
the dresser to pull out a clean pair of panties and bra. Jack frowned. “He'll have a fit, but I'm going to
do it anyway.”

Jack chuckled, which had Harley looking over her shoulder at him. “Where do you get something
like that? Let me guess, you know a guy?”

Jack chuckled. “Don't I always?”

Jack dropped back on the bed lying on his back, reaching over to grab his cell phone. After a few
minutes he smiled, his head hanging off the side of the bed while he watched Harley dressing. He
licked his lips watching the shimmy of her hips as she pulled her red lace panties up.

Jack grinned and said into the phone, “Hey Terrance.”

Harley glanced over. She only heard part of the conversation as she hooked her bra under her breasts
before sliding it around under her chest to bring the cups forward and slide her arms through the
straps.

“You, it’s Jack. Hey, I was wondering, do you guys have any prop Tommy guns? You do? Could I
get a couple from you? Oh for our costumes...yeah, yeah, that big party my brother is holding. Yes,
yes...for those pictures he bought. Oh my girl and I are going as Bonnie and Clyde.” Jack laughed
softly.

Harley smiled as she picked out a sleeveless, mini tiered maxi dress in a shade of red so dark it
reminded Jack of the color of Harley’s blood. He watched her walk into the bathroom, just barely
able to see her. He saw the bra being tossed out the door to land on the floor. Jack scooted over so he
could see a hint of her in the door shimmying her sexy body into the sleeveless dress, pulling the
fabric up over her breasts. She reached behind her to pull up the zipper part way before she picked
up a brush and started to run it through her hair. Jack watched her, his blue eyes following the line of
her figure hungrily.

“Can you get those to me in the next couple of hours. Yes, I'll take it off what you owe me. Great!
See you soon.”

Jack hung up and tossed the phone onto the bed. “We have weapons! A friend of mine works at the
Gotham City theater—they have all sorts of prop guns.”

“A friend of yours?” Harley stuck her head out from around the door. Jack grinned seeing she had
brushed her hair out until it shone like gold. She was busily braiding it and wrapping it around her
head. Jack somersaulted off the bed, landing gracefully on his feet before he headed into the
bathroom.

Jack chuckled. “I know him from the card games at the Amusement mile. He owes me a couple of
grand, but I've been taking it out of him in favors.”

Harley chuckled softly while her fingers worked through her hair braiding it. Jack sighed happily as
he stood behind her. He smiled at her in the mirror before taking a hold of her zipper and running it
the rest of the way up her back. Harley smiled prettily at him in the mirror. Jack placed his hands
gently on her bare shoulders, running his hands down her arms just barely touching her. He leaned in
and kissed one of her shoulders. He could see a bruise there from the fight, already starting to fade.
When Harley started to wind the braid around her head, he reached up and gently stopped her.

“Just let it fall down your back,” he whispered.
Harley smiled and let the braid drop. He stood back for a moment looking at her before he held his hand up and noticed his nails were chipped. He frowned slightly. “Will you fix my nails sweets?”

Harley turned to face him. “Of course puddin.” She grabbed his hand, opening a drawer in the bathroom and moving a few things around until she came up with the black nail polish and led him by the hand back into the bedroom.

* 

Jack and Harley made their way downstairs a couple of hours later, both looking fresh and crisp with Harley in her red sundress and Jack wearing a pair of black skinny jeans that made his legs look as if they went on for ages. He had on a white cotton, button down shirt with the top four buttons left undone. Harley had fixed his nails, painting them a flat black along with hers. He was wearing a pair of dark brown simple oxfords while Harley was wearing a pair of flat sandals that laced all the way up her calf, the flats illustrated exactly how short Harley was compared the Jack.

When they came down the stairs, they were surprised to see that people were EVERYWHERE. Jack's left eye twitched for a moment as he watched the commotion of decorators, caterers and various other persons moving about the manor. Jack took Harley's hand and hurried them to the kitchen.

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The kitchen was just as chaotic if not more so. Jack's grip on Harley's hand tightened when they both heard Alfred. “Master Jack! Miss Harley! Follow me please!”

They hurried over to Alfred who looked a little haggard and annoyed. He smiled when they caught up to him. “I set up lunch for the two of you on the west patio. I also took the liberty of bringing the horseshoes around Master Jack. I thought the two of you might like the spend the next few hours...out of the way.” Alfred smiled.

Jack grinned wrapping an arm around Alfred shoulders. “Thank you Alfie! You're an absolute champ!”

Harley smiled hurrying over to give Alfred a kiss. “Thank you, though if there is anything I can do to help...”

“No, no, Miss Harleen. I have everything under control. I just know Master Jack doesn't like crowds within the manor.” Alfred smiled. “Now, you two have a nice lunch. I will keep the hysterics of party preparation away from this end of the manor.”

Jack grinned watching Alfred leave before he took Harley's hand and together they headed for the west patio.

When they arrived at the glass doors, they found that no one was using this area. It was actually quiet and still on this side of the house. Harley walked over to the glass patio doors that looked out onto the west patio and pulled them open. Outside on the patio sat a glass topped table and two chairs where a bottle of white wine, two wine glasses and two plates with what looked to Jack to be a familiar dish covered with glass lids, sat out just waiting for the two of them.

"Alfred thinks of everything," Jack said with a smile as he strolled over and pulled out a chair for Harley, bowing at the waist, his other hand going across his stomach smiling at her. Harley giggled hurrying over to take her seat. Jack kissed her bare shoulder before pushing her seat in and walking over to his own seat.
Jack grinned and picked up the wine to examine the label. "Ah, a Pinot Grigio! Alfred always has such good taste!"

He leaned over, pouring her a glass before he poured his own and took his seat. The sun was warm, but there was a light breeze this afternoon, making the arrangement outside comfortable.

"You are going to enjoy this," Jack said as he picked up his fork, removing the glass lid from the lunch. "Alfred made this for me before; it's chilled chardonnay-braised pasta...excellent! I swear Alfred could quit working for Bruce and me and start his own restaurant!" Jack chuckled picking up his wine and taking a sip.

Harley did the same before she answered. "It certainly looks good."

"Oh it is!" Jack grinned. He took his fork, wrapping the pasta around it and leaned over holding the bite out to Harley. She smiled opening her mouth as Jack fed her a bite.

Harley rolled the pasta around on her tongue making a soft groan of pleasure. "Oh, this is good Jack!"

Jack grinned. "Told you! Alfred is a wizard."

They shared a soft laugh before they both dug into their lunches.

* *

They talked a little while they ate, just enjoying each others company in the warm, late afternoon sun. The sun was slowly setting casting the sky in a warm sky-blue pink, while few of the lights along the back of the manor had started to come on in the dimming light. Jack was leaning back with his legs stretched out in front of him, his ankles crossed, and sipped his wine. "Have you ever played horseshoes?"

Harley was sitting with her legs crossed which allowed Jack to follow the length of her pale limbs up to her thighs, licking his lips at the thought of those legs of hers wrapped around his....Jack grinned at his thought watching as Harley picked up her napkin and wiped her mouth before she answered. "Nope. Never."

Jack's grin was sly as he studied her. Harley gave him a sidelong look. "What are you planning Jack Wayne?"

"Moi? Plan? You know I don't like to plan...too much." Jack chuckled. "I was considering a wager that would be paid in full before the party tonight."

Harley picked up her wine glass to take another sip. "A wager eh?"

"Yes, we play a game of horseshoes. Whoever wins has to give the other a full-body massage." Jack grinned wickedly.

Harley giggled. "What if we both win?"

Jack frowned in thought. When the idea came to him his face lit up like a child's on Christmas morning. "Then we fight. Hand to hand in the gym...I figure none of the worker bees would be in there..." He indicated the interior of the manor with his shoulder. "...will be in the gym."

Harley frowned rolling her sip of wine in her mouth before she swallowed. "Yes, but you know how to play horseshoes and I don't. So it's not really a fair bet."
Jack grinned. "Harley, Harley, Harley! You have shown on more than one occasion that you are resourceful and a fast learner! You'll do fine."

Harley smiled slowly before she put out her hand to him. "You're on."

Jack giggled. "Perfect! I can't wait for my massage!"

"HEY!" Harley threw her napkin at him and Jack laughed.

* * *

A few minutes later, Jack stood on the lawn, a cigarette hanging from his mouth as he held a horseshoe in his hand. Harley was sitting on a tree stump nearby watching him, leaning back with her legs stretched out distractingly in front of her. Jack was ignoring her as she rubbed her legs together in the short dress.

Harley frowned putting a finger to her lips with a big innocent look in her blue eyes as she wiggled her finger slowly, her nail lightly pressed against her lips. "Okay, explain this to me again..." Harley asked just as Jack tossed the horseshoe, missing his mark. Jack turned on Harley with narrowed eyes pulling out his cigarette. His eyes immediately traced the long length of her exposed legs, following the pale line up the hem of the very short dress. He licked his lips. "Are you doing that on purpose?"

Harley giggled. "Maybe." She rubbed one leg slowly against the other, eliciting an involuntary growl from Jack.

Jack chuckled taking a long pull on his cigarette. "Fine then you get the rules again!"

Harley groaned nearly sinking off the tree stump which had Jack laughing. "Didn't think of that did you?!"

Harley burst into a fit of giggles. "No!! Not the rules again!"

"Yes!! These are Jack rules!!" Jack laughed. "You only win if you get ten ringers!"

"Not fair!! I call foul!!" Harley giggled springing to her feet. The skirt of her dress flounced giving Jack a hint of the red lacy panties he had watched her put on earlier.

Jack chuckled. "Of course I'm not playing fair! I want to win!"

Harley made a face at him picking up a horseshoe and walking to the line in the lawn. It was actually a spot where the grass had been worn away to form a line in the lawn where grass didn't grow. "Did you and Bruce used to play horseshoes together?" She swung her arm a few times testing the weight of the horseshoe in her hand.

Jack blew out a trail of smoke. "We did, before our parents were murdered. I think the last time we played was with our father. I remember mother sitting over there..." Jack pointed by a huge old maple tree where Harley could see the weathered remains of a wooden bench. "She would watch the three of us, sitting there wearing a lemon yellow sundress and these huge wide brim hats...." Jack's voice became wistful as he stared at the spot. Harley worried her bottom lip watching him, but then Jack's eyes cleared and he turned back to her. "You better throw that thing or I'm disqualifying you!"

Harley giggled and stuck her tongue out before she tossed the heavy horseshoe.

The horseshoe soared forward, the metal weight of the shoe nicking the iron rod sticking out of the ground. "HA! That should count as something!" Harley turned putting her hands on her hips defying
Jack to contradict her.

Jack chuckled. “Maybe...if we weren't playing by Jack rules!!”

“UGH!! I swear you are making them up on the spot aren't you?!” Harley squealed at him.

Jack burst out laughing. “I might be!!”

Harley ran over at him. Jack had just enough time to toss his cigarette down and smash the butt before she was in his arms, Jack lifting her off her feet.

“You are an evil cheater Jack Wayne! I challenge you to a duel of honor!” She giggled rubbing her nose against his.

Jack smirked. “Being cute about it sort of takes away the threat, honey bunch.”

“You've seen me fight. I'm gonna hand your ass to you.” Harley giggled, pressing her lips against his before she let go to drop to her feet. Then just to make things more interesting, Harley took off at a run. Jack blinked as she disappeared between the glass patio doors and into the house.

“Shit! That little minx!” Jack muttered to himself and took off after her.

* 

Jack didn’t think it was possible, but it looked as if the manor was even more crowded with staff now than when he and Harley had walked through just a few hours ago. He caught a glimpse of her weaving through the caterers and florists heading toward the gym. Jack grinned wickedly and gave chase. The different staff members who where bringing in food, flowers, decorations had to jerk, weave and dance out of the way as Jack and Harley raced through them, giggling, heading toward the manor's gym. Harley still managed to arrive first, swiftly removed her shoes, then tossed them to the side. As soon as her shoes were off she stood up, turning round the instant Jack entered the gym, her fists up with a vicious grin on her face.

“Hey puddin!”

Jack's eyes widened in pleasant surprise to see her ready to fight. Watching her the night of the fight club, just the beauty of her fighting, the blood, that killer instinct in her eyes, he had found another turn on with his Harley...

Jack walked slowly backwards, away from her, keeping just enough distance that if she lunged he could easily move out of reach...hopefully. Keeping his eyes glued to her, Jack kicked off his shoes at the same time, aiming them for a corner. He reached down and pulled his socks off, making a slow circuit around her, tossing his socks as he did so, then he unbuttoned his shirt and tossed it aside as well. Harley narrowed her eyes with a smirk.

“You're cheating again Mr. Wayne.”

Jack's grin was wide and just as vicious as Harley's. “Why play fair when you can cheat?” Jack chuckled moving around her, his eyes taking in her stance. “So, you wanna fight eh?”

Harley giggled. “You know I do puddin.”

Harley licked her lips, her eyes gazing over him hungrily. “You know how sexy you are Jack?”

Jack chuckled “ Maybe, why don't you show me sugar bear?” Jack moved around slowly watching
her with a glimmer in his eyes. “I want to taste your blood on my lips Harley.” Jack's voice dropped to a seductive whisper.

Harley smiled, gazing at him through her lashes. “Then get over here and see if you can hit me.”

Jack grinned, bouncing on the balls of his feet and inched his way closer to her. Harley danced back, her blue eyes watching him intently. Jack felt her smile wash over him, he loved her smile, that deadly glint in her eyes and the way the skirt flounced with her movements. Jack chuckled, his eyes darting to the side. Harley did exactly what he wanted her to, her eyes moved. That was when he rushed her. Jack grabbed Harley by an arm and pulled her forward as he pivoted his hip to throw her over his hip. Jack lifted her up just a little, but it was enough that when he tossed her, she couldn't keep her feet under her and she hit the ground. Jack rushed her again just as Harley rolled to her feet, grabbing her from behind. Jack's right arm wrapped around her neck, his left hand coming up to lock his arm in place by holding his right wrist.

Harley threw all her weight against him, causing Jack to stumble backwards. He tripped over the corner of a weight bench sitting in one corner of the gym when Harley threw her weight at him, and made him slam into the wall. Jack shoved back, barely managing to keep a hold of her, which caused them both to stumble into another wall when their momentum plunged them forward. Jack struggled to keep his hold of her, but she was fighting like a hellcat against him. Harley's struggles caused the two of them to stumble again, almost crashing into the wall in front of them, but Harley brought her legs up at the last minute, planting her bare feet against the wall and shoved with all her might, using the wall to propel both of them backwards. Jack jerked, trying to keep her off her feet, just managing to keep his footing while pulling back on her neck at the same time. He held her up and back in an arch, far enough that she was on her tiptoes, scrabbling on the floor, her hands still struggling with the arm around her neck. She kept pounding and crawling at Jack's arm, but it was like a steel vice against her throat causing her to see spots for a moment. Harley snarled and brought her legs up at the last minute, planting her bare feet against the wall and shoved with all her might, using the wall to propel both of them backwards. Jack jerked, trying to keep her off her feet, just managing to keep his footing while pulling back on her neck at the same time. He held her up and back in an arch, far enough that she was on her tiptoes, scrabbling on the floor, her hands still struggling with the arm around her neck. She kept pounding and crawling at Jack's arm, but it was like a steel vice against her throat causing her to see spots for a moment. Harley snarled and brought her elbow back with all her might, hitting Jack in the ribs in a quick series of sharp jabs.

Her hits were powerful enough to break his hold on her, bruising his ribs.

Jack winced and shoved her away from him to provide some room to maneuver, shocked at the pain that raced up his side. Harley hit the floor, but she rolled to her hands and knees, smiling up at him. Jack felt his shaft swell in response to seeing her, fighting with her, the way she wasn't holding back, that vicious smile, her hair coming loose from her braid. Her blue eyes danced dangerously with a look of violence and lust that had him wanting her all the more. She made him ache...

Harley felt a purr in the back of her throat looking up at Jack, bare chested, breathing heavily and that damn smile of his, she thought. A row of perfect teeth...teeth she wanted to feel on her skin...she wanted him badly, the line of blood running from the corner of his mouth only made her more determined to have him, naked, pounding against her, sweaty, bloody...Harley purred. “Come on Jack, come and get me.”

Jack rushed forward, his arms snapping out in a quick series of punches. Harley just barely managed to block Jack's fists from making contact with her face or torso, slapping them away, the vibration of which raced up her arms. One of his punches slipped past her guard, clipping her in the chin. Harley stumbled backwards, struggling to keep her guard up.

Jack's right arm snapped out and his knuckles grazed her chin again, this time on the other side, the impact hard enough that it force her back. But this time when her hand jerked out in response to block, Harley snagged his wrist and yanked him forward close enough that she could use her right fist to slam it down onto his shoulder. Jack pitched to the side a little, but it was enough for Harley to hit Jack in the side—his now bruised side—with her fist, following it immediately with a backhanded
fist to his cheek. The impact of Harley's fist snapped Jack's head to the side.

Jack laughed as he felt his head wobble from the strike. He loved it, she wasn't holding back at all! God I love this woman, he thought to himself. She knew exactly what to do to get him all hot and bothered!

When he turned back to face her, he was grinning, the line of blood running down from his lip had extended past his chin from where the impact of her fist had reopened his split lip.

“Good one Harls.” He chuckled.

“Thanks puddin!” Harley giggled. Beating him up was making her ache for him, that vicious light in his blue eyes, that seemed to call her to violence... Harley lunged, her fist flying at his face, but Jack blocked her next strike. Harley's arm overextended just far enough that she stumbled forward just a little. Jack grabbed her by her hair with one hand and by her dress with the other, the momentum causing them both to hit the wall again as Jack pitched them both forward. Jack twisted around, managing to get his arm around her neck again, putting his back to the wall to give him some leverage as he hauled back on her, choking her. Harley gasped as her air was suddenly cut off.

Harley struggled, dropping her weight which pulled her down to her knees. The change in her weight loosened Jack's grip marginally. Jack held onto her with his right arm and with his left he hit Harley three times in the back of the shoulder. She snarled in pain, surging to her feet, throwing her elbow backwards to catch him in the thigh and made his leg buckle for a split second. Harley threw her elbow back for another strike that caught Jack under the chin. Jack grunted, grabbing her by the hair again and slammed her head against the wall. Harley blinked, stunned for only a second before she grabbed his right arm and rolled him right over her back and onto the floor.

Jack was laughing when he hit the floor rolling to his feet grinning, panting, and giggling at the same time. “Hahah!! Harley, you little minx!!”

Harley giggled too, grinning. “Oh puddin...”

He licked his lips watching her. Harley used the back of her hand to wipe away the blood that was trickling down her chin.

Jack laughed. “Bruce is going to kill us when we both show up with bloody lips.”

Harley giggled. “It will just make our costumes look more realistic. We'll just say it's part of the make-up.”

Jack chuckled. “My devious, brilliant little minx!”

That was the moment they both charged each other. Harley wrapped her arms around Jack's neck, forcing him backwards. Jack dropped to his knees instead, sending them both down to the ground again. They rolled, struggling with each other before they broke apart. They regained their feet again simultaneously. Jack took a couple of quick swipes at her with his fists, but Harley batted them away with her forearms. They were both laughing as they dodged and weaved away from each other.

They came in close again, but Harley performed a graceful spin, presenting her back to Jack for a split second, too fast for Jack to take advantage of, but then her elbow came up, slamming him in the mouth again. At the same time, she twisted herself around, wrapping her arm around his neck so that his head was caught against her torso, her arm around his throat, squeezing hard enough that she was cutting off his air, much as he had done to her earlier.

Jack was grinning while he struggled, clawing at Harley's arm, hitting her with his fist, but she was determined not to let go. He didn't think he had ever been as turned on as he was at this very moment.
with Harley choking him! Harley leapt up to wrap her legs around Jack's waist, gripping him tighter than before. Jack caught her, his hands going around her calves while she leaned all her body weight against her hold on his neck trying to make him pass out. He stumbled forward, then spun to slam her up against the wall, once, twice. He could hear Harley's gasps of pain until finally he loosened her hold on him.

They kept a hold on each other despite her loosened hold on his neck. Harley dropped her weight back to the floor. As soon as her feet touched the ground, she brought her knee up fast and hard to hit Jack a few times in his lower back, at least once in a kidney, before she threw him away from her. Jack hit the wall, but he didn't go down. She noticed how his eyes were dancing with mischief, his gaze running down her body as he panted. Jack dragged his teeth across his bottom lip, gazing wantonly at her, the press of his teeth causing another trickle of blood to run down his chin. Harley was panting, her eyes wandering down his naked chest and stomach, watching a drop of blood from his lip leave a bloody trail against his chest and slowly run down the slender muscles of his stomach, writhing with wiry muscles The look in Harley's eyes was one of pure lust; her body ached watching the way his chest heaved with his breath.

Jack growled and charged her, his shoulder hit her in her diaphragm, lifted her off her feet and slammed her into the wall. Harley wrapped her legs around his chest, her arms around his head. They hit the wall hard a second time, Jack spun around with her, dropping to his knees then to the floor, Harley's back hitting and knocking the air from her lungs when Jack slammed her against the hard floor. They struggled for a few intense moments before Harley, her legs like iron around him, managed to get the upper hand and push Jack around, causing him to roll, hitting the floor. Harley went with him, ending up on top, straddling him. Harley grabbed his neck with both her hands holding him down. Jack grinned, panting to catch his breath, blood smeared his teeth and lips, a trail of blood running down from his nose while he stared up at her, his blue eyes bright. “What're you going to do now?”

Harley purred, adding a little pressure to his throat. Her hair had come loose from the braid, there was blood on her lips and there was a pressure cut high on her right cheek. She ground her hips against him feeling him hard between her legs. “I win.” Harley leaned down and ran the flat of her tongue along his chin and up over his lips, licking away the blood before she kissed him.

Jack, his hair having fallen loose around his face, chuckled, but then his laughter was muffled when Harley, holding his throat still, her hands tight around his neck, her thumbs forcing his jaw up, pressed her mouth hungrily against his, her tongue delving deeply. Jack groaned, his face slightly flushed from Harley's choking, reached up to grab her shoulders, his fingers digging painfully into her soft flesh. He groaned again, tasting that delightful mix of blood and strawberries that was purely Harley. Harley slowly released her hold on his neck, her touch turning from rough and punishing to tender, a gentle caress, her thumbs lightly caressing his jaw. Jack's hands glided down her arms then around to caress her sides, reaching up her back to find the zipper of her dress, slowly pulling it down the curve of her back, the zipper parting the fabric. Harley moaned at the release of her dress. Jack grabbed both sides of the dress yanking it down to expose her breasts.

Jack bucked, Harley surprising her with the jerking move that broke their kiss. He rolled her onto the floor pressing his body against hers, attacking her mouth again, their tongues twisting, her teeth catching his tongue painfully for a moment that only made him moan with need.

Harley let go with a grin. “So, do I get my massage?”

Jack chuckled. “Oh yes, yes you do.”
Bruce came home to find Alfred in the middle of what could only be described as controlled chaos. The old butler was hollering out orders and pointing here and there as if he were directing plans to land on a runway. People were running up to him with questions and Alfred was answering swiftly, his British accent becoming slightly more pronounced as he gave clipped, precise orders.

Bruce hurried up to him with a smile. “How's it going?”

Alfred raised an eyebrow at Bruce. “Compared to raising two unruly boys sir, this is a picnic.”

Bruce chuckled. “I'm going to hurry and change and pick up Selina. Where are Jack and Harley?”

“I think I saw them chasing each other into the gym an hour ago, Master Bruce,” Alfred said while he was directing two young men and two women with string instruments toward the ballroom.

Bruce lifted his eyebrows a fraction. “Chasing?”

“Yes sir. I believe they were playing some sort of game.” Alfred smiled over his shoulder at Bruce.

Bruce frowned. “All right, going to go ask them to greet guests for me until I get back with Selina.”

“Very good sir, just be careful Master Bruce,” Alfred said, but Bruce was walking quickly away and hadn't seemed to hear the last bit of advice.

*

The sauna room off the gym was one of the best that money could buy. The room was wide enough and long enough that even without windows it didn't feel claustrophobic and it had been fashioned in the style of a traditional Finnish sauna room. There was an upper and lower bench that ran the circumference of the room along with a heater that was piled with large round stones and a bucket and ladle next to the stove. The walls and benches were solidly built, made of Nordic White Spruce. The lights of the sauna could be changed in color as well as intensity. Jack had switched the lights to a deep purple and blue with soft white lights against the wall making the sauna cozy and romantic.

Harley was lying on her stomach, naked, her hair completely loose, pulled over one shoulder while Jack, also naked was rubbing sweet almond oil into her skin. He ran his long fingers down the curve of her back, slowly working his thumbs into her skin as he pushed his hands up her back.

Harley let out a deep groan. “Oh Jack, that feels nice.”

“Mm...going to make it feel even nicer...” Jack whispered as his hands slipped down her oiled back to her rear. Jack spread her legs, running his oiled hands down the back of her thighs, then slowly, pressing down harder on her skin, he ran his hands back up and over her rear. Harley moaned softly. She jerked just a little when his hand slipped between her legs. Harley groaned while Jack slowly rubbed, two of his fingers sliding deeper. Harley hissed with pleasure, pressing her teeth into her bottom lip, her fingers balling into fists. Jack licked his lips watching her reactions while he eased his fingers into her, then out again. Harley brought her left fist up to her mouth, biting down with an inhaled moan, his slick fingers sliding in. He slowly twisted them around before pulling them out, then deep again, the oil and her own fluids making a soft, wet sound. Jack grinned wider adding a little rotation of his fingers, his slick thumb teasing against her rear. Harley whimpered and arched her hips in response to his attentions. Jack leaned forward and ran the flat of his tongue along the curve of her rear tasting the sweet almond oil on her skin, then he bit her, his teeth pressing into her soft oiled flesh. Harley gasped at the feel of his teeth against her, his fingers inside her; her body ached with need. Jack thrust gently with his fingers a few more times before he whispered, “Roll over Harls.”
She did as he requested, rolling over onto her back. Jack grinned, his eyes twinkling.

“Oh lookie here,” he whispered.

Harley purred stretching her arms over her head gazing at Jack through her lashes.

“Mmm...puddin...” Jack giggled reaching for the oil and poured a generous amount into the palm of his hand. He rubbed his hands together before he shifted between her legs. Jack grasped her hips and slowly eased his hands up her torso, pressing just enough to knead her muscles. Harley groaned arching into his touch. When he came to her breasts he encircled one with both hands and gently began to rub, working his oiled fingers over the soft mound, his oil slicked thumb skating over her hard nipple. Jack wet his lips enjoying the way the oil and the heat of the sauna made her skin glow.

The little sounds that Harley made as he touched were driving him crazy, but when he leaned over to work on her other breast, Harley ran her hands down her stomach, coating them with oil and then reached out for his erection. When she touched him with her warm oiled hands, Jack jerked, the sensation of her oiled hands moving up and down his erection sent hot, erotic ripples up from his groin to spread through his entire body.

His eyes fluttered closed and he groaned loudly. Harley grinned watching his reactions while she ran her oiled hands up and down the length of him, twisting her hands one way then the other, dropping one hand lower to caress his balls, which had Jack groaning loudly again.

“Come here Jack.” Harley tugged gently. Jack dropped his hands onto the bench on either side of her head and grinned down at her. “I thought I was supposed to massage you?” he whispered as he rubbed his nose against hers.

“You did, but I wanted to touch you.” She smiled. “I love the way you feel in my hands...”

Jack grinned lopsidedly at her. “Well, you did win so you get to do what you want.”

Harley grinned purring. “Then I want you inside me...now.”

Jack rolled her hips to the side, raising Harley's leg up, pressing the oiled limb against his chest, he ran his tongue along the side of her calf. She could feel him, the brush of his oiled hands against her skin creating a shiver along her back when he touched her, the head of his erection pressing against her wet opening, made all the more slick by the oils on their bodies. The head of Jack's erection slid and slipped teasingly against her oiled skin, the head of his erection, oiled, satin soft skin and hard at the same time. Harley watched him with a giggle that quickly transformed into a gasp of pleasure when he slowly started to press into her, the oil mixing with her own fluids. He thrust hard the last few inches, making Harley gasp louder. Jack let her leg drop which Harley promptly wrapped her knuckle between her teeth after she cried out, the first time her climax coming the instant he entered her.

Jack shifted his right arm under her leg, lifting the limb higher, his other hand holding her hip as he started to thrust harder. Harley whimpered, coming hard and fast, her groans high-pitched and long. Jack grinned as the wet sounds of their oiled bodies filled the small space mixed with their shared moans of pleasure, prompted him to thrust harder trying to go as deeply into her as he could.

* 

Bruce walked into the gym. “Jack?”

He frowned and look around, wondering where they might have gone. Some of the equipment
looked to have been moved around just a little and he saw their shoes along with Jack's socks and shirt in a corner. Bruce walked over picking up his brother's shirt frowning in confusion.

He turned swiftly when he heard a sound, like something banging against the wall and a cry of pain. Bruce cocked his head to the side listening. With a frown Bruce walked through the small hall that led to the sauna.

*

Harley was panting and groaning, biting down on her knuckles, which was doing nothing to stop the loud noises she was making. Jack panted along with her, grinning down at her, his pelvis slapping against her backside. She arched her back, her eyes screwed closed as the sensations of Jack thrusting washed over her, her orgasm like a flame bursting to life to race through her body. He felt so good she had to say it out loud. “Ooo puddin!!”

Jack's chuckles were mixed with deep moans while he pressed against her, the feel of his pelvis slamming into her, then slowly while he pulled back gently and eased back into her causing her to whimper.

Jack panted. “My little minx...”

He jerked, trying to slow himself down, but he simply couldn't; he lifted her leg around, wrapping his arm around her knee, letting himself go, giving into the hard, deep thrusts. Harley couldn't think of anything but Jack's pounding, touching her so deeply she would have sworn she was going to black out when she came again, an orgasm that prevented coherent thoughts. Jack leaned back, his back arched, crying out her name when he climaxed.

“Harley!!”

That was the moment that the sauna door opened and Bruce stuck his head in. “Jack are you...”

Jack, his expression one of punch-drunk satisfaction, his face slightly red from the heat as well as the intensity of his orgasm grinned at Bruce.

“Hey Brucie!” Jack waved.

Harley giggled arching her head to see Bruce, her arms brought in tight to cover her breasts. The look on Bruce's face was comical as he stepped back and slammed the door shut. From the other side of the door Bruce snarled. “I need you to greet guests until I return with Selina. Think you can do that?”

Jack, staying embedded in Harley laughed. “Sure thing Bro! Just leave it to me!”

Outside Bruce leaned his forehead against the door frame, his eyes closed. There were things he simply didn't want to see...that was one of them.

“Thanks Jack. See you later.” Bruce called back before hurrying out of the gym. “And please, no smoking in the house!”

From the other side of the door he heard Jack yell. “No problem!” Then the sounds of the two of them laughing.

Bruce rubbed a hand over his face muttering. “God Jack...”

*
An hour later, Jack and Harley, dressed in their Bonnie and Clyde costumes and with Harley having done her hair like Myrna Loy, her beret sassily place upon her head, stood beside Jack who had his hair slicked back, his fedora on, each of them with a fake Tommy gun in hand, stood in the ballroom entrance greeting guests as they arrived. The whole situation was mind-numbingly boring.

The ballroom was beautifully decorated with candlelight, several white covered tables and chairs, flowers, all of them white as well, decorated nearly every available space. Against one wall was an ice sculpture that Jack thought might be a swan, but he wasn’t sure. Harley had said it looked like a piece of abstract art of a dying duck, eliciting a laugh from Jack. The ice sculpture was surrounded by a dessert table. There was another table piled with an assortment of fruits, and yet another with cheeses and crackers. There were waiters and waitresses wandering throughout the room with trays of hors d'oeuvres, and a variety of other finger foods and drinks. A mini-bar had been set up where a clearly skilled bartender crafted drinks. And lastly, security personnel wandered among the crowd, obvious in their plain black suits, wearing ear pieces, and sporting stern expressions. The string quartet played in one corner of the room, the acoustics of the ballroom allowing the music to carry in varying degrees throughout the room. The lighting was soft and warm yet gave the entire room a deeper atmosphere of elegance. Several people were dancing sedately while others ate and drank, talking in little social groups. Jack muttered.

“Bunch of bloated hypocrites.”

Harley turned to watch them, all of the guests with more money than sense.

Jack leaned down to whisper in Harley’s ear. “I swear if I see one more couple dressed like those dopes from the Fifty Shades Darker movie, I'm going to stab someone.” Harley giggled. So far, of the couples that had arrived, twenty of them had been some sort of variation of the Fifty Shades Darker masquerade costumes with the lacy masks. Only a handful had shown up in 'real' costumes. There was a clown or two, a pope, a couple of witches, several prince and princesses...all fairly basic and boring.

Jack groaned loudly. “Wish Bruce would hurry back.”

That was when they both heard, loud enough that the whole ballroom stopped and turned. “Hey, you fucking criminal!!”

Jack and Harley turned to see Alex, with Alice the waitress on his arm. Alex was wearing a truly horrible lion costume, a full body suit that resembled pajamas, a lion’s head with Alex’s smiling face seen through the open mouth and a little tiara on top of the lion’s head. Alice was dressed as a sexy ring master with fishnets, thigh high black boots, corset and red tailcoat.

Jack burst out laughing. “You two look great!”

Harley giggled nodding her agreement.

Alex grinned. “It was Alice's fucking idea! She's fucking brilliant.”

Alice smiled and blushed under the profanity laced compliment.

Jack was still laughing as he patted Alex on the back. “Well go mingle, have fun!”

“I plan on getting drunk as a fucking skunk on the free booze my friend! Alice drove.” Alex grinned and Alice giggled as she led Alex off into the party.
Across town, Bruce was driving with Selina beside him in the passenger seat. She was a little annoyed. Having Bruce drive her was not part of her plan...but, as she reminded herself trying to calm down, she was good at improvising. She could do this, maybe steal one of Bruce's cars? Maybe even this one? Again when Selina thought about stealing from Bruce her heart felt as if that black spot that she carried there would expand, moving across her heart turning it darker and harder...

But right now she could concentrate on her time with Bruce. She turned in her seat to look at him. He was dressed in black knee pants, white stockings, a black coat that was a relatively straight loose garment, with the slight fullness around the knees. The coat fell into folds over the backside of of his hips (when he was standing), am embroidered vest underneath all of it accented with silver. He had a white cravat along with a white haired wig, and in the back of the car sat his mask and embellished, tri-corner hat. He really looked devastatingly gorgeous tonight, Selina thought wistfully.

Selina was wearing a black gown and petticoat with silver embellishments and embroidery, she also had a white period wig and her mask. The only difference between their costumes was that she was wearing part of another one underneath and her outer costume was designed to come off easily with the tug of a thread.

“You know you didn't have to come get me Bruce.” Selina smiled trying to keep her voice casual.

Bruce grinned. “I know, but I wanted to walk into the party with you on my arm. Is that so bad?”

Selina smiled. “No, it's not and it's very sweet of you.”

Bruce grinned. “Not selfish?”

Selina laughed leaning back in her seat. “Maybe just a little.”

She leaned over and pressed a kiss to his cheek. Bruce grinned happily heading home.

* 

Harley had gone into the ballroom and returned with two glasses of champagne. Jack grabbed his glass downing it in one swallow. “How many more guests?” Jack asked with a whine.

Harley chuckled. “I stopped and asked Alfred; he thinks maybe a handful...another ten or twenty at the most.”

Jack groaned. “Next time Bruce asks for a favor like this I am not doing it. I've never been so bored!”

Harley leaned close, draping her arm across his shoulder, sipping at her glass of champagne. “Just imagine picking the ones you could shoot in the head.”

Jack slid his eyes sideways, a wicked grin forming on his lips. “You are the light of my life, do you know that?”

Harley giggled prettily.

Two more guests arrived at the ballroom entrance then, two men. One of the men was tall (Harley figured he had to be at least six feet, though Jack was perhaps an inch taller), slim, with unruly blonde hair that was going grey, piercing eyes behind perfectly round glasses, and thin lips, but there was a quiet, almost eerie stillness to him. He was dressed as a plague doctor, his long-nosed bird-like mask held under his arm. His companion was a shorter man, hitting the tall gentlemen at the shoulder, with a bowl-like hair cut. His features were long, but not as sharp as his taller companion...
and his glasses where square shaped. There was a 'washed out' aspect to his features that made him blend into the background. He was dressed as a Civil War surgeon. The taller man spoke, his voice soft and with a quality that made the skin on the back of Harley's neck crawl.

“Dr. Johnathan Crane and Dr. Jeremiah Arkham.” The taller man, Crane, smiled putting out his hand after introducing themselves. Jack took it with a slight curl to his lips. He knew Bruce had invested a lot of money in the asylum. That had always rubbed Jack wrong, as if Bruce was preparing the way to have Jack committed. The issue of committing Jack had come up more times than Jack cared to remember and from a variety of sources. The most recent mention had been from the board of directors of Wayne Enterprises.

Jack's smile didn't reach his eyes as he took Dr. Crane's offered hand. “I know you, both of you work at Arkham Asylum.”

Dr. Arkham took Jack's hand next and smiled. “Yes we do. I’m the head of the asylum, Jeremiah Arkham, and this is my colleague Dr. Crane. Mr. Wayne invited us this evening.”

Harley frowned, a shiver running up her spine, as Dr. Crane took her hand and kissed her knuckles. She smiled and nodded as he stepped aside to allow his companion to take her hand next. Harley knew the names of both these men. Hell, she had read their work while in college! Crane's focus was the study of fear, while Arkham had written papers on the different ways to delve into the troubled mind. She turned, watching them step into the party, Crane now donning his mask.

Jack took her hand. “You all right Harls?”

“You ever have that feeling of someone walking over your grave? Or a feeling that you were just given a premonition?” She asked him and turned around with a strange look in her eyes.

Jack nodded. “Yeah, why pumpkin?”

Harley looked back into the ballroom watching the two doctors.

“Just...it's nothing.” She turned back to face with Jack a smile on her face that didn't quite reach her eyes.

Jack caressed her jaw with his fingertips. “I'll protect you Harls, from anything and anybody.” He smiled at her and Harley nodded. “I know. I would do the same for you.” Jack, his fingers under her chin, guided her mouth closer just as Bruce and Selina entered.

“Everything going all right?” Bruce asked as he stepped up disrupting the kiss.

Jack turned; if he was startled by his brother's silent appearance he made no comment. “Yeah...everything is fine, big brother. Now I can go dance with my girl!” Jack grabbed Harley's hand and hurried away with her without waiting for an answer.

Bruce shook his head. “I guess I should be pleased he stayed doing the job I asked him to do as long as he did.”

Selina smiled and lightly smacked him. “Don't be so hard on him.”

“Fine. I believe there are a few other people coming...I should...” Bruce started, but Selina grabbed his hand and pulled him into the ballroom. “Please, not everyone needs you to meet them at the door. Come on—dance with me.” Selina smiled and dragged Bruce across the ballroom to the dance floor where the string quartet were playing “A Kiss from a Rose.”
No sooner had Bruce and Selina left the ballroom entrance than two more people walked into the room. They were dressed like a couple from the movie “The Purge”, wearing 'no face' masks. The woman was a thin blonde and the man with her had dark brown hair. They both pulled their masks up and looked around the room.

“Look at them all Billy. Bunch of rich bloated...” Vicki Vale didn't continue.

Billy chuckled. “Bitter much?”

Vicki snarled. “Shut it.”

“Hey man, I wasn't the one whose Bruce Wayne exclusive fizzled.” Billy grinned at her.

Vicki Vale sighed. “Whatever. Besides, that wasn't my fault. That was because of Bruce Wayne's crazy brother.”

Billy smiled. “Yeah, weird to be seeing so much of him around Gotham now. Think it has something to do with that woman?”

Billy pointed across the room to where Jack and Harley were dancing so close it looked to her as if they were trying to crawl into each others skin.

“Maybe...that's one of the things I want to find out,” Vicki said as her eyes wandered the crowd.

“So why are we sneaking in, in the first place. Bruce Wayne has press here.” Billy indicated with his thumb the line of press outside the Wayne Manor gate they had encountered on the way inside and then again with his forefinger at the several people, not wearing costumes, who were clearly press with their cameras. There weren't many of them here and they mostly seemed content to quietly take pictures rather than ask any questions.

Vicki glared at Billy. “We are here to snoop Billy.”

“Snoop about what?” Billy asked, sliding his mask back into place.

Vale smiled. “Every rich family has skeletons. I want to find the Wayne hidden bones.”

* 

Jack had already swung Harley out onto the floor, one arm around her waist, the other holding her hand out in a classical dance pose. Jack chuckled watching a few of the other people out here dancing to the music. Jack moved Harley across the floor, the two of them cutting smart figures in their costumes as well as the fact that Jack was an incredible dancer, Harley felt as if she was just along for the ride. She could also feel that Jack was becoming bored already with the party.

“Wish most of these people would slip into a coma...all of them as useless as a knitted condom,” Jack muttered.

Harley chuckled and then pressed her forehead to Jack's shoulder trying not to laugh out loud at his last statement. After taking a couple of seconds to force her breathing back to normal Harley asked softly. “So did you pick the ones you would shoot?”

Jack spun her around with a pleasant smile. “I did, wanna know who?”

Harley grinned and nodded eagerly. Jack's smile was radiant as he indicated a couple near them with
his eyes. “See those two?”

Harley nodded as Jack continued. “I’m no proctologist, but I know an asshole when I see one and that one is named Simon Stagg. That’s him and his wife Mara over there. I know for a fact that Stagg does secret work in genetics...on human subjects...illegal work that is. For him, I think I would load him up with some of my secret...venom and see how he likes to be tested on. He donates a lot of money to hide the fact that he is a walking, talking piece of shit. A bullet between the eyes would be too good for him.”

Harley grinned as Jack spun her around and pointed out someone else. “That is the mayor of our fair Gotham City, Hamilton Hill, as corrupt as they come. I think for him I might shoot him in the kneecaps...then I would have to give some thought on what we would do...”

Harley laughed. “Cut his tongue out would be fun or even better, for liars, you would put a nail through the tongue...”

“Ah, my girl you are a wonder! Yes!” Jack laughed spinning her around.

*

Bruce smiled as he held Selina close. They moved to the music, their bodies pressed close together. Selina was fighting with herself—she could just give up on the painting, just let it go. She didn't have to steal it, didn't need the money. Her client would be angry, but she could handle it...though there was part of her that was just too tempted to steal something so valuable right under the nose...Selina sighed laying her head against Bruce’s chest. She knew in her heart of hearts that it didn't matter, she would steal the painting anyway...her feelings on the matter of Bruce Wayne didn't matter. It was the thrill of the forbidden that drew her to what she did...it was a feeling more powerful that the potential to love anyone.

Even someone as wonderful as Bruce Wayne.

*

The music had changed, disrupting their conversation. Jack took Harley's hand, leading her off the dance floor. “All these rich people are such a waste...all of them. Everyone ends up in the same place in the end...dead. I suppose that's the joke.” Jack laughed and deftly snagged a couple of glasses of wine from a nearby waiter walking past them. At that moment, Bruce walked to the east wall where the paintings were hung, all covered with curtains. Bruce stood in front of them and called out to the flashes of cameras

“Everyone! Everyone! May I have your attention! Tonight's party is all about art. All of you have donated some money tonight to the Gotham City Art Museum.” There was scattered applause. Bruce smiled. “Now let me...”

Jack downed his drink with one swallow dropping the glass on a table before he grabbed Harley's hand. “Come on, let's go.”

Harley giggled, quickly downing her own drink and tossing her glass onto the table next to Jack's. “Where are we going?”

Jack smiled. “Away from all this bullshit!”

*

Jack hauled Harley up the stairs holding her hand. “We are going to do something to liven up this
Harley was giggling in sudden anticipation. “What? What are we going to do?”

Jack turned and grinned at her. “Just wait!”

Jack pulled Harley into their bedroom and hurried over to the closet. Harley sat on the edge of the bed watching him tearing things out of the bottom until he found what he was looking for. Finally he sat back with a wide grin.

“Here we go!” Jack grinned standing up and walking over to set a box on the bed. He pulled the box open and Harley looked inside. On top were small yellow boxes, one of which was partially open to reveal little glass vials, the rest of the box was filled with tiny red tubes with little fuses sticking out of them. Harley frowned. “What are those?” Jack grinned like a bad little boy. “The glass vials are stink bombs, which I might add, I've made particularly potent...added a little bit of my own chemistry to the mix to make them extra horrible, the rest are M-80's—your classic, very powerful firecracker!” Jack chuckled. “The ones with the black fuses are slow burning and the green fuses are five second fuses.”

Harley pressed her lips together in a coy grin. “How long have you had those?”

Jack frowned in thought. “Since I was younger and was banned from the country club.” Jack smiled innocently. “Though I bought the stink bombs just a few years ago. Just wanted to see what I could do to make them more effective.”

Harley frowned picking one up. “How do you know they are more effective?”

Jack laughed with a wide eyed expression. “Trust me—they are.” He hurried over to his desk and pulled out something else hurrying over to hand them to Harley. They looked like little plastic plugs with tiny filters in them. Harley gave Jack a questioning look. “Nose plugs—my own invention—should keep the stink of the bombs out of your nostrils.”

Harley frowned. “There are only three, what about you?”

Jack grinned tapping the side of his nose. “Immune. Took a while, but I'm immune now.” Harley frowned just slightly then nodded her head and slipping her nose plugs on, holding the other loosely in her hand.

Harley put her other hand on her hip. Her 1930's outfit made her look even more sassy than usual. “What are you planning Jack Wayne?”

Jack grinned. “Causing a little chaos.” He waggled his eyebrows at her. “Let's go find Alex!”

Jack carried the box of ‘party favors’ as he had called them, as the two of them hurried back down the stairs, wending their way through the crowd that had now begun to spill out from the ballroom to fill space everywhere else in the manor. Jack and Harley found Alex and Alice out on one of the veranda’s with a platter full of filled champagne glasses that Alex had clearly misappropriated from one of the wait-staff, half of which were already empty. Alex was giggling at something Alice had said when the two of them showed up. Jack grinned at his friend.

“Alex, I need you for an important mission!” Jack gestured with the box to emphasize his need.
Alex grinned taking a flute glass and downing the drink in one gulp like it was water. “Whatcha fucking need man?”

Jack had carried the box of fireworks and stink bombs over to the table, using the box to move the platter to the side, causing the flutes to shake and clink against one another. Jack opened the box as Alex leaned over.

Alex grinned. “Let me guess, you're fucking bored?”

“Very. Time to start a little chaos.” Jack grinned. “I don't suppose you really need to be worrying about losing any of these tight-asses as clients?”

“Pffftt!! Fuck no! Half of them would lick my fucking tennis shoes if I wanted!” Alex grinned. “They need me, as much as any of them would hate to fucking admit it...”

Alice glanced at Harley. “Is this a good idea?”

Harley snorted. “No, which is why we're going to do it!”

Jack dug in the bottom of the box and pulled out three boxes of matches. Alice gasped her eyes wide. “That...that could have been so bad!”

Jack laughed. “Blah...might have blown up my closet, made my room smell...big deal...caused a big stink.” Jack snorted on a laugh. “Big stink...get it? Anyway, might actually have been funny though...” Jack smiled before he smacked a box of matches into Alice's hand. “One for you.” He put another box in Alex's one hand. “And you, and the last one for Harley and me.”

Alex was snorting, laughing to himself and grabbing another flute of champagne. “This is going to be epic!”

Jack laughed. “Feel free to head to the door when you're done so you don't get caught by security or Bruce.”

Alex saluted Jack with his one hand, the empty glass still in his hand. “Got it! Anywhere particular I shouldn't fucking set one?”

Jack frowned. “Nope, just don't go up the stairs...otherwise any place is fine!”

Jack swung his arm through Harley's. “Ready to make some noise?”

Harley giggled. “Of course puddin!”

*  

Most of the crowd was filing by the paintings, taking this opportunity for a up-close, privileged look at the masterpieces that would soon be part of the art museum's collection. Many in the crowd seemed especially interested in the Picasso. Bruce smiled, watching his guests, sipping from a glass of champagne when Selina came up beside him wrapping her arm around his waist. “Everyone seems pleased.”

Bruce smiled. Her eyes were hypnotic behind the mask. He nodded. “These paintings will be a great draw for the museum.”

Selina smiled, keeping her expression interested, hiding the truth in her eyes. “Yes, yes they will.” “And we made a lot of money in donations to the museum as well; it will allow them to continue
their summer programs for local children.” Bruce smiled clearly pleased. Selina comforted herself by reminding her heart that she wouldn’t be taking that money...and only the one painting instead of all of the others as well...though the fact that it was the most expensive painting was beside the point she assured herself.

“For a rich bachelor playboy, you seem to care a lot,” Selina said looking at Bruce over the rim of her champagne flute.

Bruce’s lips curled into a faint smile. “I can be both: rich playboy and care about the city. Gotham means a lot to me. It’s my home.”

Selina frowned ever so slightly dropping her voice. “Even though the city took your parents from you and your brother?”

Bruce took a sip of his drink before he answered. “Yes. I think Gotham has a good heart. Someone needs to nurture that heart for it to grow. Gotham needs people to care, not run away. I think ultimately Gotham can be saved.”

Selina stared at him for a long moment until Bruce blushed. “What?”

Selina smiled and kissed his cheek. “Nothing.”

*

Jack and Harley hurried into the ballroom, the two of them wrapped around each other, giggling like school children. Jack guided Harley over to the large dessert table that was set up against the wall with the stupid looking ice sculpture they had both decided they hated.

“Do you want to do the honors my little minx?” Jack purred and leaned over to grab her earlobe with his teeth. Harley groaned, her eyes rolling with pleasure at the sharp feel of his teeth against her ear. She giggled, taking the firecracker he offered her and lit a match, careful that no one noticed them. She then rolled the little red tube under the table, then lit another two, tossing them quickly under the table after the first one.

While Harley was doing that, Jack hurried over, lighting his own firework and tossed the slowly burning stick back behind the string quartet and another under the cheese table, careful that no one saw him. Luckily for them both, the few reporters here had their attention on the art works and not whatever Jack Wayne was doing. Harley lit another and rolled the tiny firework until it stopped at the feet of one of the security men.

Jack strategically placed several stink bomb vials around the room in places where, as soon as the crowd reacted to the small explosions of the M-80's the vials would be crushed underfoot adding to the chaos. When Jack was finished, he hurried over and grabbed Harley by the hand, leading her out of the ballroom. Bruce was still with Selina over by the paintings when he caught sight of Jack and Harley, laughing and leaning into each other conspiratorially as they left the ballroom. He narrowed his eyes watching them with a frown, a sudden feeling of trepidation clenching his gut. He glanced around once, but Selina leaned close and whispered something distracting him...

Outside, Alex and Alice made their way around to each of the verandas where guests were drinking, eating and talking. Alex snickered while he and Alice lit and threw fireworks out onto each of the verandas, and onto the front lawn. Alex, under Jack's instructions, had also placed strategically set stink bomb vials outside before the two of them hurried to Alex's car, a 1978 Silver Pontiac Trans Am that was parked a small distance away from the manor house, closer to the gate. Alex was chuckling as he yanked the door open for Alice just as the first firecracker exploded.
Inside the firecrackers that had rolled under the dessert table went off in a series of loud, smart pops that caused the dessert table to jerk, which in turn sent the hideous ice sculpture toppling over the edge and crashing to the floor. The results were instantaneous. People in the crowd screamed, which was accompanied by the loud pops of additional fireworks. The one behind the string quartet went off sending all four of them to leap to their feet, a cello crashing to the floor with a loud, hollow sounding “BOOM!”

There was an a moment of quiet as the party-goers struggled to decide for a few precious seconds whether they were in real danger or not, and that was the moment when the first of the stink bombs was hit, crushed under the heels of one of the party goers, a woman dressed like Anastasia Steele. The smell instantly enveloped her, causing her to cough and gag...which only added to the noise and confusion, especially as other vials of stench-filled liquid began to be crushed under the feet of other costumed guests.

Guests started to make for the exits as the stink rose up and surrounded the party goers. When the first guest vomited, the act started a chain reaction.

Jack and Harley had dashed outside, finding a prime spot out in the garden to watch the chaos they had created without becoming caught up in it.

The M-80’s outside went off at the moment guests started to leave the mansion, sparking another round of panicked cries and led to the crushing of several vials planted outside by Alex and Alice. The fleeing guests were assaulted by the horrible smell from the manor following them even outside—there was no escape.

Jack was laughing so hard that he was struggling to keep the tears wiped off his cheeks. Harley was holding her sides in hysterics leaning heavily on Jack while they watched costumed guests dashing for their cars.

Inside, the few members of the press who had been allowed into the party struggled to document what was happening despite a couple of them getting sick on the marble ballroom floor.

* 

Inside the manor, Bruce was yelling while holding one arm over his nose. “Everyone please calm down!! Please!”

Security had moved to guard the paintings and Bruce Wayne. Selina was beside him, fanning her face with her hands. “Bruce I need to go outside, this is bad!”

Bruce nodded. “Go, go—just be careful!” Then Bruce turned to his security. “Get the paintings out of here and to the safe before the odors ruins them!”

Bruce snarled, his eyes starting to water from the stench. “Jack...” He growled in anger.

* 

Vicki Vale was watching with frustration as the crowds started fleeing. She was struggling not to follow, thinking this was her chance to do some real snooping. But despite her best to resist, she and Billy were pretty much just hauled along with the rest of the guests heading toward the front entrance. The smell was becoming so bad Vicki was sure she would be smelling it for days to come. Just as she and Billy made it out the front door, she was sure she caught a glimpse of Jack Wayne over by the side gardens, either sick or...laughing his head off?
An hour later, Jack and Harley were sitting outside on the side porch in a couple of chairs and holding hands. (Bruce had tried to make her leave them alone, but Jack had refused to send Harley away.) Bruce paced angrily back and forth, fuming. Selina had left a little while ago (at least Bruce was under that assumption).

“This...this was not just irresponsible, but GOD DAMN IT JACK! You could have cost me millions! Those paintings are not just worth a lot of money—they are priceless masterpieces!! Your little prank could have ruined them! And not only that, but now you have made the Wayne family name a laughing stock!”

Jack wrinkled his noise. “Oh please, like a couple of firecrackers and a few stink bombs are going to ruin the Wayne reputation. If your running around with every model or actress to float through Gotham hasn't ruined it, my little prank isn't going to do a thing.”

Bruce turned and glared at his brother, his hands clenched into fists at his side. “You promised to be on your best behavior!”

Jack shrugged. “I was bored. Besides, all those hypocrites clustered together get on my nerves Bruce.”

Bruce groaned and ran a hand down his face. “Jack, just...don't you care?”

Jack smiled. “Not really.”

Bruce sighed. “Damn it, Jack. You have to get along with these people.”

Jack stood up, letting go of Harley's hand. “Why? Why do I have to?” he asked in sudden anger. “That's the problem isn't it? Putting up with people like that!” Jack gestured vaguely behind him. “You put up with people like that because they have money and power and you think you can get them to do the right thing! But the more you put up with them, the worse they get; nothing gets better Bruce...”

Bruce groaned. “Jack, you have to! Yes they have money and power and you have to help them use it the right way! Little displays like this, though? That doesn't do anything!”

“Well, that's the fucking point isn't it! Nothing changes and none of it matters! You can get them to play nice and donate to your little causes trying to make Gotham better, but it isn't better! Our parents were still murdered, the rich are still insufferable and uncaring, Gotham is still a shit hole and nothing changes! It doesn't matter! Everything is a huge joke!” Jack's eyes were wild for a moment. Harley reached up to take his hand. Jack narrowed his eyes at his brother, hissing through his teeth, but he calmed letting Harley tug him back to the seat beside her.

Jack sat, then giggled softly. “Oh Brucie, you never could appreciate a good joke.”

Bruce was silent for a moment before he took a breath. “I'm going to have to issue an apology. I would appreciate it if you would do so with me.”

Jack groaned loudly, sticking his tongue out like he might puke, but then he sighed. “Fine. Whatever.”

Jack stood up tugging Harley up with him and turned without another word to Bruce, heading back into the house. Bruce watched him go with a sigh, dropping down onto the seat Jack had just vacated, leaning his elbows on his knees and covered his face. “What am I going to do with him?”
Bruce moaned to himself.

* 

Jack took the stairs two at a time, tugging Harley along with him.

Harley squeezed Jack's hand. “You all right?”

Jack stopped on one of the stairs and turned back to smile at her. For a moment Harley was knocked breathless by the vision of him, the lights from the stairwell backlighting him, his smile wide as he spoke. “Of course sweets!” He laughed. “That was completely worth getting yelled at by Bruce!” He hauled her up to the stair he was standing on, pressing her body against his, his free hand coming up to stroke the tips of his fingers along her cheek. He grinned and brushed his nose against hers.

Harley laughed softly gazing, mesmerized by his eyes. “Yeah, it was!”

Jack chuckled holding her face with the tips of his fingers. “That's my gal,” he whispered, brushing his lips seductively across hers, setting a fire burning deep in her groin. Jack turned and quickly took the stairs, tugging her along again.

They headed upstairs, then turned the corner heading down the hall toward Jack's bedroom. Jack yanked the door to the room open, practically shoving her through the opening though he never released her hand and turned, slamming the door. He swung Harley around and pushed her up against the wooden door as soon as it was closed.

“Did I tell you how gorgeous you looked tonight in your costume?” Jack asked with a smile, pressing his warm body up against hers so that she could feel every inch of him.

Harley grinned, blushing prettily. “Yes you did puddin, but you can say it again.”

Jack reached up to take the beret from her hair and toss it into the room just before he kissed her. It was one of those kisses that made her groin and breasts ache for attention. She wanted to melt into him. Jack's hands wandered down over her hips grabbing her bottom lip between his teeth pulling her lip out then letting it go with a grin. His long nimble fingers found the zipper of her skirt, sliding it down so that the skirt dropped to the floor, pooling at her feet.

Harley grabbed the front of his slacks, wrapping her fingers around the belt and cuff of his pants before she forced him to walk backwards as she stepped out of her skirt. She moved him until the back of his legs hit the bed, knocking his hat off and they both toppled down on top of the soft mattress, the two of them laughing.

“You are so bad Jack.” Harley giggled, shimmying her body up his so that she was straddling him wearing only her blouse, silk stockings, panties and garter belt with her heels still on. She reached down and started to work his tie loose. Jack watched her and ran his palms up and down the silk stocking as Harley removed his tie, then focused her attention on unbuttoning his vest and shirt. Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, his blue eyes wandering down over her while she worked at his buttons. His nimble fingers once again went to work, finding the clasp of her garter belt against the silk of the stocking and the satin soft skin of her thigh; he played with it for a few seconds without unclasping it.

Jack chuckled running his hands up to her panties. “Why thank you Miss Quinn. I do try to cultivate my bad boy image.”

Harley laughed, working her nimble fingers over the buttons of the shirt he wore tugging it out of his slacks and open once she had all the buttons undone. “You're terrible.”
Jack surprised her by reaching up and grabbing her arms, rolling her off of him and pouncing on her yanking her arms up over her head. “You love it.”

Harley giggled. “I do!”

Jack wiggled a little, working his hand under her blouse and around her back, searching for the clasp of her bra; when he found it he released it with one hand giving her a smirk when he did. Harley giggled. “Talented.”

“Yes I am...now...let's see how talented I am with my tongue. Jack slid down her body, hooking his hands through the sides of her panties and slid them down her thighs. Harley lifted her legs, leaving her shoes and stockings on as Jack freed her panties and tossed them somewhere in the room. Jack grinned at her, spreading her legs and with a wicked smile buried his mouth against her clitoris.

Harley groaned, bringing her legs up. Jack reached up to grab one of her legs, pressing the limb down on his shoulder so he could feel the silk of her stockings against his cheek, the heel of her shoe pressing into his back. Harley groaned bringing her other leg up and around, the heels of both shoes pressing into his back. Jack wrapped his arms around her hips scooting himself back until he could drop off the edge of the bed, yanking her hips with him.

Harley dropped her legs down, prompting Jack to spread them wider. He grinned, his mouth wet and glistening with her. He gazed at her lying across the bed, her hair still in the 1930's style, her blouse open now, the bra loose and the garter belt, stockings and heels still on...she looked delicious, wanton and gorgeous, his little sex kitten he thought...all his. Jack gave her a lopsided grin when Harley smiled at him, one of her hands brushing across her cheek.

“Mmm...I'm gonna eat, as they say in the 1930's, a 'box' lunch.” Jack waggled his eyebrows grinning before his face disappeared from her direct view to please her.

* *

It was late, or early depending on how you looked at it, Selina thought. She was dressed in her leather and vinyl catsuit, her colored goggles pulled over her eyes. She had had to find a place to hide after she 'left' the party, ditching her costume in the trunk of a car before they were all gone. Selina glanced up chewing her bottom lip in concentration. She had her back pressed up against the side of the house, the bricks biting into her back, balancing delicately on one of the windowsills with just the tips of her toes. She was positioned just under one of the windows that led into the room where she knew the safe that held the paintings was located...on the second floor. It had been several hours since the disastrous end of the party and Selina had waited patiently for the commotion to die down and for the Wayne Manor to go silent. Selina wondered for a moment who was responsible for the chaos...Bruce had seemed to know, which made her wonder if it was his brother Jack. If she were to guess by Bruce's reaction...Jack was probably the culprit.

She smiled. It was funny watching all those rich stuffed shirts scurrying out, throwing up on themselves. Under different circumstances she might have congratulated Jack on his prank.

Selina took a breath and looked above her. She had her whip in hand and with a flick of her wrist, the whip caught hold above her...

* *

Jack was lying naked, spooned against Harley's back. His arm was wrapped tightly around her waist, pressing her up against him, when he heard something. His eyes flew open. He lay there unmoving listening for whatever it was he had heard, when he was sure he heard it again, the sound of
someone moving around, but it wasn't Bruce or Alfred, he was sure of it. There was a quality to the sound that just didn't feel right. Jack started to move away from Harley when she stirred.

“Jack?”

“I thought I heard something,” Jack whispered.

Harley sat up turning to look at him. “Heard what? Someone in the house?”

Jack nodded and replied, still whispering. “I think so.”

He slipped out of bed and grabbed his boxers from the floor. Harley followed him, grabbing Jack's dress shirt and slipping it on. The shirt hung past her hips so she didn't bother with slipping on her panties, she just buttoned the shirt enough to be decent. Jack walked barefoot and silently across the room, taking their bats down from the wall. He handed Harley's hers and the two of them slipped out of the bedroom.

* Selina leaned against the safe, the two armed guards lying unconscious on the floor having just received a hefty spritz from her knock-out gas. She wasn't sure where the rest of the security were and wondered if some of them had had to leave after the stink bomb incident. She silently chuckled at the thought of Bruce Wayne losing security due to weak stomachs. She refocused her attention back on the safe; it was the latest in safe technology. She pulled out the device from the pouch at her hip and attached it to the safe. This lock decipher was the latest...not even on the black market yet. Her tech guy Harold had said there might be a few glitches, but nothing that should hamper her using the device. She was just starting the device working when she heard a noise and turned—just as Jack Wayne and his fiancee Harley Quinn walked into the room, both armed with bats.

Chapter End Notes

Didn't think I was going to get a chapter out this week but I did it!!
Selina hissed in frustration. “Shit!”

Selina could only just see their faces in the darkened room, but the dark expression that came over Jack face and Harley's as well sent a chill down Selina's spine. She would never have thought those two people could have such cold eyes. Jack's gaze wandered over to the two unconscious security men, whom it seemed Selina had dragged to a corner and tied up.

Jack frowned shaking his head. “Well well, we have a cat problem—and our dogs....” Jack pointed to the unconscious men. “Are clearly not cut out for dealing with cats.”

Harley chuckled with a practice swing of her bat. “Bad kitty kitty.”

Selina saw that they were both armed, Harley with a baseball bat and Jack with a cricket bat. As they stepped closer, the moonlight streaming into the window highlighted both their features more fully...it was clear from the expression in their eyes, she was in trouble—deep trouble.

“God damn it,” she muttered out loud, she hadn't even managed to get the safe open!

“Look...” Selina grabbed her device off the safe, sliding it into the pouch at her hip as quickly as she could, taking a hesitant step backwards toward the window, her hands up in the air to show she was unarmed. (Her whip was at her hip and she wasn't sure she could get to it before one of them hit her with a bat, but her fingers itched to grab it.)

“I didn't take anything, you guys stopped me in time. So how about we just let bygones be bygones and I leave?” Selina smiled.

Jack chuckled. “Oh I don't think so. Stealing is very impolite. I mean, you broke into our home. That's a violation and I think the only way we can call this even is if we teach you a lesson about trying to take from others. Taking things that don't belong to you is extremely naughty, don't you agree Harley?”

Harley giggled. “Oh yes puddin, very naughty.”

Then Harley frowned, something about the woman's voice sounded familiar to her. She quirked her brow and stepped closer, trying to get a better look at the woman in the cat suit. Selina turned her attention on Harley, her hand carefully moving down to the whip at her waist. Harley stared at the woman, something about her face, the eyes, the way she was holding herself, it was all very familiar. Harley's frown deepened. The cat burglar reminded Harley of Bruce's girlfriend...then Harley's voice dropped low as she whispered.

“Selina?”

Selina, who had glanced toward the window, turned to stare at Harley with horror in her eyes. Jack frowned with a glance at Harley then at the burglar; he stared at her then slowly started to laugh.

“Oh my GOD!! Are you fucking with me? Selina Kyle? Brucie's special girl?” Jack wrapped his arms around his middle and let out a full belly laugh.

“That's rich!! Brucie's girlfriend!!”

Jack eye's widened as pieces started to click into place. “You helped him pick out the paintings didn't
you? You were at that auction with him! I remember Alfred mentioning it!” Jack choked on a laugh. “Oh fuck, let me guess...the party was your idea too! Wasn't it?!”

Selina felt her heart sinking. Of course they recognized her. She didn't know what to do, this was not what she wanted. She had wanted to steal the painting and disappear from Bruce's life. Yes, he might have drawn a connection between the thief and her, but he wouldn't have done it until she was long gone! She would never have had to confront him and he could have just written this off as a bad experience, albeit an expensive bad experience.

Selina sighed, her gaze flitting between the two of them. “Don't tell Bruce. I'm leaving.”

Harley shook her head. “Tsk tsk, you ain't even going to say goodbye to your boyfriend? What kinda girl are you?”

Jack grinned at Harley. “I really think we should teach her a lesson about lying and stealing, don't you Harley? I mean, I guess it's up to me to defend my brother since Bruce isn't here...isn't it?”

Harley smiled giving her bat a good swing. “Yep puddin, I think you're right! Can't leave without your lesson!” the blonde woman said with a hint of a growl in her words.

Selina took a step backwards, for a moment thinking that if there was going to be a fight, thank God Bruce didn't keep a lot of furniture in this room! Getting hit with a chair was never fun.

But as her attention was brought back to Jack and Harley, Selina shuddered just a little. She knew something had bothered her about the two of them the handful of times she had met them. There had been something unstable about them, but right now, seeing the way they were looking at her, now she was sure of it—they were both crazy.

Jack laughed and swung his bat like a baton. “Hey Selina: What's the difference between a pick pocket and an umpire?”


Jack grinned. “One steals watches and the other watches steals.”

“Look, this...” but she didn't get to finish her sentence before Harley raced forward and took a swing at her, catching her by surprise. Selina yelped, throwing herself backwards into a standing somersault. She kicked up with her legs, catching Harley under the chin with the toe of her boot and knocked her backwards. The somersault put Selina that much closer to the window. At the same time that she landed on her feet, she yanked her whip off her belt when Jack hissed.

“Hey!! You hit my girl! You bitch!”

Jack rushed her, swinging the cricket bat like a baseball bat. Selina barely had time to duck under his swing when Harley raced forward and took a swing at her, catching her by surprise. Selina yelped, throwing herself backwards into a standing somersault. She kicked up with her legs, catching Harley under the chin with the toe of her boot and knocked her backwards. The somersault put Selina that much closer to the window. At the same time that she landed on her feet, she yanked her whip off her belt when Jack hissed.

“Hey!! You hit my girl! You bitch!”

Jack rushed her, swinging the cricket bat like a baseball bat. Selina barely had time to duck under his swing when Harley was back in the game. She snarled and rushed Selina, swinging her bat high and aiming for Selina's head. Selina ducked the first swing, and spun away from her attackers, putting a couple of steps between them again while snapping her whip out at the same time. The thin edge of the whip caught Harley in the shoulder, knocking Harley backwards at step, but Selina snapped her whip again at Harley in a quick double flick of her wrist. The whip's thin tip caught Harley in the torso, ripping the side of the shirt.

Harley stumbled back with a hiss of pain, her free hand immediately covering the spot where the whip had cut through the cloth of the shirt. Harley pulled her hand away to see that it was covered in blood. Blood blossomed on the white shirt like blood in snow, spreading in a wide circle and dripping down Harley's leg.
Jack's eyes blazed when he saw Harley was bleeding. He snarled, his head whiping around back to Selina. Jack dashed toward Selina, then, at the last minute, he dropped onto his knees to slide on the polished floor at the last possible moment. He swung his bat in a underhand swing, using the side of the cricket back to attempt to take Selina's legs out from under her. Selina leapt into the air in a perfect straight legged cartwheel, cracking her whip at the same time, catching Jack across his left cheek.

Jack hissed in pain, his head snapping to the side with the strike of the whip. The thin leather end of the whip left a deep, nasty, bloody line along his skin. The blood oozed from the wound to run down the side of his face. Jack turned his blazing blue eyes on her, using the smoothness of the floor to come to his feet gracefully. Selina felt a cold wave wash over her when her eyes met Jack's. Never had she seen anyone look at her with such cold, dead eyes while smiling. Selina landed in a crouch and pivoted on her left leg, bringing her right leg around to kick Jack, trying to knock his legs out from under him. He leapt backwards, but the toe of her boot caught him in the ankle. He stumbled, though her connection wasn't strong enough to cause Jack any damage.

Harley swiftly came back into the melee with her bat to defend Jack, taking a powerful swing at Selina's side. Selina threw herself onto her hands, bringing her legs up as she balanced on her hands, for a split second, angling her legs to grab Harley around her arm. Selina twisted her body, bringing her legs down again, but she kept her grip and took Harley with her, throwing Harley off her feet. Harley hit the floor hard on her back, knocking the air from her lungs. Selina let go at the last moment, swiftly coming to her feet and backing away. Damn it, she thought, she didn't want to hurt them, but they weren't leaving her any choice in the matter!

Jack snarled and raced up behind Selina.

She turned, bringing her leg up to kick the cricket bat away, while at the same time, she snapped her whip to the side trying to hit Jack again. Jack was ready for the whip this time, dancing elegantly to the side, her strike missing him all together. Selina twisted out of the way, trying to avoid the bat, but Jack's swing nicked her hip. Jack hissed in frustration. He had been aiming for her lower back!

Jack let his swing carry him, turning his body fully around. Selina whirled, trying to keep him in her sights, snapping her whip, trying to catch him up, maybe knock him off his feet with an entangling maneuver.

Jack chuckled and hissed with a wide grin.

"Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed to see such sport
And the dish ran away with the spoon!"

She cartwheeled away from Jack's next strike. She did three somersaults to create more space between them before she stopped and turned in a crouch only to see Harley come out of her own somersault at the same time in front of her and swing her bat when she was right in Selina's face. Selina yelped in surprise, ducking Harley's bat. The bat slamming into the wall with enough force that Harley left a hole in the wall.

"HA!! You ducked!" Harley laughed.

Jack giggled as he lifted his bat up to his shoulder. "Damn Harley, that's sexy!"
Harley giggled at Jack. “Thank you puddin!”

Harley turned her attention back to Selina after winking at Jack. Selina pressed her lips together and responded by bringing her right leg up and around, trying to hit Harley in the head, but Harley weaved swiftly out of the way.

“Oh, is that how you want to play?” Harley grinned, tossing her bat, which Jack caught out of the air laughing.

“Oh you're in trouble now Selina!” he yelled back.

The two women hesitated for a moment, Harley holding her hands up in loose fists while Selina debated whether to just use her whip and end this...when Harley took a swing. Selina barely had time to block the punch before Harley was swinging at her again. Selina smiled just a little. She was impressed, she didn't really take Harley to be a fighter, but clearly there were a LOT of things that Selina didn't know about the little blonde doctor.

Selina quickly stepped back and dropped to her hands swinging her legs up gracefully as she used her booted feet to kick at Harley. Harley blocked with her forearms, then pivoted, bringing her right leg around for a powerful round house kick. Selina blocked, swung back up on her feet then down again on her hands, trying to use her legs by swinging them in a semicircle in order to knock Harley down, but the little blonde ex-gymnast threw herself back doing a perfectly executed back flip that knocked Selina's legs out of the way.

* Jack, holding both bats was laughing and propped himself against the wall to enjoy the show. He was finding that anytime Harley was fighting, it turned him on immensely, whether she was fighting someone else or him—especially him—but this was pretty hot too he thought. Watching Harley move was the most beautiful thing in the world.

* Both women were back on their feet circling each other.

Harley smiled “You really shouldn't break into peoples houses.”

Selina smiled and shrugged. “What can I say, I like expensive things.”

“Clearly more than you like Bruce.” Harley smiled.

That hurt. Selina realized that the statement hurt more than she wanted to admit. But the statement also had the added effect of distracting her. Harley lunged, but Selina was fast having a few more years of fighting experience under her belt. She dropped down, caught herself on one hand and used both her legs to kick Harley in the stomach. Harley stumbled, almost going down, but she managed to stay upright. Selina hissed doing another one handed flip, trying to use the strength of her legs to grab Harley, but Harley was quick. She wrapped her arm around one of Selina legs and bowled her forward, the two women going down to the floor.

They both slammed to the floor, panting as the air was knocked out of them. Once on the floor, Harley then used one of her fists to hit Selina in the face. Selina brought her arms up, blocking Harley's blow.

They struggled for a few intense seconds before Selina yanked her leg free of Harley's grasp then hauled back and kicked Harley. She tried to go for Harley's head, but instead she only managed to
kick her in the shoulder. Still, it was hard enough that she knocked Harley off of her.

Harley rolled onto her back panting. Selina turned to jump on her, the plan to hold her down long enough to get a good solid punch in that would knock her out. But when Selina moved, Harley brought her right leg up and kicked Selina in the chest before rolling herself back to her feet.

Harley giggled, her breathing hard, just before she came at Selina with a few tight swings of her fists. Selina hissed, just barely avoiding getting hit. Selina returned to the offensive, dropping onto her right hand and bringing her legs around in a couple of swift swings, but Harley managed to hold her arms in close to her face and body, taking the kicks on the front of her of arms. Selina then did a series of quick spins, using her legs, trying to back Harley away from her so that she could once again get closer to the window and maybe, just maybe, get out of here. Both women were panting, the intensity of the fight getting to the both of them.

Harley backed up, but not enough for Selina to make a break for the window and there was still Jack who had stood up, cricket bat over his shoulder watching them intently. Selina bounced on her legs for a few moments then twisted her body around to bring her right leg up for a powerful roundhouse. Harley thought she was ready for anything, but Selina was good; she faked the kick to the head and instead dropped her leg down, taking Harley's legs out from under her.

Harley hit the floor hard on her left shoulder and cried out in pain. “Ah!”

Selina rushed in thinking to put her down and out when Jack snarled. “That's enough!”

She turned gasping in surprise as Jack brought his cricket bat down over head, hitting her as she brought her forearm up to try and protect her head. Selina screamed as the bat slammed down on her forearm; the sound of the bat made a dull cracking noise against her arm. The pain vibrated up her limb through her shoulder; the pain was almost enough to cause her to black out. Selina was certain that the weapon's impact had created at least a hairline fracture that ran along the length of her forearm, causing the limb to instantly go numb. Selina's arm dropped like a dead weight to her side, causing her to stumbled backwards and her back slammed against the wall. She was panting, trying to fight the urge to pass out, her eyes darting between Harley and Jack as she stumbled back into a corner.

Jack dropped to his knees at Harley's side, helping her up with one hand. He was tender with her, careful, which Selina found bizarre in contrast to the venom in his gaze when he turned those blue eyes on her. How could a man that could look so murderous have such a tender heart for the one he loved? How could he love at all?

Jack cupped her cheek with his free hand. “Harley?”

“I'm fine,” she said with pained expression as Jack helped her to her feet. Once he had Harley up, his eyes never leaving Selina (who wasn't sure she could get to the window in time) Jack smiled again holding his bat lazily for a moment. He moved Harley over to lean against the wall before Jack edged closer to Selina while whistling with a grin on his face.

He brushed his free hand along Harley's arm as he walked closer to Selina. Harley glanced sideways at Jack.

Jack gave Selina a sweet smile. “Did that hurt? Well, things are about to hurt a lot more.”

Selina looked between them. She knew that her luck was about to run out.

Jack raised his bat, but that was the moment the lights clicked on and a deep voice yelled. “STOP!!”
All three of them turned to stare at Bruce, standing in the doorway wearing a robe, barefoot, his eyes huge with shock and anger. Standing behind him was Alfred.

*

Bruce had been in the bat cave with Alfred getting ready to head out for the night when the silent alarms had gone off inside the manor. He had thought about leaving anyway, sending Alfred to investigate, or maybe Jack. There was also the security he had hired for the paintings, but something told him no—this was something he needed to take care of himself. Something in his gut told him this was not a simple break-in. So he had quickly stripped out of his Batman suit and hurried back inside.

*

Bruce glared. His eyes quickly took in the scene, a woman dressed in black, her arm sprained or worse. His brother had a bloody cut along his face, wearing only his boxers and Harley, also wounded, had blood on her side and she was holding her shoulder, dislocated maybe, or broken too. He couldn't tell from here.

“Who are you?” His eyes were on Selina. He couldn't quite see the thief clearly in the dim lights of the room, but he didn't have to wait long to find out who it was when Jack turned laughing. “Oh, you're going to love this Brucie—it's your girlfriend, Selina Kyle has come to rob you.”

Bruce frowned. “Jack I don't...”

“No, no he's right...it's me Bruce.” Selina, holding her arm against her body, stepped closer so that Bruce could see her better in the light.

Jack smiled. “Now isn't this just the cutest thing ever!” He put his hand to his mouth grinning. “What do you think Harley?”

Harley giggled. “Just adorable.”

Bruce stared at Selina. He saw it was her, but for a moment or two he tried to deny it to himself.

“Selina?”

Selina frowned and nodded silently. Bruce pressed his lips together then said softly. “Jack, Harley, I would appreciate it if you two would leave this to me to handle from here.”


“Because Selina and I have a few things to discuss.” Bruce answered, his eyes never leaving Selina's.

“You're going to let her go aren't you?” Jack growled.

“That is none of your concern Jack.” Bruce said flatly, but Jack wasn't having any of it.

“Not my business? This house is just as much mine as it is yours Bruce or did you forget that? Our parents left it and everything in it to us both. So I would say, 'Yes,' your little girlfriend breaking in concerns me!”

Bruce growled at his brother. “Yes I can see how your concern works! Two against one! What were you going to Jack? Beat her to death?”
“I would have been within my rights to do so if I wanted!” Jack yelled back.

Bruce, his jaw going stiff glared at his brother. Alfred's brow furrowed in pain. “Master Bruce, Master Jack, perhaps we should simply call the police?”

“No police,” Bruce said flatly, turning his attention back to Selina.

“What?” Jack, who was now holding his arm around Harley, growled in shock. “What the fuck are you doing Bruce? Is your head so far up your ass or is this you thinking with your dick? As many women as you have had I'm surprised this one sticks out enough for you to care.” Jack sneered at his brother.

Bruce turned his eyes on Jack. “That's enough Jack. Alfred, take them both downstairs. It looks as if Jack needs stitched and I'm not sure about Harley.”

Jack narrowed his eyes at Bruce. “You know Bruce; one day you are not going to be able to just dismiss me like I'm your pesky little brother. One day you are going to have to listen to me.”

Jack, his arm tight around Harley’s waist, followed Alfred out of the room.

*

Bruce sighed as he turned his full attention back to Selina. The pain that he now showed was real and Selina felt her heart twist. “I'm sorry Bruce.” The words sounded painfully inadequate to her ears.

“I am too. Was all of it just so you could steal these paintings?” Bruce stepped into the room as he spoke, closing the door behind him.

Selina tested her arm. Nope, it was broken, not bad, but she was going to need to see one of the 'friends' to have a cast put on. That was going to cost her, damn it. Bruce looked at her arm. “I can have one of my...”

“No thanks Bruce. I have people.”

He frowned and said, “You didn't answer my question.”

“Yes, okay, yes all of it was about the paintings—well actually just the one painting, the Picasso. I was hired to steal it. So yes, I used you.” Selina turned away so she wouldn't have to look him in the eye.

Bruce closed his eyes then sighed. “Just go.” Bruce wasn't sure what he was doing...Batman would not have let her go, but Bruce Wayne? Bruce Wayne was heartbroken and Bruce didn't make the same choices as the Batman.


Selina stared at him taking a step forward. “Bruce...”

“Don't. Selina just don't. Leave now.” Bruce turned, opened the door, and stepped out, shutting the door closed behind him. Selina stared at the door for a long moment. She didn't know if she was waiting for him to come back or what, but when nothing happened she hurried to the window.

*
Jack was fuming as he sat on the examination table while Alfred stitched up the wound on his cheek. Harley was lying on her side behind him. (They had had to make a stop at the bedroom to retrieve a pair of Jack's boxers for Harley to slip on before heading downstairs for Alfred to stitch her side up.) Her shoulder was neither broken nor dislocated, just badly bruised. Alfred recommended she wear a sling for a day or two, however.

“I just can't believe Bruce is up there talking to her! Just, just...Aaah!” Jack snarled digging his fingers into the sides of the examination table.

“Master Jack, if you do not stop moving around then you are going to end up with crooked stitches.” Alfred stopped what he was doing to glare at the younger man.

Jack sighed and took a breath. “Sorry.”

Alfred nodded. “Good. I'm almost done Master Jack.”

Harley reached out to lay her hand on Jack's back, rubbing the flat of her hand up and down his back slowly. She felt the tension slowly drain away. Alfred put a few more stitches in as he murmured, “The cut was nice and straight Master Jack, like Miss Harleen's. It will leave a scar, but I think it will be faint.”

“Thanks Alfred,” muttered just as Bruce walked in. Bruce glanced at Jack and Harley. Harley quickly sat up.

Bruce narrowed his eyes at his older brother. “You let her go didn't you?”

Bruce’s lips turned white as he closed his mouth tightly for a moment, but then opened his mouth enough to speak through gritted teeth. “Yes I did. She failed to steal anything...thanks to that two of you. I didn't see any reason to involve the police.”

Jack made a rude noise. “Yeah, I bet. If that had been Harley you would have had the police down here in a heartbeat wouldn't you?”

Bruce narrowed his eyes. “This isn't about Harley or you Jack. This was my mistake and my decision on how to handle it.”

Jack glared. “Fuck you Bruce.”

“Jack...” There was a clear threat in Bruce’s voice, but Jack hopped down from the table, stepping close to Bruce, poking him in the chest. “You are such a hypocrite, Bruce. Clearly you think you are the only one in this family with any sense! You can't tell me if you even thought Harley had stolen anything you wouldn't have had the police here immediately!”

Bruce lost his temper and shoved Jack back hard enough that Jack hit the examination table. Harley squeaked in surprise and Alfred gasped. “Now see here! Both of you need to stop this right now!”

Bruce glared at his younger brother, ignoring Alfred. “It's not my fault Jack if you haven't the ability to make a good decision if your life counted on it! You have been nothing but trouble since our parents died! Everything you do! You don't think of the consequences! You never think! You just do! Do you really think I would trust your opinion on anything or anybody?”

Jack hissed in sudden fury. “You're a fucking...” Jack snarled and started again. “You just can't admit when you're wrong, can you? Bruce Wayne, the perfect big brother, you're just perfect all around aren't you? Bruce Wayne who never does anything wrong. Perfect business man, perfect rich boy with the mentally deficient brother! However do you cope Brucie? Poor Bruce with the crazy
brother! Well, you know what Brucie! You aren't as fucking perfect as you think you are! You are just a fallible as the rest of us! Selina is a perfect example!” Jack shoved Bruce in the chest. “And you're just jealous because I found someone! You, with all your women and running around, but it was ME! Your crazy little brother who finally got something you can't have! I have someone who loves me just for who I am Bruce. Harley loves me! And you can't stand that! As flawed as I am, she loves me!”

Bruce didn't know why, what it was...maybe because Jack hit close to home with his remarks. Bruce was responsible for Selina...and Batman would make sure she faced justice, but Bruce Wayne? Bruce Wayne was hurt, Selina had been...he had really thought that maybe...And yes, if he was honest with himself, he was jealous. No matter what he thought, Dr. Quinzel loved his brother...loved him, faults and all. Bruce hadn't found anyone who could love the real him...but he had thought Selina might be it. But he was right, he didn't think Jack was capable of making wise choices. He still thought of Jack as that little boy crying against his chest in the well, or the nights that Jack woke up screaming...the little boy who attacked first when he was older...all the times Jack had gotten into trouble...the trouble he still found himself in...

Bruce didn't know what caused him to do it, but his fist shot out and struck Jack across the jaw hard enough that he knocked his little brother back against the table again, breaking the stitches in Jack's cheek. Harley screamed and Alfred gasped in shock.

“Master Bruce!”

But it was too late—Bruce had thrown the first swing.

Jack let out a harsh laugh. “I knew it!! Hit me again Bruce! Go on! Do it! Do it! Do it! You know you want to!” Jack's laughter, his needling, his inability to see how his actions had consequences, caused something in Bruce to snap. He grabbed Jack by his upper arms and threw him out of the medical room into the hall. And Jack was laughing the entire time. Jack hit the floor sliding into the wall, his breath hitching for a moment when his back slammed against the wall, but then his laughing continued. “Oooh Bruce!! So much rage!! Did your little brother hit a nerve?”

Bruce snarled. “SHUT UP Jack!! Just shut up!!”

Bruce reached down and hauled Jack to his feet by his neck (like he had done to many a criminal while being Batman) holding Jack up so his feet didn't touch the floor. Jack wrapped his hands around Bruce's arm, grinned brightly at his brother, a trickle of blood running down from his nose over his lips.

“Hehe! Bruce, you know you really should see someone about your anger issues!”

Bruce slammed Jack up against the wall, his hand around his brother's throat squeezed. At the moment Bruce wasn't sure where he ended and Batman began; his anger was clouding his judgment.

“Shut up Jack!” Bruce hit him across the face with his other fist trying to stop his little brother's hysterical laughter, which only made Jack laugh even wilder.

“Hehehe!! Oh Bruce, is this for me or for you?” Jack grinned quirking a brow at his brother.

Jack suddenly brought his hands up, slamming his right palm sideways into the crook of Bruce's elbow, breaking Bruce's hold on him. Suddenly freed from Bruce's hold, Jack staggered on his feet for a second before he swung an upper cut, his fist hitting Bruce just under his chin. Jack brought his other fist around, aiming for Bruce's cheek, but his second swing missed as Bruce arched back away from it. Bruce swung, also an upper cut, into his brother's diaphragm twice, then again across the
face sending Jack spinning down the hall. Harley screamed again, surprising Bruce when she leapt onto his back.

“STOP IT!” she screamed, her arms around Bruce's neck. Bruce broke her hold and shoved her back causing her to fall into Alfred. Alfred grabbed Harley, tugging her out of the way of the two men, holding the young woman against him, doing his best to prevent her from putting herself between them.

“Get her out of here!” Bruce snarled just as Jack, laughing, punched his brother across the face when Bruce turned back around.

Bruce blinked at the punch, surprised at how strong Jack actually was, but he shook his head and grabbed Jack, lifted his younger brother off his feet once more and slammed him against the wall again as he snarled, “STAY DOWN JACK! Just stay down!”

“Hooohoo!! What're you going to do Bruce? You like how it feels to beat someone up don't you? That freedom to just keep beating them to a bloody pulp—you need it don't you? You understand that sometimes it's the violence that keeps us going don't you?” Jack rose up on one knee and leveled a mad glare at his brother.

“Jack, I'm warning you, shut up!” Bruce hit him in the face, knocking his little brother's head back against the wall with a sharp crack.

Jack was laughing hard enough that he had tears in his eyes. “Oh perfect!! Perfect Bruce has a temper!! Who knew?! There you go! Let it out Bruce!! All that anger under your oh-so-perfect exterior!! Hit me again!! You know you want to! Show me how you really feel Brucie!”

“Shut up!” Bruce hit his brother again, knocking Jack to the floor again. Jack crumpled to the floor laughing, spitting droplets of blood all over the floor as he did.

Jack rolled onto his side. His nose was bleeding, his lips were bleeding and the wound on his face, the bandage gone and the stitches destroyed, but he was still laughing.

“Oh Bruce, hit me again! Show me that anger! Show me the real you!” Jack rolled back onto his back grinning at his brother with bloody teeth. Bruce dropped to his knees, straddling his brother. He held his arm back, ready to hit Jack's laughing face. His mind was racing. Jack, who had been nothing but trouble since their parents' murder with his explosive anger, his needling, dangerous pranks, his constantly being in trouble, and lately with his disregard for the rules of being a public figure, his whirlwind romance, his constant pushing, pushing at the boundaries...always pushing. And now...his constant laughing. Bruce hissed. “Shut up JACK! Stay DOWN!”

Alfred grabbed Bruce's arm hauling back with all his strength. “THAT'S ENOUGH!! BOTH OF YOU!”

Bruce was breathing through his clenched teeth while Jack lay under him laughing, his face covered in blood. Bruce let Alfred pull him off of Jack. Alfred turned Bruce and shoved him up against the wall. “Master Bruce, you need some fresh air. Go. I will take care of Master Jack.”

Bruce stumbled backwards away from Alfred, glaring at Jack who was still laughing as Alfred helped him up. Alfred put Jack's arm around his shoulders as Harley hurried over and took Jack's other arm. Alfred looked at Bruce. There was no anger there, just sadness.

“Master Bruce, just go. Please,” Alfred said softly.

Bruce nodded stumbling away, shocked at his own behavior. He felt as if a mind-numbing haze had
settled over him, as if his actions weren't his own. But he knew they were his—all his.

Alfred and Harley led Jack back into the medical room helping him up onto the examination table, laying him back. Jack was still laughing though not as hard, just soft chuckles. Harley took his hand.

“Jack? Are you all right?” She stroked his hair back with her other hand. His face was a bloody mess. Alfred hurried over, cleaning away the blood and checking Jack's nose.

The older man sighed in relief. “It's not broken. That's good.”

Alfred finished cleaning Jack's face, tearing away the rest of the bandage and proceeded to re-clean the wound, removing the damaged stitches.

“I'm going to have to restitch this,” Alfred said softly.

Harley smiled down at Jack, threading her fingers through his hair. “Jack?”

“I'm fine baby girl. I promise.” Jack smiled as he looked up at her, his face a mess, but his eyes clear and full of love for her.

Alfred started to restitch the wound while Harley held Jack's hand and stroked his head. After a few moments Jack had finally stopped laughing and smiled at Alfred.

“Aren't you going to say anything?” Jack asked.

Alfred sighed. “I'm not sure what to say. You two haven't fought like that in years. Not since you were very small, not long after your parents' murder.”

Jack grinned. “Well at least now I know what Bruce really thinks.”

Alfred sighed. “No Master Jack, you don't. You pushed him and it is regrettable, but Master Bruce lost control and answered you in a most inappropriate way. You both need to talk.”

Jack made a rude noise, which only caused Alfred to shake his head. “You both have issues between you that you need to work out. If you don't, you are both going to be responsible for the rift that you are creating between you—have created.” Alfred sighed. “There may come a time when that will be the only way the two of you will be able to communicate is with your fists if you don't do something about it now.”

Jack sighed, looking away. “I don't have anything to say to Bruce.”

Alfred sighed. He finished up with the new stitches and placed a clean bandage over the wound. “Why don't you both go upstairs. I will be there with some tea and scones.”

Jack started to protest, but Harley stopped him with a look before she turned to Alfred. “Thank you.”

* 

Half an hour later, Alfred came to the door with a tray containing a steaming teapot, sugar, cream and a plate of scones. Harley took the tray as Alfred asked in a soft voice, “How is he doing Miss Harleen?”

Harley, now dressed in a pair of bike shorts and one of Jack's t-shirts that hung on her like a mini dress, frowned and glanced behind her. Jack was sitting on the bed in a clean pair of boxers and a white t-shirt with a pack of cards that he was shuffling and doing card tricks with, his attention fully on the cards.
“He’s been quiet,” Harley said softly. Alfred nodded. “Sleep well Miss Harleen.”

She smiled gently. “Thank you Alfred.”

Harley brought the tray over, carefully climbing onto the bed with the tray and sitting down cross legged next to Jack. She lay the tray in front of her knees and poured the tea. “Jack, do you want to talk?” Harley asked as she handed the cup to him.

Jack frowned putting the cards down, taking the tea cup from her and blowing on the hot liquid. “No, not really.”

Harley frowned finishing making her own cup. “Are you sure?”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “Are you wanting to talk as my fiancee or my doctor?”

Harley pressed her lips together. Jack sighed then. “Sorry Harls.” He kissed her cheek. “I'm fine love. Just...need a good night's sleep I suppose.”

Harley frowned as she gazed at him. She didn't want to force him to talk...but...she sighed. Maybe tomorrow.

*

After leaving Jack and Harleen, Alfred made his way down to the bat cave hoping he might find Master Bruce, but when he arrived, as he suspected, the young man was gone. Alfred sighed standing in the silence of the cave wondering what was going to happen to these two young men he loved like his own sons.

*

When Harley woke the next morning she woke to the sound of Jack singing and dancing around the room as he pulled clothing out of the closet.

*

“You're just too good to be true
I can't take my eyes off you
You'd be like heaven to touch
I wanna hold you so much
At long last love has arrived
And I thank God I'm alive
You're just too good to be true
Can't take my eyes off you ...”

When he glanced over and noticed Harley watching him, Jack grinned brightly tossing the clothing he had in his hand to the floor and hurried over to her. He grabbed her out of the bed, leaning down to scoop her up into his arms bridal style (careful of her stitches on her side) and carried her around the room continuing to sing.
“Pardon the way that I stare
There's nothing else to compare
The sight of you leaves me weak
There are no words left to speak
But if you feel like I feel
Please let me know that is real
You're just too good to be true
I can't take my eyes off you...”

Harley squealed, laughing and kicking her legs while Jack carried her around singing. He wrinkled his nose at her with a big grin. He had a bruise under one eye, but his lip looked less swollen and the swelling around the cut on his face was better. Jack grinned and laughed. Harley cupped his face, staring into his blue eyes.

“You seem happy this morning,” Harley said softly and kissed him, her lips tender on his as he pressed his mouth against hers in response.

Jack groaned softly, opening his mouth against hers, his tongue flicking out to trace her lips before he spoke. “I'm in a great mood this morning and I'm taking you shopping!”

“Shopping? For what?” Harley asked caressing the back of his head, her fingers brushing the hairs at the back of his neck. (Inside, the doctor...Harleen..whispered to her. He is acting a little bipolar there Harley...be careful. But Harley only shoved Harleen's concerns away. She didn't need to listen to her.)

“I decided when I woke up this morning that I was going to buy you a car.” Jack grinned like a kid. Harley's eyes widened. “A car? Why?”

Jack giggled. “Why not?! And then we are going to fuck in the front seat while parked in the street! AND hopefully get arrested for indecent exposure while we're at it!” Jack laughed swinging her around until she squealed again.

* 

Jack was holding Harley's hand, dancing down the stairs singing as he did so. Harley giggled, her eyes sparkling as she let Jack lead her down the stairs, then start dancing with her, even though he was carrying an empty brief case with him, (Harley had asked about it but he had only winked at her) as if they were performing a scene from “The Gay Divorcee” with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

Jack sang at the top of his lungs in a perfectly beautiful voice.

* 

“Like the beat beat beat of the tom-tom
When the jungle shadows fall
Like the tick tick tock of the stately clock
As it stands against the wall
Like the drip drip drip of the raindrops
When the summer shower is through
So a voice within me keeps repeating you, you, you
Night and day, you are the one
Only you beneath the moon or under the sun
Whether near to me, or far
It's no matter darling where you are
I think of you, night and day
Day and night, why is it so
That this longing for you follows wherever I go
In the roaring traffic's boom
In the silence of my lonely room
I think of you, night and day,
Night and day, night and day
Under the hide of me
There's an oh such a hungry yearning burning inside of me
And it's torment won't be through
Until you let me spend my life making love to you
Day and night, night and day

* 

He grinned brightly, holding her hands and dancing up and down the stairs, the two of them looking stunning. Harley wore a retro style knee-length swing skirt of bright red with a white halter-top that didn't quite reach the top of her skirt leaving a thin line of skin visible along with a pair of two-tone white and black gladiator style sandals. Jack was dressed in a white suit with a dark brown vest, a light blue dress shirt that brought out the blue in his eyes, along with a gold and plum colored tie and light brown leather wingtip bluchers. When they neared the last steps, Jack picked Harley up, his hands at her waist and swung her down the last few steps.

They both looked happy, despite the wounds on Jack's face.

Alfred came into the front room. Neither Jack nor Harley had come down for breakfast which had worried him, but now that he was seeing them he was more worried. While Bruce was brooding, having barely come in that night before he was off against this morning, Jack seemed too happy considering the fight the two brothers had had last night. Alfred stopped himself from saying
anything to Jack and Harley as they headed for the front door. They were too happy, perhaps overcompensating, and he didn't want to ruin their mood by speaking of last night. Alfred let them leave without a word. Maybe when they returned, he would speak with them then.

* Jack had called a taxi for them, which was waiting outside when Jack opened the door for her. He opening the cab door. “In you go my little cupcake!”

Harley giggled as she slipped into the seat. Jack jogged to his side, opened the door and slid in. The cab driver looked familiar as Harley tilted her head. She started to ask if she knew him when the man turned around to face them. “Where to first Mr. Wayne?”

“Ah, my friend the Riddler!” Jack chuckled while he pulled out a pack of cigarettes offering one to the taxi driver. The young man laughed taking the offered cigarette. “Oh I like that!”

Jack chuckled lighting his cigarette from his personal lighter and even lighting Ed's before he flopped back in the seat with a grin.

“I thought you might,” Jack said with a smile. “Just as you must wear the right costume for the right event, so must your moniker fit you.”

As Jack spoke, Harley remembered the cab driver, Ed Nygma! The guy who had taken them to get their first tattoos and asked riddles. The young man smiled as Jack said grandly, “First to the First National of Gotham!” Jack patted the briefcase, the hollow sounds echoing on the inside of the case. Nygma gave Jack a salute, holding the cigarette between his teeth and started the cab's engine. Jack grinned leaning forward. “So do you have a riddle for us?”

Nygma grinned looking in the rear view mirror. “Who makes it, but has no need of it. Who buys it, but has no use for it. Who uses it, but can neither see nor feel it. What is it?”

Jack frowned as he sat back and thought while he blew a contemplative stream of smoke from between his lips. Harley quirked a brow in thought, and after a full two minutes she smiled. Jack grinned. “You figured it out didn't you?”

She nodded. “A coffin.”

Nygma laughed. “That's right!”

Jack tugged her closer wrapping his arms around her. “My clever girl!” Then he gave her a deep kiss leaning her back in the seat, eliciting a giggle from Harley.

* An hour later, (the bank had taken Jack longer than he had anticipatedd), Nygma pulled up in front of the Lamborghini dealership and let out a low long whistle.

“Damn...those are some nice cars.”

Jack laughed. “Yes they are.” He leaned forward handing Nygma a wad of bills. “Thanks for the ride Riddler.”

“Always a treat Mr. Wayne!” Ed took the money with a salute as Jack hopped out of the car and swiftly came around to open the door for Harley. “Now, let's go pick up your car.”
Jack wrapped her arm around his, the brief case in his other hand, and strolled into the shiny building. As soon as Jack entered, a young woman came racing up to him, her heels clicking frantically on the tiled floor.

“Mr. Wayne!! It is so nice to meet you!” The young woman had inky black hair and large brown eyes behind a pair of cat framed glasses and a pleasant smile. She was dressed in a navy blue pencil skirt that reached just below her knees, which had made her little jog across the floor that much more difficult, which in turn made Harley giggle. Her thick black hair was held in place at the nape of her neck in a bun with a couple of hair sticks holding the hair in place.

The woman took Jack's hand pumping it eagerly before she turned to Harley. “Oh and you must be Miss Quinn, Mr. Wayne's fiancee?”

She extended her hand to Harley who took it. “Hi, that's me, but please call me Harley.”

“My name is Jane Hernandez, please just call me Jane.” The other woman smiled pleasantly letting go of Harley's hand turning and motioning them to follow her. “Well, right after you called this morning Mr. Wayne, I got right on the phone and your car was delivered just an hour ago!” She smiled happily leading them over to a desk. She motioned to the two chairs on one side of the desk while she sat on the other side and continued smiling while she pulled out some papers.

“Metallic red rosso mars color, black leather interior, nero lucido rims, red calipers, carbon engine bonnet, carbon fiber exterior...” Jane looked up.

Jack grinned. “Perfect Jane, just perfect.”

“All right, well the price is as we discussed on the phone and I just need you to sign here, and Miss Quinn, I will need your signature, here, here and here...” Jane was pointing showing each of the places she needed a signature. Jack took the pen to sign, but Harley stopped, her eyes widening when she saw the price...451,350 dollars.

Harley turned to look at Jack as she whispered. “Jack...but...”

Jack smiled at her and wrinkled his nose, giving her a wink. “It's a drop in the bucket sweets, believe me.”

Harley frowned, but nodded as she signed the papers. Jane smiled. “All right, now do you want to set up payments or...”

Jack hauled the brief case up and dropped it onto Jane's desk rather loudly. He grinned as he stood up and popped the lid. “Is cash all right Miss Hernandez?”

Jane stumbled back into her seat, her glasses falling down her nose when Jack dropped the brief case on her desk and her eyes wide. “Yes, yes cash is fine Mr. Wayne,” her voice conveying her surprise.

Jack giggled at her with a broad smile. “I thought it might be.”

Harley laughed as she hit the gas and the car leapt as if it were a caged animal just being released back into the wild.

“Oh God, Jack, she is gorgeous!!”

Jack laughed. “I'm glad you like her Harls! Let's see what she can do.”
Jack narrowed his eyes with a grin when Harley hit the gas. Jack handled the stick shift for her (since she was still learning) and laughed, stopping to clap his hands. “YES!! Go Harley!!! GO!”

Harley grinned savagely as she spun the car out onto the road, slamming the gas. The two of them drove recklessly through traffic with music blaring out the windows. Jack was laughing when several drivers honked at them when Harley weaved through traffic nearly hitting at least four cars. She was shaking a little, but she didn't care. She giggled, glancing at Jack. He was clearly enjoying himself. He pointed ahead of them.

“Head to the Gotham Art Museum!”

Harley gave him a surprised look, but smiled as Jack handled the gearshift for her and they took off.

* 

They zipped into the museum parking lot a few minutes later, Harley almost losing control as she brought the car around, the back in whipping around as she skidded into a parking space. People were staring when the car zipped into the parking lot, but when the two people stepped out there was more staring. Holding Harley’s hand, Jack walked at a quick pace toward the museum entrance.

The Gotham Art Museum looked completely different in the daylight, Harley thought as Jack led her toward the front entrance. She remembered coming for the gala which seemed a life-time ago now...

Jack sneered. “Always thought this place was pretentious.” But his sneer quickly dissolved into a grin. “Let’s go stain the Wayne public persona shall we?”

Harley gave him a quizzical look, but she let Jack grab her hand and pull her up the stairs that led into the museum. They stepped past the giant columns and through the modern glass doors, walking into the vast open gallery and headed straight for the entrance counter where patrons bought tickets for the museum. An older woman was sitting at the counter reading a trashy romance novel—if the cover was an indication—looked up over the top of her reading glasses and frowned, her eyes roaming over their clothing. From her expression she was having a hard time placing where they were in the social circles of Gotham. She was clearly trying to make a judgment about them as she smiled a little condescendingly. She took her glasses off, letting them dangle from the chain around her neck. Then her small brown eyes landed on Jack's hand, clearly taking in the nail polish and lipstick on Jack’s face as well as the clear signs of a fight along his features with disdain.

Jack gave her a pleasant smile and took out his wallet. He pulled out his ID, flopping it down onto the counter in front of the woman. The elderly woman with clearly dyed auburn hair and too much make-up, frowned in displeasure as she took his ID.

She huffed. “I don't know what you think you’re doing throwing your ID at me young man, but...”

She glanced down at the ID and her expression completely changing as she read the name there. Harley had to stifle her laugh.

“Ooh. Ohh my, Mr. Wayne!” The women stood up handing him his ID back.

Jack leaned an elbow on the counter, propping his chin in his hand as he did so and grinned. “Yep. That's me.” He took the card back holding it between two fingers.

“Oh...oh of course, no charge for you. Please enjoy your visit!” The lady smiled motioning toward the inside of the museum.

Jack chuckled. “Thanks, I intend to...”
He winked at the older woman causing her to turn beat red, before he turned on his heel and wrapped his arm around Harley's waist, leading her inside.

Jack grinned glancing around as he hissed. “Sometimes I just want to come in here and deface every bit of art work...all of this supposed timeless art...blah.”

Harley leaned in close. “What are we doing here Jack?”

Jack chuckled. “Well, I thought fucking in the car would be fun, but then as we were driving I came up with an even better idea!”

Harley lifted a brow and Jack giggled. “Just come with me my sweets.”

Jack led Harley through the museum, past beautiful paintings and amazing sculptures, until they came to one of the rooms that contained a specific collection. As they walked toward it Harley took a breath when she saw the name above the entrance. It was the Martha Wayne Wing.

“Jack? What are we doing?” Harley asked as they passed under his mother's name. Jack giggled glancing around and seeing no guards, just a few cameras in the corners. There were only a handful of patrons in this section at the moment, otherwise the room was full of silence and art.

“Bruce is so damn worried about his image and the family's public image. I'm the public disgrace, the bad seed...and I'm such a disappointment anyway. Why not just push the envelope further, eh?” Jack grinned playfully at her.

Harley thought she should protest, but there didn't seem to be any point. One thing she had learned by being in love with Jack Wayne was that once he set his mind on something, there was no changing it. So when Jack pulled her into the room that contained several dozen priceless pieces of art all donated by his family and shoved her up against a corner of the wall between La Belle Dame sans Merci by John Waterhouse and La Belle Dame Sans Merci by Frank Cadogan Cowper where he began attacking her mouth in earnest, Harley just went along for the ride.

Jack chuckled softly against her mouth, his tongue playing along her lips. His hands slid down her sides gathering up handfuls of her skirt as he did so. Harley moaned softly wrapping her arms around his neck, her mouth moving wantonly over his, her eyes slipping closed, forgetting instantly where they were, her only focus on the feel, smell and touch of Jack Wayne. Jack used the entire length of his body to push her back against the corner, one hand snaking under her skirt while his kisses became more fevered with desire. Jack ran the edge of his teeth along her chin, then down her throat, his tongue following the curve of her neck, his teeth catching her soft, delicate skin and biting, sucking while he pressed against her leaving lipstick marks on her delicate skin.

Harley groaned, running her hands through his hair. When Jack brought his mouth back to hers, a lock of his hair falling forward against his brow, she softly bit down on his bottom lip, feeling the swelling against her tongue. Jack made a soft sound of pleasure at the pain she caused, his blue eyes were partly closed, the blue glowing under his lashes.

He pressed harder against her; she could feel already how much he wanted her.

“Jack...why here?” Harley asked, her mouth moving to his ear. She traced the outside of his ear with the tip of her tongue making Jack chuckle then shudder when she caught his lobe with her teeth. Jack hissed before he answered.

“Because sweets...it's a fuck you to Bruce. I'll do whatever I want...he doesn't think I can make smart choices...then fine, I won't. He thinks I'm out of control, then I'll show him out of control. What does
it matter?” Jack giggled. “Besides, we've had public sex before...why not again?”

He caught her bottom lip gently with his teeth and wagged his eyebrows at her, the mischief in his eyes made the blue dance.

Harley sighed with pleasure, her eyes fluttering for a moment, then she gasped when Jack's fingers slid under her skirt, tugging her panties aside, his fingers diving into her, pressing her back against the wall. Harley groaned, but Jack cut her groan off by covering her mouth with his, thrusting his tongue deep into her mouth at the same time that his fingers slid deeper into her. Harley responded, all thoughts of where they were vanished as her need for him grew. Her leg came up to wrap around his hip, she pushed up on the ball of her other foot while Jack thrust two of his fingers up, his thumb rolling over her clitoris until she was ready to crawl up the wall, her pants and moans muffled when she came were covered by his tongue and lips.

Jack kept her gasps and moans quiet, kissing her long, hard and deeply while his fingers moved, twisted and rolled within her, becoming wet as he drove her quickly to the edge again. Harley's next climax was again swallowed by Jack's heated kisses, his fingers continuing to press her hips back against the wall as she thrust against his fingers. Jack smiled along her lips, fucking her with his fingers, watching the way her expression morphed and changed with pleasure. Harley's hands grasped desperately at his neck, grabbing handfuls of his hair in her hands when she came, thrusting her hips against his fingers and thumb, her whole body shuddering.

Jack smiled against her mouth, his eyes open to watch her face when she orgasmed for him. He licked her lips when he was sure she wasn't going to cry out.

“That's my girl,” he purred rubbing his nose against hers. “My girl.” He cooed softly licking the entirety of her mouth. Harley moaned softly but before she could come down, Jack removed his fingers causing her to gasp. He quickly undid his pants, lifting her up and shoving her hard against the corner, hard enough that she made a loud thump against the wall. Jack lifted her up, wrapping her legs around his waist as he lifted her higher, pressing his erection deep into her, groaning softly at the feel of her warm wetness surrounding him. He settled her legs around his waist, his arms hooked under her legs, Harley locking her ankles at his waist and her arms around his neck.

Jack grinned groaning softly. “My girl...my lover...my partner...”

“Uhh...Jack...yes.” Harley attacked his mouth, her arms tight around his neck, her skirt bunched up between them. Jack's hands held her under her rear using the corner to help in supporting her weight while he moved, fucking hard, but not fast, taking his time, slowly pressing deep as he held her up against the wall.

“Tell me you're mine Harley, always mine.” Jack purred breathless against her mouth his blue eyes watching her.

“Always puddin, I'm always yours no matter what happens...you'll never get rid of me.” Harley whispered back desperately.

Jack grunted, thrusting into her, making her slide against the wall. He pressed his teeth against his lower lip groaning, coming closer. Harley buryed her face against his neck, holding him tightly, whimpering as another intense orgasm burned through her just as she felt Jack thrust her hard against the wall, this time the sound of her banging against the wall rattled the paintings beside them. Jack bit down on Harley's shoulder, groaning when he climaxed, his eyes rolling closed at the moment someone uncomfortably cleared their throat.
Jack ignored them, thrusting a few more times into Harley. She didn't bother to look up, she just tightened her grip on Jack, her nose and mouth pressed to the side of his neck. Whoever it was cleared their throat again then reached out and touched Jack's shoulder. Jack's hand shot out from under Harley's skirt and grabbed the offending hand so quickly that it shocked the other person who tried to step back, but Jack had gripped their first two fingers in his grip and he squeezed, hard.

Jack slowly turned his head, his eyes narrowed to see one of the museum's guards doing his best to not look in pain, but Jack's grip was threatening to break his fingers.

Jack slowly pulled out of Harley and eased her to her feet. Harley's skirt dropped, covering her, but she quickly zipped Jack up and tucked his shirt back in. When she was done Jack turned around still holding the man's fingers, bending them back as the guards eyes were watering.

“Can I help you?” Jack asked with a deadly smile holding the man at his mercy with just the guard's fingers in his grasp.

The man swallowed his knees were weak, the pain racing up his arm. “You...you can't do that in here sir...”

Jack grinned. “Then it's a good thing we're done isn't it.”

Jack let the man's fingers go and the guard dropped, cradling his hand against his stomach.

“Come on Harls.” Jack took her hand smiling as he led her out of the museum. While passing the entrance counter he waved at the elderly woman. “Thanks sweetie! Had a good time!”

Harley giggled and waved too. “Bye!”

Just as they exited the museum Jack laughed. “That was fantastic! You are always fantastic Harley...Mmm...” Jack yanked her close then hauled her into his arms laughing and carried her bridal-style down the steps with a skip in his step. They had almost reached the car when his phone began to vibrate.

“Harley can you get that?” Jack smiled carrying her to the parking lot as people laughed, stared or waved at them. Harley leaned over Jack's shoulder, her arm tucking under to pull his phone out of his back pocket. She smiled when she saw the caller ID.

“It's Alex!” She grinned.

“Answer it my sweetling!” Jack laughed.

Harley pushed the button and held the phone to her ear. “Hey Alex!”

“Oh fucking hell, I thought something had happened to Jack's voice for a moment!! You fucking startled me! Is Jack there Harley?” Alex asked. He sounded as if he was calling from a car with the window open.

“Yes, but he is carrying me at the moment; can I help you?” Harley asked.

“Carrying you? You okay?” Alex asked with genuine concern.

“I'm fine! He just felt like carrying me I guess.” Harley smiled and looked into Jack's blue eyes.

“Oookay. Tell Jack I got fucking Troy and Tif to come to the club! Troy fucking begged me to get him in! It was fucking crazy!” Alex laughed.
Harley smiled. “Really? Fantastic!” She turned to Jack. “Alex got Troy and Tiffany to come to the club.”

Jack’s eyebrows shot up. They had arrived at the car and Jack set Harley on her feet taking the phone from her. “Alex, it’s official, I love you.”

Alex laughed. “Yeah you fucking do! Okay I gotta go, see you guys! Don’t do anything I won’t do!”

Jack leaned on the hood of the Lamborghini grinning at Harley who had walked over to the passenger side.

“Ready for another fight baby?” Jack asked with a smile.

Harley giggled. “Always.”

* * *

Bruce came home that night, but he didn't come home. He went straight to the cave. He had received word from the head of museum security about Jack and Harley’s behavior at the museum. Part of him wanted to storm into the manor and have it out again with Jack, but the part that was now in the cave was still too raw to deal with him. Tonight he was going to look for traces of Selina. Hopefully she had skipped down. He wasn't sure how or if he could deal with her. Bruce took a breath, letting it out slowly when he heard the sound of the elevator coming down. He looked over to see Alfred coming toward him carrying a tray.

“Alfred?” Bruce asked, but he was only answered by Alfred dropping the tray down in front of him. On it was a turkey sandwich, a glass of cold iced tea and an apple.

“You need to eat something before you go out tonight sir,” Alfred said it in a tone of voice that said he would take no guff from Bruce tonight.

Bruce frowned. “Fine.” He picked up half of the sandwich and took a large bite out of it. Alfred nodded his approval before he sighed. “Sir, you need to talk to your brother. You need to mend this.”

Bruce sighed. “I can't Alfred. I just...I just don't understand him! I try to get him help and he just turns around and romances her! I...I give him chances Alfred and he throws them away. He acts like...like a child...just doing whatever he wants whenever he wants. He has...I just...I don't know! He acts like everything is a game, a joke! The only thing he has shown any caring about is Dr. Quinzel and all she is doing is feeding his behavior!”

“Bruce, this is more than his behavior—this is also about yours.” Alfred looked down at Bruce with a frown.

“You have distanced yourself from Jack almost the moment he showed that he was having trouble coping with your parents death. You were not not there for him Master Bruce.” Alfred didn't look angry, he looked sad.

“I was just a child myself Alfred,” Bruce said softly.

“I know Master Bruce, but you were his elder brother. Do you have any idea how much Master Jack worshiped you. I think in many ways, though he would never admit it now, he still does,” Alfred said softly.

Bruce sighed. “What can I do?”
“Perhaps, I might suggest you throw them an engagement party sir, as a gesture of peace? They were
discussing it and I think if you showed that you support their marriage more...” Alfred trailed off as
Bruce frowned. “I have...when Harley was pregnant I was...” Bruce sighed as he realized he could
have done more for his brother after they lost the baby. Yet another blow to Jack's psyche that Bruce
didn't pay enough attention to, but he had seemed all right...

“I'll think about it Alfred. I promise.” Bruce stood up taking another bite of the sandwich reaching
over and grabbing his hood, pulling it on and setting off toward the batmobile. Alfred frowned
watching him leave then sighed and headed back upstairs.

*

Jack was hyper the day of the next fight club meeting. Not only was he going to get to have a go at
Troy, but he would be one more step closer toward having another 'duel' with Oswald Cobblepot.
Harley sensed he also still needed to vent...he and Bruce had been avoiding each other since their
fight. The tension in the manor was palpable. Harley was lying on the bed naked, her blonde hair
down around her shoulders as she watched Jack while he threw some knives at the wall where a
picture he had printed of Batman hung. Batman had made the Gotham news the last few days and
Jack was pissed. After the Killer Croc and the Electrocutioner events, Jack didn't see what good the
bat was doing for Gotham at all.

Jack stood in the middle of the room, wearing only a pair of purple silk boxers and narrowed his eyes
just before he threw one of his knives, hitting the printed picture right in the middle of the Batman's
face.

“I still can't believe they were calling him a hero in the news last night,” Jack hissed in scorn.

Harley frowned. “Only that one station. The others were arguing about whether or not a vigilante in
Gotham is a good idea. They were talking about other vigilanties in other cities too...apparently
vigilanties are becoming the 'thing' in some of the bigger cities.”

Jack walked over and yanked the knife out of the wall, along with a handful of others that were
littered around the picture. “I just don't get it. He runs around scaring the shit out of these criminals,
catching a few of them for the police, but when it comes right down to it, he won't take that extra
step and just put them down permanently.” Jack walked over and flopped onto the bed. “He
managed to let that Killer Croc escape and the Electrocutioner...hell, we had to take care of him
ourselves! What good did he exactly do?” Jack frowned as lay on his back.

Harley scooted closer to him and lifted his head to her lap where she began to stroke his hair back
threading her finger through the thick locks. “We don't need Batman puddin. We'll find Croc and
take care of him.”

She smiled as she leaned down to kiss his forehead. Jack grinned enjoying the feel of her breasts,
warm and satiny across his face when she leaned in to kiss his forehead.

“You're right, of course my love. Who needs a fucking giant bat, we can mete out our own form of
justice!” Jack giggled then kicked his feet in glee. “Beating the living daylights out of Troy is going
to be so satisfying!”

Harley giggled. “Punching Tiffany will be pretty rewarding too, I think. I'm going to aim to break
her perfectly expensive nose.”

Jack snorted. “Ruin her nose job are you?”
Harley giggled. “You betcha puddin!”

Jack grinned leaning up to lick one of her breasts before he pushed himself to his feet. “Okay, well, we should get ready.”

Harley jumped up too, much to Jack’s delight, watching all the wiggly parts of her wiggle. Jack growled playfully, crouching a little bit, his hands out. “You better hurry and get some clothes on pumpkin or you aren’t going to leave this room...running around naked like that...I’m a weak man!”

Harley giggled and with a squeal of delight when Jack lurched at her she ran to the bathroom slamming the door. Jack laughed. He smiled happily as he thought how since Harley had come into his life so many things made so much more sense to him. He loved having someone to share everything with...someone who understood him and still loved him.

* 

The streetlights had snapped to life and the moon was high when Jack and Harley arrived at the fight club’s location. Alex had called, telling them he would meet them there this time driving his own car (Harley still found it pretty impressive that Alex drove one-handed). The air was cool when they arrived, parking where they had parked last time they were here. When they exited the Lamborghini, they both saw Alex, dressed in a pair of well worn jeans with huge holes in the knees, red high top sneakers, a white t-shirt and an unbuttoned pink and green Hawaiian shirt on over the top, leaning against the wall with a cigar in his mouth. He waited for them by the door with Blockbuster, who also had a cigar. The two men were smoking in what resembled companionable silence. The large man, wearing a pair of cargo pants and a red and white striped shirt, narrowed his eyes when he saw Jack and Harley walking up, but he didn't say a word to them. Jack and Harley also noticed the way Blockbuster kept his eyes averted.

Harley, her hand in Jack’s, wore a pair of red and black booty shorts, a pair of thigh-high black socks that ended with white stripes running horizontally across her thighs, a pair of thick sole ankle boots and a red and black striped t-shirt that stopped just short of her shorts. Her hair was pulled up into two little bun-like ponytails.

Jack, a cigarette between his lips, was dressed in a pair of slim cut black jeans that highlighted Jack’s height and his slim legs. He had on a pair of purple and black striped socks, with a pair of ankle boots and a simple, athletic cut purple t-shirt. Jack smiled and stopped right in front of Blockbuster. He pulled his cigarette out and dropped it to the ground as he blew out a long stream of smoke at the man.

Jack grinned. “How ya doing?”

Alex chuckled. “How the fuck are you? You two look like you’re ready for a fucking fight!”

Jack turned his attention from Blockbuster and smiled at Alex. “Is he here?”

Alex nodded. “Yep, the two of them arrived just fifteen minutes ago. Man that fucking Troy...he’s looking for a fight. Thinks he’s fucking Muhammad Ali! When I told him I could arrange for him to fight you, man that fucking asshole couldn’t agree fast enough. Apparently that little party at your place took away every guest they had. And according to some hints from the uppity ups, it was still more fucking fun than the Randells parties have ever been, even with what we did!” Alex chuckled before he redirected his attention to Blockbuster. “You wanna remove the board there Blockbuster?”

The large man glared at Jack, but he pulled the board out of the way. “Thanks for the cigar,” he grunted at Alex.
Alex waved him off. “It was fucking nothing.”

Alex led the way inside. The place looked exactly the same as the last time they were here. The three of them made their way downstairs to the deep thump of music and the cheers of the spectators.

Alex muttered. “Well, we better get the fuck down there before Cobblepot gives him to someone else. I kinda put in the word that you wanted first go at Troy. I was fucking surprised that Cobblepot didn't like throw a fucking fit or something. He must hate that fucking piece of shit as much as you, wants to see the two of you fight.” Alex glanced at Harley. “Did the same for you, Tiffany is all yours.”

Jack smiled with a shrug. “Whatever works. The enemy of my enemy is my friend sort of thing.”

Harley giggled softly.

* *

When they arrived downstairs there was a fight going on between two women. One, a blonde dressed all in black and fishnets who looked slightly familiar to Harley and another woman with long black hair, dressed in black and purple, were fighting in the middle of the crowd while the audience yelled and money was exchanging hands. Rammstein's 'Ich Tu Dir Weh' was playing in the background as the two women faced off. Alex stopped and pointed. Over in a corner were Troy and Tiffany; Troy was clearly enjoying himself watching the fighters with a grin while Tiffany looked as if she wanted to crawl into a hole and hide. Troy turned pulling out a wad of money, placing a bet with Warren while Tiffany looked on in horror.

“Look at that fucking piece of shit,” Alex yelled over the music shaking his head.

Jack and Harley chuckled at Alex's assessment of Troy, their arms around each others waists.

The two women in the center of the makeshift ring both had bloody noses and split lips, their fists scraped and bleeding. As Alex led them over to where Cobblepot sat on his 'throne,' Harley noticed that the two women clearly knew how to fight by the way their were moving around each other. Alex gestured toward Cobblepot, catching the shorter man's attention. Cobblepot glanced over, his eyes meeting Jack's. He grinned and nodded.

That was the moment the blonde hit the brunette hard enough that she knocked the woman off her feet, sending the brunette to the floor with a sickening looking impact. The brunette went down and didn't get back up. The crowd roared as the blonde was grabbed by her wrist by one of Cobblepot's men who yelled, “BLACK CANARY WINS!”

The blonde woman grinned, pumping her fist once before she wiped the blood from her nose and turned, blending into the crowd, people congratulating her, patting her on the back as she headed over to get her winnings.

Alex grinned. “God, I love it when the chicks fight!”

Cobblepot stood up then and yelled. “QUIET ! Time for the next round!!!”

The crowd quieted down waiting for Cobblepot to announce the next fighters. Cobblepot smiled looking around the crowd. “As you know, last time we gathered here we had a newcomer beat Blockbuster and tonight he's back. Jack Wayne!”

The crowd cheered. Immediately money started being exchanged before Cobblepot announced who Jack was fighting. Jack grabbed Harley, yanking her closer, and kissed her. The crowd roared.
Harley grabbed Jack's face between her hands returning his kiss passionately before they separated and Jack walked into the makeshift ring.

Alex leaned in close to Harley. “Want me to place a bet for you?”

Harley glanced sideways at him and grinned. “Yes.”

Jack pulled his t-shirt off and tossed it to Harley who easily caught it. He stretched his arms over his head to the cheers of the crowd (for a moment the urge to kill them all rushed through Harley with surprising speed. She found herself quaking at the sudden rage, but a few breaths calmed her).

Cobblepot grinned viciously and yelled. “Jack Wayne against TROY RANDELL!”

Troy grinned and started to walk into the circle. Tiffany grabbed for him saying something, but Troy pulled her hands off of him throwing her hands back at her, causing her to stumble backwards. Troy walked into the ring with a condescending smile. Troy was dressed in pair of black and white plaid shorts with a button down denim shirt. He unbuttoned his shirt, taking it off and tossing it at Tiffany who barely caught it. Troy wasn't badly built, but he was missing the slender, razor whip physique of Jack Wayne.

“Finally! I'm going to give you just what you deserve! I'm going to make you pay for everything you did to me and Tiffany.” Troy sneered at Jack as he lifted a hand to thumb his nose at Jack.

Jack smiled pleasantly, lifting a brow at Troy. “Oh boo hoo Troy. Did I hurt your little feelings? I was going to give you a nasty look, but I see you already have one.” The crowd started laughing. Troy narrowed his eyes and started circling Jack. “Oh you think you're funny do you? You...you...piece of shit!”

(Someone changed the music from Rammstein to Marilyn Manson's 'Fight Song.')

Jack smiled bouncing slightly on the balls of his feet. “I know I'm funny Troy. You bring out the best insults in me!”

Troy snarled. “You're a piece of SHIT Jack Wayne!! You're just the crazy little brother of Bruce Wayne! You'll never be anything but a fucking disgrace to the Wayne name, you know that? I bet your parents are glad to be dead so they didn't have to see what a crackpot you turned out to be. An insane shadow to Bruce Wayne! They should lock you up!”

Jack's eye twitched just a little, his lip curling into a cold smile that never reached his eyes. “You know Troy, I'll never forget the first time we met, though I keep trying.”

Troy lunged, but Jack's hand snapped up, wrapping his long fingered hand around Troy's wrist. They struggled for a few intense seconds before Jack reared back and slammed his forehead against Troy's face, causing the other man to lurch back as Jack let go at the same time. Troy stumbled backwards nearly toppling over. Troy tried to slap Jack, but Jack leaned back avoiding the clumsy blow. Troy next brought his leg up to kick Jack in the chest. The kick connected, but lacked any real power to do any harm; the kick failed to knock Jack back any. Jack simply shrugged it off.

Jack chuckled. “Really Troy, this is your best? Though I'm not sure what I was expecting.”

* Alex had placed Harley's bet for her and had come back carrying two bottles with him, both wine coolers and handed one to her.
Harley growled. “Where did you get these?”

Alex grinned. “I have my ways!”

Harley smiled taking a sip of the drink. It was sweet with just the right amount of burn. She smiled pleasantly and asked. “You think Troy will realize that Jack is playing with him?”

“No, not until it’s too fucking late.” Alex laughed in anticipation.

* * *

Troy lunged again, aiming for Jack’s face. “ARR!!”

Jack slapped Troy’s hand away with a dismissive gesture and punched Troy across the face while laughing. “You know Troy... I guess you are proof that God makes mistakes.”

The crowd roared with laughter, serving only to make Troy furious.

Troy snarled wiping the blood away from his nose. “You know what you are Jack Wayne! You’re a fucking reject!! I bet your brother laughs at you behind your back!”

Jack hissed in warning, “Stop bringing my brother into this.”

Troy chuckled. “Oh, does that hurt?”

Troy took two more punches at Jack, but the leaner fighter weaved one way, then the other easily avoiding Troy’s sluggish punches.

Jack chuckled. “Really Troy, this is a little sad. You need to try harder sweetheart.”

Troy tried again, lunging low, trying to knock Jack’s legs out from under him, but Jack simply jumped avoiding Troy’s punch. Troy did surprise him when Jack spun around with a roundhouse kick that Troy somehow managed to duck. Jack twisted his body at the waist, putting power behind his move when he twisted his upper body and brought his right elbow around, cracking Troy across the face. Troy’s head snapped to the side and up. Jack followed that by fully turning his body and kicking Troy in the chest.

Troy coughed and groaned as he hit the floor. Jack stepped back. Instead of finishing him, he let Troy get to his feet while laughing the whole while and the crowd was laughing with him. Troy was becoming blind with rage as he pushed himself to his feet. The light haired man lunged again (Jack had to laugh, clearly Troy hadn’t figured out that lunging wasn’t really working for him.) Jack twisted at the waist to the left, his legs in a wide stance, and used his shoulder to hit Troy in the chest, grabbing his arm at the same time and rolled Troy over his back and to the floor. Troy hit the floor hard again, knocking the air from his lungs.

Jack smiled, bouncing back and giving Troy a chance to get to his feet again.

Jack hissed, mocking his opponent. “Oh, did that hurt?”

Troy came to his feet with a cough, but he rushed Jack again, throwing punch after punch. One, two, of the series of punches connected, though Jack seemed to take the punches as if he felt nothing. One punch hit Jack across the face, reopening the split in his lips, blood immediately started to ooze down his lips and chin; the next punch was in the stomach, but Jack barely winced.

Troy hissed, panting to catch his breath, covered in sweat. He staggered around glaring hatefully at
Jack. His rage was clear when he started to speak, spitting the words at Jack “You!! Your woman is a WHORE! You hear me JACK WAYNE! A fucking ball sucking CUNT!”

Jack stopped moving then and stared at Troy. His voice was barely a whisper as he asked with narrowing eyes, “What did you just say?”

Troy grinned with bloody teeth. “You heard me!! She's a ball sucking, dick sucking TWAT!”

(Tiffany was in the corner of the room covering her ears in shock at her husband's behavior.)

Harley's eyes narrowed as she started to move, but Alex quickly grabbed her with his one hand pulling her back.

Jack smiled then. “I'm going to fucking kill you Troy.”

Troy took a few swings at Jack, hitting him in the chest, then once in the face again, knocking Jack's head back. Jack's head came up, blood flowing more freely from his nose. He smiled at Troy and waggled his eyebrows at him. Troy looked confused for a moment at Jack's reaction, but then Jack struck. He hunched slightly and hit Troy in the side hard, the smack of a fist against flesh was hard enough that it could be heard. Jack then swung his right arm up, striking Troy under the chin, snapping his head backwards hard enough that Troy went down in a daze.

Troy pushed himself up to his knees, but Jack was there, slamming his fists into him again, across the face with his fist, and again and again in rapid succession. Troy's head snapped back and forth like a punching bag in a cartoon. Jack hit him again, knocking Troy back down to the floor as he straddled him and planted his weight on Troy's chest. Jack hit him hard, a direct knuckle punch to the nose, blood splattering everywhere. Jack started to laugh. Now Jack was using both fists. He hit Troy across his left cheek, splattering more blood, then again and again his fists connecting with each cheek splattering blood and saliva.

Blood was everywhere, Troy's face such a mess of blood, saliva and chipped teeth that the man was becoming unrecognizable. Jack kept hitting him though Troy had stopped struggling to hit back, he just lay on the ground, his arms spread out as Jack continued to savagely beat him.

Jack showed no inclination to stop. Jack smashed his face again, then again. Jack was laughing as Troy's blood splattered his face mixing with his own. A moment later Jack stopped using both fists and just kept pounding against Troy's face with his right fist, over and over.

Harley was laughing, her giggles turning slightly maniacal as she watched Jack beat Troy.

(At some point during the beating, Tiffany had run off, no one noticing when she left.) Jack kept hitting Troy over and over, knocking a couple of his teeth out, breaking his nose, still laughing.

Alex hissed at Harley, “He is going to fucking kill him! You need to get him out of here!
The Unforgiven

Alex was the first one to run out toward the two men to try to stop Jack. Jack just kept hitting Troy over and over. Spittle and blood flew from his lips as he grinned, laughing, his fists raining down in hard, meaty sounding thwacks against Troy's face. Everyone had gone quiet watching while Jack continued to beat Troy; the only other sound was Jack's giggles. Harley didn't move for a few heartbeats watching Jack continue to beat on Troy. She smiled, thinking it was nice to see Troy get exactly what he deserved (she could almost hear a whisper of Harleen's voice yelling at her to stop him, but the voice seemed so far away), but finally her sense of preservation kicked in and she rushed forward to help Alex.

“Jack!! Jack he's down, puddin!! You can stop!!” Harley grabbed Jack's arm while Alex hooked his one arm around Jack's chest doing his best to haul his friend off of Troy. Jack giggled softly, the sound dying slowly as he finally seemed to come to his senses, looking up at Harley at same time that Alex was hauling him to his feet.

Alex was shouting. “JACK STOP!! YOURE GOING TO KILL HIM!!”

Alex hauled Jack back at the moment Jack's attention was on Harley, managing to throw Jack backwards onto the floor. The crowd, which had gone silent watching Jack nearly beat the life out of Troy, erupted into cheers. It didn't seem to matter to them that Jack had almost killed a man, what mattered was that the fight had been a good fight and most of them had put their money on Jack Wayne. Harley and Alex helped Jack to his feet as patrons of the club swarmed him, wanting to pat his back, to touch Jack somehow as if touching him would rub something off on them. Jack seemed a little out of it, smiling, but not really connecting to the situation until Alex dragged him over to the wall and started yelling at people at the same time to give Jack some air. While this was going on, a few men hurried over and dragged a barely conscious Troy out of the way; Tiffany was nowhere to be seen.

“Go on, you bunch of fuckers! Go get yer money! Give the man some fucking room to breathe, ya motherfuckers!” Alex started pushing people away from Jack (and threatening to deck a few) while Harley caught Jack's face between her hands forcing him to look at her.

“Puddin? You okay?” Harley searched his eyes looking for her Jack.

Jack responded with a giggle at first, his mouth and teeth were bloody and there was blood still running freely from his nose. His eyes weren't focused on her at first, but after a moment, as Harley stared hard at him, her thumbs caressing his cheeks, she whispered. “Puddin?”

A big smile bloomed across his face, his blue eyes focused on her. “Hey cupcake.”

Harley smiled letting out a sigh of relief. “There you are.”

Jack chuckled gathering her into his arms. “Mm...you smell delicious sweetie.”

Harley held on tight to him, one hand going into his sweaty hair to cradle his head against her shoulder, her other hand stroking his bare back. Alex, who had gone to make sure he picked up their winnings came back in a hurry. “Hey, Cobblepot wants a fucking word with you Jack.”

Harley released Jack who spat some blood onto the floor. “What the fuck does that wobbling bird want?”

Alex shrugged. “I don't know, but I think you should fucking find out Jack.”
Jack nodded, smacking Alex on the back before he took Harley's hand in his and pushed their way through the crowd to Cobblepot's throne, Alex acting like their bodyguard as he yelled and pushed people out of the way. “Go on you bunch of fucking pussies! Get out of the way!”

Cobblepot, dressed in a three-piece black suit with white shirt and shoes shined to the point they seemed to reflect what little light there was in the dimly lit room, was sitting on his 'throne' when they approached, leaning to the side as one of his girls, a tall woman with dark mocha-colored skin and black hair streaked with blood red color, whispered something in his ear and another, a blonde with green eyes and a doll-like face, sliced bites of apple off with a knife and fed them to Oswald. His hair looked greasier than usual, thick strands across his forehead, some of it sticking up oddly while he laughed at whatever the mocha-skinned woman next to him whispered. He reached up to caress her face, making her smile before he noticed Jack.

Oswald smiled slowly. “Well, well Jack Wayne, quite a show.”

Jack grinned. “What can I say? I'm an entertainer at heart.”

Cobblepot snorted, his eyes wandering over Jack's bare torso for a moment with a curl to his lips before he smiled again. “Well, now you get to fight someone extra special Wayne.”

“You?” Jack asked bringing Harley's hand up to kiss her knuckles, but Cobblepot gave him a condescending look. “No, you get to fight Croc, Killer Croc.”

Jack and Harley both stiffened at the same time. Jack hissed. “What?”

Next to them Alex hissed. “Oh Jesus Fucking Christ on a Ritz Cracker! No wonder I haven't been able to find him! You've had that freak the whole time!”

Cobblepot grinned leaning on his cane and drumming his fingers, his eyes moving from Jack and Harley to Alex. “I had heard that the two of you had a run in a while back, maybe some unfinished business? And that you Alex, were looking for the Croc for Mr. Wayne.”

Alex narrowed his eyes. “Watch it Oswald, you don't want to be on my fucking bad side.”

Jack sneered taking a step toward Oswald, but Harley pulled on his hand stopping him from moving further. Jack snarled. “Don't pretend you don't know what happened Penguin.”

Cobblepot narrowed his eyes at them, but his smile never faltered while he tapped his fingers on his other hand. “Well, I guess you have a chance now for some payback...or not...I'm betting on the walking, talking crocodile myself. We meet again in four days, that should be enough time...”

Everyone turned at the sound of Blockbuster rushing down the stairs, the sounds of sirens following him. “That bitch Randell called the police!!”

Cobblepot stood with a hiss. “EVERYONE GO!!”

Alex grabbed Jack by his upper arm. “Follow me.”

Jack and Harley didn't ask any questions; instead they followed Alex. Alex was following Oswald and his people while the crowd down here all raced for the only way they knew out of the basement, the way they had gotten down here, the stairs leading up.

Blockbuster saw Alex with Jack and Harley following Oswald and his group. Blockbuster started to
say something, but Alex put his finger up with his one hand, his eyes narrowed at the larger man. “Hey, who got you those cases of Mansinthe? Me. So you want to stay on my good side, you're going to get us the fuck out of here.”

Blockbuster sighed looking defeated. “Fine, come on.” He motioned with his big hand for them to follow.

Blockbuster stayed close behind Oswald and his girls, trailing them to a far corner of the large basement. One of the women pulled open a door. The door was made from dark, heavy wood, painted to blend into the walls of the basement. It was hidden in the back of the room in such a way that if someone didn't already know it was there, it would be overlooked. The small group hurried through the door with Blockbuster taking up the rear to pull the door back into place. Someone up ahead had a light, a dim beacon in an otherwise black tunnel. Jack, Harley and Alex followed the others through the tunnel for a good ten minutes before another door was opened that led into an abandoned warehouse.

The group came up into the fresh air. Cobblepot frowned when he saw Jack, Harley and Alex coming up through the floor before Blockbuster, but he said nothing.

Alex was the one to mutter loudly. “Thank the fucking gods for prohibition. I love those fucking secret tunnels!”

Cobblepot and his group quickly left the warehouse, though Cobblepot stopped long enough to salute Jack. “See you in a four days,” before he vanished into the evening air.

Alex grumbled. “Man Jack...You need to fucking disappear for a while.”

Jack frowned taking his shirt that Harley handed him and shrugging back into it. “Why?”

“Because man, Tif is going to be telling the cops everything! And when they see how fucked up Troy is, they are going to be looking to question you! I mean, I don't think even fucking Troy is going to say anything, but it's going to be hot around here with the cops being nosy fucks.” He paused to shake his head. “For fuck's sake, Troy was a willing participant, but he ain't going to be able to talk for a while and I'll fucking bury him if he squeals, but until he wakes up... you should just get the fuck out of town, go take a fucking vacation or something. Maybe we'll get fucking lucky and Tif is going to sound like a fucking headcase, but just in case I would get the fuck out of Gotham for a day or two.”

Harley lifted her brows at Jack. “I think it's a good idea puddin. If the police are going to be crawling around looking for you or anyone Tiffany says was here, they are going to talk to Bruce and I don't think you and Bruce need another confrontation.”

Jack snarled. “Bruce...”

Jack's eyes flashed for a moment before he came back to himself. “Fine. Not a problem. We can leave tonight. We'll go home, pack our bags. I can use one of the private jets and head to....” Jack stopped for a moment, his mind raced, then after a couple of seconds a smile formed on his lips. “I know! We'll go to San Francisco...I think there's some summer concert series that is going to be starting there tomorrow...it'll be perfect and maybe fun.” Jack lifted his brows in question at Harley who grinned. “Sounds good puddin...a little getaway would be nice. Just the two of us.” Harley stroked her fingers down his chest.

Alex grinned. “Okay, then let's get to the fucking cars before the cops find them...then none of this will matter...”
Luckily for Jack, Harley, and Alex, the two Gotham cops that came out to investigate Tiffany's call weren’t the best that the police department had to offer, nor the most vigilant. Because the police were busy with Tiffany, it didn’t take too much effort for Alex, Jack and Harley to pick up their cars and leave the area without the Gotham PD seeing them. It probably helped in their escape that Tiffany Randell was hysterical, her husband was beaten unconscious, there were no witnesses and the two cops were fairly sure it was a mugging considering where they were called to, which made the two police far more interested in quizzing Tifanny Randell about why she and her husband were on this end of Gotham—drugs, prostitution, or something else just as nefarious.

When they arrived home, it was nearly four in the morning. Harley had cleaned the blood off of Jack's face and straightened his hair for him (just in case Bruce or Alfred were up when they arrived home) while he drove the car home. (Luckily for them both, Bruce was still out. He wouldn't be back for another few hours and Alfred was sleep.) Jack parked the car in the back of garage, swinging the car into one of the few empty spots in the far back before hopping out and taking Harley's hand as they walked swiftly into the manor.

Jack was grinning brightly, pleased with the idea of leaving Gotham, Bruce...all of it, putting the place behind them for a few days just to be with Harley. He was whistling when they entered the manor swinging Harley's hand with his while he walked briskly inside. Harley frowned as they took the steps two at a time.

“Are you going to fly the plane?” she asked as they turned and headed down the hall to Jack’s room.

Jack snorted. “Nah, we have a couple of pilots on the payroll. Just going to call one of them.”

“Won't Bruce be upset if you just take off with a jet?” Harley frowned. Jack opened the bedroom door, flipping the light switch on as he walked in and tugged Harley with him.

“Yes, but Brucie takes off without telling me all the time. Why can't I do the same?” Jack shrugged. He let go of her hand thinking about calling Alfred to find the luggage when he stopped in the middle of the room as an idea came to him, his eyes dancing.

“You know...don't pack a bag! Just grab your make-up and some other toiletries. We'll just go shopping while we're there! It'll be fun!” Jack chuckled as he turned to walked back out the door.

“Jack where are you going?” Harley asked, reaching out to touch his arm.

“Going to go wake up Alfred to call the pilot for us!” Jack grinned as he walked out the door.

An hour later, Alfred, with a large steaming travel mug of earl grey tea in the cup holder, was driving the Cadillac Escalade with Jack and Harley (who had both washed up and changed, Harley into a simple, sleeveless mini tank dress, a wide brim white hat, her blonde hair loose around her shoulders, with a pair of white and gold crossing-over flat sandals and a pair of oversized white framed sunglasses, while Jack was dressed in a white suit with a light blue shirt underneath, no tie and a pair of white and black oxfords shoes along with a pair of aviator Gucci sunglasses) sitting in the back seat, taking the two of them to the private air strip where the jet they would be taking to San Francisco was kept.

“How long will the two of you be gone again Master Jack? I'm a little sleep deprived,” Alfred said
with a smile.

Alfred had to admit, he was happy to see Miss Harleen and Master Jack going on a little vacation, especially after the other night when Bruce and Jack were at each others throats. Maybe a break would be good. Alfred pinched his lips together. He could as least hope that a little separation would help. Perhaps he would take that time to discuss an engagement party for Master Jack and Miss Harleen with Master Bruce. He still believed that would be a nice gesture on Master Bruce's part to put together a party. But he had a few days to work on him. Both these young men were just as stubborn now as they were as children. Pig-headed and both with a tendency to solve problems with their fists first instead of their heads.

“Four days Alfred! Four days in San Francisco! We are going to a four day concert and shopping and having sex as loud and as often as we want!” Jack laughed wrapping his arm around Harley and pressing a loud kiss to her cheek.

Alfred's cheeks turned bright red, but he smiled. “Very good Master Jack. Well, I do hope you both enjoy yourselves. I will inform Master Bruce of your vacation when he returns.”

Jack smiled then pointed as Alfred pulled the car up alongside one of several hangars that lined a smaller runway than was used for the commercial jets. Harley couldn't quite see the jet, despite the lights inside the hangar. When Alfred pulled the car along the side the hangar, Harley caught of a glimpse of a small, slick looking jet.

“There she is, one of the Wayne Enterprises private jets, a Bombardier BD-700.” Jack grinned like a kid, full of excitement.

“One of? How many do you have?” Harley asked while she peered out the window then glanced back, her eyes switching between Jack and Alfred.

Jack chuckled. “We don't own as many planes as we have cars, I promise.”

Harley blinked with a grin and shook her head.

* * *

Once Alfred had parked the car, he opened the door of the Cadillac for Harley, took her hand as she stepped out and stared at the jet. It wasn't like she hadn't seen planes or private jets before, but she had never been this close, let alone flown in one before. Harley stared at the plane, unaware of a man quickly approaching them until he was almost on top of them. Jack grinned coming around the car to take Harley's hand.

A tall, dark haired man about the same height as Jack who sported a black mustache and goatee with piecing grey eyes came strolling quickly toward them until he was almost on top of them. Jack grinned coming around the car to take Harley's hand.

“Mr. Wayne! I'm your pilot, Janos Prohaska! It is a pleasure to finally meet the youngest Wayne!”

Jack grinned in return taking the other man's hand. “Pleasure to me you Mr. Prohaska, or can I call you Janos?”

“Janos! Please yes!! And this is your fiancee?” Janos turned his attention to Harley taking her hand and kissing the back of her knuckles.

Jack frowned slightly when Janos kissed her hand, but the contact was brief enough that Jack's smile
returned swiftly. “Yes, this is my fiancee, Harley Quinn.”

“It is a pleasure Miss Quinn. You are quite lovely. You are a lucky man Mr. Wayne.” Janos smiled then clapped his hands together loudly, startling Harley. “Now!! It is time to fly!! Are you ready Mr. Wayne, Miss Quinn? Any luggage?”

“Nope, let's go!” Jack grinned taking Harley's hand. “See you in a couple of days Alfred!” Jack waved over his shoulder as did Harley. “Bye Alfred!”

Alfred waved. “Enjoy yourselves Master Jack, Miss Harleen.”

Jack led the way up the steps to the interior of the plane. When Harley stepped through the portal, she couldn't stop herself from gasping. The interior of the plane was gorgeous, like nothing she had ever seen before...nor was it like anything she was expecting! The interior of the jet was done in shining black and whites. The center of the cabin was dominated by a wrap-around couch in white leather that faced a large flat screen TV and a fireplace?! In front of the couch was a black table with a chess set and in front of that was another long shiny black table. There were several high back chairs (all in white leather) set around small black tables. There were vases of flesh flowers and a drink cabinet. Jack walked in, leading her over to the couch, then flopping down and tugging her with him.

“So what do you think?” Jack asked, wrapping his arm around Harley's shoulders and leaning back. Harley giggled taking her hat and sunglasses off to set them on the table.

“This is...wow...I've only seen things like this in the movies!”

Jack laughed. “Well, I have to give Bruce this, he does have taste.”

Janos stuck his head in from the front of the plane (Harley couldn't be sure but it looked as if the plane was divided into sections since there was a half wall between where Janos stuck his head out and this room). “All right, buckle up! We're about to take off!”

Jack hopped up taking Harley's hand and leading her over to the individual chairs, all of which were equipped with seat belts. Jack sat her down and reached around her to grab the buckle and strap her in, taking a tender kiss from her lips before he sat down in the leather seat next to her and strapped himself in. He grinned reaching over and taking her hand. “Ready sweets?”

Harley giggled. “Yep! Let's go puddin’!”

Outside Alfred watched as the plane rolled out of the hangar and onto the runway. He stayed until the plane took off and disappeared into the horizon before he sighed and headed back to the car. Hopefully Bruce wouldn't be too annoyed with Master Jack and Miss Harleen taking one of the jets.

After a few minutes Janos' voice came over the loud speaker. “Feel free to move around the cabin and enjoy your flight! We will be coming into San Francisco in approximately five, maybe five and half hours.”

Jack had just unstrapped his seat belt at the same time Harley did when an attendant came into the cabin from the front of the plane where the half wall and a heavy black curtain separated the cabin
from the pilot and the stewardess' area. The attendant was dressed in a conservative navy uniform, complete with a little stewardess hat. Her brown hair was pulled back into a severe bun, but her features were pleasant as she smiled at the both of them. Jack flopped down onto the couch, tugging Harley with him again, who giggled when she landed almost on his lap. Jack grinned tugging her the rest of the way onto his lap, wrapping his arms around her as the stewardess stepped up to them. Harley giggled pushing Jack's sunglasses back up his nose where they had slipped just a little.

“My name is Cindy. Would you both like a night cap, morning coffee, fruit juice? I can mix pretty much any drink you would like? Also we have smoked salmon wrapped around small balls of crème fraîche, whipped crème cheese and chives dipped in caviar, fresh fruit...we are fully stocked with anything you would like…”

Jack grinned. “Sounds great...I mean the salmon things! I'll have a scotch and soda. What would you like Harley my love?”

Harley smiled. “Ah, could I have a New York sour?”

Cindy smiled. “Of course. I will have your drinks and the salmon out in just a moment.”

“Hey Cindy, can you turn on some music, something smooth?” Jack asked with a grin.

“Of course, Mr. Wayne.” Cindy replied before she disappeared behind the curtain. Cindy had only been gone a couple of second when music started to fill the cabin, Lana Del Rey's sultry voice singing “Freak” filled the cabin as a low beat in the background.

Jack snuggled Harley close, nibbling her ear causing Harley to giggle as she asked, “So where are we going to stay while we're in San Francisco?”

Jack's tongue and teeth tickled her neck as his hand slid up her side and gathered up her dress in his fist, pulling it slowly up. Jack stopped long enough to purr in her ear.

“Oh, I called before we left the manor, we are going to stay at the Marriott Marquis! Booked us one of their penthouse rooms. It's amazing what the Wayne name can accomplish at the last minute.”

Jack laughed licking her ear. “Now, I'm more interested in nibbling on you.”

Harley giggled and squealed while Jack ran his hand down her bare legs reaching down to remove her sandals, dragging the tips of his fingers back up her legs, starting with the back of her feet.

“I really like this dress,” Jack purred against her ear, sliding his hand under the skirt of the dress, pressing his hand between her soft warm thighs before working his fingers up higher, his tongue licking at the spot just under her ear, sending shivers down her spine. His other hand was around her waist, holding her against him while his tongue traced the outside of her ear creating goosebumps along her skin. He had just wormed his hand further between her legs, the tips of his fingers brushing her panties when Cindy came in with a tray holding their drinks and food. She was well trained enough (and had had enough flights with Jack Wayne's older brother) that Cindy didn't react to seeing Jack's hand up Harley's dress. She simply set the tray down and removed the drinks, then the plate of salmon.

“There you are. Enjoy and please feel free to hit the button located there…” She pointed at small button that looked like part of the couch's arm rest. Harley frowned when she realized there was a well hidden button there, if you didn't know it was there you would never have seen it.

Cindy smiled, her eyes averted as she left the cabin.

Harley leaned over, reaching for their drinks, Jack holding her legs so that she wouldn't fall off his
lap while she picked up their drinks with each of her hands. She smiled handing Jack his and took a sip of her own. Jack adjusted her on his lap, his arm around her waist while he took a drink.

“Oh wow, this is really good,” Harley exclaimed taking another sip of her slightly sour beverage.

Jack grinned. “Bruce only hires the best.”

Jack took another long sip from his drink before setting it aside and leaning over to pick up one of the salmon wrapped snacks, brushing it over Harley's lips. He watched her mouth as he traced her lips, his eyes intense just before he fed her the bite, sliding it slowly between her lips and onto her tongue.

“Mm...Harley. We have almost six hours to play with...” He said softly.

Harley picked up a bite and brushed it over his lips, watching the way his tongue moved when she slipped the bite between his lips. “Mm.. Jack...all that time alone.” She giggled.

Jack grabbed her, making her squeal when he bowled her over onto her back with a laugh. He was about to kiss her when his phone started ringing, the tone indicating that it was Alex calling him.

Jack sat up, Harley started to pull down her skirt and sit up as well, but Jack grinned and put a hand on her holding her down. She giggled, allowing him to push her back, then Jack pushed her skirt back up, rubbing his hand up and down her thighs as he hit the button on his phone.

“Hey Alex, whatcha need?”

“Hey Jack, just got a call from one of my fucking friends who works at Gotham General. Thought you might like to know that fucking Troy is going to live...the stupid motherfucker. Anyway, from what I heard on my grapevine, the cops didn't find a fucking thing, they seem to think Tiffany either hired someone to beat her fucking husband up or she somehow did it herself! They were even looking for some fucking drugs thinking Tif was high as fuck!” Alex was breathless trying to get those sentences out while controlling his laughing.

Jack settled back on the couch, his fingers gently stroking Harley's inner thigh while he talked. “You're joking?” Jack chuckled.

“Nope, last I heard they have Tif in a fucking cell at the PD. I heard that fucking Troy woke up on the way to the hospital and he seems okay. You just gave him a fucking concussion, but he ain't talking. I'm surprised actually. I guess even Troy can once in a while show some fucking sense. Thought you might also want to know what you fucking did to him! According to one of the nurses...Her name is fucking Gina, she could be my mom, but man that woman can gamble...You haven't played cards with her yet, she's a fucking shark!! Hey when you guys get back I got a fucking poker game I'm putting together, high stakes...you guys want in?”

Jack chuckled, his hand having made its way up Harley's leg to grab the side of the lacy piece of cloth that was her panties and he was working it down with one hand.

“Poker? High stakes? How much are you talking about?” Jack licked his lips watching Harley lift her hips up off the couch helping him to pull her panties down as she slowly shoved the sides of the panties down her hips.

Alex laughed. “One hundred thousand pay in. Is that high enough for you?”

Jack chuckled in response. “Count me and Harley in. So, Troy's injuries?”
Harley had rolled off the couch coming to her feet and dropped her panties in Jack's lap just before she kneeled down between his legs, placing her hands on his knees, spreading his legs apart with a cute, coy, smile and started to undo his slacks, her nimble fingers moving slowly, her light blue eyes on his face while she worked. Jack watched her intently over the top of his sunglasses while listening to Alex on the phone. She undid the button, slowly pulled down the zipper, then slipped her hand into the boxers through the front opening. Jack swallowed, pressing his lips together while he watched her. Her hand was warm when she touched him, pulling him out slowly. He was already semi-hard, but when she touched him he wanted to groan loudly. Instead, Jack's breath hitched.

Harley gave him that beautiful smile of hers as she leaned down and began to run her tongue over him, her eyes never leaving his face. Jack watched her, a small smile on his lips while her tongue played over him just before she began to press her lips against him, her tongue circling over the head of his erection in slow, tantalizing circles. Jack caught his bottom lip in his teeth, his features contorting with pleasure watching her while he tried to keep himself from making too much noise over the phone while Alex spoke. “Oh yeah, man you did a fucking number on that fuck head! Gina says he has a broken orbital, a broken nose, you broke at least three teeth and knocked out another two and dislocated his jaw! That's all in fucking addition to that concussion you gave him! And he needed over seventy stitches. You fucked him up Jack!” Alex chuckled.

Jack ground his teeth, dropping his head against the back of the couch, his sunglasses sliding back up his nose when Harley lavished her tongue up and down, licking long and slow, but then altered with flicks of her tongue under the head of his erection while the fingers of one hand dug into his knee before stroking up his thigh, her hand burning through the cloth of his slacks. She dragged her teeth just barely over the silken flesh of his shaft, causing Jack to cross his eyes which made Harley giggle around him in her mouth.

Alex paused. “Hey man, you fucking all right? You sounded fucking weird there for a minute.”

Jack hissed just a little as he replied. “Yeah, yes I'm fine.”

Alex continued.”Okay man, if you fucking say so. Anyway, I mean...Troy better hope he has the money to cover the plastic surgery he is going to need on that fucked up face of his, but I heard that fucking douche is in debt to some bad people. Don't know if he is ever going to be able to get that fucking face of his fixed!” Alex started laughing. “Okay, well just wanted to let you know what the fuck was up. You two have fun! See you in a couple of fucking days and don't you fucking do anything I wouldn't do!”

Jack barely suppressed a grunt when Harley took all of him into her mouth, dragging her lips up his length then down again. She sucked hard, her tongue zigzagging against him until his back was arching off the couch.

He was choking with the effort not to groan loudly over the phone, his voice breathless reaching up to take his sunglasses off and dropping them beside him. “Yeah, yeah bye Alex.”

He pushed the button and dropped the phone like his hand had gone dead, reaching forward to dig his fingers into Harley's hair. She grinned around him sucking long and hard before bobbing her head as Jack let out a loud and long groan. She grabbed him with both hands while she rolled her tongue over the head of his erection, using her grip to jerk her hands up and down while she licked and sucked on the head his erection until Jack was nearly whimpering with the effort of not releasing right then.

Jack growled. “Get up here Harley.”

Harley giggled letting go of him, stood up while she licked her lips, looking coy and cute at the same...
time. She pulled her dress up and straddled his lap, adjusting him so that she could slide down as she settled on his lap.

“Mmm...My puddin...” Harley hissed in pleasure.

Jack reached under the short skirt to grab her rear, squeezing as he grinned up at her beautiful face. Harley giggled. “What did Alex want?” she asked as she started to grind, spreading her bent legs further apart, her hands grabbing the back of the couch on either side of Jack’s head.

Jack groaned, the warm wetness of her surrounding him after all the sucking almost set him off, but he managed to keep himself in control, reaching down between them to play with her.

“Alex...grrrr...God Harley...fuck me Harley...yes. Alex just wanted to tell me what was up with... uuhh...Troy and Tiffany...damn it Harley...” Jack struggled to speak around his panting, Harley's thrusts and grinding sent shudders up from his groin to spread through his body like lava.

Harley was starting to pant while Jack's thumb rolled slowly over her clitoris, pressing down and circling causing her groin to tighten with building need. Jack hissed as he continued to talk.

“Uhhaaah...Jack...yes...grr...harder...” Harley groaned.

“Troy is awake...ahh...not talking...Tiffany...shit...Tiffany is in jail...God uuhh...” Jack panted his eyelids lowered to slits watching her.

Harley groaned, arching her back as her orgasm made cry aloud. “Ooooo puddin!! UUHH!!”

She held onto the back of the couch, but leaned dangerously far back, while Jack removed his thumb from her clitoris to grab her hips and yank her closer. She continued to fuck him hard, her pleasure rippling through her and building again. Jack's hands traced up her back gazing at her. Harley licked her lips smiling down at him while she used the leverage of the back of the couch to bounce her hips. She could feel Jack coming close to climax while her second one started to build. She let go of the couch and wrapped her arms around his neck, attacking his mouth, her tongue dancing with his at the same moment that Jack wrapped his arms around her waist, holding her tight while she bounced.

At the same moment, they climaxed together, their cries muffled against each others mouths.

They had moved to the back of the jet where Harley hadn't noticed the wall that divided the very back of the jet from where they had entered. Here there was a king size bed with crispy white cotton sheets and a black comforter, a bedside table and another flat screen TV. Jack was sitting up against the pillows with Harley's head against his chest, both of them naked, with their clothing still in the main area draped across the couch. Jack lazily stroked his fingers through her thick, soft hair and smiled happily. Cindy had brought them fresh drinks along with a large banana split she had made them. Seeing the two of them naked in bed, their clothing tossed around the living room area of the cabin hadn't caused her to blink an eye at all.

Jack was watching 'Public Enemy' with James Cagney. Harley was only half watching the movie, her mind was going over what had happened between Bruce and Jack. Harleen had been whispering to her to talk to him. She didn't want to listen to Harleen on general principle, but she was correct...Jack needed to sort out his feelings about his brother.

“Jack, can I ask you a question?” Harley inquired softly.

Jack frowned as he grabbed the remote and paused the movie. “Sure thing Harley-girl—what's up?”
Harley sat up, holding the sheet up against her chest. Jack chuckled. “Uh-oh, that's a serious expression. What did I do?”

Harley smiled. “I just...I'm worried about you. That fight you and Bruce had...”

Jack’s face turned dark, like a cloud had passed over hiding the sunlight. Harley pressed her lips together feeling a small spike of fear that she might have crossed a line by asking, but in the next instant the cloud was gone. Jack smiled, reached for her and pulled her back against him. She breathed a sigh of relief and settled back with her head against his chest, listening to the steady rhythm of his heart.

“I need a cigarette,” Jack muttered. He startled her by hopping up out of the bed and wandering naked back to the living room area. She frowned, sitting back up. She could hear him rummaging around. Soon he returned with a pack of cigarettes, one unlit one in his mouth and his lighter in his hand. He crawled back into the bed with her, pulling her back into place before he lit the cigarette and took a long drag on it. He sighed then chuckled. “Bruce would hate to know I'm smoking in one of his precious jets. I mean technically they belong to the Wayne family or Wayne Enterprises, but since this is one of the first times I've ever used one I know he sees them as mostly belonging to him.” Jack chuckled again.

Harley was quiet for a heartbeat before she asked again. “What happened between you and Bruce?”

Jack snorted. “You mean besides our parents being murdered in front of us?”

Harley was quiet as she wrapped her arm around his waist. Jack sighed taking another pull on the cigarette. “When our parents died, Bruce changed. He wasn't my brother anymore.”

“What was he?” Harley/Harleen asked.

“I don't know...but he wasn't the brother I needed. I was scared. My parents were suddenly gone, but I didn't have a big brother to protect me either. Bruce became distant...like he had shut himself off not just from the murder of our parents, but from me. I was weak and scared and wanted my big brother to make everything all right, but Bruce wasn't there for me.” Jack sighed taking a long pull on the cigarette, holding it before he slowly let the smoke drift out from between his lips.

“Bruce...he became stern and unyielding. He was all about the rules, the laws...fuck, that was all he seemed to care about! I guess that's why he started to dislike me so much. I didn't conform. I liked to lash out against conformity, the bonds, while Bruce liked to work within the rules. I don't know. Bruce just—he became focused so much that he had no room to deal with his emotionally unstable little brother,” Jack muttered.

“I was scared. My parents were gone...I had nightmares for as long as I could remember after that...” Jack laughed. “I haven't had any since you came into my life...odd...” Jack mused as if he only just realized this strange occurrence.

He took a pull on the cigarette and blew the smoke out through his nostrils. “The nightmares had started to fade some when I began my experiments. Watching people die,” he shrugged. “It quieted them...when I realized there was no meaning to anything in life, everything is chaos, everything that happens to us...there is no control! You just have to enjoy what you have. Then you came along...and it was like a light had been turned on...a partner in the silly game of life where the punchline is we all die in the end...someone who understood there was no point to it...there is no justice...” Jack's voice trailed off again. Harley glanced up to see that Jack was staring off into nothing. She frowned, but then just as quickly he came back to himself.
“We just need to enjoy the moment...” Jack chuckled. He seemed surprised by this notion before he pressed a kiss to the top of her head. “But Brucie? Oh, Brucie thinks there’s some sort of ultimate good out there...he believes in all that shit, law and order. Guess we just...I don't know...part of me still loves my brother, part of me hates him...hates how he sees me, hates how he is always looking to do good for others, but he was never there to help me. He...just...” Jack took a breath as he pondered. “He doesn't see me...except as his weak, mentally fragile little brother who hits first instead of thinking...I guess he gave up on me a long time ago.” Jack frowned looking confused for a moment before he stuck the cigarette back between his lips, his eyes looking haunted as if there was something there he wasn't willing to think about. Harley stroked her fingers along his stomach. She could feel the tension in him, but her touch seemed to relax him.

“You know what hurts the most Harley? Bruce is always donating money to this charity or that charity, trying to help everyone less fortunate than us. He sponsors clubs for kids and events...you name it, if it's good for Gotham, Bruce has donated time or money to it. But he never could see there was someone right in front of him who needed his help too.” Jack angrily ran the back of a hand across his face banishing the tears that threatened to fall. He leaned over and smashed the cigarette angrily right into the top of the bedside table, burning a hole into the finish. Jack hated that it still hurt after all this time...part of him knew what he did, the violence, the murder, was a cry for help, but the other part of him was angry with himself that after all this time, he was still looking for Bruce to save him, when he knew his big brother couldn't save him...or maybe it was that Bruce simply wouldn't. Jack couldn't save himself, maybe Bruce was focused on saving himself...maybe that was for the best. Jack smiled—he was beyond saving.

Jack took a deep breath, swallowing his pain and the tears. Instead of letting the tears take him, he squeezed Harley against his side taking comfort in knowing he now had someone who was on his side, no matter what happened. Harley saw his darkness and unlike his brother, she didn't turn away from him, didn't see him as unworthy of love. Harley loved him despite the darkness in him, despite the wretched creature he was... she had simply thrown herself around him. Jack closed his eyes on the tears. Harley loved him and he loved her. But it was more than simply love. There wasn't a word he could think of that could embrace the way he felt about her. Harley was everything to him.

Harley felt the struggle within Jack as he wrestled with his emotions for a few moments. She held on tight to him, planting tender kisses on his chest until his breathing calmed.

Jack continued. “Anyway. We just started to grow apart...” Jack laughed. “Cliché. Siblings living under the same roof who know nothing about each other. But the more I acted out, the more Bruce wanted nothing to do with me. I don't know...I was too chaotic for him I suppose. He could never understand how I was reacting...I guess he expected me to act like him since we're brothers.” Jack shrugged then frowned. “Hey! Enough of Bruce! This is our little vacation away from Gotham. Let's enjoy it.”

Harley squeezed her arm tight around his stomach. She was frowning slightly as she sat up, took Jack's face between her hands and stared into his eyes. “Jack. I love you. Never forget that I'm in love with you, all of you.”

Jack stared back at her, a small tender smile on his face. “I'm in love with you too Harley. Deeply and forever. Nothing in this world or the next is going to keep me from you.”

Harley smiled stroking her thumbs along his cheeks then she kissed him. Jack smiled wider and wrapped his arms around her, dropping and scooting down on the pillows taking her with him as they both started to giggle.
By the time they landed in San Francisco, California, Harley and Jack were dressed again in their matching white outfits. They both looked dramatic walking off the plane, sunglasses on, hand in the hand. The first thing that Harley noticed on exiting the plane, was the difference in the temperature. Where Gotham was still fairly warm, San Francisco was a few degrees cooler. The next thing she noticed was that there was a car waiting for them, a black Mercedes S550 sedan to be exact, (the only reason she knew what kind of car it was, was because of her growing knowledge of the Wayne fleet of vehicles.)

Jack had his arm around her waist and grinned at Harley as they walked swiftly toward the parked vehicle and gestured with his free hand as he spoke.

“Wayne Enterprise has offices all over the world with their fingers in everything you can think of! So the Wayne name is everywhere. And that means I have access to cars wherever I am. Though this is the first time I really put it to the test.” Jack laughed. “Bruce is the one who travels—me, I tend to like Gotham, never really cared to travel until now...with you, but this is going to be fun!”

Jack turned Harley around in his arms, grabbing her hand and danced with her to the car, the two of them laughing as they spun toward the back of the vehicle.

* 

Their first stop was the hotel to check in. The car pulled up in front of the hotel while Harley was nearly plastered to the window. It was a gorgeous hotel. The building was a postmodern highrise that reminded Harley of a fancy jukebox. The driver had remained silent most of the ride and didn't laugh at Jack's joke: There is a theory that sooner or later anything in America that is any fun at all will be ruined by people from California! Harley had found it hilarious, the driver had only grunted.

Holding hands, their fingers threaded together, Jack and Harley stepped into the hotel lobby, a wide, softly lit area that was all warm colors; beige, deep orange reds, with beige and brown marble floors. The check-in counter was a long, soft brown marble that Jack strolled up to and stopped, leaning his chin on his free hand waiting until the young woman behind the counter noticed him. He grinned brightly, a lock of his hair falling forward, curling around his forehead seductively, making Harley's fingers itch to reach up and brush it back into place.

The young woman at the counter's eyes widened when she looked up from her computer and saw Jack watching her. The young woman's first thought was that she had never seen eyes so beautiful, but then the rest of him was devastatingly handsome. Harley could almost see the thoughts in the other woman's head as they came to her, which only made Harley hate the other woman with a passion, though Harley couldn't blame her. Jack was a damn good looking man; but if she didn't shut her mouth and check them in soon, Harley was going to reach across the counter and tear her throat out. Harleen's voice whispered to her. You would kill her for staring at your Jack? Isn't that a little extreme Harley?

Harley glanced at Jack while she mentally responded. “Shut up Harleen, if I want your opinion I'll ask for it!

I think you should think about why your reaction is so violent Harley. What does that say about you? And if it wasn't for Jack, would you react this way? Harleen asked softly.

Harley snarled in her mind. “No one is like Jack, no one...he is. You just don't understand...besides, I like the violence, so shut it Harleen!

*
Jack smiled wider when the young woman continued to stare at him. His smile never faltered as he leaned on his elbow, leaning over, his eyes reading her name tag, a gold tag that was displayed prominently over her left breast, pinned to her white shirt.

Jack lifted his brows at her. “So, Lisa, can you check us in or are you trying to catch flies?”

Lisa, who’s mouth had fallen open, her eyes wide as she continued to stare at Jack, snapped her mouth shut and blushed. “Ah, yes, how can I help you? I mean, name please?”

Jack grinned. “Jack Wayne.”

Lisa brushed a lock of thick brown hair from her face, blushing prettily and glanced at Jack, tittering a little as her fingers worked over the computer keys. (Clearly Lisa was only aware of Jack. She gave no indication that she noticed Harley was standing there.)

Lisa giggled again, her eyes giving Jack a flirty ‘come hither’ look as gazed up at him through her lashes, her fingers flying quickly over the keys. “Oh yes Jack Wayne, you called us this morning. You have a room on the our 38th floor, one of our suites with a fantastic city view Mr. Wayne.”

Lisa smiled gazing up at him like a love sick puppy.

* *

Harley’s lip curled. In her mind Harleen whispered. “I would call this a case of possessive disorder…”

Mentally Harley snarled. “Shut the fuck up Harleen!”

She may have to teach Lisa a lesson…a fatal lesson if she didn't lighten up soon with the swooning at her fiance! Harley grinned. She could hear Harleen protesting, but her voice was becoming more and more distant while Harley ignored her.

* *

Lisa stood and gazed over the counter, looking right through Harley while she examined the floor. “No luggage Mr. Wayne?” she asked looking up and smiling prettily at him.

Jack laughed. “Nope, but we're planning on shopping while we're here.”

Lisa giggled. “Oh how fun Mr. Wayne. There are so many fabulous places to shop here in San Francisco. If you need any help feel free to ask.”

Harley narrowed her eyes.

Lisa turned away, her back to them while she opened a locked cabinet behind the counter where she pulled out a key card (But Harley noticed the little bitch was still completely blind to Harley standing RIGHT BESIDE JACK. Lisa even had the audacity to wiggle her hips in her tight skirt, a little too much. Harley narrowed her eyes to angry slits.)

Lisa turned back around and handed Jack the card.

“This is your key card, don’t lose it.” She giggled smiling at him. “And I just need you to sign our register.”

Lisa directed Jack's attention to a large open book on the counter. Jack laughed. “Oh that's so quaint! I love it!” He took the key card, then wrapped his arm around Harley's waist, pulling her close so
that they could both look at the book at the same time.

“Shall I go first?” Jack asked smiling at Harley.

Harley was still annoyed with Lisa though Jack seemed completely obvious (just like with Meg).

“Yes, you go first.” Harley growled just a little.

Jack frowned gazing at her for a moment before he shrugged and signed the book then handed the pen to Harley. Harley sighed and signed her name 'Harley Quinn' next to Jack's. Jack chuckled.

“Soon to be Harley Wayne.” He pressed a kiss to her cheek.

Lisa amazingly still seemed to find Harley invisible, turned the book around again and grinned.

“Now if you need anything at all Mr. Wayne, don't hesitate to call. And please feel free to ask for me by name, Lisa. I will do everything in my power to make your stay with us a pleasant one. Anything at all.” Lisa emphasized that last three words.

Harley's hands formed into fists and she started to say something, but Jack had put his arm around her waist and cheerfully led her toward the elevators. Harley shot a look over her shoulder at Lisa only to find Lisa watching Jack's ass. Harley growled.

Jack glanced sideways at her. “You okay angel?”

Harley frowned. “Yeah, I'm...I'm fine.”

They entered the elevator. This elevator was the kind that had the transparent back to allow the rider to have a view of the city while the elevator took them up to their rooms. The doors closed cutting them off from the world, and Lisa, for a few moments. Jack reached around Harley, hitting the button for their floor, but in the next moment, Jack grabbed her by the waist, twisting Harley around to press her up against the back of the elevator where anyone looking up could see them. Jack crushed his mouth against hers within seconds, his hands moving greedily down her body. Harley's ire was forgotten.

Her attention was drawn instead to the sweet sensation of Jack's tongue in her mouth and his hands yanking the skirt of her dress up just to run his hands under her panties and squeeze her rear.

“Don't you worry about anyone else Harley.” Jack purred against her mouth. “But you can take care of her before we leave if you want to, my jealous little minx.” Jack laughed which earned him a giggle from Harley.

“Really?”

Jack purred. “Anything you want baby. You are my only girl, ever.” Jack's fingers squeezed.

Before Harley could respond, Jack yanked her panties down, dropping them to the elevator floor. Harley smiled and dropped her hands between them, working the button of his slacks, their mouths hungrily kissing each other to the sound of his zipper being pushed down. Jack lifted her up, his teeth gliding over her lips, biting her jaw then back to her mouth while he lifted her up, hooking his arms under her legs. Jack dragged his tongue along her cheek, caressed her jaw and down her neck causing Harley to groan. Harley's groan turned into a gasp when Jack thrust into her, holding her up against the glass wall of the elevator, riding her and the elevator up to their room.

* 

When the elevator chimed at their floor, their were both all smiles, holding hands, (Harley with her
panties dangling from her other hand) as Jack led the way to their room. “Ah, here we are!” Jack slid the card into the lock; the little light turned green releasing the door. Jack grabbed Harley, yanking her up into his arms and kicked the door open carrying her inside while she laughed.

The room was spacious with a queen size bed in the middle and one whole wall was a window looking out onto the San Francisco skyline. The sky was beginning to turn a bright, clear blue with a few clouds rolling in. Someone had opened the curtains showing off the impressive view and laid the bed back with chocolates on each of the pillows. There was a large flat screen TV, on the wall opposite the bed. The walls themselves alternated between shiny wood paneling, along with sections that were painted a warm golden beige. The floor was laid with a thick plush carpet in complimentary colors. There was a lounge area with two plush chairs in deep rich browns with a round table set nearby, decorated with a vase of fresh flowers.

The bathroom was its own separate room where the color scheme continued with a large whirlpool tub, more than big enough for the two of them, a separate shower with multiple shower heads so that water could spray from nearly any angle, one wall which was all mirror and double marble sinks. The hotel had provided several candles throughout the bathroom.

Jack grinned like a child. “So, do you like it?”

“Oh Jack, this is fabulous!” Harley laughed.

Jack grinned. “Well, Wayne Enterprises has a personal shopper on staff, I'm going to give them a call and have a couple of new outfits brought up while we shower. Then how about we grab something to eat upstairs at the lounge before we go shopping!”

Harley immediately started to strip when Jack laid on his stomach across the bed with his phone, dialing up the local Wayne offices. While he was on hold, he leaned across the bed, hanging over to watch Harley moving around the bathroom naked, filling the tub with water, squealing when she found bubble bath in the cabinet, then watching her step into the tub. He lost sight of her, but he heard her call.

“Hurry up Jack!”

Jack chuckled standing up, beginning to strip while on the phone. “Yes, this is Jack Wayne...I need someone to bring me two sets of clothes...”

*

The sky was just beginning to turn a delightful shade of sky blue pink as evening approached when Jack and Harley returned. Most of their packages had already been delivered to the hotel ahead of their return. There were packages everywhere, stacked neatly along the wall, on the table and some on the bed. There was also a brand new set of luggage set on the floor near the window.

Harley flopped onto the bed, kicking off the booties she was wearing with the black and white linen swing dress, her blonde hair piled into a loose bun at the base of her neck with two hair sticks. She pulled the sticks out to let her hair fall loose down her back. Jack kicked the door closed, carrying the last of their packages with him, grinning as he danced into the room.

“The concert doesn't start for another couple of hours, plenty of time for room service.” Jack set the packages on the floor and stepped over to flop down next to her. Harley grinned wrapping her arms around him and yanking him down with her on the bed causing a few of the boxes and bags that had been balanced on the mattress to fall to the floor.
Harley giggled wrapping herself around him. “So who is at this concert again?”

Jack rolled onto his back taking Harley with him laughing. “Let's see, not sure who is on tonight, it does run over the next few days, but we have, Metallica, the Who, Gorillaz, A Tribe Called Quest, Lana del Ray, St. Vincent...there's a bunch more, but I can't remember...all I know is we are going to have some fun. Now. You figure out what you're going to wear and I am going to order us room service and then we can paint each others nails. Then we can figure out the best make-up.”

Harley giggled licking the tip of his nose whispering. “I love putting make-up on you...especially lipstick.”

Jack smiled. “Mm...You like kissing it off of me.”

Harley giggled. “Guilty as charged puddin.”

*  

Back in Gotham, Bruce had returned home from his night of trying to keep the streets of Gotham safe, his mood dark. He still felt the fight with Jack brewing down deep in his chest like a chaotic twisting mass. Jack just always managed to bring out the worst in him, Bruce thought. But he also knew that Jack had been correct...if it had been Harley trying to steal from him, he wouldn't have hesitated to call the police. Bruce grabbed the cowl, yanked it off of his head and threw it across the room where it slapped against the computers he kept down here in his 'Batcave'. Why couldn't he and Jack find each other again. They had been so close before their parents murder...but after...it was as if their parents' death had created a wedge between them instead of bringing them together, as if more than their parents had died that night.

Bruce wondered if he had brought Jack in...told him about his vow, his plans, what he did...maybe...But it was too late now Bruce thought to himself. Too late to change. When he had gone out that night, Bruce had told himself he was not looking for Selina, but he had been searching for her, hoping that he might catch a glimpse. He had gone to her apartment...rather he had crouched on top of the building across from her apartment. But the place had remained dark. He had waited an hour before he had slipped into the apartment building only to find the apartment was intact, though all of Selina's clothes were missing...that was when he realized that this hadn't really been her place. As he had studied it, he realized there was nothing of Selina here. He had been so blind...

Bruce walked over to the computer chair and flopped down. Tonight he had probably used more force than necessary to put down a few muggers, a couple of thieves and one potential rapist. One of them he left with a broken leg, the other had several cracked ribs, one man he was sure had two broken orbitals along with his nose, and the last one, he had dislocated his jaw, broke his arm and if he ever walked straight again Bruce would be surprised. Nothing that they couldn't live through, but it had been more force than was necessary. Bruce had come close to crossing the line with the rapist. Bruce took a deep breath—he could utilize violence against criminals, but he could not become an executioner.

“Sir, I brought you some dinner.”

Bruce looked up startled to see Alfred standing there with a tray. Bruce leapt to his feet, his fist raised before he had realized what he was doing. “I didn't hear you,” Bruce muttered

“Well I'm glad I was over here when I spoke.” Alfred eyed Bruce's raised fist. Bruce looked embarrassed and lowered his arm. “Sorry,” he said softly.

Alfred stepped the rest of the way into the cave carrying the tray which he set in front of Bruce. “I
brought you a glass of milk and a peanut butter and jelly with grape jam sir, just as you liked it as a child.” Alfred took a step back.

Bruce chuckled when he looked down at the sandwich, cut at a diagonal just as he liked it as a kid, some ruffled potato chips and a large glass of white milk. The meal of vigilantes everywhere...“Thanks Alfred.”

“You are welcome Master Bruce. I also wanted to tell you that Master Jack will be gone for a few days along with Dr. Quinzel.” Alfred had put his hands behind his back when he spoke.

Bruce frowned, he had just picked up half of the sandwich when he turned a shocked expression on Alfred. “What do you mean he's gone? Where?”

“He took one of the jets to San Francisco,” Alfred said evenly.

Bruce stood up. “WHAT?”

Alfred leveled a steady stare at Bruce. “He and Dr. Quinzel are in San Francisco for the next few days Master Bruce.”

Bruce snarled. “That's it—I'm bringing him back...” Bruce started to walk past Alfred, but was shocked when Alfred put a hand on his shoulder.

“Master Bruce, Master Jack is a grown man. You cannot fly off and fetch him home like a unruly boy.”

“But.. Alfred, he's unstable...he...” Bruce frowned, but Alfred just 'looked' at him.

“Master Jack no longer has to ask permission to leave Master Bruce and I might add, you haven't been able to control his actions in a long time, nor have you had him declared 'unstable.' Perhaps trying to control your brother is why there is such tension between the two of you? And while I know Dr. Quinzel was hired to help your brother as his doctor, maybe she is doing more to help him with their close relationship?”

Bruce sighed and sat back down, his brow was furrowed.

Alfred tilted his head studying Bruce. “I'm assuming there was no sign of Miss Kyle while you were out tonight.”

“No.” Bruce picked up his milk taking a sip.

“I'm sorry to hear that Master Bruce.” Alfred said quietly. He frowned wanting to say something else but instead he turned to leave stopping long enough to turn and say. “Please gets some rest Master Bruce.”

*

Later, Harley sat wearing only her panties and bra, showing off the new tattoo she had received that afternoon on her side, the letter 'J ' done in Gothic lettering. The tattoo also consisted of curving lines that seemed to suddenly end. Jack was sitting across from her, wearing only his silk purple boxers; on his side was a letter 'H' in the same style of lettering as Harley's 'J' along with the same curving lines on his side that seemed to end in nothing. But they had designed the tattoo so that when they stood back to the back the lines connected, Jack had called it their line of fate...they were fated to be together. The tattoos still looked red and raw since they had just received them a few hours earlier. Harley reached over to grab a baby carrot from the salad that was sitting on the table next to the bed.
where she and Jack sat, the contents of her makeup bag scattered over the bed. She popped the carrot into her mouth, crunching it between her teeth before she leaned forward with the eyeliner, her hand steady as she traced out Jack's eyes. She smiled while she worked. Jack was looking up at the ceiling, his lips slightly open while Harley worked on his eyes. Harley was careful, but she enjoyed studying the deep blue of his eyes. There was such depth to them, and such shadows. She could see them lurking in his eyes like living creatures flowing through his soul. She licked her lips wanting to kiss his mouth, to feel his lips on her, moving across her body; his soft, fine lips.

Harley finished with his eyes and sat back. Jack closed his eyes rolling them under his lids for a moment before he opened them and focused on her with a grin.

“My turn!” Jack laughed taking the eyeliner from her.

Harley smiled sitting still and leaning forward a little while Jack began to work on her eyes.

“Have you ever been to a concert before?” Harley asked, her eyes closed while Jack traced her eyes.

“Mm...once in Gotham. I was seventeen and the band was Tool. I went because Bruce had told me no. He didn't like them, too violent he said.” Jack chuckled as he worked carefully. He reached up and lightly held his finger over her eyebrow, pulling the skin just a little while he worked. “I bought my way in at the last minute. Snuck out of the manor and stole a car. It was fun...violent. You should have seen me then. My hair was past my shoulders.” Jack laughed as he slowly eased the eyeliner under her eyes.

“I can't imagine you with long hair.” Harley giggled, opening her eyes just slightly to steal a glance at Jack before he started to work on her other eye.

Jack grinned. “Yep, long hair, holes in my jeans, black t-shirts, black leather jacket, motorcycle boots...the whole nine yards. Man did I piss Bruce off then, even more than now if you can imagine!” He chuckled lightly, his fingers delicate against her eyes.

“What were you like when you were seventeen?” Jack asked removing his hand and the pencil. Harley blinked her eyes a few times before focusing on him. “Me? I was boring really. I mean, I wore a lot of pink, but I listened to loud music which got me grounded or smacked, a lot.”

Jack snorted. “I bet you looked so cute!” He smiled, but his features darkened slightly. “I'm glad I killed your step-father because if I hadn't, I would be going to kill him again.” Jack growled then seemed to shake himself from his darker thoughts.

“Would you have gone out with me?” he asked picking up a tube of lipstick and catching her chin with the tips of his fingers. He slowly started to trace her lips in the deep red color of the lipstick.

Harley’s eyes were on him as he worked, watching the intent way his eyes followed the color across her lips. “Yes, yes I would have,” Harley said softly when he finished.

Jack’s eyes looked up to meet hers as he whispered, “I would have made you mine then too.”

They stared at each other, lost in each others eyes until Harley reached up and took the lipstick from him. “My turn,” she said softly.

Jack smiled holding his lips slightly parted, allowing Harley to slowly trace them with the red lipstick. “You have beautiful lips Jack,” Harley said softly.

Jack chuckled. “Thank you Miss Quinn...all the better to kiss you with.”
Harley giggled. “You have a nice tongue Jack.”

“All the better to lick you with...” Jack purred

She giggled again and blushed softly. “Better start on your nails or we won't be ready in time.”

Jack wrinkled his nose at her. “You're right. I'll just ravage you when we get back.”

“That better be a promise.” Harley grinned pulling out bottles of nail polish from her bag.

“Oh it is.” Jack crossed his heart with a giggle.

* 

Soon they were in a SMW Z4 that Jack had rented, headed toward the concert. It was a large outdoor affair at the Golden Gate Park. They pulled up in front of the VIP entrance where a young man came running out in a uniform to take the vehicle and park it for them after Jack tossed him the keys. The VIP entrance (which Jack had been able to get tickets for despite the lateness of the date...as Jack had told Harley, the Wayne name and money tossed here and there could get a LOT done in a short period of time) included a VIP hospitality area and viewing area for the concerts, though Jack said they were going to mix with the regular crowd because that was where all the energy was going to be. With his dark brown hair slicked back, Jack wore a pair of black jeans, cut to accentuate his long legs, a pair of black and white Vans, with a black enfants riches déprimés t-shirt and a purple and black checked button down shirt over the top and his Gucci aviators on.

Harley had her long blonde hair down, loose and wavy around her shoulders. She had on a pair of black thigh high socks, with a pair of black and white sneakers. She also wore a pair of extreme cut-off denim shorts that highlighted the length of her legs and the shape of her rear. They were too short for her to wear panties with, so at the last minute (and to Jack's delight) she had removed her panties leaving them at the hotel. She had on a red, ribbed knit, crew neckline, wrap design crop top and a black leather jacket with fringe along the arms. She was wearing a new pair of large cat eye sunglasses. As they walked through the gate heading over to pick up their wrists bands for the VIP area, the two of them drew a great deal of attention. The press (which was there to snap photos of celebrities and the wealthy) made sure to take several shots of the two of them without knowing who they were until one of the reporters, a blonde woman yelled out. “Julie Greer for KN News! Who are you two?”

Jack laughed taking off his glasses. “Jack Wayne and this is my fiancee Harley Quinn.”

Greer's eyes lit up. “As in Bruce Wayne's reclusive brother?”

Jack snorted. “Yep, that's me, the recluse weirdo of the Wayne family!” He laughed grabbing Harley around the waist and guided her past the paparizzi and into the VIP area waving over his shoulder. “I'm going to go be reclusive in here!!”

Greer was beaming. “Oh...get me everything on Jack Wayne! I want to know it all.”

Her cameraman who had been snapping photos frowned. “Why?”

“There's a story there, I can smell it.”

* 

Jack and Harley could hear the sounds of music playing though the main attraction at the centerstage hadn't started yet. A group called Fleet Foxes was playing a song titled 'Mykonos' to a smaller crowd
of listeners.

As they stepped out of the VIP area Harley realized just how huge this park was, with several different places to buy food, drink, vendors selling jewelry, art and any number of other things. And the people! There were people milling about everywhere, wearing a wild variety of fashions.

With his arm around her waist, Jack led Harley walking toward a large tented area.

“Let's go get a little drunk.” Jack laughed leading her through the crowds over where there was a large covered area under which several tables were set up, each representing a different local winery.

* 

By the time the main concert for the evening started, Harley was slightly tipsy—though not so badly that she thought she might fall asleep, just enough to make her horny as hell. Jack didn't seem to be affected at all by how much wine they had tried, but he was perfectly happy to have her hanging all over him. Harley had her arms resting around his shoulders, her fingers lightly interlocked, her hips pressed snuggly against his as she swayed back and forth to the song 'If You Need to Keep Time on Me' as the Fleet Foxes played their last song.

Jack smiled watching her, swaying along with her, his hands sliding up and down her sides gently before wrapping around to grab her rear, pressing her closer. Harley giggled softly, brushing her nose against his, then her lips. Jack licked her mouth tasting the lipstick and the wine on her tongue when her tongue brushed his tenderly.

“Mm...My baby...” He purred.

“Jack, will you be mine forever?” Harley asked softly before she brushed her lips against his for a tender kiss.

“Yes Harley. Nothing in this world can tear us apart. Nothing in this world is strong enough to come between us. Our love is stronger than anything.” Jack spoke with conviction, wrapping his arms tight around her waist. “Don't you worry pumpkin, I'll kill anything that tries to get between us.”

Harley giggled softly, but then Jack lifted her off her feet and swung her around making her laugh just before she covered his mouth with hers, cradling his head, kissing him as if her life depended on his breath.

* 

Soon the main event for this night started. Metallica took the stage and Jack and Harley became swept up in the music along with everyone else. The crowd was full of energy as night fell and the lights came on, the air cooling, but the press and amount of bodies kept everyone warm.

Jack kept a hand on Harley, whether brushing against her side, touching her lower back or hooking a finger through the loop of her shorts, always touching her as if he were afraid of losing her in the crowd, or of someone taking her...(He had no intention of being caught unawares again.)

Harley was careful to stay close to Jack, never straying even when she was jumping up and down to the music; she stayed close enough that she would bump Jack. He would laugh and grab her hips, jumping with her as he held on to her.

Near the end of the show, the group performed their last song of the night, 'The Unforgiven.'

Jack leaned in, yelling so Harley could hear him. “I love this song!”
Harley turned into Jack as he wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her close, singing the last half of the song under his breath. They swayed together, their foreheads pressed together.

“...What I've felt,
What I've known
Never shined through in what I've shown.
Never free.
Never me.
So I dub thee unforgiven.
You labelled me,
I'll label you.
So I dub thee unforgiven...”

Jack lifted her up. Harley's arms wrapped around his neck, her legs wrapped tight around his waist. She laid her head against his shoulder. Jack started carrying her toward the VIP section. The crowd was still engrossed in the song so it was easy to make their way over to the other side of the concert grounds. Jack spoke into her ear. “Let's go back to the room. I want to make love to you again.” He brushed his lips against her cheek.

Harley purred softly nuzzling against his neck. “Mm...Jack.”

They didn't make it out to their car before the crowd started to slowly flow from the park like water, everyone looking for their rides, or walking home. It was crazy busy with people everywhere. There were still paprazzi trying to grab pictures of celebrities leaving the VIP area so there was flashing lights, as well as fans milling about holding out for a glance, photo or autograph of their favorite celebrity.

Jack grumbled and dropped Harley delicately to her feet, though he was careful to keep a hand on her, and they started to make their way to the VIP parking attendants who were clearly becoming overwhelmed by everyone leaving at once, retrieving cars and trying to avoid getting slammed by bodyguards and other security people. Jack saw the kid who had parked their car.

“Harley, hop on.” Jack turned his back to her holding his hands back, clearly wanting her to jump on his back for a piggyback ride. She frowned in confusion, but did as he asked, wrapping her arms loosely around his neck as he grabbed her legs, hefting him up so she could wrap them more securely around his waist, then with a huge grin, Jack muscled his way toward the valets.

Jack yelled, waving a hand to get the kid's attention. “Hey, over here!”

The valet looked up. “Sir if you will get in line...”

Jack shook his head. “Just toss me the keys. I'll get the car myself.”
The kid looked relieved. It only took him a couple of seconds to find the keys before he threw them over the heads of the crowd. Jack, holding Harley with one hand did a little jump and caught the keys out of the air.

Jack yelled back. “Where's it parked?”

The kid shouted back. “Red 10!”

The kid waved at him and Jack laughed, waving back before he headed out of the VIP area.

* *

Jack frowned when they wandered into the parking lot. The VIP lot was right up against the regular parking lot, so people were cutting through this one to get to the other. Jack noticed there were poles out here marked with colors and numbers, so following that to the car shouldn't be too difficult, but it was a little a challenge with all the people milling around and the lighting here wasn't as good as it could have been, leaving dark pools of shadows every so many feet. There were security personnel here and there throughout the lot, some on foot and others driving golf carts doing their best to control the chaos (which was why most people in the VIP area were content to wait for their vehicles to be brought to them) but there simply weren't enough of them.

Jack set Harley down on her feet and put his arms around Harley's waist, his fingers through the loops of her shorts so that he wouldn't lose her, when he finally spotted the car.

“There we are! Finally!” Jack growled making his way over to the vehicle. He stopped at Harley's side of the car, bending over to put the key in the door when he heard Harley yelp. Jack's reaction was so quick that neither the man that he grabbed, nor Harley, saw Jack move until Jack had shoved the guy up against the car door, his hand on the man's chest holding him in place. Jack's face was right up in front of the other man's, their noses nearly touching as Jack smiled.

“Boo,” Jack hissed.

The man was about five feet ten inches, skinny with a long brown beard and long brown hair pulled up in a man bun wearing jeans with holes in the knees and a plaid shirt that made Harley think “cult leader” chic. Jack grinned holding the guy against the car; no one paid any attention to them.

“So what do you think you're doing?” Jack smiled, though the pleasant way he spoke was not reflected in his eyes.

“Hey man I wasn't doing anything! I just bumped into her, that was all man.” The guy put his hands up his eyes darting back and forth between them.

“Hey man I wasn't doing anything! I just bumped into her, that was all man.” The guy put his hands up his eyes darting back and forth between them.

Jack smiled, glancing at Harley. “Is that what happened sweets?”

“I think he was trying to take my wallet.” Harley patted her back pocket where she had slipped her wallet before leaving so she would not be encumbered by a purse. Jack's eyes darted back to the man. “Pickpocketing eh?”

The man stared wide-eyed at Jack and started to bolt, but Jack shoved him back in place. “Oh now, I don't think you're going to go anywhere. I mean, you clearly think you need someone else's money. How about this, you come with us and maybe we'll show you a good time, eh? Have some fun, get some drinks? Whataya say?”

Jack smiled again. Harley could see it, the smile didn't reach Jack's eyes, but she saw something else, the shadows behind the vivid blue stirring.
She grinned, immediately in sync with her Jack. “Sure, come on, we can get a couple of drinks, it'll be fun!”

The guy turned to look at Harley then back at Jack. Harley thought the man must clearly be an imbecile because his next words sealed his fate. “Uh...sure man, I'm into some freaky shit.”

Jack laughed softly. “I bet you are. Well, come on friend, you can ride with us.” Jack released him reaching around the man to open the door. “What's your name friend?” Jack asked as the man slipped into the back.

“Oh, hey man, I'm Jason.” The man grinned at them both.

Jack smiled his false smile. “Nice to meet you Jason.” Jack glanced up at Harley grinning. “Ready to have some more fun baby?”

Harley giggled. “Of course puddin.”

Jack held the door open for her and as she slipped into the car, taking the seat in front of Jason, Jack smacked her rear making her giggle before he closed the door.

“Yeah, let's go have some fun. Teach our new friend Jason a little lesson,” Jack said softly to himself as he walked around the car opening the driver side door and slipped inside.
Jason drummed his fingers nervously on his knees, fidgeting in the backseat. He kept looking between the two people up front, wishing they had something to drink or a hit of something to take the edge off until they made it to a party or their place. He was pretty excited; rich people always had the best shit and were some of the kinkiest motherfuckyers he ever came across. He couldn't believe his good luck, that a pickpocketing going wrong would land him in the back seat of an expensive car about to get funky with two pretty hot people who had the money to buy the good stuff. Jason grinned. He had thought his night was going down hill, but now he looked to be riding the night up to an epic high and some probably fucking good fucking too! Jason grinned wide, the jitters momentarily forgotten.

* 

Jack glanced in the rear view mirror. Jason didn't notice the coldness to Jack's eyes or the way his smile never seemed to quite reach his eyes, or when it did, there was something unhinged about the grin.

Jack hummed something pleasantly under his breath, his fingers playing a tune on the steering wheel as they waited in the long line to drive out of the park. After a few minutes of sitting Jack started to sing under his breath.

“Hey, Miss Murder, can I—
Hey, Miss Murder, can I
Make beauty stay if I take my life?...”

* 

Harley turned around, wrapped her arm around the head rest, and smiled at Jason.

“So, what exactly do you need money for Jason?”

Jason frowned screwing his lips together before he spoke. “Well I—man I was just looking to get some cocaine, maybe some thizzles, and some acholol man, just wanted to party, used all my money up on some girl at the park then she turned around and dumped me.” Jason ran his hand through his hair in the twitchy way of someone in need of a fix; Harley recalled all the signs from medical school.

Jack looked in the rearview mirror. “Well ain't that a shame Jason. A real shame.” Jack grinned. “And it was a woman who led you down the path of crime?”

Jason snorted. “Nah man, I've picked pockets before, though I don't get caught a lot. I've sold some amp joints, and banano, made meth for a while until this dude named Walter, well until he blew the place up. Some small time robbery, broke into a couple of houses, stole some jewelry and other shit to sell, all pretty low level shit.”

Harley reached over to run her hand casually along Jack's leg grinning. Jack chuckled. “So you're not a really 'bad' guy then are you?”

Jason smiled. “Hell no.” Then the young man chuckled. “Man, you guys are really cool. I mean I expected to get slugged in the face, but it's nice to run into some fellow freaks.” Jason leered a bit. “I
mean and it's nice to meet some freaks who are good looking. Usually they ain't all that great, but once the drugs hit, everything is great, know what I mean? You and your lady there are both hot so I'm totally down with anything tonight. You guys like to party right? I mean I got it right...right?"

Jack chuckled and winked at Harley, the two of them sharing a secret smile.

“You have no idea,” Jack purred as he drove.

Harley giggled softly. “So your plan was to get some cash and drown your sorrows?”

Jason shrugged. “Yeah, something like that. I mean there’s a party I was going to down at the Black Sands beach. I was going to go anyway no matter how things played out with that chick, but man she took all my money and I didn't even get in her shorts. Sucks.”

Jack smiled serenely. “Direct us to the party, Jason.”

Jack leaned forward and turned the knob on the car's stereo and the sounds of Godsmack's 'Whatever' began to fill the car's interior.

Jack laughed. “Perfect!” He turned the music up, hitting the gas hard as soon as they were clear of the park, speeding down the street. Jason grabbed hold of the sides in the backseat his eyes going wide while Harley laughed.

“Go puddin, go!”

* 

It took them nearly half an hour, give or take, to drive to the beach that Jason indicated. They found a place to park that wasn't too obvious, hidden between two street lights. From where they parked Jack and Harley could hear some people shouting, music and the wavering light from a bonfire. Jack grinned, without a worry in the world, taking Harley's hand and dancing her into his arms. Jason watched them with a grin thinking once they were both drugged and drunk this was going to be fun. Before the three of them headed down the wooden steps that led to the beach, Jack moved around to the trunk of the car pulling out the tire iron. Jack grinned swinging it like a baton. If Jason thought this strange he made no indication, simply taking it in stride as he headed off in the direction of the beach, motioning to Jack and Harley to follow him.

“Come on you two. I hear Maisy is supposed to be here. She sells the best shit!” Jason grinned happily his jitters forgotten in anticipation of scoring something soon.

Jack laughed. “Hear that sweets, the best shit.”

Harley giggled. “Oh wonderful!”

Jack and Harley, clearly in sync with one another, laughed and followed Jason as he quickly maneuvered the wooden steps down to the beach.

* 

The three of them made their way down the steps onto the beach where the sand was indeed black (though it was hard to tell in the bonfire light.) The sounds of the water lapping against the sand were muffled by the sounds of The Pussy Cats Dolls 'Buttons' playing, people laughing, yelling while some were dancing around the fire, drinking, some clearly tripping on drugs, while others were having sex in the sand. Harley stopped at the edge of the walkway, taking her shoes off, then rolled her socks down, slipping them off and stuffed them into her shoes. She laughed hopping onto the
sand and wiggled her toes.

“OH it's still a little warm puddin!” she giggled before she began dancing her way down to the fire, the light playing over her body. Harley spun on the balls of her feet, flowing gracefully, letting the jacket fall off her arms into the sand before she curled her arms tracing her body sensually, throwing her arms over her head. She swayed her hips, immediately grabbing Jason's attention and several other men (and women) while she moved. Jack noticed the looks Harley was getting from some of the men and women around the fire, but he let it wash off of him; she was his. If they did more than look...if they said anything...well, then he would teach them a lesson about keeping their hands off of things that didn't belong to them.

Harley grinned, spun in the sand, and turned to face Jack, making a 'come hither' motion with her finger, her arms snaking back and forth. Harley arched her back, throwing a leg up, her arms parting the air. She dropped her foot to the sand smiling at Jack while the music washed over her. She ran her hands up her sides again letting the music lead her movements, her head back, long blonde hair catching the firelight, then she brought her head up, grinning at Jack and dropped into a splits (which earned her applause from the party.)

Jack grinned and bit his bottom lip as he watched her dance, the sway of her hips, the way she ran her hands down her body, licked her lips, and the play of the firelight on her hair. Then those splits, he felt his pants becoming tight watching her. He glanced once at Jason who looked like he was going to have a problem soon, with Jack's fists. The way the young man was watching Harley it was clear what he wanted. Jack narrowed his eyes slightly, but consoled himself that Jason would be paying his price soon, might as well let him enjoy what he thought he might be getting...

Harley arched her body, using her hands and spread legs to push herself back up. Slowly rolling her hands back up her body before tracing her bottom lip with her finger. She then swayed to the side, then back the other way, She dropped herself to the sand once more in a sensual roll before she lifted herself up on her arm, hand flat in the sand, rolling her legs over her head into a long legged somersault, coming up on her feet and rolling her body in a sensual curve while sand flew in the firelight. She laughed, gracefully falling back to the sand and rolling onto her chest showing more fully her gymnastics training as she did a perfect split with her legs in the air.

For a moment, Jack forgot about the game to teach Jason a lesson, and instead focused his attention on Harley and her body; the shorts clung to her hips, the wide inviting split, her bare feet in the sand, the sexy exposed section of her stomach...

His eyes wandered, his imagination picturing her dancing naked for him, those long wickedly flexible legs, the way she moved, smelled, tasted...Jack growled softly, a barely audible sound of desperate want.

Harley rolled up to her knees, arching her back, weaving her torso, licking her lips, sliding her hands over her body and up to her breasts. Gazing at Jack, she bit her lip as she grabbed her breasts and hopped back up to her feet.

Harley giggled while she pushed herself up on her hands and did another split with her legs in the air. Jack growled again, but he shot Jason a deadly gaze as the other man grinned and said, “Man, she is one bad bitch.”

Jack tilted his head at Jason narrowing his eyes, but Jason just kept talking, running off at the mouth.

“I have to tell you I'm really a backdoor kind of guy and man does she have a nice backdoor.” Jason made a hip thrusting gesture at Harley that had Jack seeing red. Jack's hands balled into fist, the knuckles of the hand around the tire iron turned white, but Jack did nothing, he simply walked...
through the sand to Harley when the song was done. The music switched to 'First to Love' by Blaqk Audio and a few people started to dance, mostly swaying in place to the music. Harley smiled at Jack weaving in place herself, holding her arms out while she swayed her hips, her eyes on Jack's, waiting for him to come and wrap his arms around her.

Jack scooped her up once he was close enough, lifting her off her feet and into his embrace his mouth crushing hers. Harley wrapped herself around Jack, her hands cradling the sides of his face, her tongue exploring his mouth with intimate determination, hooking her ankles behind his back. Jack groaned, squeezing her rear. He pulled away from her lips just long enough to hiss.

"I'm gong to fuck you so hard Harley."

Harley giggled and nipped at his lips. "Promise?"

Jack chuckled. "Oh yeah, I promise sweets..."

Jason watched them for a moment, clearly wanting in on the groping, but instead he hurried off when it was clear that Harley was done dancing. It didn't take long for Jason to find someone willing to give him a few beers. Jason hurried back holding three bottles of beer in one hand and a joint in the other.

"Hey guys, got us some beers! And a mummy finger!!" Jason held the joint up while he continued talking. "And Maisy's here! She's got a little bit of everything. What you guys into?" Jason grinned handing them each a bottle of beer. His eyes kept wandering down Harley's body. Jack had put her back on her feet, his arm around her waist while Jason spoke, though Jason gave no indication that he noticed Jack's hard stare at all. Jack let go of Harley long enough to pull his wallet out and hand the young man a couple of hundred dollar bills.

"You get whatever you want Jason. Why don't you go do that then meet us over there?" Jack pointed with the tire iron. A ways down from the bonfire was the shadow of a pier.

The only light in that direction came from the moon and the bonfire's light reflecting off the water.

Jason grinned and licked his lips. "Okay man, have our own private party! I get ya. Here why don't you hold on to this and I'll go get us some real drugs." He handed the joint to Jack before he hurried off into the crowd again. Jack shrugged sticking the joint in his pocket before turning his attention back to Harley.

Harley giggled. "That's a good place to take him." She indicated the pier with her head.

Jack chuckled. "I thought so. I had an idea of what we can do to teach him a lesson about trying to take things that don't belong to him."

Harley grinned, her eyes slightly manic. "Ooo tell me puddin!"

Jack leaned close, his lips tickling her ear as he told her his plan.

*  

Jason was already a giggling mess, his arms draped around Jack and Harley's shoulders as the three of them made their way across the black sand beach toward the pier, the pockets of his jeans stuffed with the drugs he had used Jack's money to buy. No one from the party tried to stop them or even looked in their direction while Jack and Harley practically dragged Jason. He had clearly taken a few hits of whatever drugs he had bought before he sought Jack and Harley out again.
They made their way under the pier where the smell of fish, seaweed and saltwater was nearly overpowering. There were large granite colored rocks under here, along with beer cans, dead fish and other trash. There were pieces of damp clothing, lost sandals and the remains of what might have been a campfire now long dead and cold. Jack and Harley both let go of Jason, settling the young man up against one of the tall, slimy wooden columns that formed part of the pier.

Jason sighed happily. “Oh man, I feel so good right now. Hey I've been meaning to ask you guys your names all night. I keep forgetting. All you ever call him is puddin? Why puddin?” Jason laughed.

Harley shared a look with Jack, running a finger along Jack's jaw before she walked closer to Jason. “Because he's my puddin. Now Jason, you ready to have some fun?”

Jason giggled. “Fuck yeah!”

Harley purred. “Well good. Why don't you take off all your clothes for me first.” Jason's smile became bigger. “Yeah okay.” Immediately he started stripping, kicking his shoes off and nearly ripping his shirt to get it off quickly. Harley watched him while Jack moved silently into the deeper shadows of the pier. Jason was completely oblivious to Jack's disappearance, stripping and watching while Harley teased him by opening the button of her shorts and letting them hang open running the flat of her hand against her stomach, teasingly sliding her fingers lower, under her shorts, pushing the zipper down as she did so. Within seconds Jason was naked, tossing his clothes haphazardly on the ground along with his shoes. He had a hard on, which he grabbed, and licked his lips grinning at Harley. “This better?”

Harley giggled (though mentally she was ready to vomit) as Jason took a step toward her. She reached out, placing a finger on his chest and walked him back toward the column. “Oh, that's just perfect Jason, just perfect. Now, I want you to wait right there.”

Jason's back hit the column, his eyes raking over her having for the moment forgotten about Jack. Grinning Jason asked. “You gonna take your clothes off?”

Harley giggled. “No, silly.”

Jason frowned at the strange sound of tearing cloth, but he was moving too sluggishly from the drugs in his system to understand what the sound was or to respond. That was when Jack came up from behind the pillar, his face appearing from the darkness like the grinning face of death and grabbed Jason's arms, yanking them back around the column. Jason didn't think to struggle, he was too confused and then began grinning thinking this was all part of the game. “Hey man, what's this…”

He didn't struggle, but instead the young man grinned stupidly. “Oh man are we going to get really kinky? I can dig it, I'm into some BDSM.”

Jack used Jason's clothing (having easily torn the cheap shirt the young man was wearing into strips) to secure him tightly to the slimy column, first by binding Jason's wrists, then wrapping another length of cloth around Jason's chest.

Jason was grinning. “Oh man this is going to be fun ain't it?”

Jack came waltzing back around with a smile. “Oh, it sure is Jason, I promise you that.”

Jack quickly stuffed Jason's underwear into the drug-addled man's' mouth, then used some of the remainder of Jason's shirt to wrap around his mouth securing the gag in place.

“There we go. Though I really wish I had some duct tape.” Jack sighed dramatically. “Well, guess
we’ll just have to make due.”

Jack walked back behind Jason into the shadows under the pier, coming back a second later with the tire iron he had carried out from the car. He swung it a few times like a baton with a wide grin.

“Bet you are asking yourself now why I brought this?” Jack chuckled at Jason who still didn't seem to be reacting appropriately to his current situation.

Jack walked over to Harley, putting his arm around around her waist and giving her a tight squeeze, pressing the tire iron against her side. Harley giggled and wiggled up against Jack.

“Oh puddin, you did a fabulous job tying him up.”

Jack laughed cupping Harley's chin and rubbing his nose against hers. “You are just the sweetest my little cupcake.”

Jack turned his attention back to Jason. “I have a joke for you Jason since you informed us of your liking of a little BDSM. One day a mom was cleaning junior's room and in the closet she found a bondage S&M magazine. This was highly upsetting for her. She hid the magazine until his father got home and showed it to him. He looked at it and handed it back to her without a word. She finally asked him, "Well what should we do about this?" The dad looked at her and said, "Well I don't think you should spank him."

Jason tried to laugh around the wad of cloth in his mouth, though his eyes looks slightly confused. He was still smiling, his erection still hard, clearly thinking this was all part of the game they were going to play.

Jack cupped Harley's cheek, brushing the pad of his thumb along her lips before he turned his attention back to Jason. “Now Jason. I thought perhaps we would play a game with you.” Jack stepped away from Harley, swinging the tire iron as he spoke and circled Jason. “You know...you ever see that movie 'Four Rooms' by Quentin Tarantino where they talk about the lighter bet?”


Jack frowned. “I'm going to take that as a negative. Well, in the movie, Bruce Willis, Tarantino, a couple of other people...Anyway, the movie centers about Tim Roth's character, a bell boy in this hotel. These guys, drunk guys, want to perform this bet from an Alfred Hitchcock movie where one guy has to light his lighter ten times straight, no misfires. If he does, he wins the other guy's car, if not he loses his pinky finger. Now, I thought about doing that. It would be fun, but, I don't want you messing up our hotel room, I don't have the supplies I need for a really good game, AND I don't like you enough to play a game with you. SO...I've decided, along with my lovely minx here, that instead we are simply going to punish you.”

Jack leaned forward holding the tire iron behind him as he grinned at Jason. “Aren't you lucky? I mean, we can take care of our business and you can just go about whatever it is creeps like you do. Then again...maybe not.” Jack barked out a laugh. “So, tonight you have a few lessons to learn. This is your first: Your first mistake tonight was touching my girl. No one—and I mean no one—touches my girl.”

Jack moved so swiftly that even Harley didn't follow his strike until he had already hit Jason in the knee with a loud, dull thunk and crunching sound. Jason yelled, his cries muffled by the gag.

Harley giggled. Jack smiled and handed the tire iron to her. “Now, lesson number two! You stuck your sticky little hands where they shouldn't have been. “
Jack waltzed behind Jason who was struggling against his bonds, but he was slightly drunk and very high, even with the shock of the pain sobering him up a little, it wasn't enough for him to really fight his bonds. Jack stood behind Jason, looking down at Jason's hands which were tied together. Jack studied Jason's hands while Jason was whimpering.

Jack leaned over. “Sweetling, you wanna come over here. This is a perfect teaching moment I think.”

Harley smiled with a wink at Jason as she skipped over to Jack, holding the tire iron behind her back as she did so looking too adorable for what they were doing. “Yes puddin.”

“Okay, see his hands. Now since they are tied up, this is going to be a little more difficult, but...” Here Jack grabbed Jason's right hand forcing the thumb out. “Now, take his thumb and I want you to haul back with all your strength.”

Jason was struggling. Harley leaned the tire iron against the side of the column next to Jason then flexed her fingers before she stepped closer. She grabbed his thumb, like Jack showed her, and with a quick movement, no hesitation at all, Harley hauled back on Jason's thumb, snapping it easily. The sound was like a loud crack accompanied by a pop. Jason screamed around his gag, thrashing about. Harley grinned when Jack kissed her cheek.

“Well done sweets! Well done indeed!”

Jack grabbed Jason's pinkie and with a swift twist, broke the pinkie finger, the only sound a quick sounding snap and Jason's whimpering.

“There, I think the pinkie is probably easier than the thumb.” Jack mused letting Jason's hand go.

Harley frowned. “Is that all we're going to do puddin?”

Jack turned to smile at her. “What did you have in mind sweets?”

Harley picked up the tire iron. “Seems a shame to only leave him with a couple of broken fingers and a shattered kneecap, especially after he not only tried to steal from us, but he had the nerve to think either one of us would want to be with him.”

Jack blinked. “You're right sweets!!” Jack put his hand to his chest in mock horror.

Jack took the tire iron from her and turned, holding himself ready as if he were about to swing at a ball coming his way. Jason groaned and struggled. Jack mock swung twice, then on the third swing Jack let the tire iron hit, smashing into Jason's bound wrists with a loud thunk of the metal bar hitting Jason's wrists and part of the tool hitting the wood of the column.

Jack stood back grinning at the awkward, almost inhuman looking way Jason's hands were hanging, the swelling immediately beginning to malform the hands further and cut into the cloth Jack had used to bind Jason's wrists.

Jack grinned with a very slight giggle. “I think I might have broken all sixteen wrist bones, imagine that?”

Harley laughed and clapped her hands. “Good one puddin!”

Jack and Harley walked around the column, one on either side, the column barely holding up a now sagging Jason. Jack held the tire iron on his shoulder as Harley danced over to take Jack's hand only to see that Jason was rolling his eyes looking dazed, incoherent words falling from his gagged lips.
“Whathauh...”

Harley frowned touching her chin with her thumb and forefinger, looking every inch the professional doctor she once was while examining Jason with a clinical expression. “You know puddin, I think he's going into shock.”

Which was when Jason made a soft groan and passed out, sagging against his bonds and broken knee. Jack lifted the young man's chin with the end of the tire iron. “I hope that taught you a lesson young man, no touching things that aren't yours.” Jack rolled his eyes. “I believe my brother tried to drum that one into me often enough, along with don't pick fights and 'stop talking to yourself Jack, you sound crazy.' Though he never thought to break my wrists. Hmm...” Jack dropped Jason's chin and then wrapped his arm around Harley's waist. “Anyway, Jason old friend, we have to go, things to do and all. We only have a few more days in town. You have fun here. I truly do hope someone finds you before...you know, it's too late.” Jack smiled turning away with Harley who waved over her shoulder at the unconscious Jason. “Bye now sugar.”

“So, tomorrow, I thought we might go see Alcatraz...” Jack said as the two of them walked back onto the beach. The bonfire was still going as was the music, (which sounded like Coldplay) the soft sounds drifting over the beach. Less people were dancing and the one's that were seemed to mostly be swaying in place, leaning on each other for support. Most of the crowd were either passed out, asleep or having sex on the beach while Jack and Harley walked by, picking up Harley's jacket as well as her shoes and socks.

“I think that sounds like a great idea puddin!” Harley giggled dropping her jacket over her arm. Jack carried her shoes and socks.

Jack chuckled when they walked past a couple vigorously having sex near the steps leading off the beach. “They are going to have beach bugs in the morning and sand where they really don't want it.”

Harley giggled leaning against Jack while they took the wooden stairs. Jack smiled glancing sideways at her. “Wanna hear a joke?”

Harley grinned wrapped her arms around him as they walked. “Yes.”

“What did the ocean say to the beach?” Jack grinned.

“What?” Harley asked.


Jack gave her a boyish grin. “I know! I have a worse one.”

Harley narrowed her eyes at him, though with an amused expression on her face while Jack let go of her to unlock the car. “Vacationing in Hawaii, two priests decide to wear casual clothes so they won't be identified as clergy. They buy Hawaiian shirts and sandals, and soon head for the beach. They notice a gorgeous blond in a tiny bikini. "Good afternoon, Fathers," she says as she strolls by. The men are stunned. How does she know they are clergy? Later that day, they buy even wilder attire consisting of surfer shorts, tie dyed T-shirts, and dark glasses. The next day, they return to the beach. The same fabulous blond, now wearing a string bikini, passes by, nods politely at them and says, "Good morning Fathers."

"Just a minute young lady,", says one of the priests. "We are priests and proud of it, but how in the world did you know? The blonde replies, "Don't you recognize me? I'm sister Katherine from the
Harley burst out laughing just as Jack held the door open for her. He laughed closing the door and hurrying around to get behind the wheel. Harley grinned at him. “That one was pretty funny.”

Jack bowed of his head. “Thank you sweets.” He started the car with a smile and started back for the hotel.

*

Back in Gotham, Bruce had just finished showering. Today he was wearing a Tom Ford Windsor base peak-labeled two piece black suit, with a crisp white shirt and circle medallion red and gold silk tie. He looked every inch the playboy billionaire with his good looks and expensive suit. Today he was doing a tour of some new Wayne Enterprise technologies offices that were opening in a fresh new building in downtown Gotham. Bruce had just finished with his tie and was about to leave the room when he heard a knock at his bedroom door.

Curious, Bruce opened the door to see Alfred standing there. “I have a message for you Master Bruce, it was just delivered.” Alfred, holding a silver tray on which lay a beige envelope, was standing in perfect butler pose. Bruce took the envelop and opened it. Inside was a simple card with a cute little drawn cat, that read:

Dear Bruce,

This is not what I wanted to happen. I truly am sorry. I haven't left Gotham yet, maybe you would let me explain in person?

If so, just call this number. 555-4680

Selina

*

Bruce stared at the note then at Alfred. “It's from Selina.”

Alfred lifted a brow in surprise. “Sir?”

“She wants to meet.” Bruce's voice held a mixture of wonder, shock and, now that he thought about it, excitement. He was thrilled she hadn't left Gotham after all, but he wasn't sure of the rest of his feelings; was he angry? Hurt...yes, but he still felt that pull toward her.

Bruce sighed. “Thank you Alfred.”

“Of course Master Bruce.” Alfred nodded heading downstairs.

Once Bruce was sitting in the back seat of the car on his way to the tour, he dialed the number. Almost immediately Selina's voice came through. “Hello Bruce.”

“Selina.” Bruce tried to keep his voice neutral, but it was difficult.

He heard Selina sigh. “I just...I had to talk to you and apologize. I...it wasn't personal Bruce. I...I didn't mean for any of this to happen, but I wanted you to know that my feelings for you, those weren't fake, those were real.”

Bruce frowned staring out the window. “I'm not sure what you want me to do with that information Selina.”
Selina sighed. “Nothing. I just needed to let you know.”

“Are you staying in Gotham?” Bruce asked softly.

“I don't know yet. I didn't finish that job. It wasn't for me. I was hired to steal that painting and since I failed I have a target on my back...”

“Maybe I can help you with that?” Bruce asked quickly, but Selina laughed. “Bruce, sometimes all the money in the world won't help, but I appreciate the offer.”

“Will I see you again?” Bruce asked gently.

“Do you want to?” Selina's voice was slightly sad.

“I do.” Bruce answered honestly which made Selina smile, he could heard it in her voice. “Then, you just might.”

And then the phone went dead. Bruce dialed the number again, but now all he received was a computer generated voice telling him that the number he had reached had been disconnected.

* 

Harley woke to the sound of Jack laughing. She was lying in bed on her stomach, her hair in her face, naked. She smiled when Jack laughed again, and then the smell of fresh coffee hit her, along with the scent of bacon, eggs, and something baked. Harley pushed herself up to a sitting position, running her hands through her hair. Jack smiled when he saw she was awake. He was propped against some pillows, sipping from a cup of coffee watching an old “I Love Lucy” episode, but when he saw Harley was awake he turned the TV down.

“How'd you sleep sweets?” Jack asked getting up and walking, also naked, over to a room service cart that Harley could see was loaded with breakfast food. Harley yawned stretching her arms over her head. Jack was in the process of loading food onto a plate, but he stopped to watch her stretch, the fall of her hair over her breasts, the pale creamy texture of her skin...his body immediately reacting to seeing her naked. Jack grinned then finished loading up a plate for her. He hurried back to the bed, handing her the plate before he walked back to the tray and poured her some coffee, fixing it just the way she liked it before moving back to crawl onto the bed next to her. Harley giggled. “Aww! Jack that was so sweet, thank you!”

Jack grinned. “Hey, just want to make sure my angel has everything she needs.”

Harley wrinkled her nose as she smiled at him and took a bite of bacon. “How long have you been awake?”

Jack shrugged. “Not long.”

Harley gave him a look that said she didn't believe him while she sipped her coffee.

Jack grinned. “So, ready to go see Alcatraz?”

Harley took a bite of egg, nodding with enthusiasm. “Yes!”

Jack grinned and gave her a big kiss on the cheek. “Well eat up my sweets!”

Jack walked over to the boxes of clothing they had bought yesterday while Harley ate, and then he started pulling clothing out. Harley watched him while she ate, enjoying the view of his naked
backside as he crouched and pulled a few things out.

Jack mused while he looked through their new clothing. “You know, when I was a kid I was fascinated with Al Capone, George “Machine-gun” Kelly, Alvin Karpis...all those gangster types, the ones that were so bad they had to be sent to Alcatraz because no other prison could deal with them. Sorta like Blackgate in Gotham. Anyway, I always liked the fact that they lived life by their own rules. Didn't let society tell them how to live...I don't know. I just always found that fascinating. Yet another thing about me that Bruce hated. He was always trying to get me to read about 'real' heroes, but I always found the criminals fascinating.” Jack chuckled as he stood up with a dress for Harley.

“How do feel about wearing this today sweets?” The dress that Jack held up was a vintage '50's style sleeveless swing dress with a boat neckline in black with roses printed all over it. He had also purchased her a pair of red ankle strap wedge sandals to go with the dress.

Harley grinned. “Of course puddin.”

Jack laughed as he lay the dress on the bed. “Mm...I love you Harley.”

Harley smiled. “Oh puddin, I love you.” She giggled in delight, finishing off her bacon.

* *

Within the hour they were on their way out. Harley was looking every inch vintage in the dress that Jack had picked for her, with her hair done up in a softer, slightly more modern take on the victory rolls hair style—which had Jack nearly drooling—and a matching red quilted purse with a cute little bow and a little red shrug over her shoulders. When they stepped off the elevator, Lisa, who was working at the counter saw Jack and called him over.

“Oh Mr. Wayne!”

She was standing up waving her arm to get his attention. Harley narrowed her eyes, a slight curl on her deep red lips. Lisa came hurrying from around the counter with a huge grin on her face. She was wearing a tight bright blue pencil skirt with a sleeveless black blouse that had a neckline that was bordering on being inappropriate for her job. Lisa had her hair up swept to stress her neck and the plunging neckline of the blouse. Harley was nearly seeing red with anger. She knew exactly what Lisa was trying to do. That was when a whispering voice pushed to the forefront of Harley's mind.

* *

“Are you sure it's anger?” Harleen hissed from the shadows of Harley's consciousness. “Isn't it jealousy? Or maybe Harley, maybe Lisa represents all those girls that used to make fun of you, put you down, just like your step-father? All those girls who thought they were better than you? Maybe that's why you hate her?” Harley snarled at Harleen.

“Maybe, but she is also flirting with Jack and Jack is MINE. Harleen giggled. ‘True, true, but you know you're scared, scared of losing him, scared of not being able to keep up... Part of Harley thought she should be a little more concerned about the fact she was hearing voices on a more regular basis lately. Granted, it was technically her own voice and not 'voices' but still...the doctor part of her...Harleen...smiled and poked. “You know what that means don't you?”

Harley muttered mentally. “I'm not schizophrenic..maybe I'm becoming a sociopath? Affective psychosis? Dissociative disorders? Though remember Harleen, new studies show that not everyone who hears voices is mentally ill or unstable, 2 out of 3 people who hear voices are quite healthy and
function well.”

Harleen laughed. “Well Harley, you aren't mentally healthy because you have murdered and hurt people and you're thinking about murder right now. What do you say to that?”

Harley frowned then hissed in her mind. “Oh shut up Harleen! You know what, I don't care the reasons why I hear your voice or hate Lisa. All I care about is that Lisa is trying to put herself in my place and I am not going to stand by and let her continue.” Harleen frowned. “Don't you trust Jack?”

Harley smiled. “Oh I do, with all my heart, but just because I trust him doesn't mean I have to let some bimbo try to put the moves on him. He's just as much ours as we're his Harleen. You know that even if you don't want to admit it.”

Harleen was silent then answered slowly. “Maybe in this case you're right Harley, maybe we should teach Lisa a lesson.”

Harley giggled. “Now you're talking.”

* 

Jack frowned, then slowly let out an exasperated sigh before walking over to where Lisa waited by the counter, making a little scene trying to grab his attention. Jack strolled over with Harley's arm through his, but as before, Lisa didn't seem to see Harley at all; in fact, a look of triumph crossed over her face when she saw Jack turn around and come toward her. Jack looked devastatingly handsome today wearing a pair of black slacks, black wingtips with a black jacket under which he was wearing a low, scoop neck shirt of deep purple. The shirt's neckline was low enough that his neck looked long (causing Harley to have to practice her willpower not to lick and bite him...yet). Lisa's eyes went straight to Jack's throat, then raked up and down his body before finally zeroing in on his face.

“Hi Mr. Wayne. I wanted to let you know that I was able to get a hold of some tickets to the showing of Chicago tonight, down at Orpheum Theatre. I thought you might be interested.” Lisa smiled showing off rows of perfect teeth. She cocked her hip, leaning against the counter in an attempt to look sexy.

Jack frowned then glanced at Harley. “Would you like to go dear?”

Harley smiled looking right at Lisa who just now seemed to notice Harley. “Sure puddin, that might be fun.”

Jack grinned. “Why thank you Lisa. Harley and I would love to go tonight.”

Lisa frowned, chewing her upper lip for a moment. “Are you sure? I mean if, ah...your friend is too tired to go...”

Jack leaned forward. “I'm sure. Thank you Lisa. I'll pick the tickets up when we get back.”

Harley was having a difficult time not laughing out loud as Jack spun them around and left. The urge to turn around and give Lisa the finger was almost too much to resist, but Harley did.

Harley leaned in close to Jack's ear, her breath tickling his ear. “I really want to do something about her.”

“Do you want to kill her?” Jack asked, his blue eyes smiled with innocent inquiry.
Harley snarled. "I guess not kill...but I want to do something really, really bad to her."

Jack grinned. "Let me call Alex and have him do a little research on our friend Lisa. Maybe he can give us something we can work with?"

Harley giggled. "Okay, that sounds great puddin. Thank you."

"Anything for my girl," Jack purred into her ear. As they walked out the door, they both slipped on their sunglasses giggling together. Jack pulled out his phone while they waited for their rented car to be brought around.

Alex answered the phone with a, "How the fuck are you man? Liking California?"

Jack laughed. "The only difference between here and Gotham is the sun, I think. Anyway, Alex, I have a job for you."

Alex laughed. "Fuck man, you can't even go on vacation without needing something, eh? Okay what is it?"

"There is this young woman named Lisa, works here at the Marriott Marquis. I need as much information as you can give me. Who she is, where she was born, what she likes to eat, allergies...etc.." Jack said as he took the keys from the valet and hopped into the car after holding the door for Harley.

"Man, what the fuck she do?" Alex asked though Jack could hear the click of computer keys in the background.

"She upset Harley," Jack said as he put the car in gear.

Alex laughed. "Oh well...shit. Okay I'll call back when I have something...regular fee."

"Thanks Alex. Speak to you soon." Jack smiled hanging up the phone and taking off.

* 

Running that day in the entertainment section of one of San Francisco's local papers, a small article tucked into the gossip and entertainment section of the paper, was a story about Bruce Wayne's younger and reclusive brother. The article also mentioned Wayne Enterprises and how the Wayne brothers of Gotham were a couple of the wealthiest young bachelors around.

The article by Julie Greer read:

"Jack Wayne, who is visiting our fair state with his fiancee Dr. Harleen Quinzel, is the youngest of the Wayne family members. There was not much known about how the happy couple met, except that Bruce Wayne had a part in the fateful meeting that led to their engagement. Bruce Wayne's brother, up to this point, has lived in obscurity in recent years, feeding rumors in Gotham that there was something wrong with the young man, but seeing him in public today he seems just fine."

The article went on to discuss the net worth of the two brothers, properties the family held and other public information. The article also ran a picture of Jack Wayne and Bruce (no picture of Harleen Quinzel was included in the article.)

* 

The ride over to Alcatraz on the ferry was lovely. There was a nice breeze blowing off the water, the
smell of the salt in the air, whipping Harley and Jack's hair where they stood at the rail watching their
crossing toward the prison. Jack and Harley had a spot near the railing up near the front of the ferry,
watching the island prison come into view. Jack had his arm around Harley's waist holding her close.
Harley leaned against him enjoying the view from the ferry, the warmth of his body next to hers, the
sounds of the waves on the water. Harley was smiling serenely when she pointed. “Is that the
Golden Gate bridge?”

Jack smiled narrowing his eyes behind his Gucci sunglasses trying to see into the distance.

“Yes it is,” Jack said against her ear.

They were both quiet watching the prison island come into view, Jack wrapped both arms around
her tugging her against him. Jack leaned close whispering in her ear to be heard over the wind and
the waves.

“I bet I would have been able to escape if I'd been here.” Jack grinned.

“Really?” Harley asked turning toward him.

“Sure. I think the problem with most criminals is their inability to think big enough.” Jack smiled
serenely.

Harley laughed. “I think you're right puddin.”

“Yup, oh and their inability to think outside the box. If you are going to be a world class criminal
you have to think bigger and better! No small time stuff, your plans should be so elaborate that the
sheer size confuses your enemies into looking in the wrong direction while you're doing your crime,
robbery, murder, kidnapping—whatever it is—right under their noses.” Jack chuckled, moving his
hand in front of him as if he were cutting the air.

Harley giggled as Jack continued. “That's the problem with the good guys, so confined by the rules.
They never work outside their precious rules. The only reason the good guys ever win is because the
writers of movies, TV, comics, make it happen. Real life...heroes are losers.” Jack laughed.

Harley giggled brushing her hair behind her ear. “So when you become a master criminal, do I get to
be your moll?”

Jack made a rude noise squeezing her closer. “Moll? Hell no! You are more than just my girl Harley!
You're my partner! We will become master criminals together!” he exclaimed quietly, yet
emphatically.

Jack squeezed her tight against him, rubbing his nose with hers. Harley giggled and whispered. “I'll
go wherever you go Jack.”

Jack purred then quickly licked her lips. “And I'll go wherever you go my sweets.”

* * *

When they landed on the island, they walked with the group of people toward one of the rangers
who was calling the crowd to them. The ranger, a young woman with bright blue eyes wearing the
ranger uniform, asked the group questions about where they were from, why there were there...the
usual. Jack yawned, quickly becoming bored as the ranger droned on about some of the famous
inmates to Alcatraz. She mentioned Al Capone and Alvin “Creeper” Karjis, she then continued
speaking about the history of the place, how it was once a Civil War fort, a demonstration site. Jack
leaned toward Harley's ear, his lips close enough that they tickled.
“You know they called Alvin Karjis the Creeper because of his smile, which I think is completely unfair...a good smile is never creepy.” Jack gave her his best smile. Harley giggled leaning in close to him.

The ranger continued talking about the history of the place, droning on and on. Jack groaned, laying his head on top of Harley's making her giggle. “Hey you're going to ruin my hair,” she hissed at him.

Jack chuckled then whined. “Oh. My. God. This is boring!”

The crowd started to break apart, some continuing to follow the guide, others to just walk the area (since there were no 'guided' tours), when Harley grabbed Jack's arm and held him back. She gave him a wicked little grin. When the crowds were well ahead of them, people having spread out to explore the island prison, Harley motioned for Jack to follow her.

“Where are we going?” Jack asked while Harley pulled him through a door she spotted. “I have no idea! I thought we might find a cell and you know...” Harley giggled giving him a meaningful look.

Jack laughed. “Harley, you are a naughty girl! Sex on historical property! In a cell!”

Harley continued to giggle the two of them slipping silently through a door.

*

It took them a little while to find one of the prison blocks. Jack looked around and let out a little laugh. “We're in the D-block!”

“What does that mean?” Harley asked looking around. The place was completely vacant with the eerie quality that spoke of ghosts. The paint was a dull beige that was peeling in places and even the tiniest sound seemed to echo off the walls.

Jack smiled taking her hand and walked down the empty hall swinging their hands between them. “D-block was solitary confinement, also called the Hole.”

Jack suddenly tugged Harley with him, the two of them slipping into one of the cells. The tiny room had a cot bolted to the floor, a toilet and nothing else. The atmosphere was dark and gloomy inside the tiny room. Jack spun her around, pressing her front up against the wall his hands immediately under her dress, his long fingers grasping at her panties and yanking them down below her hips.

Harley gasped in surprise, but smiling at the touch of his warm fingers against her skin. “Jack!”

He chuckled whispering against her ear while he worked her panties down further. “Pretend you came to visit me...” He hissed against her ear before taking a deep breath, smelling the vanilla on her skin. “I haven't seen you in ages. All I can think of is fucking you...hard...thrusting into your wet, waiting...”

Harley groaned, feeling heat race to her groin, that warm tickle of wanting him to touch her. She pressed the flat of her hands against the wall, feeling the rough cement against her palms, arching her back and spreading her legs, trying to make it easier for him to get her panties off of her. Harley pressed her teeth into her lip, wiggling her hips slightly to let the thin cloth slide down her legs where she stepped out of them.

Jack growled glancing down to see her panties on the floor of the cell, the sight arousing him more, prompting him to growl softly. He grinned and growled again when he spun her around, shoving her hard up against the wall. Her little gasp of surprise, the way her body hit the wall...God she turned him on. He pressed his mouth to hers, attacking her lips with burning need. His teeth caught her
bottom lip tugging with just enough pain to make it hurt in a way that made her groan, watching the way her eyes filled with heat. His hands slid hungrily down her sides then up again over her breasts, grasping her breasts over her dress, his fingers digging in around her breasts squeezing. Harley groaned, thrusting her hips against him. She could feel the hard pressure of him against his slacks.

Jack dragged his teeth down her neck, biting hard, sucking on her throat, letting go of her for just long enough in order to work his slacks down, just enough to free himself. Jack lifted her left leg up, thrusting into her at the same time once he was free. Harley gasped in pleasure and wrapped her arms around his neck, her hands gliding into his hair, luxuriating in the silky softness of his hair, when she felt him, hard, hot entering her body with a powerful thrust, filling her, pressing into her and sending heat spiking through her body. Now all she wanted was for him to hold her down and fuck her. Jack yanked her, and her leg, up higher, which allowed him to angle himself for deeper thrusts. He grinned at her before pressing her back against the wall again, both of them panting breathless as he fucked her hard, and fast, pressing her painfully against the wall, the sweet, wet sounds of their bodies meeting filled the tiny cell.

“Uuhh...Harley...” Jack groaned thrusting harder, pounding her against the wall. Harley cried out, her climax ripping through her with a startling and welcome suddenness. She arched her back off the wall, her hands grabbing fistfuls of Jack's hair.

“Uuhh Jack...uuhh Jack...” Harley whimpered, her whole body tightening around him. Jack hissed yanking her leg up higher using the wall to hold her up while he continued to thrust a few more times. They kissed furiously, his hips jerking hard and fast, her liquid heat washing over him, when he suddenly came with a guttural groan. Jack kissed her cheek, her nose, her lips pressing his forehead against hers. Harley groaned feeling that wet burst of pleasure dragging Jack's mouth to hers, swallowing his orgasm wrought groans.

“Mmm...My sweet thing.” Jack purred, rubbing his face against hers, continuing his thrusts into her causing her to bounce and jerk against the wall.

Harley sighed, all the air leaving her lungs while she held on to him.

“Oh Jack,” she whispered.

He was just considering easing her to her feet when his phone rang, the sound loud in the tiny cell (and also alerting anyone to their presence if their moans had not). Jack cursed pulling out of Harley and yanking up his slacks. Harley grabbed her underwear and snatched up her purse, pulling out a few tissues, hurriedly cleaning herself up before she wiggled back into her panties as Jack sat on the bunk and hit the button.

“What?!” he growled.

“What the fuck man!” Alex muttered. “Geez Jack.”

Jack chuckled. “Sorry Alex.” He glanced at Harley who smiled and sat down on the bunk next to him. “So, I got all kinds of fucking dirt on Lisa for you. Like she had two brothers in prison and she lost a job for supposedly having a fucking affair with the manager.”

Jack was holding the phone between him and Harley with the volume up so she could hear too. “That's nice, but not really helpful.” Jack muttered.

“Well, I found out she has a shellfish allergy, pretty fucking bad one too.” Alex said with a crush of something he was eating on the other line.
Harley giggled. “Oh, now that I can work with.”

They could both hear Alex on the other end. “Man, I almost feel sorry for this bitch. Okay that all you guys need? If so I got a fucking date with Alice!”

“That's perfect Alex. I'll wire the money as soon as I get back to the hotel room.”


“Whatever do you have in mind my little minx?” Jack purred reaching out to run a finger along her jaw.

Harley giggled. “How do you feel about taking another woman out on a date?”

*

Before heading back to the hotel for their little 'scene' they planned, Jack and Harley stopped and purchased a lipstick for Lisa. It was a Christian Louboutin silky satin lipstick. The lipstick, as the sales lady—an extremely tall, thin woman of nearly sixty years with perfectly white hair—held the lipstick up as if she were presenting them with a rare jewel told them. “This lipstick is presented in a jewelry box and offered with a silk carrying pouch, the design mirrors an objet d'art so intimate as to be worn like a precious jewel; it transforms a forgotten object into a woman's magic wand.” She uttered her sales pitch with the grandeur of an old stage actress.

Harley did her best not to giggle. “Does it come in pink?”

The sales lady's eye twitched at Harley, her tone flat. “Yes, it does.”

Within the next fifteen minutes the two of them were leaving, (After Jack made sure to pay with cash), with the ninety dollar lipstick in a shopping bag ready for Jack to present to Lisa after 'dumping' Harley in the lobby, except they had stopped by the theater and purchased a ticket for Harley...so she could see the 'show' tonight.

*

That evening Harley was sitting on the edge of the bed in her underwear. She knew she needed to get dressed, but she was distracted watching Jack. She had on her lacy red panties and her lacy red bra, other than that she wasn't wearing anything else. The outfit she was going to wear tonight was hanging up against the wall, a spaghetti strapped burgundy mini dress with the leather jacket (express cleaned for tonight) and a pair of matching burgundy open toe stilleto booties. She was planning on styling her hair around her face in such a way that it would be easy to conceal her features, but she was pretty confident Lisa would never see her because her eyes would be only on Jack.

Beside Harley on the bed was a small plate with different slices and cubes of cheese, as part of an appetizer plate that Jack had ordered to their room. Harley kicked her bare feet, her heels bouncing against the side of the bed while she watched Jack dressing, popping a cube of cheese into her mouth. He had gone downstairs earlier and played his role of the sexually deprived husband-to-be looking for a fling or a mistress, but implying that there were 'financial benefits'...gifts as it were.

He explained to Lisa how he wasn't happy and had noticed her from the moment he had checked in with his fiancee, how he needed a real woman...blah blah blah...the whole sickening story.

Jack said Lisa had eaten it up. Harley shuddered at the thought of that ...woman!...staring and slobbering all over Jack with her eyes. Of course, it was part of their plan, but it still made Harley want to vomit knowing that woman was going to be hanging all over him tonight, thinking he was
going to take her somewhere intimate afterward...though Jack had said emphatically that he was not going to kiss her. That made Harley grin from ear to ear.

The lipstick, which Harley had carefully laced with shellfish oil (which they had also purchased before returning home), lay in its bag next to Harley on the bed. Jack had a bottle of scotch and a glass on the counter next to him, where he was adjusting his tie, glaring at the offending silk cloth in the mirror's reflection. Jack also kept pouring liquor into his glass and swallowing in one shot, his cigarette lay next to that, balanced at the side of the ash tray. He was already on his fourth cigarette which clearly illustrated his annoyance at having to spend time with another woman tonight. He was clearly agitated by having to do this 'thing' this evening even though he wanted to be there for the outcome.

Jack gave up on his tie for the time being and glared at himself in the mirror. He wore a grey Armani collezioni suit with a pair of black leather Ermenegildo Zegna monk strap shoes. He looked so handsome, Harley thought, which only made the idea of that Lisa thinking she had won that much more bitter. Harley really wanted to tear the other woman's eyeballs out, BUT she reminded herself, this was going to be funnier. For a moment, Harley wondered how many times she would have to worry about women like Meg or Lisa, but then she shrugged, probably a great deal since she was marrying a Wayne.

Harley stood up and walked over to where Jack was standing. He picked up his cigarette and took a long pull on it as Harley took the untied tie around his neck. Harley began to work on tying the offending bit of cloth for him. Jack sighed putting the cigarette out then let his eyes slide over her once. “I like your outfit, but I'm going to have to insist you don't wear that to the theater.”

Harley laughed, finishing with his tie. “Fine, I'll wear something else.” Harley chuckled taking a step back from him after she finished with the tie.

“How do I look?” Jack turned around with his arms out and doing a little spin. He had just a little eyeliner on tonight, just enough that his blue eyes stood out; he was sans lipstick this evening.

Harley licked her lips feeling that warm burn in her groin. “You look very handsome Jack. If I had my baseball bat, I would have to beat her off of you. Which would be a lot of fun.” Harley grinned brightly.

Jack laughed. “Oh my little sugar bear...” He gathered her up into his arms rubbing his nose against hers. “I'm sorry you don't have your bat.”

Harley pushed out her bottom lip in a pout which only made Jack laugh more, kissing her on her pouty lip. He let her go reluctantly. “All right, I guess I better go pick her up. I'll give her the lipstick after we're seated.”

Harley nodded grinning. “I'll be there with the car.”

Jack grinned brushing his finger and thumb across her chin. “See ya soon, pooh bear.”

Harley sighed after Jack left, then quickly started to get dressed.

*  

Jack grimaced as he walked outside the hotel entrance with Lisa on his arm. She was dressed in a black sleeveless jumpsuit with black stilleto sandals. She had her hair up in a high ponytail with all her jewelry in gold. She was talking a mile a minute as they waited outside for the taxi. “I just knew
when I saw you Jack that you and I were destined to be together.” She grinned. “I mean, a man like you with a woman like that? I mean I saw her and at first I was sure she was just a prostitute you had picked up. But then when you got a room together I was just shocked you know? You could do so much better than that blonde. And I was right?! Here you are!” She cuddled his arm leaning her head against his shoulder. “What would you like to do after the show tonight? We could go to my place for a nightcap, if you like?”

Jack did an impressive amount of acting on his part not to roll his eyes or gag as he muttered. “Sure thing.”

* 

The interior of the Orpheum Theatre was gorgeous; it was an old theater, left over from the 1920's. Harley walked in by herself, looking around her with mouth hanging slightly open. Harley had done a little internet research before she came to the theater tonight. As she gazed around she saw the ceiling, modeled after a twelfth century Spanish cathedral and as she walked into the seating area with its red covered seats, she could see the carved figures that aligned the walls of the theater. Harley pressed her lips together trying not to pout, wishing she was here with Jack for the hundredth time since she left the hotel, driving their rented car here in order to be able to drive Jack and her back to the hotel later.

Harley carefully made her way through the crowd and to the stairs, trying to find her seat which was up in the large balcony area of the theater. It took a little effort, but she finally found her seat and edged her way through the row. She smiled to herself. It was fairly far up, but she could see all the seats below her. She scanned the seats and after a few seconds, she saw Jack and Lisa. She grinned. Her seat was perfect! Jack and Lisa were fairly close to the stage, easily visible from Harley's vantage point. Harley leaned forward and wrapped her hands around the rail when she saw Lisa lean her head against Jack's shoulder, her knuckles turning white as murderous thoughts drifted through her mind.

* 

Down below, Jack was having to bite the inside of his cheek to stop himself from saying something not funny, but nasty to Lisa. She had been talking nonstop since they had left the hotel and her constant touching of his person was really annoying Jack to the point that the thought of pulling a knife out and shoving it right up under her jaw was the only thing keeping him sane at the moment. He really hoped she was as allergic to shellfish as Alex had said, because the longer he was in her company, the more he wanted her dead.

Lisa was not only the hotel's concierge, but she had a degree in liberal arts, had two brothers, her parents were divorced and she loved shows like 'The Bachelor' and she knew she was meant to meet a prince charming...the rest of it had turned into white noise while she continued to speak incessantly. Jack let her hold onto his arm, counting the minutes. He was supposed to give her the lipstick just when the lights dimmed for the performance. Harley had doused the lipstick one more time before he left just to make sure it was coated, so hopefully it would work quickly.

Lisa suddenly caught Jack's chin forcing his face around to face her. “You know, you are just like a real life prince out of a fairy story. I mean you are so handsome, wealthy, just everything I ever dreamed about! And then you asked me out!! I mean, just...wow.” Then she kissed him.

Jack's eyes widened, all the blood draining from his face.

*
Harley snarled standing up leaning so far forward that a man sitting next to her grabbed her. “Hey miss, be careful!”

Harley yanked herself out of the man’s grip. “I’m fine thanks,” she snarled between her clenched teeth. The man let go of her quickly. “Sorry.”

Harley closed her eyes to calm herself. Slowly, she returned to her seat. Lisa was going to get hers soon, she told herself. Soon.

* 

Lisa pulled away all smiles, and if she noticed Jack’s stiffness or lack of response, she made no indication. Mentally Jack was ready to strangle her, watching the light go out of her eyes with his hands around her throat seemed like a really fantastic idea, but instead he smiled stiffly.

“I have a gift for you.”

Lisa gasped. “You do! Oh how sweet!” With one of her arms wrapped around his, Lisa leaned forward. “What did you get me?”

Jack pulled open his jacket and pulled the pouch of lipstick from his inner pocket. “This.”

He handed her the pouch. Lisa excitedly opened the gift.

* 

Up above Harley grinned. It was a little soon, but Jack had just handed her the gift. Harley giggled nearly bouncing in her seat, watching the other woman like a hawk.

* 

“Oh Jack!!” Lisa squealed when she pulled out the expensive tube of lipstick. “Oh my God, this is Christian Louboutin! Oh gosh this is so wonderful!!” Lisa opened the tube of lipstick. “Oh gosh its such a pretty shade of pink!! I should put some on right now!”

Lisa opened her purse digging around for her compact. Jack abruptly stood up. “You do that...ummm, I'll be right back...I have to...”

Lisa smiled. “Oh I understand. Hurry back.” She purred and winked at him, popping open her compact. This time, Jack's smile was genuine, making his eyes sparkle. For a moment Lisa was spellbound by how handsome he was now that she was finally receiving the full effect of a true smile from him.

“Wait for me,” Jack cooed, grinning as he made his way out of the row of seats to the aisle. He glanced up when he made the aisle, his eyes clearly searching the balcony for Harley. When he spied her up above, his grinned widened further, their eyes meeting. Harley pressed her fingers to her lips and blew him a kiss. Jack winked at her before he headed out of the theater.

Harley waited. (Harleen frowned. “You just have to watch don't you?”)

Mentally, Harley laughed, the mental laughter translated to a radiant smile on her face as she leaned forward, folding her arms along the railing and resting her chin on her hands watching Lisa. (“Of course I do Harleen. That bitch thought she could take Jack—have to watch her learn her lesson.”)

Lisa pulled out a tissue and wiped her lipstick away. She then started to apply the expensive
Christian Louboutin to her lips. Lisa applied two coats of the lipstick, rubbing her lips together then carefully wiping some of the lipstick from her teeth and off the tip of her tongue. She gazed at herself in the little compact mirror admiring her reflection. She grinned and snapped the compact closed, thinking to herself that this time she had really finally caught her prince charming. A guy with enough money so she could live like a princess, but he was also handsome, far more handsome than she expected her prince to be...and that made her very happy.

She settled back in her seat folding her arms in her lap thinking about kissing him again, but when he came back she was going to try and loosen him up a little more. He seemed stiff, maybe he was feeling guilty about that woman he came with? Lisa sighed, but that was when she noticed that her lips felt funny. She pressed them together, rubbing them, they felt slightly swollen. The next moment Lisa cleared her throat which felt slightly scratchy. Lisa reached up and touched her neck, the itch was feeling worse. She coughed reaching up to scratch the corner of her mouth that tingled and itched. Lisa gasped, trying to catch her breath, but it was difficult. She pressed her lips together again coughing; breathing was becoming more difficult.

* 

Harley smiled serenely watching as Lisa started to twitch, obviously feeling some discomfort. Harley giggled. That was the moment she felt a hand on her shoulder, she instantly knew who it was as she looked up to see Jack standing beside her. He smiled. Harley jumped up and into his arms.

Jack hugged her tightly against him giving her a deep enough kiss that some of the people sitting in her row looked a little uncomfortable. Jack grinned. “Come on sweets.” The two of them moved out to the aisle, but they stayed to watch Lisa for a little bit longer.

* 

Lisa coughed harder. It was becoming more difficult to breathe and her tongue felt swollen in her mouth. She turned looking back down the aisle, but Jack hadn't returned yet. Her breathing was becoming more difficult and it felt as if her heart was hammering hard against her chest trying to break out. That was the moment the music began to play and the lights dimmed.

* 

Jack laughed softly, his arm around Harley's waist. “And that's our cue to leave, my sweet little pumpkin.”

Harley giggled as they two of them walked up the aisle of the theater whispering. “Do you think she'll live puddin?”

Jack frowned in thought. “OH, I certainly hope not, but who knows...” He waved his hand in the air. “Que sera sera...” They both laughed walking outside the theater.

Jack sighed. 'I think it's time to go home to Gotham sweets.'

'I couldn't agree more puddin.” Harley giggled.
It was late afternoon, the sun had reached its peak and was now on its slow descent when the taxi dropped Jack and Harley off in front of the manor. Bruce was still out so only Alfred was there to greet them, which was fine by Jack. They had been gone nearly three days. When Jack stepped out of the cab, he grinned throwing his arms wide as he faced the manor. “Ah, there is no place like home!”

“Did you enjoy your trip Master Jack? Miss Harleen?” Alfred immediately walked out when they arrived, heading to the back of the cab to help them with their bags. He had an amused expression at the amount of baggage they brought back, considering they had left with nothing.

Jack, one lock of hair falling out of place and framing the side of his narrow face looked not exactly rested, but pleased. He was dressed in a pair of black slacks, his white button down shirt untucked, with the sleeves rolled up and minus a tie, a pair of purple and black checked socks with his black oxfords. His Gucci sunglasses had slid to the tip of his nose, and he stretched his back which made popping sounds. “Yes we did, Alfie! Didn't we sweets?”

Harley, who had just stepped out of the cab, held her hand on her head to keep her hat from falling off, was wearing a white shift dress with tassels along the bottom that highlighted her shapely legs, with three-quarter sleeves making her look ready for a day at the beach. Her long hair was loose and she wore the oversize white straw hat she had left in. She smiled and took off her sunglasses. “It was fun Alfred! We went to Alcatraz! And we went to this HUGE concert festival in Golden Gate Park. I got to see the Golden Gate bridge too!”

Jack grinned at Harley’s enthusiasm, reaching out for her and drawing her into the circle of his arms just so he could rub his nose against hers. “You had a good time, didn't you pumpkin?”

Harley giggled scrunching her nose at him. “I did.”

Alfred chuckled, his eyes warm with delight at the two of them. “You will have to tell me all about it Miss Harleen. Can I get either of you something to eat or drink?”

Jack let Harley go with a quick lick to the tip of her nose, then he frowned in thought. “Actually I'm starved. We only snacked on the plane.”

Harley giggled. Actually what they had done was have sex across the table, knocking the snacks onto the floor and Jack had indulged himself between her legs, his tongue and teeth causing her to scream loudly on the flight home. She blushed reaching down to grab a couple of the bags to hide her knowing smile. Jack glanced sideways at her, catching her giggle and gave her a wink and a suggestive lick of his lips. Alfred, noticing all this, simply walked back into the house saying as he went, “How about I make something simple, perhaps some teriyaki chicken and a bottle of Beaujolais?”

Harley grinned as her stomach made a clear sound of agreement, which caused another blush to creep across her cheeks. “That sounds great Alfred!”

Alfred chuckled. “Then after I help takes these to your rooms, I will get started. Where would you like to eat?”
Jack grabbed a couple of bags. “Oh, just bring it up our room.”

Harley smiled softly. Little things like that, calling it ‘our room’ still made her heart patter with joy. It was such a simple thing, but those sweet little gestures sometimes meant more than all the huge declarations of love. Harley's smile widened when she stepped into the manor. Home, this was her home now. No...Jack was her home, but this place was an extension of him and that made it her home too. Her face alight, Harley made her way up the stairs.

*

Once they had dropped all the packages onto the floor of the room, Jack didn't feel like unpacking. Instead he stripped down to his boxers (tossing his clothes in a corner) and socks, hopped onto bed, grabbing his old deck of cards that were sitting on the bedside table where he usually left them, and lit a cigarette while he started to shuffle the cards. Harley changed into a pair of yoga pants and an oversized black t-shirt that read “Alcatraz swim team” across the chest along with a silhouette of the prison in the background. She came over, bare foot, and hopped onto the bed causing Jack to almost fumble the cards. He grinned at her with his cigarette held firmly between his teeth.

“So, you getting ready for the poker game tomorrow?” Harley asked. She sat cross-legged in front of him, her hands between her legs and watched Jack perform a variety of shuffling tricks quickly and with the ease of someone who had been doing them for a long time. Jack smiled at her with one brow lifted while a grin spread across his lips. “Yup.”

Harley pressed her lips together watching him. “Are these game dangerous?”

Jack frowned in thought while he shuffled. “Can be I suppose. There is a lot of money on the line and a lot of dangerous people play. I've been buying in for a while. Sometimes I win, sometimes I lose...everyone is pretty safe as long as no one cheats.”

Jack held the cards with one hand as he moved his arm in a graceful arch, the cards seemed to roll, floating smoothly from one hand back into his opposite hand. Harley grinned, her eyes twinkling with admiration. She was amazed how sexy Jack and his cards were...he dropped them all into one hand then gracefully rolled them with his fingers, holding just one up from the pack, the joker and winked. “The joker is always wild, my sweets.”

Harley giggled.

“Will I have to play?” Harley asked, watching while Jack divided the deck in two then with one hand, divided that half into fours, holding them with one hand between his fingers and moving them, creating a strange optical illusion just before he brought the four stacks of cards back together into one deck.

“No my sweets. Your job is to look sexy—and distracting—so that when the other players' attention is on you, then they'll play badly. Besides, it's an excuse for me to buy you a new, sexy dress.” Jack smiled. “I like buying you dresses. Though I might have to kill everyone there for staring at you...hmm...but then the poker game won't go well...shoot.

Guess I'll have to be nice.”

Harley looked away sideways with a slight smile.” Jack...

A soft knock sounded at their door. Harley hopped off the bed and headed to the door, opening it to find Alfred waiting with a tray, the warm smells of teriyaki chicken wafting through the doorway, two wine glasses and a bottle of wine.
“Oh Alfred, thank you!” Harley leaned forward to take the tray from him. Alfred smiled at her. “You are very welcome Miss Harleen. Just set the tray outside your door when you're done, if you please.”

Jack waved. “Thanks Alfie!!”

Alfred waved his hand. “You're welcome Master Jack.”

Harley closed the door and carefully walked across the floor with their food, crawling up onto the mattress and then settled the tray between them. Jack gathered the cards and placed them on the table by the bed. “We should get you a dress tomorrow,” Jack said as he grabbed the bottle of wine, already opened for them. He poured them each a glass of wine.

Harley unwrapped the silverware that Alfred had rolled up in the napkins for them, handing Jack his fork and knife. Jack took them, his long fingers brushing against hers.

They gazed at each other when Jack said, “Eat quickly—I feel like drinking my wine.”

Harley lifted a brow quizzically at Jack when he said that, but she cut into her chicken with a smile. He was always full of surprises, she thought.

* 

It was around nine that evening. Harley was lying naked on the bed and her wrists were tied together with one of Jack's purple silk neck ties. From there he had tied her wrists to the bed's headboard so that they were pulled tight, stretched over her head. Sitting on the side of the bed, Jack grinned down at her and reached out to stroke her thick blonde locks from her face. Harley giggled and struggled just a little.

He smiled. “Better be good Harley or I'll tie your ankles down too.”

Harley gave him a sweet little grin with steel in her eyes, giving him a little wrinkle of her nose. “Oh you will, will you?”

Jack stood up with a laugh. “Now you've done it! You bad girl!”

He hurried over to a drawer, pulled it open and grabbed out a couple more ties. She watched him, her eyes raking down the curve of his spine, the lean muscles of his back, the way the boxers rode low on his hips. Her body ached with want. Jack turned around and dangled a tie in each hand, grinning at her like a bad little boy, his blue eyes dancing with mischief. He walked over slowly to the bed and his willing prisoner. “You going to be good?”

Harley giggled. “Nope!”

Then Jack pounced.

Harley squealed and kicked her legs, trying to snatch her legs away from his grasp, but Jack grabbed her right leg by the ankle, forcing her leg down on the bed and spread her leg wide. He worked swiftly and gracefully despite her struggles, wrapping the silk tie to her ankle then used the rest of the tie to secure her to the footboard. She kicked again with her other leg, but he snatched her ankle, once again yanking her leg wide and securing that leg as well, her legs spread wide across the mattress. Jack's grin was wide and all teeth as he sat on the edge of the mattress, his blue eyes raking down her body.

“Mm...now that looks good...very good indeed.” He dragged just the tips of his blunt nails down between her breasts watching with satisfaction when her skin goose-bumped at his touch, her nipples
becoming hard. Harley rolled her tongue over her bottom lip as she watched him with hooded eyes.

Jack reached over to pick up the bottle of wine they had set on the bedside table next to his cards. He picked up the bottle rolling it over in his hand. “Good year,” he murmured.

He winked at her and slowly, starting at the point just below the hollow of her throat, poured the wine over her breasts in small drops of clear liquid, watching the way the white wine rolled down between her breasts, gradually trailing down to her stomach. He stopped long enough to lean down and wrap his lips around one of her now wet nipples and suck the wine from her skin. Harley moaned softly, but then Jack flicked his tongue over the sensitive surface. Harley hissed, arching, her whole body on fire.

“Jack...uuhh...Jack...”

Jack poured a little more wine onto her breasts, switching the bottle to his other hand so that while he curled his tongue around her nipple, he could pinch the other with his free hand.

Harley whimpered. “Oh God Jack!”

Some of the wine pooled at her belly button, then overflowed and rolled down her stomach, creeping lower across her tattoo, the chilled liquid progressing down to her groin like a slow sensual snake, rolling down over her clitoris; the chilled liquid sent shivers up her body.

Harley groaned. “Oh Jack! Jack...It's still cold.”

Jack stood, taking the bottle with him as he walked around the bed. He then dropped down on his knees at the foot of the bed grinning as he looked up the length of her body. The footboard ran low along the mattress, through the corners were high enough to tie Harley with ease.

“Mmm...I do enjoy my wine,” he whispered.

He leaned in, his blue eyes flicking up to meet her gaze, as his tongue rolled along his bottom lip just before he leaned in close to her and licked gradually at the wine dripping down her clitoris. Harley arched, groaning at the warm feel of his wet tongue tracing up her vagina in a slow lick, using the flat of his tongue to cover as much space as he could. Jack sat back for a moment and licked his lips chuckling. “Mm...such a good year.”

He poured a few more drops of wine on her groin, using his thumb to control the amount of liquid to leave the bottle and watched the expensive liquid ease lower in a shining trail to drip down over her. Jack set the wine on the floor before he leaned forward and pressed his mouth to her, sucking slowly, moving his jaw gently, up and down, his lips pressed against her and his tongue lapping up the fluid that dripped between her legs. Harley gasped, bucking her hips just slightly, but when Jack started to suck on her clitoris and flick his tongue across her, Harley moaned softly. “Uuuuhh...”

Jack’s hands stroked tenderly along the inside of her silky thighs while he deepened his kiss on her clitoris, his tongue curling along her sensitive flesh, his teeth catching her labia and tugging gently...when his phone rang.

Harley was moaning loudly, her back arching off the mattress, her toes pointed, her arms yanking back on the tie that secured her to the headboard and her legs jerked against the ties that held her legs apart. His mouth felt like heaven, the intense way he sucked on her, the warmth of his tongue and lips mixed with the chilled wine. Harley's hips came off the bed, the small pool of wine at her belly spilled down her sides and she cried out as a wave of pleasure washed over her, causing her to climax. Jack moved his jaw more frantically, his mouth covering her as he sucked deeply while
sliding his hands under her rear, squeezing just before he lifted her up and held her, needing to taste more of her. Jack thrust his tongue deep into her when she came, sucking more strongly, then using his tongue to fuck her, only stopping long enough to pour a little more wine over her groin. The phone just kept ringing. It would stop, then start again.

It was quickly becoming annoying.

Jack ignored it, his two middle fingers sliding into her while he rolled his tongue vigorously over her clitoris, needing to make her come again, wanting to drink from her, his fingers sliding in and out, the sound of how wet she was made him growl, but the phone kept ringing, throwing him off with its insistent jingle.

Finally, with his mouth wet and covered in her juices, Jack pushed himself from the bed with an angry snarl. “That fucking PHONE!” he hissed.

Jack stomped over to where he had left his phone on the desk. Harley, panting, struggled to catch her breath, watched him walk across the room. She grinned seeing how hard his erection was straining against his boxers. Her body ached to feel him inside her...

Jack snarled as he picked up the phone. “WHAT?”

“Jack! It's me! Lisa! I'm so sorry, but I just had to call you!” Her high pitched annoying voice carried over the line.

Jack frowned looking confused for a moment as if he had no idea who Lisa was. He wiped a hand over his mouth and chin, wiping away Harley's fluids. “Lisa?”

“Yes! I had to call. I'm so sorry. I'm assuming that bitch of a fiancee found you at the theater and forced you to leave. But I had to tell you what happened. That gift you gave me, that bitch messed with it! Can you believe it!? I'm not sure how she found out about the gift, guess it wasn't her color...anyway. But I put the lipstick on after you left and I had an allergic reaction. I thought I was going to die! But someone got me to the hospital in time. Anyway, I just had to warn you that she tried to kill me! I'm going to see if I can file a complaint with the police, but Jack darling, you have to get rid of her. She's completely psycho.” (At Lisa's words, especially her use of the term 'psycho,' Jack's lip curled and his eyelid twitched.) Come back to San Francisco and we can be together after we get her in jail okay?”

Jack's lip curled more, his voice a snarl, but Lisa didn't seem to notice. “Really?” Jack asked.

“Oh yes, Jack. I miss you.” (She made kissy noises that made Jack want to vomit.)

Jack glanced at Harley, the sight of her tied to the bed settled his escalating annoyance with Lisa. Harley frowned, watching him from across the room. He winked at her to let her know that everything was all right. God he wanted to get over there and take her right then; he licked his lips, tasting her on them and smiled. The sight of Harley tied to his bed was making his groin hurt, but this bitch Lisa was ruining everything! He was angry now—not only had Lisa lived, but she had the nerve to call him on his private line? AND she thought she was going to cause trouble by going to the police to try to have Harley arrested?

Jack smiled. “Don't worry Lisa, I'll take care of everything.”

“Okay, thank you Jack. I can't wait to see you. Love you! Kisses!” She sounded extremely excited.

Jack clicked the button, glaring at the phone. Harley frowned. “Jack?”
He looked over at Harley, taking a breath to calm himself before he smiled. “Just...a minute sweets, I have to take care of this first...then I'm going to finish taking care you.” He winked at her. Harley's smile washed over him, calming him further.

He dialed the number of the hotel while he paced the room, taking a chance that Lisa wasn't actually working at the desk, which paid off when a young woman answered who wasn't Lisa.

“This is the Marriott Marquis, I'm Morgan, how may I help you today?”

Jack smiled. “I would like to speak to the hotel manager.”

“Sir, is there a problem; maybe I could help you?” The young woman on the other end of the line sounded professional, but when Jack said there was a problem he could almost see the woman on the other end straighten up.

Jack snarled. “Yes, Morgan, there is a problem and I want to speak to the manager. Tell him Jack Wayne, brother of Bruce Wayne is calling.”

“Yes sir, right way.”

Jack was only on hold for a couple of minutes before the phone was answered by a man with a deep, rough—albeit polite—voice. “Yes Mr. Wayne, this is Chuck Pacioni, how can I help you?”

Jack's grin was wicked. “Why yes Chuck, you can. I have a problem with one of your concierges...”

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When Jack hung up, he tossed the phone back onto the desk and looked much more relaxed again. He grinned, feeling better. Lisa would be fired right away, the manager had assured him after Jack threatened to bring the entirety of the Wayne legal team down on his head. Jack also informed the man that he would be filing a restraining order and if Lisa persisted, he would take more extreme legal action.

Jack grinned as he made his way back to Harley licking his lips once more as he gazed at her tied to the bed. She had been waiting patiently, unable to move.

“Lisa thinks you found out about us sweets and laced her lipstick with something to trigger her allergy,” Jack said while dragging his fingernails along the top of her thigh.

Harley shivered at his touch and chuckled. “Oh?”

Jack nodded. “She called me on my private line. Can you believe that? Well...she has now lost her job.”

Jack resettled himself on the floor at the foot of the bed leaning on his elbows between her legs and dragged his fingertips along her inner thighs, then lower to trace her vagina in slow lazy touches.

Harley shivered then giggled at the tickling sensation of his fingers. “Is she going to the police?”

Jack continued to idly stroke the inside of her thighs, then traced the outline of her labia, his eyes following the trail of his finger. “Mm...probably, but what proof does she have? And she has just been fired for inappropriate conduct with a client. I think in the morning you and I should head over to the Gotham Police department and find out about filing a restraining order don't you? This crazy woman has it in her head that there was something between her and I...” Jack chuckled as his fingers teased at her clitoris.
Harley giggled, then hissed with pleasure at his touch. “That sounds like a great idea puddin.”

“Now, where was I before I was so rudely interrupted? Oh yes...” Jack mused leaning in to run the flat of his tongue up the entire length of her vagina, stopping at her clitoris to roll his tongue. Harley hissed with a jerk. “Oh Jack...”

Jack smiled and said quietly, “Yep, that's exactly where I was...”

Jack licked her a few more times, moving his tongue slowly making sure she could feel every movement, but he needed to fuck her. Jack stood up while stripping off his socks and boxers, climbing onto the bed. He rested on his knees, running his hands up and down her thighs enjoying the view of her wet and exposed.

“Damn Harley...you are so sexy...” Jack hissed, grabbing himself and stroking a few times just gazing at her. His eyes traveled up her body, stroking harder as his eyes reached hers...Harley was panting with expectation and need; watching him touch himself was making her groin ache.

“Come on Jack...” she purred.

Jack grinned. “Tell me what you want Harley, tell me.”

Harley moaned. “Fuck me Jack. I want you to fuck me.”

Jack's grin spread across his face while he scooted closer, rubbing the head of himself against her wet opening, coating himself with her fluids. He continued to stroke himself more vigorously, reaching over with his other hand to press his thumb against her clitoris, rolling the pad of his thumb over her as he had earlier. Harley groaned and whimpered, lifting her hips up. Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, just watching her while he brought her to climax again. Then when he couldn't stand it anymore, he lifted her up just enough to enter her before he started pounding into her with abandon.

Harley cried out when he entered her, thrusting hard and fast. Harley screamed with pleasure, tugging on her bonds and came when Jack leaned down and bit her breast. Harley's body trembled with her orgasm, but Jack kept thrusting, leaning back and grabbing her hips, grinning while he watched the jiggle of her breasts with each thrust. He held on tight to her hips, fucking harder, faster until he cried out loudly. “Ahhh, fuck Harley!!”

He nearly collapsed on top of her, dropping down to his hands, resting his forehead between her breasts breathing heavy. “Jack, you okay?” Harley asked unable to wrap her arms around him.

Jack laughed. “Yeah, just...just give me a minute pumpkin.”

They stayed like that for a few minutes before Jack pulled out. He gently untied her, stopping to kiss the places where the ties had left marks on her pale skin. “I didn't hurt you did I?” Jack asked with concern in his blue eyes.

Harley giggled. “Never Jack, you never hurt me.”

He smiled thinking how lucky he was...never had any interest in sex until he met her and now he just couldn't get enough of her...ever.

He finished untying her, then, not only did he clean himself off, but he cleaned her. When they were finished Jack pulled the covers on the bed back and gathered her into his arms with a contented sigh (luckily only the top blanket was slightly damp from the wine.)

Jack pressed her head against his chest and stroked his fingers through her hair. “You put a smile on
my face every single day Harley,” he whispered. “Nobody will ever come between us.”

With her arm tight around his waist, Harley smiled and closed her eyes. “Never Jack. There is nothing that can stand between us.”

They fell asleep that way, wrapped in each other's arms.

The next morning, at the Gotham Police department, Frost was annoyed. He was just having trouble with his job. The fact that most of the police department didn't really seem to care about carrying out the law actually didn't bother him as much as it should, but it was the fact that he couldn't seem to advance. He took bribes like all the cops on the beat (of course that was going to get harder with the new commissioner, a guy named Jim Gordon. Seemed to be a real straight arrow.) Frost was having trouble making ends meet, his wife was becoming more and more demanding and becoming a bigger bitch. She was always telling him about their neighbor Jessica and her husband. Jessica's husband bought her jewels and expensive clothing. Of course Jessica's husband was a drug dealer, Frost was sure of it. When he had told his wife Aylesa about that, she had only said that maybe he should consider a job change then. Frost was considering a divorce. He sighed, wishing he could step out for a cigarette then he looked up when the front doors opened and was surprised to see Jack Wayne and his girl walk in.

Jack Wayne was wearing an expensive looking black, textured jacket, cut slim to highlight the man's thin, tall frame, a John Varavatos if Frost wasn't mistaken (he had looked at suits like those... he wanted to dress in suits, be a man who people looked at with fear and respect. So he knew his suits and Jack Wayne had taste, expensive taste, but really damn good taste he thought.) The jacket was paired with black pants, a white dress shirt and a forest green vest, no tie and a pair of expensive black Sutor Mantellassi Oswald leather derby boots (another thing Frost knew, expensive shoes). Wayne's woman looked just as expensive as Jack Wayne, the dress she was wearing was an Akris punto color block dress in red and black. (That little detail he had received from his wife... she liked expensive clothing too.) The dress was crew neck, sleeveless with cap sleeves. She wore a pair of Alexander McQueen black platform sandals. Her hair was pulled back in what he would only describe as a modern take on a 1960's ponytail.

Jack Wayne strolled up to the counter and smiled. “Well, well, Officer Frost! What a pleasure!”

Frost beamed. His few encounters with Jack Wayne had been pleasant, he liked the man even if there was something about him that seemed off. “Hello Mr. Wayne, how are you?”

“Well Frost my dear, I have a problem.”

“What can I do to solve your problem sir?” Frost inquired.

“I need to file a restraining order against a woman in San Francisco who...well, she became obsessed with me and she is making herself a problem. Calling me, threatening me and my fiancee.” Jack tilted his head toward Harley, her arm through Jack's. She leaned against him, smiling at Frost. “It's very distressing,” she said softly.

“Well, sir, you'll have to go to the clerk's office for the paperwork, and proof of harassment...” Frost frowned. “But you know what Mr. Wayne, let me take care of everything for you. No need for you to waste your time on something like this. I'll get it done for you.” Frost smiled.

“Truly?” Jack asked in surprise, then grinned. “Thank you Frost. Whenever you're ready to work in the private sector, give me a call.” Jack pulled out his wallet and one of his cards, setting it down on
the counter and sliding it to Frost. “I could use someone who can get things done...someone loyal...” Jack's smile held a lot more to it and Frost saw in.

“Thank you Mr. Wayne. I've been considering a change of scenery, truth be told.”

Jack laughed. “Fantastic! Thank you for taking care of this Frost. How long will all of this take?”

Frost smiled. “This woman will be served by the end of the day in San Francisco, you have my word.”

Jack laughed looking at Harley. “I love this man! Thank you Frost.”

Frost nodded. “Thank you sir.”

Jack and Harley started to turn to leave, but Jack stopped and turned around to face the police officer again.

“Actually Frost, you free tonight? Harley and I are going out, but it's someplace where I could use someone I trust to stay with my car.” Jack leaned forward, putting his hand aside his mouth and whispered. “I promise I pay well.”

Frost smiled. “I get off at seven—will that work sir?”

Jack grinned. “I think it will work just fine. I'll call you later with the details of the job.”

“Thank you sir.” Frost smiled and nodded to them. Nothing wrong with a little moonlighting.

He watched the two of them leave. It was strange, it was as if he felt a shift in his fortunes was about to take place.

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Jack and Harley returned that afternoon to the manor, having purchased a dress for Harley to wear that night to the poker game. It was a champagne pink Halston Heritage strapless flounce skirt dress along with a pair of Jimmy Choo strappy leather heeled sandals in the same color.

While Harley was painting her toenails, sitting on the bed in their room with just a pair of white lace panties, and nothing else, Jack was on the phone with Alex.

“Yeah man, game's at the fucking abandoned theater in the theater district, it's that one...fuck...what's it called...” Jack could hear the tap of a pen on a table from the sounds of it through the phone as Alex tried to remember the name of the place. “Oh yeah, it's that fucking Uptown theater. We got a table set up on the fucking stage. Had some of my guys go in, got lights, air, music and I hired a few nice ass girls to serve drinks tonight. We got a whole fucking nest of Gotham's worst, but some of the richest...and that includes Gina!!” Alex laughed. “Nah...ain't going to be that bad. It's you, Gina, the bad bitch of a nurse—I still haven't figured where she gets her money, but man that fucking woman can play cards. Me of course since I'm the fucking host, Tobias Whale, one big ass mother-fucker! He is the CEO of Kord Enterprises, but I know for a fact it's a front for his fucking criminal gang. Anyway I got this freak named Professor Pyg, well actually his name is Laalo Valentin, but he goes by the Pyg name for some fucking reason. Anyway, the guy is a plastic surgeon, heard if you're in the mob and want to disappear, Pyg's the guy to go to if you really wanna disappear. Course you know that fuck Simon Stagg, owns Stagg Enterprises, thought that might make you fucking laugh. That fucking gangster, Tony Zucco and Yuri Dimitrov, or as everyone in the underground likes to call him, The Russian, also a mob boss. He and that fuck Zucco hate each other. Oh and this fucking
jerk Jimmy Stilles. That fuckhead inherited his daddy's real estate business, slum lord and all around shit-for-brains with too much money. And there ya have it, the whole fucking gang!"

Jack laughed. “Big group tonight, surprised.”

“Hey they all know I run a fucking clean game...mostly.” Alex laughed. “So game starts at nine, see you there.”

Jack grinned. “This should be fun.”

Jack walked over to sit on the side of the bed to make one more phone call. The phone rang only once before it was answered. “Frost here, Mr. Wayne.”

Jack grinned. “You have the suit I sent over for tonight? I made a guess on your size.”

“Oh yes, Mr. Wayne. It fits perfectly. Thank you sir.” Frost was wearing a Calvin Klein black suit with black shirt and black tie along with a pair of new shoes, all courtesy of his employer for the night, Mr. Wayne. “I'm going to have a taxi bring me over sir.”

“Good good, make sure you're armed, just in case.” Jack laughed. “Mostly your job will be watching the car. Probably a night of boredom.”


“See ya soon Frost!” Jack hung up with a smile, glancing over at Harley. “You know toots, I like Frost.”

Harley looked up from painting her nails to smile at him. “I like him too puddin. Now get dressed and I'll do your make-up.”

Jack grinned wrinkling his nose at her. “Yes ma'am.”

*  

They took the Bentley that night to the Uptown theater. At one time the theater had been a grand beauty in the elaborate art deco style that dominated the architecture of Gotham, but now the building was a pale reflection of what it used to be. Frost parked the car down the alley where Alex had suggested when Jack called ahead that night. There were no other cars here, but that was expected. Alex had said he wanted to give Jack a place away from the trash coming tonight...just in case. Jack had been to a handful of Alex's poker games, not once had one ended peacefully. With that much money involved, someone always became ass-sore when they lost Alex said. Jack usually found the whole thing funny when an argument had broken out. He was perfectly fine with leaning back and watching the drama unfold, but tonight he wasn't sure. Now he had Harley with him...he didn't want her hurt.

Jack stepped out of the car, taking Harley's hand and leading her out. She looked gorgeous in the dress he had bought her, her shoulders creamy and bare and her long blonde hair was piled atop her hair in a mess up do that highlighted her slender neck, curling locks of blonde hair falling down to frame her pretty face. Jack was dressed in a solid black three piece suit, complete with gold chain across his abdomen, and a purple tie so dark the color could only be seen if the light hit just right. He had black eyeliner around his blue eyes making them almost hypnotic in how vividly they stood out from his face. (Harley had painted his lips a deep red that Harley had giggled about and told him was called Unicorn Blood; Jack had loved the name. She had painted his nails a similar shade that matched the polish she wore called Moscow Red.)
Harley's makeup was all in soft colors to match her dress. Where Jack was all darkness and shadows, Harley was looking light, soft and creamy, like peaches and cream, Jack had told her.

* 

Jack and Harley walked into the theater without being bothered by anyone. (Alex never had a guard at the door for two reasons. One: people who came to the poker game were invited. And two: guards put people on edge. And three, he added, claiming this was the most important reason: he was a cheap fucking bastard). Jack's arm was around Harley's waist as they stepped in and stopped to take in the remains of the old place. Alex had some music playing lightly. Jack had to laugh. Alex was playing System of A Down's “This Cocaine Makes me Feel...” an extremely Alex choice of music. The lights were on, not bright, but casting a soft glow through the ancient and decaying theater. The only lights that were brighter were the ones that were on the stage where Jack and Harley could see the poker table and chairs that had been set up.

The theater had a three story lobby, stadium seating, rows and rows of decaying seats that led down to the stage and an orchestra pit below. The whole place smelled of dust and decay. Another aspect of the theater they noticed as they made their way down the aisle was that there was so much marble! The style of the theater's interior was Spanish baroque, which Harley could still see in the remains of the buildings walls and ceilings. The walls had once been painted—now fading—with Spanish women, animals, kings and maybe even knights in great murals across the walls.

Jack escorted Harley down the aisle toward the stage where it looked as if most of the players were already here, several well-dressed men milling about the stage. The table was a large, long, oval antique walnut Holdem table with a green cloth top, along with ten antique-looking walnut swivel chairs, each with brown upholstery and intricate flower patterns. The back of each chair had delicate carved decorations around the top. The chairs surrounded the table along with a few extra chairs for guests. Nine of the chairs had chips sitting in front of them, representing everyone's buy-in to the game. On the stage there were also four young, scantily clad women dressed in black mini skirts and halter tops, one African American, two caucasian and one young woman who looked to be Korean. At the corner of the stage, Alex had somehow set up a bar that looked to have everything anyone could possibly want to drink, along with a formally dressed bartender. Jack could see Alex leaning against the bar talking to the bartender. Where everyone else was dressed in their finest, except Gina who was in hospital nurse scrubs with Winnie-the-pooh on them, Alex was in holey jeans, a black t-shirt that read, “Bluffing: A Pair of Balls Beats Everything” across the chest, along with his favorite pair of Converse and a short sleeved red, black and white plaid shirt over the top.

Alex was chatting away with the bartender, smoking a large cigar, when he saw Jack and Harley approaching the stage. “JACK!! HARLEY!! How the fuck are you two?? Damn Harley, you look hot!! I think you're too good for old Jack boy here!” Alex came rushing over to greet them patting Jack on the back with his one hand before taking Harley's hand and kissing her knuckles lightly. (Jack didn't feel a spike of jealousy from Alex kissing Harley's hand. Alex was one of the few people Jack trusted...someone he would actually trust to protect Harley. And someone Jack knew would never dare make a move on her.)

Alex turned, grinning at all the players and their guests. “Okay boys and girls, the fucking gang is all here! Everyone take a fucking seat. Before we start though, put in your drink orders with the lovely fucking ladies over there and Bernard here is the fucking bartender.” Alex pointed with his one hand as he spoke around his cigar. “Benard is great and he doesn't come fucking cheap so ya'll better use his services! Once everyone is ready, then we will go over the fucking rules.”

“Rules? What the fuck? It's poker.” A skinny man with shiny, shaggy, blonde hair, with a crooked nose that looked as if it had been broken at least one muttered loudly. Overall he looked like
someone Jack wanted to hit. No, Jack thought, someone he wanted to watch bleed to death. The shaggy blonde was dressed in expensive clothing, a pair of brown slacks so dark they almost looked black and a matching dress shirt, with matching jacket, but he wore the clothing in such a way that he managed to make it look cheap.

Alex narrowed his eyes. “Jimmy, you shut the fuck up and listen or you're out and your fucking buy-in is mine.”

Jimmy started to open his mouth, but Alex just pointed at him with his one hand and Jimmy snapped his jaws shut with almost an audible snap of his teeth, clearly irritated but not willing to test the information broker.

Alex smiled. “Good. All right you fucks! Fucking listen. First rule, nobody and I mean nobody, insults anyone else’s date here tonight. That’s just fucking bad taste man. Second, I catch you fucking cheating, you're out on your fucking ass. No second chances and you never get to buy into one of my fucking games again. Rule three, you get too fucking drunk to play, that's on you...and again, you're out on your fucking ass, all your winnings are mine. Rule four, no fucking weapons. I'm fucking trusting you 'cause some of you fucks have been here before...the rest of you who are fucking new...I find out any of you brought a fucking weapon to my game I will fucking end you. And last rule, I reserve the fucking right to change or add to the fucking rules whenever I want. You have a problem with that, get the fuck out. You try to mess with me and mine at any fucking time...I will ruin you and you all know I fucking can.” Alex glared at everyone, except Jack and Harley...he winked at them. “Okay, take your fucking seats in the next twenty minutes and let's play some fucking poker!”

They had twenty minutes to put in their drink orders in, introduce themselves to each other if they wished and settle in to play. Jack walked Harley over to their seats. “You wait here angel. I'll go place our drink orders. Anything particular you want?”

Harley smiled. “Nah, surprise me puddin.”

Jack smiled at her brushing his fingers along her jaw before he walked over to the bar. No sooner had Jack stepped away than Jimmy Stilles flopped down in the seat next to her. “Hey sexy, what you doing here with a loser like Jack Wayne?”

Harley narrowed her eyes. “Watch it, Jack Wayne is my fiance.”

Jimmy laughed. “Oh I see—money. Hell honey, I could buy and sell the Waynes if money is what a girl like you wants...I could pay really well for your services. Really, really well.” His eyes raked over her making Harley feel more than a little uncomfortable.

“’You better watch it, my puddin doesn't like anyone messing with me,” Harley warned, but Jimmy laughed. “Please, that skinny freak? I know he's a whackjob, we've all heard the stories. Girl like you could do so much better than him.” Jimmy grabbed himself as if that somehow proved his point.

Harley made a disgusted face as she leaned forward, which had Jimmy's gaze going straight for her breasts. She had crossed her legs, laying her arm across her knee as she hissed at him. “You touch me, it's not my puddin you're going to have to worry about.”

Jimmy grinned. “Oh I like you. I guarantee by the end of the night, you'll be my bitch.” He did a thrusting motion with his hips. “Gonna have you riding me like a fucking horse.”

With that Jimmy stood up, winking at her and heading over to the bar. Harley's hands balled into fists as she imagined taking her bat to his head while she simultaneously shuddered wishing she could
take a shower to wash his stare off. He made her feel dirty. She glanced over at the bar. Jack was speaking with The Russian, Yuri. He glanced over at her with a question in his eyes, his gaze going over to Jimmy, instantly going cold. It was clear from Jack's eyes he realized Jimmy had done something even if he didn't know the specifics at the moment. Harley shook her head. She would tell him later, didn't want that jerk to ruin her puddin's game tonight...at least not yet.

* 

The game had been going back and forth for over an hour, several hands quickly played, but now they seemed to have hit the long play, the money in the middle had been steadily rising. Alex had done everyone a favor and switched the music playing to something a little less, agitating. Now Alex had techno dance music playing in the background, which was currently Skrillex's “Kill Everybody.”

Stagg was puffing on a cigar, his eyes narrowed, while his date—a woman who had to be almost twenty years his junior if not more—was sipping on a glass of champagne, her legs crossed so that her short dress fell away to reveal her thigh and hip. She had thick black hair pulled back in a tight bun at the base of her neck and was resting her elbow on Stagg's shoulder her eyes gazing at everyone at the table crossing between narrowed disregard and downright hate. Zucco, who had come alone, was spending a great deal of his time focused on The Russian. Yuri Dimitrov was a tall, not unattractive man with short black hair and wore a fur coat with an silk shirt underneath (though Harley thought the coat was overkill in this heat if he was wearing it to maintain a look.) His date was a young man, very pretty with thick eyelashes framing deep green eyes.

Gina, who came alone, was drinking a beer and leaning back studying her cards without a care in the world. Tobias Whale was fairly quiet, sipping his pomegranate martini delicately, the fragile glass looking especially dainty in the large man's hand. He would occasionally glance up at the other players, but only a quick glance, his eyes staying glued to his cards and his chips. His date was a slender wisp of a woman, so white that she almost seemed see-through. Pyg was also fairly quiet and alone. The man had shown up in an expensive black suit, but the top half of his face was covered by a pig's mask. It had taken Harley giving him a good pinch in the hip to stop Jack from barking out a laugh at the sight of the round little man with a pig mask.

(Jack had gathered Harley into his arms, pressing her tight against him, fighting his laughter as Jack hissed against her ear. “Why did the pig go to the casino?”

Harley giggled licking his cheek. “Why?”

Jack snickered like a child. “To play the slop machine!”

The last man, Jimmy Stilles, who was sitting on Harley's right, came alone much to Harley's annoyance because he would not stop leering at her.

Jack took a pull on his cigarette before setting it back down in the ash tray on his left. Harley was seated on his right. Stagg's date kept glaring daggers at Harley. Jack had simply smiled leaning over to whisper into Harley's ear. “I think the evil queen over there just realized she isn't the fairest in the land anymore.”

Harley blushed and chuckled. “Jack!”

Jack shrugged. “What?” He laughed and reached for his drink, a Screaming Orgasm which he had made of point of whispering to Harley. “Just like the one you had earlier today...”

Harley giggled and looked sideways at him with a grin as her cheeks reddened. She crossed her legs,
the ruffled layers of the silken material of her dress falling back from her thigh while she picked up
her own drink, a drink called Sex Appeal. Jack's hand immediately dropped to stroke her thigh,
brushing up her leg, his fingers caressing her skin in a way that sent chills up her spine.

Harley glanced at Jack's cards. She wasn't sure, but she thought he had a good hand. She then
 glanced up at the other players, trying to read their expressions. Alex was easy. He grinned watching
everyone (he was the dealer in this game) and it was clear to Harley that Alex was having a great
time, especially when Jack threw out a couple of grey chips into the pile after Tobias threw out a
grey chip. “I see your thousand and raise you another thousand.”

The intensity of the silence that came from the players seemed to increase. Harley was guessing that
was a big chip Jack threw out. He had explained to her the worth of the chips before they left and
she might have usually remembered, but he had been telling her while sliding his fingers under her
panties. A girl really couldn't think straight when that was happening. She suppressed a giggle,
sipping her drink to cover her blush as the memory of his fingers against her made her squirm in her
seat.

Harley's gaze returned to watching Stilles, trying to use her drink to hide her expression. Something
about the man was bothering her. It wasn't just his overall ickiness, but there was something about
the way he was holding his cards close to his chest, the way his gaze kept roaming over the other
players, there was an stiffness about his body language that bothered her. Something was definitely
off with him besides the fact that he was a fucking asshole.

Plus it didn't help that whenever he caught her watching him he would leer at her, licking his lips (or
at one point he held up his hand and waggled his tongue quickly between two of his fingers at her)
his eyes raking down her body in such a way that it made her feel dirty. He especially liked to stare
at her breasts which only made Harley acutely aware that she wasn't wearing a bra with this dress.

Jack drew her attention back to him by stroking his fingertips along her bare neck, then down her
bare shoulder. She turned her attention back to her puddin with a smile. She was pretty sure Jack had
cought Jimmy looking at her because she would feel Jack stiffen occasionally next to her in a way
that told her he was ready to pounce and when she had met Jack's eyes, he had that murderous gleam
in them directed at Jimmy. Harley had put her hand on his thigh to calm him. But Jimmy was
becoming bolder in his leering at Harley, even leaning over to whisper loudly. “I notice you're not
wearing a bra with that dress...nice.”

Jack started to rise, but Harley's hand on his knee stopped him...only barely.

Gina threw out a couple of grey clips with a smile. Alex lifted a brow at her in surprise, then Zucco
cursed. “Fuck, I fold.”

That was when Jimmy threw out five grey clips with what Harley thought of as a shit-eating grin.
The tension at the table became thick enough to be cut by a knife. Professor Pym growled. “I fold.”

Jack chuckled. “This is going to be funny.” He threw out another six grey chips. Stagg threw out
seven grey chips and Tobias tossed another eight grey chips out to the middle. Gina took a long
drink from her beer. “I fold boys.”

Jimmy laughed. “Oh getting to only us big boys playing, eh? I'll raise you boys another ten, I think
yer all bluffing.” Jimmy tossed out the chips.

That was when Harley saw it, from the corner of her eye; Jimmy palmed a card. He was good, she
almost didn't catch it, but she saw it, a card; he slipped it out of his hand and switched it. She didn't
quite catch the switch, because when she looked at his hand, the number of cards was the same. His
sleight of hand was almost perfect. She quickly leaned in to Jack and hissed against his ear. “He's cheating!”

Jack frowned leaning to the side watching the other players. “What?”

“Jimmy Stilles, I saw him palm a card! I'm sure of it.” Harley laid her hand on Jack's knee when she spoke.

Jack turned his cold blue gaze on Jimmy. The man wasn't paying attention to Jack; his eyes were now on Harley's legs. He wasn't even trying to hide the fact that he was gawking at her legs. He even went so far as to lick his lips. That was when the slow boil that Jack had been feeling since the moment he knew Jimmy was eyeballing Harley—and now to know the man was cheating at the game as well—caused what little control Jack had to boil over. He moved so quickly that Harley wasn't prepared for what happened next. Jack dropped his cards on the table, twisting around and grabbed the back of Harley's chair dragging her and the chair out of the way so swiftly that she didn't have time to react before Jack lunged, grabbing a pen out from an inner pocket of his jacket. The fountain pen seemed to flash before her eyes, the light catching the gold accents on the pen as Jack moved past her with almost inhuman speed. She had seen the pen before—it was a custom fountain pen she had seen him use on occasion. It was purple with a “J” on the side.

Jack grabbed Jimmy by the side of the head, yanking the man out of his chair. Jack's fingers grabbed a fistful of Jimmy's hair at the same time, yanking his head to the side. Then in the next second, before Jimmy had time to fight back, Jack slammed the fountain pen into Jimmy's neck.

Harley grabbed the arms of her chairs, her eyes wide. Everything seemed to slow down for her, as if the world was moving in slow motion. Jack lunging and thrusting the pen into the side of Jimmy's neck was like a graceful dance, the way Jack moved, his jacket flying back from him, the clenched smile of his perfectly white teeth and deep, blood red lips. She could even see the light catching Jack's blue eyes making them glow. He held the pen in Jimmy's neck, his hair falling down around his face, his smile wide, eyes dancing while he gazed down at Jimmy. With the pen embedded deep in Jimmy's neck, time seemed to stretch for Harley. She watched her lover hold the pen in place, grinning with undisclosed glee, then in the next second, Jack yanked the pen out, throwing his arm back wide. The light caught an arc of blood exploding from Jimmy's neck, thin, but the red of the blood glowed like Jack's eyes in the dim light. Blood started to flow from Jimmy's neck, dark red blood, like a fountain staining Jimmy's shirt, though it was hard to tell since Jimmy's clothes were so dark, the blood seemed to simply enhance the color. Jimmy stared up at Jack in shock as his life started to seep away. Jack smiled down at Jimmy, holding him up as the blood flowed fast from the hole in his neck.

Jack hissed low at Jimmy. “Look upon thy death.”

It was only when Jack stepped back, dropping Jimmy who landed on the floor with a thud, and began to convulse for a couple of seconds before he stopped moving, staring up at the ceiling, a darkening pool of blood gathering under him, that the rest of the poker table reacted. The young women who were serving drinks had started screaming. The bartender had ducked behind the bar hiding. Harley, still in her chair, started to giggle.

Everyone else began to yell, stumbling back from their chairs, the woman with Stagg was screaming. Whale was fairly calm, keeping his seat and frowning, but otherwise he didn't move and his lady did much the same. Professor Pyg made an actual piggy noise of...surprise? Stagg had stumbled up to his feet, a hand to his chest, but when his date had started to scream, Stagg grabbed her by the hair, shaking her and hissed, “SHUT IT FLORENCE!”

The Russian had gathered up his boyfriend who had burst into tears. Gina didn't react except to
Zucco pulled a gun and was holding it on Jack screaming. “WHAT THE FUCK??!!”

But it was Alex who was the voice of reason, yelling when he jumped up from his seat. “EVERYONE SHUT THE FUCK UP!!!”

Everyone was suddenly silent.

Jack turned to face the table with a smile on his face looking perfectly calm after his outburst of violence. “Sorry about that everyone, but Jimmy here was cheating.” Alex looked pale. He walked over to where Jimmy lay on the floor, the pool of blood under his body was so dark that it looked black under the lights.

Alex pressed his lips together stepping back to avoid the ever expanding pool of blood. “Cheating eh?”

“Yes, Harley saw him palm a card. Don't believe me, search him.” Jack said calmly, pulling out a handkerchief from his jacket's breast pocket and started to clean his pen.

Harley stood up walking closer. “He palmed a card. I'm sure of it.”

Jack reached out to take her hand. She smiled at him, weaving her fingers with his as she stepped closer.

Alex's expression conveyed his displeasure, but he dropped into a crouch and with his one hand, he searched the body. After a few seconds Alex came up with extra cards, hidden up the sleeves of Jimmy's shirt and another card in the pocket of his slacks. Alex narrowed his eyes in anger as he stood up showing everyone the cards.

“Mr. Wayne and Miss Quinn were correct...Jimmy was fucking cheating.” Alex tossed the cards down on the table then turned a hard gaze on Zucco. “You brought a fucking gun to my game Zucco?”

Zucco snarled, putting the gun back where it had been hidden under his jacket. “Yeah...what're you going to do, eh?”

Alex snarled pointing with one hand. “Get the fuck out Zucco, you're blacklisted.”

“You can't do that!” Zucco hissed, but Alex smiled. “Don't push me Zucco...don't push me.”

Zucco looked at everyone then at the body and shrugged. “Fuck you all.”

“Oh and Zucco, you try anything, I got your dad's personal number. Remember that you fucktard.” Alex said without looking at Zucco, his attention back on the body. Zucco paled even more, then quickly turned and left, the sounds of his running feet echoed off the walls of the old theater.

“Oh Okay everyone, get out. I mean the fucking game is over. Don't know how long Jimmy here was cheating so everyone, except Zucco, gets their buy-in back. I'll fucking reschedule the game.” Alex waved everyone out with his one hand.

The players muttered among themselves, but nobody disputed Alex. Instead they gathered up their things and left. Alex watched them go before turning back to the problem at hand.

It wasn't long before the place had been cleared out when Alex groaned. “God damn Jack, I don't
know whether I should be fucking impressed or irritated!” Alex shook his head. “What did you kill him with?” Alex turned to look at Jack who held up his pen.

Alex blinked, his eyes widening in surprise, then he shook his head again. “A fucking pen? Are you fucking with me?”

Jack grinned and shrugged. “You said no weapons.”

Harley giggled at this and placed a quick kiss on Jack's cheeks. “You are so gifted puddin.”

“Yeah...I fucking did. Man...I didn't know you...well...shit.” Alex rubbed the back of his neck looking at Jimmy with Jack standing beside him. Jack wrapped his arm protectively around Harley's waist. “So, what are we going to do Alex?” Jack asked casually, seemingly unconcerned.

Alex shrugged. If he was disturbed by Jack and Harley's calm after Jack's murder of Stilles, he didn't show it. “I got a gal who does clean up. You work with the fucking mob like I do, you need a cleaner...just in case.”

Jack asked softly. “What about your employees here or everyone at the game?”

For a moment Alex noticed the cold way Jack's gaze took in Alex's employees and Alex knew, Jack and Harley would not have an issue with disposing of them. Alex shivered, but then made a rude noise. “Don't you fucking worry about any of them, they know who butters their bread and who will fucking make their lives a living hell if they fuck with me. I ain't worried about the others either. All of them have fucking skeletons rattling around and I know about fucking all of them. They won't want to get involved.” Alex frowned staring down at the body and shook his head again.

“Just...wow man. I didn't know you had it in you, even with the fight club stuff. I'm fucking impressed!”

Jack shrugged and chuckled. “There's a few things about me you don't know Alex.”

Alex smiled. “Hey man, you're my fucking friend, no matter what.” Alex smacked him on the back. “You and Harley go on. I'll take care of this. Knew I shouldn't have let this fuckhead buy-in to the game,” Alex muttered more to himself then to them.

Jack took Harley's hand and led her off the stage. They had just started up the aisle when Alex yelled after them. “Hey, you still gonna go fight Croc tomorrow night?”

Jack turned with a laugh. “Of course. I have a score to settle with him.”

Alex chuckled and shook his head. “You're a fucking monster, man, just fucking nuts. I'll be there though. Not going to pass an opportunity up to bet on you! Gotta make some money after the fuck show this game was...” Alex waved.

Jack waved back. “You have no idea Alex! No idea at all! See you tomorrow!”

*

Frost was reading when Jack and Harley came out. He was a little surprised to see them so soon, but he made no comment as they stepped into the car. He started the engine.

“Where to boss?”

“Take us home Frost my love!” Jack was laughing. “Well, that was a lot more exciting than I bargained for.”
Harley giggled. “I loved the way you handled the situation puddin.” She giggled licking her lips seductively. “It was a real turn on puddin.”

Jack chuckled. “Oh?”

Harley nodded pressing her teeth into her bottom lip, gazing at Jack through her eyes lashes. “Uhuh...That was one of the sexiest things you have ever done puddin.”

Jack purred reaching out with one finger to trace her collarbone. “Was it really?”

He yanked her closer, making Harley squeal in surprise, covering her mouth with his for a kiss that caused her to burn with want. Jack dragged his teeth across her tongue when he pulled away from her mouth and with a husky voice he purred again. “Wanna show me just how sexy you thought it was?”

He licked his lips smiling that wicked smile she loved so much.

Harley's smile in response was beautiful. “Oh yes puddin, I do...”

Harley licked her lips reaching over to undo the top button of his slacks while Jack leaned back against the seat. She pulled then zipper down, her hand slowly caressing him over his boxers, squeezing gently. Jack hissed with pleasure, his eyes hooded with lust as he whispered. “Harley girl...”

Harley giggled pulling him out, her hand wrapped around his quickly hardening erection. She leaned down and gradually ran her tongue up the length of him stopping at the head of his shaft to place a tender kiss. Jack dropped his head back against the back of the seat, letting out a long low groan. “Harley...”

He grabbed the back of her hair, weaving his fingers through her mess updo, his fingers forming a fist in her hair, his other hand pressed against the window while Harley sucked him into her mouth. “Mmm...” she moaned bobbing her head, her tongue slathering him with her saliva. She wrapped her other hand around him, sliding and twisting her hands while she pulled up on his shaft with both her hands and her lips. Jack's whole body jerked.

He grinned. “Oh Damn Harls!”

* 

Frost had started to lay his hand along the back of the seat to begin backing up the car when he saw Miss Quinn going down on Mr. Wayne. He quickly turned around reaching up to adjust the rear view mirror to help him back up without catching sight of them two of them in the backseat. The last thing he did see though was Miss Quinn crawling onto Mr. Wayne's lap, pressing her hands to the ceiling of his car when she started to grind her hips.

* 

When they arrived back at the manor, Harley stumbled out of the car first while yanking the top of her dress up at the same time, quickly straightening up the skirt of her dress giggling and laughing the whole time. Jack hopped out after her pulling up his slacks and swiftly zipping them up. He grabbed Harley's hand, dancing around to where Frost started to get out of the car. Jack grabbed the door leaning on the top of it and grinning down at Frost.

“Hey Frost, you feel like being our driver again tomorrow night?” Jack grinned holding on to a
giggling Harley's hand.

Frost smiled. “Sure thing!”

Jack raised an eyebrow at him. “You sure? Because we are going to be doing something pretty illegal!!”

Frost frowned in thought...

Jack tilted his head to the side. “The pay will be double and if you are good at keeping your mouth closed and want a different career, I wouldn't mind hiring you on permanently.”

“Permanently?” Frost looked like he had just won the lottery. “You sure, Mr. Wayne?”

Jack's smile was sincere. “I always take care of my friends. You wanna be my friend Frost?”

Frost grinned and nodded. “Whatever you want, Boss.”

Jack thumped the top of the door before he pushed away from it. “Perfect. Take the car, it's yours and be here tomorrow by 9 pm. I'll have another suit sent over for you.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wayne,” Frost said, proud that he kept his tone calm.

Jack and Harley turned together before heading to the door. Jack waved at him.

“No, thank you Frost my love, thank you!”

Jack and Harley laughed as they headed inside.

*  

The next morning Bruce was downstairs in the kitchen with Alfred. He was dressed casual, grey slacks and a dark blue and white checked button down shirt. He had decided to let Jack know that he wanted to throw them an engagement party; deciding to take Alfred's advice...an olive branch, but he also had something rather important he wanted to discuss with Jack. He wanted to arrange for Jack to meet with one of the family lawyers to write up a prenuptial agreement. After careful thought Bruce had decided it would be for the best.

Bruce stood by the coffeemaker having just finished making himself some coffee while Alfred was cooking breakfast. Bruce watched the older man's back while Alfred worked. “Do you think they will be down or should I head up?” Bruce asked.

Alfred turned with the skillet of scrambled eggs in his hands. He had two plates set out on a tray, along with toast, butter, jam and bacon. “They were out late last night Master Bruce. I suspect that they will be eating upstairs this morning, which is why I'm making their breakfast accordingly.”

Bruce smiled. “Let me take it up to them.”

Alfred frowned slightly as if he wanted to disagree, but instead he nodded. “As you wish, Master Bruce.”

*  

Harley giggled trying to worm herself away from Jack, squealing and giggling.

“Stop!!” she yelled, but Jack wasn't having any of it. Laughing, he grabbed her, rolling her around,
at the same time jumping on top of her so that he was straddling her. He grabbed her wrists and held her arms out to the side, pushing them down and slightly up holding her down against the mattress.

“And where do you think you're going Miss Quinn?” Jack chuckled leaning down to lick the tip of her nose.

Harley giggled wiggling under him which she noticed made him harder, his shaft hot against her stomach. “Nowhere Mr. Wayne...did you want something?”

Jack grinned wide. “Oh I want something all right.”

Harley laughed. “Well, you have to fight me for it!”

She bucked, catching Jack off guard. The sudden thrust of her hips upward caused him to lose his grip on her since he really hadn't been holding down all that tightly. Harley managed to yank one of her legs free, twisting it around to wrap around his waist and flipped him, but she rolled with him so that he was flat on his back. She swiftly grabbed his wrists and pinned his arms over his head.

“Now, who has the upper hand Mr. Wayne?” Harley giggled, her hair falling wildly around her face framing her in gold.

Jack grinned, his teeth pressed into his bottom lip, his hair a mess making him look much younger and more vulnerable as he purred. “Now what are you going to do to me Miss Quinn?”

Harley giggled. “Oh I'm going to...” but before she could finish what she was about to say, there was a knock at the bedroom door.

Jack frowned for a moment then smiled. “I bet it's Alfred with breakfast.”

Harley let him go and jumped up. “Better let me go get it, you're in no condition to be answering the door.” She looked pointedly at his hard erection with a cute predatory smile.

Jack grinned. “You're probably right.” He pulled the sheet and blanket up to cover himself while Harley hopped off the bed and grabbed her robe from the floor. The robe was black made from silk. Jack had picked it up for her when they were in California.

Harley swept her hair back and walked quickly across the room to open the door. “Morning Alf...” but her voice trailed off in shock when she saw Bruce standing there holding the tray. Bruce smiled a little awkwardly when he saw Jack was still in bed and Harley was wearing a thin robe.

“I...I brought your breakfast up for you,” Bruce explained, glancing down at the tray. (Bruce had noticed the tattoo, but said nothing) “And...and I was hoping I could talk to you in private Jack.”

Jack frowned in confusion looking young and hurt with his hair curling around his long features making him look no older than eighteen. Jack narrowed his eyes suspiciously at Bruce. “Why? Anything you can say to me can be said in front of Harley, big brother.”

Bruce frowned looking uncomfortable. Harley took the tray from him, walking back into the room and setting it on one of the bedside tables. Bruce rubbed the back of his neck. “Jack, I just need to talk to you. Could you meet me in the library after you eat?”

“I brought your breakfast up for you,” Bruce explained, glancing down at the tray. (Bruce had noticed the tattoo, but said nothing) “And...and I was hoping I could talk to you in private Jack.”

Jack frowned in confusion looking young and hurt with his hair curling around his long features making him look no older than eighteen. Jack narrowed his eyes suspiciously at Bruce. “Why? Anything you can say to me can be said in front of Harley, big brother.”

Bruce frowned looking uncomfortable. Harley took the tray from him, walking back into the room and setting it on one of the bedside tables. Bruce rubbed the back of his neck. “Jack, I just need to talk to you. Could you meet me in the library after you eat?”

Jack started to snap something back, but Harley reached over and touched his arm. “It's okay puddin. You go talk to your brother. I can straighten up in here, okay?”

Jack frowned and stared at her for a couple of heartbeats before he sighed. “Fine, I'll be down after
breakfast.”

Bruce smiled at Jack. “Thank you Jack.” Bruce reached over and grabbed the doorknob stepping back and closing the door. Jack crossed his arms over his chest looking sour as he muttered. “What on earth could he possibly want? Need to get after me about something I'm sure.”

Harley giggled and poured some coffee into one of the mugs on the tray from the pot Alfred had sent up.

“Don't be such a grump puddin.” She handed him his coffee. “You know, after your little meeting, we could go swimming, naked in the pool.” Harley waggled her eyebrows at him making Jack laugh and then Harley purred. “I could start out wearing that little bikini you bought me. You know the one I haven't worn yet...”

Jack grinned and licked his lips. “Okay, since you have given me incentive, I’ll do my best to be good.”

Harley giggled climbing back into the bed and slipped out of the robe at the same time. Jack's eyes raked slowly over her smooth creamy skin, his body immediately reacting to the sight of her naked, the curve of her hip, the swell of her breasts, the hardness of her nipples...

Jack purred. “Oh I’ll be very good.”

Harley giggled picking up a fork, and scooped up some of the eggs. “Open up puddin...”

*

Forty-five minutes later, Jack came down to the library. He was all smiles and singing as he hopped down the manor stairs and danced into the library.

Bruce could hear Jack's singing voice—which he had to admit was stellar—before Jack entered the room.

“Linger in my arms
A little longer, baby
Hold me tight
While my love for you
Is growing stronger, baby
It ain't right to say goodnight....”

Jack was wearing a pair of grey, almost silver, slim cut slacks that accented his thin figure and height, along with a white button down shirt, the top four buttons of which were undone showing off just a little of his chest. The sleeves were rolled up and he wore a pair of distressed white bucks with a pair of grey and white striped socks. Jack's hair was slicked back now and Bruce could see that Harleen must have put eyeliner on him again because the blue of Jack's eyes was quite vivid.

“So Bruce, what did you need to see me about that is so important? Did Harley and I break the table in the jet?” Jack grinned wickedly clearly not the least bit upset if they had broken the table. He rocked on his feet for a moment in front of his older brother, his hands shoved into his front pockets.

“No, no,” Bruce waved that notion off. “I...I decided that I would like to throw you and Harley an
engagement party,” Bruce said.

Jack blinked, clearly in shock and flopped down onto one of the leather wing-backed chairs. “You what?”

“I want to plan an engagement party for you and Harley.” Bruce smiled, as if he were trying the expression on for the right fit.

Jack narrowed his eyes. “Where's my brother and what have you done with him?”

Bruce chuckled. “I want to make amends Jack. You're my only brother, I don't want us to always be at each others throats for the rest of our lives. I want to extend an olive branch and I thought this might be a way to do that.”

Jack leaned back in the chair crossing his long legs, his hands wrapped around his narrow knee, studying his brother. “All right, what's the catch?”

Bruce looked uncomfortable for a moment before he sighed. “I want to set up a meeting with one of the family lawyers for you to draw up a prenuptial agreement.”

Jack went very still. Bruce noticed Jack's altered posture as the younger Wayne said, “You want what?”

Bruce sat forward, motioning with his hands. “You need a prenup Jack. You can't just roll full steam ahead into a marriage without getting a prenuptial to protect yourself and the family fortune. If you end up in a divorce, if there are any children, things like that can become really messy…”

Jack snarled as he leapt to his feet, but Bruce noticed there was more than simply anger in Jack’s eyes, he could see the beginning of tears, glistening at the edges (much like Jack would do when they were younger; he could become so angry he would start to cry, but as they became older Jack would instead start to laugh, which Bruce found disconcerting, which was what happened now.)

Jack’s smile was sharp and the chuckle that accompanied it was just as sharp. “You know Bruce, you are a fucking jerk! Harley and I are going to be together forever, come what may. She isn't simply the woman I love, she is so much more than that! You just have no understanding of a real, undying forever love! She is my soul mate, my lover, my best friend and my partner! You don't understand that kind of love Bruce. Complete and utter trust. She will never betray me, never. And I will never betray her!”

Bruce stood up and reached for Jack, but Jack angrily yanked himself out of his brother's grip. “I will not make Harley sign a prenup Bruce. I won't!”

Bruce put his hands up as if he were trying to calm of wild, unpredictable animal. “All right all right Jack,” Bruce conceded. “The prenup is off the table all right...but please, just promise me you will at least think about it.”

Jack narrowed his blues eyes, the same blue eyes Bruce shared and their father had shared, but while Bruce’s eyes held the stern and unmovong calm that their father's had, Jack's eyes were wild, untamed, channeling their mother's free spirit rather than their father's stern determination.

“No. I won't even consider it,” Jack hissed low and menacing.

Bruce pressed his lips together. He wanted to argue further, but he knew he was losing whatever ground he had gained with Jack with the offer of the engagement party, an official endorsement of their wedding.
Bruce nodded. “Fine Jack, fine...no prenup.”

Jack breathed heavily through his nose in an effort to control his temper then nodded. “Thank you. And thank you for the offer of the engagement party.”

Bruce smiled. “I'm still going to do that...we'll have Gotham's best and brightest there; make an official announcement. The papers will love it.”

Jack’s smile was hesitant as if he wasn’t sure whether to believe his brother or not. That hurt Bruce, that their relationship had deteriorated over the years to the point that Jack didn't fully trust him. After several heartbeats Jack smiled and nodded. “Thank you Bruce.”

Bruce reached for Jack again, but this time Jack didn't resist, he let Bruce pull him in for a hug. Bruce squeezed his brother. “I love you Jack. No matter what you may think, I love you. You're my only brother; I just want what's best for you.”

Jack closed his eyes holding onto Bruce, laying his head against his brothers shoulder. “I love you too Bruce.”

The brothers were quiet for a handful of heartbeats, just holding each other. For this brief moment they were brothers again, the brothers their parents had wanted them to be. When Jack pulled away, he grabbed Bruce by the face and planted a loud kiss on his brothers lips. “MMUUFFPPP!!” He made loud popping kiss sound before he let Bruce go.

Bruce chuckled wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “Eewww!!”

(It was a routine from their childhood, before their parents death...Jack would kiss Bruce on the lips and Bruce would act disgusted.)

“Well, I'm going to go tell Harley!” Jack started to trot to the door when Bruce called out. “We should get together, the three of us to discuss details and when to have the party.”

Jack grinned from the doorway. “I know the when: as soon as possible.” With that Jack winked at his brother and headed out.

Bruce smiled thinking to himself that maybe they did have a chance to repair their relationship and there was still the chance he might find a way to convince Jack to reconsider the prenup. He just had to handle Jack carefully.

*

Jack found Harley at the pool where she said she would be waiting for him. He walked into the enclosed space to see her floating on her back with her eyes closed. She looked like an angel, her long blonde hair floating around her head in the water, her arms moving gradually back and forth. She was wearing a micro red string bikini he had bought while in California. He grinned watching her. There was barely enough material to cover...anything. The top only covered her nipples and the bottoms were a thong. She had blushed when he had bought it, but now she was wearing it. Jack stepped further into the room moving quietly. Harley didn't react, so clearly she didn't hear him. He slipped out of his clothing, stripping down to nothing at all, placing his outfit on one of the lounge chairs in here, then silently slipped into the water with little to no sound. He sank slowly under the water, like a predator, only his eyes and forehead visible above the waterline, but as he moved deeper into the pool he slowly sank down completely under the water. Harley sighed content to let the water hold her as she waited for Jack to return from speaking with his brother. She moved her hands through the water in slow waves, letting her mind wander. She was smiling as she thought...
about running her tongue long Jack's neck, tracing out his tattoo with the tip of her tongue, when there was a burst of water and she was grabbed. Harley yelped, but then she was quickly struggling for breath as she was yanked down below the water's surface. Harley struggled, twisting her arm around until her elbow connected. That was the moment she realized it was Jack who had grabbed her. He pushed away from her grabbing his nose, a small stream of blood floated in the water from between his hands where he grabbed his face. They both headed to the water's surface, both of them gasping for air.

“OH MY GOD JACK!” Harley yelled as soon as she had air and swam over to him. Jack tested his nose. “You didn't break anything sweets, but damn, great right elbow there.” Jack laughed then. Harley grabbed Jack's face between her hands and kissed his face all over, tenderly kissing his nose. “Oh Jack, I'm so sorry!”

Jack laughed. “Harley, it's fine.” He pulled her into his arms wrapping them around her. Harley pouted which only made Jack laugh more.

“I'm proud of you, you silly little thing.” He kissed her until Harley relaxed wrapping her kiss with enthusiasm.

He licked her lips once before breaking the kiss.

“I like the suit.” He smirked.

Harley laughed. “I'm glad because you are the only one who will ever see it.”

“Mm...I can live with that.” Jack chuckled.

“So what did Bruce want?” Harley asked as the two of them lazily floated in a circle in the middle of the pool.

“Well, he wants to plan our engagement party,” Jack said while he began to nibble on her chin.

“What?? really?” Harley looked startled.

“Yup. He almost ruined it by insisting on a prenup though...” Jack's attention moved to her ear.

“Oh.”Harley frowned then added softly. “I'll sign whatever you want me to puddin. I want to be your wife,” Harley whispered back while Jack began to run the tip of his tongue along the lobe of her ear, tracing the ear softly.

“I know you would my little pumpkin, but I don't want a prenup. You're my girl. Always. I trust you more than I trust myself Harley. You are my everything. I don't need or want a prenup.” Jack purred against her ear before sticking his tongue in her ear making her giggle, squeal and squirm in his arms. Jack laughed at her reaction.

“Jack, I love you.” Harley said it tenderly.

Jack smiled looking into her blue eyes. His were so much more vivid, the eyeliner around them smeared to cover the whole of his eyelid, almost like a clowns make-up except Jack didn't look funny at all. He looked...magnetic. His eyes were like the pull of a black hole, inescapable.

“You are the only person I love Harley. Only you, ever.” Jack kissed her, a sweet yet passionate kiss. He pulled back to grin playfully. “Now didn't you promise I could take this off of you?”

Harley giggled. “I did.”
“Mm...” Jack smiled and dragged his teeth along his bottom lip in anticipation. Harley felt the first pull of the ties behind her back coming loose...

*

When Frost arrived to pick Jack and Harley up, he was wearing his second new suit in as many days. This one was a well-tailored navy blue suit, with white shirt and a navy, white and silver striped tie. Frost had even gone to have his hair trimmed and cleaned up. He looked every inch the driver/bodyguard for some wealthy personage. He was waiting in the car when Jack and Harley stepped out of the manor. Harley wore a pair of denim shorts that were cut especially short, and a red crop top with black trim, fish net stocking and a pair of black and red Converse high tops. Her hair was pulled into two low hanging tied pigtails. She looked ready to go roller derby, thought Frost when he saw her walking beside Mr. Wayne. Walking at her side, holding her hand, Jack Wayne was dressed in slim fitted black jeans, a solid white t-shirt and some black vans.

They both hopped into the back seat, all smiles and laughs. Jack leaned forward and handed Frost a card with an address on it. (The card had arrived this afternoon with the address for the new fight club.)

Frost glanced at the note. “This is in Otisburg, right?”

Jack nodded. “Far as I know. Think you can get us there?”

Frost grinned. “Of course Boss, just hold on.”

Jack laughed dropping back into the seat wrapping his arm around Harley's shoulders. “I love this man sweets.”

Harley laughed and smiled up at Jack.

*

Frost pulled up in front of a large abandoned building that had the painted remains on the side stating that this place use to be a brewery. Blockbuster was outside leaning against the wall smoking a cigarette with a bottle of beer at his feet, looking like just some man wasting time on a muggy Gotham night.

Frost pulled around and parked the car between two buildings. “You want me to wait here Boss?” Frost asked looking out the front window, clearly not happy with their current location.

Jack smiled. “Yeah, yeah, nothing to worry about here—among friends my dear Frost.”

Frost didn’t look sure, but he nodded. “Whatever you say Boss.”

*

The inside of the building had been recently cleaned, the old and abandoned equipment had been pushed to the sides to create a large space for the fight. When Jack and Harley walked in though they were both surprised at the size of the crowd. The two fights that Jack and Harley had been to had both been well attended, but this crowd was the size of both of those together.

Jack frowned. “Wonder what's going on?”

Harley frowned too, then hissed. “You don't think this is all for your fight with Croc do you?”
Jack frowned in thought, but slowly a wide smile spread across his face. “Oh, this is going to be so much fun!!”

*

Music was playing, Marilyn Manson’s “Killing Strangers” filled the area while people milled about placing bets, passing around beers, and a few were in the corner playing cards while they waited for the main event to take place. Jack and Harley wove their way through the crowd heading over to where Warren was taking bets left and right. Standing next to him was Alex, smoking a cigarette and a holding a bottle of beer. When Alex saw him he threw his arm up. “The man of the hour!! How the fuck you two doing?”

Jack laughed. “So what is going on tonight?” He and Alex exchanged a quick embrace, then Alex did the same with Harley.

Alex laughed. “Fuck man, everyone is here to see you fight that fucking crocodile man of Penguin's!!”

Harley glanced around. “How's the betting going?”

“So far the odds are 2 to 1 against...a lot of people are putting their money on the lizard. There are some side bets going on whether or not Croc is going to bite your head off.” Warren smiled apologetically.

Harley scowled. “What?” She took a step toward Warren like she wanted to punch him, but Alex put his hand on her shoulder. “Hold on Harley, not Warren's fault. Just a rumor that got started about Croc being a cannibal. Anyway, I'm betting on you Jack.” Alex grinned and winked.

Harley pulled out her wallet from her back pocket. She didn't have a lot of cash on her (since Jack usually paid for everything), but she yanked out two fifties and handed them to Warren. “On Jack.”

Warren smiled and nodded. “Okay, one hundred on Jack Wayne.”

Jack laughed yanking Harley up against him. “Oh my sweet, sweet girl. I'm going to carve his eyeballs out just for you.”

Harley grinned gazing up at Jack lovingly. “Promise?”

“I promise sweets.” Jack kissed her, grabbing her rear with his other hand and pressed her hard against him. The thought of violence, blood and murder was turning them both on to the point that Alex cleared his throat. “Hey guys, you might want to save the groping for later.”

Jack chuckled against Harley's lips. He pulled back, but kept a hand around her waist. He was about to say something when everyone quieted, turning to look in one particular direction as someone turned off the music. Penguin entered the room.

Oswald Cobblepot was flanked on both sides by the same two attractive women as last time, along with an additional two new women who...well, no one could be sure what they looked liked. The women had their faces covered by white, expressionless masks and tight, red bodysuits giving them each an eerie appearance.

A new throne was set against the wall more or less facing the middle of the room. Penguin, dressed in a fancy suit of black and grey and looking rather stylish as he used his cane, kept his back straight not looking at anyone until he had taken his seat. The new 'throne' was a Victorian wing back styled chair with black upholstery.
Jack leaned in close to Harley whispering, “I have to give old Oswald props for the drama.”

Once Oswald was seated, he grinned, his eyes scanning the mostly silent crowd until he saw Jack Wayne. “I see you came after all.”

Jack stepped forward, yanking his shirt over his head and handed it to Harley. “Of course I did Pengie. One more tier and then it’s me and you again.” Jack winked at him, blowing Oswald a kiss at the same time. Cobblepot sneered, but the expression quickly morphed into a wicked smile. “Let the fight begin!!”

The music started up again, this time whomever was in charge of the music had In This Moment's 'Sick like Me' playing. Then the crowd started to part. Jack turned, following everyone's gaze as Killer Croc slowly entered the room. Harley felt a knot form in the pit of her stomach when she saw him, remembering the dark sewer, the blood and death down there where he had taken both of them. Harley paled, but her overriding emotions were anger that quickly escalated to rage and bloodlust. She wanted to see her puddin kill this monster who had dared to hurt them both.

Jack smiled darkly, his gaze following Killer Croc as the huge figure lumbered to the center of the room. Everyone was quiet as the large crocodile man stopped, suddenly as immobile and eerie as a crocodile waiting for the chance to strike. Jack wasn't sure, but it looked to him as if Croc had somehow grown bigger.

Jack grinned as he walked over to stand in front of Croc and looked up at the man who had to be well over seven feet tall. “Wanna hear a joke?” Jack asked and continued before Killer Croc could answer. “What do you get when you cross a crocodile with a flower?”

Croc grinned a fanged, toothy grin down at Jack. “I don't know, what do you get?”

Jack giggled. “I don't know either, but I'm not going to smell it!”

Croc chuckled, his clawed hand snapping out to grab Jack around the neck.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to Mabelmadness for the lipstick color!!
Croc lifted Jack off his feet, his large clawed hand squeezing Jack's throat while at the same time the crocodile man opened his mouth wide, displaying rows of sharp four inch canines along with other large fanged teeth. Jack grinned and wrinkled his nose at the same time. “Damn man, don't you brush between victims?”

He laughed and wrapped his hands around Croc's wrist (though his hands didn't quite wrap completely around the larger man's wrist), Jack brought his legs up and planted his feet against the giant man's scaled chest and pushed with all his strength. The suddenly shift and power behind the move threw Croc off, whose hold on Jack was broken. Jack hit the concrete floor hard, knocking the air from his lungs, but he threw his arms behind his head, bringing his legs up and thrust himself up onto his feet just as Croc lunged.

* 

Harley cried out, “Jack!” as she brought her hands up and covered her mouth with her knuckles. Her blue eyes were wide when Croc took a swipe at Jack, his claws raking across Jack's side, slicing through his skin. Jack leapt back just barely in time, the claws only making a shallow line across his stomach instead of gutting him as Croc intended, but the pain still burned white hot through Jack. He hissed, sparing a quick glance down at the ragged three lines across his stomach, the top of his jeans suddenly soaked in blood.

“Oh that was a good one Croc. Let's see what else you have.” Jack ducked under another swipe. Croc took another one, but Jack slapped it away causing Croc to look down at his hand oddly. Jack danced back a few steps with a grin, then he leapt up taking a swing with his right fist to hit Croc in the jaw, then another with his left hitting Croc's jaw on the other side. Then Jack wrapped his fists together landing a blow on the top of Croc's head when he leapt into the air.

While Jack's hits seemed to be distracting at the most, they didn't seem to have much affect on Killer Croc. Jack hissed as he tried to take another swing, but Croc grabbed Jack's arm in a vice like grip. Jack twisted his body around, bringing his left leg up in a roundhouse kick, smacking his shin into Croc's side.

Croc only snarled. “Little man!”

Croc released Jack's arms and grabbed Jack by his upper arms to lift him off his feet before tossing Jack into the crowd. Jack hit the group of people, who didn't know whether to catch him or not, knocking several of the audience down with him but the effect at least cushioned his fall.

* 

Penguin chuckled watching Jack begin the slide to a loss—a painful, perhaps permanent loss. Oswald's eyes wandered over to Jack's fiancee and he wondered how much she would cost him...

* 

Croc lunged again, spittle flying from his mouth. “That all you got Wayne?”

Croc slashed with his claws at Jack, catching Jack in the face, his forefinger claw cutting across Jack's cheek, leaving a long bloody cut.
Harley cried out. “JACK!”

Alex wrapped his arm around her shoulders. “It's okay Harley!”

She turned to look at Alex, who could see that there was real fear in her eyes.

* Jack hissed in pain, feeling the sudden warmth of blood dripping down his face and off his chin, but he ducked and kicked, caught Croc in the knee with a sickening sounding crack, which caused the larger man to stumble to the side. Jack was certain that he had not caused lasting damage to the mutated brute, but it gave him the opportunity to quickly unbuckle his belt and pull off the buckle, which was more than simply a buckle. It was also a knife with a small, but comfortable grip; over three inches and double edged. Holding the knife's hilt with his teeth, Jack swiftly wrapped the thick leather of his belt around his right fist as he dodged a clumsy backhanded swipe from Croc, flexing his fingers once while his eyed Croc.

Someone from the crowd yelled. “Hey, he has a weapon!”

* Harley turned, her eyes wild. She stalked through the crowd, shoving people aside as the speaker continued to yell at anyone who would listen about the knife that Jack Wayne now held. When Harley found him, she saw that the man was an average guy who looked like he might go to the gym on a regular basis with muscles that were clearly more for show than for any real use. He was wearing a sleeveless t-shirt and jeans, his hair slicked back like he thought of himself as James Dean, full with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. Harley pushed by Alex (who had followed her then tried to put himself in front of her saying, “Now Harley...” but then as she shoved passed Alex, he shrugged and

so Pokemon, Alex noted with mild interest, had not uttered a word about the weapon Jack Wayne had. The all muscle and little brains young man was standing on his toes in the crowd, his hands cupped over his mouth yelling his head off.

“That fuck has a knife!! Ain't someone gonna call foul on that?”

Harley walked right up to the guy with Alex close behind her. (He figured it was sort of his job to keep an eye on Jack's girl for him even though Jack had never asked him to do so, but that was what friends were for...) Harley grabbed the kid by the front of his shirt. Alex could tell from the younger man's expression, for a half beat the young guy thought the gorgeous blonde was going to try to kiss him, but that was quickly dispelled when she quick walked him backwards before she slammed the man up against the wall.

“You see that giant Crocodile out there?! Well he has fucking claws and teeth! So my puddin having a blade is only fair!” She put her face right up in the younger man's nearly spitting at him in her rage. She shook the man for good measure while she spoke. The young man, no more than twenty-three of so, just stared at her. Harley let go of his shirt.

“So shut your mouth unless you want me to knock your teeth out.”

She turned and started to move away. Then he did something that made Alex grimace and shake his head at the stupidity of some people, as the young man muttered out loud.

“Okay, okay...geez you crazy bitch!”
Harley's narrowed her eyes. Alex saw her form a fist at her side. He grinned shaking his head—not to indicate that she shouldn't, but in amusement about what was about to occur. Harley turned so quickly the guy didn't know what hit him when her fist connected with his face, causing several people to turn and cheer when she clearly broke this man's nose.

The man with the big mouth hit the wall and screeched, his hands going to his face in disbelief. “You fucking psycho bitch! You broke my nose!!”

He snarled at her and tried to take a punch, swinging his arm wildly. Harley brought her leg up to plant her foot against his chest in a kick that sent him stumbling back to hit the wall again. He hissed and spit out a string of curses as he tried to throw another punch at her. Harley blocked the punch with her forearms before she slammed her fist into his face again. The impact of her knuckles against his teeth cracked one of his front teeth.

Harley yanked her hand back, her knuckles clearly cut and bleeding. The stupid young man gasped in pain, his lips bloody from where she had smashed them against his teeth.

Alex groaned. “Oh, you fucking moron.”

The man tried yet again to hit Harley, clearly too stubborn to know when he had met his match—or rather, his better. Alex shrugged thinking it served the fucking asshole right if Harley smashed his face in.

Harley twisted her torso while pivoting on one foot and performed a roundhouse kick, snapping her leg out in a vicious assault to the man's chest. He gasped, the air knocked from his lungs from the impact. Harley then rushed forward, grabbed him around the back of the neck with one hand, and with a vicious grin, she narrowed eyes. The kid blinked at the deadly look in Harley's eyes. Before he could react, she used her free hand, between her thumb and fingers, slammed her hand into his throat. The kid choked, grabbing his neck and dropping to his knees as Harley stepped back from him.

Harley grinned. “No one ever calls me a bitch and no one ever tries to talk trash about my puddin.”

She turned on her heel walking away from the choking kid to a few cheers from the crowd that saw Harely put the young man down. Alex hurried to keep up with her, grinning from ear to ear.

“Fucking hell Harley, where you learn to fight like that?” She seemed even better and faster now than when he had seen her fight Ivy.

Harley smiled at Alex. “Jack.”

* 

Jack threw a punch with his blade (gripped like one might hold brass knuckles) and sliced across Croc's chest, leaving a long cut, not mortally deep, but with enough of a bite that Croc took a surprised step backward, blood leaking from the wound. Jack grinned seeing the red blood and knowing that Croc could indeed be hurt, excited that he had actually made a cut in the croc's thick hide. He swung with his other fist, aiming for Killer Croc's head as Jack took a leap up trying for the monster's face. Croc snarled and smacked Jack's hand down before he grabbed him around the neck again, lifting Jack off his feet.

Jack wrinkled his nose. This close the smell of the other man was pungent, a strange combination of reptile and sweating human.

Jack grinned, his voice choked when he laughed back at Croc's face. “This is really kinky ya know. I
mean a little choking before hand is always fun, but we really need to come up with a safe word!!!

Croc snarled and threw him. Jack hit the concrete on his left shoulder, rolling for a moment before he stopped. The impact rattled through his shoulder sending white hot jolts of pain through his arm and neck. The impact also caused Jack's teeth to snap together hard, catching the tip of his tongue. Jack tasted blood in his mouth when he rolled to his feet, just barely avoiding Croc trying to stomp on him. Jack staggered backwards holding the blade in front of him and grinned with bloody lips at Croc.

When Jack gained his feet, he dropped low and spun his leg out, hoping to catch Croc in the knee again, maybe break it this time. But Croc seemed prepared, so when Jack's leg shot out, his foot only brushed across the big man's knee cap. The impact still caused the large crocodile man to stumble, but not enough.

Croc twisted back around and hit Jack square in the jaw with the back of one ham-sized fist, opening a pressure cut at the corner of Jack's mouth. The thinner man stumbled back a little with the power of the punch, blood trailing down from the corner of his mouth, but then Jack snarled, grinning with blood covered teeth. He moved swiftly, lunging forward, aiming his punch with the hand that held the blade, at Croc's side. The small belt buckle blade caught the light for a moment, twinkling like a star just before it impacted with the thick hide of Killer Croc. Jack pressed the blade swiftly into Croc in a series of punctures, quick and fast. Jack repeatedly struck the man's side trying for as many puncture wounds as he could.

The monster was bleeding, but there was no way to tell if the blade was actually penetrating deep enough to cause any real damage. Croc snarled, but instead of punching Jack, he wrapped his clawed hands around Jack's shoulders and shoved, sending the shorter man stumbling backward and creating some space between them. Croc took a heavy, wide swing, but Jack dropped down into a crouch, the large fist sweeping over Jack's head, missing by an inch or two.

Harley screamed, her hands around her mouth. "YES! KILL'EM JACK!!"

At that moment Harley would have done anything for a pair of pompoms and a skimpy cheerleader outfit to cheer her puddin on.

Croc came in closer to Jack, taking several swipes at Jack's face and torso, though only one swipe connected with Jack's shoulder, leaving three grooves that instantly bled down Jack's arm. Jack brought his arms up, dancing back and forth trying to avoid the worst of the blows that Croc could inflict by constantly moving. Croc threw several punches, each blow landing on Jack's forearms. Jack gritted his teeth against the pain, but luckily none of the blows landed well enough to break his arms. Jack was always more confident in speed than strength, intelligence—or cunning—over brute force.

Croc snarled and swung hard, broke through Jack's defense and connected with the smaller man's already wounded cheek. Jack stumbled as the flash of pain threw him off, going down on both knees and seeing stars for a split second. He spit blood onto the floor.

With sweat dripping down his lean body, Jack twisted on his knees to avoid Croc's follow up attack—a knee aimed at his chin—and rose up with a swift upward strike with the hand that held the blade, catching Croc under his scaly chin. The blade slashed deeply into flesh, scraped against the bone of Croc's chin and sent blood flying into the air. Croc stumbled, dropping to his hands a knees for a split
second. Jack, who had twisted to the side rushed the large scaled man, twisting his lean graceful body to the side and brought his right knee up to slam Croc in the side of the face; the impact of Jack's knee to Croc's jaw made a sickening sound. Croc snarled and took a backhand swipe at Jack, but he had already moved out of the way in time...just barely.

Croc lumbered to his feet, spitting a fang out onto the floor. Jack chuckled and tried to come in for another swing, but Croc grabbed him again, lifting Jack off the ground and with a roar that made everyone in the place go quiet, he bit down on Jack's right shoulder. Jack let out a cry as the four inch teeth sank into his flesh. “FUCK!”

* 

Harley screamed. “NO!” and started to rush out to him, but Alex grabbed her by the shoulder.

“Harley, no you can't go out there! Croc could fucking hurt you or worse! Then Jack would kill me and I couldn't even be fucking mad about it!!!” Harley turned on Alex, ready to punch him, her hand already in a fist; but she managed, just barely, to stop herself. She was panting, breathing heavily through her clenched teeth.

Alex squeezed her shoulder. “I still think he is going to win,” he said bluntly.

Harley stared. Alex could see the anger and fear in her eyes, but she nodded turning back around to watch the fight. Alex kept his one hand on her shoulder, afraid if he let go she would rush out there and get herself killed.

* 

Jack slugged Croc across the face with the hand that held the blade, desperately trying to break the giant crocodile man's hold on his shoulder. The small knife sliced across Croc's cheek and mouth, the blade cutting deep into Croc's mouth, slicing the softer flesh between the reptilian man's upper and lower lips, slicing a wider opening as the cut ran nearly to the hinge of Croc's jaw.

Croc released Jack's shoulder with a roar, which only ripped the wound that Jack had inflicted wider, blood rushing down over Croc and Jack.

Croc gargled a hiss. “I'm going to eat you, little Wayne!”

Croc started to rear his head back, almost like a snake, opening his mouth wide. It was clear to the audience that Croc was going to try and bite Jack's head off. But before Croc could strike, Jack shoved his right hand forward, the fist covered in his leather belt, into Croc's mouth.

Jack's hand went right into Croc's mouth near the back and the wound that Jack had given Croc. The long, sharp teeth still clamped down on Jack's hand, but instead of Croc's teeth sinking into Jack's flesh the monster's teeth caught in the leather of the belt. The audible sound of bones breaking were heard by the onlookers as the powerful jaws clamped down on Jack's hand.

Jack cried out in pain, but he kept his hand planted inside of Croc's mouth. Croc couldn't shut his mouth any more firmly down because not only was Jack's thick belt preventing him, his smaller, rear teeth sunk into the leather, but Jack had grabbed a hold of the palatal valve behind Croc's tongue.

In a real crocodile, the palatal valve would automatically come up to prevent water from going down the crocodile's throat so that it would not drown when it opened its mouth underwater. Jack hadn't known for sure that Killer Croc had such a flap, but he had gambled that the mutated man did, judging by the fact that Croc had become that much more...crocodile-like since the last time he had seen him. Jack's gamble paid off.
Croc was struggling, choking with Jack's fist in his mouth, his fingers wrapped around that fleshy valve holding on for dear life, pleased that the leather belt held up under a stress its makers had surely never imagined. (Jack was thankful for the Harry's of London Alligator Basel belt that cost him almost two thousand dollars, or else Croc would have bitten his arm right off.)

Jack grinned viciously, blood staining his lips and teeth.

He hissed at Croc. “This is for hurting my Harley. No one touches her—EVER.”

Jack thrust the small blade into Croc's eye with all his might, burying the blade to the hilt. Croc roared releasing Jack's arm from the grip of his teeth (leaving a tooth behind in the leather), as well as dropping the younger man. When Jack fell, he yanked his blade out at the same time, ripping the metal from the eye socket.

Jack hit the concrete hard, but he rolled to his feet grinning wildly while Croc snarled and snapped his teeth. “MY EYE, MY EYE!!”

Jack laughed. “'No animal is half as vile! As Crocky–Wock, the crocodile!'”

Croc turned toward Jack, his eye socket a bloody mess his one still intact yellow eye filled with hate. “I'm going to eat your heart out in front of your woman and then I'm going to feed on her too after I fuck her!!!!”

Jack lip curled, madness and hatred mixed in his blue eyes to an extent that for a moment Croc felt something like the icy tendrils of fear in his blood, but what made him even more afraid was the fact that Jack Wayne started to laugh.

Croc, blind in one eye and raging, lunged at Jack. Jack danced backwards, his slim dancer's body making the movement graceful. Jack's right hand was useless, the finger bones in his hand broken or worse, possibly crushed. Jack couldn't know for sure, but the pain was strangely only a dull throb, easy for him to ignore right now, hatred for Croc being his overwhelming emotion at the moment. Jack, sweat rolling down his face and over his body, held his broken hand protective against him, the hand with the knife held in front of him. Jack chuckled, his smile wide and perfect as his blue eyes stayed glued to the reptile in front of him.

Jack circled Croc looking for an opening. Croc wasn't trying to lunge this time, he was trying to stalk Jack, but with the use of only one eye and then mind-numbing pain in his mouth and the agonizing loss of the other eye, the crocodile was having a difficult time. Jack knew he had to end this now or he wasn't going to last much longer. Despite his rage and ability to push past the pain, his body could only take so much. Just a few more wounds, or another bite...Croc would win. Jack knew exactly what he needed to do to end this match, to make Killer Croc pay for everything he had done to him and Harley.

Croc snarled, the blood running down his throat from the wound Jack had inflicted in his mouth, the bloody eye socket with a ruined eye all came together to create an image straight from a horror movie.

*  

Harley's hands were balled into fist, her knuckles white, and her whole body was tight with tension. She was ready to close the distance between her and Jack, ready to throw herself in front of Croc. Alex's fingers held on tightly to her shoulder. He couldn't really stop her, but she knew she had to stay where she was, she knew that Jack needed this...but if anything happened to him she wasn't going to live without him. She would die making Croc pay.
Jack chuckled. “Oh, look, that greasy greenish skin! The shining teeth, the greedy smile! It's Crocky–Wock, the Crocodile!”

Croc snarled. “Shut up, you fucking nut!”

Jack grinned sweetly. “Don’t like Roald Dahl? Such a shame…”

Jack moved like a striking snake knowing that if he didn’t do this swiftly, Croc was going to kill him. Jack ducked low and charged, his left arm whipping out ahead of him, starting low, then Jack threw his arms and the blade upward, the blade cutting into the soft skin between the thigh and groin not protected by scaly hide. Croc wasn’t watching what Jack was doing, confident in his superiority, thick hide, and the damage he had already done to the weak little rich man. Croc simply grabbed him, wrapping his muscled arms around Jack's middle when the smaller man's body hit him.

Jack led with his bitten shoulder, ramming it into Croc's stomach. The pain was blinding, but Jack didn’t let that stop him; this close, he jammed his blade into the soft tissue between the groin and thigh of Croc's leg, then with all his strength, Jack dragged the small blade down.

Croc felt a slight sting, but he was beyond caring, not feeling the full extent of the injury as he roared loud enough that the entire building seemed to shake. He lifted Jack off his feet and threw him into the crowd again, aiming for the wall beyond.

Harley screamed. “JACK!!”

Jack slammed into the crowd, taking several of the watchers with him. He rolled and came to a stop, bloody and unmoving. Harley rushed over, using her fist to push people out of her way, dropping her to her knees, and pulled Jack's head onto her lap. “Jack!! JACK!!”

Croc was hissing and snarling sounding every inch the crocodile that he looked like, snapping at anyone who came too close. He didn’t notice the thick trail of deep red blood that was flowing from his groin. In the dim light of the building the blood almost looked black, pooling swiftly around his huge clawed feet. Croc growled, whipping his head back and forth, the blood pool at his feet quickly expanding until he staggered, then stumbled. The huge crocodile man looked confused as his strength was leaving him swiftly. He felt strangely cold, but he didn’t seem to understand.

Everyone in the crowd watched, too scared to move close to him even if any of them were inclined to do so.

*  

Alex rushed over to Harley who was struggling to get Jack on his feet. Jack only seemed semiconscious.

Penguin stood up from his throne, furious. Croc was supposed to dispose of Wayne, to pull the thorn in his side, but instead Jack Wayne had won. Why was life so unfair? Oswald thought just before he yelled. “Get them out of here!!”

That was the moment Croc stumbled, dropping to his knees still looking confused. But then the giant of a man fell, hitting the floor like a great tree falling, the accompanying sound of his impact echoed through the building.

Harley staggered to her feet. Covered in blood and sweat, Jack was laughing weakly, his right arm dangling at his side. “I killed the crocodile sweets!! I finally got him!!”
Harley gave Alex a pleading look. “Help me get him to the car, he needs medical attention!”

Alex muttered, “Fuck me sideways,” as he rushed over to aid Harley.

Someone had finally, cautiously, approached Croc who hadn't moved since he fell. “Fuck! Cobblepot, Killer Croc is dead!”

Jack started to laughing maniacally. “Hehe!! Bet you thought it was going to be me, didn't you Penguin old buddy!! Joke's on you!!”

Penguin glared with distaste at Jack while the slimmer man laughed even more. “You're next Pengie! You and me!!”

Harley hissed. “Come on Jack, we need to go.”

Alex grabbed Jack’s other arm throwing it over his shoulders. “Let's go, you fucking lunatic!”

Penguin glared at their backs while Harley and Alex staggered out of the building nearly dragging Jack with them while the crowd remained relatively silent.

* 

With the news that Croc was dead, the entire club started to scatter. Harley, with Alex's help, hauled Jack to the car where Frost looked out, watching the people fleeing the building. When he saw Jack Wayne practically being dragged by some strange man and Miss Quinn, he jumped out of the car, yanking the back door open.

“What the hell happened?” he asked as they came closer.

Harley's bottom lip was trembling, though her eyes looked icy. “Just get us back to the manor, now. I'll explain in the car.”

Frost nodded and helped her lift Jack—who was still laughing to himself—into the back. Alex rubbed the blood from Jack on his jeans looking concerned. “You want me to come with you?”

Harley shook her head. “No, it's fine—I can handle it from here.”

Alex nodded. “Call me, let me know how he is, okay?”

“I will.” Harley smiled.

Just before she slipped into the car Alex grinned. “Jack's a fucking lunatic, Harley.”

She poked her head out of the door and laughed. “One of the many reasons I love him.”

* 

Inside the building Penguin was yelling out orders to his people. “Take that body and put it in the sewer where it belongs! I want this place clean of any evidence within the hour. Anyone blabs to the police, you guys know what to do...that's what I pay you for.”

The four women and Blockbuster all nodded in response.

* 

Frost pulled out glancing in the rear at Jack Wayne. He looked bad. It was clear to Frost that Wayne
had a broken hand, and if he wasn't mistaken that looked like an animal bite in his shoulder?! But Frost drove, doing exactly as Miss Quinn asked.

In the back seat Harley had moved Jack's head to her shoulder, she was using his t-shirt he had given her before the fight to stop the bleeding from the bite wound. She was fighting back tears and tried to focus as she had been taught in med school. She could see that his hand with the belt was broken and there was a deep slice across his cheek and stomach; all of them she was sure were going to leave scars. She stroked her fingers along his undamaged cheek, gazing down on him.

“Jack?” Harley called softly. “I love you Jack. Please be al; right. I need you. I can't be without you.”

He had stopped laughing a few minutes ago. She had thought maybe he had passed out, but Jack opened his eyes, the gorgeous blue looking up at her. Surprisingly his eyes were clear. He grinned. “Hey sweets.”

Harley pressed her lips together fighting back tears, but her rebellious body refused to cooperate with her. “You scared me.”

He grinned starting to reach up with his left hand, the movement aggravating the bite mark causing it to bleed more “Ouch...that kinda hurts.”

Harley laughed, a few rebellious tears dropping from the corner of her eyes as she pressed down on the wound again. “Oh puddin!”

Frost turned when he heard Jack's voice. “You sure I shouldn't take you to the hospital Boss?”

“No, no...home, take us home,” Jack mumbled.

Frost nodded with a sigh.

* 

Frost hurried around once they were parked in front of the manor, easing Jack out of the vehicle while Harley hurried inside. “ALFRED!! ALFRED!!”

Alfred, dressed still in most of his butler's uniform, just missing the jacket and his tie was undone, had been in the kitchen fixing himself a cup of tea, came rushing out and stopped in his tracks when he saw Miss Harleen covered in blood. “Miss Harleen!”

That was the same moment that Frost came staggering in with Jack who had passed out. Alfred paled. “Master Jack!”

Alfred rushed over and helped Frost carry Jack the three of them taking him to the Wayne manor's infirmary.

* 

Once they were inside the manor, Alfred led them to the medical room. Frost helped lift Jack, who was muttering only half aware, up onto the exam table. Frost then took a step back staying out of the butler's way while Alfred hurriedly examined Jack.

“What bit him?” Alfred asked as he gingerly examined the bite wound first. He turned to Harley who was hovering close by with an understandably worried expression on her tear streaked face.

She looked pale as she murmured. “A crocodile-man.”
Alfred stared at her, several questions in his eyes before he nodded. This wasn't the first Wayne to return to the manor with wounds and bizarre reasons for them, but Alfred focused on what was important.

“All right. I'm going to treat the bite like a regular crocodile bite.” He smiled at Harley and pointed at one of several cabinets in the room. “If you could help me Miss Harleen? We'll have Master Jack taken care of in no time at all.”

She nodded. Alfred's calm self-assurance helped to calm her own nerves. She turned to Frost. “You can go on home. I'll have Jack call you when he can.”

Frost nodded, then inclined his head to Alfred, taking one last glance at Jack Wayne's prone figure on the examination table before he left.

Alfred turned to Harley. “All right Miss Harleen, ready to be my nurse, my dear?”

Harley nodded vigorously. “Yes, anything you need Alfred.”

* * *

It was a couple of hours later. Jack was resting in bed upstairs, his eyes closed, and breathing softly in sleep. He had received stitches on his cheek, the slashes across his stomach and the bite mark, all of which were now covered in fresh bandages. He was connected to an IV pumping antibiotics and some pain medication into his body. His hand was in a cast, his last three fingers bound together, the cast extending just a short way up his wrist (Harley was impressed with how expertly Alfred had set the bone and made and applied the cast with the cool and calm of someone who had done this more than once) and resting across his abdomen.

Alfred looked weary. His sleeves were rolled up, his clothing looked rumpled, and his thinning hair was in a little disarray. He sighed. “Master Bruce is not going to be happy with either of you.”

Harley was sitting on the bed, exhausted, her face still pale, her make-up having run down her cheeks from her earlier crying. She gazed at Jack, her fingers lightly touching his arm. She had told Alfred about the fight without giving any more details than it was a fight club and Jack had fought Killer Croc. Harley mentally crossed her fingers. Hopefully Cobblepot would take care of the monstrous Killer Croc. The giant man had evaded police this long...his vanishing would not be unusual...she would assume no participants in the fight club would have the desire to go to the police about the incident or suffer the wrath of Oswald Cobblepot, Alex, or the Gotham City police.

Alfred continued. “I will keep him on the antibiotics for twenty-four hours. The hand will take approximately six weeks to heal if all goes normally. He was very lucky Miss Harleen, that belt saved his hand from worse damage.”

Harley nodded. “Thank you so much Alfred.”

He sighed and nodded. “Of course Miss Harleen. I would do anything for either of you. But I'm going to have to tell Master Bruce when he returns. This is not something that the two of you will be able to avoid.”

“I know.” Harley smiled.

Alfred gazed at her saying softly. “Why don't you shower Miss Harleen. I'll bring you up some tea.”

“Thank you Alfred.” Harley kissed Jack's forehead and stood.
“I'll just leave the tray outside the door Miss Harleen.” Alfred started to turn and leave, but Harley rushed forward and wrapped her arms around him. Alfred smiled and held her close, then he heard and felt the sob. “Oh Alfred, I don't know what I would do if anything ever happened to Jack...I don't think I could live without him.”

Alfred stroked her back. “There, there Miss Harleen. It was just a fight. Master Jack has been in plenty of fights growing up. He will be right as rain in the morning and he will be a terrible patient. I know from experience. But it will be just fine.”

Harley squeezed him. “Thank you Alfred.”

“Of course Miss Harleen. Now you go shower my dear and make yourself comfortable. You need rest too.” Alfred stepped back placing one hand on her shoulder and lightly cupped her chin.

“Yes Alfred.” Harley gave him a smile.

*

Once Harley was clean, having showered and washed her hair quickly, she slipped into a pair of yoga pants and one of Jack's t-shirts from the closet. She retrieved the tea and curled up next to Jack. He only stirred a little, his body leaning more heavily toward her. Harley gently moved his head into the crook of her arm before closing her eyes and going to sleep.

*

The next morning Harley was awakened by knocking at the door. Jack grumbled trying to wake up. Harley hurried to the door opening it to find Bruce, dressed in one of his well cut black suits, standing there looking like a walking, talking storm cloud. “Is Jack awake?”

Harley glanced behind her. Jack hadn't opened his eyes yet, though she could see he was starting to stir even with his eyes were still closed. She surprised Bruce by shoving him into the hall and closing the door behind her. “Not yet,” she hissed.

Bruce took a deep breath clearly calming himself as he muttered, “Alfred said Jack was participating in a 'fight club' and he was hurt badly?”

Harley frowned and nodded. “He was. Broke his hand and had to have a few stitches.”

Bruce narrowed his eyes at her. “Alfred said he had been bitten by Killer Croc?”

Harley paled and nodded. “He was. Broke his hand and had to have a few stitches.”

Bruce narrowed his eyes at her. “Alfred said he had been bitten by Killer Croc?”

Harley paled and nodded. Bruce snarled though there wasn't a lot of heat behind his words.

“Why didn't you call the police?! The police are looking for him in connection to your kidnapping? What was Jack thinking? Fight him then call the cops? I see how well that worked out for him.” Bruce's anger and disappointment were obvious.

(Harleen whispered to Harley, the two of them watching Bruce, his face struggling between emotions of rage and concern. “You know that Bruce is using his anger to cover his pain. He is really worried about Jack, but at the same time if makes him furious that Jack does this to himself. I think Bruce blames himself for Jack's recklessness. Remember, Alfred had said Jack had gotten into fights before...”)

Harley reached out and laid a hand on Bruce's arm. “He is going to be all right. Alfred took care of him.”
Bruce sighed. “I know Harley, but...I hired you to help deal with his behavior, yet here you are supporting him going to a fight club?”

Harley pressed her lips together. “You more than anyone should know that if Jack decides to do something, there is no stopping him. Besides...this was a chance for him to get back at the man who took us...who scarred him.”

Bruce hissed. “Well according to Alfred, Croc scarred Jack again. And for what?! He is gone yet again, no clues, no leads...this was dangerous Harley—and foolish.”

Bruce took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. He frowned rubbing the back of his neck.

Harley remained quiet, letting Bruce vent. “Just, please, don't let him do this again.”

Harley didn't say anything, but she gave a nod. “I should go back in and check on him.”

Bruce frowned and nodded. “All right. Just...just tell him I came by?”

Harley smiled. “I will Bruce, I promise.”

Bruce turned to go, stopping and turning back before Harley closed the door.

“Perhaps...perhaps when Jack is feeling better the three of us could get together and discuss your engagement party...” Bruce wanted to end the conversation on a high note.

Harley smiled. “I think we would both enjoy that.”

Bruce gave her a small smile before heading back down the hall thinking to himself that Batman would have to find about this 'fight club' and see if he could break it up.

*

(A week and a half later)

Jack was lying naked on the bed, propped up on pillows, finishing his cigarette while waiting on Harley. She had ordered him undressed with an adorable glint in her eyes and a mischievous wrinkle to her nose, when she said she was going to play nurse. This was the first day in almost two weeks that Jack had felt himself. His wounds were healing quickly, though he would now have a whole new set of scars. The bite mark was looking much better, but there would be marks left on his shoulder. Harley had suggested getting another tattoo later to mix with the scar.

The one on his stomach would fade with time, Alfred had said, as would the one on his cheek, though it would still remain a light scar, a reminder on his face. He could have plastic surgery to take care of it if he wished, but Jack wasn't sure he cared to...Harley had said it was sexy. And ultimately, her opinion was the only one that mattered to him. As he leaned over to put his cigarette out, Jack looked toward the bathroom where he could hear Harley moving around.

“What are you doing in there?” Jack asked.

He held his arm up studying the cast when finally Harley come out of the bathroom. She grinned at him playfully, stopping and posing with one arm up in the air and the other held across her stomach. She was dressed in a sexy nurse outfit, though a highly unusual one. Harley had on a red and blue corset that had not just ties, but buckles along her torso with a little white puff sleeved top underneath. The top was opened in such a way that it exposed the top of a blue and red bra underneath...leather by the looks of it. Her stomach was bare, and riding low on her hips—held in place by a thick leather belt—was a tiny white skirt ruffle with a tiny white thong under that which
he received a good look at when she turned and wiggled her enticing rear at him. She also had on a pair of thigh-high fishnet stockings, with a pair of high heeled thigh-high red and blue leather boots. Her hair was pulled up in pigtails and she had a little nurse cap on.

She was holding a bottle of almond oil in one hand as she posed for him. “Ready for some special treatment?”

Jack grinned. “Oh now, what have we here?”

Harley giggled. “I'm your nurse for today Mr. Wayne. I'm going to take good care of you.” Harley placed her forefinger against her bottom lip, smiling seductively.

Jack licked his lips letting his eyes roam down Harley's body, then back up, his own body reacting immediately to seeing her dressed like that. “Oh and how are you going to do that nurse?”

Harley giggled and paced closer. Jack started to reach out to run the fingers of his good hand along the edge of her skirt, just under her bellybutton, but she playfully smacked his hands. “Oh no...no touching until Nurse Harley says you can puddin. You're just supposed to lay there right now and let me do all the work.”

Jack grinned. “Oh am I?”

Harley giggled pumping the bottle, filling one hand with oil. “Uhuh...you just be a good boy and let Nurse Harley take care of you.”

Harley ran her oiled hands together, warming the oil that covered her fingers before she slowly smoothed them along Jack's chest, running her slick hands over his pecs and down his stomach, (careful of his wounds). Jack smiled, relaxing back against the pillows, his eyes fluttering closed while her hands worked gently over the muscles of his chest, then down to his stomach kneading and caressing his body. Harley smiled, enjoying herself, watching Jack relax back into the pillows. She picked up the bottle, dribbling a few more drops of oil onto his skin before she ran her hands down over the little drops of oil and then slid her hands along his hips. She wanted him to feel good, to help him not just relax, but to show him how much she wanted him, loved him.

She had been more scared over the last week and a half than she had ever been. This was the first time Jack had been hurt badly enough that he actually seemed to require time to heal, to rest. Those first couple of days had been the worst, watching him lying in bed, pale...weak, though he had laughed about it, cracking jokes. Even so, she had been frightened for him. She just knew she couldn't face the world without him.

Harley cleared her mind. She was not going to focus on what had scared her, instead she was going to focus on right now...making him feel good, getting to be with him after more than a week...

Harley ran her oiled hands down his torso again, feeling the muscles, the sleek lines of his body, the softness of his skin. She slid her hands down his groin, not quite touching him yet, her fingers gliding oil over his hairless body. She liked that he was hairless, that he waxed all the hair away. It was unusual, but sexy as hell. If he stopped she wouldn't care, she would still find every inch of him desirable, but she enjoyed the lack of hair while her fingers worked over him. She caressed the extremely sensitive space where his thighs met his body, her oiled fingers gliding easily over his skin. Jack groaned softly, his eyes remaining closed while her fingers started to knead his thighs. Harley licked her lips; she liked touching him. She liked having full access to his body like this and she adored the fact that Jack made himself vulnerable to her and only her. She grabbed the bottle of oil. Squeezing the pump, she added a few more drops to each of his legs before she began to work her hands down his slim calves. Jack made a soft moan of contentment.
She ran her hands down his calves, tenderly working her hands over the muscles. She worked her way down to his feet which she massaged, then back up again. She picked up the oil and dribbled it over his hardening shaft, her gaze heated with lust while she watch the oil ooze slowly down his long hard shaft, and roll down over his tightening scrotum. Jack made a small moan when the warm oil hit his sensitive skin, which made Harley smile. She gently began to rub her hands over his groin, sliding her fingers down along with the slick oil, tracing the “V” of his groin before cupping his scrotum, squeezing gently, sliding her hands down further between his legs, low enough that she could slide her fingers between his butt cheeks, pressing just enough to make him groan before she dragged her hands up again, coating him with the oil so that her fingers slid along the sides of his scrotum, then under, then up again, eliciting a groan from Jack.

Jack hissed, the tight pull in his groin burned up his body. “Harley...”

Harley giggled. “Just relax puddin.”

“It's a little hard when you're doing that.” Jack pouted. She had her back to him while she worked, but she turned just a little to smile over her shoulder at him.

Harley giggled. “A little hard?”

Jack opened his eyes to grin at her and waggle his eyebrows. Harley giggled taking him in her oiled hands and started to slowly twist her hands up his erection slowly. Jack's eyes rolled as he moaned loudly. “Oh God Harley...!!”

She giggled softly turning to face him and climbed onto the bed settling between his legs. She gently dragged the tips of her oiled fingers along his erection causing his whole body to shudder. Jack hissed arching his head back into the pillows. “Oh damn Harley.”

Harley cooed softly. “You like that puddin?” She continued to draw her fingers up then slowly down again over his heated flesh. She grasped him in both hands and gently rotated her grip. Jack grabbed the sheets beside him with his undamaged hand, his hips jerking upward.

“Uuhh...” he moaned.

Harley rolled her oiled hands up then she pressed just her thumbs along his shaft, sliding her hands low to the base of his erection, then gradually traveled up again, her hands sliding while her thumbs pressed into his soft oiled skin, very slowly until she came to the head of his erection. Jack was panting, hissing through his teeth. Harley used the pads of her thumbs to gently massage just behind the head of his penis.

Jack's fingers in his cast twitched, while his free hand dug harder into the sheet.

Jack groaned loudly. “Harley!! Ughh....damn it Harley!!” Jack jerked, cumming just a little at the same time he was begging Harley to stop. “Please Harley...damn...” Jack panted. Harley leaned down to run her tongue up the back of his erection to the head where she rolled her tongue over him before asking him. “You want me puddin?”

Jack was watching her through hooded eyes. He groaned softly. “Yes I want you Harley...I need you.”

Harley grinned stand up on her knees. “That's just what Nurse Harley needed to hear.” She giggled and started to unlace her corset. Jack watched her as Harley dropped the corset to the floor. She next tugged off the blouse, pulling it carefully over her head. She then unstrapped the bra, dropping it to the floor along with the rest.
Jack opened his mouth, the tip of his tongue pressed to the back of his upper teeth while his blue eyes roamed over her body. He grinned. “Take the thong off, but leave everything else on.”

Harley giggled. “If that will help my patient…”

Jack's grin spread across his face. “Yes Nurse Harley, that would help your patient a great deal.”

Giggling, Harley hopped off the bed. She grabbed the thong from under the tiny skirt and shimmied out of it, stepping carefully trying not to snag it on her boots before she was finally able to drop the thong to the floor.

Jack chuckled. “Mm…come here Nurse Harley.”

Harley climbed back onto the bed, straddling Jack. He reached up then stopped. “Can I have a bit of that oil nurse?”

Harley laughed. “Whatever the patient wants.”

She leaned over grabbing the bottle where she had set it on the bedside table and pumped some of the clear liquid into Jack's good hand. After she set the bottle back Jack rubbed the oil over her breasts. He loved the way it make her breasts shine, the hard nipples somehow looked darker, enticing with the shine of the oil on them.

“Mmm...that is very nice.” Jack cooed watching the way the oil glimmered on her skin, a few drops slowly gliding down over the soft roundness of her breast to ooze down her torso. He enjoyed the way her nipples tightened when his fingers brushed over them, the oil making the slip and slide of his thumb smoother.

Harley groaned. “I missed you touching me like this puddin.”

Jack grinned. “Mm...I missed it too.” He rolled the flat of his thumb over one nipple watching the way the oil smoothed over it. Harley pressed her lips together making a delight moan at the same time that she grasped his shaft in one hand, holding him steady for her as she lowered herself down on him. Jack tensed, his eyes rolling upward when she lowered herself down, enveloping him in her wetness and warmth, the heat of which rolled through his entire body almost causing him to cum at the that very moment, but he wanted to last, wanted this to last just a little longer, until he heard her cry out. That was what he wanted more than anything right now was to hear his Harley sing with pleasure, to hear his name moaned on her lips. So Jack bit down on the inside of his cheek to stop himself from losing control.

As soon she lowered herself down, Harley pressed her hands against his chest and started to roll her hips. Jack grabbed her thigh with his good hand panting when he started to grind. Harley whimpered. “Oh Jack ooOoh Jack!!”

Jack snaked his hand to her groin, pressing his thumb against her clitoris rolling the pad of his thumb over her, watching her fuck. “God Harley...uh..you're so beautiful…”

Harley arched her back grabbing his legs as she leaned and thrust her hips. “Puddin...oh puddin…”

Jack grinned watching her, the way her back was bowed, glancing down to watch himself disappearing into her body. Jack stroked her hissing. “Cum for me Harley...I wanna hear you
baby...”

Harley groaned pressing her eyes closed as ripples washed over her until she couldn't hold back. She peaked with a cry, her orgasm rushing through her making her whole body tingle then flood with warmth. “JACK!”

Jack grinned, Harley's nails dug into his legs when she came, but it was a good sort of hurt that sent Jack stumbling over the edge. He came with her, gasping her name when he did, heat pooling and bursting from him. “HARLEY!!”

Harley dropped forward, her hands on either side of his head as she looked down at him. “I love you Jack Wayne...I love you so much.”

Jack smiled. “Mm...I love you Nurse Harley.”

She giggled and wrapped her arms around him, settling herself around his body. Jack wrapped his arms around her holding her tight.

* 

Much later that afternoon, Harley was standing with Jack in the garage examining the 'fleet' of Wayne vehicles. Jack could drive one-handed, but today was their first outing since Jack was injured and Harley had insisted on driving. Today was her first practice as a member of the Gotham City Sirens. Harley had been pretty surprised when she had received the phone call telling her that the first practice was in a couple of days. After beating Ivy, Harley had been sure she would be kicked out.

She was dressed in a pair of black booty shorts, fishnet stockings, a baseball-style t-shirt with black sleeves and a fat, little red devil on the front along with a pair of red high tops. Her hair was still in pig-tails and she had on a knee-high pair of red and black socks. Harley was chewing her lips staring at the cars when she whispered.

“Any one of them?”

With his cast in a sling, Jack gestured vaguely and grinned. He was dressed in a pair of slim-cut black jeans, a deep plum colored button down shirt and a blazer in black over that, with a pair of black oxfords completing his outfit. Even with his healing injuries he still looked delectable to Harley. “Yes, any one you want to drive.” He laughed at her overwhelmed expression.

Harley muttered, “So many...”

They ended up taking a 1967 Ford Shelby Mustang GT500 that was painted silver with an almost bronze undercoat. Harley had had no idea what the car was when she saw it, she only knew she had to drive it!

* 

When they arrived at the roller rink, Harley was holding Jack's good hand and had her skates slung over her shoulder. Almost immediately she saw the other girls working around the ring practicing moves while Halestorm was playing in the background and Ivy yelled out directions from the edges, skated around, and pointed occasionally slamming her shoulder in to break up some of the girls when it looked as if an actual fight was going to start. As she and Jack approached, Ivy spotted her and waved. “Hey Harley!”

Harley smiled and waved back. “Ivy!”

Harley eased Jack down on one of the bleachers where he would have a great view. Jack laughed. “Harley stop treating me like glass, sweets. I'm healing up just fine.”
“I know, I just...you didn't see yourself after the fight puddin.” She leaned down to kiss him. Jack reached up with his uninjured hand, brushing his fingers along her jaw. “Go out there and have some fun my darling girl,” he whispered with a grin. “Besides, I wanna see you skating in those tiny shorts you have on.”

Harley giggled hurrying away toward Ivy, but not before Jack managed a light whack on her tush as she jogged away from him.

Harley stopped when she was by Ivy. “I was kinda shocked you guys called me.” Harley frowned.

Ivy frowned in confusion. “Why? So you beat me, so what? That's what the fight club is for....fighting and one of us won.” Ivy smiled and wrapped an arm around Harley's shoulders. “Just means you are going to be a great member of our team!”

Harley grinned. “Thanks Red.”

Pamela laughed. “No problem, now get out there and show me how you can kick ass on the team!”

* *

Practice took a little over two hours with all the new girls learning the different positions more in-depth than at try outs, practicing maneuvers, learning rules, doing drills as well as learning game scenarios and scrimmaging. Jack was grinning the whole time watching Harley and no one else. He licked his lips admiring not just the power in her legs, but the strength of her entire body as she worked with the other girls. By the time practice had come to an end Jack was more than ready to go home...for a little more practice of a different sort.

Harley came skating over to him, sliding to a stop with a wide grin and yanking off her helmet. Her blonde hair was plastered to her face and there was a sheen of sweat on her skin, but Jack had never seen her look sexier.

“You ready to go puddin?” Harley asked panting slightly.

“Oh yes my sweets...I think we should take a shower, together, when we arrive home.” Jack winked at her.

Harley giggled pretending innocence as she asked. “You don't think I should shower here?”

Jack lifted his brows. “Hell no.”

Harley giggled coming over to sit next to him to remove her skates while Jack whispered. “I think you should drive quickly.”

* *

The following day, Harley giggled helping Jack with his pants. He was holding his arms up watching her with a wide grin. “This is fun, you dressing me every day. I don't think I will ever take my hand out of the cast.”

Harley giggled. “I enjoy it too, but I also like you having two hands.” She glanced up from zipping up his slacks and winked at him which had Jack laughing. Harley giggled.

“Except I know you're ambidexterous and you just like me playing with your zipper.”

Jack chuckled. “You caught me. I like you playing with a LOT of things.” He leaned down and
kissed her nose just as she was standing up.

Harley had filled him in on the details afterward as she received them from Alex. There are been no sign or mention of Killer Croc anywhere in the news, so Harley could only assume that Cobblepot had indeed taken care of everything. Alex had said that as far as he knew, all evidence of the fight had vanished and no one was stupid enough to bring it up.

* 

Today was their first outing in which Harley was allowing Jack to actually “DO” something besides sit and watch, though watching her practice roller derby had been extremely fun. Jack loved her clothing choices and seeing Harley elbow, hiss and fight...seeing the woman he knew her to be had been more than a little exciting. But today, they were going to do something in which Jack could participate (he hated being an “invalid” if only for a short time) which was why today Jack was almost literally bouncing off the walls of their bedroom. Harley had planned a fun outing for them to play some golf at Gotham FunZone.

Jack had insisted on them wearing “golf” costumes for the fun of it. The weather was still warm enough for shorts, so Harley was wearing a short skort (skirt and short combo) along with some knee-high socks, a pair of black and white saddle shoes and a red and black shirt with a diamond pattern like the diamonds on a set of playing cards (which Jack especially appreciated), her hair in pigtails with a matching visor against the sun and her oversized white sunglasses.

Harley ran her hands down the sides of Jack's purple and white plaid pants straightening them out before she started to run the belt through the slacks' loops. Jack kept giving her 'looks' every time she would brush against his groin or 'accidentally' grope his rear.

Harley giggled at the pants. “Where did you ever find these!” Harley asked as she stepped back examining the slacks.

Jack grinned like a little kid. “In a golf catalogue of course! They're purple! I had to have them! And lookie—they match my cast!” (Jack had convinced Fred to wrap the cast with purple sticky gauze so that it would go with his outfit.)

Harley giggled. “Well, only you could make those look good.”

Jack, still topless (which was fine with Harley) did a little spin stopping with his back to her and wiggled his rear. “You like them, admit it.”

She giggled picking the polo up off the bed and walked over to help tug it over his head, helping to guide his arm still in the cast through the arm hole before tugging the shirt the rest of the way down and tucking it in. She grinned looking into his blue eyes as her hand slipped low into his pants. Jack quirked an eyebrow at her. “Maybe we should skip the golf?”

Harley giggled. “Or maybe you should wait 'til we get home and I can undress you...slowly...with my mouth.”

Jack grinned. “You can do that?”

“Maybe.” Harley giggled finishing tucking his shirt in for him. The polo was white with a purple “J” embroidered on the breast. Jack then dropped down on the edge of the bed and with Harley's help slipped on a pair of a brown and white saddle shoes. Jack was grinning at her. “Oh, I want you to try...definitely!”

She giggled. “Come on, let's go have some fun!”
Alfred was waiting downstairs for them smiling serenely. “Ah Master Jack, nice to see you up and around.”

Jack grinned. “All thanks to you and Harley's tender loving care.”

“Well still Master Jack, don't extert yourself too much, please?”

Jack saluted throwing off his Gucci sunglasses at the same time. “I solemnly swear to behave myself to the best of my abilities.”

Alfred made a show of groaning. “Oh dear.”

Jack laughed. “See ya later Alfie!”

Harley waved her arm through Jack’s. “Bye Alfred!”

The aging butler waved in return. “Have fun.”

* 

Frost was waiting outside for them when they stepped out of the front door. He was standing by the car in a nice grey suit, ready to open the doors. “Glad to see you up again, Mr. Wayne.”

Jack laughed. “Me too Frosty, me too.”

Jack slipped into the back with Harley following right behind him. Jack immediately pulled her close wrapping his arm around her. Harley wrapped her arms around his waist snuggling close. Jack let out a sigh of contentment settling back with Harley against him.

* 

The Gotham FunZone was more than simply the miniature golf course, though it was huge by miniature golf course standards. The place also had go-karts, water bumper cars, an old fashioned arcade with dozens of video games and pinball machines, along with a driving range and batting cages.

Jack was laughing as they headed inside. “This is fantastic Harley.”

Harley grinned, proud of herself. “I thought it might be. We can do the arcade, but I don't think we should do the go-karts or the water bumper cars.”

Jack pouted at her. “No bumper cars?”

Harley started to giggle. “No! You're lucky I'm letting you play golf!”

Jack laughed with a fake pout. “Woman—you are so mean!”

“I'll make it up to you. I promise...I've been reading up on the healing capabilities of a good massage.” Harley purred.

Jack smirked. “Oh? Thought we had already tried that?”

“We did, but I didn't get to try all the new ways to massage you...” Harley licked her lips before tugging Jack to the ticket counter to buy their tickets.
Gotham FunZone was busy, but not overly crowded. Jack grinned with pleasure watching Harley bend over to hit the ball, wiggling her rear back and forth...on purpose he was sure of it, especially judging by the way she looked over her shoulder at him, when he frowned slightly. Just across from them he saw a family of four: Mom, Dad, two kids, a boy and a girl. The woman was blonde, attractive, the husband slim, well dressed, the children adorable...Jack watched as they laughed and hit the golf balls, teasing one another...Jack sighed softly, but he wasn't sure why he sighed. That wasn't for him and Harley...a family, a normal life. When Harley was pregnant he had thought maybe, maybe a family with children was his future, domestic happiness, but he knew now that wasn't for either of them.

Jack frowned ever so slightly. He hadn't realized just how alone he had felt until Harley came into his life. He had had no one to share his vision of the world with, to understand that all of it was pointless...so alone. He hadn't realized that the loneliness was eating him alive...but then Harley came into his life!! She understood him and what was even better...she accepted him! Loved him! Just as he was! Harley wasn't trying to change him into something he could never be, she wanted him just as he was...Jack felt that ache in his chest, that overwhelming feeling of love he held just for Harley. Jack smiled looking over at her, watching her as she grinned at him. She was everything to him.

His life, their life, was chaos and he liked it that way. Harley and he were not meant for that...a family, a normal life. At least not anymore. Harley was all he needed. She was his one constant, the only steady thing in his life...his Harley...his anchor to this world. There was no room for anything, or anyone else...just her. Jack smiled, turning his attention back to the woman he loved just as she hit the ball and sent it rolling around a nearly impossible curve to fall right into the hole.

Harley leapt into the air throwing her hands up and cheered. “YES!!”

Jack grinned watching her. She was his everything, he thought. Harley turned around bouncing on the balls of her feet making Jack laughed. “Did you see that puddin! Right in the hole!”

Jack opened his arms to her and she bounced into his embrace. He wrapped his good arm around her waist and tugged her close. “That's my girl. Though I'm pretty good at getting it in the hole too.” He chuckled and winked at her.

That was the moment that his cellphone rang. Jack stole a quick kiss before he let her go and pulled out his phone thinking that maybe it was Alex. He frowned when he looked down at the display; unknown caller.

Jack held the phone, up hitting the button. “Yes?”

“Jack!! It's Lisa!! Oh my God!! I'm so sorry I haven't called. It's just been crazy here! I got fired! Someone called...well I know who called, but she got me fired and filed a restraining order against me! I figured it was all her, you would never do that...anyway, guess where I am?”

Jack blinked in shock as a cold creeping feeling of absolute rage washed over him before he gritted out between suddenly clenched teeth. “Where?”

He glanced over at Harley who was watching him with a frown, her hand was around her golf club, the knuckles turning white and her lips were set in a thin line.

“I'm in Gotham! I just arrived!!” Lisa nearly crowed. “Anyway I'm going to be staying at the Best Western near the stadium in Otisburg. I was hoping maybe we could get together...like tonight?”

Lisa begged softly.
Jack's eyes narrowed with anger. "Tonight Lisa....ah..."

Harley hissed. "Yes—tell her yes."

Jack looked confused for a split second, but nodded. "Tonight would be fine Lisa...around ten?"

Harley grinned with a nod. On the phone Lisa giggled. "Oh Jack, I can't wait to see you again!"

"Yeah, me either," Jack said with no warmth in his tone at all. "I'll come pick you up. Meet me in front of the stadium."

Lisa squealed. "Oh Jack, I can't wait to see you!!"

Jack rolled his eyes. "So you said..." he whispered and then said, "Me either, see you soon." He hit the button disconnecting the call, angrily shoving his phone into his back pocket.

Harley snarled. "I can't believe she came here?!!" Harley threw her golf club down onto ground.

Jack reached over with his good hand, taking her by the shoulder and tugging her into his arms. "Hey don't worry my sweet cupcake, we'll take care of her once and for all." Harley laid her head against his shoulder. "We need to take her someplace quiet...someplace where I can smash her head in." Harley wrapped her arms around his waist and hissed quietly against his shoulder.

Jack grinned. He loved the fact that Harley wanted to kill someone who was trying to come between them, trying to take him away from her. It proved to him just how much she loved him, how much she cherished what they had. Jack kissed the top of her head and grinned as an idea came to him. "I know the perfect place Harls..."

* *

They had decided to take Lisa someplace where they could leave her, a place where Lisa would look like one of the countless victims of a senseless crime in Gotham City. Sheldon Park. It had once been a lovely park years and years before, when Jack's parents had still been alive. But since their death, the park had become a place ripe with muggings, rapes, drug deals and murders. The perfect place for someone new to Gotham to accidentally go...and not come back.

Jack had told Harley to be waiting at the center of the park where a statue of an old founder of Gotham who nobody remembered stood. A perfect place for her to wait, hidden in darkness, ready for her revenge.

Harley finished braiding her hair and frowned at herself in the mirror. She was dressed all in black, black slim cut jeans and a black athletic cut t-shirt. She had braided her hair and had just stuck up her long braid under a dark ball cap before she picked up the leather gloves that she had laying in front of her. She slipped them on, wiggling her fingers as she pulled them on. Harley then looked at herself again in the mirror and rubbed her lips together spreading the lip gloss she had applied just a moment ago over her lips, then grinned at herself. She was finally getting to use her bat on someone she hated...it was exciting, thrilling! Harley narrowed her blue eyes at herself in the mirror. No one—no one would ever get between her and her puddin...ever.

(As she stared at herself in the mirror she heard a soft voice. "Harley are you sure about this?" Harleen whispered. "What do you mean, 'Am I sure?'")

Harley giggled
happily in reply. “I know...”

Harley slipped out of the bedroom grabbing the bag that she had sitting by the door and threw it over her shoulder, closing the door quietly before she headed down the stairs and made her way quietly out the door. The bag she was carrying with her contained a change of clothes along with a pair of black stilletos. Jack had already left ahead of her, taking Frost's old car, a 2014 Ford Focus under the idea that he would tell Lisa that he didn't want Harley to find him or for anyone in Gotham to recognize him, that their meeting had to be in secret.

Harley turned and quietly closed the front door, turning around and making her way silently down the drive to the gate where Frost was waiting for her in the Bentley. She quickly punched in the code for the gate, slipped through and then into the back of the car.

“Hey Frost,” Harley said with a grin as she settled into the back.

Frost knew only that he was supposed to drive Miss Quinn to Sheldon Park where he would be trading cars with Mr. Wayne. From there, he was supposed to drive his car to a chop shop that was under the Gotham PD's protection, where they were to 'dispose' of his car, no questions asked. From there Frost would take a cab to the Upper Eastside, where Jack and Harley would pick him up and he was to drive them to Sky High Gotham restaurant where they were going to have dinner.

Frost had a feeling something bad—very bad—was going down, but he found that he didn't really care. Jack Wayne seemed to be the kind of guy who looked after his own, and Frost was one of his now.

* *

Jack was dressed in a three-piece slim-cut black suit with a blood red dress shirt and black tie with matching, highly polished embossed leather Oxfords and, of course, one glove of a pair of Italian leather black leather gloves on his unbroken hand. If he could have crammed the glove on his other hand he would have, anything to not have to touch Lisa. His hair was slicked back, his eyes traced out in black eye-liner and his lips were a soft glossy red. Lisa was sitting next to him wearing what Jack supposed she thought was a sexy dress; it was a sheer, low cut black shimmering mini dress with a pair of black lace-up stilettos.

Jack was very proud of himself, he hadn't vomited yet! She had her hand on his thigh while he drove and occasionally she would try to lower her hand down between his legs. Jack would put his cast covered hand down on hers and move her hand back up his leg or try to push her hand off completely. Inwardly Jack groaned, did women have to put up with this all the time? Being groped when they didn't want to be? Jack shook his head sighing. Most men needed their hands cut off at the wrist or just a few more murders of creeps that did that...Jack frowned, thinking of killing men who just looked at Harley wrong, let alone touched her!

Lisa ran her fingers delicately along his broken hand. “I still can't believe you drove yourself with your hand all banged up like that. You still haven't told me what happened? Did she do this to you?” Lisa frowned. “You poor thing...”

Jack closed his eyes for a split second telling himself patience was a virtue. “No, Harley didn't do this. I was in a fight. Nothing to worry about.”

Lisa grinned. “I suppose you're right. I mean with your money, any scars that an injury would leave you could have taken care of.”

Jack frowned. “Now why on earth would I do that? I mean scars are proof of life aren't they?
Lisa frowned clearly confused. “But don't you want to look perfect?” She reached up and touched the healing cut on his cheek. “You are so handsome, why have a scar to detract from that?

Jack glanced sideways at her, wishing she would stop touching him. He tried not to growl. “I like scars.”

Lisa pouted then decided to change the subject. “So why do you wear make-up, Jack honey? I mean, you wear it well, but men don't usually wear make-up.”

Jack ground his teeth in annoyance. “I like it.”

Lisa made a face. “Well honey, I think you should consider what kind of message it sends and maybe stop wearing it. Especially the lipstick.” Jack bit down hard on his tongue, but said nothing. He just let himself imagine the look of glee on his Harls' face when she swung her bat.

“So where are we going?” Lisa purred. “Someplace private I hope.” Again her fingers tried to dance between his legs. Jack nearly slapped her as he took her hand and moved it off his legs, placing her hand in her own lap.

Jack smiled at her. “Don't worry; it will be nice and dark and very private.”

Lisa giggled, the sound rolling over Jack's ears like old, dirty oil. “I'm so looking forward to it.”

Jack parked over to the side in the main parking lot leading into Sheldon Park. He stepped out of the car and came around to let Lisa out of the car. (She had clearly expected him to since she had sat in the car when he stepped out without moving a muscle to open her own door.) Jack took her hand helping her out of car. Lisa frowned looking around.

“Why are we here darling?”

Jack twitched, the endearment scraping over his skin like sandpaper. “I though a walk in the park, just the two of us alone would be nice...maybe find a park bench to sit and enjoy the stars.”

Lisa looked up frowning. “You can't really see them from here though, the lights are a bit much.”

Jack smiled his most charming smile at her. “Who said those are the only stars in Gotham?”

Lisa twittered and blushed wrapping her arm around his, leaning into his shoulder.

* 

Harley arrived at the park and hopped out of the Bentley with a grin and popping bubbles with the bubblegum she had made Frost stop and buy her. Frost stepped out too with a look around. His years as a police officer—and just being a Gothamite knowing about this park—had his senses on overload for the potential dangers here. “You sure about this Miss Quinn? This park isn't safe. It's known for the number of murders, rapes and muggings that happen here. You know that's why they call it Murder Park.”

Harley swung her bat with a laugh. “Thanks Frost. I'll be fine.” She blew a bubble and popped it with a giggle. “God, I forgot how much I love bubblegum!”

Frost didn't look pleased. “Miss Quinn I don't think Mr. Wayne would be too happy if I let anything happen to you.”

Harley walked over and laid her hand on his shoulder. “Frost,” she said with a comforting smile.
“Just stick to the plan okay?”

Frost stared down at her. Miss Quinn was petite, compact and he could tell she was swift and deadly. After a heartbeat, he nodded and opened the car door. “All right Miss Quinn.”

Harley grabbed his door, grinning at him. “See ya soon.”

She closed his door and sauntered into the park, twirling her bat easily in one hand.

* 

Harley was grinning happily. She had been regretting not using her bat on Meg for ages now. (Harleen whispered. “You really are crossing a line Harley.” “Oh shut up Harleen.” Harley continued to smile. “Don't try to ruin my good mood.” Harleen sighed. “I don't know who you are.” Harley laughed. “You're not a very good doctor Harleen if you don't know who we are anymore...”)

The park was barely a park; it looked more like the inside of a dumpster. There was garbage everywhere, graffiti and she could swear she could smell urine and vomit. It had once been nice, with brick paths, flowering shrubs, and thick growth of trees. It had probably been gorgeous at one time, she thought but now it was definitely a dump. Harley made a face. “Pleasant.”

She was on her way to the center where the statue of the namesake of the park stood. The statue was surrounded by park benches and located in its own little alcove, surrounded by tall evergreen bushes. It would be a great place to make out and not be caught if the park hadn't been so dangerous.

When Harley stepped into the little space, three men jumped out of the bushes in front of her. “Hey sweetheart! Whatcha up to wandering about by yourself?” One was a young guy, early twenties, might have been good-looking except for the tattoo across his forehead. Harley couldn't be real sure what it was in the dim light from a light post not too far away, but to her it looked like he had a penis tattooed on his head. She giggled to herself. Okay that one's called dickhead. The other two, a tall skinny man that reminded her of a walking skeleton...okay Bones she thought and last, a heavy set man with a couple of chins...Jabba. Harley grinned pleased with her names for the three punks.

Harley stopped in her tracks and narrowed her blue eyes. She hadn't bothered to move the bat from her shoulder yet. “You know if ya'll were smart, you would shove off.” She blew at bubble at them.

The tall skinny, half starved looking guy (Bones as Harley called him to herself) walked closer. “You think that bat is going to protect you girlie?”

Harley swung the bat off her shoulder and smacked it into her opposite hand with a satisfying 'thwack' of wood against flesh. “I think so.”

Bones decided to rush her. As skinny as he was, Harley wasn't sure what he thought he was going to accomplish, it was an extremely stupid move, she thought. Chewing her gum and then clenching her teeth in a bright, eager, vicious smile, Harley swung her bat low and to the side. Before the man could lay a hand on her, she shattered his kneecap, the bat connecting with a hard thunk against the man's leg. The snap of bone was audible to his companions. Immediately Bones started to howl as he dropped his hands down to his damaged knee trying to catch himself, but Harley didn't stop there. She slammed the bat upward, catching Bones in the mouth with another satisfying thunk sound, shattering at least two teeth and knocking out two others. Bones made a really laughable sound of pain, falling backwards onto the ground.

Harley giggled and popped her gum. “Who's next?”

Dickhead shoved Jabba at her. “Go on Wally, you get her.”
Jabba staggered forward, pulling a switchblade from his pocket at the same time. “Come on pretty, just come have a little fun with us. Nobody needs to get hurt.”

Harley swung her bat around grinning, blowing bubbles and popping them. “Really? Oh I don't know—I think someone does.” She moved so swiftly that Jabba didn't have time to react before Harley brought the bat down on the forearm holding the knife. The man's yell was hilarious and Harley wished Jack could be here to share this with her when the hard impact of bat hitting bone filled the small area. Jabba screamed. “MY ARM!!”

He stumbled back, having dropped the switchblade, which skittered along the broken brick path vanishing into the dark. Harley giggled at Dickhead. “Mm...two out of three...whatdya think your chances are?”

Dickhead apparently had a little more brains as he rushed forward and grabbed Bones, dragging him with him while Jabba followed quickly behind. Dickhead yelled over his shoulder. “I'm gonna find you and kill you, you little cunt!!”

Harley rolled her eyes with a giggle then found herself a prime hiding spot and waited.

* 

Twenty minutes later after Harley had had to scare away a hooker and her john with the threat of using her bat on his privates, Harley caught a glimpse of Jack and Lisa walking under one of the park lights. Lisa had her arm through Jack's and her head was lying on his shoulder.

Harley sneered, her eyes narrowing with hatred watching the way Lisa was fawning all over Jack. How dare that woman try to butt her way into what she and Jack had. No one touched Jack but her...and they had even given her a chance to live, but the stupid bitch just couldn't stay away! She just had to keep butting her head in, just had to keep trying to take Jack away from her.

Harley's fists around the handle of her bat held on tight until her knuckles were turning white under her gloves. She watched until Jack and Lisa had strolled pass her hiding spot when Harley stepped out.

“Well, well, well...Lisa,” Harley said around her gum, sneering at the other woman.

Lisa turned with Jack and let out a little yelp. “You! What are you doing here?! You're stalking him aren't you! What the fuck is wrong with you? Can't you tell he doesn't want you any more?? He's in love with me!”

Lisa took a step away from Jack who was just standing there with an amused look on his face. Harley glanced at Jack giving him a wink before she blew a bubble at Lisa. “You know what, you're the one who is delusional. I don't know if Jack told you, but I'm a licensed psychiatrist and you honey, are nuts.” Harley giggled. “So to quote the newest Taylor Swift song. 'Look what you made me do.'”

With a wide grin Harley took a couple of steps back, then leading with her right foot she stepped forward, pulling her bat back over her shoulder as she stepped up with her left foot and swung, the bat cutting through the air and hitting the confused Lisa in the chest. There was a loud thump as the bat hit her in the chest and a crack of her breast bone breaking as Lisa flew backwards comically off her heels, her eyes going wide and a gasp catching in her throat.

Jack snorted out a laugh when Lisa fell clutching at her chest, wheezing for breath for a couple of seconds, her eyes wide as saucers before she stopped, her last breath coming out like a sigh.
walked over and looked down at Lisa leaning on the head of her bat watching. Harley frowned then
looked up at Jack. “Is that it?”

Jack dropped to a crouch next to the prone woman and covered Lisa's nose and mouth with his one
gloved hand. “I have heard of people dying from a blow to the chest if it's hard enough.”

Harley looked sour as she crouched down too, her right hand on the top of her bat. “Well this is just
getting to be disappointing...again.”

Jack smiled. “I'm sorry sweets, but she is as dead as a door nail.”

Harley pouted blowing a bubble. “I had more fun hitting those jerks before you came.”

Jack stood up. “What?”

Harley pushed herself to her feet with a shrug. “Just a a trio of asses. I took care of them.”

Jack laughed softly while Harley reached down for Lisa's purse taking out the woman's wallet and
shoving it into her back pocket. She crouched down to examine Lisa's earrings and necklace.
“Should I take those too?” She looked up at Jack who nodded. “Yep. Then come on—I'm starved
sweets.”

Harley giggled snapping the necklace and removing the earrings dropping them into her pocket.
“Okay puddin I'm ready. Though we need to do something where I can use my bat more.”

Jack put his arm around Harley's waist walking out of the park. “I'm sorry sweets. Make it up to you
tonight?"

Harley giggled. “Sure.”

*  

Jack drove while Harley stripped. He found it distracting watching her in the back seat (where there
was more room for her to maneuver in than the Bentley) raising her hips up to shimmy out of her
jeans. He grinned seeing the lacy black thong she was wearing. He licked his lips when she pulled
off her t-shirt then her bra, moving around to lift out the dress. The dress itself was black, like his
suit. The front of the dress was a halter with a keyhole opening between her breasts and it was
backless, the jersey fabric falling to her hips showing the smooth creamy expanse of her slender
back. He pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, his groin tightening and hardening while he watched
her dress, unbraiding her hair and running her fingers through it before she started to gather it up into
a mess up do, thick curls framing her face.

She next pulled out a pair of Christian Louboutin's black suede Pigalle Follies pumps. Jack's blue
eyes followed the length of her calf, continuing to watch while she crossed her legs to slip the shoe
on, the fabric of the dress falling away to reveal the thigh high slit in the dress.

Jack groaned. “Damn it Harley.”

She looked up, her blue eyes catching his as she quirked an amused brow at him. “What is it
puddin?”

Jack laughed. “You know exactly what you're doing to do me. That dress is going to kill me.”

Harley giggled taking out her make up and started to do her face. Jack grinned happily tapping the
fingers of his good hand on the steering wheel as he drove to pick up Frost.
The Sky High Gotham restaurant was located in one of the tallest buildings in Gotham, the Wayne International Plaza. The restaurant itself was located on the top floor, surrounded by windows providing several fantastic views of the city from every direction. The floor was a slick black marble, the chairs and seats were all covered in white table clothes, the lighting was warm soft purples and blues like an evening sky, with candles on each table. The daytime view was stunning, but it was the evening view that really drew the crowds to this restaurant, which was one of the reasons this place stayed open until 5 a.m.

Jack and Harley exited the elevator, the two of them drawing a few stares while they stepped up to the podium. With them both dressed in black, they looked like a pair of high end Goths. The only color on Jack was his shirt or blood red and on Harley it was the necklace Jack had given her, a ruby that sat at the hollow of her throat and her engagement ring.

When the man at the podium, an olive-skinned young man with pleasant brown eyes, glanced up he slowly smiled pleasantly. “Mr. Wayne, a pleasure. Right this way, please—you're table is waiting.”

“Thank you Louis, it's been a while,” Jack commented as they were led to a table by the window that had one of the most spectacular views of the city below, Jack felt.

Louis smiled while Jack pulled a chair out for Harley. “It has indeed sir. I had heard through the grapevine that you were engaged.”

Jack grinned. “I am indeedie! This is my love Harley,” Jack gestured toward Harley. Louis took her hand. “A pleasure. You are very lovely.”

Harley blushed. “Thank you.”

Jack grinned. “So how’s the husband Louis, and the kids?”

Louis smiled. “Hugo is right as rain and the kids are growing too fast.”


Louis smiled. “Perfect Mr. Wayne. I will fetch that for you right away and you can look over the menu.”

Jack smiled. “Thank you my dear.”

Soon Jack was pouring wine into Harley's glass and smiling. “I feel...” He sighed happily. “Extremely happy...we have freed ourselves of two burdens and now I feel like dancing!”

Harley laughed holding her wine up and taking a sip. There wasn't a dance floor in the restaurant, though some music was playing, light classical. Jack grinned, putting out his hand to her across the table. “Would you like to dance with me?”

Harley giggled “Yes!”

Jack took her hand as they both stood, then he pulled Harley into his arms. Jack wrapped his arm with the cast around her waist tugging her up against him. The Blue Danube Waltz was playing softly in the background. Jack started to waltz with her, smiling into her eyes. Jack spun slowly with
her, both of them pointing their right feet out, then Jack elegantly spun her around, then took both her hands the two of them stepping away from each other before Jack turned her around into his arms, her back up against his chest.

Jack leaned close and kissed her ear. “I love you my little murder kitten.”

Harley gigled. “Mm...I love you my dark prince charming.”

Jack laughed swinging her out and holding her hand, turning her in a circle before he tugged her back into his arms again. “Mmm...I can't wait until I'm introducing you as Mrs. Wayne...my wife...”

Harley giggled. “Mrs. Wayne...I do love the sound of that—my husband...Jack Wayne...” She grinned letting Jack swing her out again and back into his arms to dip her. The restaurant patrons applauded.

Jack smiled down at her. “Nothing and no one will ever tear us apart Harley...ever.”
Cementing Frienships

It was several weeks after the fight with Croc and Harley's killing of Lisa.

Harley woke up to the smell of fresh coffee and Jack singing. She smiled, wrapping her arms around her pillow and snuggling into it listening to the warm sounds of Jack's voice.

“Oh, her eyes, her eyes make the stars look like they're not shining

Her hair, her hair falls perfectly without her trying

She's so beautiful

And I tell her everyday....”

Harley smiled with her eyes closed and listened to Jack sing Bruno Mars.

The Wayne family cabin was an intimate structure, smaller than she was expecting, but the inside of it was beautiful. There were stone and wood tiled floors, with a large picture window that looked out onto a beautiful mountain and forest landscape. There was a wide open living room with a fireplace and a large comfortable beige couch, accompanied by several sitting chairs. The kitchen was off the living room/dining room with a small round wooden table and a couple of solidly crafted wooden chairs. The bedroom was cozy with its own picture window, a large queen size bed and a small fireplace in the corner. There was even a bear skin on the wall! It was the sort of place Harley had only seen in magazine pictures.

Harley giggled sitting up and grabbing the sheet, wrapping it around her naked body and walked barefoot into the cabin's living room. She could see Jack, barefoot, in a pair of dark purple and white striped boxers—otherwise he was wearing nothing else. His thick dark brown hair was curling around his face though he kept sweeping it back while he sang and danced, all while making pancakes. He had the cast removed from his hand by a doctor in town just a few days ago and he had been enjoying having the freedom of both his hands back immensely...especially if last night was any indication, Harley thought with a pleased blush.

Harley stopped to watch him. After killing Lisa (who had only made the Gotham papers as another unfortunate mugging of an out-of-towner in Gotham, in the wrong place at the wrong time) Jack had decided that they should take a couple of weeks away from Gotham and spend some time in a cabin owned by the Waynes in upstate New York. It had been the right decision. Jack and Harley had spent the most wonderful time together without the distractions of family or Gotham City.

* 

Harley giggled when Jack did a complete spin with the pan in one hand and spatula in the other, then grinned when he saw her watching him. He pointed with the spatula at her, using the pan as a microphone continuing to sing Bruno Mars.

“And when you smile

The whole world stops and stares for a while

'Cause girl, you're amazing

Just the way you are
Her lips, her lips, I could kiss them all day if she'd let me

Her laugh her laugh, she hates but I think it's so sexy

She's so beautiful

And I tell her everyday...”

He trailed off putting the pan down on one of the off burners, tossed the spatula down so that he could stalk over to her, grinning and waggling his eyebrows with a devilish gleam in his eyes. He strolled across the floor, grabbed Harley and yanked her into his arms. She squealed as she struggled to hold the sheet up, swiftly tucking it around her so that it would not fall to the floor while Jack pulled her against him. His hands moved down her back in a slow sensual caress before he started to sway, pressing her body flush against his while moving to unheard music. Jack's voice provided the only melody they were dancing to; Jack's smile was broad as he held her hand, twisting her out from him making Harley do a full spin (nearly losing the sheet) then back again with her back pressed against his chest. Jack chuckled licking her ear as he continued to sing softly.

“When I see your face

There's not a thing that I would change

’Cause you're amazing

Just the way you are...”

He twisted her back around to face him, took a few long quick tango-like steps across the living room floor before he stopped and dipped her back to place a kiss between her breasts. He set her back on her feet. “And how is my little minx this morning?”

Harley grinned at him. “Happy. How are you?”

Jack grinned as he stole a kiss before he let her go and walked back to the kitchen. “I'm making breakfast and feeling fantastic! Especially after last night's exercise. You, my dear, are very flexible...I love it!”

Harley giggled, her cheeks turning red as she straightened up her sheet and walked into the kitchen. “Mm...the coffee smells fantastic, Jack!”

Jack smiled softly at her, reaching up to pull a cup down for her and began preparing her coffee. “So my sweets, ready to head back to Gotham? Bruce called this morning to check to see if we were still planning on meeting him for dinner tonight.”

Harley smiled taking the offered cup when he was finished and held it up to her nose to take a deep whiff of coffee. “Sure if you are puddin?”

He grinned. “I suppose we can't stay here forever, though I've enjoyed myself. Oh, I also got a phone call from Alex; apparently Penguin is ready for our promised fight.”

Harley looked up from her coffee. “What?”

Jack prepared his own cup of coffee while he spoke. “Yep, I thought the little bird would find a way out of it because of what happened with Croc, but I guess his pride took over. So, yes, our fight is in a day or two...Alex said he would let me know, but he also called to tell me he's rescheduled the poker game for tomorrow night.”
“Busy week,” Harley noted.

Jack grinned with a nod as he set his mug of coffee down and went back to making pancakes. “Yep. What can I say? You and I are popular toots!” Jack slid the finished pancake onto a plate and handed it to Harley while he set about making another for himself. “Bruce wants to meet us at Ducards, this really fancy French restaurant...if you don't show up dressed up, they kick your ass out.” Jack laughed.

“Is it nice or just pretending to be nice?” Harley asked while she adjusted her sheet before cutting into her pancake.

“No the food there is actually good. I was there once with Bruce when he first became official head of Wayne Enterprises...when he came of age and had proven himself. Anyway we went out for a celebration: Bruce, Alfred and me.” Jack tilted his head in thought. “I think that was also the dinner where I put a steak knife through this really rude waiter's hand...he kept talking to me like I was slow.” Jack chuckled. “Oh, Bruce was upset and embarrassed!...Or maybe he was just upset. Anyway that was when I ended up under a doctor's careful eye for about a month until he declared me sane again. Apparently I was suffering from pathological jealousy...or something like that.” Jack shrugged carrying his plate over to sit at the little dining room table with Harley.

“But the real reason I stabbed the waiter was that he was condescending and a bore.” Jack giggled cutting a bite off his pancake after lathering it in butter and syrup. He grinned around a mouthful. “I don't think I've been back to that restuarant since!”

Harley giggled. “Oh I can just see the look on Bruce's face when you did that!”

Jack laughed. “It was priceless!”

*

By mid-afternoon Jack and Harley had the Bentley Bentayga loaded up and were headed back to Gotham. Jack drove, singing along with Harley. They had the windows rolled down and the cool breeze was blowing through their hair. Harley leaned her head on Jack's shoulder thinking to herself that moment, everything was right with the world...at least with her world.

*

When they arrived home, Alfred was waiting for them with a small smile on his lips. He was clearly happy to see them. “Nice to see you both back again. Did you have a nice stay at the cabin?” Alfred asked while he walked out to the car to help with their bags.

“Oh, it was wonderful Alfred!” Harley grinned rushing over to hug Alfred. She looked adorable in a pair of “Daisy Duke” shorts and a red and black plaid button down shirt with her hair in pigtails.

Jack smiled at her, admiring her backside for a moment. He was dressed casually as well, in dark blue slacks and a white button down shirt with the sleeves rolled up. “Yep, we had a nice time away from all the cares of Gotham! So is Bruce around?” Jack asked picking up two of their bags and walked through the manor's front doors.

“No, he is not Master Jack,” Alfred answered. “Master Bruce is still at the office, though he did want me to tell you that he will be not running late for dinner tonight.” Alfred smiled. “Would either of you like some tea?”

Jack glanced over his shoulder at Harley who nodded. “That sounds great.”
Jack and Alfred had just headed up the stairs, Harley following along with her own couple of bags when her cellphone rang. She frowned. Harley didn't receive calls often. Usually they were wrong numbers or solicitors and usually Harley would check the number before answering, but this time she just dropped the bags and grabbed her phone out of the back pocket of her jean shorts without thinking before she answered. “Hello?”

“Well if it isn't Quinz.”

Harley froze at the foot of the stairs, her eyes going wide in shock. She knew that voice.

The man on the other end continued; his voice slithered down her spine like a vile snake, then creeping up her back, drilling into the back of her skull. The old Harleen came to the surface and Harley shivered stepping back mentally. Harleen actually quivered with an old fear.

“How are you babe? Saw your pic in the paper. Hanging out with the rich boys now, are ya? Dating a Wayne? How the fuck a whore like you hook a Wayne? I couldn't get you to spread your legs for nothing...course my trying got me kicked out of school, didn't it ya frigged bitch? Though I suppose if I had the money you would have opened up just fine, eh?” He laughed on the other end and Harleen felt a tear she hadn't realized she was crying run down her cheek to drip off her chin. Her old fears, the memories of him holding her down, trying to...punching her in the face, threatening her...while these images from Harleen's past rotated through her mind, he continued to talk.

“Don't have time for your old boyfriend anymore, do you Quinz? You too good for me now huh? Course you thought you were too good for me then too when you fucking ruined my life.”

Harleen reached up unconsciously and touched her cheek where he had hit her, feeling the old bruise that had vanished years ago, her fingers dragged down over the phantom of a pressure wound, blood trailing down over a swollen bloody lip, brushing along the tooth he had chipped when he hit her, now replaced with a cap. She had dated him briefly. Good-looking, blonde with that sort of all-American boy look, the athlete, football player that rode into college on a scholarship...the sort of guy she thought might give her...something good. She had buried her brief three-week relationship with Guy deep down, to the the point she had almost forgotten about it until she heard his voice again. The hitting had started after the first week and had grown more and more severe so that by the time she left him, he was hitting her regularly...that night, the night she had finally wrestled up the courage to tell him no, had been the night he had hit her in the face and tried to rape her.

She did her best to keep her voice from trembling as images of that man, the night he had attacked her when she had refused to be his girl, refused to be with him...Harleen closed her eyes. Images came to her mind, images of him pressing her down against the brick path in the park that ran alongside the campus. His hands ripping the front of her dress, his mouth on her neck, whispering to her that she wanted this, she was making him do this...it was her fault...

Harleen swallowed. She had fought back, ripping her nails along his chest, her knee slamming into his groin with every bit of strength she had. She had pushed him off of her, getting to her feet and kicked him in the ribs before she took off running for help. She had reported him to campus security, which lucky for her, found him still on the ground, but even luckier was that Guy Kopski had several other assault charges issued against him and one restraining order. If not for those other issues already against him, he might not have been kicked off the campus. Lucky for her, he had been...

Harleen had pressed charges against him for attempted assault, but his family lawyer had gotten the charges reduced further and cut a deal for to community service if Guy agreed to leave the college. It had made Harleen sick, but she had moved on with her life, finished her degree and had pushed her time with Guy Kopski away, locking it up and forgetting all about it completely. It had become something that had happened to another person. But now all of it came rushing back to her.
“What do you want?” Harleen hissed. “I want nothing to do with you and you're not getting anything out of me.”

Guy chuckled. “Really? How about I want some of that fucking Wayne money and I'm betting that freak Jack Wayne would love to hear how you whored yourself around in college.”

“What? That's a lie! Jack would never believe you!” Harleen gritted out between her teeth, her grip on the phone tightening enough that the plastic case groaned.

Guy laughed on the other end. “But what if I can provide pics? Who do you think your rich boy is going to believe, you or me?

Harleen opened her mouth to say something, her mind racing. How could he have pictures of anything? She never slept with him. He had assaulted her! That was when Jack came trotting down the stairs.

“Hey sugar dumpling, what's taking you so long?” Jack was all smiles as he trotted down the stairs then his steps slowed when he saw the look on Harley's face.

“Harley, what is it?” Jack asked with concern.

Guy on the other end apparently heard Jack and he laughed. “Yeah Quinz, put old Jack Wayne on the phone...” Harleen hung up.

“It's nothing puddin, wrong number.” Harley smiled shoving the phone back into her back pocket.

Jack frowned taking her into his arms. “Harley...”

(Harleen sighed. “You should tell him.”)

Harley frowned mentally. “I don't want to...I...you were so weak and stupid then.”

“Maybe, but you need to tell him.” Harleen frowned. “Jack has told you all his secrets...tell him.”

Harley sighed. “I know you're right, but can it wait? Not now. We're going out to dinner with his brother and I want Jack in a good mood.”

“All right, but Harley don't let this go. Tell him.” Harleen faded away.)

She shook her head. “It's nothing puddin.” She draped her arms around his shoulders. “So, you wanna help me dress for dinner?”

Jack frowned knowing she was keeping something from him, but he decided to give her time to tell him when she was ready. So instead he laughed. “Oh do I!” He grabbed her, lifting her into his arms bridal style and started to hop up the stairs while a squealing Harley.

“I always love helping you dress!” Jack chuckled taking the stairs with her in his arms two at a time. “And undressing...” Jack grinned.

* 

Frost drove them to the restaurant that night. “Nice to see you back Boss. You and Miss Quinn have a good time?” Frost glanced in the rear-view of the Bentley where Jack was playing with Harley's neckline, his fingers tracing the edges of the dress where it ran along the top of her breasts, his tongue and teeth worrying at the smooth column of her neck and down to her bare shoulders. The dress was a red trumpet style that hugged her figure. The sleeves were off-the-shoulder and the
chiffon and lace dress had a train, not long, but just enough to give the red dress a bit of a dramatic flair. Sequins in the bodice of the dress made Harley glitter and her hair was styled with one side of her hair braided along her scalp so that the rest of her long blonde hair fell over her left shoulder. Jack was enjoying himself immensely as he licked her neck again sending delightful shivers down Harley's spine.

Harley had her eyes closed enjoying his touch, her right hand resting on Jack's crotch, squeezing ever so gently. Jack growled softly. He was dressed in a three-piece royal purple suit, the jacket of which had black lapels matched with a black shirt, making Jack the image of elegance. As always, Harley thought. They both knew they were a little over dressed even though the restaurant had a dress code that demanded the patrons wear jackets, but Jack thought it would be fun to go all out.

Jack looked up from his licking of Harley to smile at Frost's eyes in the rear-view. “We had a great time. It was nice to be alone away from everyone for a while.” Jack grinned at Harley adding, “Harley kept me very busy.”

She giggled as her cheeks reddened. “Puddin!”

Frost chuckled. “Glad to hear it Boss.”

“Ah Frost, my darling. Would you be free to drive Harley and me to a friendly game tomorrow evening?” Jack met Frost's eyes in the rearview. Frost smiled and nodded. “Of course Boss, anything you want!”

Jack grinned. “Good good. Now, where was I? Oh yes...” Jack tugged her closer nibbling on her shoulder causing her to wiggle and squirm.

*

The restaurant, Ducard's, was very lovely on the inside, Harley noted with pleasant surprise; the simple lines on the outside of the building didn't translate on the inside. The interior was definitely 'fancy' Harley thought. Jack waltzed in with Harley on his arm and stopped to have a word with the maitre d'. Harley and Jack were receiving quite a few looks, dressed up as if they were going to a royal dinner instead of just dinner with Jack's brother.

The inside of the restaurant had the warm golden luminescence of candlelight. Soft violin music played in the background, creating a calm and sophisticated atmosphere. The architecture reminded Harley of Versailles that she had seen pictures of in books, complete with mirrors on the walls along with highly ornate wall sculptures of Roman gods and goddesses. Crystal chandeliers hung everywhere reflecting the light back at the mirrors on the wall creating the illusion of a vast space. There were round tables with elegant white table cloth and chairs throughout the main dining area. The chairs reminded Harley more of expensive arm chairs than actual dinner table seats.

Jack smiled leaning on the podium with his elbow. The young woman who had been looking down at her guest book glanced up with a quizzical lift of her brow.

Jack smiled pleasantly. “Wayne,” he said simply. The young woman at the pedestal smiled and nodded. “Right this way sir, ma'am.” She inclined her head and briskly headed into the main dining room, her heels making a smart click-clack against the floor.

The young woman, with her hair spiraled up on top of her head in an intricate bun, wore a long black skirt that stopped just at her ankles and a white dress shirt, her name tag pronouncing that she was named Kate. The maitre d' led them to the far back of the restaurant to a table in the corner where Bruce, wearing a crisp tailored black suit and red tie, sat cross-legged sipping some wine and going over something on his phone with one hand, his thumb scrolling through something when he
heard them approach. Bruce glanced up and smiled brightly when he saw them.

“Jack! Harley! Glad you both could make it.”

He stood and embraced Jack, then took Harley's hand, kissing her knuckles which surprised Harley enough that she didn't remove her hand right away staring at him. Jack chuckled taking her hand from Bruce and kissing her knuckles while he pulled her seat out for her.

“Did you guys have a nice stay at the cabin?” Bruce asked taking his seat and pointing at a waiter, then motioning at the young man before holding up two fingers indicating he wanted two more glasses brought over.

Jack sat down next to Bruce, taking Harley's hand and kissing her knuckles again. He held her knuckles against his lips, idly running the soft, smooth skin against his painted lips as he spoke.

“We did. It was nice to be away from everything. A lot quieter than our little trip to California and it helped with the healing process.” Jack wiggled the fingers of his healed hand. “Still a little stiff and sore, but healing just fine. Alfred is a miracle worker.”

Bruce frowned ever so slightly at the mention of Jack's broken hand...which reminded him of the fight “club,” but he promised himself to let it go...though Batman may have a different opinion on the matter.

Bruce nodded. “Well, why don’t we order our dinner before we talk about the engagement party, hm?”

Their waiter approached their table carrying two extra wine glasses on a silver tray. “May I pick you up another bottle of wine?” he inquired politely.

Bruce nodded. “Yes please, we are having Chateau Lafite Rothschild. If that is fine with you Jack?” Bruce glanced at his brother and Jack inclined his head. Bruce smiled and glanced back up at the waiter. “And I believe we would like to order.”

The young dark haired man nodded. “Whenever you are ready, sir.”

* 

Soon their food orders were placed and Bruce steepled his fingers with his elbows on the table, his blue eyed gaze shifting between the both of them. He made an effort to keep his smile pleasant. Bruce wanted this to work, he wanted Jack to be happy and he wanted to be friends with Dr. Quinzel since she was making Jack happy and, he thought not for the first time in the past few weeks...she was going to be his sister-in-law. It was still difficult for him...separating the reasons he brought her here, to now, with her about to marry his baby brother. Bruce still had an issue with some of the stunts Jack had pulled recently, but he told himself that maybe being married would be good for Jack. He kept reminding himself that marriage could be stabilizing for Jack. His brother could settle down, think about raising a family. Bruce had hoped when Harleen had first become pregnant that maybe that was a good sign. But when she lost the baby he had worried that Jack would become worse...so far, except for that fight club incident, Jack had seemed reasonably stable, as far as Bruce knew. Though he had come across the police report (as Batman) of the Electrocutioner being found by some cops, his mind seemingly...gone. No one was sure what happened, the only reason they had learned the man was indeed the Electrocutioner was from a mugshot taken a couple of years before. An examination had shown that the man had been lobotomized. It was a queer question on who had done it to him...for a moment Bruce had entertained the idea that it had somehow been Jack, but he had just as quickly dismissed the idea.
Jack would never do such an thing. Bruce was even surprised that he would have considered it for the heartbeat that the idea had entered his conscious mind. Jack seemed better, his outbursts of violence were under control and he was happy.

“What more could I possible want for him?” Bruce had asked himself.

Maybe, just maybe, this party would be a way for them to mend some of the bridge that spanned the gap between them.

Bruce smiled, leaning on his elbows. “So, I wanted to discuss your engagement party...for two weeks from now?”


Bruce nodded. “I thought we could have something elegant, invite all of Gotham's elite and of course some of the CEO's that Wayne Enterprises works with, friends of the family, especially people who knew our parents. I know Alfred said you had wanted a themed party, but I was hoping I could steer you both toward a more elegant style party.”

Jack frowned slightly, glancing at Harley who smiled at him in such a way that Jack felt his heart swell in his chest. She murmured, “I'm fine with it if you are puddin.”

Jack grinned leaning over and planting a loud kiss on her cheek. “I love this woman!” He grinned at Bruce who couldn't help but smile. No matter what he may think or continue to worry about, it was clear Jack was deeply in love, and judging by the way Harley looked at Jack she was just as much in love with his brother. Jack wrinkled his nose with a grin.

“Sure as long as there is lots to drink, dancing, a live band that can play a decent waltz and more dancing AND...” He leaned over and whispered to Harley. “Cupcakes?”

She giggled and nodded. “Cupcakes.”

Jack grinned at Bruce. “Lots and lots of cupcakes!”

Harley giggled and took another sip of her wine. “Maybe we could have a color theme?”

Bruce smiled and nodded. “Yes I'll make sure there are a lot of cupcakes. A color theme would be just fine—what did you both have in mind?”

Jack grinned. “Purple and green!”

Harley giggled bumping his shoulder. “Red and black!”

They both giggled leaning in toward each other like a couple of conspiring kids, Jack reached over and ran his finger over the bridge of her nose, his blue gaze was filled with love and mischief. “If you want black and red that's what it'll be Harls.”

Harley smiled. “Actually I think purple and green would be prettier puddin.”

Bruce smiled watching the two of them. A little part of him was slightly jealous. He frowned, his thoughts drifting to Selina...

Jack murmured tracing Harley's jaw. “You would look beautiful in purple.”

Harley giggled. “We could wear matching outfits!”
Jack sat back looking pleasantly shocked. “You're right Harls!! We could match!! It would be such fun!!! We could still go with a 1920's theme with our outfits!” Jack glanced at his brother. “Would that be acceptable at an elegant engagement party?”

Bruce was actually surprised that Jack asked his opinion. He smiled pleased and nodded. “Actually that would be wonderful. As the bride and groom-to-be you would both stand out, as you should at your own engagement party.”

Jack clapped his hands. “It's decided then!”

Bruce thought briefly about approaching the prenuptial conversation again, but decided to let it go for now. This was the first in a very long time that he and Jack were getting along, so much so that they were laughing together. It was nice. Bruce hadn't realized how much he had missed his little brother. Bruce smiled, and really, honestly, he owed this moment to Dr. Quinzel.

Bruce smiled at her and nodded his head. Harley blinked in surprise not sure what the gesture was about, but she smiled back.

*

Later that evening Harley was curled in the crook of Jack's arm while Frost drove them home. The evening had been successful. Bruce and Jack had gotten along all evening, talking about the party and a few other (non-volatile) subjects. They both had laughed telling her about a party their parents had had when the boys were quite little, the two of them sneaking into the party well after they should have been in bed and hiding under a table.

Jack had started to laugh as he retold the story of pulling on the tablecloth of the table, trying to make sure they were well hidden, but instead he had yanked all of the party food off the table...including a very large crystal punch bowl.

Harley smiled. It had been nice to see the brothers laughing together, remembering their lives growing up as brothers.

Jack lit a cigarette and rolled down the window as he smoked, holding her close. “You know Harley, this was a good night.”

She gazed up at him watching the way he wrapped his lips around the cigarette, the slow way he blew the smoke out. She found his smoking so damn sexy.

“Mm...Jack...I love you.” Harley reached up to stroke the back of her fingers along the end of his sharp chin. He glanced down at her with a smile. “You will always be my girl Harley...I love you my sweets.”

She sat up and turned his face toward her. Jack stared at her for a long moment before he flicked the cigarette out the window.

Harley found his movements to be sensual, seductive without effort. Jack leaned in and kissed one cheek, then her other. Harley smiled closing her eyes each time his lips touched her skin. Jack caught her lips with his teeth chuckling softly before he kissed her, a soft and tender kiss. He reached down and started to unbutton his vest slowly. Harley reached for him, taking over, unbuttoning the vest, then running her hands up the soft fabric of his shirt and started to undo the buttons one by one, letting his shirt fall open. Harley ran her hands up his chest and over his shoulder. His skin was so soft, even where her fingers ran over the puckered places where his wounds were, the place where Croc had bit him, the claw marks on his stomach. For Harley, it didn't take away from how alluring
his body felt—in fact it only enhanced her desire for him.

Jack reached around her, taking hold of the zipper at the back of her dress and slowly, gradually tugged it down until the upper half of her dress fell away. She hadn't been wearing a bra since the dress had dropped shoulders and held her breasts snugly, so there had really been no need. Jack sat back to admire her.

“You are so beautiful Harley...the most beautiful woman in the world,” he whispered and slid one hand over her breast, cupping it then squeezing gently.

Harley groaned in delight at his touch. “Oh Jack..”

(Frost twisted the rear-view mirror away so that he couldn't see them unless he turned around, though he was wondering if he could have a sliding window installed between the front and back seats.)

Jack gradually dragged his lips down the column of her neck, brushing over her collarbone and pressing soft kisses in his wake. Harley laid back, the two of them shifting just a little so that Jack could be above her. He tugged her dress up, then, with both of them giggling, they struggled to get her dress off until finally Jack helped her pull the garment over her head.

(Frost pressed his lips together smiling, keeping his eyes on the road, though his task was made difficult when the bright red dress came flying into the front seat with him.)

Harley giggled and reached for Jack again. He slipped his arms out of his jacket, shirt and vest, tossing them into the front seat with her dress before he lay on top of her.

“Harley...” He whispered her name like a prayer, pressing his lips to the tender spot just under her ear. Harley moaned softly, her arms around him, the tips of her fingers caressing up and down his spine feeling the soft warmth of his skin under her fingertips. Jack slowly made his way down her torso, pressing kiss after kiss against her skin. Harley moaned again; the warmth of his lips, the tickle of his breath against her skin caused heat to swirl and pool in her nipples and groin. Jack pushed himself carefully higher again, his lips pressing against her hard nipple. Jack enjoyed the texture of her nipple against his lips, the hiss from his woman, her back arching when the tip of his tongue played over the sensitive skin. He rolled his hand down her stomach, over her side then back again, dragging just the tips of his blunt nails across her ribs. She giggled softly and wiggled just a bit.

Jack laughed. “Ticklish Harls?”

She giggled and squirmed when he did it again, his tongue flicking slowly over her nipple while his fingernails tickled over her side. Harley giggled in response to his attentions. “Puddin!”

He chuckled softly, his hot breath brushing across her sensitive nipple. He switched breasts, grasping her nipple with his lips and tugging. Harley glanced down to watch him, to watch the way his lips pulled at her nipple then the way he coated her nipple with his tongue, spreading saliva over the sensitive skin just before he blew on the hard nub. Harley shivered, a quiver rippling from her breasts to her groin, a tickle so deep, making her so desperate that she couldn't find the words to express the aching longing for him to be inside of her, to fuck her. While Jack's mouth was focused on one of her breasts, he brought his fingers up to play with the nipple of the other breast, rolling the hard nub with his fingertips.

“Ahh...uhh...” Harley ran her hands into his hair arching her back and pushing her chest upward while Jack continued to drive her crazy. He smiled, switching back to her opposite breast, dragging the flat of his hand down her stomach, enjoying the silky softness of his Harley against his palm. He slid his fingers under her panties teasingly, coming close to her clitoris, hovering there, making her
ache for his touch. Her body grew tight and hotter yet, waiting for him to touch her, only to have him withdraw his fingers. Harley groaned with frustration, then pouted when he withdrew his hand completely. She had lifted her leg (still wearing her heels) placing it across the back of the front seat. Jack sat back smiling down at her and ran the flat of both hands up her torso, grabbing her breasts then dragging his hands back down over her stomach and up again.

He grinned. “Damn, you are so soft Harley in all the right places.”

She giggled. “You like it?”

“Mm...yes...” Jack dragged his hands down again stopping and tracing her tattoo with his fingertips. “Lucky you...” he repeated slowly before running his tongue over his teeth while he traced the words. “Mm...I would say so Harley...I'm very lucky.”

Harley laughed. “That tickles!”

Jack chuckled dragging his fingers back and forth until she was squirming and squealing. “JACK!!!”

He dropped down capturing her kiss with his mouth sliding his hand under her to hold her close. Harley wrapped her arms around him, biting slowly at his lips and tongue before sucking gently on his tongue. Jack purred which made Harley growl playfully and hiss. “On your back Jack Wayne.”

Jack giggled. “Ooo!”

(Frost glanced over to see Miss Quinn's shapely leg, her red heel resting on the shoulder of the passenger seat. “Yeah” he thought, might have to consider a different car for chauffeuring these two.)

They shifted, doing a little awkward turning around that had the both of them laughing, but finally, with Harley practically shoving Jack onto his back, she was on top. She grinned running her hands, her palms flat against his stomach, up over his chest giving him a look that communicated how much she would simply like to eat him. Jack grinned with his hands resting on her thighs. He loved the way she felt, her body weight pressing down on him, to be surrounded by her scent. Jack squeezed her legs grinning up at her.

“What's going to do Harley?” Jack asked eagerly.

Harley purred squeezing her arms together so that her breasts stuck out more. “I'm going to do this...”

She undid his slacks spreading the material wide then grabbed the edge of it along with his boxers and yanked, forcing Jack to lift his hips up. They both laughed but then Harley wrapped her hands around his hot erection. Jack groaned dropping his head back.

“Mmm...puddin...so hard and so warm...” Harley rolled her thumbs up the length of him pressing along the underside of his shaft all the way up then over the head of him, enjoying how soft his skin was there, like satin. She wanted to rub his shaft over her lips and cheeks, to press her lips to not just the head of his shaft but to every inch of Jack Wayne. She wanted to suck on every inch of skin, to smell him, taste him. Harley rolled her tongue over the top of his satiny soft head, tasting just a little of the salty ejaculate that leaked against her lips, which had Jack throwing his head back with a loud groan.

(Frost frowned. Maybe I should invest in ear-buds too? Yeah, that might be a good idea. He thought to himself.)

Jack whimpered. “Come here Harls.”
Harley grinned scooting herself over him and pulled her panties aside so she could slide down slowly, groaning softly at the feeling of Jack's hardness filling her. She dropped down to wrap her hands under his head to the feel of soft luxurious curls of his hair between her fingers. Jack wrapped his arms around her holding her close, their bodies connected, their souls connected. They stared at one another, smiling, rubbing their noses together.

Jack chuckled jerking with a groan when she moved; she was so warm and wet it felt so good it almost hurt. He rolled his hands down her back, under her panties to grab her rear, pressing his fingers into her flesh. “You're going to be my wife.”

Harley giggled tightening her inner muscles around him, squirming because he felt so good inside her. “Mrs. Wayne.”

Jack groaned, his hands running down to her hips which he gripped holding her down on him. He moaned. “I could be Mr. Quinn if you want.”

Harley giggled, the vibration of which rolled from her to him, up through his core. Jack gasped, closing his eyes for a moment as the intensity of feeling her laugh that way made him want to cry out. Harley brushed her lips against him, lazily licking his bottom lip with her tongue just as she started move her hips, gliding, then grinding against him, her inner muscles contracting and tugging against him. Her heat burned through him warming his entire body. Her breath came in little pants and soft feminine grunts which drove Jack crazy all by themselves. Jack could feel her fingers flexing against his skull where she cradled his head, tangling in his hair. He smiled against her mouth, his tongue flicking out to caress hers, thrusting his hips up, wanting to bury himself deep inside her.

“Uuhh puddin...oh puddin...” Harley groaned rubbing her nose against his, her lips catching his kisses. Jack groaned softly. “My pumpkin pie...my sweet, sweet girl...”

Jack ran his hands up her hips, grabbing a hold of her waist, thrusting his hips up to meet hers before he dragged his hands around her back feeling the supple curve of her spine. They stayed closely wrapped around one another, their hips moving in short thrusts or Harley would roll her hips grinding hard against him. They groaned together sharing their breath. Jack could feel it when Harley started to reach her first peak, her body tensing around him. Harley laid her forehead against his, her breath coming in quick gasps until she pushed up, digging her fingers into his chest, arching her back.

She came with a cry. “JACK!!! Uuh Jack!!”

Jack hissed pressing his teeth into his bottom lip, arching his back to meet her, reaching up to grab her shoulders. “God Harley...Harley...my—my Harley...”

Jack squeezed his eyes closed trying to hold back just a little longer, but God it was hard with her looking like a damn angel over him, the streetlights flashing against her pale skin, the look of pleasure on her face when she climaxed.

Jack reached up to run the flat of this hand down her stomach with a pleaded, “Harley.”

When she looked down at him, her beautiful face, her blue eyes glowing in the streetlight, he couldn't hold back; it was as if she ripped his orgasm from him. Jack cried out a sob that was a mixture of intense pleasure and undying love that came from him as he held on to her.

Watching the man she loved orgasm sent a ripple through Harley, a deep burn that spread out from her groin to encompass all of her. She came again with another moaning cry. Jack yanked her down
to him wrapping his arms tighter around her, kissing her with a deep, desperate passion that bordered on the fanatic.

(Frost pressed his lips together and squirmed a bit in his seat while he drove. It was quite difficult not to be...enticed by the sounds coming from the back seat. Hell, Frost thought, he didn't think he and his wife had ever had sex like that...not even on their wedding night!)

* 

The next day Harley and Jack were lying in bed naked, curled in each others arms when Harley murmured, “I really want some peanut butter cookies.”

Jack sat up suddenly turning to stare at her. “What did you say?”

Harley frowned looking confused. “I want some peanut butter cookies?”

“How did you know that was my favorite cookie?” Jack asked breathlessly.

Harley giggled. “I didn't.”

Jack grabbed the pillow he had been resting his head on and whacked her over the head with it. Harley squealed. “JACK!!”

She started to get up when he hit her again with the pillow and laughed. Harley snarled as she grabbed her own pillow, and, using her gymnastics training, she rolled away from him in a somersault to leaping to her feet at the end of the bed. She promptly hopped up and swung her pillow at her opponent. The pillow hit Jack straight across the face, knocking him back against the bed. He lay there unmoving, his eyes closed and his mouth slack.

Harley stood there naked on the edge of the bed her pillow raised for another strike. “Jack?”

Jack didn't move or respond. Harley narrowed her eyes and poked him with her foot. He still didn't move. “Jack?”

The moment that Harley dropped to her knees and put her pillow aside, Jack lunged up and grabbed her. “Never think your victim is dead 'til you take them down a second time!!” He grabbed her around the waist and yanked her over on top of him. Harley squealed laughing. Jack rolled over pressing Harley down into the mattress. She laughed, but then he started to blow raspberries on her stomach while holding her down. Harley squealed loudly.

“JACK!!”

“You have to surrender!!” Jack laughed blowing on her stomach again. Harley squealed and laughed loudly kicking her legs against the mattress. “I surrender!!”

Jack laughed and hopped on top of her straddling her. “You belong to me now!” Jack grabbed her arms and yanked them over her head holding her down. His smile was beautiful Harley thought as she gazed up at him with a broad grin on her lips. “I'm always yours Jack. Always.”

Jack smiled, brushing his nose against hers before he kissed her, a slow tender kiss, dragging his fingertips down her arms. Harley wrapped her arms around him with a soft groan. “Mmm...”

Jack ran his mouth gently over hers, nipping at her tongue, cradling her head between his hands, his kiss melting over her like warm honey, sweet and slow. His thumbs brushed over her cheeks tenderly. Harley stroked her fingertips up and down his sides, lower, caressing along his thighs
returning his kiss with little whimpers of need. Jack pulled away with a grin and whispered.

“Wanna go make cookies with me?”

Harley giggled grinning up at him. “I thought you would never ask.”

Jack chuckled.

*

The two of them came downstairs to the kitchen where Alfred was making some tea. Harley was dressed in a pair of black leggings and a long denim shirt with the sleeves rolled up and her hair pulled back in a 1960's style ponytail with the slight 'bubble' look to her hair that was common for the era and a pair of brown, knee high boots. She was laughing, her arm around Jack's. Jack wore a pair of slim cut jeans, some brown oxford wingtips along with a grey button-down shirt cut to stylishly hug his torso. He had the sleeves rolled up too and had elected to go without a tie.

Alfred looked up surprised to see them. “Is there something you need Master Jack, Miss Harleen?”

Jack grinned, released Harley's arm, and jumped up to sit on the counter with crossed ankles.

“Alfred,” Jack began, “Harley and I want to make peanut butter cookies!”

Alfred blinked in surprise. “Truly?”

“Yup! Harley brought up she wanted some and I haven't had any in ages!” Jack clapped his hands together.

Alfred continued to frown, perplexed. “Wouldn't you rather I just made them sir?”

Harley walked over to lean between Jack's legs. “But it wouldn't be as much fun unless we made them! You can guide us.”

Alfred's frown altered, but remained a frown. “You two are going to ruin my kitchen, aren't you?”

Jack and Harley shared a giggle.

*

Jack and Harley, both wearing aprons that Alfred had dug up for the both of them, were laughing and rolling the cookie dough into balls before rolling the peanut butter balls in the bowl of sugar and setting them on the cookie sheets where Harley would take a fork and press down first horizontally, then diagonally.

Harley picked up some dough and fed it to Jack who grasped one of her fingers with his teeth and playfully sucked on the digit with a wicked grin on his face.

Harley giggled glancing over to Alfred who was sitting at the small counter, out of their way, sipping on his tea and watching the two of them when Harley turned and asked, her finger still in Jack's mouth. “Do you have any baby pictures of Jack?”

Shocked at her question, Jack released her finger only to groan. “NOOO!! Not baby pictures!”

Harley giggled and bumped Jack with her hip. “Yes baby pictures! It's part of being a couple, embarrassing childhood pictures!”

Jack shook his head. “Still not fair because I don't get to see any of you.”
Harley smiled. “Well...I might be able to find a few...if you show me yours first.”

Jack grinned giving her a wicked expression that made Harley laugh and smack him lightly on the shoulder. “Jack!” she scolded him which only made him laugh all the more.

Alfred smiled pushing himself to his feet. “I'll be just a moment.”

While Jack and Harley put the cookies into the oven to bake, rolling a few more for the next batch, Alfred came back carrying several large albums. Harley squealed and clapped her hands. “Baby pictures!!” Jack hastily wiped his hands on his apron and hurried over to help the older man.

Alfred smiled as Jack took a couple of the thick albums and they set them down on a clean section of cabinet away from the baking and opened up the first album. Harley washed her hands and hurried over, drying them on her apron. Jack groaned and rolled his head. “Uhh!! Alfred!” he whined, but only halfheartedly. “I could raise your salary if you 'lose' those albums.”

Harley slapped Jack's shoulder and shared a look with Alfred, who proclaimed, “A butler cannot be bribed, Master Jack.”

Alfred chuckled pointing to a picture of a little round faced baby with huge blue eyes nestled in the lap of his mother while his father stood behind them, his hands on his wife's shoulders. A small, dark haired boy stood by his mother's knee staring at the little bundle in his mother's arms as if he couldn't quite decide whether to like it or not. “That is Master Jack at three weeks.”

Harley leaned closer to examine the photo. Her heart twisted in her chest to see baby Jack, so soft and innocent with striking blue eyes. The woman holding him had the same shade of brown hair that Jack did now (baby Jack only had wisps of hair), with the same delicate long face as Jack. Harley glanced over to her lover. She could see the shadow of his mother in his features.

“Your mother was beautiful.”

Jack stepped closer to wrap an arm around Harley's shoulders staring down at his mother's image holding a baby Jack Wayne in her arms. Behind her stood her husband, squared jawed and blue eyed, a kind but stern face, whereas Jack's mother's eyes were grey and softer. They looked like they held a hidden pain like Jack's eyes did. Her observation made Harleen whisper from the darkness of Harley's mind. (Do you think Martha Wayne had issues with violent outbursts or other tell-tale signs of illness? Harley growled. “Shut up Harleen.”) Thomas Wayne sported the thick black hair that his eldest son inherited. Bruce was there in the picture staring down at his little brother with serious eyes.

“Bruce looks a lot like your father, the hair, the eyes, even the expression. But you, except for the eyes, you take after your mother,” Harley said tilting her head as she studied the picture.

Jack frowned examining the photo. “Yes, I suppose I do, though Bruce and I both have our father's eyes.”

Harley smiled softly touching his picture. “You were a sweet baby.” For a moment Harley's heart twisted in her chest and an ache filled her. The baby that could have been...she touched her stomach, letting the sadness wash over her and then recede.

Jack squeezed Harley close kissing the corner of her mouth. He knew exactly what she was thinking without either of them saying a word.

Alfred noticed poor Miss Harleen's expression, though it passed quickly. He focused back on the photo and chuckled. “Unlike Master Bruce, who was quite loud as an infant, Master Jack was always rather quiet, though I do remember that you laughed a great deal.”
Harley giggled. “So you have loved to laugh from day one?”

Jack shrugged looking slightly embarrassed as Alfred turned the page and pointed. “Ah, here is Master Jack when he was three years old.”

Harley leaned close to see a picture of a slim little boy with mischievous blue eyes wearing a bright purple t-shirt and blue shorts. He was holding his big brother's hand while both boys were grinning and looking at the camera. Judging by the furniture in the background and the figure of Alfred in the corner, caught by the camera, both boys were tall for their age. Bruce was just starting to not look as 'babish' but Jack still had that roundness to his cheeks. It looked like both boys were swinging their arms.

Alfred smiled. “The boys were inseperatable until after their parents’ death.” Alfred spoke with a fondness in his voice. Harley traced the photo of little Jack.

Alfred turned a few pages, stopping to show Harley images of Jack as a skinny little boy, his brown hair wild and unkempt. One of her favorite images was a picture of Jack in blue jeans and a green t-shirt sitting under a tree blowing balloons up. He must have been tossing them because the area under the tree was littered with a rainbow of vari-colored balloons. Bruce must have been running around with a toy sword because he had stopped and was either posing or had been captured in midfight pose. Alfred said that Jack was blowing up the balloons for Bruce to conquer with his sword. The boys would secure the balloons to target for Bruce to do battle with. Jack would sometimes play the game, but his approach was always a little more sneaky whereas Bruce was always very much an 'in-your-face. problem solver; Jack was always more about misdirection. Harley giggled while Jack blushed with embarrassment. Harley loved the photo though, the two brothers working together, Jack’s bright innocent blue eyes, lacking the pain she knew he carried now, the dark secrets...but now he had her to share them with. Together they would navigate the darkness.

The next photos Alfred showed were of Jack in different costumes. Harley gasped. “You have always liked to dress up!”

Jack grinned and nodded. “Told you, always need the right costume. Dressing up always allowed me to pretend I was someone, or somewhere else.”

Alfred chuckled. “Young Master Jack has always had a flair for the flamboyant.”

The images were of young Jack dressed as Hamlet, a pirate, a cop, and a harlequin. Alfred tapped the picture of Jack in the harlequin costume. “Now that one was Master Jack's favorite. Took me over a month to convince him to stop wearing the costume every day.”

Jack grinned with a little shrug. “I like clowns.”

Harley smiled and kissed him on the cheek. Jack caught her jaw with his fingers stopping her from turning away and kissed her tenderly.

Alfred flipped the page and pointed down at an image of two teenage Waynes. Jack was slender to the point of almost skinny, but there were hints of the slim, wiry muscles he was developing. The baby roundness had fallen away and the long sharp features were starting to be seen in the lines of his face, with his hair dyed black, hanging well below his shoulders. His hair didn't look oily or dirty like one might expect at that age; instead he looked like teenage Harleen's idea of a Goth Metal God. Even now Harley could tell high school Harleen would have been swept off her feet by him. His hair hung loose and long around his face, casting his lean figures in shadow. He wore the typical school uniform of the wealthy who send their children off to be educated. Next to him stood Bruce looking
tall and stronger. Bruce with his perfectly styled short hair, his eyes just a little hard, whereas Jack's
eyes looked haunted in the photo. The difference between the two brothers was astonishing.

Alfred frowned slightly at the photo.

Jack groaned. “O’ God please stop or I'll put my head in the oven with the cookies.”

Alfred smiled. “The oven is electric sir.”

Jack groaned with a laugh.

*

Later that evening, Harley was upstairs having headed up before Jack in order to start a bath for the
two of them, a nice bubble bath for them to soak in together. She decided to go ahead and get it
started while Jack and Alfred spoke a little longer She giggled thinking about taking a bath with
Jack...maybe a little something else. She giggled happily to herself at the thought. She scurried into
the bathroom singing to herself.

“Loving you is easy cause you're beautiful.

Making love with you is all I want to do.

Loving you is more than just a dream come true.

And everything I do, is out of loving you...”

Harley was all smiles; it had been a wonderful, calm day. Though she enjoyed the thrill of travel and
new locales, her new roller derby activities, concerts, and other excitement with Jack, days like today
were just part of why she looked forward to spending her life with Jack. She was just adding some
bubble bath when her phone, which she had set by the sink, began to ring. She was still singing
under her breath when she reached over and picked up her phone. Distracted with her task, Harley
answered without looking at it.

“Hello?”

“Hey baby. How's it going?”

Harley felt her blood run cold, her fingers around the phone had gone numb.

She hissed. “Stop calling me. I am not giving you anything.”

Harleen immediately resurfaced; it was her hand holding the phone to her ear that started to shake.

Guy laughed. “Oh Quinz...still so naïve. Still so stupid. You are going to give me what I want you
little bitch and what I want is a hundred thousand—or else I am going to make your fucking life hell
Quinz. Hell,” he emphasized the word slowly. “I will make sure Jack Wayne hates you so much he
won't be able to even look at you.”

Harleen tried not to cry. Even the idea of Jack hating her hurt. She couldn't live without him. She
loved him so much and the mere thought of him hating her caused her eyes to sting. She couldn't
help the tears that were rolling down her cheeks. Guy had made her feel worse than her step-father
ever had...that she was small and useless, that no one but him would love her and then he would hit
her. Harleen closed her eyes. She was stronger than this...Jack had helped make her stronger.

Harleen hissed. “You come anywhere near Jack, I will kill you Guy.”
Guy laughed. “A hundred thousand will do for starters Quinz, remember that. We can have a nice serious discussion alone about the rest...the payments I expect...or I swear it won't just be Jack Wayne who won't be able to stand you...it will be all of Gotham.” Then the phone went dead.

Harleen dropped the phone and angrily rubbed her hands over her eyes, but the tears wouldn't stop. She looked at herself in the mirror. “He is not going to hurt me. He can't do anything to hurt me. Nothing he can say will stop Jack from loving me...he doesn't have any power over me.” As she spoke to herself in the mirror, Harleen seemed to back away, fading back into the background of her mind. Harley smiled at herself. He could call all he wanted...say what he wanted, but she wasn't going to cave in to his stupid demands.

Harley washed her face and stripped, tossing her clothing in a corner.

* 

A few minutes later Jack came waltzing into the bathroom following the sounds of Harley singing.

“No one else can make me feel the colors that you bring, 
Stay with me while we grow old, 
and we will live each day in spring time. 
Cause loving you has made my life so beautiful. 
And every day of my life, is filled with loving you. 
Loving you I see your soul come shining through. 
And every time that we have 
I'm more in love with you....”

Jack leaned in the doorway of the bathroom where he could see Harley, her back to him, reclining in the tub full of bubbles. Her hair was wet and slicked back, her head resting against the tub's edge. She had lit a few candles around the bathroom to permeate the moist air with the warm scent of vanilla. Harley turned to look over her shoulder at him smiling when she sensed him.

“You singing just for me toots?” Jack's grin was warm, but with an edge of mischief. 

“You just going to stand there or are you going to strip naked and get in here with me?” Harley purred.

Jack laugh. “Naked in a tub with a gorgeous blonde? Only a fool or a married man refuses an invite like that!” Jack laughed, pulling his shoes off.

She watched while Jack undressed quickly before he walked over and slowly stepped into the tub to sink into the water with a contented sigh. “Mm...nice. I love all the bubbles!” Jack sank down. “I brought us up a plate of cookies. Left the rest for Alfred and Bruce.”

Harley giggled as she scooted closer Jack and wrapped her legs over his thighs and around so that she could drape her arms around his neck. Jack grabbed her waist to tug her even closer. She could feel his quickly hardening erection bump against her in the water. She dragged her teeth over her bottom lip with a wicked grin.

“You happy to see me?” Her eyes drifted down with a significant crook of her eyebrow.
Jack licked his lips. “Oh, I'm always happy to see you Harley.”

He scooped up some bubbles and blew them into her face.

She giggled, shaking her head and wrinkling her nose before she leaned closer to kiss him, covering his mouth with hers, her tongue easing into his mouth. Jack groaned softly holding her tight, returning her kiss with equal zeal.

While they were kissing she scooped up some bubbles placing them onto his head with a giggle against his lips. Jack grinned opening his eyes though he didn't take his lips from hers. “Oh, that how we are going to play, is it?”

Jack scooped up a larger handful, plopping them onto Harley's head. She laughed, the bubbles running down her face. She wrinkled her nose. “You are so bad!”

“Mmmm...that's what you love about me,” Jack cooed, sliding his hands under the water to grab her rear, spreading his hands wide, cupping her rear and lifting her up, positioning her over his erection.

“Tell me you want me Harley,” Jack breathed softly, his blue eyes boring into her light blue ones.

Harley growled a response. “I want you Jack.”

Jack ran the flat of his tongue up her neck biting her chin before he hissed with desire. “I want you Harley. I want you now and I want you to fuck me.”

Harley reached down into the water to hold him steady before Jack lowered her down, squeezing her rear hard. He closed his eyes dropping his head back against the tub when he felt his body connect with hers, running his hands up her back and over her sides, the tips of his fingers dragging along her ribs. Harley’s features contorted with the intensity of feeling, Jack filling her, the way he was grabbing her backside, the slightly painful press of his fingers into her skin. She loved it all so much that she would not be able to describe it in words if anyone had asked her (not that she would share such intimate information with anyone other than Jack, anyway.) She grabbed the back of the tub and had just started to roll her hips when Jack grabbed her and held on tight before he flipped their positions around splashing water everywhere.

Harley squealed with laughter. “Puddin!”

Jack grinned picking her up and setting her on the edge of the tub. “What is it pumpkin?” he asked innocently.

He set her on the edge which forced Harley to balance her tush, but she had to grab hold of the edge to prevent herself from toppling over when Jack spread her legs wider. Jack began a slow rotation of his hips as he grabbed both her breasts with his hands, shoving them up where he bit and licked, sucking, more biting as if he simply couldn't get enough, that he needed to devour her. At the same time his hips jerked, plunging him in and out of her warm wetness groaning at the way her body tightened around him, pulling at him.

Harley cried out when Jack thrust especially hard, but it was a cry of pleasure and her orgasm burst, flooding her with heat when her pleasure peaked then crashed over her. “Uuuuhh...Jack!! Uuhh...”

Jack pushed himself up balancing on one knee, bringing his left leg up to press his foot against the back of the tub, wrapping Harley’s leg around his waist he started to quicken the pace of his thrusts, harder, needing to be deeper.

Harley dug her nails into his rear, lifting his hips higher, helping him thrust deeper. Jack used one
hand to balance, his long fingers wrapped around the edge of the tub, his other hand was in her hair holding onto a tight handful, pressing her mouth to his. He could feel Harley about the cum again as she was tightening around him in a way that felt like she was trying to pull his very being from his body.

Jack groaned like a man in pain. “I'm gonna cum Harley...ahh...ahhha...”

The sound of wet flesh slapping hard against wet flesh, accompanied by the sound of splashing water mixed as background music to their shared panting until Jack hissed.

“Harley! Harley I can't...I..I...” Jack yanked her hair pulling her head back and Harley smiled. “Don't hold back puddin...don't hold back.”

Jack cried out, letting himself go with a loud. “FUUCK!!”

Harley dug her fingers painfully into his hip, but he didn't care. He couldn't think or see straight because not only was his own orgasm blowing his mind, but Harley came at the same moment he did, the shared pleasure, her body holding him tight, the flood of warmth, her cries driving him beyond words. “PUDDIN! Aah..yes!!”

Jack was sure he passed out for a moment which made him start to laugh. Just sank back down into the water, tugging Harley with him and grinning from ear to ear. “Maybe we should take a shower?”

Harley blushed wrapping her arms around his neck and settling her head on his shoulder. “Yeah, maybe so puddin.”

* 

Later that evening, Jack was dressed a light-blue Gucci Bee Jacquard Oxford “Duke” shirt and a 3-piece navy Armani suit tailored to fit him in such a way that Harley nearly dragged him back to the room. He paced while they waited for Frost, who was a few minutes late. Harley was dressed for the evening in a short, chic little red dress with a plunging neckline and little metal hoop accents that accentuated her trim, figure with an angled hemline. She wore a pair of black, high heeled sandals and her long hair was piled up, held in place by a couple of hair sticks. She was watching Jack pace, smoking on a cigarette with an aggravated disposition.

(Earlier upstairs, Jack had leaned in while she was doing her make-up with a lusty. “Tell me you are not wearing panties under that dress.”

Harley had grinned. “You'll just have to wait and find out won't you?”

Jack had groaned. “You are killing me!”)

Jack was slightly annoyed as they waited for Frost to show up. Jack had just tossed his cigarette down onto the gravel of the driveway (which would annoy Bruce if he found out) and pulled his phone from his inside jacket pocket ready to dial again, when Frost came driving up the driveway. He swiftly hopped out of the car and opened the door to the vehicle for the two of them. Harley thought Frost looked pale and tired. He knew he had messed up, but didn't know what to do about it.

Frost muttered without looking up. “I'm so sorry, Boss.”

Jack frowned handing Harley into the back of the car before he turned to face Frost.

Jack didn't shut the door on Harley, instead leaning against it as he spoke. “Why are you late sweetheart—and I want the truth.” Jack stood up and pulled out another cigarette and his lighter, lit
the end and waited, clearly giving Frost a minute to collect himself before he spoke. Jack looked calm, but Harley could recognize the agitation behind his movements. Jack didn't like running late, ever.

Frost frowned glancing down at his shoes as he spoke. “It's...it's personal Boss.”

“Personal in that you won't tell me or personal in that it's family?” Jack leaned on the back car door again taking a long drag on his cigarette as he studied Frost. Harley looked up from the back seat, watching the two of them. Frost frowned glancing up at Jack then back down at the tips of his shoes. “Well sir, it's my mother. I'd prefer not to go into it, if you don't mind.”

Jack frowned, his voice growing quiet and ignoring Frost's protest. “Your mother?” Harley recognized the change in Jack's voice, a subtle shift in his concern.

Frost nodded. “See Boss, she's in this care facility and...it's not the best, but it's the best I can afford. I was with her tonight and she ain't doing so well.”

Jack looked thoughtful, then he walked around and put his arm around Frost's shoulders. “Look Frost, you're my friend right?”

Frost nodded. “Sure thing, Boss.”

Jack tilted his head to glance at Harley. She knew exactly what he was going to do without Jack saying a word. She smiled and nodded. Jack grinned and continued. “Then, since Im your friend AND your boss I want you to feel like you can come to me at any time. So, I want you, while Harley and I are at the game tonight, to write down all your mother's information and let me take care of everything. I will get her set up in the best facility here in Gotham. You give me the details of her illness and I will make sure everything is paid for. I don't want you to worry about a thing except making sure you visit her often. All right sweetheart?”

Frost blinked. He wasn't sure for a moment that he had heard Mr. Wayne correctly. “You want to pay for everything?”

Jack squeezed Frost's shoulders. “Yes. You my friend are not just a good employee, but you're a good son to your mother.” Jack grew quiet then said softly. “I miss my mother Frost. So...” Jack smiled, releasing Frost. “I expect all the information by the time you are driving us home and I promise that by day's end tomorrow your mother will be taken care of.”

Frost stared at Jack then suddenly—taking a chance—the man grabbed Jack in an embrace. “Thank you Boss, thank you so much.”

Jack smiled and returned the embrace, patting Frost's back. “Not a problem my dear, not a problem at all.”

* 

Tonight, the card game was set up in a different location (probably since Jack had killed a man at the other place.) This time Alex had managed to secure an abandoned church for the game. When Frost drove up to the address that Jack had given him, Jack burst out laughing.

“Leave it to Alex to find an abandoned church to use for an illegal game!!” Jack actually slapped his knee in glee. Harley leaned over Jack's lap to look out his window at the church. The building was in the Gothic architecture style with large glass windows (most seemed to still be in place Harley noted), clustered columns in the front and sharply pointed spires. She could see what looked to be intricate sculptures and flying buttresses on the outside of the church.
Harley giggled. “Reminds me of the Addams family.”

Jack laughed grabbing her hand when she sat up. “Say something French Harley.”

Harley grinned and whispered, “Je t’aime.”

Jack took her hand and kissed her knuckles before he started to kiss his way up her arm. Harley giggled. “Jack!!”

He grinned. “I always loved those movies. My favorite I think was the Addams family motto, “Sic gorgiamus allos subjectatos nunc”...“We gladly feast on those who would subdue us.” I believe Harley, that is a statement you and I could get behind, don't you sweets?”

Harley grinned as Jack stepped out of the car after Frost had opened the door. She took Jack's hand and he delicately helped her out of the car. With a smile Harley replied. “I completely agree puddin.”

Jack hooked her arm through his, kissing her knuckles one more time before he did so. “I knew you would, my lovely little minx.” He gave her cheek a quick kiss before they walked toward the church together.

*

The night air was beginning to grow chilly as Gotham began to head into the fall months, but when they stepped into the abandoned church the temperature became warmer. The walls of the church echoed with the sounds of Skrillex's “Bangarang” playing in the background. (Which made Harley think that Alex ought to attend a rave or something sometime.) The long aisle would have been beautiful at one time, Harley thought. Here the Gothic architecture was shown in the ogival arches that ran along the sides of the aisle, the beautiful stained glass windows and the vibrant heavily decorated walls and ceiling depicting angels and saints.

The altar was still intact with more of the extreme ogival Gothic arches that were painted gold, now pealing away to show the dark, rotten wood underneath. At the altar was where Alex had set up the poker table and the bar from the last game. The table was the same one he had used last time (which made Harley wonder who Alex hired to lug the damn thing about from place to place. Of course, now that she thought about it, how many of these abandoned places did Alex own around Gotham?)

Alex had candles lit everywhere throughout the church, which for a moment made Harley feel as if they were participating in a séance rather than a game of poker. He had also strung work lights everywhere to provide more useful lighting, but as they approached closer Harley saw that tonight Alex wasn't alone; tonight he had his girlfriend Alice with him looking adorable in a sleeveless white swing dress with musical notes printed all over it.

The cast of characters from the last game was much the same: Tobias Whale had returned (this time with a different woman on his arm...a red head who looked less snobbish than the last woman), Professor Pyg (with piggy half-mask in place), Simon Stagg (this time Stagg had come stag, Harley noticed with a giggle. She of course had to share her little play on words with Jack, whispering in his ear which had him snickering into her shoulder), Gina the nurse, this time in Disney's Frozen themed scrubs, Yuri “The Russian” Dimitrov, wearing a floor-length pink faux fur coat, shirtless and wearing pants that reminded Harley of a disco ball and his boyfriend, dressed much more subdued in black slacks and a sunflower pattern dress-shirt. Along with the players from last time, there was a new player whom Harley recognized from the masquerade party at Wayne Manor, Dr. Johnathan Crane. The tall sandy blonde doctor was dressed like a mortician in a black on black suit with his sandy blonde hair slicked back. He smiled at the both of them giving them a thin lipped nod of acknowledgment when he saw them walking down the
church's nave. Harley shivered. Dr. Crane had a strange way about him...

Harley also noticed that the serving girls for tonight (while were just as scantily clad as last time) were different from the last game, as was the bartender. After what happened last time, Harley thought that was probably to be expected. Not everyone could handle seeing someone die, Harley thought with a smile. Alex was sipping on a what looked to be a black Russian, his arm around Alice's waist, when he saw them coming up the nave.

“Holy fuck man! I was beginning to think you two weren't coming!” Alex laughed setting his drink down on the portable bar and hurried down the nave toward them with Alice walking a little slower behind him though she was all smiles. Tonight Alex was dressed much the same as at the last game except tonight his t-shirt had pictures of playing cards on it that read “I play poker and know things; That's what I do.”

Alex embraced Jack and then Harley, kissing them both on the cheek. “So glad to fucking see you man. You look so much better than the last time I saw you! You were fucked up!”

Jack laughed. “Yes, well some tender-loving care from my sweet Harley helped a great deal in my healing.”

Harley smiled kissing Jack on the cheek. Alex laughed. “God you two are like a fucking Hallmark card. Well get the fuck over here, get a drink and let's play some fucking cards. Oh and Alice is with me this time. She wanted to come and watch.”

Alice smiled. “So nice to see you both again.” She took Harley's hands and the two women mock-kissed each other on the cheek. Jack took Alice's hand and gave her a light kiss on the knuckles. “It's nice to see Alex hasn't been such a pig as to drive you away.”

Alex snorted. “Alice is a fucking angel.”

Alice giggled.

*

Soon the game was underway, as the sounds of Lana Del Rey singing “Born to Die” played in the background (clearly Alice's choice of music ). Alex was sitting on Jack's left, with Harley on Jack's right and Alice sitting a little behind Alex on his left. Harley was sitting beside Jack, her hand sliding along his thigh sipping her drink while the chips in the middle of the table piled up. He smiled glancing sideways at her with a wicked grin on his face, licking his lips suggestively at Harley before he would look back at his cards.

Harley suppressed a delighted giggle and would squeeze his thigh.

Crane was the only factor in tonight's game that was bothering Harley. He was polite, well-spoken... there was nothing that should have triggered Harley's dislike, but there was just something about the way he studied...everyone...like they were all experiments, bugs under a microscope, as if he were looking for something, trying to pick them apart. Harley had read some of Crane's work when she was a student. He was particularly interested in what made people scared, what frightened them. Harley picked up her drink, a hot buttered rum, letting the warmth of the liquid calm her nerves. His work had been interesting and just a little unnerving.

Jack didn't seem the least bit creeped out by the man. If anything, Jack would simply stare back at Crane with a playful grin on his red lips. But other than Crane's unnerving staring, the game was going along nicely.
Harley returned her focus back to Jack. She smiled and glanced at Jack's cards, her hand settling down between his thighs, enjoying the heat she could feel between his legs, the slight jump when she would stroke her fingers too close to his crotch. Jack would bump her with his elbow whenever her fingers would stray too close...which of course only encouraged her to be naughty and continue to stroke him under the table.

She was just about to see if she could undo his zipper and slide her hand into Jack's pants when she noticed movement down at the end of the nave. It was hard to see anything with the illumination so much dimmer there, but she could have sworn she saw a shadow. Harley moved her hand and squeezed his knee. Jack glanced at Harley, their eyes meeting, then she motioned with her eyes down the nave. Jack glanced in that direction. Harley could see the minor twitch at the corner of his mouth when Jack saw the shadow she had seen.

Jack set his cards down and put his right hand over Harley's and tapped out the number three with his finger over the top of her hand. Harley nodded; three people had slipped into the church.

Harley glanced around the table, it seemed that no one else had noticed the intrusion. Jack hadn't picked his cards back up. Harley felt the shift in him that signaled he was about to stand up when suddenly three shadows emerged out of the darkness. One of them rushed forward, taking long strides as he yelled.

"All right—nobody move!!"

The man that yelled was tall, with a frame that was going toward pudgy (he clearly had a developing "beer belly," at least that was what Harley thought. He also had short black hair cut in that style of "smart-ass businessman" that asshats the world over liked to get. Harley thought to herself that he was the type of guy she would have hated whether he was holding a gun on her or not.)

The man was dressed in an expensive suit, but he looked as if he had taking a recent beating, there was a nasty looking bruise developing under his left eye and his lips were split. His expensive suit looked as if he had been sleeping in a gutter, blood and grime staining the expensive fabric. His companions looked more like hired muscle. Two rather tall, muscled types who hired themselves as 'bodyguards' or whatever paid well, but they were usually all appearance and not a lot of strength, Harley thought to herself. At least that was what Jack had told her once when he was explaining why he and Bruce never had bodyguards.

She glanced at her puddin, who had narrowed his eyes dangerously. Harley smiled just a little; clearly he was thinking the same thing as her. All three men where holding Glock-17’s, though the man speaking didn't hold his weapon with the comfort of the other two. Jack figured that made that man more dangerous than the other two. The man who had spoken glared at Alex as he halted a few paces away from the poker table.

"Except you Alex, you can stand up and walk over here real slow."

Alex stood slowly, his one hand in the air. "What the fuck is this all about Rippey?"

Alice grabbed Alex's arm. "Don't please."

The man Alex called Rippey motioned with his weapon. "Get over here Alex."

Alex glanced at Alice and grinned. "It's okay honey."

He started to walk over, his one hand still up, edged slowly around the table as everyone watched him. Jack was fuming. No one moved, the other two gunmen kept a close eye on them. (Though
Jack could see by the looks the two men were exchanging, they recognized some of their “hostages.” Jack suppressed a smirk thinking to himself that they must have just realized the shit they had stepped in by agreeing to work with this Rippey.)

When Alex was close enough, Rippey grinned holding the gun on Alex, the barrel aimed right at his face.

Alice was standing still, so pale that Harley was worried she might pass out. Jack frowned, his thoughts racing when he realized he had heard the name Rippey from Alex before...He remembered the last name from some conversations with Alex because he had made some lame joke about the name. Alex had told him once that he had some competition in the “information” business, a man named Andy Rippey. Rippey had a bought and paid for education, had worked in the stock market and had made some deals over the years with some very bad men in Gotham. Rippey thought he was better than Alex and under the delusion that he could push Alex out of his top-spot as the guy everyone went to in Gotham for information. Andy Rippey wanted to be the man in the know, the guy everyone invited to the big parties, who went everywhere for free and was everyone's friend. Except, as Alex had told Jack, Rippey was the world's biggest fucking asshole. Rippey wasn't nearly as good at getting information as he thought he was and he had “accidentally” screwed some of his clients trying to play both sides, trying use information he had to create a situation Rippey had thought he could benefit from. Instead it had landed Rippey in the hotseat.

Apparently Rippey had problems being a neutral source of information; he was easily bought, which led to Rippey giving out bad information on purpose...and as Alex had said, Rippey had fucking screwed up. But someone like Rippey, Alex had told him, blamed all his problems on someone else, in this case: Alex.

*  

Rippey laughed waving his weapon in Alex's face. “Ain't none of your fancy friends going to get you out of trouble this time Alex!!! This time I know exactly how to get rid of my competition!”

Alex groaned rolling his eyes. “Rippey, you fucking asshole. Killing me isn't going help, ya know? No one likes you Rippey and you're a fucking asstwat!”

The rest of the guests around the table had gone still. Jack frowned, his eyes darting around gauging who would help or hinder. He didn't actually think anyone of them would hinder—all of the poker players were, as far as Jack knew, good clients of Alex's (or else they wouldn't be here at one of Alex's games), but while they would not hinder Jack trying to save Alex, they certainly wouldn't help. Why endanger themselves? Jack thought in derision. The staff, no help there, Jack thought. Just plain people getting paid to do a job.

Jack glanced at Harley. She gave him an encouraging smile and a hint of a nod and Jack smiled in return. He knew he could always count on Harley.

*  

Rippey snarled. “If it wasn't for you Alex I would have taken over Gotham. All of these people would be begging me for help! Coming to me!! But no, if if wasn't for you! I would be the toast of Gotham right now!!”

Alex snorted. “Fucking bullshit Rippey, even if I wasn't the one squashing your shitty ass, no one would want to do business with you! No one likes you Rippey. You. Are. An. ASSHOLE! So you know what? Kill me if you want. You will still never be me. I'm twice the man you are, even considering...” He wiggled the fingers of his one hand.
Jack smiled. He had to admire Alex; even with a gun to his face, he didn't back down. Jack spoke up.

“Rippey is it? You know, if you want to walk out of here alive, I would put the gun away.” Jack smiled serenely, taking out a cigarette and lighting it.

Rippey snarled. “Shut the fuck up! Who are you anyway?”

Alex smirked.

Jack stood and slowly walked around the table with cigarette in one hand and with his other hand, he took Harley's hand leading her around the table with him closer to one of the gunmen while Jack was focused on Rippey.

“The name is Jack Wayne. I'm sure you've heard of Wayne Enterprises, if you are anyone that is?” Jack took a drag on his cigarette, running the tips of his fingers along Harley's spine.

Rippey narrowed his eyes. “You're that crazy younger brother of Bruce Wayne aren't you?” Rippey frowned.

Alex snickered. “Oh fuck.”

Jack moved swiftly, Rippey twisted around to bring his pistol to aim at Jack when he realized Jack was coming toward him. Jack grabbed the barrel of the pistol with his left hand yanking Rippey's arm down and to the right with his right hand. Jack yanked his cigarette from his mouth and jabbed the burning end into Rippey's eye. In the same fluid movement, Jack let the cigarette go, grabbed Rippey's fist, yanking the weapon free and threw it the floor where the gun slid underneath the poker table.

Harley was annoyed. Not only had these jerks decided to come in and mess up a perfectly nice evening of gambling, but this was the second time her puddin's game of poker was sabotaged by someone being a jerk!! She moved at the same time that Jack did, heading toward the closest of the two hired guns next to her. (One of them was blonde, looked like a TV cut-out of a hired thug, all show muscles, ugly face and ugly smiles while the one closest to Harley had black hair.) He had turned looking over toward Jack and Rippey, leaving him unprepared for Harley. She rushed forward moving swiftly on her high heels. Ducking under the man's gun, Harley came right up into his face startlingly him. She grabbed the front of his shirt in both her hands, hissing as she did so.

“Puddin and I just want to have a nice time!”

And slammed her forehead into the man's nose, breaking it with a sickening sounding crunch, accompanied by a sort of squished melon noise.

The guy yelled. “MI NOTHE!

But Harley wasn't done with him. She shoved the man back from her, releasing the hold she had of his shirt. He stumbled trying to aim his weapon with the one hand, while the other hand was grabbing at his profusely bleeding nose as if simply holding his nose would somehow make it hurt less. Harley, with a lovely smile spread across her face, performed a back flip, bringing her legs up and kicking the dark-haired thug under the chin with a smart thwack of one of her heeled shoes. The dull thud of Harley's foot connecting with his chin, followed by his head snapping back with another sickening sounding crunch. The man fell to the floor like a sack of potatoes. He lay there gasping for air, his nose broken, chin split open and having knocked the air from his lungs when he fell, hitting the remains of the church's hardwood floors.
Harley stepped over to him with just a little swing in her hips and placed a heeled shoe on his head, the heel hovering over the man's eye. She smiled down at him with her hands on her hips.

“You move, I'll put your eye out,” Harley said with a pleasant smile.

*

Once Rippey was disarmed, (Jack wanted to laugh at the ridiculously shocked expression on Rippey's face when Jack easily disarmed him), Jack brought his knee up slamming it into Rippey's crotch. Rippey gasped at the shock of pain shooting through his groin, but before he had time to even fully appreciate the pain of his crushed testicles, Jack brought his right arm back and slugged him right in the face with a meaty sound of fist impacting with face. The impact of hitting Rippey sent an electrical shock of pain racing up Jack's arm, reminding him the his hand was only recently healed, but Jack just snarled and ignored the pain.

Rippey stumbled backwards a step, but Jack didn't give him time to recover. Instead, Jack grabbed Rippey by the front of his suit with his left hand, cocked his arm back with a wide grin on his face, and hit Rippey again in the face. The second hit knocked Rippey's head back, blood flying into the air from the man's shattered nose. Jack's fist came back bloody, having not just cut his knuckles on Rippey's teeth, but the blood from Rippey' bleeding nose had spattered onto Jack's fist.

Jack laughed. “You really are as stupid as you look. Though I think Alex called you the perfect name, an asstwat. Rippey. You are an asstwat. Coming uninvited into our poker game and threatening my friend? No one—and I mean no one—threatens anyone I consider a friend.” Jack smiled, but there was no humor in the expression. Jack's blue eyes were flat when he smiled at Rippey.

Jack hissed. “And you know what's even worse than that Rippey? You held a gun on my girl. No one threatens my girl or my friend.”

Jack continued to hold Rippey by his suit and hit him in the face a third time. If Rippey's nose wasn't broken by the first two hits, this one most certainly broke the man's nose as the sound of broken bone grinding against bone was easily heard along with a howl of pain. Rippey tried to bring his hands up to defend himself, taking a swing at Jack. Rippey's knuckles grazed Jack's chin, but in response, Jack slammed his fist into Rippey's stomach knocking the air from the man. Jack let Rippey go, easily dancing out of the way when the man vomited.

Alex quickly made his way back to Alice's side. Alice was watching Jack and Harley with wide eyes, all the blood drained from her face. The third gunman looked torn between helping or fleeing. By his inaction, it was clear he was at a loss. Everyone else just sat there watching impassively. They had already seen Jack Wayne kill once and all of them had been on the other end of a gun before...but it seemed as if Jack Wayne and his woman had things under control so they just watched, sipped their drinks and waited for the game to continue. Dr. Crane was watching all the developments with keen interest and clinical detachment. His dark eyes were on everyone's' reactions to the situation and he made mental notes that he would write down once he returned home. The wait staff that Alex had hired were clearly better trained because the young women never uttered a word or scream. They simply turned away.

Rippey dropped to his knees gasping. Jack pushed Rippey back, causing the man to fall onto his back continuing to gasp.

Jack strolled over, and straddled Rippey smiling as he sat down on the man's chest, resting his elbows on his knees.
“You know Rippey...” Jack giggled as he flicked the man on his forehead. “Rippey...what a God awful name. Anyway Rippey, I could just let you go with a warning, but I have this feeling you are one of those individuals who doesn’t learn lessons very well. So, I’ve decided that this, this is going to be a permanent lesson. Never go after my friends and never hold a weapon on my girl.”

Jack sneered and suddenly dropped his hands down over Rippey’s face, his thumbs over the man’s eyes, one good and the other blistered eyelid. Rippey gurgled and started to struggle, reaching up to grab at Jack’s arms. Jack smiled and pressed his thumbs into Rippey's eyes. Jack leaned in, pressing down with all his strength until there was a distinctive crunching sound accompanied by a high-pitched shriek. Jack continued to sit on Rippey as the man thrashed and screamed. Jack Wayne sighed and made a disgusted noise, wiping his bloody thumbs on the shoulders of Rippey's suit, then without looking behind him Jack simply held his bloody hand out and in a flat voice said.

“Gun.”

Jack didn’t see who gave him the gun (Alex had retrieved it from under the poker table and handed it to Jack.) Jack held the weapon to Rippey's head and with a smile he said. “Live and learn...oh well, in your case: live and die.” With that Jack shot Rippey in the head, silencing the screaming coming from the ‘eyeless’ man.

Jack wrinkled his nose, jerking a little when blood, skull and brains splattered his suit.

Harley giggled from where she stood watching him. “Oh puddin.”

Jack smiled looking over to where Harley had her heel positioned over one of the gunmen ready to take his eye. The gunman's friend was still standing there off to the side, staring in horror, his pistol only half-halfheartedly pointed at anyone.

Jack slowly stood, wiping some of the bits of Rippey off the front of his suit after taking the handkerchief from his jacket pocket. He frowned, dropping the gun onto Rippey's chest turning to look at the other gunman. “I'm hoping you and your friend are both intelligent men and have decided that perhaps you should involve yourselves in a different kind of work?”

The man at Harley's feet was holding his broken nose with both hands, but he nodded and his friend looked slowly around at everyone mumbling. “Ah...yeah..look, he was just paying us to be here. We ain't got no beef with you guys.”

Jack chuckled. “Ain't got no beef? Did you hear that Harley? They ain't got no beef.”

Harley walked away from the man lying at her feet, strolling over to Jack and laying her hand on her puddin's shoulder as she leaned into him. Jack grinned at her, looking into her eyes. Harley reached up and wiped some of the blood from his face with her thumb before she kissed him, wrapping her other hand around Jack's neck and pulling him closer. Jack grabbed her waist with one hand, holding her against him for the kiss then let her go reluctantly. He sighed happily. Without looking at either man he said softly, the single word clearly directed at them. “Go.”

The gunman that was still standing hurried over and grabbed his friend helping him up, the two men leaving without a backward glance.

As soon as they were gone Alex started laughing. “FUCKING HELL Jack!! Man, you are a fucking lunatic!! You saved my fucking life! I swear though that's two fuckheads you've killed at my card games. I don't know if I can fucking invite you anymore!”

Alex hurried over and yanked Jack into an embrace with his one arm. Jack laugheded hugging Alex
back. “Harley and I, we take care of our friends and I promise, next game I will keep the killing to a
minimum.”

Alex grinned. “Thanks man. I'm fucking serious. Ain't no one stood by me before, saved my life like
that. I...I fucking appreciate it.”

Jack smiled. “You can always count on us Alex.”

Alex nodded. (For all his bravado when the gun had been held on him, he had been scared, but the
emotion he was feeling right now was genuine thankfulness that Jack and Harley cared enough to
save his life. Alex promised himself, no matter what, he would always have Jack's back, no matter
what the future might bring.)

Alex took a breath and turned to everyone. “So, after we clean up this mess...” Here Alex indicated
Rippey's dead body. “You guys still wanna play?”

There was a round of murmured consent. Alice looked a little scared, but she nodded wrapping her
arms around Alex, burying her face against his shoulder. Alex smiled
rubbing her back with his one hand.

“Hey, it's all good baby. It's all good.”

* 

The rest of the poker game went well, with Jack dropping out after winning three hundred and thirty
thousand. Yuri gave Jack a seductive smile. “Come on Jack, you know you want to play with us a
little longer.” He licked his lips which made Jack laugh, but Yuri's boyfriend look as if he wanted to
tear Yuri's tongue out of his head. Stagg frowned. “Ain't going to give me a chance to win more
money off you?”

Jack stood taking Harley's hand and kissing her knuckles. “'Fraid not gents. I have some unfinished
business tomorrow night that I should probably rest up for.”

Alex laughed. “Fuck yeah you do. Going finally get your little showdown with Oswald Cobblepot.
That ought to be a fucking show! I still can't see that guy actually fucking fighting.”

Jack laughed. “It should be interesting. But thank you all for a fun game.”

Alex nodded. “See ya tomorrow, you crazy fuck.”

Crane stood up. “Might I have a word with the two of you in private? I could walk you out.” Crane
smiled. “Sure man, we'll wait.”

Jack frowned every so slightly glancing at Harley who shrugged, then nodded. “All right.”

* 

The nave was wide enough that the three of them could walk side by side. Crane smiled. “That was
rather interesting.”

Jack frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Your response to fear, the way you attacked that man without fear for your life. Both of you.”
Crane smiled and Jack, who had his arm around Harley's waist stopped to look at the man. “Are you
going to be a problem Dr. Crane?”
Crane frowned for a moment, then smiled shaking his head. “No, no, I assure you. No, I do research on fear and I would be very interested in using you and your fiancee in my experiments.”

Jack’s eyes narrowed. “Use? Experiments?”

Crane shook his head. “You misunderstand Mr. Wayne. I would like for the two of you to participate in my fear experiments.”

Jack glanced at Harley then smiled. “We’ll think about it Dr. Crane.”

With that he turned with Harley. Crane watched them go with a frown on his lips.

*

The next morning Harley was sitting up in bed waiting for Jack. He had gone downstairs to fetch them some breakfast. He had been gone a while so Harley assumed he was speaking with Alfred...maybe even Bruce. She smiled. It made her happy for Jack to be getting along with Bruce. She pushed her hair back behind her ears when her phone rang. She saw it was indeed Guy, the number unknown. Harley hit the button. “Stop calling here.”

Guy laughed. “Cranky in the morning aren’t you? Did you know there was an article in the society section about you and Jack Wayne? That his brother Bruce is going to be throwing the two of you an engagement party?! Mmm...public acknowledgment for all of Gotham to see after weeks of being engaged, weeks of speculation on how serious the relationship was? Oh my, it’s all so exciting Quinz!”

Harleen crept into Harley's voice. “Shut up. Leave me alone.”

“Never Quinz. Not until I get my money. And as along as the money keeps coming you will never see my face.” Guy laughed.

Harleen felt the sting of tears behind her eyes. “You can't hurt me! You have nothing.”

Guy chuckled. “Oh Harleen...now you should know...it doesn't have to be the truth for my words to ruin your life. Fuck sweetie...all it has to be is a few hints, a little lie here and there...maybe some photo-shopped pictures...even if they are proved false, the damage will be done. Do you really want to risk your future happiness just to avoid paying some pocket change?” Guy sounded mock upset.

“Quinz, just pay me baby and you will never hear from me...unless there is no money and then everyone will here anything I want them to hear. I'm sure the local news would love to hear my side of the story. The spurned lover, dumped because of the Wayne fortune.” Guy laughed. “Don't disappointment Quinz.” The line went dead.

Harleen threw the phone across the room shattering it. She dropped her head down to her knees covering her head with her arms. She closed her eyes. He had nothing. There was nothing. He couldn't hurt her anymore...Harleen repeated to herself until she felt that confidence settle over her. Harley swallowed, assuring herself there was nothing he could do to her.
Harley smiled softly as she studied Jack's profile. His blue eyes were intent on his task, a lock of his brown hair had fallen forward over his forehead, and he was holding his bottom lip between his teeth while he slowly dragged the brush across her nails. He was concentrating on painting her fingernails, alternating between black and red. They were going to do some shopping before the fight tonight with Cobblepot. Jack already seemed bored with the idea of fighting, as if the fight club had lost it “newness” and Jack was ready to move on to something else. Harley was fine with that; she didn't want him to be hurt again. But at the same time, there was something hot about watching him fight...the sweat rolling down his body, watching the movements of his lean muscles...blood on his teeth and the chaos in his eyes. Harley smiled blushing at her thoughts. Thinking about Jack helped her calm her nerves which had been frazzled since she woke up that morning.

Harley had been distracted during breakfast and now also as she sat, wearing only her bra and panties, letting Jack paint her nails. She was still distracted by the uncomfortable feeling of something crawling over her skin. She had a nightmare last night about Guy...she swallowed at the memory and the shiver of Harleen eased to the surface of her thoughts. She couldn't remember exactly what the dream had been about, just the feeling of something weighing her down still permeated everything.

She didn't tell Jack about the dream or the feeling that settled over her when she woke up. She had simply rolled over and snuggled closer to him. Jack had opened his arms without opening his eyes and pulled her against his chest, holding her tightly. He kissed the top of her head, rolling onto his side and wrapped one of his legs over her hip. The warmth of his body, the smell of his skin surrounding her, the steady beat of his heart, had lulled her back to a peaceful sleep.

But today, Jack was focused on their engagement party. Bruce had asked them to pick out the cupcakes they wanted and to place an order for the party, at least several hundred cupcakes.

Jack blew on her nails, holding her hand across his while he blew. Jack frowned glancing up at her. He could feel the tension in her arm.

“You okay Harls?” Jack asked holding her hand up to blow on her fingernails again.

“I'm fine, promise.” Harley smiled looking into his eyes. Her heart hurt for a moment looking at him. She loved him so much that it hurt. A physical pain, a twisting in her chest. If Guy did anything to hurt Jack...hurt this, what they had...Mentally she cursed at Harleen for being so weak. Harleen only replied with a choked, “I'm sorry,” before Harleen faded back into the darkness. Harley swallowed and changed the subject. “You want me to paint your nails?”

Jack nodded. “Yep! Just black today.”

“Only black?” Harley asked while she reached for the nail polish.

Jack smiled. “Yep, going for a more 'elegant' look.” He snorted.

Harley laughed. “Our engagement party isn't going to stay 'elegant' is it?”

Harley shook the little polish bottle before unscrewing the top and taking out the little brush.

Jack laughed before making a rude noise. “No. I'm going to hire a magician.”

Harley giggled. “What?”
“A magician! I ever tell you how Bruce hates magic?” Jack laid his hand across Harley's knee while she worked.

“He does?” Harley frowned. “Why?”

Jack shrugged. “When we were little, I remember our parents had a magician for his birthday. Giovanni Zatara...supposedly a famous magician. 'Course, neither of us knew who he was at the time. I guess he was a friend of our father, offered to show up for Bruce's birthday. But anyway, Bruce was terrified of him after he did a few tricks. Though he would never admit that. But as we became older I think magic actually made him angry! He doesn't like things he can't figure out and magic is something he could never figure out.” Jack switched hands so that Harley could work on the other hand. “I remember when we were in high school Bruce was on this mission to disprove all magic. He learned how to do all the magic tricks, every sleight of hand trick, disappearing act...you name it, Bruce learned how to do it. But what really got under his skin was when he taught me the same tricks, except I was better at them than he ever was.” Jack chuckled. “God he hated that—another thing he will never admit. Bruce never admits when he is upset.” Jack smiled ruefully before he continued. “Actually, there were a few tricks that my brother couldn’t figure out, a couple of Zatara's tricks that boggled the mind. It's the tricks Bruce couldn't figure out that really bothered him.”

Harley frowned as she listened and concentrated on his nails. “Why?”

“Bruce hates anything he can't figure out, understand, put in scientific terms.” Jack shrugged. “Me, it's the nature of the universe—you just can't understand everything. While Bruce looks for the answers and deeper meanings I say...fuck it. Just enjoy yourself because in the end we all end up in the same place, so who cares.” Jack grinned at her. “The only thing I care about is that you and I are always together, no matter what may come.”

Harley finished with his nails, leaned over and kissed him lightly on the lips. “I will always go wherever you lead Jack.”

Jack gazed at her. “Always and forever Harley.”

“Always and forever,” she repeated gazing back at him.

Jack reached out to carefully run his fingertips along her jaw in a tender caress before he continued. “Anyway, Giovanni Zatara has a daughter that's roughly around the same age as Bruce. I remember her, raven hair, big grey eyes...she was nice to me. Not a lot of people were...or are...” Jack frowned and for a moment his eyes clouded with memories. Harley had just finished screwing the top on the nail polish back on when she saw the look in his eyes. She held her arms open to him.

“Come here puddin.”

Jack smiled softly and scooted into Harley's embrace. She laid back on the bed, his head nestled between her breasts while he spoke. “Anyway, her name is Zatanna. She is playing at a local theater here to some sold out crowds, but I called her and she agreed to meet with us. I told her about the party and she seemed pretty excited to attend, invited us over this afternoon to discuss her fees and to catch up she said.”

“Catch up? Sounds like you and Bruce knew her well.” Harley stroked her fingers through his hair, feeling a spike of jealousy that she quickly dismissed, at least temporarily, while Jack spoke.

“She and her father came around several times after our parents' murder. I remember Bruce wasn't always very nice, especially if she did any magic while she was there and she had refused to show
him her 'tricks' as he called them. I think he offended her.” Jack chuckled lightly to himself.

“But she was always nice to me, taught me my first card tricks, before Bruce, until she and her father stopped coming around. I sometimes wonder if Bruce chased them off...” Jack frowned closing his eyes. He smiled gently listening to Harley's heartbeat.

“Well it sounds like having her at the party will be fun. I always liked magic shows,” Harley said quietly, her eyes closed while her fingers played through Jack's hair. She could feel his smile against her skin.

“I think it will be great fun,” Jack murmured.

* 

Alfred was in the front room dusting when Harley and Jack came laughing and racing down the stairs. Harley (wearing a pair of black leggings, knee high black boots and an open shoulder lace detailed deep red top with long bell sleeves and a burgundy leather jacket, her hair done in a fishtail braid) squealed when Jack grabbed her around the waist lifting her off her feet. He threw her over his shoulder and carried her down the last few stairs. Jack was dressed in a pair of grey slacks, white dress shirt and a dark brown leather jacket that was fitted to him. The leather jacket had a 1940s bomber jacket feeling to it and a pair of black leather Chippewa Men's Rally 12” Euro Motorcycle boots.

Alfred winced. “Oh, please do be careful Master Jack!”

Jack hopped down the last step, his arms tight around Harley's waist, her feet in the air as she laughed and squealed at the same time. “JACK!!”

Jack set her down with a grin. “Sorry Alfred!” He grinned, clearly not sorry. Alfred sighed, but Harley hurried over and threw her arms around Alfred giving him a big kiss on the cheek. “Sorry Alfie!”

Alfred smiled and shook his head. “So, where are the two of you off to this fine day, if I may ask?”

Jack walked over and wrapped his arm around Harley's waist. “We are going to pick out and order cupcakes for our engagement party AND our outfits. Then I'm taking my girl to lunch.” Jack leaned over and kissed her at the corner of her mouth when he stopped short.

“Alfred! Where is that place you were telling me about a few weeks ago? The one where they have the swing dancing!” Jack asked excitedly.

Alfred frowned in thought then smiled as the name came to him. “Ah, it's called Swing 46, it is a jazz and supper club Master Jack.”

Jack was grinning at Harley. “I thought dinner and dancing...before the final event tonight.”

Harley frowned. “Are you sure about that puddin?”

Alfred smiled. “It is quite a nice establishment, Miss Harleen. I have gone, maybe once or twice, on my evenings off.”

Harley giggled. “Alfred! Really? With a date?”
Alfred smiled and went back to dusting. Harley giggled, noting that though Alfred smiled, he refrained from answering. “All right, dinner and dancing.”

Jack’s eyes were bright. “I love dancing with you Harls. In my arms swinging to the music…”

Jack scooped Harley up and swung her around the main room. Alfred smiled softly watching as Jack weaved with Miss Harleen in his arms. He was so happy to see Master Jack in love and Miss Harleen, just the way she gazed at him, it was obvious that she loved the younger Wayne brother. It did an old man's heart good.

Jack dipped Harley back stealing a kiss. “I could teach you how to sock hop tonight!”

Harley giggled. Jack took her hand and led her out the door to where he had driven the motorcycle around front. “See you later Alfie!” Jack put his hand over his mouth and blew Alfred a huge kiss.

Giggling happily, Harley did the same.

Alfred chuckled with a slight shake of his head and went back to dusting.

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Harley had her arms wrapped tightly around Jack's waist while he drove, the motorcycle weaving through traffic as he headed to the bakery, a place called “Gotham Cakes and More.” The bakery store was located at 112th Eight Ave and was a small shop located between a bank and a small used book store. The front of the shop was a dark chocolate brown with large picture display windows where several tiered cakes were shown.

When they pulled up on the bike Harley looked in wonder at the cakes on display in the windows. They were gorgeous! True pieces of art, she thought. Jack helped her off the bike, taking her hand and not letting go as he twisted her around then out again in a spin. Harley laughed. “You are in a really good mood Jack!”

Jack grinned. “I don't know...I guess it's the idea of the whole of Gotham knowing you are my girl.” Jack wrapped an arm around her waist holding her against him, his other hand stroked slowly along her jaw. Harley cupped his face in her hands. “I love you so much Jack, so much.”

Jack kissed her, his lips sliding along hers before his tongue brushed against her lips. He pulled her closer deepening the kiss when some man walking down the street yelled. “Get a ROOM!”

Jack laughed against her mouth, reaching down to squeeze her rear for emphasis and yelled back. “I like an audience! I perform better under pressure!”

Harley burst out laughing. Jack grinned taking her hand and walked with her toward the bakery. They stopped at the windows to look at the wedding cakes. There was one that was grey and white with four layers ending in a castle, while another was blue and silver looking as if it were part of a palace in Paris. There were several that were covered in roses, or other flowers and another was black and white with silhouettes that illustrated a couple’s moments together. Jack laughed leaning close to Harley's ear.

“Ours would chronicle some of the people we have had to dispose of on the way.”

Harley snorted and covered her laugh. “Jack!”

“Oh, or silhouettes of all the places we've had sex! That would be an awesome cake!” Jack grinned and waggled his eyebrows at her. Harley blushed and laughed, playfully smacking him on the
The inside of the establishment smelled like vanilla and chocolate, mixed with the smell of coffee. The interior had shiny chocolate colored floors and bright honey colored walls. There were tables with stools, some lined across a counter, while others were in front of the windows and of course a large glass display case that held slices of cakes, cupcakes, danish, all matter of fresh baked goods. Jack swung Harley's hand between them as he walked up to the counter.

A young woman dressed in black slacks and a pink t-shirt, smiled brightly at them. “May I help you?”

Jack smiled. “Yes, my fiance and I have an appointment to meet with someone named Jeanie.”

“Oh yes you must be the Waynes, correct?”

Jack's grin widened. “Yes, the Waynes.”

The young woman smiled. “Why don't you have a seat and I'll send her right out.”

They only had to wait a handful of minutes, (in which Jack told Harley “Bakers earn the majority of their income in the morning, they earn most of their dough at yeast by a leaven o'clock.” Harley had groaned loudly which only made Jack laugh more), before Jeanie a heavy-set woman with light almost white blonde hair came out, carrying several large binders. “Well hello! You must be Mr. Jack Wayne and Dr. Harleen Quinzel? The young engaged couple?”

Jack frowned for only a moment, his hand around Harley's tightening. “It's Harley Quinn.”

“Oh, I'm sorry—Miss Quinn.” Jeanie frowned, but Harley smiled. “It's fine.”

Jeanie nodded taking a breath to start over. “Yes, ah, your brother, Bruce Wayne called to say you would both be coming to pick out cupcakes for your engagement party?”

Jack nodded. “Yep, we need a thousand cupcakes.”

Jeanie blinked. “A thousand.” She took a breath and re-oriented. “I thought your brother had said two hundred?”

Jack frowned tilting his head, blinking his big blue eyes at her with a completely innocent expression. “Is that going to be a problem?”

“No, no of course not.” Jeanie paled a little. “Same delivery date?”

Jack nodded. “Same date.”

Harley leaned in close and whispered. “A thousand?”

Jack laughed whispering back. “Yes. It'll be funny! Can you imagine Bruce's face when a thousand cupcakes show up?”

Harley shook her head with a laugh. Jack turned back to Jeanie leaning his elbows on the table. “Now, let's talk about how you are going to display the cupcakes.”

Jeanie went very pale. “Display?”
Jack giggled. “Oh yeah...I was thinking a giant circus big top! I mean if that is something you would like Harley?”

Harley squealed. “OH, with a big red and black striped tent?”

Jack gasped. “YES! That would be perfect!! Harley you read my mind!”

The both of them giggled holding hands which prompted Jeanie to ask timidly. “Are you being serious?”

They both turned to look at her and at the same time said. “Of course.”

* * *

After half an hour of discussion, Jack and Harley had ordered several varieties of cupcakes from chocolate malt to hummingbird cupcakes...the shop had twenty-two flavors, all of which they ordered as well as a discussion of how the cupcakes were going to be displayed. Poor Jeanie looked both pale and elated at the monumental task she had ahead of her and how much she was going to be paid.

Jack and Harley were heading outside for the bike, ready to go shopping for their outfits for the party and make a stop for this magician Jack wanted to hire, when Harley saw someone from the corner of her eye, someone she recognized.

She turned in confusion, but then her eyes widened when she saw Guy standing at the corner leaning against the building. He winked at her. He strangely didn't look much different than when they had dated in college, the same blonde good looks, chiseled chin, the sort of all-American boy many fathers would love to see their daughters bring home. He was dressed in jeans and a white t-shirt with a blue blazer holding a soda. He took a sip staring at her with a smug smile. For a moment Harleen swelled to the surface, her fear washing over Harley. How on earth did he find her?

But then Jack had stepped in front of her reaching out to touch the tips of his fingers along her jaw. “Harls, did you hear me? You all right sweets?” Jack gently caressed her face.

Harley blinked and shook her head. “Yeah, yes, yes I'm fine. Let's just go.”

“Well, I asked if you wanted to go grab some lunch first.” Jack held her cheek very gently his blue eyes filled with concern.

“Lunch sounds wonderful Jack.” She smiled taking his hand in hers and tugging him toward the bike. Jack let himself be directed, but he glanced around. He didn't notice anything (Guy having stepped back around the corner vanishing from sight), but something had been bothering Harley since they returned to Gotham from their stay at the cabin. It upset him that she was keeping something from him, but at the same time he loved her deeply enough to trust her; she would tell him when she was ready. He just had to be patient.

* * *

For lunch, the two of them decided on pizza. Jack pulled the bike around back and down an alley, parking behind the pizza restaurant. Jack again took her hand after parking the bike, then proceeded to hold her hand as he led her inside. The place had a warm coziness with brick walls, black tables and chairs with the red and white checkered table cloths one usually expected in a pizzeria, all mixed with the mouth-watering smells of melting cheese, baked crust, and marinara sauce.

The place was pretty crowded, but the waitress who came to seat them managed to find them a
decent table on the far left. “What can I get you to drink?” she asked, cocking her hip to the side, her pen poised over the pad in her hand.

Jack glanced at Harley who had picked up the menu the waitress had handed to her, glancing over the drink selections. “Mm...let's try a margarita.”

Jack grinned. “Excellent choice as always my sweetie. I will have a bottle of your pale ale.”

“Okay, got it,” the waitress said. “Be right back with your drinks and I can take your food order when I return.” She gave them both a smile and trotted off.

Jack turned to Harley. “What do you think about ordering pizza for the party?”

Harley chuckled. “Are you purposely trying to sabotage this party?”

Jack made a face. “No, just trying to make sure everything isn't mind-numbingly boring. So we have a magician, a few hundred cupcakes extra we probably don't need and, I don't know...a hundred pizzas? “ Jack set his elbows on the table, lacing his fingers and smiled when he rested his chin against his fingers. “I don't think of it as sabotage...more like just adding a few fun elements. Magic is fun, cupcakes are fun, pizza is fun....”

Harley giggled. “Want to add some balloons?”

Jack’s smile was mischievous. “Wanna add a hot air balloon?”

Harley grinned. “Why not!”

That was when their waitress returned with their drinks and the two of them ordered.

* 

Lunch was fun, just the two of them talking and laughing and (ordering a hundred pizzas for the party) when Harley saw him again, Guy. He was across the street, sitting on a bus stop bench and eating a hotdog, probably from the hotdog cart not too far away from him down the street.

He caught her watching through the restaurant window, and lifted his hotdog to her. She turned away, her blood running cold. Clearly he had gone from harassing phone calls to stalking. She wondered briefly about calling Frost herself, asking him for his assistance...maybe on filing a restraining order...

But when she turned back to look at Guy, he was gone. She saw his retreating back headed down the street away from them. Maybe if they hurried, he would lose them she thought to herself as she grabbed Jack pulling him toward the front door since they had just finished. Jack laughed.

“Hey, hey Harley—why the hurry?”

Harley stopped, frowned for a split second before she smiled. “Just thought if we finished out chores early enough we could maybe go for a walk in the park.”

Jack smiled softly catching her chin with his thumb and forefinger and tugged her lips toward his, “Anything you want Harls, anything at all, you only have to ask.”

Harley closed her eyes sinking into the kiss that followed, letting Jack's presence wash away all her tension.

“I just want you puddin...always you,” Harley said softly. Jack pulled her close, wrapping his arms
tight around her and rested his chin on her head. “I'm not going anywhere my sweets. You will never get rid of me,” he said with a smile.

Harley chuckled closing her eyes tight, her arms around Jack's waist holding him so that he would never disappear.

*

Their next stop was clothing (Jack's favorite thing to shop for). They decided not to go for the full '1920's' look, but instead for modern clothing inspired by the era.

Jack smiled yelling over his shoulder as he drove. “I looked up this place online that is located downtown. It should have exactly what we are looking for. We'll be good and dress 'elegantly' for the party at least.”

Harley laughed, her chin resting against his shoulder. “Well that will be one thing we do that will make Bruce happy.”

Jack snickered lifting up her hand from around his waist and kissed her knuckles as they pulled into a little shop downtown called The Vintage Agenda.

The woman who ran the place reminded Harley of a heavier Audrey Hepburn from “Breakfast at Tiffany’s” with her hair piled high on her head, a little pearl necklace, a black sleeveless maxi dress and black heels; she looked ready for a night on the town rather than selling clothing in a shop.

The woman smiled brightly. “Hello, I'm Kathy. I'm here to make your vintage inspired dreams come true.”

Jack laughed. “Now that is an introduction!”

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Harley ended up with a gorgeous black beaded mesh fringe flapper dress with a nArt Deco style design across the front and back in silver. The black fringe at the bottom of the dress, which stopped around mid-thigh was fun, as Harley kept swooshing her hips back and forth to make the fringe sway.

Jack grinned watching her hips like a man under a spell.

“I really really like the fringe,” Jack murmured licking his lips.

Harley blushed with a wrinkled nose. “I love it.”

Kathy smiled. “I know exactly what shoes you should pair that dress with, something comfortable, a high heel, but not too high. Wait right here.”

Kathy hurried off into the back, but soon returned with a pair of black T-strap heels. When Harley tried them on with the dress, the look was complete.

Jack sighed smiling. “God, you are the most beautiful woman Harley.”

Harley stood there in the dress and shoes, her eyes meeting Jack's while Kathy droned on about accessories.

Next was Jack. Jack purchased a Great Gatsby inspired tuxedo with a full on black fitted jacket with long ‘swallow’ tails in the back, a white vest, trousers with silk stripes on the sides, and a white bow
tie, then chose black leather oxfords with the spats.

When he had stepped out of the dressing room Harley thought her knees were going to give out he looked so handsome.

“Oh Jack. That is...goodness.” Harley did a little swoon which had her husband-to-be laughing. “Mm...maybe I should wear this tonight.” He waggled his eyebrows at her. Harley giggled happily with a hint of pink in her cheeks.

While at the shop they also purchased clothing for tonight for when they went dancing before the fight. (Harley tried once to talk Jack out of it while they were at the shop, but he emphatically explained: “Toots, I'm not going to let that little bird think he won by not fighting him. Harley had whispered. “I just don't trust him not to do something dirty.”

Jack shook his head. “I'm counting on him doing something dirty Harls. Don't worry your prettily little head. I'll take care of the bird quickly and we can be on our way home early.”

Jack bought Harley a red and white polkadot swing dress along with the crinoline underneath. The dress had a little collar and short sleeves. Harley had stood in the dress, again swishing her hips back and forth, watching the way the skirt moved, rolling around her hips like its own little ocean. Jack also purchased for her a pair of red and white t-strapped pumps that had little white bows on them. Jack didn't buy much for himself. He ended up with a new pair of black skinny jeans and a black leather motorcycle jacket that made him look like Marlon Brando.

* *

This time when they left the shop, Harley was looking for Guy, terrified that she would see him standing against a wall again smiling at her, but she didn't see him anywhere. She breathed a sigh of relief. She was sure he hadn't left Gotham, but maybe his stalking them for the day was over and she could focus on dinner, dancing and watching her puddin fight...

* *

Their last stop before heading home was the Gotham King's Playhouse where Zatanna was playing to sold out shows. Jack pulled up to the theater, the both of them sitting on the motorcycle and looking up. The Gotham King's Playhouse was part of an older Gotham building dating back to 1905 when the building had been constructed. It had been in nearly continuous occupation solely as a theater its entire existence.

The front of the building held a large neon sign over the entrance that announced the theater's name and another billboard like sign beneath that which announced, “Zatanna, Master of the Mysterious” with a picture of a beautiful raven-haired magician. Her costume consisted of fishnets, booty shorts and a tuxedo top and top hat.

Harley frowned with a narrowing of her eyes. “Should I be jealous?”

Jack turned to look over his shoulder at her, clearly confused. “Of what?”

Harley studied his face for a split second then smiled happily; it was clear to her that Jack saw no reason at all that Harley should be jealous. The fact that no woman (even one clearly as gorgeous as Zatanna) meant anything to Jack made her heart swell in her chest. Yes it was probably a little petty of her, but it made her feel good knowing Jack desired no one but her. She smiled at him giving him a kiss on the cheek. “Nothing, never mind.”

Jack frowned, but he hopped off the bike, turning to grab Harley by her waist and lift her off into his
arms. She giggled and wrapped her arm and legs around him, making Jack laugh. He stumbled with her losing his balance for a split second, taking several steps backwards before he finally had his balance. He put his hands under her rear and, with a large smile, carried Harley into the theater.

*

The interior of the theater was not nearly as grand as the one in which Alex had had the first poker game she had attended. This one had the stadium seating, red velvet chairs, but the walls lacked the grandness of the other theater, though the walls were painted in a gold color with lovely art deco style arches and an elaborately textured ceiling. The stage was magnificent Harley thought with art deco designs painted around the stage, framing it. The stage had the large red velvet curtains, with a smaller set of gold curtains at the top over the red, and the backdrop that was currently in place looked like a painting of the heavens as envisioned by the creators of the silent French film “A Trip to the Moon.”

As they walked down the aisles between the seats, Harley saw Zatanna on the stage. She wasn't in costume, instead she was wearing a pair of low riding black sweatpants and a black baby-doll t-shirt that read “On Wednesdays We Wear Black.” Her long raven-colored hair was pulled up into a ponytail and she had on duckie slippers. She was speaking to someone up in the top of the stage by the lights.

“Yes, like that, I want that blue light to come on just as I'm telling the story of the stars.” She smiled at whoever she was speaking to when Jack called out. “Did you hear about the perverted magician? He pulled his top hat out of a Bunny!”

Zatanna turned around and laughed when she saw Jack Wayne and his fiancee. “Jack Wayne! I should have known it was you. You told bad jokes even when we were kids!” Jack laughed as the young woman came to the end of the stage and jumped down, walking swiftly up the aisle to meet them. She pulled Jack into an embrace (clearly surprising him), then she did the same to Harley. She then held Harley back, her hands on her shoulders. “You must be Harley Quinn. Love the name! Jack just wouldn't stop gushing about you when he called.”

Jack twisted his lips into a frown like a little boy. “I don't gush.”

Zatanna beamed. “You do about her.”

Harley blushed and Jack shrugged. “Okay I guess I do gush about Harley. She is my girl.”

Jack kissed Harley on the cheek with a wide smile. Zatanna grinned motioning with her hand for them to follow. “Come on back stage with me and then we can talk in private...sorta. This place is never really private.”

Jack and Harley followed her backstage to a small, but adequate dressing room. Zatanna moved some layers of clothing, a bird cage with a sweet little blue parakeet inside, a couple of top hats and a few miscellaneous objects that Harley was not sure exactly what they were, until the three of them were able to sit down and face each other comfortably. Jack reached over to take Harley's hand and rested her hand against his thigh, his hand covering hers.

Zatanna turned her chair around in order for her to lean against the back of it and asked. “Either of you want something to drink? I have some bottled water and a few sodas.”

She put her hand to the side of her mouth and whispered loudly. “I also have a few wine coolers stashed somewhere I could find for us.”
Jack laughed. “I’m fine. Harley?”

“I’m fine too, but thank you,” she said politely.

Zatanna shrugged. “Okay, let me know if you change your mind though,” the grinning magician said. “So, heading to the altar before Bruce. Actually, I’m not surprised.”

Jack frowned; clearly he was surprised. “Really? Even though I’m the crazy one?”

Zatanna laughed. “As far as I’m concerned you and your brother are both crazy, but most men are.” She winked at Harley. “But I would peg Bruce as the crazier one. Remember how he used to drill me about my magic and demanded to know the truth all the time?”

Jack nodded. “I do.”

“He’s lucky I didn't turn him into something unnatural or give him continuous farts or something,” she said with a grin.

Jack’s eyes glinted. “You can do that?”

Zatanna laid her head against her crossed arms laughing. “So—engagement party. You want to hire me?”

Jack nodded, letting go the fact she had chosen to not answer his question. “Yep for two reasons: one it will be epic; and two, it will drive Bruce up the wall.”

Zatanna lifted a brow at him. “I do remember you had a thing about driving Bruce to the edge all the time, trying to make him lose his temper.”

Jack shrugged. “What can I say? Bruce drives me to drive him crazy.”

Zatanna shook her head. “Well I would be happy to perform. My usual fee is twenty-five thousand a night, but for you I will perform for free.”

Jack shook his head. “How about instead of free, I just donate your usual fee to a charity of your choice?”

Zatanna smiled. “Oh, I like that. Listen to you, sounding like your brother.”

Jack made a face, then laughed. “Careful there Zatanna, going to make me change my mind. Go rent myself a clown.”

Zatanna laughed at that. “Hey!”

Jack and Harley laughed too, but Jack waved his hand at her. “Don’t worry, I would rather have you over a clown...but only barely.”

“So, care if I ask how you two met?” Zatanna smiled with lifted eyebrows as she looked between them.

Jack nodded to Harley, squeezing her hand, who took over speaking. “Well, I was hired by Bruce to be his psychiatrist.”

Zatanna blinked. “Seriously?”

Harley nodded and Zatanna grinned. “Ooh, I love work place romances!! How romantic! Was it
love at first sight?"

Jack grinned looking at Harley. “It was for me.”

Harley gazed at him squeezing his hands. “Me too.”

Zatanna sighed. “Okay, I'm officially jealous.”

* They had spoken for a few more minutes, ironing out details, but when they left it was settled that Zatanna would be there, early so she could mingle before the performance. Jack would be making a donation to the Gotham's Rainbow Trust in her name.

* Back home, Harley had just gotten out of the tub, a towel wrapped around her torso, another towel wrapped around her hair. Jack had showered earlier and was on the phone with Alex who had called to let them know the location of the fight tonight. Harley was looking through her make-up bag trying to decide on eyeshadow when Jack came rushing into the bathroom.

“Hey Harls, you are never going to believe where Pengy and I are going to be fighting...whoa...” Jack stopped short to admire Harley in her towels.

Harley blushed. “What are you staring at...you've seen me wrap a towel around myself before.”

Jack gave her a goofy grin. “I don't know...you look especially...delectable right now, that's all.” His blue eyes wandered down her back, lingering on the back of her thighs, then up again. He smiled with hooded eyes at her.

Harley blushed pulling the towel off her head and shaking out her damp hair. “You're silly.”

Jack leaned over out of the bathroom doorway and tossed his phone onto the bed before coming back into the bathroom. He wasn't dressed yet, only wearing his boxers, a purple pair with green polkadots. Harley loved them, since they were whimsical, like so many of Jack's moods. He put his hands behind his back, waltzing over to her to stand behind her and watch her over her head in the bathroom mirror as she brushed the tangles out of her damp hair. Harley narrowed her eyes watching him.

“You're up to something,” she said softly. Jack's grin looked mischievous as he pleaded innocence. “Nope, not me.”

“So where are you and Pengy supposed to fight?” Harley ran her comb through her hair until it was nice and smooth.

“Cobblepot Manor. Inside this time.”

Harley blinked in surprise. “Really? I thought it was too much disrepair for anyone to be inside of it?”

“It's not in the best shape, unless he's made changes. I'm just surprised he would want all those people there unless he's sure he is going to win.” Jack reached up and ran his hands over her bare shoulders and down her arms sending warm shivers over her skin.

“I'm worried about this fight Jack. I don't trust him. You beat him at that duel, he set up that fight
with Croc to kill you, I know he did...he's going to try and hurt you Jack. I couldn't...” She stopped
and then continued. “If anything happened to you...” Harley swallowed looking at his reflection in
the bathroom mirror, tears threatening to fall from the corner of her eyes.

Jack smiled at her reflection, wrapped his arms around her from behind and pressed her back against
his chest. He rested his narrow chin on the top of her head.

“I'm always careful Harley.” He kissed the top of her head, pressing his nose against her damp hair,
closing his eyes. “I won't let anything or anyone get between us Harls. I swear it.”

But the look she gave him clearly indicated that she knew that wasn't true, that he loved to live
dangerously. Jack turned her around by the shoulders to face him.

“I swear Harley, I'll be careful with Cobblepot. I know this is a trap. That he's going to try to do
something nasty because he knows he can't take me in a fair fight, and I also promise to kick the
living shit out of him.” He grinned down at her, his hands gently holding her upper arms.

Harley was still pouting, looking down at their bare feet. Jack bent over to try to look into her eyes
but she wouldn't look at him.

“What do you call a penguin in the desert?” he asked softly.

Harley frowned refusing to look at him. “What?”

Jack grinned. “Lost.”

Harley snorted, trying not to laugh. Jack grinned at her reaching down to brush his thumb over her

He tilted her face up whispering.

“May I kiss you Miss Quinn?” Jack asked in a low voice, his thumb brushing along her chin.

Harley smiled meeting his eyes. “Always puddin.”

Jack kissed her, a slowly exploration of her mouth with his tongue that had her weaving in place
slightly. His kiss made her want to sink to the floor, to simply melt. His tongue brushed over her
teeth, caressed her tongue, in slow warm rolls, waves of warmth flowed over her pooling in her
breasts, in her groin making her crave more. She wrapped her arms around his body, pressing herself
desperately to him. Jack's hands, which had softly cupped her face dropped to her towel to pull the
cloth from around her letting it fall heavily to the floor around her feet.

Harley let out a soft gasp as the cooler air brushed over her torso, but then the cool air was quickly
replaced by Jack's hands. He brushed his palms down her sides, gently caressing her skin,causing the
tiny hairs across her torso to quiver. He brushed his fingertips down her side, his blunt nails creating
a soft tickle, then he dragged them up again, sending goosebumps racing over her skin. Jack's hot
breath cascaded along her neck, heating her skin. He leaned down, blowing slowly, letting his breath
send chills down her spine just before he licked her shoulder. Harley closed her eyes taking in a
shuddering breath while his tongue danced across her skin. His fingertips moved from her sides to
stroked slowly over her rear; again he curled his fingers to drag his nails over the round slopes of her
rear, creating another series of racing goosebumps over her flesh before he spread his fingers wide to
grab her rear and squeeze pressing her pelvis up against his groin.

“I want you Harley,” Jack hissed. “I want to bend you over the sink and fuck you while I look into
your gorgeous face in the mirror. I want to watch you cum, hear your groan my name.”
Harley groaned in response. “Yes Jack.”

Jack smiled against her skin, then slowly started to lower himself down, placing kisses against her skin, pressing his lips to each erect nipple when he was even with her breasts, his breath warm against her skin sending curls of heat flowing through her. Harley squeezed her eyes shut against the tense pleasure his lips and breath were causing, her whole body already on fire from such simple touches. But just when she was focusing on the feel of Jack’s elegant fingers brushing down over her skin, his breath hot against her flesh, she felt the warm dampness of his tongue on her flesh.

Jack ran the flat of his tongue over her nipples then circled over the sensitive flesh using just the tip of his tongue. The sensation caused her groin to tighten with the need for him to touch her, to stroke those long fingers of his against her, a burning ache that he kept simply feeding as he sucked on one of her nipples. His hands were around her hips, his thumbs against her hip bones, holding himself steady as he crouched on the balls of his feet in front of her.

Jack shifted his attentions from her breasts to her stomach, kissing his way lower until he dropped to his knees. He spread her legs, forcing Harley to lean her hands back against the sink to hold herself up arching her hips toward Jack. He smiled pressing his mouth to her, rolling the tip of his tongue over her clitoris, eliciting a moan from Harley. Jack smiled against her, licking slowly then rolling his tongue over her taking deep strokes against her while his hands glided up to grab her rear again and squeeze pulling her closer. He sucked, pulling on her with his lips. Harley dropped her head back gasping out loud as one of her hands found purchase against the sink while with the other, she tangled her fingers in her puddin’s hair.

“Uuhhuuhh...Jack...puddin...guuhh...” Harley came with a jerk of her hips, her fingers sliding on the sink for a moment. She felt Jack’s laugh, low and deep vibrate against her clitoris and race up through her groin like a deep tickle. Jack lifted one of her legs, placing it over his shoulder, pressing his mouth more firmly against her clitoris, kissing her with his lips and tongue until Harley was nearly vibrating again.

“Puddin...aahh...ahha...my puddin...” Harley’s toes pointed against his back when the warmth of her orgasm rippled up through her. She reached down with one hand and dragged her fingers through his hair, grabbing a fistful when Jack hummed against her, moving his head back and forth, not fast, but in slow, fluid movements while sucking on her clitoris until Harley cried out again pushing herself back against the sink, her other hand still in his hair, her fingernails dragging across his scalp. She looked down at Jack, his blue eyes gazing up at her with such love and lust. Her breathing was coming in pants just watching him. He smiled again, moving his mouth up and down, his teeth brushing ever so slightly against her. Harley whimpered, her leg over his shoulder shifted as she angled herself a little to the right, her leg almost going completely around his neck. Jack chuckled again pressing deeper yet. She hissed when he nipped at her clitoris. Her hips were moving in gently undulating thrusts against his mouth, her fingers brushing his dark hair back from his face.

Jack’s blue eyes never left her face. He wanted to see every expression, to watch her complete surrender, the way she dragged her teeth across her lips, biting her tongue...he wanted to worship her, worship his Harley. He loved her so deeply, so much that he almost felt like it, their love, was driving her further down the path of madness...he wanted to kill for her, tear the souls from everyone who dared to hurt her, he wanted to tear his soul out and give it to her...his girl...his Harley. He pressed his fingers into her hips, holding her tight as he shook his head back and forth again sucking until Harley screamed.

“JACK!!”

He licked her a few more times, long slow licks before he gradually stood, his tongue tracing a damp
trail up her body to her breasts which he kissed, sucking on each again, his tongue flicking across the sensitive surface of each nipple, tugging them with his lips, his hands cupping her breasts up and squeezing when his mouth found hers again. The kiss was long and deep, Jack's tongue pressing and swirling against hers. Harley could taste herself on his lips and tongue which only made her growl. “Puddin..”

Jack moaned, his voice coming in panting breaths. “Mm...my honeybunch, my sweet cupcake...” He chuckled turning her around to face the mirror over the sink.

Harley thought he was going to take her right then, but instead Jack kissed his way down her spine, gradually dropping to his knees again. He pressed a kiss to the tip of her tailbone, bringing his hands up to squeeze her rear, cupping and squeezing and biting her backside. Harley's body weaved under his touch, undulating with each caress. She gasped when Jack bit her again, his teeth pressing hard into her flesh, then he sucked harder still, his hands skating over her soft skin. Jack sucked until he was sure he had left a bruise on her buttocks. He pulled away just enough to look at where he had bitten her, a deep purple mark on her porcelain skin. He grinned.

Jack stood back up pushing his boxers down and forced her legs further apart with his foot before he slid up into her. Harley gasped arching her back, then groaned when he pushed deep inside her, feeling that hard warmth and the satisfaction that came with having him buried inside her. Her inner muscles contracted, holding him while Harley looked into the mirror.

Jack grabbed her hips with his hands, pressing his fingers hard into her skin on both sides and started thrusting, just plain hard fucking. He smiled at her, catching her eyes in the mirror when she looked up. She groaned seeing him standing behind her, thrusting hard and fast into her, hitting into her over and over again.

Harley arched her back further, pressing back against him with a sexy growl in her throat and her eyes sparkling in the mirror. Jack groaned driving himself deep inside her watching the changes in her expression in the mirror. He slid a hand up her back, then dragged his blunt nails down her spine, the whole while thrusting as deep as he could, feeling that wet warmth surround and pull at him. Jack wanted to close his eyes and let the feeling ripple through him, but he was also being driven willingly, pleasantly mad by the look in Harley's eyes, the lust and love reflected back through her hot gaze.

Harley thrust her hips back and hissed. “Harder Jack...Uuhh...puddin harder!! Yes!!”

Jack held her hips with both hands letting himself go, no controlled thrusts, just fucking her as hard as he could, watching the bounce of her backside, the expression of her face in the mirror. Jack moaned. “I can't...I can't hold back much longer Harley...”

“Uuhh puddin, come for me puddin.” Harley groaned smiling at him in the mirror.

Jack pressed his teeth into his lower lip with a hiss. “I love your smile Harley.”

She grinned at him pushing herself up a little more; he could see the way her breasts bounced with each of his thrusts hitting her backside. She groaned, then he felt it, that tightening, her whimper and then the burst of her pleasure that made her shudder and clench her fingers into fists on the countertop. Harley kept her eyes on Jack's when she came, his slowly expanding bubble of her sexual pleasure burst, flooding her whole body with warmth.

“Oouuhh! Puddin!!” Her now slightly dry hair framed her face, her blues eyes glowing with satisfaction. Jack moaned softly, gazing at her face in the mirror, the sensation of Harley, her body around him, the scent of her, the way she felt around him, the wet warmth...but it was her smile that
really did it for him. Seeing her smile at him in the mirror at the same moment she came was more than he could handle. He arched hard with one final hard thrust, burying himself as deep into her body as he could, his fingers pressing hard into her hips when he came with a loud moan.

“HARLEY! Uuhh...Harley...”

Jack groaned loudly, his eyes rolling closed for just a moment as the sensation of pleasure burst over him, as if Harley was ripping something from his very soul when he climaxed. Harley groaned when Jack pressed deeply into her, another ripple of pleasure bursting up through her body, then immediately made them both feel liquid, relaxed, and sagging against the sink.

Jack lean forward and kissed her spine, then her shoulder, then her ear. Harley stood up a little and Jack wrapped his arm around her squeezing one of her breasts.

“I love you Harls. Nothing will ever come between us. I love you.” He said it with a slight lilt of desperation in his voice just as he wrapped his other arm around her waist.

Harley leaned back into him, feeling him still embedded inside her kept making her jerk with aftershocks of pleasure.

“Oh Jack...puddin...always and forever...” Harley smiled closing her eyes. Jack smiled gazing at her in the mirror, their bodies joined.

He hissed against her ear. “My girl.”

Harley opened her eyes to look back at him in the mirror. “Always puddin.”

Jack sighed, reluctantly letting her go and pulling out. He reached for a cloth which he handed to her while he grabbed his boxers off the floor.

“Ready to go dancing?” he asked with a wide grin.

“Jack, are you sure dancing is a good idea before the fight?” Harley asked while she cleaned up.

“Yep. I want to have some fun. Waiting about to go kick bird ass is boring sweets...though I suppose we could stay here and fuck and make love all night until it's time to go?” Jack grinned wide then chuckled. “BUT I really want to twirl you around a dance floor and show you off in that cute little dress you purchased today.” Jack winked at her.

Harley giggled blushing slightly. “Fine you win.”

Jack grinned. “Yeah me! Oh, I better get dressed. Want you to do my eyeliner before we go!” Jack stopped in the doorway to turn and smile at her. “I can't wait to dance with you in the that dress.”

Harley blushed softly. “It is a gorgeous dress.”

“It's only gorgeous because of the woman wearing it,” Jack said before he brought his hand up and blew her a kiss, disappearing into the other room. With that, Jack rushed out of the bathroom. Harley smiled watching him go. She loved him so much that it hurt, her chest ached. For a moment her thoughts drifted to Guy...she was not, could not let him ruin what she had with Jack. She had to figure out a way to get rid of Guy...somehow...
Frost was driving them tonight and he pulled up in front of the supper club. The outside wasn't anything special, just a flat building entrance with a burgundy awning and some outside seating on either side of the door—nice, but nothing thrilling.

Frost leaned out the window after Jack and Harley had hopped out. “I'll park over there Boss, at the pay parking lot. You can just call me on your cell when you're ready Boss, Miss Quinn, and I'll drive around front to pick you up.”

Jack smiled. “Perfect.” He pulled out his wallet and handed Frost four hundred dollars. “Go get yourself something to eat. Oh and does your mother like the new facility?” Jack asked with a smile.

Frost's responding smile was bright. “Oh yes Boss! She loves having her own room again.”

Harley leaned on Jack's arm. “Did she get the flowers I sent?”

Frost nodded. “She did Miss Quinn. She really loved them.”

“I put a standing order in to have roses delivered once a week,” Harley said with a smile.

Frost roughly rubbed a fist across his eyes. “Thank you both.”

Jack surprised Frost by leaning in and kissing the other man on the top of his head. “Not an issue Frost my love. You are a friend to me and Harley.”

Frost nodded rubbing his eyes again. Jack smiled then asked. “Oh did you find the address for later this evening?”

“Yes sir, I know exactly how to get to Cobblepot Manor.” Frost gave a small salute.

Jack grinned hooking Harley's arm through his and stroked her arm. “Wonderful! All right! I'm off to spin my girl on the dance floor!”

Jack and Harley waved goodbye to Frost and headed inside the supper club.

*

The inside of the supper club reminded Harley of supper clubs she had seen in old movies from the 1940's and '50's. There was a large dance floor with a traditional looking big band on stage which was currently playing Benny Goodman's “Moonglow.” Tables and chairs sat around the dance floor and a full bar was over to the right on the far wall. The wall themselves were painted a deep terra cotta and were decorated with old movie posters from the era, photographs from the supper club itself and old jazz posters.

Jack grinned. “Alfred was right, this place is nice. So Harls, dancing, dinner or drinks first?”

Harley smiled at the child-like expression of pleasure on Jack's face. “How about a dance mister?” she asked with a coy smile.

Jack laughed. “I thought you would never ask Miss Quinn.” Jack took her hand and led her out onto the dance floor just as a man stepped in front of the band. “We are lucky tonight to have one of Gotham's local swing bands with us tonight, The Era.”

The crowd clapped as the man continued. “And now—The Era !”

A young woman with her red hair done up in such a way she reminded Harley of the movie star Barbara Stanwyck, wearing a snug evening dress of the era, stepped up to the vintage microphone
that had been brought out for her an smiled at the crowd. “I'll be singing Bei mir bist du schon.”

The crowd clapped and the woman leaned in to sing.

“Of all the boys I've known, and I've known some

Until I first met you, I was lonesome

And when you came in sight, dear, my heart grew light

And this old world seemed new to me

You're really swell, I have to admit you

Deserve expressions that really fit you

And so I've racked my brain, hoping to explain

All the things that you do to me

Bei mir bist du schon, please let me explain

Bei mir bist du schon means you're grand

Bei mir bist du schon, again I'll explain

It means you're the fairest in the land...”

*

Jack grinned. “You know how to swing dance Harls?”

Harley frowned, thinking of movies she had seen set in the 1940's and '50's. “Well, sorta.”

Jack laughed. “Don't worry about it sweets, just follow me!”

Jack swung her around the dance floor, moving his feet in a kind of hop step that Harley easily picked up and duplicated. He then swung her out at arms length, continuing with the sort of hopping steps to the music. Harley just flowed right along with him laughing when he swung her back then spun her in a circle before swinging her out again. Harley did a sort of twisting dance step when Jack swung her out then laughing, rolled back into his arms. Jack held her, her back against his chest while they swung and swayed to the music.

They started doing a series of twists and spins, their feet keeping up to the hopping beat of the music. Harley's skirt flounced with the swinging movements, keeping her hips loose while she twisted. Jack danced with the loose, elegant abandon of someone who was a natural dancer. They didn't realize they had drawn a crowd of on-lookers until people started to clap with the song's beat, the singers crooning away while everyone watched how effortlessly Jack and Harley danced in the middle of the dance floor.

Harley was all smiles, her eyes never leaving Jack's grinning face while he swung her around. Jack swung Harley to his side, his arm around her waist, Harley's arm just naturally going around his. Together they did a few back and forth steps, their knees staying slightly bent the whole time with the bounce in their steps. Laughing they turned back to face each other, Jack spinning around and lifting Harley off her feet. She laughed and brought her legs up as he twisted around, dropping her back to her feet before he swung her out, always keeping a hold of her hand, then swung her back
into his arms.

Jack then held Harley in a classic ballroom dance pose and proceeded to lead her around the circle of the dance floor in a quick step. Harley laughed just following along with him even though she didn’t really know how to quick step, but with Jack leading her it was easy. They made a circuit of the dance floor then Jack spun around dropping down on one knee, his other leg up so that he could sit Harley on his lap just as the music came to an end.

The crowd erupted into cheers and applause. Harley was grinning from ear to ear panting just a little. Jack was the same as he stood up and pulled her into the circle of his arms, dipping her for a quick kiss which earned them another round of applause before Jack led her off the dance floor and headed to the bar.

“Now that was a fun!” Jack laughed lifting Harley by her waist and easily planting her on one of the stools.

“You are such a wonderful dancer Jack,” Harley said softly.

Jack laughed. “I’m only as good as my partner and you, Miss Quinn, are a fantastic partner.”

The bartender strolled over. “What can I get the two of you?”

Jack glanced at Harley. “What would you like sweetness?”

Harley tapped her chin. “How about a French 75?”

Jack grinned. “Good choice my love. And I’ll have a Green Dragon.”

The bartender nodded. “Coming right up.”

Jack took Harley’s hand and started to speak, but that was the moment that Harley’s attention was caught by a figure moving around the far side of the dance floor. She saw Guy moving through the crowd. He caught her eye and winked at her and her blood turned cold. She closed her eyes purposely turning away from Guy. She knew what he was doing; he was showing her he could find her, find them both. She glanced up, watching as Guy moved out the door with a wave at her.

“Harley?” Jack touched her shoulder.

Harley jerked her attention back to Jack. He frowned reaching out to stroke her face. “You all right?”

She swallowed just as the bartender arrived with their drinks and she quickly grabbed hers to take a sip. “Yes, just...I want the fight tonight to be over with.”

Jack smiled at her. “I know sweetums. It will be. Then I plan on taking you home and making love the rest of the night,” He assured her with a wink at her. “Sound like a plan?”

Harley giggled pressing her lips together on the spike of emotion. “Yes, yes it does.”

Jack stroked her chin tenderly. “How about one more dance?”

The music had slowed down and the singer had begun to sing a song called “If I died in Your Arms” her voice a warm seductive purr. Harley downed her drink in one large swallow which made Jack blink in surprise. He quickly downed his one drink taking Harley’s hand and leading her back to the dance floor.

“Oh you know that I’ll give you my heart

into his arms.
Even if it's torn apart
Coz I've come too far to be scared
And I don't regret what we shared
But you know that I'll love you for good
And I'll love you much more than I should
And I can't help but cry when you're so far away
But I'll smile coz I hope that you'll be back one day …”

* 

Jack held her close, his arms completely around her as if they were simply embracing. Harley had her arms around his neck, her body moving with his in a slow and sensual sway. Harley laid her head against Jack's shoulder and closed her eyes. Jack tightened his grip around her, pressing his lips to her ear. Harley sighed softly. She could hear Harleen's voice whispering to her. “Tell him Harley...tell him soon. This is going to end badly if you wait...tell him.”

Harley screwed her eyes tightly closed, hissing mentally. “Go away Harleen...just...just go away.”

Jack kissed her ear again and Harley lifted her head to look at him. He smiled brushing his nose against hers while the singer crooned.

“Now there's one thing I need you to know
Coz you think that you just know me so
That I'll be there if you ask me to
If you only knew
That I love you so much that it hurts
My broken heart feels so much worse
You do what you want coz I gave you my best
And you know something
If you ask me, I would say yes ...”

Jack kissed her, slowly and tenderly. Harley tightened her hold around his neck, returning his kiss with every ounce of love and passion she felt for him.

* 

As last time, the drive to Cobblepot Manor was pleasant since it was located on the outskirts of Gotham. As Frost drove up, Harley leaned out the passenger window to stare at the building, really looking at it for this visit. Where the Wayne manor had a definite 'Gothic' feel to it, the Cobblepot home still reminded her of a haunted house, an old fashioned sanatorium, a castle, a prison—some place that was a fortress rather than a home. Jack frowned watching as they approached. This time there was scaffolding and other clear signs of work being done on the building that had not been
“There the last time they were here.

“Pengy must be making good money with the fight club,” Jack muttered in surprise.

“Yeah he must. Or maybe he is becoming involved in other illegal actives?” Harley frowned turning to share a glance with Jack who shrugged. “Maybe.”

There were already several cars parked all around the front of the manor. Frost frowned turning to look at the two of them in the back seat. “You sure you don't want me to come along Boss?”

Jack shook his head. “Nah, stay with the car. This won't take long I think.”

Frost glanced at Harley. It was clear to her that he wasn't happy about this, that he felt it too, that something was going to go wrong, but he turned back to the wheel. “Whatever you say Boss.”

Jack slipped out of his leather jacket, leaving it in the back seat before he came around to get Harley. He opened her door and took her hand, kissing her knuckles. “I promise sweets; this is going to be short and sweet.”

* 

Blockbuster, as usual, was standing outside the fight club and waiting by the door. He lifted his chin at Jack and Harley. “Good luck tonight,” he said surprising them both.

Jack smiled. “Thank you.”

Blockbuster nodded, but was disinclined to say anything else.

Inside, the manor was in the same state of evolution, with some walls plastered and painted, others in the middle of being repaired with tools scattered around like so much debris, the forgotten tools of human workers now looking forlorn and haunted in the dreary manor. There was electricity, but the lighting was dim. As Jack and Harley walked from the main room following the sounds of music (Iggy Pop's “FunTime” was currently playing), they came to what must have once been a ballroom. The marble floor was now mostly lost under the remains of fallen ceiling tiles and decaying furniture and was occupied by the usual suspects from Warren who was set up in a corner taking bets, to Penguin, dressed like someone from a century back, leaning on his cane and with his cronies on either side of him as he sat in a large rotten chair near the back. Jack caught sight of Alex who was here with Alice. The one-armed man waved and started to make his way toward them.

Jack saw Cobblepot staring at him, a gloating expression on his pinched face. Clearly Cobblepot thought he had the upper hand being on his own ‘turf’ so to speak. Jack knew Oswald would be armed, he was sure of it. Jack hadn't brought anything with him this time; he didn't think he would need it against Oswald. Oswald was going to be relying too heavily on the element of surprise and that he would be better armed than Jack...but Oswald's biggest fault, which would be Jack's best weapon, was Cobblepot's own ego.

“Well well, looks like the entertainment for the evening showed up everyone. The clown is here!” Penguin stood up, the crowd parted creating a line between Penguin and Jack. For a moment Jack was reminded of the old westerns when a shoot out was about to take place between the bad guy and the good guy...Jack chuckled with amusement wondering where he would stand in that equation.

Jack smiled. “You know Ossie, if you're going to be a smartass, first you have to be smart.
Otherwise you're just an ass.”

The crowd of people around them started to laugh; it was low, like a rumble barely heard, but it was definitely there, the laughter moving through the crowd.

Penguin narrowed his eyes. “You ready to fight or just stand there wearing makeup and batting your eyes?”

Jack smiled and batted his eyes (which earned Jack more laughter) at Oswald. Jack winked before he made a kissy face and blew Cobblepot a kiss. Harley covered her mouth with a snort of laughter. Grinning Jack turned to Harley standing beside him and pulled her against him. “Don't worry sweets, everything will be fine.” He gazed down at her, running the back of his fingers along her cheek.

Then he kissed her. Harley wrapped her arms around him, hopping up to wrap her legs around him too, causing the skirt of her dress to flounce. She kissed him deeply, her tongue a tender caress against his own. The crowd around them yelled and whistled while they kissed before Jack set her on her feet turning her around and giving her a little shove toward Alex, smacking her playfully on her rear as he did so. Harley turned a mock glare at him, but his smile and confidence were contagious so she smiled back and blew her lover a kiss.

Jack turned back to Oswald, pulling his t-shirt over his hand and tossing it to Harley with a wink. Harley caught the shirt and held it to her chest watching him. The few women in the crowd tonight crowsed when Jack removed his shirt.

Oswald sneered at Jack while he removed his jacket and vest before removing his tie and rolled up the sleeves of his dress shirt. Oswald walked over to stand in front of Jack.

“So, ready to be humiliated Jack Wayne, the clown of the Wayne family, the nut job, the unwanted son, the cry baby...” Oswald's voice was sing-song and needling as he held his fists up, holding himself in a fighting stance.

Jack grinned. “I feel sorry for your parents Ossie, out of 100,000 sperm, you were the fastest?”

(Penguin's small eyes darted around the crowd with a look of hatred. It was clear Jack was winning the crowd to his side again even though this was Cobblepot's fight club! They were all here by his leisure! The shorter man seethed with hate for Jack Wayne...the man who represented everything he wasn't; Jack Wayne with his model good-looks, money and a gorgeous woman on his arm...Jack was charismatic to boot! Oswald hated Jack just as much as he hated Bruce Wayne and Bruce Wayne was untouchable. But Jack Wayne, he was the Wayne that Cobblepot could get to; he could humiliate Jack Wayne.)

The two men circled each other slowly. Jack seemed laid back, an easy smile and no tension in his body. Penguin on the other hand was holding himself tightly, looking like a vicious little bird ready to peck Jack's eyes out at the slightly twitch.

Penguin snarled and took a jab at Jack. Jack twisted aside easily avoiding the hit. When Penguin's knuckled fist passed by his face, Jack noticed the light catching something in Oswald's hand. Jack frowned, he would have to let Cobblepot get closer to see what it was the shorter man was holding.

Jack danced back from Cobblepot, but not too far, putting enough space between them that Oswald wouldn't realize Jack was setting himself up for a hit, giving Oswald the opening to take a swing at him. Jack shook his arms out, bouncing back and forth on the balls of his feet, keeping his body loose. His smile (which he knew grated on Oswald's nerves) was in place. Jack took a few quick swipes at Ossie, not designed to make contact with him, but designed to force the other man to move.
Oswald threw a few punches which Jack easily avoided, but the smaller man surprised Jack when he ducked in under Jack's guard, hitting him in the stomach hard enough to double the taller man over.

Jack gasped with pain, the breath knocked out of him, but he grinned. Jack winced straightening up. (Thankfully he thought, it was a good thing he and Harley ate a light dinner or else he might have vomited and that would have looked bad.) Judging by the impact and feel of Oswald's fist, Jack had learned something; he now knew Oswald was wearing a pair of clear plastic knuckles.

Jack avoided another swing just as Oswald tried to follow his successful hit with another to Jack's jaw, but the tall, slender man leaned backwards, avoiding Cobblepot's plastic knuckled fist, the plastic of the weapon only just barely scraping across Jack's jaw.

Cobblepot grinned. “Come on Jackie, make me laugh! Take a swing, I dare you—or are you too chicken?”

Jack sneered at Penguin just before he swung his fist.

*

Harley was standing next to Alex and Alice. Alice, who had her arm around Alex’s waist, leaned closer to Harley to be heard over the crowd. “You doing okay?”

“Yes, just worried about my puddin.” Harley frowned, holding his shirt up against her mouth, catching her bottom lip between her teeth; just knew Cobblepot was going to try something soon. She watched Jack, her eyes never leaving him as her tension mounted.

*

Jack’s fist connected with the large beak of a nose on Oswald's face. The man squawked before he jumped back, his hands suddenly over his nose trying to protect it, a little too late. He glared hatefully at Jack.

“You know Jack, I bet your brother wishes every day that it was you who had died in that alley instead of your parents...can you imagine what it must be like for Bruce Wayne to know he has you as a brother?” Penguin laughed which sounded stuffy now that Jack had broken his nose. Jack smiled in satisfaction at the blood flowing over Oswald's lips. Jack focused on Oswald. His smile became flat, lacking anything remotely resembling humor.

“You know Pengy? You're insults mean nothing. You need some new material.” Jack smiled broader, staying just out of the Oswalds reach. “Besides, if I wanted to hear from an asshole, I'd fart.”

That earned Jack hoots of laughter from the crowd about them. Penguin narrowed his malice filled eyes. Jack grinned. “You know Oswald, you've got less meat in your pants than there is in a vegetarian restaurant.”

This remark set the crowd howling with laughter even louder. Cobblepot snarled then hissed like an angry goose as he charged at Jack. Cobblepot was surprisingly fast despite his slight limp, charging into Jack and catching him around the waist. The two men struggled in their close quarters, hitting each other in the back of the neck or side as they struggled in a violent embrace. Jack managed a few good hits while Oswald concentrated on Jack's side, trying to break a rib. The impacts hurt, the plastic knuckles adding to the force of Oswald's strikes, but his hits were just not strong enough to break one of Jack's ribs; if anything Cobblepot was only bruising Jack's ribs. Jack shoved him away, hissing.
“I’m done playing with you Oswald. Everyone here knows you are nothing. You are just a wannabe with an inferiority complex and probably a small dick.”

Oswald snarled ready to spit some sort of venom at Jack when Jack simply swung too fast for Penguin to dodge, hitting him in the solar plexus hard enough that Penguin gasped, falling back against the wall (the crowd parting like water when the shorter man started to stumble into them.) Jack stalked forward with his grim smile on his lips. Cobblepot pushed himself away from the wall, but Jack ducked and rushed forward pivoting his upper body to bring his right fist around to slam Oswald in the liver. Oswald squawked, gasping out for breath. Jack just stood and watched the shorter man drop to his knees before he turned and started to walk away.

“This fight is over,” Jack said.

“Not so fast Jackie,” Cobblepot growled struggling for breath. The crowd had gone silent. Harley screamed. “NO!!”

Both Alex and Alice grabbed her, stopping Harley from running out to Jack.

Jack turned around slowly to see Oswald holding a gun on him.

Cobblepot coughed, getting to his feet. “You aren't walking away Jackie.”


Penguin looked unsure himself what he was going to do. Jack shook his head. “Tsk tsk. You know I was going to walk away. Decided I wasn't going to beat you like you so richly deserve Ossie, but a gun? Really?” Jack looked around at everyone here. “Even when I saw you were using plastic knuckles...I was just going to drop you and walk away, but now...” Jack shook his head as if he felt real regret. “Now I'm just going to have to beat the living shit out of you.”

Penguin looked around for support, but no one said a word; not even his two lady bodyguards who gazed at him with looks of disappointment.

Oswald snarled at them. “Get over here and protect me!”

The tall dark-skinned woman of the two spoke up. “Cobblepot, we are here to protect you against threats to your life, not when you start a fight.” She smiled. “We promise to step in if Mr. Wayne goes too far.”

Jack grinned at them. “Don’t worry, I have no indention of killing him.” Jack turned back to Oswald. “Humiliating you? Well, that's another thing entirely.”

Jack moved so quickly, grabbing Cobblepot by the wrist and yanking the gun out of his sweaty hand that Oswald was pulling the trigger on a weapon that was now sliding across the floor and disappearing into the crowd. Jack smiled at him and in the next instant he threw a punch straight for Oswald's face, snapping his head to the side, knocking him back a step or two. Then Jack twisted his body and with a little leap, he kicked Oswald in the chest which sent the man flying backwards, the crowd once again parting and letting Cobblepot fall to the marble floor.

Jack stalked over and straddled Cobblepot smiling down at him. “You know, you are really annoying. But lucky for you that's all you are Oswald.”

Jack punched Cobblepot in his right eye, eliciting a howl of pain from Oswald. Jack gave him a few more hard, solid hits, the wet meaty sounds of Jack's fist hitting Oswald mixed with the music playing in the background before Jack hopped up, leaving Oswald Cobblepot gasping, wheezing.
and lying bloody on the floor.

Jack walked over to Harley who was smiling at him as she held her arms wide.

Jack walked into her embrace, wrapping his arms around her waist and lifting her off her feet.

“Come on sweets, let's go home.”

Oswald rolled to his side spitting blood, gasping. “I'll get you Jack Wayne!! I'll get you...”
Harley woke up to the feel of Jack nibbling on her ear. She giggled and squirmed away from him rolling onto her side, her back facing him. “What are you doing, Jack? Go back to sleep,” Harley mumbled. She kept her eyes closed, but she couldn't keep the smile off her lips.

Jack scooted up closer, his hand snaking down her side, his fingers starting to wiggle over her stomach, then along that highly sensitive place between her hips and groin.

“Wake up, sleepy head,” Jack whispered against her ear.

“Why?” Harley snuggled more securely into her blankets.

Jack huffed. “Because, today is our engagement party and I can hear that the mansion is already crawling with workers. So we need to get out for a few hours and I have a plan.” Jack nibbled on her shoulder, tickling her softly.

Harley grinned, still refusing to move. “A plan?”

“Yes, we are going to go out on the lake.” Jack nibbled down her arm. Harley rolled over onto her back finally so she could see him. Jack was grinning, his brown hair a tousled mess.

“What lake?” Harley asked with genuine confusion and curiosity.

“The lake here on the Wayne estate. There is a boat house, and there should be a row boat out there. I thought it might be fun, get us out of the house while the chaos of the party being set up was going on...bring a lunch with us...” Jack rolled on top of her, his hair falling forward to frame his face. He rubbed his nose against hers. “Come on Harley. Go row boating with me!”

Harley giggled. “I guess I could go boating with you...”

Jack dropped all his weight on her causing her to squeal. He immediately started numming at her neck and shoulders until she was screaming with laughter.

“JACK!! That tickles!!”

Jack giggled with a slight nod. “I know!!”

Harley laughed and bucked her body until Jack finally let her toss him off the bed. He fell off the side disappearing. Harley frowned when he didn't come up right away. She edged to the bed.

“Jack?”

That was the moment he chose to pop up to his feet completely naked. “BOO!”

“Jack Wayne!” Harley grabbed a pillow and tossed it at him which Jack easily avoided by stepping to the side. Jack laughed. “Last one to get ready is a rotten egg!”

Harley rolled out of the bed going after him. “You're a dirty cheat Jack!!”

Jack laughed. “Of course I am!!”

* *

An hour later the two of them were weaving their way through the chaos of party preparation people
on their way to pick up a picnic basket from Alfred. Harley was dressed nice and casual today in a pair of black leggings, hiking boots and a dark red, light weight, sweater top that hung past her hips with a denim jacket to ward off the morning chill. She wore her hair loose and wavy around her shoulders. Jack wore black skinny jeans, a dark blue pull over henley with a black leather jacket and black boots. When they arrived in the kitchen, Alfred was arguing with Jeanie from the bakery.

“They did so order a thousand cupcakes,” Jeanie was stating, her fists on her hips.

“I clearly recall that Master Bruce was only going to be ordering two hundred. We do not need a thousand.” Alfred was calm, but he was tapping his fingers on his arm where they were folded across his chest.

Jack started to laugh, putting his hand over her his mouth like a bad little boy. Harley grimaced, but she started to giggle too. When Jeanie saw them she pointed. “He ordered them, didn't you Mr. Wayne?”

Jack gave Alfred his best apologetic look. “Sorry Alfred.”

Alfred didn't groan or sigh, the only indication of annoyance was a slight twitch of his lips. “Of course Master Jack. Let us see what we can do Miss Elmore.”

“Just call me Jeanie, please.” Jeanie smiled.

Alfred pointed to a rather large wicker basket on the counter. “Your picnic Master Jack.”

Harley dashed over and kissed Alfred on his cheeks. “Sorry about the cupcakes Alfred.”

Alfred smiled. “Just tell me that is the only surprise.”

Harley glanced back at Jack who was snickering again and Alfred barely refrained from rolling his eyes. “Ah, well. I shall, as they say, roll with the punches.”

Harley kissed him again. “Thanks Alfred. Oh, heads up...a hundred pizzas are coming.”

Alfred sighed. “This is almost as bad as Master Jack's eighteenth birthday.”

Harley giggled. “Promise to tell me about it!” She waved, following Jack out the door. Alfred smiled. “I shall my dear. Let us just say it involved spiking the punch.”

*

The trek to the lake took far longer than Harley anticipated, but when they arrived she could see the lake was well worth the hike. The lake was beautiful and much larger than Harley thought it would be; she was beginning to think that the Wayne property was far more encompassingr than she thought; she had never thought to ask Jack the extent of the property. She hadn't even seen the lake, hidden as it was by trees that surrounded the whole area, the leaves recently having started to turn beautiful shades of red, orange and yellow.

There was a small dock that led out into the water of the lake with a small rowboat big enough for two tied to it and a boathouse. The boathouse was not at all what Harley thought of when she heard the term 'boathouse.' This was more like an actual house with sort of a boat/house/garage at the bottom. The house itself was all polished wood, with large windows facing the lake and a roofed terrace at the top.

As they walked toward the house and dock, Jack pointed with his free hand (the other carrying the
basket.) “That lake house has two bedrooms and there is a large motorboat in the boathouse, but I thought the rowboat would be more romantic.”

Harley blinked in astonishment. “Sometimes I forget exactly how much money you and your brother have.”

Jack chuckled. “Me too. We have another manor house as well...the small house it's called. That house was the first Wayne Manor built by the Wayne family...geez...early 1840's maybe....”

Harley frowned as they walked out onto the dock. “Really? Another whole house?”

Jack shrugged leaning over and carefully dropping the basket into the middle of the rowboat. The boat was a lovely white rowboat that was big enough to seat two comfortably. “Yup, it's over on the island where that national wildlife refuge is...shoot, I forget the name. Our Dad donated half the land there for the refuge, but we still own the property where the house is located.”

“You ever been over there?” Harley asked as Jack carefully handed her into the boat. Harley was careful as she took her seat, the boat rocking gently under her weight.

“Not for a long time. Bruce and I went over there once when we were teenagers. The place was still in pretty good shape. It's like a damn castle.” Jack gracefully stepped onto the boat and settled down across from Harley.

“I would love to see it sometime.” Harley smiled at Jack as he picked up the oars. He grinned at her. “How about we head over there around Halloween? Nice and spooky.” Jack widened his eyes with a wicked little grin.

Harley giggled. “That sounds perfect.”

*

Jack rowed them out to the middle of the lake. The sky was a calm steel grey with a layer of ghost white clouds that slowly drifted overhead making the sunlight a watery grey. There was a gentle breeze, made cooler by the water, just enough that Harley brought her hands up to blow warm air into her hands and back against her nose. The water was clear and clean, casting back a perfect reflection of the trees along the water's edge. Harley smiled leaning back, her fingers dragging lazily across the water. Jack set the oars back in the boat and carefully moved over to sit by Harley. He leaned over and pulled out a pillow along with a blanket from the picnic basket.

Harley laughed. “Alfred's idea?”

Jack grinned. “Nope, mine! I thought it would be nice not only to eat lunch out here, but to just lay out here in the peace and quiet, holding my girl.”

Harley smiled softly, her eyes burning with a sudden overwhelming feeling of emotion. “I love you so much Jack.”

Jack was in the middle of pulling out their lunch when he stopped to look at her. “You okay Harls?”

She nodded. “It's just that...”

(Harleen's voice spoke up. “Tell him now Harley, now. This is a perfect time.”)

“I just don't want any of this to end,” Harley said instead, ignoring Harleen. Jack reached over and cupped her neck, tugging her close and laying his forehead against hers. “It never will Harley. I
swear. You are I are a team. Together forever, come hell or high water. Got it toots?” He smiled, his blue eyes seemed to pierce her own as she nodded and replied, “Forever Jack.”

Jack gave her a quick kiss. “Okay—now, lunch. Let's see what we have...ah perfect, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches!” Jack laughed. “Oh and ruffled potato chips and some jam-filled thumbprint cookies!”

Harley laughed. “Not what I was expecting.”

Jack grinned handing her a sandwich in a plastic sandwich bag. “I told him to make us something simple since I know there will be all sorts of food tonight—including pizza—and the house is crazy right now. Didn't want Alfred to try and make anything complicated for our picnic. BUT, I did have Alfred pack this...”

Jack pulled out a bottle of wine. He grinned. “We have here a Riesling Trocken "Stock & Stein", Jakob-Kühn 2011 with white flowers and stone fruit that mimic apricots in the jam of our sandwiches.” Jack held his other hand under the bottle of wine as if he were showing it for a potential customer. Harley laughed.

“Perfect Jack!”

*  

Jack and Harley had eaten lunch, drank more than half the bottle of wine and were now lazily floating on the lake, letting the boat drift where it may, lying side by side in the bottom of the boat watching the dark clouds play across the sky. Jack held her hand and kissed her knuckles as they gazed up at the sky. He took her fingers, kissing the tips of each finger before going back to kissing her knuckles.

Harley had her head on his shoulder occasionally turning her head to kiss the place along his jaw or lean up to kiss his ear. “What do you want do to after we get married?” she asked.

“Mm...we could travel...kill annoying people all over the world,” Jack said with a laugh as he brushed her knuckles over his lips.

Harley giggled. “I always wanted to go to Paris.”

Jack shifted over to his side holding her hand against his mouth. “I'm sure there are a lot of annoying people in Paris too.” They both chuckled, but Jack continued. “If you want to go to Paris, then that is where I will take you. Just name it Harley, my sweet Harley Quinn...my harlequin...” Jack traced her face with his fingertips. “I will take you anywhere in the world Harley, anywhere at all. I will do anything to make you happy, my sweets.”

“Honestly Jack, I don't care where we go or what we do, as along as we're together. If you're with me then I will always be happy.” Harley leaned forward and kissed him softly.

Jack wrapped his arm around her waist tugging her closer. “I love you, my harlequin.”

Harley purred back and pressed her body up against his. Her mouth roamed hungrily over his, her hand coming up to thread through his hair. Jack moaned softly as he held her close. They nipped each others lips, tongues, and he slid his hand up her back. Harley stroked his neck, catching his tongue with her teeth, making Jack chuckle. She wrapped a leg around his hip which Jack grabbed and yanked further up, wrapping his arm around her thigh, kissing her a little more passionately. His hands drifted up from her leg, slid under her shirt, where he felt the warmth of her skin under his fingers. He had just reached up for her bra with his long fingers, undoing the latches at the back
easily, then slid his hand along the smooth skin of her back, when the first chilly drops of water hit
them.

Harley jumped and looked up. “Oh that was cold! Jack I think...”

That was the moment the clouds decided to open and and let the rain fall in great sheets of cold wet
water. They both squealed. Jack sat up with Harley quickly. He grabbed the blanket (which they had
had over their legs) and wrapped it around her head and shoulders before he grabbed the oars.

“Hold on Harls! Going to see how fast I can make this baby go!”

Harley laughed. “Jack! You're rowing, not driving a car!”

Jack grinned brightly. “I know!”

Jack rowed the boat with impressive strength as the rain started to come down harder on them.

*  

They arrived at the dock soon after, but the rain had already soaked both of them to the bone. Jack
jumped out of the boat and onto the dock with ease, reaching back to grab Harley’s hand, easily
lifting her up out of the boat before he leaned down to grab their basket. Laughing together in the
cold torrent, they ran up to the lake house. Jack pushed the door open and both of them stumbled
inside.

Harley laughed kicking off her boots and shivered. “Oh gosh, that is cold!”

Jack grinned. “There's a gas fireplace in the living room. I could get it started and there should be
some blankets in the closet. I think Alfred comes out here once a week to freshen everything up, so
they should be clean.”

Harley yanked her denim jacket off and then her top. “A fire sounds great.”

Jack grinned while pulling his boots off. “Then a fire you shall have.”

Jack stripped off his jacket, then pulled his shirt over his head. Harley grinned doing the same, but
her eyes were on Jack, watching him as he pealed his wet jeans off, taking his boxers with them until
he was standing naked in front of her running his fingers through his wet hair slicking it back. He
caught her watching him and grinned, his smile spreading across his face, showing off his perfect
white teeth. Harley giggled as she felt her cheeks heat with a blush, feeling that warmth that only
Jack could create in her spread through her body. She quickly stripped off her damp clothing,
dropping them to the floor with that slopping sound of wet cloth hitting the hard floor. Jack wrinkled
his nose playfully, his tongue gliding along his upper teeth as his blue eyes ran down her chilled
naked body. “The air is a bit, ah, nipply,” he said with a wink. Harley wrinkled her nose and rolled
her eyes as she pulled her long hair to the side and wrung it out, water dripping onto the floor next to
their clothing. He chuckled and took her hand, kissing her knuckles before he led her into the lake
house's living room.

Their wet feet made slopping sounds against the wood flooring as Jack led her through a small hall
and into the house's main room. The living room, like the rest of the house, was paneled in light
wood that had a deep yellow glow to it. The living room contained a nice set of white furniture. On
the wall were water color paintings of the Wayne Manor, the lake and the woods around them as
well as a couple of paintings of two young boys who could only be Bruce and Jack. The room also
had several tapestry throw pillows and a large fireplace against the far left wall. The fireplace was
stone layer, with a wood mantle that had a few small family photos on it and there was a large, white,
fuzzy fake bear skin rug in front of the fire. Naked, Jack hurried over to a closet door just inside the living room, a thin door that opened up onto multiple shelves on which there were several thick folded brown and white blankets. He pulled one out, snapped it open and wrapped it around Harley’s shoulders before grabbing another to wrap it around himself.

He then pulled out the rest of the blankets and carried them over to the fireplace. Harley reached in and pulled out a couple of pillows that were setting on the bottom shelves and carried them over with her. Harley grinned. “These are down pillows aren't they?”

Jack, who was spreading the blankets out in front of the fireplace, answered, “Yep. Of course, only the best for the Waynes!”

Harley laughed at her fiance’s words as she carried the pillows over and set them down on the blankets while Jack walked over to turn on the fireplace. It only took a few minutes for the fire to begin to warm the room. Jack walked over to a stereo system that sat against the wall, picked out a CD and placed it in the CD tray, then turned the music on. The sounds of Ivy Levan's “Killing You” filled the living room. Harley couldn’t see where the speakers were, but the music seemed to emanate from everywhere.

With his blanket around his shoulders, Jack hurried back toward the front where he had left their basket and came back with the remains of their wine. The sound of the rain could be heard drumming against the roof creating a comforting sound that mixed with the warmth of the fireplace and the sounds of Ivy Levan's voice in a duet with Sting's. Jack came dancing over to her with the wine, singing along with the song and grinning wide as he used the bottle as a microphone.

“I want our home to burn it down
I want nobody when somebody's around
I won't scream, howl the moon
But the reason that I'm howling is you!
Oh, oh well, I hope it's warm in hell!
Oh, oh well I hope it's warm in hell!
'Cause no one's ever gonna need somebody more than I need you
And no one's ever gonna hurt somebody more than I hurt you
You know it's true, the things that I do and I'm killing you
The things I do and I'm killing you
You see, love is war, love is blind
We could've met it if we just took the time...”

* 

Harley giggled watching him dance in a blanket, naked, and singing into a bottle of wine before he finally stepped over and sat down pulling Harley down with him in front of the fire. He grinned wide repeating the lines from the song. “And no one's ever gonna need somebody the more than I need you...and on one's ever gonnie hurt somebody more than I hurt you...the things I do and I'm killing
you...”

Jack stopped singing, grinned at her and stuck the cork in his mouth. He pulled the cork out of the bottle with his teeth before he handed the wine bottle to Harley. “Now, to warm up some.”

She smiled as took the bottle and tilted it back to take a couple of swallows before handing it back to Jack. He smiled at his fiancee and took a swig before setting the bottle aside and wrapping his arm around her shoulders. Harley leaned her head against his shoulder, the two of the snuggling down on the rug in front of the fire. “This is nice,” Harley said softly snuggling against him.

Jack smiled with contentment, holding her close. “It is.”

(The music changed to something softer; Jack lowered the sounds as Selena Gomez sang out “There are a million reasons I should give you up, the heart wants what it wants...”)

Jack smiled rubbing his hand up and down her arm. “Yeah, almost a shame to go back for the party. We could just stay here all day.”

Harley giggled. “Except there will be a thousand cupcakes, a hundred pizzas and a magician.”

Jack chuckled. “True—would be a shame to waste all that by not showing up. But until then...”

Jack was about to shove Harley backwards, but she was ready for him and instead shoved him down against the pillows, tossing off her blanket and crawling on top of him, her hands pressed against his chest. “Were you going to do something like this Jack Wayne?”

Jack laughed gazing up at her with an amused expression. “You read my mind.”

Harley ran the flat of her hands up his chest. “Mm...could be because the same thing was on my mind after watching you undress.”

Jack grinned as he caressed her thighs. “Well yes, the thought occurred to me seeing this gorgeous blonde, naked and damp standing in front of me...a man is only so strong.”

Harley giggled at him and leaned down to kiss him. Jack wrapped his arms around her, holding her tight against him. Her skin was warm, silky soft against his; he could feel the warmth of her seeping into him.

Harley licked his mouth, then slowly ran her tongue down his chin, and then along his throat. His skin tasted slightly salty mixed with something unidentifiable, but pleasantly and uniquely Jack. She grabbed his throat between her teeth, tugging gently for a moment before Harley started to drag her tongue down his chest, sliding her body along his stomach, biting and sucking as she went.

Jack closed his eyes, his hands moving to her damp hair giving himself over to her. Each teasing bite or lick from Harley made him groan softly. He loved the feel of her fingers pressing into his flesh, the way her breasts brushed against him, he could feel her nipples hard, stroking against his skin as she edged lower.

Jack groaned. “My sweet Harley...”

She lowered herself down between his legs, pressing her hands against the soft flesh at the space between his groin and thigh. Jack jerked when she stroked her fingers against his skin in that sensitive area, teasing him. Her fingers danced passed his scrotum, her breath hot against his shaft, but she didn't touch him fully, not yet. He only felt her hot breath for a few moments.
Jack groaned when she slowly ran her tongue over his quickly hardening erection, wrapping her fingers around him, leaning against his thigh and using her other hand to cup him, squeezing gently, at the moment she wrapped her lips around him. Jack squeezed his eyes closed feeling her lower her mouth on him, her lips moving down gradually, her tongue weaving against the under side of his shaft slowly, covering him in her saliva. Her hand holding him jerked up, then gradually slid up and down as she drew her lips up to the head of his erection. She sucked gently, then harder, then gently again, adjusting the rhythm of her hand between stroking up and down while squeezing and massaging his scrotum. Harley rolled her tongue over the head of his erection in a slow lazy twirl that made him hiss. “Harley...my Harley...”

Harley smiled, flicking her tongue over the top of his shaft, her tongue playing along it before she wrapped her mouth around him again. She sucked hard, pressing her lips down on him, then pulled up, her tongue coating him with saliva as she did so. Harley smiled against him as she listened to the grunts and gasps from Jack, enjoying the feel of his fingers in her hair tightening.

Harley let go of him only long enough to suck the full length of him into her mouth, relaxing her muscles to take all of him until he was touching the back of her throat before she pressed her lips tightly, dragging them up his length, her tongue moving back and forth along the under side of his penis. Jack's fingers convulsed in her wet hair, his hips jerking up. “Uhh...Harley...”

Harley stopped and crawled back up to straddle him. Jack whimpered slightly at the loss of warmth from her mouth, but opened his eyes to look up at her staring a down at him, her hands on his stomach. Her thighs on either side of him were warm and soft. When she flexed, holding him with her legs, it was exhilarating just feeling her weight on his hips. It made him want her even more. Harley rubbed her hands over his pecs, her nails brushing gently over his nipples before she dragged her nails down his chest, eliciting a hiss from him.

“Watch me Jack,” she whispered, her blue eyes reflecting the light flickering from the fireplace just before she took him in her hand, and holding him steady, she lowered herself down onto him. Jack sucked in a breath with pleasure as her warm wetness surrounded him, burying him inside her, and feeling the way she surrounded him made him groan loudly. He watched her face, contorted with pleasure at the moment his body pierced her own.

Harley’s muscles tightened drawing him into herself, holding him inside her. She closed her eyes briefly letting the warmth and pleasure roll through her body, the tremor of pleasure hot and stimulating, flowed up her spine and spread through her body like warm honey, oozing into every fiber of her being.

Jack reached up to grab her, his hands around her waist, holding her down on him, and watched Harley arch her back and reach behind her to grab his knees. He hissed with pleasure, watching her lean back. He looked down to see himself inside her, sending a renewed ripple of warmth through him. He dragged one hand down her stomach, brushing over the tattoo, to her groin, his thumb brushing over her clitoris and rubbed gently. Harley gasped and groaned and thrust her pelvis, squeezing him inside her which sent molten heat through his body. Jack groaned watching the way her breasts bounced as she moved vigorously, then she slowly rolled her hips sending erotic waves through him, his skin tingling in pleasure.

She brought herself forward again, her hands pressed against his chest, rolling her hips, pressing down hard on him, then undulating her hips in slow waves. He could feel her pleasure building when he grabbed her hips and thrust upward, meeting her rhythm; any moment now, Jack knew she would climax.

Jack reached down to roll his fingers over her clitoris again, stroking slow and steady and grinned
when her breathing quickened, her skin warming as she came closer. When her eyes opened, the
blue was filled with something warm, lustfilled and only for him.

“Oh, oh Jack...uhhhh...puddin...yes yes...”

Jack groaned watching her. “You're so beautiful Harley. Cum for me Harley, cum for me pumpkin.”

Harley cried out, her eyes screwing closed, her fingers digging into his chest almost painfully when
she came. Jack groaned feeling the bursts of extra wetness wash over him, that flood of warmth as
her muscles tightened then went lax again when she came. He grinned happily, watching her. Harley
buried her face against his neck, then playfully bit him before she pushed herself up to gaze down at
him.

She smiled, getting her breath back and catching her bottom lip with her teeth which sent trickles of
pleasure through him. He loved her smile.

“Oh Jack...” she groaned.

Then she surprised him again when she lifted up and off of him, the loss of her wet heat had him
whining slightly. Jack groaned. “Harley!”

She giggled at his response. Jack swallowed watching her, his hands hovering, ready to grab her
again. She turned her back to him, holding his erection steady once more before she pressed him
back inside her. Jack groaned watching the curve of Harley's back, reaching forward to grab her rear,
squeezing hard into the creamy soft flesh, pressing his teeth into his lower lip almost painfully,
watching the way his shaft disappeared, in and out of Harley. It was beautiful watching her move,
feeling her shifting and fucking, her hips thrusting up and down then rolling over him punctuated by
her gasps and groans. He pressed his fingers into her hips enjoying the feel of her soft flesh in his
hands, and the red marks he left in her skin delighted him. Jack dropped his head back with a loud
groan, arching his back to thrust his hips upward, burying himself as deeply as possible into her.

Harley moaned loudly, a deep primeval sound of pleasure. The feel of his fingers pressing into her
flesh, holding her down on him while his thumbs rubbed up her tail bone then back, pulling her
cheeks apart so he could watch his shaft moving in and out of her. Harley lifted and lowered her
hips, having him so deeply embedded in her body, the feel of his hands on her, every sensation made
her groan loudly.

“Oh Jack! Jack you feel so good...Uhh...yes...” She grabbed his knees, her fingers pressing in hard
as she held on and thrust her hips up and down, bouncing just a little, which made Jack gasp. “Oh
God Harley!”

She hissed with pleasure at the way Jack felt inside her, each time he hit that spot that sent a burst of
heat through her.

Jack sat up wrapping his arms around her waist, pulling her back against his chest, one hand around
a breast squeezing, his other hand moving down between her legs, rubbing over her clitoris while she
thrust on him. Jack dragged his tongue up her spine before he bit down into her creamy skin at her
shoulder. Harley jerked, but the pain was a welcome addition to their fucking.

She groaned. “More Jack...more...”

He moved his hands to cover her breasts, the warm silk of her skin, the sweet softness, the weight of
her breasts in his hands felt good. Jack grinned against her shoulder just before he pinched her
nipples, rolling the hardened flesh between his thumb and forefinger harder than necessary, but that
spike of pleasurable pain had her muscles tightening in response.

Jack brought his legs up, bending his knees slightly. Harley immediately grabbed his knees again, arching into him. Jack kissed her shoulder before he pressed his teeth into the flesh of her back again, biting down as he thrust a few times in fast jerks into her warmth. He let go to groan against her shoulder. “Fuck me Harley, fuck me hard.” Harley cooed in response, her fingers digging into his knees as she lifted up, almost completely off of him, the head of his shaft the only part still inside her when she came crashing down on him again. Jack's eyes crossed for a split second while he held onto her.

Harley's whole body tightened, reaching, climbing for that peak. She ground her hips down hard on him; that was the moment the bubble of pleasure broke and washed over her. She cried out, her orgasm breaking like a wave through her body. Jack couldn't hold back when she climaxed this time. It was too much. She sounded too beautiful, breathtakingly sexy and her body around him tightened to the point of yanking his orgasm from him. The soft whimpers she made, the way she called his name, the rush of fluid...

He pressed his forehead against her shoulder, his arms tight around her waist when he came with a long moan.

“Haarlley...uuhh...Harley...”

He kept thrusting as if he just couldn't stop, his fingers flexed, spasmodic with the intensity of his orgasm. He pressed his forehead hard against her shoulder, her soft hair against his cheek, with an almost anguished sound. “I love you Harley...my girl.”

Harley leaned back against him, her eyes closed letting the intensity of her feelings, not just the physical pleasure, but the way he touched her very soul wash over her. She placed her hands over his where he held her, weaving her fingers with his while Jack's last thrusts sent her spiraling up, then crashing down as another wave rolled through her, her orgasm racing up her spine.

“Oh Jack...my Jack...my puddin...”

Jack held her tight, neither one of them moving for the longest time. Jack kissed her shoulder, tracing the line up her throat to her ear.

“My beautiful Harley Quinn,” he whispered against her ear.

Harley giggled resting back against him. “Mmm, always my puddin...”

*

It was early evening, not long after Jack and Harley made their way back to the manor house. They were both wet again having walked through another burst of rain showers, but they immediately made their way upstairs to take a warm shower together (which took far longer than necessary because Jack lifted Harley up and pinned her against the wall, holding one of her legs up while he fucked her hard and fast, pounding her against the wall until everyone in the house putting the party together heard her scream Jack's name.) Harley sat in front of the bathroom mirror setting the 1920's style hair chain in her hair that she had just finished curling and pinning partly back, giving her golden hair a soft look as the rest of her hair lay in waves around her shoulders. Her makeup was done in a softer 1920's style with a basic cupid’s bow red lips and smokey eyes. She was humming to herself, smiling at her reflection as she adjusted the hair ornament in her golden hair.

Her smile widened when she saw Jack walk into view to stand behind her, adjusting the tie of his
old-fashioned tuxedo. She had done his makeup for him, black eyeliner that made his incredible blue eyes stand out even more and red lips that matched her own. His hair was slicked back and he wore a pair of white gloves even though she had painted his nails for him.

“You look so handsome Jack,” Harley offered with a smile.

He grinned at her in the mirror, then did a little spin making Harley laugh softly. He stepped up behind her and ran his gloved fingertips along her throat. “And you look so beautiful that I don't really want to share you tonight.”

Jack leaned over and nibbled on her ear making her squeal and wiggle. “Jack!!”

He laughed pressing a kiss to her ear careful not to smear his lipstick. “So, ready to go down?”

Harley stood and ran her hands down the front of her dress. “Yes.” She swished her hips making the tassels sway.

Jack laughed. “You are going to look gorgeous dancing in this dress.” Jack wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her up against him and held her right hand in his, dancing her around the room. He spun her out, then pulled her back into his arms and waltzed in a circle.

“Ready to go put in our appearance my sweet? The happily engaged couple,” Jack asked, dipping Harley back. Harley giggled softly. “Yes, I guess so, but you're in a great deal of trouble tonight Jack. I am going to peel that suit off of you first chance I get and I am going to show you exactly how good you look.” She ran her tongue over her upper lip to emphasize her point.

Jack giggled. “Ooh Miss Quinn!! You say such scandalous things!”

They both giggled with Jack pulling her up and wrapping his arms around her waist. Harley draped her arms over his shoulders and kissed him softly.

* *

When Jack and Harley made their way to the stairs leading down to the entrance hall, Harley gasped in surprise when she saw how the stairs were decorated. When they had arrived home the stairs hadn't been touched and some workers had just started to put lights up. But now the place was completely transformed. The stairs had been decorated with green leaves and hundreds of white roses, all intertwined through the bannister and down the stairs. Every other stair was decorated with white candles, their flames dancing merrily. The main hall was laced with strings of lights and more white flowers throughout as well as white drapery that led from the hall, guiding guests to the ballroom.

When Jack and Harley arrived at the top of the stairs they were also surprised to see most of the guests in the front hall with Bruce, dressed in a perfectly tailored black suit. Bruce was holding a glass of champagne and smiling as was everyone else. Harley didn't know most of the people in attendance. She saw Zatanna, and she recognized the mayor, the chief of police, a few of the other elite families of Gotham from the two other events she had attended and from the paper or internet. She even saw Alex (in a suit no less!) with Alice in the very back, each person holding a champagne flute in their hands and waving at them. Harley and Jack both gave a little wave back.

Harley felt Jack, his arm around her waist, squeeze her side. Harley's heart swelled when she glanced sideways at him. He wasn't looking at anyone else but Bruce, his big brother. No matter what Jack had said, Harley had realized there was a little bit of the little brother hero worship of his older sibling, no matter how much Jack tried to get under his brother's skin...no matter how maniacal Jack
became...or how violent...there was that part of him that was always the little brother seeking his big brother's approval. Jack wanted Bruce's love and approval, no matter how he acted or protested. And this, this acknowledgment of their engagement in front of everyone...the fact that Bruce was throwing this party, did more for Jack than Bruce could ever know, because no matter what, Jack loved his big brother with all his heart. It did Jack more good to see his brother smiling and happy for him than the fact that all of Gotham's elite was here to see them.

Bruce smiled and held up his glass. “I would like to introduce everyone to my little brother, Jack Wayne and his bride-to-be Harley Quinn.”

That surprised Harley. Bruce used the name Jack had given her. She smiled at him and reclined her head. Bruce returned the gesture. Jack laughed and taking Harley's hands he led her down the stairs to the applause of the group. When they reached the bottom of the stairs Bruce hugged Jack. Jack laid his head on his brother's shoulder with a broad smile. “Thank you Bruce.”

Bruce hugged him back tightly. “I love you Jack. I always have and always will.”

Bruce released his brother and turned to Harley, pulling her into his arms and hugged her. “Thank you Harley, for making Jack happy.” Bruce held her tightly.

Harley returned his embrace. “I love Jack with all my heart. Thank you Bruce for this. You have no idea how much this means to us both.”

Bruce nodded and smiled. “Well...” He released Harley. “Shall we go have a party?”

The crowd cheered.

*  

The ballroom, (which had even more guests waiting inside who broke out into applause when the engaged couple entered) was decorated in elegance. There was white drapery that started at the large crystal chandelier and extended out, mixed with small twinkling lights creating a canopy overhead. There were white clothed tables and chairs all decorated with candles and white roses. There was a small string quartet playing, and of course, a huge big top circus display in a corner where the cupcakes were on display. There was a large buffet table with shrimp, vegetables, crackers, dips, cheeses...there was so much food Harley was sure there would be leftovers for days. That was not even considering the wait staff that was walking around with trays of hors d'oeuvres, and the alcohol! Harley had never seen so many cocktails and other colorful drinks being walked around. Bruce had gone all out and really out did himself.

Once everyone was in the ballroom, Bruce moved over by the large circus tent of cupcakes near the string quartet and took one of the microphones set up there.

“Everyone, I would like to dedicate this song to my brother and his bride-to-be.”

A light appeared on the dance floor in a perfect circle as everyone clapped. Bruce grinned calling out. “Okay you two, let's have a dance!” (For a moment Harley saw a little bit of Jack in Bruce. Something about his smile and the glint of happiness in his eye.) She smiled while Jack took her hand and led her out into the middle of the ball room.

Jack winked at her. “Hey my bride-to-be, would you like to dance with me?”

Harley giggled and took his hand as the string quartet started to play “At Last.” Jack spun Harley into his arms then danced her across the dance floor, his bright eyes never leaving her face. She wrapped her arm around his waist and they slowly moved in a circle ignoring everyone watching
them as they danced. Jack took her hand from around his waist, his fingers sliding along her arm. He stepped away from her, taking her hand once more so that he could slowly spin her around and back into his arms. They took up the position for a waltz, slowly dancing in an elegantly flowing circle.

Jack grinned at her, his eyes only on her. He took her hands, guiding them to his shoulders. He surprised her by tucking his hands under her arms and lifting her into the air, moving in a slow spin, gazing up at her. Harley smiled down at him, everyone in the room fading away until it was only her and Jack dancing together, together forever. (Bruce, along with everyone else, felt almost like intruders watching how intimately the two of them danced together.)

He gently set her back on her feet, sliding her body down his own, their eyes never faltering from one another. Jack pulled her close again, taking her right hand in his, his other hand stroking along her upper back, their foreheads touching as he led Harley into a tango next. The steps were short and quick, back and forth, their bodies pressed together. Jack slid her to the side and Harley brought her leg up, leaning her body against Jack's side. He leaned with her, the two of them creating an artful sway to the side. Jack lifted Harley up again, swinging her gently as if she weighed nothing. After two spins Jack, brought her back to her feet gracefully before they laughed together.

The happy couple spun around the dance floor, making a full circuit, and stopped when they came to the middle of the dance floor where Jack wrapped his arms tight around her waist, tugging Harley up against him. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck and they simply swayed together to the last of the music. Just as the last notes played, Jack dipped Harley just slightly and kissed her.

Everyone started clapping. Jack laughed and spun Harley out, maintaining a hold on her hand, and the two of them bowed to their audience.

Jack walked Harley off from the center of the ballroom floor and the music started again with something light and classical.

Harley was all smiles until she saw someone from the corner of her eyes. She turned and there he was, Guy, standing on the other end of the cupcake display, a glass of champagne in his hand. He raised his champagne glass up to her and winked before he licked his lips in an obscene gesture. Harley's blood ran cold. She stumbled.

Jack frowned turning toward her, laying his hand on her arm in concern. “Harley?”

He turned her into his arms, then cupped the side of her face looking deeply into her eyes. He could see the fear there, that something was hurting her. “Harley, I don't know what has been bothering you the last few days, but sweets—you need to tell me.”

Harley felt Harleen ooze past her defenses and murmured, “It's ...it's Guy, Guy Kopski. He...he's an old boyfriend of mine from college.”

Jack frowned as something cold crept into his eyes. He started to say something when one of the guests came up to congratulate them on their engagement. Jack was doing his best to be polite, yet he pushed past the guest, almost dragging Harley with him as he headed to a corner of the ballroom and grabbed her by her upper arms, pressing her into the corner.


Harley/Harleen looked down at the floor before she continued. “Guy Kopski was this man I dated for a few weeks in college. He—he was awful Jack. He used to hit me.”

Harley reached up touching a phantom hurt on her face. She whispered as if talking to herself. “He
chipped my tooth once...”

She felt the pressure of Jack's hands on her upper arms, not hurtful, just a reflection of his anger. He reached up to cup her face with one hand and tilted her face up to him as she continued. “Nothing intimate happened between us. I didn't want it to...and I refused him, until one night, when I was on the verge of breaking it off with him, he...he tried to rape me.”

While she spoke, Jack's expression became more and more murderous, his eyes, a lively blue, turned almost icy, a flat and dangerous edge creeping into them. Jack's voice became deadly quiet. “What? Tell me again.”

Harley/Harleen (the two now mixed together) started to cry. “He...he tried to rape me. I fought him...I got away from him.” She swallowed hard before she continued. “I managed to have him thrown out of college for it because mine was just one of many complaints against him. He...he started calling me just recently, threatening me, demanding money because he found out I was marrying you. I tried to ignore him, but now I've seen him over the last few days, following us. He swore he would make you hate me, he would tell stories to the Gotham press to turn them against me and to...make you look like a fool. And me...this...gold digging whore...If I didn't start paying him...not just one payment, but he wanted me to keep them coming...forever I guess...”

Harley/Harleen started to sink against the wall.

“Oh Jack...I just hoped he would go away. I...I don't know why I just...I didn't want you to see me as that person who was so weak she let herself be...” she trailed off for a moment and then looked up at her fiance. “Jack....I didn't want you to stop loving me. I thought maybe I could handle this myself...I...I don't know....” Her voice trembled and tears started to leak from the corner of her eyes. Jack grabbed her, pulling her into the embrace of his arms and held her tightly, resting his chin on her head. “You have nothing to be upset about except that you should have told me sooner Harley. I trust you. I trust no one in this world like I trust you Harley. We are a team—always. If someone hurts one of us, they hurt us both.”

Harley broke down in his arms and Jack held her close, stroking his fingers along her back as he continued to speak. “You never have to face anything alone Harley. Never. “

He tilted her face up to his once again and kissed her softly. She moaned, leaning into the kiss, giving her strength. Jack pulled away and rubbed his nose against hers before cupping her face between his hands and using his thumbs to stroke her cheeks and wipe away the tears.

Harley pressed her forehead against his and whispered. “He's here Jack, here at the party.”

Jack stiffened. She could feel every muscle in his body go taunt. Jack's voice was low, steady, and deadly. “Where Harley?”

Harley turned and pointed. Guy was still standing by the cupcakes sipping his champagne and grinning from ear to ear. Jack turned back to Harley cupping her cheek and kissed her hard before he pulled back and hissed. “Stay here. I'm going to take care of this.”

“Jack wha...?” Harley grasped for him, but he was already walking toward Guy. Harley rushed to catch up.

*

When Jack reached Guy, he snarled. “You need to leave.”

Guy looked a little surprise when he turned to see Jack Wayne, but he grinned. “Not until I get my
money. That bitch finally tell you what I want? Give me what I'm owed and you won't see me again...until the next payment is due at least.”

The smile Guy gave Jack was nasty, condescending and so full of his own self-satisfaction that Jack didn't hold back. Jack punched Guy hard enough in the face that the man's nose instantly broke, blood rushing down over his lips. Guy dropped his champagne glass, the glass shattering into a hundred pieces when he grabbed his nose. Everyone turned just as Guy took a swipe at Jack. Guy's first punch missed as Jack leaned out of the way.

Jack grinned and hissed. “You aren't getting anything from me! AND LEAVE HARLEY ALONE YOU FUCKER! NO ONE, AND I MEAN NO ONE MESSES WITH MY GIRL!!”

Jack's arm snapped out hitting Guy in the face a second time. Guy dry heaved at the pain of having his nose hit again. Guy swung again, managing to connect, but Jack brought his arm up protecting his head from Guy's clumsy swing, the strike causing little more than a bruise to Jack's arm.

*

By now everyone was watching the fight as the two men moved out onto the dance floor. Anyone who had been out there dancing swiftly headed off the floor to avoid the fight. Bruce, who was in the back talking with Zatanna turned at the sounds of people gasping and murmurs running through the crowd when he heard his brother shout at one of the guests. Bruce started to move forward, seeing that Alfred had appeared. The two men exchanged a look before they both moved forward toward the sounds of fighting.

*

Jack grunted when Guy slammed into his chest, wrapping his arms around Jack. Guy struck him three times, hard in the side, possibly cracking one of Jack's ribs. Jack brought his elbow down on Guy's back with two hard downward jabs of his elbow until Guy grunted in pain and stumbled back, releasing him. Jack then backhanded Guy across the face as hard as he could, snapping the other man's head to the side. Guy stumbled backwards, the blonde man just barely kept his footing. He managed to right himself and charge at Jack, taking a blind jab that Jack simply slapped down. Jack swung his right fist, slamming his knuckles into Guy's cheek. Guy grunted in pain and swung his fist wildly at Jack, managing to get a strike in, opening a wound across Jack's cheek. Another quick strike and his knuckles brushed hard across Jack's nose, blood instantly oozing down and staining the white color of Jack's tux from the pressure cut in his cheek, at the same time that blood started to leak from Jack's nose running across his red lips. Jack angrily wiped the blood away with the back of his hand smearing it across his white glove. The next swing that Guy took, Jack easily blocked with his elbow. Jack leaned to the left and swung, his fist connecting with Guy's side, cracking a rib.

“One for me and one for you.” Jack laughed, his blue eyes looking dangerous.

Guy took an awkward left fist swing at Jack who swung his right elbow up blocking the hit. Jack swung again at Guy, his left fist connecting with Guy's jaw; this time there was an almost audible crack as the knuckles of Jack's fist fractured Guy's jaw. Jack was grinning viciously as he then hit Guy again in the abdomen, accurately striking and temporarily paralyzing his diaphragm, causing Guy to struggle for breath before Jack then hit him again in the cracked ribs, breaking them.

Jack chuckled low and menacingly, swung his fist, aiming for Guy's face again, but Guy managed to slip a hit under Jack's arm, knocking Jack's head up causing his teeth to snap together. Guy sucked in a breath and got another slug in, hitting Jack in the face again, opening up another pressure wound at Jack's jaw.
Harley cried out. “Jack!!” She started to run to help, but someone grabbed her from behind. She turned, ready to fight when she saw it was Alfred. He frowned. “Miss Harleen, please don't...”

His grip was light, but his expression was one of concern and worry. Harley didn't know what to do so she let Alfred stop her from running to Jack.

Jack snarled out a laugh and charged under Guy's arms, wrapping his arms around Guy's middle and lifted the blonde man off his feet before throwing him into the cupcake display, sending cupcakes flying everywhere. Guy pushed himself to his feet just as Jack had stepped closer and hit Jack in the stomach, then another fist to the side. Jack took the punches, then grabbed Guy, lifting the man off his feet again and slammed him back down onto the floor with the smashed display and squished cupcakes. Jack straddled Guy, blood covering his teeth as he smiled down at the blonde.

“Nobody threatens my girl...no one...and I'm going to kill you for what you tried to do to her. I want you to suffer!!” Jack wrapped one hand around Guy's neck, his right fist poised over Guy's face.

Guy choked on a laugh and spoke even with his broken jaw. “She's a fucking whore!! A frigging fucking cunt!!! She was always a cunt! Teasing me! Acting like she was going to let me fuck her, but when it came right down to it she was a fucking WHORE!! You hear that everyone!!! JACK WAYNE'S BITCH IS A FUCKING CUNT WHORE!! Write that in your fucking papers!! If she let you between her legs, it's only because you got the money to pay for it!!” Spittle and blood flew from Guy's lips as he ranted under Jack.

Jack snarled, his eyes flashing deadly and cold. It was clear to Guy that Jack Wayne was going to take pleasure in killing him. He grabbed Jack's arms without success in moving Jack's hand from his throat; Jack's grip was like iron. Jack then released Guy's throat and snapped his hands out to grasp both of Guy's wrists and pin them with one hand to Guy's chest, while with his other hand, Jack hit Guy in the face, again, and again, and again. The crunching scrape of bone moving against bone was audible as Jack smashed Guy's nose into a bloody, fleshy mound of nothing. Guy's lips split against his teeth, Blood started to splatter over Jack's tux, some splattering up to his face as he continued to hit Guy. The crimson fluid was covering Guy's face, his head lolling, his eyes rolling back to show only the whites, but Jack just kept hitting him.

Jack finally grabbed Guy around the neck, stood up and lifted Guy with him...

Someone was screaming. “CALL 911!! CALL 911!!”

Bruce rushed toward his brother, shoving guests out of his way as Jack lifted Guy up off his feet. Bruce could see his brother's face, covered in blood, his blue eyes wild and something in Bruce's heart sank... Bruce whispered. “No Jack...no...”

This...that look was what Bruce had been fearing all this time...the reason he had hired Dr. Quinzel...that Jack would lose control one day...and that day was now...

Jack grinned at the barely conscious Guy before he slugged him hard enough that Guy was lifted off his feet and sent crashing down again, his head bouncing when he hit the floor with a loud crack against the marble flooring. Guy started to lift his head, but there was clearly something wrong as he
dropped back and stopped moving all together. That was the moment where everything seemed to turn into a slow motion film for Harley. Jack started to go after Guy again when Bruce rushed up behind him and grabbed his brother under his arms and hauled his brother back.

Jack snarled, spittle and blood flying from his lips. “LET ME GO BRUCE!! I'M GOING TO KILL HIM!!”

“JACK STOP IT!! NOW!!” Bruce roared and yanked back, hauling and pulling his struggling brother off his feet and away from the immobile Guy. A siren could be heard in the distance, echoed by another siren. Harley ran to Jack and screamed, “LET HIM GO!!” as she beat on Bruce's arms. Alfred rushed forward to try to grab Harley again, but she was yanking at Bruce trying to get him to free Jack.

Jack started to laugh a high pitched maniacal laughter that sent a chill down Bruce's spine and had many of the guests looking on in shock and fright. Bruce held onto Jack even after he had stopped struggling, but he continued to laugh, the sound now a crazed chuckle. Alfred had wrapped his arms around Harley pulling her back as the police entered the ballroom.

An hour later Jack was in handcuffs and being shoved into the back of a police car. He was still laughing, unnerving everyone. An ambulance was taking Guy to the hospital, but he was unresponsive. Harley had heard one of the medics say something about him being in a coma. One of the officers, a young blonde woman with a stern face named Sarah Essen was standing by a crowd of guests taking statements while her partner, Sgt. Roger DeCarlo had taken Bruce's statement and was now taking hers. Bruce was standing nearby while Alfred had a comforting arm around Harley's shoulders.

She was fighting tears, but they were falling down her cheeks in a steady stream as DeCarlo asked. “So, this Guy Kopski was threatening you, trying to blackmail you?”

Harley nodded. “Yes, he wasn't supposed to be here—he had been stalking me.”

DeCarlo nodded. “And why hadn't you reported this?”

“I hoped he would just stop...just go away.” Harley sniffed then asked. “Can I see Jack? Can I go with him?”

DeCarlo frowned. “I'm sorry Miss Quinn, but no. He is going to have to be taken in.” DeCarlo glanced at Bruce. “I'm assuming you have already called your lawyer?”

Bruce nodded. “Yes, he will meet Jack at the police station, though my brother needs medical attention too and I want a doctor from Arkham there, someone to evaluate my brother's mental fitness.”

“I promise he will get it once he's booked Mr. Wayne and you just made the arrangements with your lawyer...” DeCarlo closed his notebook. “Now if you'll excuse me.”

Harley turned on Bruce. “What is going to happen to him? Why can't I go down there with him?” Her voice was rising with each word. “We can't be apart! We can't be!”

“Harley. Let me handle this.” Bruce's voice was stern, hard, lacking emotion as he turned his back on her and walked away. Harley started to go after him, but Alfred eased Harley back. “Miss Harleen, let me take you to the kitchen and make you some tea all right?”
Harley turned to Alfred, whispering. “Alfred...I...we...we can't be apart...”

Alfred frowned putting his arm around her shoulders. “Come along Miss Harleen. I'm sure everything will work out.”

She looked over her shoulder, her body starting to tremble. She couldn't believe any of this was happening...she needed her puddin...he needed her...they needed to be together!

*

It was two in the morning by the time the doctor that the Wayne lawyer had requested made it to the Gotham police department lock-up.

Jack sat in an interrogation room, which was painted that terrible battleship shade of green, one table, two chairs and a two-way mirror. It was raining hard enough outside that the drum of the rain against the building could be heard inside the interrogation room. Jack was handcuffed to the table, now dressed in a prison orange jumpsuit. The wounds on his face had been attended to, with a couple of stitches and band-aids over the wounds. His knuckles had been cleaned as well, but there was still a rough, bloody feel about him. The man that was sitting across from him, the professional who had been requested by the Wayne lawyer and Bruce Wayne himself, was Dr. Jeremiah Arkham.

Arkham smiled and pushed his glasses up his nose. “Do you know why I'm here Mr. Wayne?”

Jack grinned. “To see if I'm sane.”

“Basically. Your brother and lawyer requested a psych evaluation based on your history of mental illness. My determination will decided whether you are held at Blackgate or given over to me for help at my asylum.” Akham folded his hands on the table in front of him with a neutral expression settled over his features.

Jack chuckled. “Why does wanting to kill a man make me unstable...”

Arkham frowned. “Jack—may I call you Jack?”

Jack grinned. “No.”

Arkham frowned clearly not expecting that answer. “All right Mr. Wayne...I spoke to Dr. Thompson, you remember her?”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “Yes I do.”

Arkham smiled. “Well I spoke to her before coming here to speak with you. She had some interesting things to say and your extended file is quite interesting.” Akham smiled. “Anyway, why did the man you attacked deserve to die?”

“Hmm...let's see...I was in the anger stage and on my way to acceptance, which would have been perfect once he was dead,” Jack growled.

“Hrm...let's see...I was in the anger stage and on my way to acceptance, which would have been perfect once he was dead,” Jack growled.

Arkham nodded. “I see...you know Kuber Ross. All right. Do you feel any guilt over your actions?”

Jack laughed with a slight shake of his head. “No, should I?”

Arkham nodded. “How would you have felt if you had indeed killed this man?”

Jack smiled. “Happy.”
Arkham nodded. “And why happy?”

Jack crossed his eyes. “Have you ever danced with the devil in the pale moonlight?”

“What?” Arkham frowned.

Jack chortled. “I just like the way that sounds, don't you?”

Arkham took his glasses off and cleaned them before he stood up. Jack giggled. “You know what is really funny? That you all think any of this matters...but you know I did find meaning in one thing...finding someone to share it all with...” Jack's smile became wider. “Someone who understands.”

Arkham frowned. “I'll be right back Mr. Wayne.”

(Arkham kept his smile under control. Having a patient like Jack Wayne at Arkham would be wonderful! Not only might his brother consider donating more to the asylum, but Crane had been looking for new patients to work on with his fear thesis and Jack Wayne seemed perfect with his lack of empathy and general lack of fear. This would be a boon for the asylum...and getting Bruce Wayne to fully commit his brother would be easy.)

Outside the room on the other side of the glass stood Commissioner Gordon, Bruce Wayne, and the Wayne family lawyer Coleman Reese.

Bruce Wayne spoke up. “So, Dr. Arkham?”

Arkham nodded. “I think committing your brother would be the best decision. I don't think he fully comprehends what he has done, that his actions have repercussions—and given his past issues, I think a full stay with us will do your brother some good.”

Bruce looked at Gordon who frowned and nodded before his gravelly voice ground out one word. “Fine.”

Reese smiled. “Wonderful. Let us draw up the paperwork, shall we?”

*

Bruce watched through the mirror when Dr. Arkham returned to the room to inform Jack that he was being committed.

Jack turned toward the two-way mirror and screamed, trying to stand up, yanking on his cuffed hands. “NO!! BRUCE!! You can't!! Harley!! No, no!! I need HARLEY!! YOU CAN'T KEEP US APART!!”

Jack went ballistic, yanking on his cuffs and screaming continually for Harley. Dr. Arkham frowned standing up and backing away as two police officers rushed into the room to try to restrain Jack. Dr. Arkham asked for his bag which was brought in a few seconds later. Arkham pulled out a vial and syringe from his medical bag, quickly breaking the seal and filling the syringe while Jack screamed.

“HARLEY!!”

Arkham yelled. “Hold him steady—I'm going to sedate him!”

The guards struggled to hold Jack as Arkham approached him with the syringe. Dr. Arkham injected Jack in the neck and within seconds, Jack's whole body became limp. He broke down into a sob, sinking to the floor, held up more by his cuffed hands than under his own suddenly rubbery muscles and curled into himself as the sedative took effect.
“Harley...I need Harley...”

Bruce closed his eyes. Never had he witnessed anything so hard as watching his brother have a psychotic break. Bruce pinched the bridge of his nose thinking to himself, what was going to happen to Jack now?

*

Harley was waiting in the kitchen with Alfred for Bruce to return. The rain drummed relentlessly against the manor and sent a chill through the house, but the rain wasn't the only reason for the chill. Harley was still dressed in her evening gown, but her make-up was smeared across her face from her crying, her lipstick was smudged, and her eyes looked haunted; the smeared makeup only added to her pained and lost look. Alfred had held her while she sobbed almost uncontrollably until she was hiccuping as she struggled to catch her breath, but now he wondered if he didn't prefer that to her current hollow state.

Alfred had brought her a blanket when she started to shiver. He had wrapped it around her shoulders before putting a cup of hot tea between her hands. But even with the blanket and tea, Harley couldn't seem to stop shivering.

Alfred watched her with concern, but his own heart felt heavy in his chest. He had never seen Master Jack in such a state, the violence in his eyes, and that laughter... Alfred shivered and sipped his tea watching Harley. She was pale, all the color having been drained from her face and the shivering had set in almost as soon as Bruce had left for the station. He was afraid she would become ill if this kept up.

“Is there anything at all I can get you Miss Harleen?” Alfred inquired with concern.

“No, no thank you Alfred. I'm fine,” Harley said in a small voice.

Alfred glanced at the time on the oven. It was almost five in the morning. That was when they both heard the sound of a car pulling up in the drive outside. Harley flung the blanket off and dashed for the front of the house, Alfred close on her heels.

*

Harley ran to the door in desperation, hoping to see Jack, hoping that Bruce had brought him home, but she stopped dead in her tracks when she only saw Bruce standing in the doorway removing his damp coat looking worn and tired. There were shadows under his eyes and his face looked drawn.

“Where is Jack?” Harley demanded, her hands in fists at her sides as her entire body starting to tremble.

Bruce frowned and looked at Harley, then glanced at Alfred who was standing behind her. Bruce glanced down at his wet shoes for a moment without speaking.

Harley snarled. “Where is Jack?!”

Bruce glanced between the two of them again before he spoke. “I had him committed.”

Harley gasped, her breath leaving her in a whoosh of astonishment. She brought her hands to her mouth, her eyes wide in shock. Her voice was barely audible. “What?”

At the same time, Alfred gasped as well. “Master Bruce!”
Bruce frowned, rubbing a hand over his mouth in clear distress. “I had to...it's for the best. There was no choice, it was Arkham or Blackgate until he has a parole hearing. I thought Arkham would be the best for him. It's clear Jack needs help.”

“FOR THE BEST??!” Harley screamed. “PUTTING HIM IN AN INSANE ASYLUM??!”

Harley moved so quickly that Bruce wasn't ready for her, before he knew what was happening, Harley struck him across the face. “HOW COULD YOU DO THAT TO YOUR OWN BROTHER?!”

Bruce took the slap, but Harley wasn't finished. She slapped him again snarling as new, hot tears ran down her cheeks. “You never loved him!! You have been looking for a chance to do this to him haven't you!!??!”

Bruce let her hit him a couple of more times. She lunged at him, her fist smashing into his chest, tearing flowing down her cheeks, and she was screaming incoherently. He could have stopped her easily, but he felt guilty...she was correct, part of him had always wanted to be able to just put his brother someplace where he couldn't hurt anyone, including himself. There was a certain level of relief knowing that Jack was someplace where he was safe...Or maybe it was because Jack was an embarrassment? Maybe he wasn't admitting to himself what he really felt? Bruce had felt a chill when Jack had started laughing...that laugh he remembered from when Jack had really lost control when they were younger...that laugh that always indicated that Jack had done something bad...And this time, the laugh seemed to close a door between them while opening something else, something worse, more frightening than anything Bruce had encountered.

Bruce grabbed Harley by her wrists, holding her arms up so she couldn't hit him again, nearly lifting her off her feet.

Bruce looked into Harley's face. Her teeth were bared in a vicious snarl, her blue eyes blazing with hatred, but she was also crying, tears running down her cheeks creating dark rivulets down her face.

She yanked her arms free from his grasp, stumbling backwards into Alfred who gently held her shoulders. Harley hissed with venom at Bruce. “I will never forgive you.”

She turned and took off, running back toward the kitchen, her heels making hard clacks on the marble flooring.

Alfred watched her go; he looked older, sadder. “Master Bruce, are you sure that was the only option? An asylum? I just...I just don't see how being in there will help Master Jack. He will resent you sir.”

Bruce groaned and ran a hand over his face before he nodded. “Yes, it is best Alfred. Dr. Arkham himself came out to speak with Jack. He thought committing Jack would be the best for him, and I agreed. Jack nearly killed that man. I stopped at the hospital on the way home to check on him. Jack put that man in the coma, Alfred! He would have killed him if I hadn't stopped him.”

Alfred frowned. It was clear to Bruce that Alfred had more to say, but the butler kept his opinion to himself—for the moment. Bruce sighed. “I'm going to go change and go to bed. I'll be heading to the asylum first thing in the morning to check on Jack.”

Alfred nodded then said more softly. “Master Bruce, Bruce...we should talk about this.”

Bruce, who had headed toward the stairs stopped with his foot on the first step, his hand on the bannister. He didn't turn around to look at Alfred. “I...not now Alfred.”
Alfred sighed. “Bruce...”

Bruce didn't say another word, but simply made his way up the stairs. He turned down the hall heading toward his room disappearing from Alfred's sight, his expression pained and mournful. And then Alfred heard the sound of a car. He frowned turning around. He could tell, even with the rain, that the sound was coming from around the garage area and heading down the drive. Alfred frowned and whispered, “Miss Harleen?”

He raced to the kitchen only to find that she was gone...

*

Harley had grabbed the keys to the Lamborghini and took off driving off of the Wayne estate, heading toward Arkham asylum at a break neck speed. She was driving recklessly, the song on the radio was drowning out the sounds of the rain and her own tears and sniffling. While she drove down from the manor she was talking to herself, repeating over and over again. “No, no, no...I won't be separated from my puddin!! They can't lock him up...not without me...not without me...he needs me...I need him...” Tears flowed down her cheeks, her knuckles white as she held onto the steering wheel whispering. “Not without me...not without me...”

*

The rain had not eased up by the time she arrived at Arkham. If anything, it fell harder, a steady dark grey rain reflecting the darkness in her chest, the hollowness of complete despair. Harley could see the ancient iron gate up ahead, the headlights of the sports car catching the wet metal and reflecting back the Victorian looking gate with “Arkham Asylum” in iron letters across the top of the gate as if she were entering the doomed property of a Gothic monster.

She drove along the poorly lit drive, the weak yellow lights casting more shadows than light and pulled up to the large front doors that reminded her of the entrance to Dracula's castle. She pulled into the guest parking, tossed the keys inside the Lamborghini before she locked it and walked with determination through the pouring rain to the main entrance. There was a light over the door, the same sick wavering yellow of the lights that lined the path she had followed up here. There was another sign over the door that read: “Arkham Asylum visitor entrance.”

Harley pressed her lips together and shoved open the door, walking in with determination.

Inside wasn't much better than outside. Oddly, when she had been a student, she had seen this place as ahead of its time, an institution where patients were treated with care or housed in safety for themselves and others. But now that she was here and someone she loved was trapped inside, Harley saw it as a prison, the tall stone buildings, the fencing—all of it was just designed to hurt as far as she was concerned now. But she was getting into this prison to be with her puddin, one way or another.

Once inside Harley looked around. There was a small lobby with a few generic plastic chairs visible in that dull white lighting that would make you feel tired and cast everything in the glow of purgatory...which was exactly where anyone would be as they waited here...purgatory...waiting between this world of the asylum and the world outside. The floor was dull beige and a drab blue; the blue theme continued with the receptionist station where Harley could see a middle-aged woman, with her brown hair done up into a bun, her glasses perched at the end of her nose, with a long chain that ran from her glasses to around her neck, wearing a dull nurses outfit of plain white. She sat behind a wall with a sliding frosted window, currently open. The woman hadn't bothered to look up when Harley stepped in out of the rain.

As Harley approached, it looked as if the woman wasn't working, but reading a magazine.
Soaking wet in her evening gown which was now plastered to her, her hair a damp disarray of blonde and her makeup having smeared and run further down her cheeks, Harley leaned on the little ledge outside the receptionist window. There was a can of flower topped pens at the woman's elbow, the bright colors looking out of place, in this house full of dull shades.

“I want to check in,” Harley whispered.

The woman looked up and pushed her glasses up her nose. “What now, young lady?”

“I want to check myself in,” Harley said slowly, her bloodshot blue eyes stared back at the woman.

The older woman pressed her lips together into a thin white line. “Well, how about we get someone to come talk to you first, eh? Just because you broke up with your boyfriend or girlfriend, or have gone on a bender, doesn't mean you have to be checking yourself in.”

Harley narrowed her eyes. “I want to be checked in. I want to be with my fiance.”

The woman sighed. “Honey, you are clearly confused. Why don't you go on home before I have to call security or the police.”

Harley felt something inside her break. It was odd she thought, it was almost like she heard it break...a quick snap in her mind. Harley screamed. “TAKE ME TO JACK!!”

The next thing she knew, Harley had launched herself over the tiny counter and through the window of the reception station, grabbing a hold of the woman by the front of her uniform. Both women fell back as the chair went out from sudden weight of both women. The receptionist's head hit the tiled floor with a sickening thunk.

Harley sat up on the woman's chest, cutting off her air, but Harley didn't stop. She hit the woman in the face with her fist, over and over and over again. The sound of her fist smacking into the nurse's face could be heard for a few seconds, the sickening sound of meat being hit by flesh and bone, before someone came to investigate the sound of the crash. It was another nurse, a young blonde. She pushed open the door. “Agatha what's...”

She saw a crazed blonde on top of Agatha wearing a black and gold flapper-style evening dress, her blonde hair a mess, make-up smeared across her face, beating Agatha over and over. Blood had splattered across the floor, across the blonde's face and over her knuckles. The blonde on top of Agatha screamed. “TAKE ME TO JACK!!”

The blonde nurse screamed and hit a button by the door. “SECURITY!! I NEED SECURITY!!”

Harley started to laugh, a long, hard, maniacal laugh while tears continued to run down her cheeks mixing with the blood splatters on her face as her voice dropped to a deadly whisper.

“Take me to my puddin...”
Earlier at the Gotham PD, Jack had been sedated and strapped down to a gurney before being transferred to an ambulance. The ambulance roared through the streets of Gotham heading toward Arkham Asylum, but the drug was working itself quickly through his bloodstream until when the orderlies came to wheel him out of the back of the ambulance, Jack was fully cognizant again.

Jack didn’t let on that he was awake again, regaining full consciousness just as the ambulance’s engine turned off. One of the paramedics muttered, “I always hate transferring the crazy ones. Always waiting for them to jump up and rip my throat out.”

The other paramedic in the back, a young woman, laughed. “You watch too many horror movies Tucker.”

The man named Tucker chuckled. “You don't watch enough Lexi.”

He couldn’t quite see what they were doing, but soon the back of the ambulance opened up and some light rushed into the small back compartment. Jack carefully watched them through the cover of his lashes, seeing shadows of the two paramedics moving around them and then the jerk and rattle of the gurney being lifted up and rolled out the back. Lexi and Tucker didn’t say a word as they rolled him out, one on either side of him. The rain had eased up and everything shone wetly in the lights from the front of the asylum. Jack could see the water on the building making the old architecture look glazed.

The paramedics were close enough that if he hadn’t been strapped down he could have easily grabbed one of them, broken an arm and used them as a hostage and a shield. He wanted to laugh at the thought of the chaos that would cause. But he was strapped down and so Jack had to lay prone in frustration while he was handed off to the asylum. Jack heard a voice that he recognized, Dr. Arkham. He could hear the doctor speaking to someone—must be security Jack thought to himself, but they were positioned behind him, out of his range of sight.

“Mr. Wayne shouldn't cause you boys any issues; he is well sedated. I just want him brought to a medical exam room, where we can check him over and change him into his patient attire, then after that I want him transferred to his room on the sixth floor. The drug should last at least another hour, maybe longer in his system. I gave him quite a heavy dose. Hopefully he won't become violent again...”

Outside the ambulance, the man that Arkham was speaking to frowned looking down at the paperwork that Arkham had handed him. “Wayne? As in Bruce Wayne? The Gotham billionaire?”

Arkham chuckled. “No, not Bruce Wayne, the younger Wayne—Jack Wayne, his little brother.”

The tall dark-skinned man frowned rubbing the back of his neck as he looked at the form attached to the clipboard. “I had heard he had a brother.”

His partner, a shorter man with pale splotchy skin snorted with a glance at the paperwork his partner held. “I heard his brother was nuts, guess he finally cracked, huh?”

The two paramedics, Lexi and Tucker both laughed. The woman spoke up. “Guess money can't buy sanity.”

“Yeah, it sure can't.” The orderlies laughed in agreement.
Arkham frowned in displeasure, his eye landing on each of the four people around him.

“Mr. Wayne is very sick. I would appreciate it if all of you would keep that mind. Fame and money do not equal mental health. It is not Mr. Wayne's fault, and I expect him to be treated with respect and care. Now, just get Mr. Wayne to his room and make sure he is comfortable.” Arkham glared at each person before he turned and walked into the asylum, leaving the two security men to do their job and the two paramedics to leave. The four looked at each other and the woman shrugged. “Okay boys, he is all yours.” The two paramedics turned with a wave and headed back to the ambulance. The two Arkham orderlies sighed, the taller one glancing back at his clipboard.

The shorter man looked at his partner. “You wanna get him Mike? Or should I?”

Mike sighed, rubbing the back of his neck again. “You go ahead Bill, he's strapped down and drugged, it should be fine. I'll do the paperwork later, sound good?”

Bill grinned. “I like that deal. I hate paperwork!”

Mike laughed. “I know you do buddy. You sure you can handle him on your own?”

Bill made a rude noise with his lips. “Please, he's drugged. The day I can't handle a drugged crazy is the day I quit.”

Mike chuckled. “Okay man, just don't get us in trouble. I think Arkham was a bit upset with us.”

Bill rolled his eyes. “He doesn't deal with these freaks on a day-to-day basis like we do. He don't really know what's what...no worries buddy. I got this nutjob handled.” It took a great deal of effort for Jack not to react, his prevent his face from contorting with rage or his hands from balling into fists, but he hated Bill with every fiber of his being right now.

Bill grabbed the back of the gurney and pushed Jack into the asylum. Jack tried not to react to the few miserable drops of rain that sprinkled down on him. The front of the asylum glowed wetly under the glaring front yellow light, the rain falling in a slow, pathetic dribble at the moment, leaving the building coated in slick drops of water that made it seem as if the stone walls were weeping.

Bill pushed Jack's gurney through the large Gothic doors of the asylum and headed past the security doors that divided the lobby of the asylum into the main body of the hospital after an older woman at reception buzzed him through.

Bill waved. “Hey Agatha!”

Agatha barely looked up from her magazine. “Hey Bill.” She gave him an absent wave and continued to read her article. Bill chuckled shoving the gurney through the gates. Bill started to whistle “Dear Prudence” while pushing Jack through a long dimly lit hall. Jack watched everything through his lashes, the lights flashing overhead as they passed, reminding Jack of horror movies he loved to watch. He did his best to pay attention, taking in every detail that he could searching for a way to escape, but as Bill wheeled him into an elevator, Jack's heart sank. He couldn't see much as he was currently strapped down, and pretending to be drugged. Jack closed his eyes instead and let his mind drift to Harley. Thinking about her calmed him while at the same time hurt. How long before he could see her?

Bill stopped at the elevator, pushed the button and waited. Jack listened for the tinny ding announcing the elevators arrival and Bill pushed him inside the small, cramped elevator. A dull urine colored light shone down on Jack. Bill was at Jack's side and this close, he could smell stale alcohol and sweat on the man. Jack's lips twitched in disgust. Bill continued to whistle the song tapping his
foot annoyingly on the floor.

After a couple of seconds the doors opened onto another darkened hall with watery lighting. Bill shoved the gurney out the elevator doors, turning left and heading down past a few other rooms before turning left again. The hall was “T” shaped with two more halls leading to more rooms.

Bill pushed the gurney into the room which looked like a typical hospital examination room right down to the drab, almost moldy feeling paint color choices. There were stainless steel cabinets, counters, IV stands as well as several other bits and pieces of equipment that Jack couldn't identify from his prone position. Bill stopped the gurney in the middle of the room. He stood over Jack and waved his hand in front of Jack’s face. He grinned showing off yellow and chipped teeth.

“Hey there pretty rich boy, you gonna be my bitch?” Bill laughed at his crudeness as he set about removing the straps from Jack for his medical exam, and to have his clothing removed for the standard black and white striped outfits all patients wore at Arkham Asylum. Bill hummed while he worked, thinking he had nothing to worry about, that everything was perfectly safe since it was clear to Bill that the patient was still out cold on who knew what cocktail of drugs Arkham had given him. Bill reached over and started to undo Jack's bloodstained white bow tie.

Jack waited a heartbeat when Bill reached over him before he sprang into action, sitting up suddenly and slamming his forehead into Bill's with a hard enough impact that both men were disoriented for a handful of seconds.

Bill cried out, “FUCK!!” and stumbled away from Jack. Jack blinked his eyes a few times. He still felt slightly groggy from the drugs in his system and the forehead smack was harder than he intended. He rolled off the gurney, falling on his knees which caused him to hiss in pain. He looked up, a trail of blood running down between his bright blue eyes. Bill continued to hiss. “FUCK FUCK FUCK!” He stumbled around, with blood running into his eyes. Jack pushed himself to his feet and leaped onto the orderly's back, immediately wrapping his slender arm around Bill's neck. Jack felt mad, savage, consumed with rage. The pain he felt at Bruce's betrayal, at being separated from Harley was driving him mad...Bruce thought he was crazy? Well, he would show him crazy!

Jack leaned close and smiled hissing in Bill's ear as his arms tightened around the man's throat, his long legs locked around Bill's waist. Jack leaned back pressing his forearm hard against Bill's larynx. Bill let out a small choked sound. He could almost feel this crazy on his back cracking his Adam's apple.

“I'm nobody's bitch,” Jack snarled just before he sunk his teeth into Bill's ear. Jack bit down hard and he could feel his teeth cutting through the skin of Bill's earlobe, the coppery gush of blood leaking through the wound onto his tongue. Bill screamed, clawing at Jack's locked arms while the younger man pulled and yanked tearing in a swift, savage movement, ripping off half of Bill's ear from his skull in an arc of blood.

Bill let out a wonderful scream Jack thought, rather high pitched, worthy of any female horror movie actress from the 1960's. Jack let go of Bill, jumping backwards and landing easily on his feet before he pushed Bill toward the door with a firm foot the orderly's backside. Jack spit the hunk of ear out and started to laugh as blood dribbled down his lips. Bill's screams only made Jack laugh more hysterically, because it was the most high-pitched scream he had ever heard! Jack especially started to laugh when Bill dropped to the floor and scooted himself as far away from Jack as he could, slamming his back up against one of the cabinets.

Jack grinned, his lips covered in blood. He licked them before he giggled. “Did you hear about the guy who lost his left ear? He hears all right now!!!”
Bill was whimpering, his hand covered in blood from where he was holding his hand against his bloody, torn ear, staring at Jack in horror.

Jack sighed. “No one appreciates the humor of the situation.” Jack shook his head in sadness before he hurried out of the room.

With all of Bill's screaming, Jack had only breached the doorway before four guards came running down the hall toward him. Jack rolled his eyes. He turned to run in the opposite direction, only to see more guards come racing down that hall toward him, pouring out of the elevator like clowns spilling from a clown car. All the guards were armed with what looked to be tasers, each one of them a burly man or burly woman.

Jack held his hands up, blood continuing to drip from his chin creating an ever broadening stain of red on his white tux shirt.

“Hey boys and girls, anyone care to dance??” Jack gazed around expectantly. “No?” Jack smiled beatifically.

That was when the guard named Mike stepped forward and without a word, tasered him, the prongs striking Jack in the side. Jack's body seized up, but he didn't make a sound; he just smiled and he seemed to shake it off almost instantly. (Jack chuckled to himself. All those shock treatments he gave himself before facing off against the Electrocutioner were paying off again.) Two more guards rushed forward to taser him again, one set of prongs hitting him in the side again, the other set in the hips. Jack's facial muscles jerked, his smile wavering only slightly, but he stared hard at each guard that tasered him. It was clear he was going to shake the tasing off again.

Mike yelled, his voice a little shrill. “Hit him again!!”

Two more guards hit Jack, the taser prongs slamming into his other hip and lower back. Jack hissed, arching, his hands balling into fists, until finally he went down, collapsing painfully to the floor. But he started laughing hard enough that tears were in his eyes. “I finally managed to get rid of that nasty electrical charge I've been carrying. I'm ex-static!”

The Arkham security just stared in shock until Dr. Arkham came rushing off the elevator. He saw the crowd of orderlies near the end of the hall. He rushed down to them and forced his way through the guards yelling. “Make way!! Come on move!”

Jack grinned up at Arkham, though he was unable to move when he saw the doctor had a syringe. Two orderlies rushed up with Arkham, forcing Jack onto his stomach, yanking his arms behind him painfully and holding him there. One of them put a foot on Jack's lower back securing Jack's wrists with nylon handcuffs. The other orderly held Jack's head, smashing his cheek against the floor. Jack hissed through the pain, his voice shaking only slightly. “I”m going to kill you doc. Just you wait and see.”

His blue eyes roamed over the guards who had tasered him giggling. “I'm going to kill all of you. Each in a different way because I'm very creative!”

Arkham frowned. “You're a very sick young man. I am going to make you better Jack. I promised your brother and I promise you.”

Jack laughed, the sound a cross between a giggle and a sob as the needle was stuck in his neck and the drug almost instantly started to hit him, burning through his blood.

Jack grinned, pressing his teeth hard together in a rictus-like smile, his eyes becoming droopy as he
gazed up at the doctor. “Oh you can try doc...you can try, but you are never going to make me better than I already am...”

“You just behave yourself Mr. Wayne,” Arkham said with a smile patting Jack's cheek. Jack wanted to bite the doctors fingers, but the drug was making him sluggish.

Jack swallowed, tears started at the corner of his eyes. “You want me to behave, you get me my Harley here.”

His eyes fell closed as he whispered groggily. “Get Harley.”

When Jack opened his eyes again, he was alone. Jack was left in a room, a dark little hole with a cot bolted to the wall and floor, a toilet that was mostly a hole in the floor, and nothing else but the dull white walls around him. The flooring was slightly better, it was at least a sort of 'blue' color, though like everything else it, it lacked...life. Everything was dull and dirty making the asylum seem to exist in a realm of perpetual twilight. And it was chilly. There was no warmth here. Jack could feel that the mattress under him was thin and the pillow underneath his head was virtually non-existent, flat and everything had a chemical clean smell. There was a blanket folded at the end of the bed. Just a basic, light blue blanket.

There was a light high above him that he couldn't reach so he had no control over whether the light was on or not. When he first came to, the light was on, a sick yellow glare beating against his eyelids. He had rolled away from the light onto his side and shivered. He felt lost without Harley. He couldn't believe he was here, in this place without her, alone. He needed her arms around him, the smell of her skin against him...the feel of her, her hair, soft again his cheek, her voice, her smile...he needed her. Anything would be bearable if she was with him. Jack wasn't sure he could make it without her. Maybe he would really go mad. Jack giggled softly, a sound that turned from laughter to sobbing. Jack curled in on himself, squeezing his eyes closed trying to imagine her there holding him. He could almost hear her whispering “Jack...my puddin...” Her breath warm against his ear. The sound of her laugh, her little moans when they made love... He drifted off to sleep, the last dregs of the drug in his system lulling him away as the ghost of Harley wrapped around him to ease his pain.

When he woke up again, the light was out leaving the room cast in darkness. He could now hear the sound of wild giggles, muttering broken by the occasional howl of pain, or maybe desperation, floating through the darkness as if the darkness had awoken creatures that stalked the shadows. Jack managed to sit up on the flat cot and lean against the cool wall, looking out toward his cell's door. The wall here was clear, the door clear, both made of shatter resistant plastic. Jack chuckled gazing at it. He would be willing to bet the plastic had been made by Wayne Enterprises. While he studied it he grinned, thinking that this was just the sort of thing Wayne Enterprises would make and if he looked closer he would probably find the logo somewhere. It was hilarious really, to be kept captive by something his family's company made. He sighed looking down, which was when he noticed his tux was gone. That was also the point that he really became aware of the cheap cotton against his skin. Jack made a disgusted face; his clothing had been replaced with an ill fitting uniform of black and white vertical stripes. His feet were bare, but he saw a pair of white socks and simple shoes on the floor beside the bed. Jack scooted his bare feet under the folded blanket. It provided some relief but it was the best he could do considering that his arms were bound by the jacket. Jack chuckled, a sound filled with misery and pain.

He could now see there were dim lights that ran the length of a long hall, and patches of dark where other cells were located. Jack squeezed his eyes shut and occupied himself with thoughts of Harley.
He smiled murmuring softly, “My sweet, sweet harlequin...”

He had no idea what time it was, only that in here it was dark and he was alone, trapped in a limbo apart from the rest of the world and apart from Harley. Jack’s lips trembled. Alone. Without his Harley.

Jack leaned against the wall of his cell, rubbing the side of his head back and forth singing softly to himself. His eyes were closed, dark lines ran down his cheeks. Black was smeared around his eyes from his eyeliner. He could still feel the dried blood on his lips. They had changed him, but no one had bothered to clean his face. There were hints of tears at the corner of his eyes as he sang softly bouncing the side of his head against the plain, dull, white wall imagining Harley smiling at him. The only person in all the world who loved him...loved him like he was...the only person he would ever love. He sang to himself in a whispery voice:

“Only love, only love can hurt like this,

Only love can hurt like this

Must have been a deadly kiss

Only love can hurt like this...”

His red lipstick was smeared across his mouth in a mock imitation of a wide smile mocking his pain. There was still blood dried on his face from his fight with Guy, but also from the guard he had attacked. That man's blood was dry on Jack's lips, flaking slightly. Jack grinned a little thinking about the orderly whose ear he had bitten off. Granted, he was wrapped snugly in a straightjacket for his troubles, but it had been pretty funny. Jack jerked once or twice trying to free his arms. He chuckled softly licking his dry lips tasting blood there.

He opened his eyes and stared out of his cell as he whispered the lyrics of his song to himself again, imagining Harley standing in front of him, smiling, her arms open for him...

“But it's the sweetest pain

Burning hot through my veins

Love is torture, makes me more sure

Only love can hurt like this...”

Jack squeezed his eyes shut as his voice broke. “Harley...I will kill them all. Every one of them...” He whispered to himself. “Every one of them. I will have you back...I promise...they won't and can't keep up apart.”

He screwed his eyes closed against a fresh wave of pain. He said her name in a passionate whisper. “Harley.”

*

A few hours later Harley was in reception having beaten the woman Agatha into unconsciousness and screaming. “TAKE ME TO JACK!!! I WANT MY PUDDIN!!” She was crazed with desperation. She had to be with Jack, she couldn't let him be here alone without her! And she couldn't be without him!! Harley wanted to tear this place apart until she was with him again—with her Jack!
Two security men entered the room ahead of the nurse who had called for them, both with their tasers out. One was a short man of clear Latino background, dark hair, copper skin, while the other was a tall, heavily muscled pale man with a balding head.

The shorter man frowned. “Why is she yelling for pudding?”

His taller companion snorted. “I don't understand these crazies John any more than you do.”

The taller of the two who looked more like a bruiser than a guard, grinned at Harley, stepping a little closer with his hands up like he was approaching a wild animal.

“Hey sweetheart, why don't you step over to the wall and put your hands against it. Maybe we can help you find this Jack person you're looking for and then once you're nice and quiet, maybe we can get you some pudding? You want chocolate or vanilla? We might even have some tapioca.” He lifted his brows at her giving her condescending smile. Harley stood slowly, her blue eyes narrowing at the new object of her attention. She could tell when someone was being condescending to her. Harley looked crazed, wet from the rain, her makeup smeared across her face, her knuckles bloody, but she narrowed her eyes a fraction more at the two men shifting her gaze between them, her hands balled into fists at her side. “I want to see Jack Wayne NOW.” Her voice came out low and angry with a dangerous growl.

“Okay lady, Jack Wayne, I heard he was brought in. He was put on the sixth floor. You calm down and we’ll see if we can't bring you up to him okay?” The bruiser grinned, easing toward her, still treating her like she would a wild animal. He held his taser in one hand, while his left hand was held out to her, gesturing to calm her down.

Harley's eyes flashed in the ugly lighting, her expression deadly. She could see the nurse standing behind the guards watching, but she was occasionally talk to someone just out of Harley's sight on the other side of the doorway. That person moved into view and Harley saw another nurse, as well as the glint of a syringe in the other woman's hand. Harley screamed and threw herself at the guard before the man had time to use his taser on her. She grabbed his arm, yanking the man forward with a quick upward knee to his crotch, pulled him off his feet with the sudden violent gesture and slammed her elbow down against the back of his neck. The man's partner yelled something, surprise clear in his voice, but Harley never heard the man fire before the taser prongs hit her in the chest. She cried out in pain, her whole body going stiff, every muscle seemed to clinched at once forcing her to arch her back, her hands clenched into fists.

She collapsed a moment later with a groan of pain. The guard who had used his taser on her immediately rushed over rolling her onto her stomach yanking her hands behind her back and pressed his knee against her lower back painfully while he held her arms pulling out nylon zip strips to secure her wrists. Harley would have cried out, but she couldn't. Tears spilled from her eyes as she laid there on the floor being handled, and then the nurse injected something into her neck which burned. She started to struggle, but the drug hit her system quickly. The last thing she remembered before she drifted off was someone yelling for Dr. Arkham.

* 

Two hours later, in another cell on the same level as Jack, Harley had started to scream again. She had screamed when she came out of her first sedation to find herself strapped to a bed. She had reacted violently enough that Dr. Arkham had been called again to try to calm her. She screamed and cried as Dr. Arkham smoothed her hair back. “Dr. Quinzel, please, you know this behavior is beyond you. You really need to calm down.”

Harley's blue eyes blazed. “I want my puddin!!”
Dr. Arkham frowned in confusion. “Dr. Quinzel, if you want pudding, you need to calm down.”

Harley rolled her eyes. “God you are a bunch of idiots! Let me go!!”

Arkham frowned turning and leaving the room to talk to a nurse who was waiting outside. Harley struggled. She was wearing a straitjacket as well as being strapped to the bed. Someone had changed her clothing into a dress with thick black and white stripes. Her feet were bare and the room was freezing. Not only was she being kept from Jack, but she felt violated. They had taken her dress and put her in this outfit while she was unconscious. She realized at the same time that her engagement ring was missing. Harley gasped on a sob; she moved her fingers in the jacket...no, her ring was gone. Harley's bottom lip started to tremble as she was overcome with pain and revulsion which only made her tear up, large tears falling from the corner of her eyes. Her ring, the ring Jack had made just for her...

Harley's voice broke. “My ring...” she whispered.

The pain was acute. And then she screamed again in frustration, straining against the bonds holding her down. Dr. Arkham hurried back into the room, this time holding a syringe in his hand, hidden from his patient's view.

“I'm very sorry about this Dr. Quinzel, but you really need to calm down before you hurt yourself.”

Harley groaned on a sob. “You took my ring!”

Arkham sighed. “We had to, you know that Dr. Quinzel. It's policy. You could hurt yourself with it.”

Harley squeezed her eyes shut on the pain. “My ring.” She took a breath trying to calm herself deciding to try a new tactic. “Please!! I'll stop...just...I just need to see Jack.”

Arkham looked down at her, his expression one of pity. “I'm sorry Dr. Quinzel, you know I can't allow that just yet.”

Harley dropped her head back against the flat pillow with a keening moan. “Please!!”

Arkham sighed. “You need to rest Harleen.”

He put the syringe, that Harley hadn't seen, to her neck. Harley started to sob, but the drugs hit her fast and soon she was out.

*

Harley didn't thrash around when she regained consciousness again; she controlled herself with a strong effort. She opened her eyes slowly, taking a deep breath. She knew how this worked, how the game was played. You want something, you want privileges, than you behaved yourself. She could do that...she could try at least. Until she had Jack back. Once she had Jack back, all bets were off...

Dr. Arkham sat on a stool next to her bed, his legs crossed leaning forward, resting his arm on his knee.

“There you are Dr. Quinzel.” He smiled like he was proud of her. “Now, Harleen, may I call you Harleen?” Arkham smiled at her and he spoke in a low tone. His voice had that kind of wheedling calm that was like fingernails against the chalkboard to Harley. She knew exactly what he was trying to do.
“Don't call me that,” she hissed.

“Call you what, Dr. Quinzel? Or Harleen?” Arkham smiled lifting a brow in question at her.

“Dr. Quinzel, yes. Don't call me that. It's Quinn, Harley Quinn now.” Harley turned her face away from him so she wouldn't have to look at him.

Arkham frowned, but nodded. “All right Miss Quinn. I wanted to inform you that I will be asking Mr. Wayne to seek legal action to become your executor since you have no family available, and considering your relationship with the family...” He smiled, bouncing his leg a little.

Harley turned back to face him. “What?”

Arkham smiled. “You are clearly not in your right mind at the moment...Miss Quinn...and you need help, but as Mr. Jack Wayne's fiancee, I thought you would appreciate having Bruce Wayne take control of your “estate” since it is connected with Jack Wayne or will be.”

Harley turned away again, tears pricking her eyes. She didn't want him to see her cry. “I don't appreciate him at all. He put my puddin in here.”

“Puddin?” Arkham frowned.

“Jack...he put Jack in here. I want to see Jack.” Harley turned back to face Arkham. “Please? Please can I see him?”

Arkham frowned with a small shake of his head. “I think that it would better for now to keep the two of you separated.”

She knew at the moment she reacted, that she shouldn't, but her anger, fear, and pain at not seeing Jack raced through her like a bullet train. Harley's reaction was instant. She began to fight against her bonds and screamed in impotent frustration and fury until Arkham was forced to sedate her again.

*

When Harley woke again she was alone and no longer strapped down. She gazed around slowly. The room was dark and there were no windows. There was very little in the room except for the cot she was on and the toilet, there was nothing else, no furnishing at all. She was still in the straightjacket, limiting her movements. She closed her eyes. She supposed she would have to prove herself non-violent in order for them to let her out of the jacket. Harley swallowed telling herself, she was at least that much closer to Jack. But the pain of separation, of knowing he would not be here to hold her, kiss her...She curled on her side and started to sob. She felt hollow inside, as if she were a bottomless pit of anguish that was sucking everything that had ever been good in her life into its darkness, that there would never be any light again. She choked. “Puddin...oh puddin...”

*

Bruce had just managed to get into bed. He had stripped out of his damp clothing and while a warm shower would have been nice, he was simply too exhausted. He knew he should be concerned about where Dr. Quinzel had sped off to, but he just couldn't seem to drum up the worry. He assured himself she had probably driven to Arkham to try and see Jack. They would turn her away and she would be force to return to the manor. Batman might have gone after her, but Bruce was weary.

He crawled into bed and was lying down only to find himself staring at the ceiling when he received a call. Bruce groaned glancing over to his cellphone lying on the table beside the bed. “What now?” he muttered reaching over and grabbing for the phone.
“Hello?” Bruce answered picking up his cellphone with exhaustion evident in his tone.

“Mr. Wayne, this is Dr. Arkham. Ah...I thought I should inform you that Dr. Harleen Quinzel has just been committed here. She attacked our receptionist.”

Bruce sat up, suddenly wide awake again. “What?”

“Yes, well apparently she showed up demanding to be admitted and then violently attacked our receptionist when she suggested that Dr. Quinzel go home. I have her in solitary, under sedation at the moment.”

Bruce rubbed the bridge of his nose as Arkham continued. The hits just kept coming. Some nights it seemed easier to be in uniform in Gotham fist fighting with criminals.

“Does she have any family I should notify?” the psychiatrist inquired.

Bruce shook his head. “No. Only some half siblings that she has no contact with....her mother recently passed on and her step-father is missing.”

Arkham was quiet for a moment. “I would suggest you contact your lawyer and pursue becoming Dr. Quinzel's legal guardian since she is engaged to your brother.”

Bruce nodded. “Yes, yes of course. Are they both all right?”

Bruce could hear Arkham sigh. The man sounded tired. “Yes. They are both sedated, though I would like to ask Mr. Wayne: I have them both in the secure unit at the moment where they will both stay until they are no longer violent and can be allowed to mix with the general population. At that point I can no longer keep them separated unless you wish me to isolate your brother. But I wondered Mr. Wayne—would you like me to keep them from seeing one another?”

Bruce frowned closing his eyes. “I...I think that might be best for the short term, keep them separated, or at least don't let Jack know Dr. Quinzel is there. After they are both stable I will trust your judgment doctor.”

“All right, thank you Mr. Wayne. I will speak to you again later this morning.” Dr. Arkham hung up after that. Bruce closed his eyes lying back. Bruce opened his eyes again and stared up at the ceiling. The ceiling was plain and white, providing no answers. He couldn't believe that this was happening. He would have to tell Alfred. Both of them, his brother and sister-in-law-to-be—if that ever happened now. Bruce felt an overwhelming sense of loss and failure. As the older brother it was his job to take care of Jack and he had failed him miserably. Bruce pushed the heels of his hands against his eyes. How could everything had gone so wrong so fast?

Being Batman was easy, being Jack's older brother was hard. Bruce pressed his lips together on the pain and took a few deep breaths, forcing himself to be calm and let himself relax.

* *

Unknown to Bruce, a reporter had managed to come across some information about what happened at the party since his girlfriend was friends with one of the wait staff that had been hired for the engagement party. This led to the headlines/stories in one of the local Gotham papers: “Local billionaire Bruce Wayne's younger brother Jack Wayne was involved in an altercation at the youngest brother's engagement party at Wayne Manor. At this time we do not have all the details, but Jack Wayne put a man in a coma. At this time the name of the man is unknown, but we will keep you posted. Jack Wayne has been committed to Arkham asylum by his older brother Bruce Wayne.”
Bruce arrived downstairs looking the worse for wear and headed toward the kitchen. His eyes were bloodshot and his expensive suit looked rumpled and slept in despite the fact that Alfred knew Bruce would never sleep in his suit.

“I have fresh coffee brewing Master Bruce,” Alfred said without looking up from where he was chopping carrots. Bruce frowned walking over and reaching for a mug to pour off some coffee into, the biggest mug he could find. He felt as if he had been on the streets of Gotham last night fighting criminals instead of having his brother admitted to an asylum. Bruce didn't bother adding sugar or cream, but instead blew on it until the midnight black liquid was just barely cool enough to begin sipping. When the first taste of hot coffee hit his tongue Bruce came instantly more aware.

Bruce ran a hand through his dark hair taking another sip. “Where are the travel mugs Alfred? I think I'll fill one and take it with me.” Bruce opened a cabinet door, his blue eyes searching the shelves without really seeing anything at the moment. He knew that he was distracted at the moment—had to get his head on straight.

Alfred glanced up from the carrots. “Top shelf on the left sir.”

Bruce opened the cabinet, found the cups and took one down. He glanced at Alfred while he poured the coffee. It was clear by the stiffness of Alfred's shoulders and the way he refused to look up at Bruce that the butler was upset. Bruce pressed his lips together.

“Alfred if there had been another way...any other way...I wouldn't have committed Jack,” Bruce started just as Alfred looked up cutting him off.

“There is always was another way sir. He's your brother, not some crazed criminal on the street that you fight every night. Your brother, Bruce. You could have found another way especially now that you know Jack was only reacting to someone who had threatened Miss Harleen. How many criminals needed hospital care after a certain night prowling vigilante encountered them? Bruce, please.”

Bruce blinked in shock. Alfred very seldom simply called him Bruce, not 'Master Bruce' or 'sir.' Just calling him Bruce demonstrated how upset Alfred was about the situation.

“Alfred, Jack is dangerous. I have known that for a long time. I brought Dr. Quinzel to help and he simply twisted her around. I had Dr. Thompson come in to help them and they fooled her too! He is just as violent if not more so now than when we were kids. Jack needs real help Alfred.”

Alfred dropped his gaze and finished with the carrots, scooting them into a bowl and picked up some celery, but he didn't reply.

Bruce sighed. “Jack needs help and judging by Harleen's extreme reaction, so does she Alfred. She drove herself down there and attacked a woman to get herself committed! That is not the act of someone of sound mind Alfred.”

Alfred closed his eyes. He had been worrying about where Miss Harleen was, having tried to contact her, but she had not answered her phone. His worst fear was that she had had an accident, but now to know she was in that awful place with Master Jack hurt just as much. Alfred grew very still. Bruce could feel the pain emanating from the older man. “That may be sir, but keeping them separated? You realize that your brother and Miss Harleen have been inseparable since you put them together? Even when Miss Harleen was in the hospital after the miscarriage, your brother stayed right with her the entire time, by her bedside. Even when he needed to care for himself he would not leave her. I
think trying to keep them separated is a horrible idea. That was why Miss Harleen drove herself to the hospital and attacked that woman, to be with Master Jack. And how long before Master Jack realizes Miss Harleen is in the asylum? Then what will happen?"

Alfred wiped his hands on his apron. “Bring them back here, hire another doctor, let me help, but Master Bruce—Bruce, please let them be together.” Alfred gave Bruce a pleading looking. Bruce stared at Alfred in surprise. Alfred never asked for anything, in all the years he had been part of the family, Alfred never once made a request unless it was for the well-being of Bruce and Jack. Alfred was level headed, the one person that Bruce could rely on to respond with cool logic and quiet sarcasm to any situation...but it seemed even he was under an illusion woven by Jack.

Bruce sighed. “I can't Alfred.”

With that Bruce turned and left the kitchen. Alfred watched Bruce's back as he left, seeming to age as he stood there, defeated.

* 

When Bruce arrived at the asylum he was escorted immediately to Dr. Arkham's office. When Bruce stepped in, Arkham was sitting behind his desk. The man's glasses had slipped to the end of his nose and he was writing something, dressed in his white lab coat and a dark brown, simple suit, his hair a slight mess looking as if the man had been napping earlier. He glanced up when the door opened.

“Ah Mr. Wayne, so nice to see you.” Jeremiah stood up and walked around his desk, taking Bruce Wayne's hand in both of his and shaking the younger man's hand with enthusiasm. Bruce shook Arkham's hand, a quick hard brief shake. “So, may I see my brother?”

Arkham frowned. “I think Mr. Wayne, it might be best if you wait a few days before seeing your brother. Give him and Dr. Quinzel a chance to acclimate to their new situation. Especially since your brother attacked and maimed one of our orderlies.”

Arkham motioned to the chair across from his desk as he resumed his seat behind his desk. Bruce stepped over to the ancient looking chair, a dark brown cushioned chair old enough that the cushion was losing color, much like Arkham's office. The walls were paneled with dark wood, there were shelves loaded with books and had one window which was closed and the dark blue curtains were pulled closed, yet everything looked as if it were fading. On the wall directly behind Arkham was a drawing of the asylum when it had first been built, a large Gothic castle-like structure. The image was imposing, frightening.

Bruce sat with his hands resting on the arm rests glancing at the drawing. The image of the asylum made Bruce think of Dracula's castle from an old black and white film he and Jack watched as children. Bruce brought his attention back to Jeremiah Arkham.

Bruce frowned at Arkham. “Maimed?”

Arkham sighed. “He bit a chunk of the man's ear off.”

Bruce went pale. He brought a hand up to his mouth in shock. The doctor took a few breaths before he spoke again. Arkham continued. “Dr. Quinzel broke several bones in the face of our receptionist as well. They are both quite violent.”

“How many days is a few days?” Bruce asked.

Jeremiah Arkham set his elbows on the desk and folded his fingers. “Usually three days. It will depend on their behavior. They will both receive individual care and sessions. It will take a few days
to decide on what medicines might help the two of them, what other treatments to administer. After 
that, we will slowly integrate them into the rest of the population that occupy our sixth floor. I cannot 
keep them away from each forever while they are here, but I can keep them apart for a few weeks. 
I'm assuming all current treatments that are available for their rehabilitation are acceptable?"

Bruce frowned beginning to deflate. Three days before he could see and talk to Jack. Maybe explain 
his actions for putting him in here...discuss Harleen...

Bruce sighed pinching the bridge of his nose. “Yes, yes of course, whatever you need to do Dr. 
Arkham, any and all treatments.” He took a deep breath. “Are you sure I have to wait three days? 
Couldn't I see him for just a little bit, just to know he's all right that...so that he knows I'm here. I 
came...”

The expression on Bruce's face conveyed desperation. Arkham frowned. Maybe he could bend the 
rules for Bruce Wayne...just this once and besides, if he treated Wayne well, the man might make a 
farther donation to the asylum. “All right Mr. Wayne. Why don't you return to the waiting area and 
I'll arrange for an escort to take you to your brother.”

Bruce pushed himself up. “Thank you Dr. Arkham. Thank you.”

“Of course, Mr. Wayne.” Dr. Arkham stood up as well and walked with Wayne to the door. “Don't 
worry about a thing, you brother and soon-to-be sister-in-law will be treated with expert care. We 
will soon have them past this dreadful incident and back out there as contributing members of 
Gotham society.”

Bruce stopped and turned to the physician. “Thank you Dr. Arkham.”

Jeremiah Arkham smiled. “My pleasure Mr. Wayne. Now, go down to reception and take a seat. I 
will grab a couple of orderlies and we will go see your brother.”

*

No sooner had Wayne left than Dr. Crane showed up. Arkham had just finished organizing his 
papers to put away before heading out to find a couple of orderlies, when there was a quiet rap at his 
door. He frowned. The knock was distinctive Arkham always thought, Dr. Crane's knock always 
reminded him of Edgar Allan Poe's poem The Raven...

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

“'Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—

Only this and nothing more.”

Arkham shook himself, half-amused at his moment of reverie, and answered. “Yes, come in.”

Crane entered the room. Crane was tall and thin, with short brownish-blonde hair that continued to 
flop rebelliously over his brow. Today Crane—who had impeccable taste Arkham had to admit— 
wore a suit of dark brown and red plaid with a white shirt and flowered red tie. Crane seldom smiled 
and when he did, it was unsettling. Today, Crane's thin lips were pulled back in an equally thin
Smile.

"Is it true Jeremiah?" Crane asked as he walked in and took the seat across from Arkham's desk.

"Is what true Jonathan?" Arkham slid his papers into the desk's drawer and lifted his gaze to meet his fellow doctor's intense stare.

"Is Jack Wayne here in the asylum?" Crane asked with intensity.

"Yes, both he and his fiancee were admitted early this morning," Arkham answered tiredly.

Crane's smile continued. "May I have them Jeremiah?"

Arkham blinked and frowned. "You want to be their doctor? I was thinking of assigning Thompson since she had already worked with them..."

Crane's smile remained in place as he crossed his legs and tilted his head a fraction, a few strands of hair falling forward over his brow. "I would like use them in my experimental treatments. They are both perfect candidates, you must admit."

Arkham frowned tapping a finger against his lips as he pondered Crane's request. Crane leaned back patiently wrapping his hands around his knee and waited. Arkham knew Crane was doing a great deal of research into fear as a form of treatment.

"All right Crane. You can have them." Arkham smiled. That was one worry off his shoulders, really.

Crane stood up. "Splendid."

Arkham yawned and stretched. "You can do their first one-on-one sessions this afternoon."

Crane smiled. "I look forward to it. Thank you Jeremiah."

Arkham yawned again. "No problem Johnathan."

* *

Soon after his conversation with Crane, Dr. Arkham led Bruce into a room that held a series of chairs, with little partitioned off sections where clear plastic divided one section of the room from the other. Between the two areas was a speaker so that each person could hear the other without being able to make physical contact. Arkham walked Bruce to one of the chairs, then disappeared back out the way they had just come. Bruce looked around. The place was badly in need of a fresh coat of paint. There were signs of water damage on the pale, flat blue paint and the tiles on the floor were brown and chipped. Bruce frowned slightly at the state of the room, but then his attention was distracted as a door on the other side of the plastic wall opened and Bruce saw two large men step in, nearly dragging Jack.

Bruce went pale. Jack's hair was a mess and his face was still bloody, his brother's make up smeared across his eyes and lips making him resemble some nightmarish clown. But the worst part of seeing Jack now was that his brother was in a straightjacket. The two men had to half drag Jack to the seat opposite Bruce and plopped him down, none too gently, Bruce noted with a grim frown. Dr. Arkham stepped into the room and moved up to stand behind Jack.

"I'm sorry about your brother's condition," Arkham explained with a sad look. "He will be allowed to shower and clean up soon, but he has only recently come off the sedatives we had to administer again early this morning, but he seems to have calmed down and is ready to cooperate. Isn't that
correct Jack?"

Jack, who had been looking down at his bound arms in the off-white jacket, lifted his head to look at
Bruce. When he spoke Bruce could see the blood still staining his brother's teeth. “Yeah, doc, I'm all
kinds of compliant,” he said out of the side of his mouth, but kept his gaze on his older brother.
“Well well, Brucie. Guess you finally got what you wanted...”

“Jack, this isn't what I wanted at all, but you left me no choice.” Bruce sighed tiredly.

Jack frowned looking around. “Where's Harley? Why didn't you bring her with you?”

Bruce frowned, but Jack continued. “You kept her from seeing me? You didn't allow her to come!!”

Jack started to stand, but the orderlies on either side shoved him back down onto his seat. Bruce felt a
twist in his chest seeing how much pain Jack was in. Alfred was correct, Jack needed Harley...but...

“It's not like that Jack...” Bruce began, but Jack wasn't listening anymore. Bruce was shocked to see
tears in Jack's eyes as he struggled against the two orderlies. “You can't keep her away from me
Bruce!! You can't!!”

Jack struggled. “I want to see Harley!! BRUCE!!”

Dr. Arkham frowned. “That's enough!! Jack settle down or you'll be sedated again.”

Jack struggled as tears rolled down his cheeks while he glared at his brother. “Bring her Bruce, bring
Harley.”

The orderlies grabbed Jack lifting him and dragging him out of the room. Jack struggled yelling.
“BRUCE!! Bruce!! I need to see her!! Please Bruce!! Please!! Please help me!! BROTHER!!
PLEASE HELP ME!!”

Bruce stood watching his brother disappear, Jack's pleas hitting him right in the heart and gut. Jack
didn't begged for his help like that since they were children and it hurt more than he thought it could.
Arkham went with Jack, returning to the area where Bruce stood waiting with a hand over his mouth
as he stared at the place his brother had been.

“I'm sorry you had to see your brother like that Mr. Wayne. I should have stood my ground and not
allowed you to see him but...”

Bruce nodded. “It's fine doctor, thank you. You will keep me informed of his condition...every day.”

It was a statement, not a question. Dr. Arkham nodded. “Of course Mr. Wayne, of course. Now, let
me escort you to the front.”

* 

He had let himself break down when they brought him back to his cell...room...whatever it was, (he
couldn't leave so it was a cell as far as he was concerned) after Bruce's visit. He couldn't believe
Bruce hadn't brought Harley with him. Jack closed his eyes as renewed pain washed over him. He
needed her and Bruce hadn't even brought her with him. For a brief moment Jack worried that
maybe Harley hadn't wanted to see him, but he had quickly dismissed the idea. His Harley would
never abandon him, never.

It was almost noon before Jack saw someone again. He was hungry and miserable, but he had
decided he wouldn't let anyone know, not again. After the episode with Bruce he refused to let
himself be that weak again. So when two very large men dressed in nurses whites came to his door Jack put on a huge smile. Both men were, he noted with some chagrin, armed with tasers. One of the orderlies was a large man with beady black eyes and enough muscle that his head looked too small for his body. His partner had the look of an all-American football player from a high-school movie, blonde, nice build, chiseled good looks. They were both dressed in white uniforms and both wore equally dull expressions on their faces. The beady eyed man slid a card into a reader on his side of the clear, shatter proof plastic door to Jack's cell. There was a buzz and the door popped open, allowing the orderly to step in. His voice was deep as he pointed at Jack with the taser. “Turn and put your feet on the floor.”

Jack, who was sitting on his cot shrugged (as well as he could in the jacket), turned and put his bare feet on the floor. He narrowed his eyes. “I already had my pee break gentlemen. Two of your kind, though not quite as burly, came in here and help me get my pants down to take a piss.” Jack said it with a bright grin. “It was just as humiliating as you would have thought and neither of them understood my jokes or at least they didn't laugh. And on top of that neither one of them flirted with me. Really a hit to the old ego you know?”

The man stared at him as if surprised that Jack spoke to him then he shook his head. “We're to take you to the showers Mr. Wayne. Dr. Crane wants you cleaned up before your session. You behave yourself then we won't have to put you back into your straightjacket. You misbehave, we taser you and you're right back in it. Are we clear Mr. Wayne?”

Jack smiled. “Crystal.”

The man came over, dropping down on one knee to put Jack's socks on him and to help Jack into the dull grey slip-on tennis shoes. Jack behaved himself smiling down at the man. “So what's your name?” Jack asked pleasantly.

The man finished, slipping on Jack's socks and shoes before standing up, grabbed Jack by the straps of his straitjacket and lifted him to his feet without answering him. Jack chuckled. “Hey you guys wanna hear a joke? My dad died when we couldn't remember his blood type. As he died, he kept insisting for us to "be positive," but it's hard without him!”

The football player snorted, his beady eyed partner gave him a dirty look. The football player shrugged. “Sorry Dale, it was funny.”

Jack continued giggling softly. “If you guys see me smiling it means I'm thinking of doing something bad. If you see me laughing, I already have!”

The blonde chuckled again as he took his position on Jack's other side. The beady eyed orderly sighed. “That's enough Mr. Wayne.”

Jack chuckled. “Nah!! Come on guys, can't we be friends? Wanna here a song? I have a great singing voice!”

The two men put their hands on Jack's shoulders and led him out of the cell and into the halls.

* 

In her cell, Harley was sitting on her cot with her back against the cool wall. She had been roughly escorted to the showers half an hour ago. She hated to admit it, but she felt better clean and in a clean uniform. They had let her back into her cell without her straightjacket as along as she behaved; she had been informed that they wouldn't put her back into it, but if she acted violently at all, she would be right back into the restraining jacket.
Harley leaned against the wall with her eyes closed kicking her legs slowly against the cot. She was trying to not let the pit in her heart open up and swallow her again when she heard something. She stood up and hurried over to the clear plastic of her cell wall/door and leaned against it listening intently. Then she heard Jack’s voice singing loud and clear with a slight lit of laughter to his voice.

“I'm one card short of a full deck
I'm not quite the shilling
One wave short of a shipwreck
I'm not at my usual top billing
I'm coming down with a fever
I'm really out to sea
This kettle is boiling over
I think I'm a banana tree
Oh dear, I'm going slightly mad
I'm going slightly mad
It finally happened, happened
It finally happened uh huh
It finally happened I'm slightly mad - oh dear! ….”

Jack grinned looking between the two orderlies. “See, told you I have a great singing voice and lucky for you two, I take requests!”

The high school jock looking orderly grinned. “Do you now?”

The one named Dale snarled. “Rich, if you encourage him, I swear to God...”

Jack chuckled. “Ah come on Dale! Be a sport! Let Rich here pick a song!”

Jack laughed again grinning brightly.

* 

Harley frowned. “Jack?” She breathed his name listening hard, but then she heard him laugh after a rough voice groaned. “Will you stop singing!”

Harley pressed harder against the transparent door. “JACK!!” Harley's face broke into a huge smile. “JACK!! JACK!! CAN YOU HEAR ME??!”

* 

Jack had just taken a deep breath, ready to sing his heart out again much to the annoyance of one of the orderlies when he heard her voice. Jack stopped singing, his eyes going wide. He said her name in a whisper. “Harley?”

Then he heard her again. “PUDDIN!! IT'S ME!”
Jack stopped in his tracks nearly causing the two orderlies to trip when he suddenly stopped moving. The one named Dale gave Jack a shove in the shoulders. “Come on Mr. Wayne, you said you wouldn’t cause any trouble.”

Jack wrinkled his nose. “I said I understood—never said I wouldn’t cause any trouble.”

The football player snorted on a laugh again. That was when all three men heard the voice.

“JACK!! IT'S ME HARLEY!!”

Jack reacted instantly. He bolted. “HARLEY!!”

He didn't manage to get very far before the beady eyed orderly named Dale hunkered down like a bull and slammed into Jack’s lower back lifting him off his legs and slamming Jack down. Jack hit the floor hard, the two men going down and sliding across the floor.

Jack had the instant taste of blood in his mouth, his teeth cutting against his bottom lip, the slam to the floor knocking the air out of him, but Jack twisted and fought, kicking at Dale as he struggled and yelled gasping painfully for air. “HARLEY!! HARLEY!!”

* *

In her cell Harley was jumping up and down. “JACK!!”

Tears started to flow down her cheeks as she banged her fists on the clear wall. “JACK, JACK!!”

* *

Jack managed to squirm his way out of Dale’s grip, rolling onto his back and using his feet to kick at Dale, striking Dale in the face hard enough to break the man's nose.

The blonde orderly yelped. “Oh shit.”

Rich’s taser was on his hip and he fumbled, yanking it off and aiming it at Jack. Jack had just regained his feet, rolling up to his knees then leaping to his feet before taking off at a run toward where he thought he heard Harley's voice coming. “HARLEY!!” Jack yelled.

* *

Harley heard him. She gasped with excitement and yelled back. “JACK!!”

* *

Jack had only managed to go a short distance before he was hit in the back of the thigh by the taser. He was weak from lack of food, water and, already being tasered more times than any regular person should be, along with the drugs that had been pumped into his system too many times in a short span of time. So when the taser hit him, Jack jerked tight for a moment, almost falling, but he still managed to fight off the effects of the taser, starting to move again, slower, but he forced himself to take a step forward, and then another jolt hit him, and yet another. The third jolt of electricity was enough to put him down this time. Jack dropped hard onto his knees, the impact rattling through him before he dropped sideways, landing heavily on his side, knocking his head against the floor. He blinked, dazed, but he was smiling a wide smile that stretched ear to ear.

“Harley...Harley's here,” Jack mumbled with clear happiness.

*
Three hours later, Jack finally had his shower. He hated to admit that finally getting a lukewarm shower felt good. He was in a fresh set of asylum “fatigues”...clearly making sure the patients were dressed as unfashionable as possible must be some sort of torture because, Jack thought to himself, these outfits were hideous. Once he was showered and dressed, he was put right back in the straightjacket because of the earlier incident...and he had been sedated...again the drugs having worn off about an hour and a half ago. They had allowed him to shower, but the second time he had had six orderlies escort him, all armed with tasers. But he hadn't cared! Now that he knew Harley was here in the asylum, he was determined to avoid being sedated again. He was going to find a way to see her, to be with her and part of that would mean he would have to use every once of his charm, humor and good behavior...until that didn't work any more. He would kill his way through this asylum on a murderous rampage if he had to, but he was going to be with Harley again.

Jack grinned happily. Part of him was thrilled! She was here, close too, on the same floor as him! But the other half of him was devastated that she was in the asylum too. What had happened? How did she get here? Did Bruce have her committed too? Could he do that? Did he do it as some sort of punishment, maybe revenge? Jack calmed himself. He was not going to jump to conclusions...he would just have to find out, that was all.

He sat on the edge of his cot waiting for the orderlies to arrive and take him to his session. He was humming happily to himself kicking his legs back and forth like a child in a chair when they arrived, except Jack's long legs allowed him to rub the rubber soles of his shoes against the floor making annoying squeaking noises. He glanced over when one of the men opened the door to see that they had brought a wheelchair with straps. Jack frowned.

“What's that for?”

The orderly who opened the door was Dale, his nose taped up along with a little bit of swelling around his eyes. This time he had a different partner, another guy that looked like he could be Dale's twin.

Dale spoke, his voice slightly stuffy. “It's to make sure you don't try anything on the way to your session.”

Jack stuck his bottom lip out in a pout. “Ah come on guys, really? Can't you forgive me Dale? I'm a man in love. We sometimes do crazy things. You ever been in love Dale?”

Dale narrowed his eyes at Jack. “Don't start Mr. Wayne.”

Jack grinned. “Call me Jack.”

Dale frowned for a moment then sighed. Jack could see it, even with him having broken his nose, Dale was susceptible to a little bit of the Ol' Wayne charm. Dale pointed a threatening finger at Jack.

“Jack, just behave, get in the wheelchair and don't cause any more problems today. I don't think getting tasered or sedated would be good for you again, but that don't mean I won't do it.”

Jack smiled. “I will be a picture perfect patient. Cross my heart. Well I would, but my arms are a bit tied up at the moment. But I swear, I'll be such a perfect patient you'll be singing my praises and telling the other loonies, 'You should be more like that good boy Jack Wayne, always does what he's told.'” Jack ended with a bright smile.

Dale just sighed and motioned to the chair. Jack hopped up, sauntered over and flopped down onto the seat of the wheelchair. Dale and his partner quickly strapped him down and proceeded to wheel him down the hall. Jack dropped his head back against the wheelchair to smile at the two men,
rolling his head back and forth to look at both of them. “Hey ah, is it okay if I yell “Hi” to my girl? Just in case she can hear me?”

Dale sighed. “I would prefer you didn't Jack.”

Jack grinned, his eyes dancing. “That's not a no!”

“HARLEY!!! I LOVE YOU!!” Jack yelled as loudly as he could.

* 

Harley nearly fell off on her cot and onto the floor when she thought she heard Jack. It wasn't as loud as earlier when she had heard him singing, but she was sure she heard him this time too. She jumped up and ran to the front of her cell, pressing herself against the hard shatter proof plastic, listening. She grinned and yelled at the top of her lungs.

“JACK!! JACK!! I LOVE YOU!!”

Harley smiled, blinking back tears. He was so close...he knew she was here!!

Someone in Harley's hall yelled. “WILL YOU SHUT UP!”

Harley made a face, sticking out her tongue and yelled back. “MAKE ME!”

Harley giggled with glee as she tossed herself on her cot like a teenage girl whose crush had finally noticed her, squealing happily to herself. “He knows I'm here!! My puddin knows I'm here!!”

Harley was smiling so much her cheeks hurt and she drummed her feet with excitement against her cot. Jack knew she was here. Now, they only needed to find a way to be together...

* 

Jack wiggled in his wheelchair. “You hear that??!! That was her!! That's my girl!!” Jack's smile was wide and happy as he was wheeled to the elevator. He dropped his head back looking again between the two orderlies. “She is the most beautiful woman on the face of the earth.”

The orderly with Dale glanced at his partner. “He talking about that cute blonde that came in last night right after him?”

Dale glanced sideways at the other man giving him a clear “shut the fuck up” look.

Jack grinned. “Does she have legs that go on for days, blue eyes that make your heart melt and a figure that would make men go to war and a smile brighter than the sun? Then that's her...that's my Harley.”

The orderly next to Dale opened his mouth to say “Yeah that's her” but from the look he was getting from Dale, the man snapped his mouth shut. Jack didn't care...

He knew she was here.

* 

They arrived down on the first floor and continued to wheel Jack down to the end of the hall, turning toward the last door on the right. Dale knocked and a soft melodious voice replied. “Enter.”

Dale opened the door, holding it open while his partner wheeled Jack inside. Jack frowned when he
saw Dr. Crane.

“Hey, I know you,” Jack said.

Crane motioned for the orderlies to leave. “I'll ring when you can return.”

Jack was left facing Crane's desk as the two men who had wheeled him down here stepped out of the office. Jack frowned slightly with a look around. Crane's office was noticeably neat, with deep burgundy colored walls, book shelves lined with books, and there were several framed prints hanging on the walls. Jack picked out prints of Goya’s “Saturn Devouring his Children” and a print of Fuseli’s “The Nightmare.”

Jack lifted an eyebrow. “You definitely have a theme going on here. Nice suit, by the way.”

Crane smiled. “Thank you. May I offer you something to drink, perhaps some food. I know it's been hours and you must be hungry.”

Jack jerked his bound arms. “Unless you're going to feed me doc, I think the answer would have to be no.”

Crane smiled again. Jack studied the other man, deciding he didn't care for Crane's smile.

Crane said in the same soft voice. “I will make a deal with you Mr. Wayne. I am going to be your primary doctor here at Arkham. I would like to start our relationship out with a bit of trust. I will release you from the jacket...though you will have to have one hand cuffed to the chair and I will have some food brought to you while we talk. Agreed?”

Jack narrowed his eyes slightly, then nodded. He had to play the game to get what he needed. “Agreed.”

Crane hit a buzzer under his desk and within seconds Dale returned. “Yes, Dr. Crane.”

“I want you to remove Mr. Wayne's jacket and cuff him to the chair. Then I would like you to bring him something to eat. What was on the schedule for the patients' lunch today?”

Dale frowned in thought. “Ahh...grilled cheese, green beans and a slice of apple pie.”

“Very good. Please bring a tray for Mr. Wayne and what would you like to drink with that Mr. Wayne?” Crane asked with a small smile.

Jack frowned with suspicion. “Ah, it feels like a bourbon day, but...chocolate milk will do.”

Crane nodded and looked to Dale who stepped over to Jack. Jack gave him a quizzical look, but leaned forward and let Dale undo the straps of the jacket then quietly let Dale handcuff one hand to the wheelchair with a nylon handcuff. Dale left to fetch Jack's lunch while Crane took his seat again.

The psychiatrist steepled his fingers with a smile. “Now, Jack—may I call you Jack?”

Jack frowned slightly. “Sure.”

“Jack. I would like to understand exactly what happened to bring you here to Arkham.” Crane gazed calmly at him.

Jack gave Crane a “look” that said he knew that the doctor knew exactly why he was here. “I beat a man into a coma in front of a bunch of Gotham elite at my engagement party.”
Crane nodded. “Were you not afraid of the consequences?”

Jack shrugged. “Not really, didn't actually think about it.”

Crane nodded. “Would you say you were not afraid at all.”

“Nope.” Jack smiled.

Crane nodded pulling open a drawer at his desk to pull out a pad and pen. “So, Jack, what are you afraid of?”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “Nothing.”

“Not even something happening to your fiancee?” Crane asked with a lifted brow. Jack paled slightly and remained silent, but Crane noted it.

The doctor smiled again. “What if I told you I had a way for you to see your fiancee Jack?”
Harley yawned since it was late and it had been a long day, the same day she had been admitted to the asylum. It was turning into the day that would never end, she thought with a sigh. She was still riding a little bit of a high knowing that Jack was close enough that she could hear him and that little bit of information had done wonders for her mood. Harley yawned again. She couldn't cover her mouth because she was in a straight jacket as she waited on her cot to be taken to see Dr. Crane, her first session with him. Harley swung her legs back and forth and muttered to herself. “You know this is all your fault.”

In her mind Harley could see Harleen, dressed in her conservative black skirt and red top, her blonde hair pulled back into a tight bun, the glasses that she didn't need perched on the tip of her nose. She had her white doctor coat on. She had been so proud of the coat. Harleen frowned at Harley. She wasn't in her box, she was sitting on top of it with her legs crossed, a pad and pencil in her hand.

“Why do you say that?”

“If you hadn't been such a coward; if we had told Jack before the party none of us would be here.” Harley hissed into the dimness of her cell. “We could have killed him and no one would have known. It's all your fault we ended up here. You're the one who should die Harleen.”

Harley squeezed her eyes closed on a fresh burst of tears. She had told herself she was done crying. Jack knew she was here and it was now only a matter of time before they were together again, but that didn't stop the pain of not being with him now from threatening to overwhelm her again. She hissed into her cell. “I hate you,” directed at Harleen, but her other self was no longer there.

She flopped to the side of her cot, her hair falling across her face, her bottom lip sticking out. She sang softly to herself herself, an old song that she remembered listening to in college. Slowly, and very low, more a whisper than singing, Harley murmured:

You and me
Meant to be
Immutable
Impossible
It's destiny
Pure lunacy
Incalculable
Inseparable
And for the last time
You're everything that I want and asked for
You're all that I dream
Who wouldn't be the one you love
Who wouldn't stand inside your love
Protected and the lover of . . .

* 

Her voice trailed off when she saw shadows through the golden cascade of her hair, walking down the hall toward her cell. She didn't bother trying to push herself up, with her arms bound up she would end up just rolling around or flopping like a fish out of water, so she watched as the hulking image of Dale and some female orderly who looked like Dale in a wig materialized in front of her cell door. Dale slid his card and there was the click of the light switching over and the beep announcing the door was opening. Dale frowned as he stepped over to Harley while the woman pushed a wheelchair into the room behind him. “Come along Dr. Quinzel.” Dale nudged her arm with his knuckles gently.

Harley narrowed her eyes. “Didn’t I tell you last time you was in here to call me Harley or Miss Quinn...not Quinzel?” Harley didn't move a muscle except to keep glaring up at Dale through her hair.

Dale sighed. “Yes you did Miss Quinn. Sorry, it's late. Let's get you in the chair.”

Harley rolled away putting her back to Dale and his female companion.

“Did you see Jack?” she asked with her back to him.

Dale sighed. “Yes Miss Quinn and he's fine.”

Harley grinned rolling back over. “Did he ask about me?”

Dale sighed again. Harley wondered briefly about how much sighing Dale did on his job and that he really should talk to someone about his work time stress. “Miss Quinn, let's get you into your chair and then I will answer you question, but only if you agree to no fighting me.”

Harley beamed at him. “Of course!”

Harley let Dale lift her up, then pick her up by her coat straps to place her in the chair. He made sure she was comfortable before he strapped her down. She tilted her head back to look upside down at the woman holding the chair's handles. “What's your name?” she asked with a smile.

The woman smiled at her. For such a large brute of a woman, she had a kind smile. “Sandra.”

Harley smiled sweetly. “I'm Harley, don't let anyone tell you different.”

Sandra smiled. “Of course.”

Dale made a grunt that was accompanied by a frown.

Sandra just rolled her eyes. “Calling her by a name she prefers isn't that big a deal Dale.”

“I guess so.” Dale rubbed the back of his neck looking annoyed. Harley bounced slightly in her chair. “You said you would tell me what Jack said.”

Dale flushed. “I ain't repeating everything he said...he was a little inappropriate.”
Harley grinned, her cheeks turning red as Dale continued. “But he said to say he loves you.”

Harley swooned. “Oh Jack. I love him too.”

Dale rolled his eyes motioning for Sandra to follow him.

Harley inhaled, but Dale quickly turned to put a hand over her mouth. “Miss Quinn, it's late, some of the other patients are sleeping and I don't want you yelling in the hopes that Mr. Wayne hears you.”

Harley sighed and pouted. “Fine.”

They started to move when Harley took another breath. Clearly Dale was faster than he looked as he twisted around and covered her mouth. “Miss Quinn,” he warned her with narrowed eyes.

Harley pouted, but then licked his hand. Dale snatched his hand away with a disgusted face, but it was Sandra who reached down and laid a large hand on Harley's shoulder. “Miss Quinn, please no shouting. How about if you behave, I will take a message to Mr. Wayne for you.”

Harley dropped her head back to smile at Sandra. “You mean it?”

“Cross my heart.” Sandra smiled kindly.

Harley giggled. “Okay I'll be quiet.”

Dale sighed. “Thank God,” he muttered and started to walk again.

*  

They made their way through the dimly lit halls traveling by a few other patients. One, a young blonde woman with what Harley would describe as a lovely angel's face was sitting cross-legged in front of her cell door. When she saw Harley being wheeled by the young woman waved. “Hey! Hi! I'm Barbara!!”

Harley leaned forward as much as she could. “HI! I'm Harley!”

Barbara stood up as Harley moved past her. “Can we be friends?” she called after Harley.

Harley frowned in confusion, but yelled back. “Sure!”

Dale sighed, again. “Barbara, you're supposed to be getting ready for bed.”

Barbara grinned. “I will Dale. I promise.”

Dale shook his head as they continued by with a snort. “You don't wanna be friends with that one Miss Quinn.”

Harley frowned. “Why not?”

They had arrived at the elevator and Dale pushed the button. “She killed her parents.”

“Oh?” Harley leaned forward trying to look back, but she was pinned to her chair by the additional straps. “That's interesting,” Harley said in a tone that sounded too curious to Dale's ears.

*  

Once they arrived, Harley was wheeled into Crane's office. Since it had grown dark outside, he had
turned on a lamp on his desk. The lamp reminded Harley of an old fashion banker's lamp with an amber shade. The light cast the rest of the office in darkness. He was writing when she was turned to face him. Without looking up, Crane said softly.

“Remove her jacket and please cuff her to the chair.”

Dale and Sandra set about doing what the doctor asked without a word. Harley didn't move except to help them remove her jacket and calmly placed her left hand on the chair to be cuffed to it. She watched Crane who continued to write as the orderlies stepped outside of the office. Crane looked up only when Dale and Sandra had stepped out and Harley sat in silence.

“Now, I was told you like to be called Harley?” Crane asked in a soft voice as he set his pen down and steepled his fingers.

Harley nodded. “Yes.”

“Have you had dinner yet?” Crane asked, standing up with a slight lift to one eyebrow.

Harley frowned. This was starting off as a strange session. “No.”

Crane nodded and walked to the door pulling it open where Dale and Sandra were waiting. “Dale, please fetch a tray of food for Miss Quinn.”

Dale nodded. “Yes sir, Doctor Crane.”

Crane closed the door and went back to his desk and sat. “Now Miss Quinn. I am Dr. Jonathan Crane. I will be your primary doctor as well as your fiance's doctor.”

Harley beamed. “You talked to Jack?”

“Yes, yes I did this afternoon. Jack has agreed to help me with my research at the same time that I am treating him. In exchange I have offered him some...incentive.” Crane smiled.

Harley frowned. “What research, doc? I read some of your papers when I was a student. You study fear.”

Crane smiled with genuine pleasure. “Why yes, Miss Quinn. I did read that you have a degree in psychiatry.”

Harley nodded. “Yes, I do.”

Crane smiled. “Interesting. Why do you not want to use your birth name and the title you earned?”

Harley frowned. “Because I'm not her anymore.”

Crane lifted a brow in question. “Really? Is Harleen then a separate person from Harley? The woman you have become...become for Jack?”

Harley gave Crane a withering look. “I didn't become Harley for Jack...I became Harley because of Jack. He opened me up...showed me that there was more...that life is a joke and we all run around taking it too seriously. Harleen was weak, scared...”

Crane was calm, but he jumped on the word. “Scared?”

Harley nodded and continued. “She was scared of her step-father, scared of the world...scared of, well...everything, but Jack showed me I was strong and powerful and there was nothing for me to be
scared of..."

Crane nodded. “Interesting.”

Harley licked her lips. “You said something about research?” She was trying to pull him away from the subject of her and Harleen...

“Good, good. Yes, Jack has agreed to help me in my research. I was hoping that perhaps I could persuade you to help as well. Dr. Arkham has given me full freedom to treat you both...” Crane stopped as there was a knock at the door. “Ah...your dinner.”

He stood up and walked to the door, opened it to reveal Dale standing there with a tray of food. From the smell, which made Harley’s stomach growl loudly, it was chicken and gravy, corn and to her surprise, a glass of chocolate milk. Crane held the door open and Dale brought the tray over, balancing it on her wheelchair. Dale picked up a steaming cup of tea and handed it to Dr. Crane. “I thought you might like some of your tea Dr. Crane,” Dale said solemnly.

Crane took the tea with a slight nod. “Thank you Dale.”

Dale smiled just a little before he left. Crane inclined his head. “Please eat, Miss Quinn.”

Harley frowned, but she was starving so she went ahead and dug in. “So what kind of help are you wanting for your research?” she asked taking a bite of chicken.

Crane strolled around the office slowly, but careful to stay in Harley’s view the whole time. She studied him as he moved about. He was well dressed; Jack would appreciate that she thought, but there was something...creepy, unsettling about him. Crane motioned very little with his hands as he spoke. “It will mostly be simple participation in some tests...just to get some basic...mental readings, nothing more. “

Harley frowned her fork hovering just in front of her mouth. “That’s it, just some tests?”

Crane smiled softly. “Just some tests.”

Harley reached forward taking her glass of milk. “I...I guess that's fine.”

Crane’s smile widened. “Good, good. Now...I would like to ask you about why you came to have yourself committed last night.”

Harley set her glass down. “I came because Jack was here.”

Crane had taken his seat again and took a sip of his tea. “So you wanted to be committed? Why not just visit?”

Harley stared down at her tray. “That wouldn't have been enough. I need to be with Jack. You...you wouldn't understand, it's more than love. It's not that simple. Jack and I need each other. We haven't been separated since the day we met.”

She gazed at Crane across his desk, the intensity of her gaze trying to communicate to him the depth of the love that she and Jack shared. “It's not...” She frowned struggling for the words. “I would die for him. He means everything to me. It's more than love doctor...more than that. What we have is something more...transcendent?” She frowned clearly not happy with what she had said, but not sure how else to say it.

Crane nodded. “Interesting. Is that why you beat poor Agatha so badly...this need to be with Jack?”
Harley nodded. “Yes. I love him.” She shook her head. “Love is such a weak word...I...I...” Harley struggled to make herself understood, but Crane put his hand up. “I think I understand. Jack said much the same thing. Well...interesting. We shall begin testing tomorrow, Miss Quinn.”

Crane stood walking over to the door, but before he opened the door Crane smiled at her. “By the way Miss Quinn, what are you afraid of?”

Harley didn't hesitate in answering. “Losing Jack.” Though after the words had left her mouth she wondered if she had done the right thing by admitting that.

Crane smiled. “Interesting.” He nodded opening the door. “Dale, Sandra, you may take Miss Quinn back to her room as soon as she is finished with her meal.”

* *

That night Crane sat in his office reading over his notes that he had taken on both Jack Wayne and Dr. Harleen Quinzel. Their biggest fear seemed to be the thought of not being together, of losing each other. Interesting as well as being something he could play with to a great extent since he had both of them under his care. Crane tapped his pen against his lips in thought. He would inject them both, starting tomorrow and monitor their reactions to his fear toxin, as well as setting up situations to test the toxin's effectiveness and their fear, their reactions.

Crane smiled. It was nice that Arkham wanted nothing to do with the patients on the sixth floor—it allowed him a whole floor of test subjects as well as unfettered access to everything he needed to test and develop his toxin. This really was going to be quite enjoyable.

* *

The next morning after breakfast, which consisted of lukewarm oatmeal, toast and milk, (breakfast was brought to Jack's cell though he was told if he behaved himself he would be allowed to take meals with the other patients in a day or two) Jack was allowed outside. He was strapped in his jacket then strapped firmly to the wheelchair, but Crane had insisted that Jack be wheeled out into the gardens for some fresh air before their session that day. Once outside, Jack would be set free for a limited amount of time, allowed to mingle with a handful of the other patients that resided on the sixth floor.

Dale was wheeling him through the halls to the elevator before he would take him outside.

“Dale, we're friends correct?” Jack dropped his head back over the back of the wheelchair to look up at Dale. Dale glanced down. “No, we're not Mr. Wayne.”

“Oh come on Dale!!! Be my friend!” Jack stuck his bottom lip out, looking like a child.

Dale rolled his eyes. “Why don't you just tell me what you want Mr. Wayne, instead of trying to be friends?”

“Can you wheel me by Harley's room?” Jack smiled innocently.

Dale sighed. “No.”

“Why not?” Jack pouted.

“Dr. Crane has given orders that until he has decided one way or another that you are both “safe,” you are not allowed to see each other,” Dale explained in a tired voice as he wheeled his charge down the hall where the elevator was located.
“Oh come on Dale, how would he know? Besides, he did promise me Harley.” Jack pouted.

Dale sighed. “He would know and he promised after the sessions, not before.”

“Could you give her a message?” Jack asked hopefully.

Dale sighed. “I might, just tell me the message and this time make it clean.”

Jack grinned and Dale groaned as Jack said. “Tell her I love her.”

“Fine.”

*

Jack frowned. “How does a crazy person travel through the woods.”

Dale grunted in response. Jack cheerfully continued. “They take the psychopath!”

Jack laughed, but Dale gave no response except to keep pushing the wheelchair along.

Dale and Jack made it to the bottom floor without Jack getting himself into trouble, though he had told Dale several jokes that had fallen flat...either Dale had no sense of humor...Jack grinned to himself or the man was just that good at not laughing. That had to be it! Dale was in desperate need of someone to make him laugh and Jack decided he was just going to have to find a way to do that before he left the asylum.

Dale wheeled Jack down a hall to a door that opened up from the back of the main building. Jack paid attention as Dale scanned his employee card, followed by a buzz and a light switched over to green opening the door.

Today was a heavy overcast day, the sky a perpetual grey with the threat of rain in the air. The daylight (and not being drugged in the back of an ambulance) allowed Jack to really achieve a proper look at the asylum grounds. The grounds were not made up of simply one large building, but were actually several large Gothic style buildings littered throughout a vast, fenced in estate. Jack could see that there were winding paths leading to each of the buildings, all with little metal signs in front of them announcing the title or function of the building.

Dale wheeled Jack along an old grey paved path in need of repairs (so the wheelchair ride wasn't exactly smooth), turning around the side of one of the buildings. Jack noticed that there were guard towers located all over the grounds making the place look much like a maximum security prison, albeit with trees and shrubbery. Jack gazed above him at the towers, but only a handful had anyone patrolling. The few guards that Jack could see were armed, but they were too far away for Jack to precisely determine what sorts of weapons they carried. He would assume nonlethal since this place was technically a hospital. As they turned another corner, Jack saw the “gardens.”

They were not actually gardens, but instead were a building, a botanical garden, sealed off behind glass walls. Jack frowned. “What was this place before it was an asylum?”

Dale muttered. “Used to be the Arkham family estate. This place has more secrets and hidden areas than...nevermind, shouldn't have said that.”

Jack smiled, but said nothing.

There were two armed guards at the entrance to the gardens, and unlike the orderlies, the two guards were dressed in black slacks and grey shirts with Arkham embroidered across the shoulders and
pocket with talkies hooked on their belts and ball caps with the asylum name across the top. Jack noted they were armed with tasers, nothing deadly...nothing permanent. Jack smiled. They both nodded to Dale.

“Hey Dale, what lunatic you got there?” One of the guards, a sandy blonde with a mole on his cheek that made Jack think the man had a dead dung beetle on his face, motioned at Jack

Dale frowned. “I told you not to call them that Jason.”

“Whatever Dale,” Jason muttered. The other guard had a chiseled chin and dark mocha skin, didn’t say a word. He just smiled, opening the door so Dale could wheel Jack inside. The inside of the building was overflowing with greenery and winding brick paths, and there were even a few benches. Inside there were maybe four patients including Jack. Dale rolled him around to where there were other wheelchairs sitting empty. Dale pulled Jack around and unfastened his straps, then released him from the jacket.

“Behave yourself Mr. Wayne...please.” Dale gave Jack a significant look.

Jack grinned brightly. “I will behave like I was in church Dale, my friend.”

Dale narrowed his eyes. “Why do I suspect you don't go to church.”

Jack laughed. “So Dale, who are my fellow crazies?”

Dale sighed. “Mr. Wayne, please—we refer to everyone here as patients.”

Jack groaned dropping his shoulders. “Okay fine, my fellow patients.”

Dale took a breath. “All right, the bald man there is Victor Zsasz over there, Aaron Halzinger, Robert Greenwood and Abigail O'Shay. They are all sensitive, so please, do not ask why they are in here.”

Jack grinned slowly and Dale sighed. “Please Mr. Wayne.”

It was Jack's turn to sigh. “Ooh, okay fine.”

*

Inside the asylum, Harley was being escorted to the common room by Sandra who was telling Harley what she was allowed to do in the common room. Harley was wearing little white slippers along with her black and white striped dress and her long blonde hair was loose and curling softly around her shoulders. She wasn't in a straightjacket, nor was she handcuffed, she only had Sandra with her, walking close behind her.

“We have board games, a television—though you aren't allowed to watch the news, so don't ask. If you want the station changed, you do need to ask a nurse or an orderly. We have sketch paper, coloring books and crayons, no pens or pencils. Though you are lucky, today is ice cream day! So everyone gets a snack of ice cream as a special treat. You will be sharing the room today with Barbara, Linda, Jervis, and Tabitha. We prefer the patients didn't bother each other about why you were committed, but as along as you all behave...” Sandra shrugged.

Harley nodded, then sighed softly. “No Jack?”

Sandra gave Harley a sympathetic look. “I'm sorry, Dr. Arkham thinks you both should remain separated for at least another couple of days. After that, who knows.” Sandra gave her an
encouraging smile.

Harley's bottom lip trembled. “I need to see him.”

Sandra frowned. “I'm sorry Miss Quinn.”

“Call me Harley.” Harley angrily wiped a tear away with the heel of her hand. Sandra frowned. “Maybe, if you want, I could take him a message for you?”

Harley turned around so quickly that the much larger woman took a startled step back. “Would you? Really?”

Sandra nodded. “Yes, just...don't tell anyone.”

“No, no, of course!! Thank you Sandra, thank you!!” Harley threw her arms around Sandra. Sandra smiled blushing. “Ah, let's get you to the common room.”

*

The common room wasn't anything special, Harley decided within a few seconds of passing through the door. The room was painted plain white, with several windows that had the wire frame embedded within a reinforced plastic frame. There were several plain wooden chairs around the room and several plain wooden tables with easily washable white plastic surfaces. There was a TV in the corner of the room up on the wall, an old fashioned RCA TV. Harley saw Barbara, her bobbed blonde hair bouncing as she rocked her head back and forth to music that wasn't playing, sitting at a table coloring. The other patients were scattered around the room. When Barbara saw Harley, her face lit up and she motioned Harley over with an excited smile on her face.

“New Friend!! Come here, come here, sit with me!”

Harley glanced back at Sandra who gave her an encouraging smile and motioned her into the room. Harley walked over pulling out the chair across from Barbara. She sat down and raised her hand in a little wave feeling as if she were back in preschool.

“Hi, I'm Harley.” Harley smiled.

Barbara grinned as she thrust her hand out to Harley. “I remember! Wow, you are so pretty! I'm Barbara Kean, but everyone calls me Babs.”

“Babs. I like it.” Harley giggled and took her offered hand.

Babs grinned. “Thank you. Does anyone call you Harls?”

Harley nodded. “Sometimes.”

Babs continued to grin taking her hand back. “So, I know we're not suppose to ask, but whatcha in for? I just have to know because you don't look like you belong here.” Babs giggled. “Me? I killed my parents.”

Harley grinned. “You don't look like you belong here either.”

The two young women giggled like they were sharing secrets in homeroom before Harley answered. “I attacked the receptionist so they would commit me. My fiance is here for beating a man into a coma at our engagement party. I wanted to be with him.”

Bab's expression became filled with wonder. “That is so beautiful! True love!! I love it. So you're
here for true love?"

Harley nodded. “Yes...”

Babs looked at her, tilting her head one way and then another, her round blue eyes looked slightly empty, but she said quietly, “You and him...it's deeper than love, isn't it? You have secrets don't you? Bloody secrets. I can tell. I can see blood in your eyes. I like that. We are going to make great friends!” Babs handed Harley a green crayon before she went back to her own coloring. “So, tell me all about your fiance.”

Harley took the crayon as Babs scooted the coloring book she had been using into the middle of the table so both women could color. The book was a generic coloring book full of clowns and circus animals. Babs had given all the clowns on the two pages bloody eyes, the red crayon smeared angrily across the eyes of every clown.

Harley gnawed her bottom lip before she spoke. “He is handsome...so handsome...like a prince from a fairy story. Tall, lean and he likes to dress well and he has the bluest eyes. You can just become lost in his eyes. He likes to wear eye makeup and for me to paint his nails...and he is so talented! He can sing, dance, play the piano, he's fantastic in bed and knows how to kill someone...”

Harley blushed and giggled; she hadn't meant to say that last part.

Babs glanced over at her smiling broadly and pointed her crayon at Harley. “I know...there is blood on you. I like that in a person.”

Harley giggled before she continued, coloring in the hair of a clown with the green crayon Babs had given her. “But the best part about Jack is the way he thinks. Nothing matters except us, him and me...everything else...society, the “good” people of Gotham, civilization, all of it is an illusion...they are all hypocrites...so it doesn't really matter what we do...it's all one big joke because when it comes down to it, no one is really civilized and none of it really matters because everyone ends up in the same place...”

“Arkham?” Babs asked which caused both women to laugh, but Babs' eyes lit up. “I can see why you love him!!

Harley smiled softly, dreamily. “Yeah. I can't live without him.”

Babs sighed like a love sick girl. “I'm in love too.”

Harley started coloring the hair of another clown, deciding each of them on the page would have green hair. “Oh, who?”

Babs pointed across the room where a lovely dark skinned woman with jet black hair sat on the very uncomfortable looking couch, her arms and legs crossed, and glared at the television on the wall. There was some sort of game show playing and the woman watching did not seem happy about it.

Babs grinned. “That's Tabitha. She likes to kill people too, but I think her lawyer is the one that got her sent here. Anyway...I think she's dreamy. Though I'm still in love with my fiance too, so it's a bit of a pickle.”

“Fiance?” Harley asked glancing up. Barbara nodded. “Yeah, he works for the Gotham PD.”

Harley frowned, shaking her head slightly at Babs' complicated love life.

*
Jack strolled around the botanical garden, his hands behind his back. The garden was really nicely kept up, which, considering the state of the asylum itself, Jack found surprising. The plant-life was lush and green, with just the right amount of flowers to give the place a little color. Jack could tell by the architecture of the greenhouse that it had to date back from at least the 1870's. As his eyes slowly took in his surroundings, Jack looked as if he had not a care in the world while he looked for every escape route, but there were guards at every door. Jack sighed. He had thought briefly about escaping and finding Harley...even if he were caught and hauled back to his room and sedated, it would be worth it for one kiss, one hug... but right now, as he studied his situation, he knew it was an impossible dream. He was frowning in frustration, watching two of the guards talking when a voice behind him said. “Don't try it, you'll just end up in solitary and believe me; you don't want that.”

Jack turned to face a slim, bald man with dark brown eyes. The man held himself with an easy grace, but Jack recognized a fellow killer easily by the way the man held himself, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice.

The man smiled at Jack, holding out his hand in greeting. “I'm Victor, Victor Zsasz—everyone calls me Zsasz.”

Jack took the offered hand. “Jack, Jack Wayne.”

Zsasz blinked. “I had heard a Wayne was here. You're like a minor celebrity, one of the Gotham elite among us crazies. All of us are nobodies, but you, you are one of Gotham's elite.” The man spoke without ire or envy, simply making a statement it seemed to Jack.

Jack put his arms out and performed a stage bow. “That would be me.”

Zsasz grinned. “The rumor mill's been spinning about you. Did you know that man you attacked? He died. Just this morning.”

Jack shrugged. “Good.”

Zsasz chuckled. “All of us are killers here, or violent...too violent for polite society. We're all insane here. Don't fit in. Still surprises me you're here, though.”

Jack laughed. “Oh, I guess I've been walking that fine line for a while. My big brother's been looking for a reason to stick me in here. You know, the family shame, and I guess I gave him one. But you know my friend, Zsasz you said?”

Zsasz nodded. And Jack continued. “Zsasz, All those people out there claiming to be sane, they are all just prisoners...sanity is a prison of the mind. Little cogs in a big machine that is grinding them to dust.” Jack tapped the side of his head. “Harley and I aren't sick, we're just free.”

Zsasz chuckled. “I like the way you think, Mr. Wayne.”

Jack smiled. “Just call me Jack.”

Zsasz nodded. “Jack. So how is Arkham treating you so far?” Both men turned and started to stroll down the path. Jack smiled clasping his hands behind his back. For a moment his mind drifted to thoughts of Harley...

Jack sighed. “Terrible. My fiancee is here too, but they won't let me see her. I really, really, really need to be with her. And I really need a drink and a cigarette. “

The two men started to walk along one of the paths that curved toward the center of the greenhouse.
“Might be able to fix the cigarette issue.” Zsasz grinned, but then he tilted his head. “So your fiancee is here? Really? Both of you here, how odd. No offense. What floor is she on? If you don't mind my asking?” Zsasz's face was etched with kind concern.

Jack smiled thinking about Harley. “Same floor. She heard me singing on the way to the showers and called out to me. She's close.”

Zsasz frowned in wonder. “She is one of the sixth floor residents? Wow, interesting. Do you know what she did or did you two do something together?”

Jack shook his head, but he smiled. “Whatever she did, I bet it was glorious. She is like a...we...” Jack laughed. “She is my little murder kitten. Everything she does is perfect.”

Zsasz quirked a brow at Jack's words, but he replied. “Arkham will probably keep you away from her as long as possible, especially if you two need each other. He is a bit of an ass like that. Doesn't like the patients to have “relationships.”’’ Here Zsasz signed finger quotes in the air before he continued. “But there are only a few of us on the sixth floor...we're the dangerous ones.” Zsasz grinned. “They don't like to let us all hang out together at the same time, in the same place, but there aren't that many of us so you might get a chance to be with her eventually and who knows, you get a orderly or nurse on your side...”

Jack muttered. “I don't like eventually. I need to be with her now.” He frowned, his eyes going cold but then he seemed to shake himself out of his mood and smiled, folding his arms behind him, holding his elbows. “So we're the dangerous ones you said? How many of us are there on the old sixth floor?”

Zsasz stopped walking for a moment, glancing toward the glass ceiling of the greenhouse. “I believe with you and your fiancee that brings our grand number to twelve.”

“Interesting,” Jack said noncommittally.

“So who's your doctor?” Zsasz asked as they continued to walk.

Jack was still gazing up at the ceiling as he strolled next to Zsasz. “Crane.”

Zsasz stopped in his tracks to stare at Jack. “Is he your fiancee's doctor too?”

Jack frowned giving Zsasz his full attention. “Not sure, why?”

Zsasz gave Jack a serious look. “Be careful with him. He can't be...”

Jack was about to ask what he meant when Dale called him. “Mr. Wayne, time for your session.”

*  

Bruce wasn't paying a lot of attention to the video he was watching on the computer. He was both angry and frustrated. He was in his office at Wayne Enterprises where the board had called a meeting, a vote really, to decided the fate of Jack Wayne's continued presence on the board of directors. Bruce wasn't sure why he was surprised. After the last attempted vote to get his brother off, being committed to Arkham...by him...it was inevitable, but it didn't make the event any less frustrating.

His thoughts drifted to Jack and Harley, but more specifically to seeing his brother...the way Jack had begged for Bruce to help him, the look on Jack's face, the pain in his little brother's eyes. That had hurt. Jack hadn't begged Bruce like that since they were children. Bruce leaned his elbows on
the desk dropping his head into his hands, his fingers threading through his hair in pain and frustration. He loved his little brother, he loved and cared for Jack deeply, but he didn't know what to do. He sensed he was losing Jack, maybe for good this time. No, he couldn't accept that. Bruce swallowed down his pain when his phone buzzed. Bruce looked up. He had set his cellphone on his desk near the photo of him, his brother and his family in happier times. Bruce glanced at the photo, his eyes lingering on the smiling image of his little brother as he picked the phone up. The caller was unknown. Bruce frowned, but answered it. “Wayne here.”

“Bruce.”

Bruce froze; it was Selina. “Selina?”

“Hi Bruce. I...I heard what happened.”

Bruce squeezed his eyes shut. “What do you mean? What are you talking about?”

He could almost feel Selina sigh against his ear. “Jack and his fiancee...I heard that you committed them both.”

Bruce sighed, seeming to deflate. “Yes. How did you...”

“Word travels fast Bruce...and it was on the local news. I wanted to call not just to tell you how sorry I am, but you warn you.” Selina sounded tired.

“What are you talking about? Warn me about what?” Bruce sat up straighter.

“Arkham. Just...it's not what it appears to be Bruce. I just want you to be careful, keep an eye on your family. Don't trust anyone,” Selina hissed.

Bruce closed his eyes anger creeping into his voice. “Not even you?”

“Especially not me.” Selina answered back and hung up.

Bruce sighed dropping the phone to the desk. He wasn't sure what to think. Arkham wasn't safe? He rubbed the bridge of his nose. It wouldn't hurt to look into the asylum...

* 

Jack was wheeled in to see Dr. Crane, just like yesterday, in a straightjacket, and restrained to the chair. Today Crane had the curtains open on his office window, letting in the grey, watery light. The bank lamp on his desk was lit casting a warm amber glow; spilled along the desk were several scattered sheets of paper. The unorganized, scattered papers looked oddly out of place in the otherwise extremely neat room.

Crane was reading and writing vigorously in a notebook, when, after the knock, and his confirmation, Dale wheeled Jack inside.

Today Crane was wearing a pale blue-grey suit with very subtle white stripes, a light, almost gold dress shirt and matching tie. He smiled when Jack was wheeled in and left in front of his desk. Dale left the room, but almost as soon as he walked out another large man (who reminded Jack of a pro wrestler he had seen once on TV...Jack wracked his brain...the wrestler had been named Triple H), took up a position behind Jack. Jack frowned looking up at the new orderly, who was staring straight ahead like a soldier. Crane snapped his notebook closed and reached over for the cup of tea that sat steeping on his desk.
Jack gave Crane a quizzical look. “Not going to release me today doc and what's with the Triple H guard?”

Crane smiled. “Not today Mr. Wayne. Today we begin the first of our “tests” that you agreed to, along with your fiancee, Miss Quinn.”

Jack twitched. “You are seeing Harley too?”

Crane smiled. “Yes. She will be vital to our...sessions.” Crane took a sip of his tea before setting it down again and standing up. Jack wasn't scared, but he felt something, a strange pressure in his chest telling him that something wasn't right. Crane crouched down behind his desk. Jack heard the sound of a drawer opening and he could see Crane set a small case on the desk, then...a ball gag?

Jack narrowed his eyes. “What are those for?”

Jack indicated with a tilt of his head the items on the desk.

Crane smiled. “All part of what's to come.”

With that said, Crane made a motion with his head toward Triple H (as Jack was thinking about him now), and the next thing Jack knew, Triple H had grabbed his head and was holding him steady, Triple H's large beefy hands wrapped around his head, the man's thick fingers pressing into his skull. Jack started to struggle and snarl, his thrashing caused the wheelchair to squeak, rattle and creak.

“What is this?? What are you doing!??!” Jack yelled, but he was unable to break free of the orderly's grasp.

Crane picked up the gag. “Just relax Mr. Wayne, this is all part of your cure.”

Ignoring Crane's assurance, Jack continued to struggle. Crane stepped closer, but Triple H was strong, and with the rest of his body secured and tied down, Jack was helpless. Crane pressed the rubber ball hard against Jack's lips and teeth trying to force the gag into Jack's mouth. Jack refused to open, the ball gag forcing Jack's lips against his teeth cutting the back of his lips, until Triple H grabbed a hold of Jack's jaw with one hand, the other large meaty hand grabbed Jack's hair and pulled, forcing his head back. Jack struggled, but he could do little as Triple H forced his mouth open. Once Crane had the rubber ball in Jack's mouth, Triple H held Jack's head allowing Crane to secure the gag in place.

“There, that's not just so you won't do a great deal of yelling, but it will also prevent you from cracking any of your teeth Mr. Wayne since the effects of the drug can be...exciting.”

Crane stepped back from his patient, running his fingers through his hair, straightening his hair up after the brief struggle with Jack. Crane stepped over to his desk and picked up the case he had set there. Jack watched him, his blue eyes wild with rage as the doctor opened the case and held up a syringe to the light. Jack saw that the syringe was full of a softly glowing orange liquid.

Crane turned back around to face Jack, walking closer. “This will be the first of a series of our more “extreme” treatments, along with a few more traditional treatments which will be starting tomorrow; ice baths, electrical shock therapy, the tried and true treatments for the insane, but tonight Jack, tonight is when we begin the first of our more, radical sessions.” Crane gave Jack a smile. It was a simple, thin lipped smile, but there was something in his eyes that was cold, calculating and maybe just a sliver of crazy thrown into the mix Jack thought.

Crane continued, leaning against the back of his desk as he spoke.
“Now Jack, you say you have no fear, that nothing makes you scared. I find that very interesting. I am a professor of psychiatry, specializing in phobias. I taught for a while, but then realized to really study fear that a place like this...” Here Crane gestured around him. “Here was where I needed to be. Inducing terror has always intrigued me. Even as a boy, I liked to frighten people, animals, it was all the same to me...what I was interested in was what made them scared and how they reacted to that fear. I became obsessed with fear's crippling power. These experiments that you and your fiancee, Dr. Quinzel, will be helping me with are experiments on fear and its subsequent effects. And while you are both going to be helping me with my research, perhaps I will be helping you.” Crane smiled.

Jack stared at him, his blue eyes full of fury as Crane brought the needle up to his neck and injected the serum. Crane spoke while watching the orange fluid enter Jack's veins. “This is just the first, but I also have a stronger serum and I am working on a gas form. Perhaps, if we're lucky, we will be able to test the gas very soon, but for now, the injections will have to do.”

Jack returned to consciousness slowly and painfully. Whatever drug Crane had pumped into his system had left only lingering effects in his blood, though his body on the other hand ached like a son-of-a-bitch. Jack could feel it, something crawling through him, but other than that he didn't really feel too much from the drug. As he laid on his side, waiting and listening, he realized that he wasn't in his cell. He could feel the vastness of space around him, indicating he was in a bigger room. He was still dressed in his Arkham attire, but he was neither in a straight jacket nor was he handcuffed. Jack's eyes fluttered opened slowly. He felt a little woozy and his heart rate seemed elevated, probably the drug in his system. He was lying on his side on a dirty floor; he could feel the gritty texture of dirt and God only knew what else under his cheek. His olfactory sense was almost immediately assaulted by the scents of decay, dust, old water and the sickly sweet and grotesquely sour smell of death. The next thing that Jack became aware of was that there was little light. Jack shifted and started to push himself up to a sitting position when his fingers brushed up against something metal that rolled across the floor. Jack reached out for the item and grabbed it, realizing at that moment that what he had was a flashlight.

Jack sat up and turned the flashlight on, panning it around the room. He looked to be in the remains of a hallway, the walls a sickly grey and white with large chucks of paint peeling off the walls and exposing brick underneath. The light washed over a few items in the room, what looked like an old leaning wooden chair, and at the very far end of the hall he thought he saw an old piano. He ran the flashlight around to reveal windows, but they were all boarded up, the only reason any light at all came into the room was because of the small gaps where the boards didn't quite cover the windows.

As Jack examined where he was, he could hear the sounds of the building settling around him, the soft moans and creaks of the ancient building shifting and adjusting itself to the cooler night air outside. Jack frowned; how long had he been out? It had still been daylight when he was escorted to Dr. Crane's office. When Jack got to his feet he was sure he heard the sounds of whimpering. Jack went very still, listening. Yes, he heard it again...female and there was something familiar about the sound...

Jack's heart slammed against his chest...Harley...he was sure of it. It was Harley he was hearing.

*  

In another section of the same building, Harley had pushed herself into a corner of the room. She was terrified. She had come awake to find herself surrounded by shadows, crawling, creeping, slithering shadows accompanied by hisses, moans and whispers. There were shadows all around her, moving and shifting, sometimes she was sure she saw eyes, glowing red or orange, emerging from
the thick inky darkness to stare at her before they would sink back into the shadows.

Harley shivered. She was in her Arkham clothing, but she was barefoot. She felt exposed, terrified, a deep bone aching chill rattled through her body, never had she ever felt this scared. The last thing she remembered clearly was being in Dr. Crane's office for her first official session with him...but after that everything was blurry, all the images that came to her mind seemed to melt away, slipping through her fingers and disappearing. Even now, trying to focus, her mind couldn't seem to settle on anything but her fear, the terror she was feeling was the only thing that was real, and that was all consuming.

That was the moment she heard the footsteps.

* 

Jack frowned using the light to guide him through the darkness of the place trying to follow the sounds he was hearing that he just knew were Harley. Every few steps he would have to stop as a wave of dizziness washed over him, which he was sure was being caused from the drugs in his system...he had no inkling of what Crane had injected him with, but he was positive it was not having the effect that Crane would have desired, whatever that effect was supposed to be...Jack felt mostly fine. He would find a way to use that to his advantage.

He had just passed through a doorway into another hall, this one lined with rooms, each with a heavy wooden door, all of which stood open. Jack had just run the flashlight over the doors when he heard the scream....

Jack jerked, his heart pounding in his chest, his blood racing with...fear...it was Harley.

* 

First she smelled it, a scent of rotten, spoiled earth, mud and stagnant water. As the shadow moved closer the smell became stronger, other scents making themselves noticeable, the sickly sweet smell of rotten flesh and decaying meat, the putrid scent of waste mixed with the earthy smell of rotting vegetation. A massive figure loomed out of the darkness. To Harley's drugged mind, the creature that emerged from the darkness was something from a nightmare, a hulking creature that seemed to be a melding of so many horrible nightmares that she couldn't separate them. Oozing from the chest of the creature, Harley saw the faces of her step-father and Guy, melding and oozing with the rotten, bruise colored, maggot-infused flesh of the monster before her. Their eyes moved to stare at her, their mouths opening to reveal long needle-like fangs as they both silently screamed at her, while their thick long, rotten purple tongues whipped out, their very tips caressing her skin and sending a cold chill racing to the very pit of her stomach. As she watched in horror, many fanged mouths opened up across the body of the monster; they would appear, then ooze closed again, disappearing into the sections of the monster's body that had turned into pus-colored flesh, then pushing through the darkness of undulating skin. Then just when Harley thought the creature could not become any more hideous, parts of its black and yellow, oozing body opened up to reveal the porcelain white skulls of children. Each one opened its tiny skeleton mouth and wailed.

“Mommy!!!”

Harley covered her ears and screamed.

The man standing in front of Harley didn't seem to least bit put out by her scream. If anything the sound seemed to attract him; it made him happy, excited. He wanted to hear her scream more. When she stopped screaming, he frowned. He was at least six feet four and built like a wall of solid muscle. Over his head he wore a burlap sack with round holes cut out for his eyes and on top of that he wore
a pink party hat. His clothes seemed stretched over his muscled mass, just barely covering the man and in his right hand he held a large a twelve inch long butcher's knife. He reached out one large meaty hand toward the now, non-screaming woman.

Harley's mouth was still open, but no sound was coming out. Her eyes widened in horror as the creature extended a putrid limb toward her. At first it looked like a hand, but soon the fingers split open, long sharp, disease infested claws ripped through the tips of its fingers, the flesh falling away, dropping in bloody chunks that made a wet “plopping” sounds as the gobs hit the floor. Harley started to scream again which made the big man smile. He reached over grabbing her by the arm to yank her to her feet. The woman stopped screaming again as she went limp. He lifted her up and threw her over his shoulder.

* Jack was running without really looking where he was going trying to follow the sounds of Harley's screams. She was scared...no not scared, she was terrified. He had never heard such a terrible sound as the way Harley was screaming. Jack felt his heart beating, slamming inside his chest. He had never felt anything like this before, the strange sense of loss, the feeling of control slipping. Jack snarled, fighting the sharp spike of the feeling, forcing the stress down. He could not help Harley if he wasn't himself, wasn't his best...Jack stopped, squeezing his eyes shut. “Fuck,” he snarled before he took off again, but the sounds of her screams had stopped.

Estimating where his Harley's screams of terror had emanated from, Jack arrived in a large room, and like everywhere else he had been, the windows were boarded closed. As he panned the flashlight around the room, he saw that the majority of the ceiling panels were gone, haven falling to the floor and chunks of insulation were exposed, some of the insulation hanging from the ceiling like the loose, loopy remains of intestines hung to dry, grey, dead and rotting. The rest of the ceiling was on the floor in clumps mixed with the remains of chairs and tables. Jack moved his flashlight slowly over the trash hoping to see something that would tell him that Harley had been here or where she had moved to...that she was alive at least, just something. He needed to know she was alive. The pit in his chest seemed to open and threatened to swallow him. Jack trembled, his lips twitching as if his face could not decide between a laugh and a growl.

* Crane watched the monitor, his legs crossed, and his fingers steepled in front of him. He slowly rolled his fingers, the pads of each hand touching the other going from front to back, then back again. He had several cleverly hidden cameras in the building for monitoring his experiments, which allowed him to make observations and take notes. He reached over with a contented smile to pick up his tea that he had left sitting beside the monitor, studying Jack Wayne as he began the desperate search for his fiancee. Crane was not interested in killing anyone as he watched his dependent variable pick up Dr. Quinzel and carry her off. No, this was all about creating the maximum fear, to push his patients to the brink of sanity...Crane wanted to not just obliterate fear, he wanted to control it! To use it as a weapon...and a doctor couldn't exactly continue his work if this was only about murder. Not that he didn't enjoy watching the occasional death, the victim dying not only from their injuries, but from the intensity of their fear. No, this was about study, learning and controlling. Crane took one more sip of his tea before he set it back down. Mr. Wayne was quite interesting. He had only shown a very mild reaction to the fear toxin and he actually seemed to be able to fight against it. Crane decided he needed a sample of Jack Wayne's blood.

Dr. Quinzel, on the other hand, had had an extreme reaction to the serum. That was quite interesting, quite delightful to watch and really, quite, quite beautiful. He could only imagine the horrors she was seeing based on her reactions. Her terror was quite intoxicating, almost sexual in its intensity. Dr.
Quinzel's fear was by far the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. He smiled and shivered with delight, watching her. He felt something for her he had never felt before...a kind of desire he had never felt before...it wasn't exactly that he wanted her physically, though watching her made him feel things...desires...for her...to possess...but it was her reactions, her terror...that was what drew him to her. She was perfect in her fear, a beautiful testament to what he was trying to accomplish. That was the moment when Crane decided, he didn't know how...but Dr. Quinzel was going to be his...her terror, her fear...she would be his darling, his lady...Crane smiled. His perfect terrified mistress.

Now, if he could just keep Birthday Boy on track and not lose Dr. Quinzel, Crane had so many more experiments to try on his happy couple and he wanted desperately to pursue this new feeling that Dr. Quinzel had awoken in him. Crane would let the test run as long as possible before stepping in; he would not like Birthday Boy destroying his beautiful Harleen.

Crane reached for his notebook and jotted down a few notes. He had never been happier than when he had come to work at Arkham. Arkham provided him the space, freedom and time to do his work. The estate was massive with not just the main house, but there were also several buildings that occupied the grounds of the Arkham estate, each of them having been converted to some use for the asylum, such as a separate intensive treatment building, a regular hospital building for surgery or patients who needed long term medical treatment. And that was not even counting the dormitory for doctors, nurses or other staff who pulled all-nighters on the grounds. There was also a “church” and several other buildings used for a variety of reasons, and that still left a handful of buildings unused, abandoned with no specific purpose...except for Crane and his experiments with the sixth floor patients. The abandoned buildings were usually boarded up, which gave Crane a fairly controllable environment with which to work and with the loyalty of staff members whom Crane paid extra for their work and silence, Crane now had the perfect conditions in which to work.

Crane had just written a few notes down, murmuring to himself when he looked up at the monitor to see that Birthday Boy had brought Dr. Quinzel to the heart of the building, the “lair of the monster” so to speak. Hopefully Birthday Boy would stay on track. Killing Dr. Quinzel would throw the series of experiments that Crane had planned into disarray and Crane's burgeoning feelings would not allow her death either. Crane frowned as he pressed his thin lips together.

* Harley didn't remember passing out, but the next thing that she was aware of was opening her eyes again and almost immediately wishing she could pass out once more. She shivered as a chill ran through her body. She had been stripped down to her bra and panties leaving her skin exposed to the chill of the room. Her near-nakedness made her feel vulnerable, as if the miasma of the place was seeping into her very pores and tainting her.

Harley could feel the cold metal under her back; she was on an examination table, her arms spread out and strapped down, her legs also spread and strapped down, icy metal around her ankles and wrists, the cold chill of the the metal table pushing up through her skin. Harley shifted her head trying to see how she was strapped down when she realized that there was another strap around her neck preventing her from raising her head more than a fraction. As her confused, drug addled brain struggled to understand what was happening, she realized that there was light in here, the warm flickering light of candles. She moved her head as best she could trying to see where she was being held. Harley could see from the light, there appeared to be several hundred candles, of a variety of shapes, set throughout the room. The room, had been painted white at one time, but water had damaged the walls, leaving large rust colored stains along the surface.

As Harley studied the walls, something underneath them seemed to roll, moving in a ripple as if something underneath the paint was shifting, climbing up to the ceiling. Harley's eyes widened in
fear as whatever it was shifted to crawl to the ceiling causing the white paint to swell and split open, but whatever she thought was there was gone by the time the wall would split out, leaking pus and viscous clear fluid down the walls.

Her breathing became shallow, rapid pants, her eyes widening so much that the whites showed in a broad circle around her fear filled blue eyes. Panic, nesting like a viper in her chest ready to poison her, threatened to overwhelm her thoughts. Just as as the creature she saw under the paint made it to the ceiling, it vanished, the movement stopped and once more the room seemed solid, the open wounds on the wall were gone and everything seemed to return to “normal.” Harley took several deep breaths struggling to get her panic back under control. She squeezed her eyes shut, her bottom lip and chin trembling as she fought the tears.

Harley took several more deep breaths, but the tears rebelliously seeped out from her closed eyes. “Oh Jack. I wish you were here. I miss you so much,” Harley whispered to herself as her chest and throat burned. She opened her eyes again and that was when she saw something else move into the room from the corner of her vision. Her wild eyes followed the shadow as it separated itself from the dark corner. It approached her slowly, the oozing body continuing to morph, shift as the face of Guy emerged from the pus-yellow and tar-black body. The head of Guy grinned at her accompanied by the whispered voices of children that she couldn’t quite hear.

Harley screamed.

*

Jack jerked around, turning at the sound of another scream. Jack took off at a run following what he hoped was not an echo, but her actual scream, the light from the flashlight wobbled madly showing Jack hints of open doors, abandoned wheelchairs and other miscellaneous debris scattered in front of him. Jack could feel his panic starting to rise with the beating of his heart. (He thought to himself that adrenaline must help in triggering the serum that Crane had injected him with...or at least it helped with the activation of the drug. He would have to remember that.) Jack fought the panic, shoving it down, fighting the fear the serum tried to enhance.

*

Crane sipped his tea, his second cup, with a grin watching Jack run through the halls following the sound of Dr. Quinzel's screams.

“How interesting,” he murmured softly to himself. “He is managing to remain fairly calm, seems to have remained largely unaffected by the serum. Very, very interesting.” He glanced at the next monitor where Birthday Boy had Dr. Quinzel strapped down, stripped and vulnerable, which would only increase her fear. Crane was quite happy with her reaction to the serum, better than he expected. The next sessions with her would be quite enlightening too. Crane smiled. He had such plans for her, his perfect little lovely patient. His little doll to play with...

Crane narrowed his eyes watching Birthday Boy, a patient of the sixth floor that Arkham had long since forgotten about...(Birthday Boy or Roy Salinger which was his real name, murdered 15-year-old debutante Amanda Grant. Since then he had been murdering young girls of the same age, though he was not above murdering other young women when one of the appropriate age was not available. He liked to disembowel them with a butcher's knife.) Crane had moved him to his experiment area with the promise of kills when he wanted them and all the cake he could eat. It amazed Crane that the lunatic managed to stay as muscled as he did since his diet, since taking up residence in Crane's little experiment, consisted almost exclusively of cake, birthday cake.

Crane sipped his tea before licking his lips. Birthday Boy was not under the serums influence, but he
had been given specific directions not to permanently harm Dr. Quinzel. Dr. Crane watched as Birthday Boy raised the knife over her. Crane narrowed his eyes. If Birthday Boy didn't follow procedure, he knew what the punishment would be...his reward would be most...unsavory. That was the moment the door slammed open. Crane grinned and whispered to himself, “Perfect timing.”

*

Birthday Boy held the knife up, the candlelight catching the blade and dancing along its shiny surface. In a voice that cracked from little use, since the huge monster of a man spoke rarely, Birthday Boy hissed, “Make a wish.”

Just as he brought the knife's edge down to her stomach, dragging the sharp blade in a slow careful movement along her stomach, he watched the line of red emerge from the shallow cut he made. He loved watching the way the blood oozed up through the slice, staining the pale skin Birthday Boy felt himself becoming excited. He enjoyed the blood, the cutting and the screams—most especially the screams.

Harley screamed, the claw that she saw burned through her skin turning it black. She could smell the sweet scent of cooking flesh. She looked down to see the blackness spreading over her. It wasn't the pain that had her screaming, but the monster hovering over her, the monster cutting into her with its lethal blood tipped claw, and the poison it was spreading through her veins that had Harley screaming.

That was the moment that Jack kicked the door open. He knew he had found her when he arrived at the door, because he could hear Harley’s cries on the other side. The door slammed open, ripped off its rusted hinges and toppled onto the dust and debris riddled floor with a loud crash sending up a cloud of dust. Birthday Boy stopped moving, his knife hovering over Harley's stomach, blood dripping from the blade's tip, stained with her blood. Harley was screaming and sobbing, struggling against her bonds. She hadn't even noticed that Jack was there.

Jack stood in the doorway, his eyes narrowed, the blue radiating with rage. He dropped the flashlight letting it roll away. Jack's lips curled into a smile, but it was a smile that radiated a deadly menace. His hands balled into fists as he hissed:

“Get away from her, fucker.”

Chapter End Notes

This is not how an asylum is run. Arkham is a combination of the comics, TV series Gotham and the games Arkham Asylum and Arkham City.
Hide and Seek

Jack's voice broke through the horror that Harley was experiencing, flowed over her, caressed her, and her eyes widened in hope. Her voice came out slightly cracked as she whispered aloud. “Jack?”

She rolled her head to the side and at first she only saw swirling darkness, a mass of moving, roiling sickness that shifted and twitched in place; two red eyes looked back at her, staring at her...Harley stared back, those eyes were the source of Jack's voice. She could hear Jack's voice emanating from the murk. The creature moved toward her, the sound of pieces of it coming off and hitting the ground in wet slopping chunks. But the other monster, the one with the long claws that had cut her, stepped from the darkness putting itself between her and the monster that sounded like Jack.

Harley's heart sped up, her blood pumping hot and fast through her veins, the fear toxin rushed through her making every part of her feel weak while the darkness kept moving toward her. Harley started to shake, but she knew she heard Jack's voice coming from the new horror she was seeing. Trembling, she tried again, her voice barely a whisper. “Jack?”

“Get away from her you fucker!” the shadow monster roared.

Harley heard Jack's voice again. It was him, it had to be, she told herself.

She squeezed her eyes shut and focused only on the sound of Jack's voice. “Jack,” she said softly, her one anchor inside the nightmare.

*

Jack saw Harley staring at him, but by the strange look in her eyes it was clear she wasn't seeing him, not yet. He could only imagine what she did see...

Jack's whole body was trembling. The need to have her see him, to know he had come for her, hurt, twisting the knot of pain in his chest.

“Harley.” He said her name placing all his emotions, all his feeling for her in the way he said her name. “Harley it's me, it's Jack, it's your puddin. I'm here for you.”

*

Birthday Boy stared at the intruder. The big man didn't move. This was not how it happened. He was supposed to play with his toy, not have someone distrub his playtime!! He was supposed to get the prize, the scary doctor always promised him a prize and he always got it. This was his new toy for him to play with for hours, days if he was careful. The longest he ever kept a toy was three days before they stopped being fun. But this one was espeically pretty, he wanted to make this toy last, but now this intruder was here!! Birthday Boy snarled in quickly mounting anger. This was his play time!

*

Jack quickly glanced around the room searching for a weapon. On one wall Jack saw something that made his blood run cold; a wall that looked in the dull light to be plastered with the images of girls, photographs from someone's wallet, school pictures, images cut from magazines, newspapers, each one of a pretty girl, or lovely woman, and all of them marked with what looked to be dried blood smeared across the images. There had to be hundreds of them. Jack felt...scared, for only a moment, but swiftly fought the feeling down, his eyes returning to Harley.
Harley opened her eyes again. She followed the image of the monster shadows, watching the shadows roiling like thunder clouds and edging closer. She could almost feel the thing's icy breath when it said her name again. “Harley?”

YES! It was her puddin's voice. She knew it was him. Harley shivered and clenched her eyes closed for a breath, then opened them again; she had to force herself to see Jack. Harley focused herself, staring at the monster even as looking at its horrible blackness made her want to scream and lash out. Instead, she focused on peeling back its exterior, keeping the image of Jack firmly rooted in her thoughts. The shadows seemed to melt away from his features and then she saw him, her Jack. He seemed to emerge through the shadows, the wisps of darkness pulled away from him revealing her lover.

When Harley saw him, her voice came out pained and hoarse. “Jack!!”

Birthday Boy put himself between the intruder and his toy. He was not going to lose his new toy!

Jack's eyes darted to the other wall on the opposite end of the room from the wall of women. There Jack saw just what he was looking for...the wall was hung with hundreds of knives all displayed liked prized possessions of a serial killer. Jack's grin was wicked when he saw the blades. He didn't stop to think further. Instead he dashed to the wall. Each blade was held by sets of hooks and there were hundreds of blades, knives all of shapes and sizes, each one cleaned and displayed with care. He didn't have time to assess the blades, he only had enough time to dash for them. His long legs carried him the distance quickly; Jack barely stopped himself from slamming into the wall, wrapping his hand around one of the blades and yanked it off, turning on the ball of a foot, the blade held in front of him. Jack hissed again at Birthday Boy, keeping his eyes on the large man, his gaze seemed to prevent the man from moving.

Jack growled. “I said, get away from her you fucker!!”

Despite Jack's burst of movement, Birthday Boy didn't react at first. He was not used to his toys coming for him. He always found them and he certainly wasn't accustomed to them talking back to him like this one did...usually they screamed. He liked the screams. This toy was also all wrong because it was a boy. He always had girl toys! He wasn't used to his toys being boys. He hated boys, he only liked girl toys.

Birthday Boy had watched that new toy—the wrong toy—when it ran across the room to his blades, his pretty special blades and yanked one off his perfect wall of blades. By the time the situation finally formed in his mind, allowing him to focus on what was happening, the wrong toy's hand had wrapped around a 12" granton edge cimeter knife and yanked it from the wall.

When Jack ripped the knife way from the collection, Birthday Boy finally reacted. He roared. “MINE!! MY GIFTS!!”

He lumbered toward Jack with his butcher's knife raised. Jack dashed forward dropping to his knees and slid across the floor. The ravaged and splintered floor torn up the knees of Jack pants, ripping into his kneecaps and splitting the skin, but Jack never noticed as he used the blade like a wakizashi, holding the handle with both hands in order to put as much power as he could behind his strike. It was slightly awkward to hold the blade like he was, but Jack was willing to give up on ease for a heavy slash. He slid past Birthday Boy, the blade ripping along the larger man's side and hip. Birthday Boy roared at the burning pain of the sharp blade cutting through his flesh. He turned
around and slashed at Jack; the large man's strike was heavy and powerful, but ultimately clumsy. Jack rolled to his feet and dodged to the right, then the left, as Birthday Boy slashed down once, then twice, trying to cut the smaller man down.

*

Across the room, Harley was struggling against her bindings. She could see the monster, its body was a roiling mess of hissing cries, the skulls of babies pushing through the thick viscous mass of its body to scream at her. Harley tried not to scream in terror this time, though her whole body was shaking with the effort. The fear toxin in her system pushed her to her limits, burning through her blood. But Jack seemed to shine in her vision; she could see him and she held on to that as the monstrous mass lunged at him.

*

Birthday Boy lurched forward, his blade slicing at Jack who sprang out of the way, arching his lean body and taking a few steps back, he then used his natural gracefulness to dance forward striking out with the blade like a cobra. Birthday Boy lumbered back, the tip of the blade catching, nicking him, but not puncturing very deeply. Jack smiled, but the grin lacked any humor—it was cold and vicious.

He chuckled. “You are proof that evolution CAN go in reverse.”

Birthday Boy stumbled out of the way, the blade cutting the air in front of him. As it snapped out, it seemed to sing, slicing the air. The large man growled, the sound like rocks tumbling together in a bucket. He tried again to slash at the smaller man, but Jack danced quickly out of the way. Jack lunged forward, the two men locked arms, their blade arms pressed together. The two men struggled, their bodies doing a strange deadly dance around the room before Jack brought his foot up and kicked Birthday Boy in the stomach as hard as he could, breaking their stalemate. Jack danced back while Birthday Boy lumbered backwards, his eyes narrowing behind the sack mask. The large man moved suddenly, sprightly for his size and caught Jack by surprise, the blade of his knife cutting deep across Jack's shoulder.

Jack let out a hiss of pain, blood immediately coating his shirt causing the fabric to stick to him.

*

Harley struggled, thrashing against the bonds that held her to the table, banging against the metal. Her eyes were wild as the monster was hurting Jack! It slashed at him with its claws. She could see her Jack jumping, twisting out of the way of the monster's heavy, clumsy swipes. He was fighting back, but the monster seemed to grow, shifting its shape, the face of Guy merging with the face of her stepfather becoming a monstrous bellowing creature all sharp fangs and orange glowing eyes. The tiny skulls emerged all over its body and howled into the darkness, filling her ears with endless screams. And then the screams began to mix with the voices of Harley's victims. Harley screamed back, not for fear for herself, but for Jack, her own voice joining the others that only she could hear.

“JACK!! RUN!!” She cried, sobbing. “Jack run...please Jack!”

She was shaking hard enough that her muscles ached. The chill seeped deep into her bones, the pain, and the fear sank deeper into her very marrow, the toxin twisting and burning through her causing a burning cold that settle deeper. The toxin reached into the corners of her mind struggling to pull at the darkness there. She felt as if she would never be warm again. The cold raced through her causing Harley to shiver uncontrollably, her teeth clattering together loudly, but she would not let the monster take her lover. She would not let it hurt her Jack. Harley started to work at her arms first. She arched her head and body to see how her arms were tied down. As she struggled to see her left wrist, she
saw something dark pulsing, wrapping itself tighter around her wrist, cutting off the feeling in her arm. As she watched, whatever held her down, slithered, tightening its hold on her. She started to scream in horror feeling the icy, slimy ooze of the creature on her skin, but instead she shut her mouth tight, her teeth clashing together as she tried to keep the terror at bay and work to free herself despite the pulsing black mass cutting off the feeling to her wrist.

*  
Crane rubbed his lips together. He leaned forward in his chair, his nose almost pressed to the monitor watching as his Harleen struggled against his toxin. He frowned, his beautiful doll was still terrified. Even through the monitor Crane could see the beautiful terror in her blue eyes, but apparently seeing Jack Wayne had given her a focus to fight his toxin. The psychiatrist narrowed his eyes in thought.

“Mm...interesting, very interesting.” He muttered to himself. He would have to work on something special, just for her, a version of his toxin more potent. He smiled. She would be his muse, pushing him to create, to reach further into the darkness...to find the ultimate fear...to bring the beauty of her terror to its full potential! He sat back again, reaching forward and tapped a key on his computer, switching the view to Jack and Birthday Boy. The two men where still fighting; Jack Wayne had a bad wound along his right shoulder, deep enough that he would need stitches. Too bad the young man appeared ambidextrous, switching the blade from his right hand to his left. Crane smiled in satisfaction. He could see the blood soaking into the man's shirt. He had to admit he was impressed with how fast and skillfully Jack Wayne moved. The man was dancer in a fight, as if he were born to this sort of duel, his life against another's. That along with his ability to fight the toxin...Crane was definitely impressed. Watching him, Crane had no doubt he was about to lose Birthday Boy, which would force him to change his experiments in the future...but it was an acceptable loss. With Jack Wayne and Harleen Quinzel he felt he had just taken a new step in his studies, a new direction. Crane smiled, definitely worth the loss.

*  
Birthday Boy let out a deep chuckle at the sight of blood. He loved blood, the color, the taste...the way it felt between his fingers; which made Birthday Boy remember his prize. He glanced over his shoulder at the nearly naked woman, his smile turning into a leer at the thought of cutting her, of watching the blood ooze out and stain her pale skin...of smearing her blood on his fingers, face, rubbing it across his tongue. But his thoughts were quickly shifted when the man he was fighting sliced a blade across his wrist. Birthday Boy let out a squeak, the intense pain immediately bringing him back to this moment, and to this annoyance, this toy which wasn't acting like it should and who had come to ruin his fun. But before the large man could turn and attack, Jack twisted his body, using the whole of his torso to put as much power as he could behind his knee, connecting with Birthday Boy's ribs. The impact sent a shudder through Jack's leg, but the impact was hard enough that Birthday Boy grunted, stumbling back from Jack while grabbing his side.

Jack danced backwards before the large man could grab Jack's leg. The man glared at Jack, his eyes behind the sack mask full of rage. The giant masked man lunged forward moving swiftly for a person of his size. He slashed down with his blade, then sideways, before twisting around and slicing the blade down again, but this time at an angle, his movements quick and smooth. Jack responded in kind, twisting and dancing to avoid each slash, but as the big man over-extended himself, Jack attacked. He launched forward taking a slash at the big man with the blade he now held in his left hand. Jack's strike didn't hit like he hoped, but the tip caught the big man across the fingers, leaving a deep bloody cut that spanned the big man's knuckles and coated his fingers in blood.

Birthday Boy stumbled backward until his body slammed up against the exam table where he had Harley strapped down. The table slid across the floor and slammed into the wall. Harley cried out,
her head thumping hard against the table. She sobbed in terror when the monster slammed against her table, the sudden explosion of movement sent the creature she saw on her wrist sliding down her arm. Her eyes widened in panic, but she did the only thing she could think of to fight against it—she closed her eyes. Birthday Boy pushed off from the table slicing at Jack with his blade, growling behind his mask in mounting rage. The big man's knife caught the very edge of Jack's arm, slicing along the shorter man's right forearm when he brought his arm up to block Birthday Boy's attack. It wasn't a deep cut, but it was enough to throw off Jack's next attack, blood coating his forearm, forcing him to take several backward steps while assessing the damage.

Birthday Boy was becoming enraged; this wasn't fun anymore! He wanted to play with his new toy and this person was preventing him from playing! The large man charged at Jack, thinking to use his size to end this confrontation quickly. Jack twisted his whole body around, bringing his right leg around and using the heel of his foot to slam into Birthday Boy's shoulder. The strike was powerful, but not enough to make the larger man drop his blade or break the bones in his meaty shoulder. Birthday Boy made a strange whining mewl that Jack wasn't sure was a sound of pain or something else entirely. The big man lunged, slashing his blade in front of him in an attempt to strike Jack, his attack messy. Clearly he was tired and wanted the fight to end. Birthday Boy swung his knife in sharp quick slashes, first vertically then horizontally, trying to cover the space in front of him hoping to hit the tiny man who had ruined his playtime. Birthday Boy wanted to slash his throat, watch him bleed, to feel the crack of the that man's bones in his hands, chew his organs and taste his blood.

Jack ducked and came up under Birthday Boy's slashes, ramming his blade with a powerful thrust of his left hand, sending the sharp metal all the way to the hilt into the big man's chest, catching him just under the collarbone, finding just the right spot for the blade to slip in easily. Jack hissed with annoyance; he had been aiming for the man's throat. Panting, Jack grinned however. “How many times do I have to flush before you go away?”

Birthday Boy groaned with pain just before he backhanded Jack. The strike was powerful enough that he knocked Jack off his feet, sending the slender man stumbling, crashing into the wall plastered with pictures of little girls. Jack slammed into the wall, pain radiating along his left shoulder and he could taste blood in his mouth. Jack pushed himself into a sitting position, his head spinning and his jaw and cheek aching, immediately feeling the wet stickiness of blood flowing from his nose and the split on his lips. Jack angrily wiped the blood away with the back of his hand before turning to face Birthday Boy again.

* * *

Harley was working to free at least one hand, with her eyes closed, she could feel the skin ripping away from her wrist and the side of her hand as she worked to slip it through the cuff. She could also feel the creature even if she couldn't see it writhing and squeezing, sucking on the blood. She shuddered, but she refused to let her nightmare—to let the fear—stop her until, just when she thought she couldn't stand the pain anymore, her hand popped free.

* * *

Birthday Boy backhanded Jack a second time.

Jack hit the floor and slid across it, the rough surface of the floor ripping through the shoulder of his shirt and into the skin. For a brief moment Jack wanted to laugh as the thought of splinters in his shoulder made him chuckle. He rolled onto his back with a hiss of pain between his clenched teeth just as Birthday Boy tried to finish his lunge. The large man had charged at Jack, his blade held over his head, his eyes wild with his own special brand of madness behind his sack mask. It was clear that he planned to ram to blade down into Jack while the slimmer man was down. Jack hobbled to his
feet, ducked, and dodged the blade coming down, but not before Jack used all of his upper body strength, pivoting his hips in, and he punched upward, the knuckles of his left hand connecting with the big man's solar plexus with every ounce of strength he could put behind the strike.

Birthday Boy choked on a pained sob, the hit to the solar plexus knocking the air from his lungs, paralyzing him for a split second when he couldn't draw any air into his lungs, but he didn't drop. Jack backed away from the larger man with a hiss of annoyance. Birthday Boy on the other hand, missed planting the blade into Jack and stumbled past the smaller man.

Birthday Boy then turned in a surprisingly graceful move. The large man was hissing between his teeth, his beady eyes glaring from behind the mask, and sweat was soaking spots on the sack mask and the front of the big man's shirt. Jack was panting as well, blood and sweat mixed to run down his face and stain his shirt, his lips shiny with blood and sweat. Turning in surprise when Birthday Boy came back around, Jack's gaze shifted to his knife, stuck in the big man's torso. He was just calculating the risk of trying to get it back when both men heard a high pitched roar and the loud clatter of metal falling.

Jack's head turned toward the sound and he gasped when he saw Harley: bloody, nearly naked, beautiful Harley, leaping from behind, both her hands wrapped around the hilt of a curved blade.

"AAH!!" She landed on the larger man's back, her blade sliding into the back of his neck like a hot knife through butter. Birthday Boy stumbled forward two steps to drop to his knees. Jack danced out of the way just barely missing going down with them as Harley yanked the blade out with another savage scream.

* 

Harley saw the black pulsating monster under her, the thing that had been trying to kill her puddin. She yanked her knife out, sweat running down her face, her eyes glazed by the toxin, and stabbed again with a shriek of rage. The large man rolled over trying to make a grab for her, but Harley jumped to her feet swiftly, avoiding his fumbling grasp while yanking her blade with her. She slashed out with the knife, cutting at Birthday Boy's reaching hands that she saw as whip like tentacles. She slashed with the blade, which was sharp enough that it cut cleanly through one of Birthday Boy's fingers. Harley leapt on the monster and stabbed again; the blade made a wet sound as she continued to stab him in the stomach, the chest, anywhere she could shove the blade. With her teeth bared, Harley stabbed over and over and over again, blood flying out to splatter her each time she stabbed Birthday Boy, the blade making a wet, squishy thunking sounding noise each time it entered his body. Birthday Boy tried to throw her off, but Harley was like a wild animal managing to move and sway out of reach, striking like a snake each time she could, the blade penetrating flesh with thick wet sounding thunks into the man's body. Birthday Boy only made some gurgling grunts of pain trying desperately to get away, but Harley's madness gave her strength and he was weakening rapidly; she did not allow the big man to move as she stabbed him over and over, her face becoming splattered with blood.

Jack looked on with admiration, his grin slowly growing watching Harley murder the large man. Finally, with a shaky gasp, she dropped the knife, which clattered against the floor, and stumbled back falling on her rear to stare at the dead body. Jack walked slowly toward her, carefully, sensing she needed him to be gentle.

"Harley?" He said her name softly.

She had been staring at the body, unmoving except for the panting breaths she was taking, when her blue eyes snapped up to Jack. Jack stood still and slowly opened his arms. Harley leapt to her feet and threw herself into his embrace. "JACK!!"
She hit him hard enough that every wound he had just received hurt, the impact of her body knocking the air from his lungs, but it didn't matter. He could feel her, in his arms, her body pressed against his, warm, and alive. Jack choked on a laugh filled with pain, but he finally had her in his embrace. His arms around her tightly, pressing her up against him, he did not care that everything seemed to hurt. He buried his face in her hair smelling her skin, the blood and sweat and her, his Harley. Harley buried her face against his chest and began to sob. “Oh Jack, Jack, Jack...” She rubbed her face against his chest smelling the blood, sweat, and her Jack...Jack...

“I'm here Harley, it's me...I'm here.” He stroked his fingers along her back and up into her hair. “I'm here Harley.” He brought his hands up to cup her face, forcing her head up, his thumbs stroking against her cheeks, smearing the blood spatters. He stared into her light blue eyes. “I'm here Harley,” he said in a whisper. Harley's eyes cleared when she looked up at him.

“Jack.” She said his name softly. “Oh Jack...puddin.” Despite everything that had just happened, she smiled staring up at him.

Her fiance smiled down at her. “I'm so proud of you Harley—my harlequin.” Jack tugged her close and covered her mouth with his giving her a kiss that communicated every ounce of pain and love he had for her. Harley clung to him desperately returning his kiss just as passionately. She didn't care that he tasted of sweat and blood, he was here and she was here; she could hold him, feel him. Jack was trembling. He finally had her back in his arms, back with him and nothing was going to tear them apart again. They were both so involved with seeing each other that they didn't notice the two men that had quietly entered the room until the darts hit them both in the shoulders.

Jack turned with a snarled. “NO!!”

He moved swiftly, releasing Harley, crouching down and grabbing Harley's discarded knife in a move so smooth that the two guards didn't notice until he was coming at them.

One of the men, a short dark haired man with too wide eyes yelled. “SHOOT HIM AGAIN!!”

Jack roared in rage. “ARRRR!!”

Racing toward one of the guards, Jack snarled. The short man didn't get his gun up in time before Jack was on him, burying the blade to the hilt in his throat. The man's eyes widened in shock, thick blood bubbling from his lips and making a slow trail from the corner of his mouth. The other guard fumbled his gun in panic seeing his partner killed. Harley shrieked and raced toward the guard while he stumbled backwards trying to get the dart in the gun. He just managed to shove the dart in place and fired again aiming at Harley and hitting her instead of Jack with another dart right in the hollow of her throat. Harley stumbled a step, then another, her eyes widened in shock before she fell to her knees then to the side, unconscious.

Jack looked over his shoulder and screamed. “NO!”

He stumbled to his feet, racing to Harley. The guard loaded another dart and fired at Jack; the dart hit him in the back of the shoulder. Jack turned, his teeth bared. The remaining guard quickly and miraculously loaded another dart barely into the gun. The next shot hit Jack in the neck. He stumbled, hissing and yanking the dart out at the same time.

“I'm going to kill you!” Jack threatened, his blue eyes crazed.

The guard stumbled backward grabbing yet another dart, but his fingers slipped, almost dropping this one as well. Jack stopped at the body of the other guard, ripping the blade out of his throat with a sickening sound that had his partner almost passing out between the combination of fear and
sickness. He managed to get the dart (his last) into the chamber and raised the gun. He shook, the barrel of the dart gun wobbling just as Jack started to run at him and shot. The dart flew and hit Jack in the stomach. This time Jack stumbled and fell, slamming his knees onto the floor. He glared at the man who shot him as his hand went numb causing him to drop the knife just before he fell over onto his side.

*  

Crane yawned, watching the men come in and remove Jack and Harley, taking them to be cleaned up and placed in their cells as well as remove the body of Birthday Boy and the dead guard. Crane frowned slightly; he hated losing a guard. These were men he chose himself—no families, no attachments, they took their pay and kept their mouths shut. It wasn't that they were hard to replace, just annoying, and it was always inconvenient when something happened. It made the others twitchy for a while and out for revenge. The result was that they could become violent toward the patients. Not that violence was really an issue for Crane, but it did make his experiments more difficult. He sighed. Jack Wayne would be in the crosshairs of the guards for a little while after killing one of their own, but he trusted the young man to be able to defend himself...to survive. Crane smiled contently, the experiment had been interesting and entertaining, and additionally, he had discovered his muse. He clicked the monitors off on his computer and shut it down before standing up and stretching. He had much to do before the next experiment...

But first, he had promised Jack Wayne he would get to see Dr. Quinzel if they participated. As much as he now disliked the idea of letting the young man near his muse, he needed their continued cooperation for further study. They would be allowed to see each other...under supervision, of course. He frowned with distaste, but decided to focus on his planned adjustments to his toxin for now with his doll in mind. Crane smiled thinking of the terror on Harleen's face.

*  

Harley came awake with a start, her whole body jerking, tense, her hands grasping at nothing. Her eyes opened in fright, for a moment seeing nothing but darkness and the creatures that lived in it. She sat up with a gasp, her chest hurting, her heart constricting. Her eyes started darted around the room, but just a quickly as the nightmares had come, they disappeared. Harley realized quickly that she was back in her cell, the three dull walls, the same single light, the clear wall and door...she looked down at herself. Her wounds had been cleaned and bandaged. She frowned staring at the bandages on her wrists and ankles the wounds reminding her of the horrors she had seen last night. The pulsating black mass, the faces and the echoing cries of dead children. Harley shuddered, cradling her arms against her stomach, a wave of nausea passing over her. She took a deep breath, closing her eyes and focused on the fact that the monster was gone. She had killed it herself.

Harley looked down at herself, belatedly realizing she was dressed in a fresh outfit, another black and white striped dress. She reached out and touched a lock of her hair that rested on her shoulder. Her hair still felt damp as if someone had washed it for her. She shuddered; the idea that someone had cleaned her and changed her clothing while she was unconscious made her feel exposed, violated. More so even than when the monster had stripped her and tied her to the table. At least then she had been able to fight, but this...this made her feel helpless and used.

Harley sat on her, cot pressing herself back against the wall. Her bottom lip started to tremble as she wrapped her arms tightly around herself and pulled her legs up to make herself as small as possible. The worst aspect of this whole thing, the part that made her even more sick than all the other things that had happened to her last night, was that she had been in Jack's arms, she had held him, felt him. She reached up and touched her lips. She could still feel the warmth of his kiss. She pressed her lips together trying not to cry, but the tears ran down her cheeks regardless of her efforts. Harley dropped
to her side, keeping her knees up and her arms wrapped around herself. She needed Jack. Needed to be with him and she had had him for a brief moment...

She could hear Harleen's voice whispering to her. “Is he really worth all this?”

Harley snarled. Her eyes were closed, but she spoke in a whispered voice. “Shut up Harleen—if I want your opinion I'll ask for it.”

Harleen whispered. “There are people out there that can help you.”

Harley hissed. “I'm fine, just shut up.”

Harleen pleaded. “You know this isn't healthy Harley.”

Harley squeezed her eyes shut harder, pulling herself into a tighter ball. “Shut up Harleen!! If I need your help I'd ask for it! So stay in your box and zip it!”

She waited for Harleen to say something in response, but Harleen never replied.

* 

Harley was lying curled on her side, unsure of how long she had laid there, unmoving, staring at nothing except her remembered kiss with Jack, when she heard her door open. She looked over through the thick tangle of her slowly drying hair to see Sandra standing there with a tray of food. Harley didn't feel like eating, but the smell of breakfast made her rebellious stomach growl. Harley could smell bacon, eggs, toast and she could see a plastic cup which probably held juice or milk. The friendly orderly smiled. “I heard that there might be someone special waiting for you in the common room today after breakfast.”

Harley slowly pushed her aching body into a sitting position. “What? Who?”

Sandra smiled. “A certain fiance.”

Harley's whole face lit up. “Jack? Do you mean it? Jack?” All thoughts of her nightmare from last night faded almost immediately, replaced by thoughts of her puddin.

Sandra smiled and nodded her head. “That's what I heard. So, if you feel like eating some breakfast we can head to the common room once you're done.”

Harley squeaked, her hands in fists as she kicked her legs. “Yes!!” She made a gimme gesture for the tray with her hands. “Food!! Give!!”

Sandra chuckled and walked over to set the tray down beside Harley. “Now don't rush, take your time and eat slowly, chew your food. We have about an hour before I can take you to the common room.”

Harley, who had started to shove eggs into her mouth until she looked like a chipmunk gathering nuts, stopped and frowned, bits of egg on her lips. She scrunched her brows at Sandra before she slowly chewed her eggs and swallowed.

“An hour?” she asked in a pained voice.

Sandra nodded. “It's okay honey, just eat your breakfast.”

Harley sighed, but then smiled again. The hope and fear mixed in her expression made Sandra's heart ache for her. Harley said softly with a hint of fear, as if she were waiting for her hope to be snatched
from her. “But I get to see him right?”

“Correct.” Sandra smiled.

Harley ate more slowly, the orderly could tell it was with great effort that Harley was forcing herself to chew her food. Sandra stood by the door to wait. “Why don't you sit down? Want some toast?” Harley asked with a smile.

Sandra gave her a small smile in return. “Thank you, but I had breakfast and I'm not supposed to sit.”

“In case I attack you right?” Harley took a sip of her milk.

Sandra shrugged. Harley made a face. “So if I promise not to?”

“Sorry, still can't.” Sandra smiled. “So, your fiance...”

Harley's face transformed, her smile lighting up her entire face, her blue eyes twinkling. “He is wonderful. Just...he is everything.”

“So how did you two meet?” Sandra crossed her arms, leaning against the wall.

“Would you believe I was his doctor? His brother hired me as his psychiatrist.” Harley took a bite of bacon.


“Yeah...” Harley said dreamily chewing on her bacon before she frowned. She looked forelornly at Sandra. “They took my engagement ring. Jack designed it for me himself.”

Sandra frowned just at the corners of her mouth. “I'm sure they put it in the safe. We have a safe in the basement where all of our patients' valuables are kept.”

Harley nodded, but she whispered savagely. “If anything happens to my ring someone is gonna pay.”

Harley perked up again then, though. “Do you think you could bring me a brush? I want to look my best when I see my puddin.”

Sandra shook her head. “No, I can't. You haven't earned the privilege yet.”

Harley made a face. “Well could you at least brush it for me? I look like a drowned rat.”

Sandra chuckled. “Sure, but believe me Miss Quinn, you are far too pretty to be a rat.”

“Really?” Harley grinned.

Sandra laughed. “Be right back with a brush.”

*

A few minutes later, her cell door standing open, Harley was sitting on the edge of her bed as Sandra stood behind her and combed her hair. She sighed contently and closed her eyes, but when she closed her eyes images of the monster from last night rose in her vision. Harley shook herself. She thought about asking Sandra about what happened last night though she wasn't exactly sure herself what had happened. The things she had seen couldn't have been real...but they had seemed so real. Before the nightmare had started, all Harley recalled was being wheeled in for her first session with
Dr. Crane, and after that...nightmares, but she was positive she had been in Jack's arms. Harley pressed her lips together and decided against bringing up last night...maybe it was mostly a bad dream anyway...

“You ever been in love Sandra?” Harley asked softly, her eyes closed while the larger woman brushed her hair.

“Yes, yes I have,” Sandra answered while she carefully worked out a tangle.

“What happened?” Harley started to turn around and stopped herself. Sandra sighed. “He doesn't know I'm in love with him.”

This time Harley did turn around with a gasp. “OH MY GOD!! Who is he? You're admiring him from afar? Does he work here? What's he like?!”

Sandra blushed, the large woman's face softening. “If I tell you, you have to swear to keep it a secret.”

Harley crossed her heart. “I cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye!”

Sandra gave Harley a funny look, but before she could stop herself she took a deep breath and blurted out. “It's Dale.”

“OOOOOO! Dale!! Big and bald! Muscles.” Harley giggled. “Oh you two would make a perfect couple! Why don't you tell him?”

Sandra shrugged. “I mean we take all our breaks together. We can talk for hours...he usually requests me for his partner...”

Harley giggled. “Sounds to me like a man in love. A perfect love is not all about devotion and loyalty, it is also understanding little tiny things, that's from M.F. Moonzajer...and it's true! Love is the little things you do together, the secrets you share...the time gazing into each others eyes...”

Harley sighed like a love sick teenager.

“I don't know...I mean...he's never asked me out or anything.” Sandra gently ran the brush through Harley's hair; the blonde hair fell softly like liquid gold, the strands catching what little light was in the room.

Harley frowned in thought. “You know what you need to do? You need to change it up, do something new with your look to get his attention.”

Sandra pursed her lips. “I don't know...”

Harley turned around surprising Sandra by grabbing her hands causing the larger woman to almost drop the brush. “If it's true love you have to make him see you! See the gorgeous woman who loves him! I mean, he clearly already sees you, but you know...gotta sweeten the lure.”

Sandra blushed. “I don't know Miss Quinn...”

“Sandra, you have to seize love when you find it. Trust me.” Harley gave her a pleading look tightening her grip on her hands. Sandra searched her blue eyes then said softly.

“Tell me what I should do.”

*
Jack woke on his side, only staying still for a moment before he was on his feet in an instant. Pain shot through him when he leapt to his feet, but Jack didn't care. His gaze shot around frantically only to realize he was back in his cell, cleaned and stitched up. His left eye twitched and he sneered with a hiss under his breath. “Crane.” That was when he saw a guard approach his cell door, then another, and another until there were six guards standing on the other side of the clear wall glaring at him. The first one to show up, a dirty blonde with a bit of fuzz that he clearly thought of as a mustache and not the dead caterpillar that it resembled, glared at Jack and growled. “You killed Tim last night Wayne, you insane crazy sonofabitch.”

Jack narrowed his eyes and smiled wide. “I'm not insane, I'm voluntarily indifferent to conventional rationality. And besides, he deserved it.” (Jack wasn't clear if Tim was the big monster of a man he had fought and Harley had killed, or the guard he had killed...not that it mattered.) Jack smiled and put his fingers to his lips. “Oops.”

“Well, we're going to make you pay.” The man slid his ID card on the lock. Jack took a stance, but he knew in the small space and six to one, he didn't stand a chance, but he was going to make them work for the beating they were planning on giving him.

As soon as the door opened, the six guards pulled their clubs from on their belts and swarmed him. The first guard took a swing. Jack leaned back grabbing the man's arm, yanking him forward, then slammed his wrist across his knee, the impact forcing the guard to drop the baton, then while he had the man, Jack used his elbow on the back of the man's neck. That guard went down with a grunt. One of the other guards hit Jack across the forearm, but he spun around and hit that that guard in the face with his fist, breaking his nose with a sickening wet crunch before another man hit Jack in the shoulder, reopening the stitches. Jack hissed, his shirt instantly turning red as blood spread from the bandage to his clothing.

Despite the limited space, Jack managed a kick to the groin of that guard with a laugh. “You’re so inbred you might as well be a sandwich.”

Another of the guards brought his baton up and down to hit Jack in the same shoulder, sending pain radiating through his body. Jack hissed at the white hot burn and stumbled against the wall while yet another guard hit him in the face with his fist, bloodying Jack's lip.

Jack laughed, blood pouring over his lips. “Do you ever think how much happier I’d be if your mother swallowed?”

The next guard, this one a burly balding man with a nose red enough to show that he hit the bottle after hours, kicked out at Jack. “You motherfucker!”

The guard's clumsy attack put him within reach of Jack, who lashed out using the ball of his hand, hitting that particular guard under the chin, snapping his head back. One of the men yelled. “Kick his fucking ass!!”

Another voice added. “Beat that fucker for Tim!”

Two of the guards, both men who looked like they had seen one fight too many, pushed forward again shoving Jack back against the wall. Jack took several more hits to the body, one guy hissing as his buddies came in to grab Jack around the arms, torso and legs. “Not so funny now are you pretty boy! Are you?”

Jack grunted when he took a hit to the abdomen. Jack grinned with bloody teeth. “Looks like you suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome.” He giggled and the guard punched him again in the stomach, but this time two other guards grabbed Jack's arms and held him tightly, not allowing him to fight
back. Jack grinned between punches. “Go fuck a landmine!”

He took a strike to the side, he didn't think his rib broke, but it groaned in protest. “You have the intelligence of a stillborn fetus!” Jack laughed loudly before coughing.

That was when everyone heard a bellowed roar that echoed through Jack’s cells

“GET THE FUCK OUT OF THERE RIGHT NOW!!”

Jack slipped down the wall to the floor, his hair falling across his brow. He spit blood from his split lip as the guards turned to stare at the person who dared to yell at them. Jack couldn't see who it was, all he could see were the backs of his assailants, but he was sure that the voice sounded familiar.

“I said get out of there now or you'll all have to deal with me and ain't none of you want that.” The voice’s threat was measured and slow, but there was a promise of deadly intent behind the words.

The guards, grumbling, filed out of the cell with someone pushing past them. Jack was left looking up from his position on the floor at Dale standing above holding what smelled to be a breakfast tray. The large orderly looked angry and disgusted. After the guards had left, Dale set Jack's tray down on the cot and hurried over to help Jack to his feet. He held his hand out and Jack took it, letting the big man lift him up.

“You all right Mr. Wayne?” Dale sighed. “Have to get you a new shirt...”

Jack nodded. “Yeah, yeah...I'm fine.” He wiped the blood from his mouth with the back of his hand.

Dale frowned pulling out a handkerchief from his pocket, pushing Jack's hand away and wiped away the blood from Jack mouth. “Sorry about that Mr. Wayne.”

Jack grinned. “I suppose I don't blame them after killing...” Dale put his hand against Jack's mouth. “Shh...Mr. Wayne, you don't want to discuss it, believe me. Especially if you want to see your girl today.” Dale frowned and shot a look over his shoulder.

Jack's eyes lit up. “You mean Harley?”

Dale nodded. “Eat your breakfast and you have an hour in the common room with her.”

Jack frowned. “Only an hour?”

Dale nodded. “Sorry Mr. Wayne, that's all Dr. Crane authorized.”

Jack sneered, but then frowned. “You know all about Dr. Crane's experiments don't you?”

Dale nodded. “Yes, but believe me, things can get a lot worse if you start causing trouble Mr. Wayne—a lot worse. Now, you eat your breakfast and I'll be right back with a fresh shirt.” Dale pressed the handkerchief into his hand. Jack thought about pressing the matter, but let it go. He knew how these things worked. Crane had power and right now, Jack had none...but that was going to change. Until then he would play the game to be with Harley...even only a few moments were better than none. If he didn't have some time with her, then he really would go completely off his rocker.

Jack finished cleaning his mouth before he sat down beside his breakfast tray. His stomach made a roiling growling sound at the scent of food. Jack picked up his plate and started to eat when Dale returned with a clean shirt and a first aid kit.

“Take your shirt off please, Mr. Wayne.” Dale set the kit down on the cot and opened it up revealing
an extensive first aid kit. Jack set his plate down gingerly reaching down to pull the shirt over his head. He winced with pain and dropped the shirt onto the floor. Dale came closer and carefully removed the blood soaked bandage. Jack sat still while Dale cleaned the wound, tsking and muttered. “Can't believe they reopened your stitches.” Dale turned and picked up a syringe and a bottle of liquid glancing at Jack. “This will numb it so I can redo the stitches.”

Jack waved him off. “Don't worry about it.”

Dale having just filled the syringe stopped and looked down at Jack. “I don't think that's a good idea Mr. Wayne.”

Jack shook his head with a light smile. “I'll be fine, promise.”

Dale let out a breath and put the syringe down. “Fine,” he said with a slight shake of his head. He threaded the needle and set the work restitching the wound Jack sat quietly, his hands resting on his knees while Dale stitched the wound. “Dale, you got a girl?” Jack asked glancing sideways.

Dale was leaning close to Jack's shoulder carefully pulling the needle through the flesh. Dale glanced sideways his eyes meeting Jack's before returning his focus to pulling the needle through his patient's flesh. “Nope.”

“Ever been in love?” Jack asked continuing to watch Dale's expression. This close he could see the big man blush. Jack grinned. “So you have, a current love or an old love?" Dale pressed his lips together in a thin line, then said softly. “Sandra.”

“Ah she does!” Jack grinned patting his knees with excitement. “So what's her name?”

Dale said nothing, continuing his work slowly, piercing the skin and tugging the thread through. Jack groaned. “Come on man...what's it going to hurt?” Dale nodded. “Need to make a move Dale. If you love her don't let her get away. You know part of the reason I'm in here is because of love.” Jack smiled.

Dale finished with his stitches, carefully wiped the wound and applied a fresh bandage. “Oh?” Dale asked as he taped the bandage down.

“Yup, an old boyfriend of my girl's showed up at our engagement party. Real piece of work. Used to hurt her. I saw him and well...here I am.” Jack smiled. “Though I suppose it's not that easy. I apparently have issues with violence. Course my brother doesn't know the half of it.” Jack giggled taking the clean shirt that Dale handed him before the orderly set to work cleaning up the kit.

After Jack pulled the shirt on he ran his fingers through his hair. “So, Sandra—you should ask her
out. Don't keep waiting Dale, seize the day!” Jack grinned his blue eyes dancing.

“That's easy for someone like you to say Mr. Wayne, you got a lot of offer a girl: money, looks...I'm an orderly in an insane asylum.”

Jack frowned, scooting back onto his cot until his back touched the wall and picked up a piece of bacon, taking a bite, careful of his split lip. “So? She works here too.”

Dale shrugged. “She deserves better.”

Jack chewed thoughtfully then spoke softly. “When Love speaks, the voice of all the gods...Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.”

Dale frowned. “What's that?”

“Shakespeare my friend. All right, you need to ask this Sandra out.” Jack lifted his plate taking a large bite of eggs. He swallowed, grinning, “I am going to teach you a line of Shakespeare, you are going to quote it to this Sandra and give her a rose, got it?”

Dale blushed and shook his head. “I ain't doing any such thing, Mr. Wayne.”

“Why not?” Jack picked up his milk, gulping it down quickly.

“Because, she won't go out with me.” Dale leaned against the clear wall, the first aid kit in his hand and looked down at his shoes. Jack smiled. He knew he had him because Dale hadn't actually walked out yet.

“Come on Dale, do it for me.” Jack grinned.

“Why?” Dale looked up slowly.

“Because Dale my friend, I'm in love and I can't be with my girl, so I want to see someone else be with theirs...is that a good enough reason? Besides, Love is a familiar; love is a devil; there is no evil angel but love.”

“Mr. Wayne, you make no sense at all.” Dale shook his head with a smile.

Jack laughed. “True.”

* 

Sandra led Harley to the common room. “Now, I don't think your Mr. Wayne is here yet, but he should be soon.”

Harley squealed. “Thank you Sandra.”

Sandra nodded, opened the door to the common area and scooted Harley inside. Today the room looked a little more grey. The Gotham sky was threatening rain which cast a gloom over the lighting inside the common room. There were only a handful of the patients in the chilly room right now: Babs, a bald guy Harley hadn't met yet, another short man with a crop of wild red hair who Harley sorta of remembered seeing, and Tabitha. Babs was sitting by Tabitha, the two women had their heads together talking, looking to be as thick as thieves today with Babs practically in Tabitha's lap. Harley smiled, musing that perhaps Babs was getting closer to her goal of having Tabitha as her girlfriend. Maybe love was in the air today Harley thought with a giggle.

Harley didn't quite know what to do with herself as she waited for Jack to arrive. Her body was
nearly vibrating with energy and excitement at getting to see her lover and her heart was hammering so hard in her chest that it physically hurt. All her other wounds were minor compared to the pain of waiting. Harley started to pace the room, too hyper to simply sit and wait.

Harley had just made it across the length of the room when she heard the creak of the common room door opening. She turned to watch, going very still, her heart sped up pounding even more painfully against her chest.

She saw the door open, and then Jack walked in. Harley didn't move at first; she simply stared at him. Her bottom lip started to tremble and tears rolled down her cheeks, tears that she wasn't even aware that she was crying. Jack looked around the room, scanning the few occupants. His brown hair wasn't slicked back, but hung loose to fall around his face making him look younger. The makeup was missing and his skin looked pale, but...Harley swallowed...he was here. Jack stopped only a couple of inches from the doorway and stood looking around the room. He was frowning until his blue eyes her across the room. When his eyes alighted on Harley, his smile burst across his face like the sun coming out. Jack simply put his arms out when he saw her; that broke the spell that had prevented Harley from moving. She dashed across the room with a small gasp. “Puddin!”

She threw herself at Jack, (one of the guards started to move to intercept, but Dale, who had walked in behind Jack, hurried over and put a hand on the man's shoulder and shook his head stopping the guard from interfering.) Harley’s hands grasped his face, her mouth covering Jack's without a word. Jack wrapped his hands around her waist, lifting her up so that Harley wrapped her legs around his waist. Neither of them felt the pain of their wounds, too focused on one another. Jack held her close his arms tight around her as he pressed his lips to hers, his tongue sliding along hers, their tongues tangling together in a slow sensual kiss. Harley simply couldn't stop herself from kissing him. She wanted to ask if he was all right, did he remember what happened last night, how were they going to escape...but all those questions faded away with the need to continue kissing him.

Jack felt weak, he finally had her back in his arms again. The pain of knowing they only had an hour nearly killed him but he had her now and that was what he would focus on, Harley in his arms her tongue in his mouth, her body pressed against his....that was all that matter.

*

Dr. Arkham was at his desk writing on one of his reports, waiting for Dr. Crane. Crane had had his first session with Mr. Wayne and Dr. Quinzel. It was the routine that the attending doctor would give a quick report on the condition of the patients, a quick initial assessment with which Arkham would note and help in making recommendations for further treatments. Though Arkham usually simply let the attending doctor make all decisions regarding the treatment of their patients... Arkham was very much hands-off, trusting his staff to do what was necessary. Arkham didn't like to be too involved with the patients. They made him feel...unstable himself. He was only running this damn asylum because his father before him had, and his father before him—it was a family tradition. Arkham would have sold the place except it made good money off the state and people like Bruce Wayne who committed inconvenient family members, then turned around and made hefty donations to the asylum.

Arkham's train of thought was disrupted by the knock on his door. “Come in,” Arkham called.

Crane entered, dressed in one of the his many nice suits. Arkham wasn't sure how the man afforded those suits on his asylum salary, but that wasn't any of his business; he assumed it must come from the money he made off his publications.

“So, first session...have you made an assessment yet?” Arkham asked leaning back in his desk chair.
Crane, wearing a brown and beige, wide pinstriped jacket, bow tie, white dress shirt and black slacks stood for just a moment, unfastening the button of his jacket. His hair was slicked back and he had an air of accomplishment about him.

“I do have my initial assessment,” Crane offered as he sat in the chair across from Arkham and casually crossed his legs. Arkham noticed the fine leather shoes that Crane wore. The man must make a mint on publishing his work, Arkham thought to himself.

Crane continued in his mellow tone of voice. “Jack Wayne is interesting. I would say he has narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder while his fiancee, Dr. Quinzel, is suffering from the same, though with a mix of hallucinations. I would surmise that they will be with us for a long while yet.”

Arkham groaned. “I thought as much. Oh well, that of course increases our chances of a hefty donation from Bruce Wayne.”

Crane smiled. “Indeed. Well I really should get back to my office. I do have appointments.” Crane stood and Arkham waved him off. “Of course, of course. Thank you Dr. Crane.”

Crane smiled.

*

Back at Wayne Manor, Bruce winced as he sat up in bed, the morning sun coming in cast a watery light through the grey clouds. A chilled rain was in the forecast. Bruce groaned since rain always made his nights out as Batman that much more difficult. The rain helped him in staying in the shadows, but it made the rooftops slippery and made seeing a little more difficult. He had had maybe two hours sleep last night after coming in late. He had been chasing down a couple of men who had mugged a young couple at an ATM. They had proven to be slippery, but he had finally caught up to them at five this morning. It wasn’t just those last muggers of the night, however. Bruce had run himself ragged, pushing himself far longer and harder than he had needed to last night. And he knew why—guilt. He ran his hands down his face as the image of Jack struggling against the orderlies, begging for his brother’s help came to mind. Bruce rubbed the bridge of his nose, then pushed his fingers up the middle of his forehead. He just couldn’t know if he had done the right thing...Selina's phone call had thrown his confidence at his decision into turmoil. Bruce had just decided to get up for the day when he heard a knock at his bedroom door.

“Enter.” Bruce called wearily. How Alfred knew he was up, he would never know. The man had a sixth sense.

The door opened slowly and Alfred stepped in pushing a cart, the soft jangle of metal sending a familiar chime into the room and, judging by the smell, the tray contained breakfast. As always, Alfred and his sixth sense were at work.

“How are you Master Bruce?” Alfred asked. His tone was neutral, but Bruce could easily tell how upset the older man still was by the slight shadows around his eyes. Alfred had not been sleeping well. The butler's insomnia was not just over Jack and Harley, but he had been clearly upset when Bruce came in last night, so much later than usual, limping and holding his side. He was additionally upset because Bruce had told him about the vote yesterday; Jack was no longer on the board of Wayne Enterprises. Bruce had also informed the butler of the call he had received from Selina about the asylum. Alfred had been quite upset by the possibility that the asylum was not what it appeared to be. They had briefly 'argued,' if that was what it could be called, more a series of clipped back and forth responses about whether Bruce should take Jack and Harley out of the asylum. Bruce had refused to do so unless he was given a good reason—and evidence. Alfred had left the room looking
pale, older and tired, his jaw set in a grim fashion that illustrated his displeasure.

“I’m fine Alfred,” Bruce said as he threw his legs over the side of the bed and ran his hands through his short black hair causing the thick locks to stick up making him look roughly like a porcupine. Alfred nodded while taking the lids off the dishes. This morning Alfred had made scrambled eggs, bacon and toast with a piping hot pot of coffee. Alfred had even brought up the newspaper, rolled and waiting on the side of the tray.

Alfred finished removing the lids off each plate and setting everything out and was about to leave the room when Bruce called out. “I thought about what Selina had said when she called me yesterday, and about our conversation...I'm going to hire someone to look into the asylum.”

Bruce could almost see the relief in Alfred’s shoulders. “Very good Master Bruce.” The older man didn't turn around, but he simply left the room. Bruce sighed, reached out to pick up the pot and pour himself some coffee. He hoped Selina was wrong. Bruce didn't think he could forgive himself if he had made another mistake with Jack.

* 

Jack was sitting on the couch in the common room while Harley sat straddled on his lap, his arms snug around her holding her close, as tightly as he could without hurting her. His eyes stung and his body ached with the need to have her pressed up against him, to feel her, smell her, taste her. They had said very little to each other; instead they had spent their time holding and kissing each other. Harley traced her fingers over his face along his narrow jaw, over his shapely lips, but mindful of his wounds. Harley brushed her lips over his, the tip of her tongue caressing along his tongue. Harley dragged her teeth over his tongue and groaned softly. Jack ran his hands up her back resisting the urge to grind against her. He contented himself with dragging his hands along her rear, squeezing then sliding his hands up her back. The image of yanking her dress up and taking her was so strong that he groaned. Harley cupped his face between her hands, pressing down on his erection she could feel between her legs. Jack hissed opening his eyes to stare into her face. Harley smiled and Jack thought he would die gazing into her beautiful face.

Dale made sure the guards left them alone, letting them have their time together. The other patients stayed away from them giving them their space. Harley pressed her forehead against his, her fingers playing with the ends of his hair at the back of his neck. Jack kissed the tears that were slowly trailing down from the corner of her eyes, tasting the salt on his lips.

“It's okay Harley. I'm here,” Jack whispered caressing her cheek, then her jaw, his long fingers skating down her throat.

“Jack, we have to find a way out of here,” she whispered back urgently. “Last night was horrible, the things I saw...” She shuddered and Jack wrapped his arms tightly around her pressing her body against him. He didn't say anything; his anger at their situation was burning deep in his chest. He had made up his mind, some way, some how, he was going to kill Crane. Then he was going to hurt Bruce.

When their time was up, Dale walked over. “I'm sorry Mr. Wayne, Miss Quinn, but it's time to go back to your rooms. Well, except for you Miss Quinn—you have a session with Dr. Crane.”

Harley sat up straight, her eyes widening in fear. “What?”

Jack tightened his grip around her. “No.”
Dale frowned. “Mr. Wayne, please don't be difficult.”

“I'm not letting you take her!” Jack stood dropping Harley to her feet before shoving her behind him. He knew he was acting irrationally, but he couldn't help it. The thought of Harley going back to Crane after last night... Dale put his hands up. “Mr. Wayne, it is just for her therapy session, nothing bad is going to happen.”

“NO!!” Jack snarled. “You know what he did to us!! You all know what he does!!” Jack's eyes darted around the room. Their fellow patients all looked away, but the guards pulled out their tasers and started to circle Jack and Harley. Dale groaned. “Mr. Wayne please, you are only going to make this bad on you both if you fight.”

“I'm not going to let her see Crane again!!! I'm not!!” Jack hissed.

Dale frowned, but he said softly. “Mr. Wayne, this is going to go very badly.”

Jack glared back. “I don't care.”

Harley yelped and screamed as one of the guards came up behind her and grabbed her around the waist with large beefy hands. She started to fight, screaming, kicking and reaching back behind her to claw at the guard who had her. Jack started to rush for the guard, but Dale grabbed him from behind and pinned his arms lifting Jack off his feet.

“Please Mr. Wayne, stop!!”

The other patients were immediately rounded up as additional guards came rushing into the room. Harley started screaming at the top of her lungs, fighting for all she was worth. Dale was struggling as Jack threw his head back trying to hit Dale in the face. Two of the guards rushed up and tased Jack, then two more tased him again. Someone yelled for a tranquilizer. Jack saw Harley being hauled away and roared. “NO!!”

That was when a couple of doctors came rushing into the room. One of them came over with a syringe and Jack kicked at them almost throwing him and Dale backwards. Dale panted with the effort of holding onto Jack, pleaded. “Mr. Wayne if you continue this, you won't get to see her again!”

Jack growled as Dale tried one more time. “Mr. Wayne please, if you want to see Miss Quinn you need to stop now. Please.”

Then one doctor moved in close enough to inject Jack with a tranquilizer.

* 

Half an hour later, Harley found herself in a straight jacket, again strapped to a wheelchair and sitting in front of Crane's desk. She had fought all the way here, even biting one of the nurses. Right now she was breathing heavily through her teeth and glaring at Crane.

There was soft music playing in his office this time while Crane poured tea. He had a full tea set on his desk, a beautiful set of white porcelain with hand painted red roses on it, while beside the tea he had a plate of what looked to be cookies. Oddly Harley thought, he had a vase of red roses on the corner of his desk as well.

Crane smiled at her. “I hope you like the music. This piece is call The Shadows Bride by Peter Gundry.” He picked up the tea pot and began pouring a cup of tea for her. “Sugar? Cream?”
Harley glared and ground out, “I can't exactly drink it like this.”

Crane smiled. “No worries my dear, I'll hold the cup for you.”

Harley frowned, then more softly replied. “Two sugar and some cream please.”

Crane nodded and fixed the tea as she asked before stepping around the desk, holding the cup and dish under it. He blew gently on the tea as he came over. “I believe it is the perfect temperature.” He leaned over and held the cup to her lips. Harley thought about ramming her head into the tea cup, spitting, biting...a hundred possibilities, but instead she sipped the tea.

“Would you like a Russian tea cake?” the doctor asked politely.

“I guess so,” Harley murmured, confused by what was going on. Crane turned picking up one of the tea cakes and gently held it to her mouth for her to take a bite, his bone thin hand balanced under her chin to catch any crumbs. She could feel his skin against hers; he felt cool and dry. After she took a bite he picked up a napkin that was folded on the desk and delicate dabbed the corners of her mouth. Harley watched him with confusion. He smiled as he leaned back against his desk. “There now, what do you think?”

Harley swallowed. “It's good.”

“Would you like me to release you from the jacket?” Crane asked again politely.

“Yes,” Harley said carefully.

“You have to promise me that you will behave yourself. We are only here to talk today. If you do not behave, I'm afraid I would have to punish your fiance.” Crane gave her a steady gaze. “Each time you misbehave, your punishment will be taken out on Jack Wayne. Are we clear Miss Quinn?”

Harley stared at him. She felt trapped, anything she did would be taken out on Jack and she couldn't have that...she could only imagine what horrors Dr. Crane might perform.

Harley swallowed and nodded. “Clear Dr. Crane.”

Crane smiled. “Jack is currently being punished for his behavior in the common room.” Crane set the tea cake down on its plate. “This will be the last time that happens, from now on, any time he misbehaves, his punishment will in turn be taken out on you. I hope this is something that I will not have to do Miss Quinn—I find myself taken with you and do not wish to cause you undue harm.”

Harley narrowed her eyes, her heart hammered hard inside her chest. She somehow doubted that after last night, but instead she responded. “What do you mean Jack's being punished?”

Crane sighed. “Let's just say he is having a bath and since he is not behaving himself, I'm afraid you will have to be punished to show him that I am deadly serious.”

Harley stared at him, her eyes widening slightly in fear. Crane smiled. “I do so enjoy that lovely look in your eyes.”

* 

Jack was drugged, strapped up in a straight jacket, fighting as two large orderlies, one of them the man Jack had dubbed Triple H, the other looked a great deal like André the Giant struggled to keep a hold of the thrashing Jack. (Dale had been removed when he had tried to muscle Jack back to his room without putting him in a straight jacket, yelling for the guards to let him handle Jack). These
two large men were flanked by four sour faced guards, each armed with tasers. The two orderlies carried Jack into a large, white tiled room. In the middle of the room were several long tubs affixed firmly to the floor and surrounded by gleaming tiles. Jack noted a strange looking standing frame in one corner as well and several hoses connected to the wall. One of the tubs was filled with water.

Jack swore, shouting. “YOU MOTHERFUCKERS!! I'M GOING TO KILL ALL OF YOU!! I'M GOING TO BURN THIS PLACE TO THE GROUND!!”

Jack was removed from the wheelchair and slammed up against one of the walls hard enough that the air was knocked out of his lungs. He gasped, but before he had time to recover one of the guards had picked up a hose and blast of water hit Jack forcing him back against the wall as the water came out in a high power spray. Jack dropped to the ground, slipping on the floor, but the spray continued, the water slamming him hard in the face and body making it difficult to catch a breath. The guard, looking on impassively, turned the hose off for a moment. Jack started to swarm to his feet ready to kill, but he was hit again with the water, knocking him off his feet. This time when the man stopped the spray of water, Jack was rushed again by the orderlies.

The orderlies dumped Jack into the tub with a loud, sloppy splash. The orderlies immediately shoved him down, holding him under the icy water. Jack struggled, breaking the surface once for a gasp of air, but two of the guards came over the hold him down. They kept him under the water until he stopped struggling, then, and only then did they release him. He gasped desperately for air when his head broke the water's surface. He struggled to push himself up for breath, slipping and sliding in the tub, splashing water everywhere, though the straightjacket making it near impossible to move. A moment later, the orderlies began dumping buckets of ice into the tub. It took four full buckets before Jack's teeth started to chatter, and another three before his lips turned blue, the icy water burned his skin leaving red, blistering welts on his legs and arms. He had stopped growling and shouting, covered in ice when one of the doctors he had seen in the common room stepped over near the tub. He was a short man with slumped shoulders and thinning weak colored brown hair. His square glasses sat at the end of his nose. He had a pad in his hand which he was looking at as he spoke.

“Jack Wayne, I'm Doctor Hurd, I work with Doctor Crane.” Hurd glanced up to see if Jack was paying attention. Jack was shuddering, but his blue eyes glared hatefully at Dr. Hurd. Hurd nodded taking a note before he motioned with his head. “Load him up, heading over to electro-therapy now.”

* 

“You're not going to do what you did last night?” Harley asked trying to keep her tone neutral, but failing. Crane gazed at her, a hint of his tongue at the edge of his mouth as if he were tasting her fear on the air between them before he answered with a soft chuckle. “No, not today. These things take time and planning, plus, you inspired me to work on my toxin again, to make a few changes. No, today we are just talking...well, and your punishment...”

“What's my punishment?” Harley asked doing her best to keep her voice calm.

Crane smiled sadly. “A dose of eletroc-shock therapy my dear. Don't worry, one treatment shouldn't cause any lasting damage...let's just hope your fiance behaves himself shall we?”

Harley's mouth twitched at the side. She knew all about electro-shock therapy, and how it was used as a tool for patients. The therapy could do wonders if administered correctly, but as a punishment...she felt her blood run cold. She had read a great deal of material on the subject while in school. (That was when she heard Harleen whisper.

“Maybe this will turn out to be good for us. A little electrical shock might fix what's wrong with
you.”) Harley glanced down while Crane continued to speak, but in her mind she hissed. “Shut up Harleen. I'm not listening to you! Lalala...”

The truth was she was terrified. What if Harleen was right? What if this did something and...

Crane cleared his throat. “Miss Quinn?”

“When will I get to see Jack again?” Harley asked with a look up at Crane.

Crane smiled. “After the successful completion of session two, you will both be allowed time together.”

Harley blinked. “Session two?”

Crane smiled. “Well dear, you—out of everyone here—should understand the importance of testing. I am working on making some changes to the serum I have crafted and I will have to test its effects. You, my muse, have shown me that I need to push myself. That I have the ability to create real fear and your...boyfriend,” (he said it with a curl of his lip) “has also pushed me to find a formula that will work on him.”

Harley was nearly trembling with rage. She wanted to lash out, to say or do something to this arrogant, pitiful excuse for a psychiatrist, but his threat against Jack stopped her. Crane picked her tea up and held it to her lips again. She took the offered sip, glaring hatefully at Crane.

“Now my dear, let us get the nastiness over with and then later I will expect you for dinner.” Crane smiled and stepped over to his office door to open it. There were two orderlies standing there, large men that Harley hadn’t seen before. Crane indicated Harley with his head. “Take her to electro-therapy. Thank you.”

They stepped in without a word. Harley turned to Crane and screamed. “YOU’RE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS!!!”

Crane didn't bother to look up, he simply smiled while writing down notes in a journal. “Make sure you dress for tonight dear. I will be sending over a dress for you for dinner.”

*  

Jack was doing his best not to shiver. He was soaking wet, freezing, bound in a straightjacket and strapped to a wheelchair. He was being wheeled down a hall, another pale white and blue hallway that looked like nearly every other hallway in this place, leaving a dripping trail of freezing water behind him. Jack snarled as his teeth chattered. “Where are you taking me?”

Neither the two orderlies nor the guards answered him, they simply kept walking without ever looking directly at him. Jack was rolled into a hospital room where there were several nurses, two more orderlies and Dr. Hurd, all moving around, preparing something. When they drifted out of his field of vision, parting like water, Jack saw Harley. She was wearing a hospital gown and she was struggling while the nurses robotically, methodically strapped her down to the bed. First her ankles, then her wrists before pulling long straps across her torso. She lifted her head struggling, pleading. “Don't do this! Please!! Don't do this! You don't have to do this!” Then her eyes met Jack's.

“JACK!!” she cried out and started to struggle all the more, shaking the metal frame of the bed. One of the nurses came over and put a hand on her forehead forcing her head down. Jack started to thrash against the bonds holding him to the wheelchair. “HARLEY!!”

The André the Giant of the orderlies lumbered over and grabbed Jack's head in both his hands and
held his head still, forcing Jack to watch Harley. Jack snarled. “LET HER GO!!! LET HER GO!!
HARLEY!!!”

Dr. Hurd sighed. “Please gag him. Dr. Crane wants him in the room for this, but I refuse to listen to
his shouting.”

The other large orderly also moved over to assist his counterpart, the two large men wrestled with
Jack until they forced his mouth open, stuffing some cloth between his teeth. Once they had
accomplished that, they tied another piece around Jack's head in order to keep the cloth in his mouth.
He continued to thrash about making noise, but now it was muffled, the metal clanking of the
wheelchair replaced his shouts. While this was going on, Harley's mouth was forced open and a
plastic mouth piece was shoved between her teeth. She started to spit it out, but one of the nurses
held it in. “You are going to want to keep that in Dr. Quinzel or you're going to break your teeth or
bite your tongue off. Usually the patient is under anesthesia for this, but Dr. Crane requested you
receive treatment the old-fashioned way...” The nurse, a dark haired woman with a nasty smile and
watery blue eyes, grinned at her. “Lucky you, you get treatment the way they should continue to get
it for people like you. Without anesthesia.” The nurse chuckled with a hiss. “I love my job.” She
patted Harley on the cheek before she picked up a cotton swap, rubbing Harley's temples with
something gooey and cold.

Harley stared at her wide eyed. She knew this about electroshock...but to have someone say it to her
made Harley's blood run cold. Her eyes rolled wildly when she saw the doctor bring over the head
piece, thrashing her head about, but to no avail. Dr. Hurd placed the device against her temples. Two
of the male nurses held Harley's shoulders down, while another two nurses held down her legs.
Harley started to struggle even more, just as Jack was doing the same. Hurd walked over to Jack,
leaning on the arm of the wheelchair to look Jack in the eye.

He smiled. “Dr. Crane wanted me to inform you, for every time that you are difficult, every time you
cause trouble, this is what will happen to Dr. Quinzel. He suggests that you continue with your
treatment without further trouble such as what happened in the common room.” Hurd stood up and
motioned with a hand. One of the nurses threw the switch.

Jack watched in horror. There was no sound, maybe a slight hum of an electrical charge, which was
eerie, but Harley immediately started to convulse, her head arching back as her whole body jerked
upward and she gritted out a small sound of pain. Her body thrashed, jerking and vibrating. Harley's
seizure was painful to watch. The nurse behind her grabbed her head, one hand on her brow, the
other under her chin to hold her mouth closed. Harley's whole body seized, arching against the
restraints; the sound of her beating against the hospital bed made Jack sick.

A lone tear ran down Jack's cheek, but his blue eyes were filled with madness and rage.
Feral Hearts

The next day Harley still felt sore from her experience. She felt as if she had been beaten with a bat, but luckily she didn't seem to have suffered any lasting effects beyond that. Her memory seemed intact, but her jaw ached from clenching it. She tried moving it, but it hurt too much. She had cried herself to sleep the night before, not because of the pain she had endured, but from seeing Jack, shivering and wet, just out of her reach. She knew exactly what had been done to him, the torture they had put him through just to teach them both a lesson. Harley screwed her eyes shut and wished she could cut Crane's throat.

Harley sighed, wrapping her arms around herself and pulling her thin blanket up over her head. There had to be something they could do...something. She was contemplating this when Sandra showed up at her door, though without a breakfast tray. Harley only pulled the blanket off her head when Sandra knocked at the wall.

Harley glared. “Is Crane going to starve me now?”

Sandra smiled, though it was a weak smile. Clearly the woman was upset, but she was trying not to show it. “No, today you get to join the others for breakfast in the cafeteria.”

Harley blinked. “I do?”

“Yes, so put your shoes on and I'll escort you.” The orderly smiled gently at her. Harley slowly sat up. Not moving for hours had done her no favors, making every part of her stiff and sore but she sat up and slipped her shoes on, her growling stomach urging her forward.

Harley was led into a medium-sized room with white walls and white and black tiled floors much like a diner. There was a serving area along the far left wall, from where the smells of cooking food wafted over to her. Someone had attempted to decorate the place for Halloween with a few cheap paper decorations: pumpkins, black cats, ghosts and some scarecrows. When Harley saw the scarecrow something deep inside made her feel chilled...almost like a feeling of deja vu. She shivered and focused her attention elsewhere in the room. There were several large women plopping food onto trays as a handful of the inmates of the sixth floor stood in line to grab some breakfast. Harley could see Babs, Tabitha, Arnold (and a sock puppet on his left hand which Harley decided she needed to know more about) and Jervis.

Sandra escorted her into the room, stopping in the entrance. “Go ahead and get in line, the trays are right over there.” Sandra pointed to a counter where there were several food trays and a container of utensils.

Harley glanced at Sandra then with a soft sigh, she headed off to grab a tray.

There were five other orderlies in here, all male and as what seemed to be the norm, huge men, all at least six feet tall and built like walls, as well as a handful of nurses (male and female) who were off in a corner sipping coffee and talking, ignoring everyone else in the room. There were also two women and one man working behind the food line keeping the food hot. Harley walked past the orderlies on her way to pick up a tray. One, a tall man, muscled and with a gruff face, blue eyes and thick hair so black that Harley thought it looked painted on, who might have been attractive at one time, but that was long ago. Now he looked as if he drank too much and probably ate too many fried foods.
The man leered at her when she walked by.

“Hey beautiful.” He cooed at her. “Wanne give us a kiss?”

The other orderlies with him laughed.

Harley ignored him, continuing to walk past, but he reached out and grabbed her arm. Harley jumped in surprise at the sudden pressure of fingers on her arm. She yanked herself out of his grasp. “Don't touch me!” she hissed, her blue eyes narrowed dangerously.

The other four men snickered. “Guess she don't want you to touch her Mel.”

“Hehe, even the crazy bitches have taste,” one man said and elbowed his friend.

The man named Mel glared at the other orderlies before he turned back to spit at her. “You better learn your place in here, little girl. Or you just don't want a real man? Maybe you need a lesson eh?”

Harley snarled. “Don't you ever touch me. No one touches me but Jack Wayne.” Then she gave the orderly the middle finger efore she walked off.

Mel watched her with narrowed eyes while his companions laughed. One of the other orderlies giggled and smacked Mel on the back. “Guess she told you.”

“We'll see about that,” Mel promised aloud, watching her.

* 

Harley shuddered letting that man's touch drop away and instead focused on getting her breakfast. When she stepped up to the table piled with trays, Harley noticed a container of utensils...all metal spoons, but no forks or knives. Harley narrowed her eyes, then quickly glanced over her shoulder. No one was paying attention to her, so she reached over and grabbed two spoons, one of which she laid on her tray, the other she deftly slipped down the front of her dress. She wasn't sure what good a spoon would do her, but it was all she had at the moment and it made her feel better knowing she had something she might be able to use for...whatever. Once she had her tray and spoon, she turned to head over and pick up her breakfast. Babs, standing in line behind Tabitha, saw Harley coming over and waved, jumping on her tip toes. “Hey Harley!!”

Harley smiled, though it hurt her jaw to do so. “Hi Babs.”

“Harley why don't you eat with me and Tabitha?” Babs asked when Harley was closer. Tabitha sneered at Harley, but Babs giggled. “Oh Tab don't be jealous! Harley has a guy here! Don'tcha Harley? Remember Tab, they were in the common room yesterday?”

Tabitha sighed. “Fine.” She shrugged. “You can eat with us.”

Harley smiled. “Thank you.”

Since there weren't many patients in the cafeteria, Harley received her breakfast fairly quickly, pancakes, bacon and some juice. She followed Babs and Tabitha over to a bench that was against the wall and behind the bench where Jervis sat with Arnold. Harley glanced at Arnold who seemed to be having a whispered conversation with his sock puppet while he ate his breakfast.

“What's up with him?” Harley asked.

Babs grinned. “They call him the Ventriloquist. They took his puppet Scarface away from him so
now he has his sock puppet Socky. Scarface was a mean old gangster from what I heard, but Socky is sweet.”

Harley frowned, glancing at the sock on the man's hand before she turned back around to face Babs and Tabitha. “You're talking like Socky is a real person.”

Babs frowned. “Well, in a lot of ways he is...has his own personality and his own separate voice.”

Tabitha snorted. “He's crazy, just like the rest of us.”

Harley frowned again, but she turned back to her food. She picked up the spoon, holding it up with a sour look. Babs chuckled. “They don't trust us with anything sharp.”

Harley snorted. “Figured as much.” She used the spoon as best she could to cut into her pancakes. Tabitha narrowed her eyes watching her then said in a low yet harsh voice. “So, I heard you got some juice yesterday.”

Harley's gaze snapped up, her blue eyes cold.

Babs gasped. “Tabitha!!”


Harley hissed at the other woman, “Shut up.”

Babs put her hand over Tabitha's mouth while the other woman was chuckling. “Forgive Tabitha, she isn't really a people person.”

Harley's eyes narrowed slightly as she turned her attention back to her breakfast. “Yes, I did.”

Babs gasped. “Really? Oh my god, I'm so sorry, Harley. You okay?”

“Yeah, I'm fine.” Harley didn't look up; instead she shoved a large bite of pancake into her mouth.

Babs asked quietly. “What happened?”

Harley chewed then took a sip of her juice before she answered. “Crane was punishing me and Jack for what happened in the common room yesterday.”

Babs asked softly. “Did he juice your guy too?”

“No—frozen bath,” Harley explained in a quiet voice.

Babs and Tabitha both winced. Babs reached across the table and laid a hand over one of Harley's. “I'm so sorry.”

Harley didn't say anything except to finish her breakfast.

* *

Across the room, Mel was watching Harley intently. The smile on his face was cold, calculating. He usually liked to go for easy targets, the ones in solitary, or women who were too doped up to resist or the ones too stupid and retarded to know what was happening, but that one...that blonde bombshell...he was willing to change his MO to give that one a whirl. Mel smiled. Maybe he could talk Dr. Hurd into slipping him some of those tranqs they used on these nutjobs...didn't have to tell him what it was for...slip the fucker a hundred he would look the other way, everyone knew it. Mel
licked his lips, his eyes intently locked onto Harley imagining her screaming and fighting him...

He liked it when they fought, too. But either way, he always won.

*

After breakfast their small group was escorted to a different room by the male orderlies. Harley, who was walking with Tabitha and Babs, didn't notice the way Mel was watching her. His hard blue eyes studied her intently. Harley caught him staring at her once when she just happened to glance over her shoulder. He made an obscene gesture at her with his tongue and Harley discreetly shot him the finger.

Harley turned away from Mel and instead focused on Babs who was telling a story about this man she had met called The Ogre. It was a long and complicated story, but rather interesting Harley thought.

The room they were led to was smaller than the common room or the room where they had just ate breakfast. It had the same lackluster white walls, but this room also had three round tables in it with plastic chairs around them. On each of the tables were finger paints and piles of paper laid out.

Babs giggled. “Oooh, arts and crafts day!!”

Tabitha muttered. “I fucking hate arts and crafts.”

Harley frowned. “What? What are we talking about?”

Babs smiled. “Once a week we get to do arts and crafts...it's supposedly some sort of therapy and it's mostly finger paints, but sometimes we get to make things like macaroni pictures...you know...summer camp type of stuff. It's stupid, but when you don't have much else to do in a day, it can be fun to pass the time!”

“Oh you mean an art therapy session.” Harley nodded.

Babs grinned with a nod of agreement. “I love art therapy!”

Tabitha muttered again, “I hate it.”

Babs giggled and wrapped her arm around Tabitha's. “Oh sweetie, you just aren't any good at it is all.”

Tabitha groused. “I don't like sticking my fingers in paint.”

Babs giggled with a little shake of her head. “You are such a whiner Tabitha!”

The three women took a table in the far corner and started to paint. One of the orderlies, a man who reminded Harley of an orc from the Lord of the Rings movies, just without the green skin, walked over to where Harley spied a CD player on a shelf in the corner positioned in such a way that only someone very tall could reach it. “You lunatics behave yourself and you get some music; any of you mouth off or cause trouble, no music and no paints. Got it?”

Everyone mumbled. “Got it.”

The orderly turned the music on. It was some sort of guitar music intended to relax the listeners. Harley made a face, which had Babs giggleing and Tabitha actually grinning.

“What is that?” Harley whispered.
“It's supposed to keep us calm.” Babs said while she opened a jar of yellow finger paint.

Harley rolled her eyes and made another face. “That will drive me insane.”

Tabitha grinned. “Tell me about it. Give me some electric guitar and a death metal vocalist any day.”

The three women chuckled. Harley reached for the purple paint glancing toward the door only to see Mel watching her. He winked at her and blew a kiss. Harley shuddered and scooted her chair around so that her back was to the man.

“You okay?” Babs asked.

Harley nodded, putting the foul orderly out of her mind. “Yeah...I'm fine.”

*

Jack sat on the floor of his cell and rubbed his face once, wishing he could shave. It had taken all night for him to get warm again after what they had done to him. Dale had treated his burns and had even brought him extra blankets, but Jack's thoughts were on Harley. Seeing her hurting like that...the rage in him felt like a wide gaping hole, tearing at him. He hadn't been able to protect her. Jack squeezed his hands into fists, shoving his knuckles against his eyelids. He hadn't protected her...

It was several hours later when Dale had brought him breakfast, which he had eaten mechanically.

That had been maybe an hour ago. He figured it was still morning, maybe about mid-morning. He leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes letting his mind wander to thoughts of Harley, focusing not on her in pain, but on their time together. He smiled remembering taking a bath with her; or the fun they had had killing all those people in that bar; her in his arms while they danced; the sound of her voice and her body moving against his. He was completely distracted until he heard the sound of someone opening his cell door.

Jack opened his eyes and frowned when he saw Dale at the door. Dale had the straightjacket and the wheelchair with him as well as another orderly that Jack hadn't seen before.

Jack frowned. He had his arms resting on his bent knees, his hands dangling, looking casual, but he had not moved from his spot on the floor. “What's up Dale?”

Dale held the jacket up. “You have a visitor.”

“What?” Jack frowned. “My brother?”

“No.” Dale shook the jacket giving Jack a meaningful look. Jack sighed and stood up to let Dale put him into the straightjacket. “Who then?” Jack asked glancing over his shoulder at Dale.

“I don't know...just know it isn't your brother.” Dale brought Jack's arms around and started working on securing the straps in the back, trying Jack's arms across his chest while he spoke.

“Just...I better warn you Mr. Wayne, behave yourself. I won't be with you and there are guards who will be in the visitor area. You do anything out of line, anything at all...the guards there are not above beating a patient to death.”


Dale shook his head. “It's only happened once since I've been working here at Arkham. A guy named Paul Dekker. Harmless enough, thought he was some sort of super villain because he could
only see in really bright colors. It was because of some procedure to help him with his eyesight... anyway, he had a “fit” during a visit from his sister, but the guards got to him before the doctors or the orderlies... they were a little too enthusiastic with their discipline. So—just be careful.”

Jack nodded, introspective. “Gotcha.”

Jack sat in the wheelchair letting Dale strap him in before he was rolled out and heading to the visitors’ rooms.

*

The room looked much the same as it had the last time he was in here when he was brought in to see Bruce. There were four guards, all armed with pepper spray, batons and tasers. Jack frowned wondering if being a big guy with a tiny head was part of the job requirement because it certainly seemed to be a trend among most of the work staff at Arkham, big muscled bodies and little bitty heads. Jack grinned, there had to be a joke in there somewhere...

Dale pushed Jack's chair up the doorway then began unstrapping him from the wheelchair. In a moment, the orderly led Jack over to little window partition sitting him down and then stepped out. Jack looked over his shoulder as Dale disappeared from the room. The guards all glared at him. Jack grinned at each of them thinking to himself, I don't engage in mental combat with the unarmed... then he chuckled to himself.

That was when the door on the other side opened and Jack grinned in delight when Alex stepped through.

Alex grinned and waved. “Hey man! How the fuck are you?”

Alex was dressed like he was going to a club as the DJ in a dress shirt with a very loud pattern, a black and silver jacket and sporting a pair of aviator shades. Alex grabbed the chair pulling it out and flopped down.

Jack chuckled. “That your idea of dressing up?”

Alex smiled looking down at his clothes. “Yeah man, trying to look fucking respectable.”

Jack laughed. “You look like you're ready to hit the club or sell someone a great used car.”

“Really?” Alex looked down at himself as if the idea surprised him. “Here I was trying to look fucking cool and respectable.”

Jack grinned at his friend. “You look cool. Thanks for dressing up to come see me. I appreciate the effort.”

Alex grinned at Jack, then his smile dropped. “How the fuck they treating you man?”

Jack glanced over his shoulder at the guards who were all glaring at him as one. “Well... could be better.” Jack shrugged as best he could in the jacket.

Alex frowned glancing from Jack to the guards behind him. When Jack looked again at Alex it was clear he understood what the problem was... Alex smiled and placed a finger on the side of his nose.

“You know man, I got some fucking... contacts. I'll see if I can get you some, fuck... I don't know... upgrades? Like better fucking food, more blankets... that sort of thing. Just might take a little time. You know how fucking slow change can be.” Alex grinned and winked.
Jack smiled back. Alex was a good friend, a really good friend. He knew exactly what Alex was saying, he had connections and he might be able to help Jack and Harley get out of here. It just might take him some time.

Alex leaned forward. “Hey, is it true Harley is in this fucking place too?”

Jack’s smile fell and he nodded. “Yeah..she is...”

*

Harley was only half trying to create anything with the finger paints. She had stuck one finger in the green paint, then the purple and had drawn a rough picture of Jack. It wasn't “good,” but she could look past the messy paint and see Jack's face. Babs had created a murder scene (she had done a really good job Harley noted; it was clear that Babs had come artistic skills.) Tabitha was trying to do anything but paint, by discussing angles from which she could use a whip in Bab's murder scene. She grinned at Babs giving her a kiss on the cheek before pointing down at the painting.

“See a whip could take them out here, then you duck and spin, snapping the whip out here.” Tabitha pointed at one of the “bodies” on Babs drawing. Babs grinned. “Oh wow Tabby, you are just so brilliant!”

Harley smiled shaking her head then sighed. She could give anything to be fingerprinting with Jack right now...

*

One floor down, Brigit Pike smiled while she pulled out her hidden cache of supplies that she had quietly been hoarding over the weeks. Brigit Pike was an arsonist. She was sentenced to Arkham after she had burned down a whole row of abandoned tentament buildings just because she had told the judge that the fire spoke to her. She had so far managed not to kill anyone with her little problem with fire, but it was only a matter of time, her doctor had said. He had declared Pike not just insane, but a danger to herself and others and so the Gotham court system had sentenced Brigit to ten months of evaluation and treatment at Arkham.

Brigit smiled happily at her little treasures. She had a couple of small branches that she had snagged from her visits to the greenhouse, some paper from art therapy and other bits of debris that she had gathered here and there. But no one knew that Brigit had been slowly gathering her little supply stash. She had had to do her hoarding secretly, of course, over the course of two months, a little bit here and little bit there until now she was sure she had enough to start a fire.

She sat with her back to her door, the contents of her hoarding between her legs and started to work, her hands rolling one stick against the flat notch she had worked tirelessly to carve into the surface of the other piece of wood until she had made a good enough indention for this part of her plan. Brigit grinned settling one piece of wood against the other and started to work her hands over the stick, spinning it swiftly watching for the beautiful first signs of smoke.

*

At the mention of Harley, Jack's whole looked changed, a cloud moving over Jack's vibrant blue eyes. Alex rubbed his one hand down his thigh nervously; he had never seen anything like it, the way that shadow moved over Jack's eyes. It was bad, he realized. Worse than that—it looked frightening. Alex was glad he was not going to be the focus of that look of hatred mixed with deep emotional pain that crossed over Jack's features.
It was clear Jack had been through some shit in the couple of days since the party incident, Alex thought. He could see it not just in the contusions on Jack's face, but there was something haunted in Jack's eyes...there had always been something slightly unstable about Jack Wayne, but now, seeing him like this, Alex was pretty sure that 'something' had only taken a turn for the worse.

Alex leaned forward his eyes darting to the gorilla size guards behind Jack. “I'll try and see...”

That was the moment the sound of a high pitch electronic beep started to go off accompanied by the strobe-like flashing of lights.

“What the fuck!” Alex stumbled up out of his chair, wondering what he had done.

The security guards wasted no time in grabbing Jack and literally slamming him back into the wheelchair. Jack was too shocked by the sudden movement and the blaring alarm to respond before he was being roughly held down and re-strapped into the chair.

Jack snarled. “WHAT'S GOING ON?!”

Someone came into the room on Alex's side and grabbed him. “Sir, you need to leave.”

Alex turned and shoved the person away with his one hand with enough force the guard stumbled back into the door. “Jack!” Alex turned but Jack was already being wheeled away.

*

In the art room the few patients here stood up, startled and knocking over their chairs. The orderlies all jumped at once, all of them yelling to be heard over the sound of the alarm. “What is that?” someone cried out.

One of the orderlies, one who looked older than the other four, yelled. “Fire alarm! Come on, we got to get the nutjobs downstairs! You and you,” (he pointed at two of them), “take Mad Hatter and Ventriloquist.” (He wasn't supposed to call them those names, but the senior orderly was in a hurry and didn't particularly care.) “Mel you take that blondie you keep staring at, I'll take Red there and her girlfriend. George, you're with me, Tabitha can be a handful if she gets riled up. Everybody got your tasers?” The orderlies all nodded together.

The group of orderlies nodded and went to grab their patients while the older man who had spoken was trying to make himself heard over the fire alarm. “EVERYONE, WE'RE HEADING DOWNSTAIRS, STAY WITH YOUR ORDERLY AND YOU WILL BE ESCORTED TO SAFETY. ANY OF YOU MISBEHAVE YOU WILL BE TASED AND CARRIED OUT. NOW LET'S MOVE!” Everyone looked slightly confused except for Tabitha who managed to somehow look bored as two orderlies led her out of the room with Babs right beside her.

Mel was grinning while he made his way over to Harley. He grabbed her by the upper arm yanking her up against him. “Come on cutie, fire alarm, gotta go hit the rendezvous spot outside.”

Harley started to protest, but the big man hauled her out of the room following the others.

*

Dale came rushing down the hall just as Jack was being wheeled out of the visitor's area, one of the guards carelessly slamming his wheelchair up against the wall in his hurry to push him down the hall. Dale snarled. “I'll take the patient!”

The guard that had pushed Jack hissed. “Good, the crazy is all yours.” He shoved Jack's wheelchair
toward Dale who stopped Jack from toppling over with a disapproving look at the guard.

Jack snarled. “I'm going to fucking kill him.”

Dale hissed. “Don't say stuff like that out loud. Come on—we have to head outside.”

Jack looked up and behind him to see Dale as the big orderly pushed the wheelchair. “Will Harley be out there?”

Dale glanced down as he jogged down the hall. “Actually, yeah she should be...I'll try to put you near her if we see her all right Mr. Wayne?”

Jack's face brightened. “Thanks Dale, thank you.”

Dale frowned, but murmured. “No problem Mr. Wayne.”

* 

Mel dragged Harley out into the hall, her feet skidding across the slick floor as she tried to fight, making herself a dead weight, but the beefy orderly didn't seem the least bit phased at all by her refusal to walk, yanking her arm painfully as he continued to move down the all. There were several other nurses, orderlies, a few of the other patients and doctors all making their way to the fire exits. None of them seemed the least bit concerned to see an orderly dragging one of the patients. And when Mel turned down a hall away from the fire exits, no one stopped him even when Harley screamed for help.

Harley screamed, trying to fight, hitting at Mel with her one free arm, kicking at his knees, his crotch, anything she could connect with, but Mel managed to hold her away from him and continued moving with determination. He was stronger than her, that much was clear. He stopped at one point looking around to make sure no one saw them before he shook her hard enough that Harley's teeth rattled in her head.

“Stop fighting me, you fucking cunt!” Mel hissed at her. “This can go one of two ways, you either pipe down and enjoy yourself or I make this one fucking painful experience for you.”

Harley snarled, trying to use her fingernails to rip into the skin of his hand.

“Let me go!! There's a fire!!” she hissed and kicked at him, but instead Mel kicked her. When his foot hit her thigh Harley gasped in pain; the man was wearing steel-toed boots and her leg went out from under her, but she didn't fall; Mel held her up by her arm.

Mel snorted. “There ain't been a real fire here in decades lady and I bet it was just one of the resident fire bugs managed to start a fire, nothing to worry about...but it will give us enough time to have a little fun.”

Harley's eyes widened and she screamed in fear and rage. “AAH!!”

She tried to pull free of Mel, realizing exactly how much danger she was in right now. Mel, who still had a death grip on her upper arm, yanked Harley close and backhanded her across the mouth splitting her lip. Harley gasped, the shock of the hit disorienting her enough that she didn't fight when Mel opened a door to a supply closet and stepped inside.

* 

Outside on the side lawn, away from the other patients, the patients of the sixth floor were gathered
in a tight knot surrounded by more than two dozen guards, a few orderlies and some doctors. Nearly all the patients were in straight jackets, with Zsasz, Jack, Robert Greenwood and Aaron Helzinger all strapped to wheelchairs as well. Jack was struggling trying to find Harley, but he didn't see her anywhere. He looked back at Dale in a panic.

“She isn't here?”

Dale looked around frowning then muttered. “Shit.” Dale motioned to one of the orderlies, a tall brute of a woman. “Sandra, can you watch Mr. Wayne...his fiancee isn't here.”

Sandra looked around only now realizing she hadn't seen the blonde. “What? Where is she?”

“I don't know, but I'm going back in. I don't think she would escape—not without Mr. Wayne—do you?” Dale asked quietly as he searched Sandra's face. Sandra shook her head. “No, never.”

“Something is very wrong.” Dale turned to put a hand on Jack's shoulder. “I'll find her Mr. Wayne, don't you worry.”

Dale started to move when one of the guards grabbed him. “What the fuck Dale! You can't go in there until we get the all clear.”

Dale turned on the man. “Jesse, we've got a missing patient.”

“Someone trying to escape?” Jesse pulled out his taser, but Dale shook his head. “I don't think so, someone in trouble.”

Jesse frowned, then motioned. “Come on. I'll go with you.”

Jack watched helplessly as the two men ran back into the building.

*  

Once inside the linen closet, Mel slammed the door and shoved Harley up against the wall hard enough to knock the breath out of her before wrapping a hand around her throat and squeezing.

“You better just shut up cunt, because this is happening whether you want it or not, you fucking tease!” Mel leered in close at her, close enough she could smell the stink of his breath, then he licked her cheek.

Harley gasped, then gagged, snarling and struggling, his hand tightening around her throat. He held her against the concrete back wall of the small linen closet, pressing her back against the cold stone as if trying to choke her into unconsciousness. Harley kicked and wiggled trying to break free. She brought her hands up and tore at his hand, her blunt nails scraping against his skin tearing bloody lines and surprising the large man with the viciousness of her attack. Mel hissed in pain, swinging her around.

Mel hauled her back and slammed her bodily to the floor. Harley gasped in pain, all the air bursting from her lungs, but the big man's attack wasn't enough to stop her. Harley thrashed, bringing her hand up and around, her fingers wrapping around in a tight fist like Jack had taught her, holding her knuckles tight, she hit Mel across the face hard enough that she opened a pressure wound along his cheek and lip, though her knuckles scraped along his teeth, ripping skin from her knuckles. At the same time she brought her knee up, slamming him between the legs. Harley rolled her whole upper body to the side bringing her right elbow up to smack Mel across the jaw. Mel gasped in pain rolling off of her and grabbing his jaw. Harley pushed herself back on her rear trying to put some distance between her and Mel, reaching to grab at one of the shelves and scrambled to haul herself up. Mel
spit blood as he rose to his feet, surprising Harley when he hit her in the stomach causing her to stumble back and slam against the door.

Harley gasped in pain, but then Mel hit her again across the face. Harley's face jerked to the side, slipped and dropped to the floor, blood immediately flowing from her nose and over her lips. Mel reached for her, grabbed Harley by the top of her hair to force her head back while he lifted her to her feet before whipping her around to drop her onto her back again. She hit the floor hard, banging her head and slid across the floor. Mel dropped on top of her, grabbing her wrists and pinning them over her head while pressing the length of his body to hers, savagely trying to force her mouth open with his tongue in a hard, painful kiss. Harley screamed in rage against his mouth, bucking her body trying to get him off of her. Harley snarled, opening her mouth to gnash at him with her teeth, and succeeded in grabbing his bottom lip. Mel made a sound that was a cross between a whimper and a snarl.

When she felt her teeth sink into his lip, Harley yanked her head to the side, taking part of his bottom lip with her.

Mel screamed in agony, blood rushing down his chin from the missing hunk of his lip. Harley spit his lip back at him and rolled onto her stomach trying to get her legs under her and break his hold on her wrists. Mel released her, grabbing at this bloody face, sitting back on his haunches.

Panting with the exhaustion, Harley pushed up with her hands and knees, pushing herself toward the door, but her knees caught in the skirt of her dress, causing her to topple forward. When she hit the floor, Harley desperately reached between her breasts, and felt the metal spoon from where she had hidden it. She drew it out, holding it clutched tightly in her hand. She lurched to her feet in the next instant and lunged for the door.

Mel, holding one hand to the bloody ruin of his lip, reached for her with a bloody hand, grabbed her skirt, the sound of fabric ripping mixed with their struggling pants. His sudden yank on her dress pulled her off her feet again. Harley fell forward, her fingers scrabbling desperately against the door. She hit the floor again, knocking the breath from her lung in a rough whoosh of pain. Harley rolled over and kicked with all her might. Her first kick connected, her shoe meeting his face with the satisfying sound of breaking bone and teeth snapping shut.

Harley grinned. “FUCKER!” she snarled, kicking out again.

Mel's hand snapped out and grabbed her by her ankle before she could land her second kick. He hauled her toward him. Her body slid across the floor easily. Mel actually laughed as he grabbed at the front of her dress yanking her closer still, ripping the black and white material of her dress down the front.

“I'm going to fuck you up, you little cunt!” Mel snarled, his words slurring slightly against his torn lip.

But just when he was grinning, thinking he had her now, Harley brought up the spoon and with all her strength and a vicious smile that was all bloody teeth, she jammed the spoon into his left eye. There was a fraction of resistance as she shoved, then in the next instant, the flesh of the orb burst with a loud popping tear. Harley gasped, letting go of the spoon as blood and jelly leaked out of his eye, then with as much power as she could, she slammed the heel of her hand against the end of the spoon. The metal dug painfully into her palm, but she shoved the spoon another few inches into Mel's brain.

Mel's remaining eye widened in shocked surprise. Harley had buried the spoon at least four inches into his skull. He stared down at her with his one remaining eye before falling over onto his back, his
hands grasping for the handle of the spoon as he made a strange strangling noise while blood bubbles from his mouth and nose to mix with the blood from his ripped bottom lip to ooze down his chin and across his cheeks.

Harley pushed herself shaking to her feet and sneered down at Mel. She spit on him. “Fuck you.”

That was when the door burst open. Harley turned, her blue eyes wide to see the orderly Dale and a guard. She turned, a smile on her face at seeing Dale, at seeing help, when the guard yelled. “GET DOWN!!”

Harley looked confused. Dale shouted. “JESSE STOP!!” But it was too late as Jesse tasered Harley in the chest. She jerked, her legs going out from under her as she lost control of her body.

Jack was pacing his cell. The fire had been small, one of the pyros down a level of so had found a way to start a fire...at least that was what Jack had overheard from some of the guards. Dale had never returned, so Jack had no word on Harley. He was muttering to himself as fear gripped him.

He laughed and muttered. “Crane would like to know how I'm feeling now wouldn't he? Heheh...”

Jack's left eye twitched.

“What are you afraid of Mr. Wayne?” Jack did a decent imitation of Crane's voice. “Tell me what scares you...” Jack stopped his pacing to wrap his arms around himself. “Losing Harley scares me. Nothing in this world scares me more than losing her.”

He had just started to make another circuit of his room when he saw Dale suddenly appear at his door. Dale looked upset. Jack rushed forward pressing his hands flat against the clear surface. “Where is she? Is she all right?”

Dale rubbed a hand over his bald head. “Yeah, I found her.”

Jack nearly sagged with relief, dropping his head between his arms to let out a breath he never realized he was holding. He took a few breaths before looking back at Dale. “Is she all right?”

Dale looked pale, upset. Jack pressed hard against the wall, leaning toward Dale. “Is she all right?” he repeated through clenched teeth.

Dale shook his head. “No. She killed an orderly, took a bit of a beating herself. She's in the infirmary right now.”

Jack frowned staring at Dale. Dale met his gaze. “They'll be here soon to take you to ECT.”

Dale looked upset. Jack looked down. “According to Miss Quinn, Mel, one of the orderlies tried to rape her and she killed him. Stole a spoon from the cafeteria earlier today...killed him with it.”

“What do you mean according? Harley wouldn't lie about that.” But as the information that Harley had killed someone with a spoon sunk in, Jack couldn't keep the grin off his face. That was his girl.

Dale shook his head. “It doesn't matter whether it's true or not. Mel was another one of Crane's guys, on the doctor's payroll. Crane is going to be pissed and you are going to pay for what she did.”

Jack frowned staring at Dale. Dale met his gaze. “They'll be here soon to take you to ECT.”
Jack narrowed his eyes at Dale then smiled. “Don’t worry. I can take it.”

*  

Harley was sitting on the side of an examination table still in her torn uniform as a couple of nurses moved around her cleaning and bandaging her wounds. Neither woman said a word to her. Two guards were at the door and just beyond them Harley could see a concerned Sandra waiting not so patiently for them to finish, a wheelchair waiting for her.

Harley said not a word. She knew that she was in a deep trouble, just not sure exactly how deep. Once the nurses were finished with her Sandra was allowed into the room. She shared a look with Harley, but then the big woman was helping her into a straitjacket before setting her back in the wheelchair and strapping her down. Once she was secure Sandra was able to leave with her.

Harley glanced up. “Will I be able to get a new dress?”

Sandra nodded. “Yes, but first...” the big woman looked upset before she continued. “First we have to go to ECT.”

Harley’s eyes widened. “No! Why?”

Sandra shook her head. “It’s not you...it’s your fiance.”

Harley started to fight trying to pull herself free to no avail. “NO!! Why??”

“The man you killed...he was one of Crane’s,” Sandra said in a whisper without looking down at her. “I’m sorry.”

Harley’s response came out as a low pained whine. “No...oh no...”

*  

Jack surprised Dale by not fighting. Dale was forced to take Jack to the ECT area before being relieved, the wheelchair taken over by “Triple H.” Dale crossed his big arms and watched helplessly while Jack was wheeled off. All of this was wrong, so wrong, he thought. But Dale had no idea what to do about any of it. The corruption wasn’t just with the sixth floor patients, though they suffered the worst...it was the whole damn asylum. But Dale was one man with no support and no money. He could easily be silenced. The only reason he stayed was to try and make the patients as comfortable as possible, to do what little he could to help them, but what was going on with Mr. Wayne and Miss Quinn was beyond what he could stomach. He needed to do something...but what?

*  

Jack continued to remain quiet as he was wheeled into the ECT room, the only sound the occasional squeak of the wheelchair’s wheels. As with Harley, there were several nurses, a few guards and Dr. Hurd in the room preparing everything. Triple H stopped inside the doorway, a silent sentinel behind Jack. Jack watched them all with narrowed eyes. Dr. Hurd, who had been writing some notes down on the clipboard, turned at the sound of the door opening. “Ah there you are.” Hurd looked at Triple H who had just wheeled Jack into the room. “Oscar, could you unstrap Mr. Wayne and place him on the table for me—and please make sure he is strapped down.” Hurd glanced over to the left where yet another gorilla-sized orderly waited. “Help him.” Then he turned back to his clipboard.

Jack glanced up at Triple H. “Oscar, eh? You look more like Butch, Dumb Animal or Walnut Brain instead of Oscar.”
The big man remained quiet, not even sparing Jack a glance as he unfastened the straps that held Jack to the chair. Once freed from the chair, the big orderly shoved Jack by the shoulder out of the chair barely giving Jack time to stand before Oscar began removing the straightjacket. Once Jack was free, the other orderly stepped closer, both men grabbing Jack by his upper arms and nearly dragged Jack to the table even though Jack walked willingly. Jack laid down, glaring at the two orderlies as he allowed Oscar and the other man to strap down his wrists and ankles, three more straps across his torso.

One of the nurses glanced at Jack with a look that was a cross between fear and disgust, then the doctor. “Shall we begin Dr. Hurd?”

Hurd shook his head without looking up from the clipboard. “No, no Crane wants the woman here to watch. Give it a few minutes then we can begin.”

Jack jerked, turning to face Hurd and the nurse when they mentioned Harley. He didn't want her to see him like this...seeing her strapped down and shocked by that Dr. Hurd has almost been more than he could take...

A moment later, the door opened and Jack lifted his head to see Harley being wheeled in. Jack's heart leapt to see her. She looked battered, a purple bruise already quite visible on her cheek, growing past the bandage on her pale skin, another under her left eye. She had been cleaned up, but he could still see traces of dried blood around her nose, her lips, her bottom lip was slightly swollen, her golden hair a mess. But the worst part was that Jack caught sight of her torn dress, where it lay across her lap, her scraped and bloody knees visible. The rage that had been simmering in him since Dale had told him what had happened to Harley flared brighter. Even though her attacker was dead, the fact that his beautiful murder kitten had killed her attacker...that Harley had defended herself, made him so proud, but the fact remained, someone had tried to hurt her, tried to rape her...his girl...someone had tried to lay his filthy hands on her...and Jack had not been there to prevent it, which made him furious, mad with hatred, not just for the man who attacked her, but for everyone involved in leading Jack and Harley to be where they were right now.

Jack snarled struggling against his restraints for just a moment. Harley cried out when she saw Jack, jerking against her own restraints in a pointless attempt to get closer to him, only to immediately be yanked back against the wheelchair.

Harley gasped desperately, her eyes darting around the room looking for some sort of help, understanding, or sympathy. “Jack!! No no no no!! Please don't do this! Please!! I killed him!! I killed the orderly!! I should be punished!! No no no no no no!!!! Don't hurt him!!” Harley looked around trying to get any of them to listen.

Jack lifted his head his blue eyes catching hers. “No Harley! No...I can take it.” He smiled at her and her heart ached to see it. “Don't worry sweets.” Jack winked as her causing Harley to choke on a sob.

Hurd, with an inclination of his head, directed one of the nurses to walk over and rub some gel on Jack's temples. The nurse placed her palm on Jack's forehead, forcing his head back before she rubbed his temples with the gel. Hurd walked over to pick up the head piece from the machine. Harley started crying.

“Jack, I love you.”

Jack’s head was being forced down, but he smiled as he looked up at the white ceiling. “I love you too Harley. You're my heart and soul, my little pumpkin pie,” he said with a grin. “My girl. My harlequin.”
Harley swallowed and smiled softly with tears running down her cheeks.

Hurd rolled his eyes, grabbing the plastic mouth piece and rather brutally shoving it into Jack's mouth while at the same time hissing. “All very touching. Too bad all your pretty words won't save her, won't save either one of you. Nurse, throw the switch.”

The nurse hit the switch and the low humming sound filled the air, accompanied by the electric charge. Harley knew it probably was in her head, but the hairs on her arms inside the jacket stood on end just before the bolts hit Jack. Harley cried out, thrashing impotently in her chair. “JACK!!”

Jack's whole body arched for a split second completely off the table, his eyes screwed closed in pain. Harley watched in horror as his limbs stiffened, the horrible sound he made...a cross between a groan of pain and a muffled cry. Then the charge died as the nurse turned off the machine. Jack went into a seizure immediately. He jerked and thumped against the bed, but the nurses— with the help from the extra orderlies—all held Jack down.

Harley was sobbing. “Jack. Oh Jack.”

It took a good minute before his seizures stopped. Jack's head lolled to the side, his eyes never opening when he rolled his head from side to side disoriented. Dr. Hurd motioned to the nurse. “Again please.”

Harley screeched, yanking herself forward and nearly toppling the wheelchair. “NO, YOU CAN'T!!”

Hurd smiled at her. “Sorry, Dr. Crane's orders. Again nurse.”

“NO!!” Harley lurched, but the orderly behind her, Oscar, was now joined by another big, muscle bound orderly. Both men grabbed her shoulders, hauled her back to hold her in place against the chair.

Hurd ignored her. “Again nurse.”

The nurse turned on the machine turning to face the patient at the same time. The electrical sound filled the small space. Harley was sobbing uncontrollably while Hurd held the device to Jack's temples. He leaned over to smile at Jack and hissed. “Always hated people like you, Jack Wayne. Money, looks...everything handed to them on a silver platter. You have no idea who much fun this is for me.” Just as Hurd brought the device closer to Jack's temples. Jack reached up, surprising everyone since no one had been watching Jack's hands (it had taken only a little work since the men strapping him down had been careless) and grabbed Hurd around the neck with both hands. The nurses screamed in shock as Jack snarled.

“I hate you too Doc.”

Jack yanked Hurd forward and bit down hard into Dr. Hurd's neck. The doctor started to scream, the sound high enough pitched that the thought fluttered by in Jack's mind...bet he could break glass...Jack tore into Hurd's throat, the hot coppery taste of blood coated his tongue and lips when he tore through the artery, but he held Hurd there, savaging his throat further—he wanted to make sure the poor excuse for a doctor was dead.

The room erupted into chaos. The guards rushed to help the doctor, the nurses fled screaming, pushing past the guards and orderly, one nearly knocking Harley and her wheelchair over. Harley had started laughing. One of the guards, the man Harley barely recognized as the one named Jesse yelled. “Get her out of here!”
Oscar immediately yanked Harley's wheelchair out of the room while she laughed and yelled. “I love you Jack!!”

The guards managed to get Hurd away from Jack, but was it obvious that it was too late. The doctor fell to the floor making horrible gurgling sounds, blood bubbling from his lips, dark blood rapidly spreading across the floor as it poured from his traumatized neck.

Jack’s face, particularly his mouth and chin, were covered in blood. He spat out the hunk of flesh he had taken from Hurd, laughing.

“Hey, does anyone have some gum? I have a funny taste in my mouth.” Jack grinned merrily. He didn't get to say much of anything else before one of the guards yanked his baton from his belt and whipped Jack across the face with it, knocking him out.

When Jack came conscious again, he was surprised to find that he was free of the straightjacket, but he immediately realized he also wasn’t in his room. He was in a room with padded walls, a box, no window, no clear wall, only a tiny hole in the door with a little door that opened from the outside and the only light coming from far above, a pale watery grey light...and nothing else. He could still taste Hurd's blood on his tongue and feel the dry blood on his mouth and chin. He chuckled scrubbing his hands over his lips and chin breaking away as many flakes of dried blood as he could.

One less doctor in Arkham...for a while at least, he thought to himself.

Jack scooted himself over to a corner of the padded room and leaned against the wall closing his eyes. Now he could only hope Crane didn't hurt Harley for what he had done...

Harley was in her cell. She had been brought back here nearly four hours ago, a new asylum dress lay waiting across her cot when she arrived. Harley had quickly changed and now she waited. She had been given no information on Jack's condition, nothing to tell her where he was, how he was—it was enough to drive her insane. She hadn't even seen a nurse, orderly or doctor in the whole four hours since she had returned to her cell. She also hadn't been fed, simply dumped in her room and left like an unwanted dog.

Harley closed her eyes and thought about Jack, her arms wrapped around herself as if she were still wearing her straightjacket while she paced. “He has to be all right,” she whispered. “I would know otherwise...”

She took a couple of calming breaths when someone called her name. “Miss Quinn?”

Harley opened her eyes, turning toward the clear wall of her cell to see Sandra standing there. Sandra looked down the hall, her eyes darting both ways, then turned her attention back to Harley. “Promise me you'll behave yourself.”

Harley frowned. “Why?”

“Just...please, promise me,” Sandra pleaded with her.

Harley's brows knitted together, but she nodded. “Yes, yes I'll behave myself.”

Sandra nodded affirmation and used her card to open Harley's door motioning her to follow. “Come on.”
Harley quickly stepped out. Sandra put a hand on her shoulder and began walking briskly, quickly pushing Harley down the hall. Harley was full of questions, where are we going? Why so secret? What's going on? How is Jack? But she kept herself mouth shut. She could feel the tension in Sandra's grip as the large woman guided her down a hall Harley didn't recognize, then through a set of rooms to another hall. This hall was dimly lit, shadows were everywhere and there were only three heavy doors in this hallway. But what startled Harley was when she saw Dale at the end of the plain nondescript hall, standing by one of the doors with a cart. She could smell the food coming from the cart as soon as they hit the hall and her stomach answered with a loud growl.

When Dale saw them, he smiled nervously. “Anyone see you?”

Sandra shook her head. “No, and I shut the cameras off. No one will notice. Hank is on monitor duty and he is already asleep.”

Dale nodded. “Good, good.” He pulled out his card from around his neck, sliding it over the front of the electric lock on the side of the door. He then pressed his thumb to the pad. Sandra frowned watching him. “Won't Crane know?”

Dale smiled. “Hey, he didn't order Mr. Wayne not to eat. I was just bringing him some food.”

Sandra grinned at Dale, her eyes taking on that doe-eyed expression of being in love. Harley noticed, but she was too confused to pursue that thought further.

“What is happening?” she asked instead, her voice barely a whisper.

Dale smiled. “A little private time, that's what. I can buy you both a couple of hours...maybe until midnight, but then you'll have to be returned to your cell, all right Miss Quinn?”

“Private time?” Harley's voice shook with hope, but Dale nodded pulling open the door and gently prodding her inside before setting the trays down just in the entrance and shoving the door closed plunging her almost into total darkness without giving Harley a chance to say another word.

*

Dale sighed. It felt good to do something...right for once. He glanced at Sandra and smiled. “Have you had your second fifteen minute break yet?” He surprised himself with his own boldness, chalking it up to doing a good and dangerous deed for Mr. Wayne. He had to admit he was jealous of Bruce Wayne's younger brother. Not because of the looks or the money...but the love. Dale had never seen two people so much in love, but add on their recent torture...Dale thought the least he could do would be to give him some precious time together with his fiancee.

Sandra blushed. “I haven't, but shouldn't one of us stand guard?”

Dale shook his head. “Nah, no one comes down to solitary. They're safe enough.”

Sandra smiled. “Then I would love a coffee.”

*

Harley stood in the barely lit room, the smell of food making her stomach growl even louder. She couldn't really see much, the little light only illuminated a small circle in the middle. She could see that the room was padded and even the floor was lined in soft material. She was thinking about turning around and demanding to be let out when she heard a voice that made her heart leap in her chest.
“Harley?”

Harley’s eyes widened as she immediately searched the shadows. “Jack!”

That was the moment a shadow emerged from the darkness and Harley saw Jack standing at the edge of the tiny pool of light. He looked pale, his hair flopping across his forehead and there were flakes of dried blood on his face and uniform, but...

“JACK!!” Harley threw herself into his arms.

Jack stumbled back from the impact of Harley’s body hitting him, taking several steps backwards until he was against the padded wall wrapping his arms around her, covering her mouth with his own. Harley didn’t give him a moment to breathe, to catch his breath, her tongue was in his mouth, her body warm against his while her fingers grabbed his hair, holding his head to hers while she attacked his mouth. She made little whimpers of desperation, her body pressing hard against him. Jack didn’t hesitate, he growled in response and immediately grabbed the skirt of her dress yanking it upward. Harley stepped back from him only long enough to pull the dress over her head and toss it away from her. Jack grabbed for her, driving her to the floor, his mouth hungrily moving along her skin, his hands caressing her sides feeling her soft satin skin under his hands.

Jack groaned. “Harley Harley Harley...you're here...you're here!”

Jack said her name like prayer on his lips, his mouth caressing down from her lips to her neck, his teeth and tongue tasting her skin. Jack growled again. “Harley.” He shifted lower, biting at her collar, his hands sliding up her torso. He grabbed her bra, dragging it off her breasts, his mouth immediately attacking the soft sensitive skin, his tongue finding the hard tender nipple of her breast, sucking the sensitive nub into his mouth. Harley moaned, arching her chest to his mouth, wanting him to touch every inch of her.

She did a little shifting, pulling the bra down her arms, desperate to get out of under garments, to feel him all over her body. Jack sat up, his fingers moving swiftly over the buttons of his uniform while Harley fumbled with her bra. Once she finally had the garment loose, she yanked it away tossing the bra into the room and immediately reached for Jack’s pants. Jack stood up moving as quickly as he could to get the pants and his boxers off while Harley let go of his pants to lift her hips, shoving her panties down her legs and kicking them off.

Jack dropped to his knees between her legs, panting heavily as he gazed down at her. Harley was panting as well staring up at him, both of them looking at the other as if they could not believe they were real. Jack gazed at her with so much love it hurt to look at him, but she couldn’t stop.

“Jack, my puddin…” Harley reached up and laid her hands against the flat planes of his stomach. Jack slowly lowered himself down, his lips gently caressing the nipple of one breast while he rubbed his cheek against her skin. Harley moaned softly at his touch. Jack cupped her breast, kissing the sensitive skin gently, squeezing her breast, his tongue circling the nipple in what Harley felt was a most delicious treat. Harley dragged her hands over his shoulders and along his back, caressing his skin lovingly. His skin was so softly she didn’t want to stop touching him afraid that she might forget what he felt like.

Jack flicked her nipple with his tongue, then turned his attention to her left breast, his lips warm and soft, his tongue drawing wet circles over her hard nipples before he slid lower, pressing tender kisses down her torso, his hands sliding and caressing along the soft slopes of her body. He licked, tracing her stomach with his tongue, gliding lower, biting her groin gently with a hiss, rubbing the tip of his nose against her skin, then with his forehead and cheek, marveling at having her in his arms. Her groin throbbed with the need to feel him inside her, touching her...
“Harley...my Harley...” Jack's voice husky he moaned softly.

Jack kissed the inside of each of her thighs before lying flat on his stomach and raising her legs over his shoulders. Jack wanted to be surrounded by her, to feel her, smell her, taste her. He laid his head against the inside of her right thigh, bringing her long left leg up over his shoulder as well and wrapping his arms around each thigh, pressing a kiss to her intimate lips. Harley moaned softly, tossing her arms over her head and arching her back. Jack smiled, the heady scent of making him dizzy with need, with want, he used the tip of his tongue to separate the soft lips, to run the very tip of his tongue over her clitoris in long sensual flicks.

Harley arched with a breathy groan at the warm wet feel of his tongue against her, her voice hitched. “Oh Jack...”

Jack delved deeper, his tongue plunging into her, the warm silk of her sex against his lips, his jaw moving in wide sensual licks and kisses, covering every inch of her. He pressed his lips hard to her clitoris sucking deeply while one hand roamed up her body, caressing the satiny skin before cupping her breast. He squeezed her breast before rolling her hard nipple between his thumb and forefinger while his tongue worked over her clitoris in long, wet licks. Harley whined softly, her body on fire just as Jack slid his tongue into her, bobbing his head, pushing his tongue deeply into her, fucking her in slow deliberate bobs and twirls, his tongue covered with her fluids.

Harley cried out, her moans echoing off the padded walls, her whole body rocking with the bobbing of Jack’s head. “Uuhh...uuhh...puddin...uuhh...UUHH!!!”

She came in a wave of pleasure rolling through her entire body, feeling the soft warm glow of her orgasm settle over her. Jack grinned when her body became taunt, then he felt and tasted her release on his tongue. He took one more long slow lick, tasting the juices of her climax, but he couldn't wait much longer—he needed to be inside her, to feel the welcome wet warmth of her body surrounding him.

Jack made his way back up her body pressing kisses along the way. Harley grabbed his face between her hands yanking his mouth to hers and devouring him. Jack grabbed her right leg holding the limb close as he entered her with a long groan. “Oh Harley...”

Harley moaned, her hands on his shoulder fingers gripping him tightly. They rocked together, Jack pressing his erection as deeply into her as he could, then pulling back slowly, then thrusting deep again. He kept his movements slow, deliberate, his tongue twisting with hers.

Harley pushed on his shoulders, using her free leg and the twist of her hips to urge Jack over onto his back. He rolled over, holding onto her tightly, not wanting to be out of her now that he had her again. Harley pressed Jack onto his back, her hands digging into his pecs as she rose up. Jack had his legs spread wide, the knees bent while Harley rolled her hips, grinding herself down on him.

Harley panted, rolling her hips harder. “Uuuuuhhh...Jack...uuhhh...Jack” her hands pressed into his chest.

Jack's hands glided along her thighs and up her hips, his blue-eyed gaze never leaving her face. “Uuhhh Harley...Harley, yes Harley...uuhh...”

He thrust up meeting her rolling and grinding.

Jack pushed himself up, grabbing her hips with one hand and pushing himself back up against the padded wall. He grabbed her rear with one hand, the other hand caressing her hair. Harley undulated her hips, wrapping her legs around him their panted breaths mixing together. They began moving
faster, the pants filling the small space. Harley groaned leaning back from him, thrusting her hips forward harder. Jack ran a hand down her body, dragging his fingers over her breasts then along her stomach meeting her thrusts with his own, both of them panting heavily.

“Uuuuhuuuhhh...” Harley panted thrusting, pouncing harder, faster, impaling herself on him with each eager thrust.

Jack grabbed her shoulder, digging his fingers in while he thrust, pounding into her, the heat of her body surrounding him teasing him with the need to penetrate her as deeply as he could. He watched her face, the way her mouth was open, her lips plump and red, the look of ecstasy on her features...his girl...

He groaned deep in his chest. “Uuuhhuuhh...Harley...”

Harley's breath came in a studder as if she couldn't catch it, gazed at Jack’s face, his brow knitted with intensity while he pumped into her with more vigor. He growled her name again, the passionate moan dancing over her skin. “H-Harley”

Harley cried out as she orgasmed loudly, her fingers digging into his shoulder, her toes pointing as the wave of pleasure slammed into her and tightened her entire body, her muscles clamping down around Jack's shaft while she rocked with her orgasm and a loud cry of pleasure erupted from her lips. “UUuUuUHH! YES!! JACK!!”

Jack grunted, watching the way her face glowed in the dim light. When she came he immediately rolled her onto her back again, pumping vigorously, harder and faster into her, the room filling with the sounds of their fucking, the slap of flesh against flesh, the wet sound of him moving into and out of her. Jack groaned, panting, feeling himself coming closer and closer to his climax. He cradled her head between his hands, kissing her hard, his tongue curling with hers. Harley ran her hands up his side, then along his arms, wrapping her legs around his hips returning his kisses with tears sliding gently from her closed eyes as she held on tightly to him.

Jack bit her lips tenderly whispering heatedly. “Harley...my Harley.”

“Oh Jack...” Harley could feel him swell inside her.

He captured her lips one more time, just as he spasmed and erupted inside her with a long drawn out moan. Harley felt the warmth of his climax, the last hard thrust which caused her to topple over the edge once more, her legs tightening their hold on him, her wraps wrapping tightly around her.

They were both quiet, catching their breath together. Harley pressed her face against his neck trembling. Jack held her tight, his fingers brushing her hair back from her face.

“I love you Harley. I love you,” he whispered against her ear.

Harley burst into tears. “Oh Jack, I love you. I love you so much...I...I just can't...”

“Shhh,” Jack whispered. “It's all right. I'm here. I'm here.”

Harley quieted, wrapping herself tight around him unwilling to let him go. Jack kissed her face, the end of her nose, her eyelids, her cheeks, her forehead, her chin and lastly her mouth before he reluctantly pulled out of her. Jack rolled onto his back pulling her against him. Harley nestled against his chest, her arm going tightly around his middle.

“How are we going to get out Jack?” Harley asked quietly. The room seemed to swallow the sounds of their voices as the spoke.
“I have a plan,” Jack spoke softly. “Alex was here. I think he is going to help...”

“Do you think Dale and Sandra will help?” Harley asked. He smiled feeling her breath against his chest.

“Sandra?” Jack asked.

“She is one of the orderlies. I think she is in love with Dale...they worked together to bring me here.” Harley pressed a kiss to his chest.

Jack smiled. “Really? That is interesting...and possibly helpful.”

They were both quiet for a bit when Jack whispered. “I heard you killed an orderly who tried to hurt you. I'm proud of you Harley. He didn't...?” Jack left it hanging.

She smiled snuggling in close. “No, killed him first,” she assured him and then said, “I loved what you did to Dr. Hurd.”

Jack laughed and Harley's heart soared to hear him. “Just wish it hadn't been so quick...he deserved a lot worse.”

They were quiet again, just enjoying this time they had together. Jack said softly.

“I'm going to kill Crane first chance I get.”

Harley chuckled softly. “Good.”

“I'm going to hurt Bruce,” Jack whispered.

Harley didn't say anything in response. She felt the same way, she wanted Bruce to pay for what he had done to Jack, but he was Jack's brother. That payment was up to him. Jack lazily stroked his fingers along her shoulder, he knew this would have to end soon, but he didn't want to think about it. He felt as if he were losing his mind without her beside him. Harley smiled pressing her cheek against his chest when she shifted her position, sliding down Jack's side. “Harley?” He frowned as she disappeared into the shadows around his legs. “Harley?” Jack asked again, but then chuckled when he felt her move between his legs, the smoothness of her palms sliding along his thighs...her tongue licking slowly along his shaft. Jack groaned reaching down to run his fingers through her silky hair.

“Oh Harley.”

He felt the delicious vibration of her humming against his skin. He immediately became hard once more, especially when Harley wrapped her lips around him, sucking hard and deeply on him. It was as if she were pulling his whole body toward her, his whole being. Jack let out a long passion-filled groan, his hips arching toward her as his fingers spasmed in her hair.

Harley bobbed her head, swirling her tongue along the underside of his quickly hardening erection. The feel of his fingers in her hair, the dull scrape of his nails against her scalp made her moan around him in her mouth before letting him go with a pop of her lips. Jack giggled.

Harley planted kisses all around his groin and scrotum, pressing her lips down, her nose against his skin taking a deep breath, the warm delicious scent of his skin. Harley smiled opening her mouth to slide her tongue along his soft, salty skin.

Jack writhed with pleasure feeling the gentle, warm running of her tongue in long lazy licks across
his skin, tracing every inch of him.

Jack was shuddering with pleasure. “Damn it Harley, that feels wonderful.”

She giggled. “Good, because I want you again puddin.”

Jack jumped slightly at the sudden feel of her teeth when she bit him. He laughed with happiness feeling the sharp nip of her teeth on his stomach, then her tongue slid along his ribs before her teeth caught his nipple. She moved up further before she laid against him, her teeth catching his mouth, her tongue tenderly, yet heatedly delving once more into his mouth.

Jack grabbed her hips, pressing his fingers into her soft skin before he surprised her and rolled her onto back. Harley squealed, laughing. Jack grinned at her pushing himself up on his arms. “You are so beautiful Harley.”

Harley reached up run her fingers along his long face. “My handsome puddin.”

Jack’s smile was wide, his eyes twinkling. “Roll over.”

Harley quirked her brow at him with a playful smile almost feeling like her old self as she rolled onto her stomach. Jack grinned sitting back on his haunches. He brushed her soft hair off her back dragging his fingertips down her smooth, curving spine to her rear. He leaned over her pressing a kiss to her shoulders, then the middle of her back, he laid his hands on either side of her back and slid his hands down her body to her hips.

Harley moaned softly feeling the smooth caress of his touch just before Jack tugged her hips up. Harley pushed herself to her hands and knees. Jack licked his lips using his leg to spread hers wider, his hands gliding over the silk of her skin to squeeze her rear, gazing hungrily at her, the dim light caressed her skin causing her to glow...Jack grabbed his erection holding himself against her rubbing back and for, coating himself with her fluids again just before he plunged into her.

Harley cried out, her fingers digging into the soft padded floor, her back arching in a slender curve. Jack licked his lips dragging his teeth over his bottom lip gazing down at her, his hands wrapped around her hips. He thrust forward, watching with eager pleasure the way her flesh wiggled each time his pelvis met her backside. Harley groaned loudly feeling the deep penetration of him thrusting into her body, piercing her core.

“Uuhh...Jack...uhh...puddin...uuUuhh...Jack!!” Harley gasped and groaned with each thrust bouncing her forward. Jack reached out with one hand grabbing her hair and wrapped his fingers through her silken locks holding on, his other hand squeezing her hip thrusting into her, his whole body arching as he groaned letting out a long low groan of pleasure that ran through his entire body.

Harley thrust back against him, willing him to go harder, deeper until she nearly screamed her orgasm, her body rippling with intensity, tears springing to her eyes as if a dam had broken flooding her with the intensity of her feelings for him. Jack joined her a second later, his body feeling as if he could drain his very soul into her. Harley moaned softly, her arms and legs going weak enough that she let herself fall forward with Jack on top of her. He laughed, biting her shoulder and neck. “God I love you Harley.”

Harley grinned sighing happily. “I love you Jack.”

Jack rolled off of her pulling her up against him, burying his face in her hair, his arm tight around her and holding her back pressed against his chest while Harley wrapped her arm around his feeling safe in his arms. “It will be Halloween soon,” she whispered. She tried to keep the pain from her voice,
but it was difficult as she continued. “When we wanted to get married.”

Jack smiled squeezing her. “We are still getting married. No one is going to stop us Harley. No one. We are going to find a way out.” He chuckled softly. “Besides, think about it Harls, we've managed to kill four of Crane's people. I wonder how many more he is willing to sacrifice just to play with us?”

Harley giggled at that. “You're right puddin.”

Jack kissed her ear, then her neck. She giggled snuggling in close to him. Neither of them wanted to talk about the fact they only had a few hours together. For now they could pretend that there was nothing outside this room.

*

Crane, wearing a tailored blue and white striped suit with a burgundy dress shirt and a blue and burgundy paisley tie, did not look like a man with anything to worry about. Yet he was pacing irritably across his office waiting for his meeting. He stopped at his desk pouring another inch of whiskey into the glass and downing it in one swallow when finally he heard a knock at his door.

Crane turned at the sound, taking a calming breath and brushing his fingers through his hair, straightened his tie and opened the door. Standing on the other side was a short balding man in a cheap suit, sweating despite the cooler weather outside.

Crane stepped aside to make room for the shorter man. “Finally Sharp, I was beginning to wonder.”

“Sorry Crane. These things take time, but he's agreed.” Sharp grinned at him, his beady black button eyes shone with pleasure. “Yeah, told him the transfer will be complete once he finishes the job and then he can disappear for a while outta Gotham. You just have to let him know what you want him to do. He practically leapt at the chance to do some acting. I guess once an actor, always an actor.”

While the other man spoke Crane walked behind his desk gesturing with his hand at the empty chair. Sharp took the offered seat and folded his hands over his belly.

“Good, good. Would you like a drink?” Sharp eyed the whiskey before he shook his head. “Better not, have that drive back to Blackgate. So, you want to tell me why you wanted him?”

Crane smiled putting the pads of his long boney fingers together and smiling over the top of his fingers at Sharp.

Crane's eyes took on a faraway look. “You see my friend, I'm in love. A beautiful blonde with heavenly blue eyes that shine brightly when filled with horror. Her lips are perfect for screaming and moans of fear...creamy skin, a generous figure...breasts that...”Crane licked his lips and stopped himself, then reached for the whiskey and poured himself just a little.

Sharp watched this, feeling suddenly uncomfortable. The look in the man's eyes was...almost...he looked crazy, lustful and obsessed. The way he was talking about this woman made Sharp fear for whoever she was, but ultimately, it wasn't his problem.

“So, ah...when are you going to use him?”

Crane's grin was wicked. “Oh, soon my friend, very soon.”
Beside You

Bruce was still at the manor dressed for the day in a black suit, white shirt and black tie, looking every inch the billionaire business man playboy, hiding the turmoil inside, which was only slightly visible by the dark circles under his eyes. He was worried about Jack and Harleen. He had called the asylum yesterday, asking when he could see his brother again, but Dr. Arkham had told him to wait a few more days. Bruce sighed. A few more days. He had just put his hand to his forehead when his phone vibrated on the table beside him.

Bruce picked up the phone and glanced at the time. It was not quite eight in the morning. Bruce sat at the large dining room table nursing his cup of coffee and waitied to meet the man he was contemplating hiring to investigate Arkham, a man named Victor Sage, when his phone vibrated again. Bruce had barely gotten out a “Hello” when Barry Hardgrove, the Wayne family lawyer, growled. “Guy Kopski is dead.”

“What?” Bruce nearly dropped his coffee cup.

“Died of his injuries this morning. I haven't heard anything yet, but I know the man had a sister. I wouldn't be surprised if she sues the Wayne estate.” Hardgrove sounded exhausted. “I just wanted to give you a heads up, tell you to be prepared.”

Bruce rubbed the bridge of his nose. “All right, I understand. If they do, then we'll settle with them. They have a right to ask for financial compensation for Jack's actions. Just...just keep me informed.”

“I will Bruce. And Bruce, I know I didn't say this before, but I'm sorry about Jack.” Hardgrove sounded sincere.

Bruce nodded. “Thanks Barry. Me too.”

Barry sighed. “Well, I let you know if I hear anything else.”

“Thanks Barry.” Bruce hung up.

A soft knock sounded at the door and Alfred opened the door a crack. “Master Bruce, a Mr. Sage is here to see you.”

“Show him in please, Alfred, and would you bring some more coffee for my guest?” Bruce asked as he straightened his tie.

“Of course sir.” Alfred stepped aside to let a tall gentleman in a navy blue trench coat step inside. The man had a handsome face, but not anything outstanding. Dark hair, grey eyes, firm jaw. A face many would find attractive, but at the same time utterly forgettable. Mr. Sage took Bruce's offered hand as Bruce stood up.

“Mr. Wayne. I've heard a great deal about you and your brother.” Sage's handshake was firm, his hands calloused. Bruce motioned to one of the chairs.

“No, no I'm afraid not. So you said on the phone you wanted me to investigate Arkham Asylum where you committed your brother?” Sage asked just as Alfred returned with a pot of coffee and another cup. “Cream, sugar Mr. Sage?”
Sage held his hand up. “Black is fine, thank you.”

Alfred bowed to Bruce before stepping out of the room again.

“Good old-fashioned sort of butler there.” Sage watched Alfred go.

Bruce smiled. “Yes, Alfred insists on conducting himself with almost Victorian airs. Anyway, yes I want you to look into Arkham. A...friend, brought it to my attention that Arkham may not be the best facility for my brother.”

“Well Mr. Wayne, my fee is six hundred up front, four hundred a day plus expenses.” Sage sipped his coffee watching Wayne.

“You came highly recommended Mr. Sage. Deal.” Bruce said.

Sage cursed to himself thinking he should have asked for more since Wayne agreed so quickly, but he recovered swiftly. “I will report to you once a week with my findings unless I find something that needs your attention right away.”

“Do you know anything about Arkham at all?” Bruce asked watching his guest.

“Nah, I mean not anything that isn't public record or hearsay.” Sage shrugged. “But then again, never had any reason to look further.”

Bruce nodded and pulled out his checkbook from his jacket's inside pocket. Sage watched while Bruce wrote out the check and handed it to him. “Let me know everything you learn Mr. Sage.”

Sage smiled and nodded. “Of course Mr. Wayne.”

* 

Neither Jack nor Harley were sure how long they were together. Harley had fallen asleep curled in Jack's arms, her back pressed against his chest, his arms snug around her waist. It felt so good to be with him, to feel him, smell him...her puddin holding her tightly. Then the door opened and she saw Dale. Harley's eyes blinked slowly, adjusting to the light that was pouring in.

“I'm sorry Miss Quinn...Mr. Wayne, but it's time to go. You both need to dress.” Dale kept his eyes averted as he spoke.

Harley felt Jack shift behind her before he spoke. “When will we get to do this again?”

Dale kept his gaze down then shrugged. “Not sure Mr. Wayne, but I'll make it happen. I promise. Sandra and I are going to try and make sure you both get to see each other more. You have my word.”

Jack said nothing in response, instead he turned Harley in his arms so that she was facing him, his hands stroked back her hair from her face, his nails along her cheek, then his fingertips across her chin. “I love you, my little harlequin. We are going to get out of this I promise. I will set you free Harley.”

Harley nodded trying not to cry, but she smiled. “I know you will puddin. Just you remember, I ain't going anywhere without you.”

Jack grinned lopsidedly at her and winked. “Well of course not! There's no Jack without Harley.”

Then he pulled her close to kiss her forehead, her nose then her lips. Harley wrapped her arms
around him pressing close against him as if she were trying to feel every inch of his body, to remember every part of him when they weren't together. Jack ran his teeth over her bottom lip tugging gently, with a whispered, “They will not destroy us Harley, but we will destroy them.” He gave her a grin and a kiss.

*

The next few days were quiet, almost routine if life in an asylum could be said to be routine. Harley was surprised she received no further punishment for Mel's death. It was almost as if everyone wanted to pretend that Mel had simply gone. Which was fine with her. She was delighted when she learned nothing else had happened to Jack either in connection to his killing of Dr. Hurd, though she didn't get to see him...yet. That was what made these last few days bad...the need to see Jack, like a burning asching hole in her being...if only...

When another day passed, Harley began to hope too that maybe Crane had moved on that he had lost interest in her. She was just starting to become comfortable with the idea when Sandra came to her cell early one evening.

*

It was early evening, the sun had just set. A yellow light glared down at Harley while she worked. Harley had been given crayons and some paper. She was drawing intently, focused on a scene she was creating of Bruce Wayne in a straightjacket, tied to a wheelchair with Jack holding a gun to his head. It wasn't very good, but she knew what she was trying to draw, and it just killed time. She giggled to herself thinking about adding some knives to it when Sandra knocked on her wall.

“Miss Quinn,” Sandra called.

Harley turned to see her holding a straightjacket and a wheelchair. Harley's heart dropped and her blood turned cold.

“Oh no,” she whispered.. She had hoped that maybe Crane was bored with her, with them...but no...she couldn't be that lucky, she thought bitterly.

*

Sandra pushed Harley down the hall. The big woman was quiet, tense. Harley decided to lighten the mood; it wasn't Sandra's fault she had to take her to Crane.

“So, you and Dale go out yet?” Harley asked keeping a smile on her face as she looked upside down at Sandra while the big woman pushed the wheelchair along.

Sandra looked down at Harley and a little smile played across her face. “Well, not a date, but we have had coffee together twice.”

Harley smiled. “Oooh twice. Good for you.”

Sandra blushed. “Thank you Miss Quinn.”

“Harley...come on, everyone who's my friend calls me Harley. You're my friend, okay Sandra.” Harley grinned at her.

Sandra smiled. “Sorry, Harley.”

When they arrived at Crane's office, instead of knocking, Sandra simply opened the door and pushed
the chair inside. The office looked much the way it had every time Harley had been in here before, but today there was a lovely short sleeved, royal blue, vintage tea length dress hanging on the wall, with a pair of matching heels on the floor beneath it. On the desk, waiting to be used, was a makeup kit and hair styling supplies.

Harley frowned looking around. “Sandra, what is going on?”

Sandra looked unhappy, but she sighed unfastening Harley's straps from the wheelchair. “Dr. Crane wants you dressed and brought to the greenhouse for dinner.”

“What?” Once she was free, Harley jumped to her feet to stare at Sandra, her hands balled into fists.

Sandra frowned in response. “Please Harley, it's only dinner. Behave yourself and nothing...bad will happen to Mr. Wayne.”

“I won't have sex with him. I'll kill him before he touches me!” Harley snarled. “No one but Jack touches me!”

Sandra stepped closer and put her hands on Harley's shoulders. “He won't. Crane is a lot of things but he would never force himself on someone. He wants you to come to him. He will want you to want him. He's a manipulator. He will want you begging him not the other way around. As long as you play the game, you're safe..”

“I will never submit.” Harley snarled sticking her tongue out and making a rude noise. She glanced at Sandra while picking up the skirt of the dress before flinging the skirt aside. “How do you know so much about Crane?”

Sandra paled; the big woman fiddled with her nails. “I...I had a crush on him in school, in college. I took a few of his classes. I was fascinated with his work on fear...but...well that's a story for another time, but he was why I took a job here in Arkham. I've only seen him “in love” one other time.”

Harley, who had stopped to pick up one of the shoes and examined it, glanced over at Sandra her eyes slightly confused. “What happened to her?”

Sandra paled. It was clear she was remembering something she had witnessed herself, not just heard about. “She...she wasn't the same afterward.” Sandra shuddered. “Please Harley. He will hurt Jack if you don't do as he asks.” Sandra pleaded. “He'll hurt you. Just play along. It's the smartest and easiest thing to do until we can figure something out. String him along...once he realizes you aren't going to submit, things will get really bad...”

Harley stared at her then pressed her lips together and her blue eyes looked sad. “This isn't bad?”

Sandra shook her head. “You have no idea what he is capable of...I'm...look never mind, let's get you ready all right?”

Harley frowned, a million questions buzzing in her head, but nodded. She would play the game, anything to prevent Jack from being hurt...for now.

* 

Harley was led outside the main Arkham building to the greenhouse. Harley wore the blue dress, her hair styled up in a soft bun on the top of her head, her make-up in soft shades with a slick cat-eye liner and a light blue eyeshadow that made—as Sandra said—the blue in her eyes pop. Sandra had done an excellet job of enhancing of Harley's natural beauty. Harley's high heels made a soft click-clack on the stone and cement walkway as the two women headed to the greenhouse. The air outside
was much cooler; with the sun going down it was down right chilly though Harley did her best not to show how cold she was out here.

While they walked, she realized that the greenhouse was lit up like a jewel, glowing in the night. This time of evening, Harley would have thought the place would be dark, but the inside of the glass walled building seemed to glow with an inner fire. When she and Sandra arrived at the main door to the greenhouse, there were a couple of Arkham security guards waiting at the door. Each man gave Harley a hateful look. (Clearly everyone knew about her killing Mel after all. It made her wonder if any of them knew he was a rapist or maybe they just didn't care. Of course it was her word against his...and Mel was dead.)

The guards glanced at Sandra with a nod. They both stepped aside, one guard opening the door for the two women to enter.

Harley had to wonder how many people did Crane have on his payroll? And exactly how extensive were Crane's funds? Pretty extensive apparently! She thought wryly. Once inside Harley could hear the light sounds of classical music...piano...she was sure she had heard it before...Harley rattled through her memories before she recognized the music; it was Barenboim - Bach Goldberg Variations – Aria. She had heard it played live at a gymnastics competition during a floor exercise when she was younger. She didn't know why the music had stuck in her head, but here it was again, yet this time she found the softly playing piano music (clearly a recording judging by the sound) uncomfortable...eerie, like everything else occurring at this moment.

With Sandra behind her, both women walked into the greenhouse where Harley saw a couple of more men, not Arkham security judging by how they were dressed, but maybe hired thugs by the looks of them; she couldn't know for certain. Sandra, her hand on Harley's shoulder, continued to walk her deeper into the greenhouse. Harley could see lights had been strung along the trees, through the plants, fairy lights that she might have found lovely, but now only seemed to accentuate the eeriness of the situation.

In the middle of the greenhouse where all the paths led was a small circular area where Crane had set up a small round table with a white table cloth, two white wooden chairs with light blue upholstered seats, two tall glass candle holders, white roses running around their bases held white pillar candles, their flames dancing softly in the dim light. The little section also contained four armed men standing motionless, but watching her. Sandra escorted her closer, pulling out her seat and waiting until Harley sat before she turned and left. Crane was nowhere to be seen at the moment. Harley looked around taking in all the other details of the setting. The plates were white, decorated with light blue flowers on them. Next to the plates were two glass goblets, and two matching white and blue tea cups as well as silver dinnerware along the side of the plates. Next to the table was a cart with covered food trays, a bucket of ice with a bottle of wine sticking out of it. Harley could smell at least one food item—steak. Harley held her hands in her lap, balled into fists, when finally Crane showed up. He was dressed in an elegant black suit, white shirt and matching bow tie, his sandy colored hair was parted on the side and slicked back. He smiled when he saw her.

“You look lovely tonight Dr. Quinzel.”

Harley snarled. “What do you want?”

Crane smiled softly. “To eat dinner with you my love.”

“I'm not your love.” Harley was vibrating with anger.

Crane smiled picking up the wine and with a skill of long practice, he popped the cork. “You are my love Dr. Quinzel, my muse, my...inspiration!”
He leaned over and poured wine into her goblet. Harley glanced around. The men here were all armed with batons, tasers and one wore brass knuckles, all non-lethal, but they would definitely hurt. Crane smiled, finished pouring wine into his own glass before he picked up the lids covering the food to reveal that the meal was indeed steak, salad and green beans.

Crane smiled as he took his seat. “I had this brought in from one of Gotham's finest restaurants, so please eat.”

Crane picked up his utensils and started to cut his steak. Harley sat there for a few heartbeats, her rebellious stomach growling before she finally reached for the fork and knife and cut into her food. The first bite melted on her tongue, which only encouraged her to eat more despite her revulsion for Crane.

They ate in silence for a little while; the food was excellent and the wine was good. Harley watched Crane warily with each bite she took.

Crane took a sip of his wine after eating a few bites before he spoke. “Every creative act has its destructive consequences. Which is why I must destroy you Dr. Quinzel and then rebuild you into something better, even more beautiful. You will be my greatest creation, my beautiful representation of pure fear.”

Harley went very still. “How do you think you are going to do that?” she asked softly, her voice barely a whisper.

Crane smiled as he sipped some of his wine. “‘Fear, you must understand, is more than a mere obstacle. Fear is a TEACHER, the first one you ever had and that is where my serum comes in. My serum is about pulling your fears to the surface, forcing you to face them. You have pushed me, my dear, pushed me to new levels...you and that Wayne fellow. He seems immune to my serum...but you...you are so delightfully receptive. I want to push, to see how far, how deep into your fears I can take you before you shatter. Then, and only then, will I rebuild you. Rebuild you into something glorious, your mind will be come mine to play with, mine to mold into my perfect companion, a perfect representative of my goals, my creation...my Lady Crow.” Crane chuckled softly taking a sip of his wine. “You see my dear, I respect the mind's power over the body—it's why I do what I do...I break it and rebuild it.”

Harley shoved herself away from the table. The men around them came to attention, but Crane put up a hand stopping them.

“Now, now Dr. Quinzel. May I call you Harleen?” Crane cooed softly.

Harley spit. “NO!”

Crane only smiled as he held her gaze. “Harleen. Once you are rebuilt into the beauty, the representation of fear I know you can be, then we can have the perfect child! A creature of my intellect and your new creation...it will be beautiful, my dear Harleen.” He continued to smile at her. If he noticed her trembling in anger, he didn't show it as he continued. “Besides, you can't stop me and fighting the inevitable will only hurt you and your Mr. Wayne more. And do you really want to see how much electricity your young man can take? Or perhaps you would prefer to watch him undergo the insulin therapy? Now that can be quite graphic and very painful.” He stood. “I had a pleasant dinner. I hope we can do this again soon.”

Harley lunged at the table, reaching for one of the dinner knive,s but one of the guards hit her in the back with his taser, then another did the same. Harley dropped as her muscles seized, watching in impotent anger, unable to move as Crane left the area and blew her a kiss before he disappeared.
Another few days passed. Harley hadn't seen Crane during that time. She had been plagued by nightmares, dreams of Crane pulling her, dragging her into a dark void that she couldn't escape. Other nightmares were of watching Jack being shocked over and over again until there was nothing left of the man she loved but a drooling thing that only outwardly resembled her lover.

Today, Harley had been escorted to the greenhouse again, but this time it was mid-afternoon and she was with some of the other patients. She glanced around shivering as she remembered her dinner with Crane, but thankfully the doctor had kept his distance these last few days. The only thing that would have made it better was if she had been able to spend time with Jack. Sandra had told her that she and Dale were working on getting them time together again...she just couldn't say when. Harley sighed. Not being with him was killing her inside. She needed her puddin.

Today the sunlight was grey; clouds had moved in threatening rain. She was walking with Babs and Tabitha when Babs excitedly bounced in place. “Did you ladies hear that we are getting some new roomies?”

Harley, who had her arms wrapped around herself while they walked frowned. “Roomies?”

Tabitha rolled her eyes. “She means more inmates.”

“Patients Tabs! You mean patients.” Babs giggled, but Tabitha rolled her eyes and muttered. “We can't leave, we get locked in our rooms and are forced to take meds we don't want while wearing this lovely black and white formal wear, and they make us have therapy and play with paints—inmates.” Babs sighed and continued. (Harley was learning quickly that Babs liked information. She liked to know things, everything. She had told Harley once that knowledge was power...the more she knew the more power she had.) “Well anyway, they are transferring some inmates from Blackgate prison over here to Arkham. I heard at least a couple will be joining us on the sixth floor.”

Tabitha groaned. “Oh goodie. I finally got used to you lot, now there is going to be more?”

“That doesn't seem...safe,” Harley observed.

“Well if you want to get technical, none of us are safe. We're all violent and some of us are murderers and there are ghosts here.” Babs winked which actually made Harley and Tabitha laugh.

Harley frowned. “Ghosts? What are you talking about?”

Tabitha groaned. “Oh you had to ask.”

Babs grinned, her light blue eyes twinkling. “There are ghosts here in Arkham.”

Tabitha put a hand on Babs' shoulder. “Not now.”

Babs sighed. “Fine. But supposedly Amadeus Arkham haunts the halls of the asylum!”

Tabitha smacked Babs on the shoulder.

Harley frowned. “You ever see a ghost?”

Babs shrugged. “Nope, but others have.”

“No one has seen a ghost Babs. Anything Jervis says is suspect because the guy is a loonie. He sees giant white rabbits too,” Tabitha grumbled.
Harley decided to change the subject before they started fighting. “So when are they coming, these new roomies?” Harley asked.

Babs frowned. “Any day now. They were supposed to be here a week ago, but something happened and the transfer was delayed. But my sources...” Here Babs tapped her ear. “Tell me it will be any day now...maybe even today.”

Harley frowned feeling a chill breeze brush over her. For some reason the idea of new inmates—prison inmates here in the asylum—made her skin crawl.

* 

Crane was in his office going over the final paperwork for the transfer of the men coming from Blackgate. Finally, he would have his actor on the premises and he could begin the second part of his work with Dr. Quinzel and Mr. Wayne. This session was going to focus on Wayne. Crane smiled to himself. He had been working nonstop on his new formula. He had concentrated it into a gas, quicker intake through the pores; the reaction would be instantaneous. Then with his new inmate coming, this session might just be the one he needed to break Dr. Quinzel and, if he were lucky, Wayne as well. Breaking Wayne would break Quinzel...watching her lover fall to pieces might be the push she needed. Crane started to hum happily to himself then hit a key on his computer. Music drifted from the computer speakers, bringing a smile to Crane's lips as Mozart's “Requiem” began to play while he wrote down his notes, imagining his beautiful Harleen broken and ready to be rebuilt.

* 

The last few days had been not just boring, but stressful for Jack.

Jack hadn't received any news about Harley. Dale had only told him she was all right. When Jack had asked about seeing her, Dale had said that he and Sandra were working something out, but that it would be soon... Well, soon was taking too long Jack thought. He needed to see her, needed to hold her in his arms. Damn it, he just needed her!! This evening, Jack was sitting on his cot playing a game of “Devil's Grip” with a pair of cards the big man Dale had provided him. Jack had been entertaining him all afternoon with them, doing trick after trick. His mind was still on Harley, but the cards kept him calmer. He had just finished his match when Dale came to the door of his cell.

“Ready for dinner Mr. Wayne?”

Jack looked up, holding a card to his right eye and putting on his best pirate voice. “Arrr...Mr. Dale, I'm being allowed to mix with some of the other patients?”

Dale nodded. “Yes. But if we don't hurry, the food will be cold.”

Jack chuckled continuing to hold the card over his eye like a patch. “Lead away my friend, to the terrible food they call dinner here.”

Dale chuckled. “Well, we certainly are not a five star restaurant.”

Jack chuckled while he slipped on his slipper tennis shoes. He grinned when he stood up making sure his striped shirt was tucked into his black and white striped slacks. “You know Dale, when I was a boy, I had a disease that required me to eat dirt three times a day in order to survive... It's a good thing my older brother told me about it, so if I can eat dirt, I certainly can handle food here.”

Dale chuckled as Jack stepped out of his cell and passed Dale, to walk in front of the large muscled man. Chuckling Dale asked. “Is that true Jack? About the dirt?”
Jack chuckled. “You've seen my brother, could you imagine him making me eat dirt?”

Dale laughed. “No, no I couldn't Mr. Wayne.”

“Honestly I think that is part of Bruce's problems...too good. Follows the rules too closely. Which is why I'm here.” Jack let out a breath throwing his arms out to encompass the asylum before he spoke again. “Dale, I have a question.”

Walking close behind Jack, Dale nodded. “Well I'll answer it if I can.”

Jack smiled. “Halloween is coming up in a couple of days. I want to get married.”

Dale frowned, almost stopping in his tracks in surprise at the question. “Okay and...?”

Jack stopped and performed an elegant, smooth turn to face Dale. “I want you to find someone to marry Harley and me, in here. Not someone on the outside, because they'll just...go tattling about it. I want someone on this side of the locked door. I want to marry my Harley.”

Dale tilted his head. “Why keep it a secret?”

“My brother. I don't trust him not to try and step in, try and stop us somehow...for some reason...” Jack's face darkened. “I don't want him to know. I don't want anyone to know except you, Sandra and the person who marries us.” Jack frowned as he continued. “We were going to have this huge wedding Dale. You...you should see the dress my girl was going to wear.” Jack closed his eyes and swallowed, his eyes stinging. He then rubbed angrily at his eyes for a moment before he continued. Jack was angry at himself for the tears, but Bruce had ruined everything with his holier-than-thou attitude. Jack had planned on giving Harley the world...

Jack really blamed Bruce's attitude toward him and Harley on the fact that his big brother had never been in love. Bruce simply didn't understand what love was like, that you would kill for love, kill because of love; when love is not madness then it is not love...or maybe Bruce was jealous? Bruce had everything, it seemed to many, except someone who loved Bruce like Harley loved him. That thought made Jack want to laugh.

Jack continued. “Anyway, I know my brother will try to stop us. There are only three people outside these walls I truly trust: Alfred, Alex, and Frost. And if I found a way to tell them, for them to come here, I'm sure Bruce would figure something was up. He always knew when something was up...well...most of the time.” Jack's smile promised that he had other secrets from his brother.

(Dale gave a quizzical look, but didn't ask who Alex and Frost were...yet.)

Jack continued, his voice sad. “I know I won't be able to give her the dress and the ring I have for her, what she deserves. They are locked away in Wayne manor just like her engagement ring is locked away here in Arkham...but...” Jack gave Dale a pleading look. “Help me marry my girl, please Dale.”

Dale stared down at Jack. A voice inside him said he should refuse, but then he thought...why not?

Dale nodded. “I'll see what I can find out.”

Jack grinned. “Peachy! Can you let Harley know?”

Dale smiled. “Of course, I'll find Sandra.”

Dale dropped Jack off in the small sixth floor cafeteria and immediately went in search of Sandra. He found the female orderly downstairs and outside on her smoking break. She was leaning against the side of the building looking off toward the Gotham skyline. When she saw Dale, her face lit up like a Christmas tree. Dale grinned when he saw Sandra. He knew a lot of people wouldn't find her attractive, she was too “masculine” looking to be considered pretty by today's standards, but Dale found her features to be enticing and he enjoyed her company.

“Sandra!” he called as soon as he spotted her.

She grinned. “Hey Dale, need something? I know this isn't your break. Everything okay?”

Dale hurried up beside her. When he stopped at her side he ran his hand down her arm. She smiled...she had the prettiest smile Dale thought. He debated only for a heartbeat before he leaned over and kissed her cheek. “I need your help.”

“Help? Sure, whatever you need Dale.” Sandra smiled, a soft pink blush on her cheeks.

Dale glanced around to make sure no one was within ear shot. “Jack Wayne just asked me to find someone on the inside here who can marry him and Harley.”

Sandra's eyes widened. “Really? That is so romantic! Do you know anyone?”

Dale frowned and shook his head. “No, I don't. I was hoping you might.”

Sandra frowned. “Well, I know someone who would know. Barbara Kean. She knows everything that goes on here in Arkham. Don't know how, but she does, and her information is never wrong.”

Dale frowned. “He doesn't want anyone else to know...especially no one outside the asylum, anyone who might accidentally leak the information. He's worried his brother will step in and try to stop the wedding.”

“Well...Barbara won't tell anyone...I would swear on it, though we might want to let her bring in Tabitha.” Sandra tapped her finger against her lips. “You know...I bet I could get Harley a wedding dress. My aunt runs a used clothing store downtown, she gets some really nice stuff. I know I could find something.”

Dale smiled. “You think you could get Mr. Wayne a tux?”

Sandra giggled. “Sure thing!”

Dale grinned at her. “You're perfect Sandra. I'll let Mr. Wayne know.” Dale stole another kiss from her cheek before he headed back inside.

Sandra watched him go with a dazed expression, her fingers on her cheek.

Back in the cafeteria, Jack had walked over and set his tray of food down at the table with Zsasz.


“So what's new guys?” Jack said with a grin while he picked up his spoon and pushed the food on his tray around with a slight grimace. “What is this stuff?”
Zsasz laughed. “Best to just eat it without asking questions.”

Robert chuckled softly. “Women taste better.”

Jack lifted a brow at Robert. “You know Robbie, that's the kind of information, you should keep to yourself, especially at the dinner table.”

The crazed haired Robert looked like he wanted to say something else, but instead shoved a spoonful of something like that looked like mashed potato into his mouth looking like he was pouting. Jack grinned at him and leaned closer. Jack grinned. “What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?”

Robert looked confused. “What?”

Jack smiled. “Are you going to eat that?”

Robert stared at him for a full second and then burst out laughing.

The four men were sharing a laugh when a tall, thick heavily muscled man with huge shoulders and a noticeably tiny head sporting a military hair cut, walked over and cast a shadow over the group of men. Jack turned completely around in his seat to look up and whistled. “Well, hello ugly.”

The man narrowed his small brown eyes as he sized up each of them. “I'm Ernie Chubb, just brought over here from Blackgate and I'm the new boss here, got it?”

No one said anything at first, though Jack giggled. “You know, bullies are always cowards. They like to pick on little guys or guys they think are weaker than them...usually means they have a little willy.” Jack held his little finger up and wiggled it.

Ernie reached forward, his ham-sized fists grabbed Jack by the front of his shirt, lifting him off his feet and held Jack up in front of his face, hissing between his large teeth, a little bit of spittle hitting Jack in the face. “I'm going to make you my bitch, pretty boy. You're going to suck my cock with that smile.”

Jack stared at Ernie impassive, then smiled slowly. “I'm only one person's pretty boy bitch and she would cut your johnson off and feed it to you.”

Robert broke into a laugh and started clapping his hands on the table. Zsasz stood up, his eyes narrowed into dangerous slits, his hands bunched into fists. Jervis just put his chin into his hands and sang. “No room!! No room!”

Ernie sneered, holding Jack with one hand, cocking back the fist of the other like he was about to hit him when Dale yelled. “PUT HIM DOWN!”

Everyone turned to see Dale with a couple of other big orderlies on either side of him and a couple of the guards who seemed a little reluctant to be standing there, but figuring they needed to do their job. Ernie glared. “Make me!”

That was when Jack’s hand snapped out, his right hand opened so that the side, between his thumb and forefinger hit Ernie in the Adam's apple with a quick hard sound of flesh snapping against flesh. The man choked, coughing, struggling for breath, immediately dropping Jack. His large meaty hands clawing at his own throat while he stared at Jack in disbelief.

When Ernie dropped him, Jack landed on his feet in a crouch, grinning. Then just as swiftly, Jack swung forward with his foot, putting all his strength into the kick, which landed right in Ernie's crotch. The big man tried to gasp, but he was already coughing and wheezing, the slam to his nether
regions only made his struggle for breath that much more difficult, plus the contortion of pain that ran across his face and the bright red hue had Jack snorting with laughter. The large man let out a whistle-like wheeze of sound.

Jack stood up, straightening up his shirt and chuckled, just as Dale was yelling. “NO!”

But one of the guards rushed forward and hit Jack across the back of his knees causing Jack to fall forward landing on his knees with a loud crack and a grimace of pain that raced across his features. Then the guard grabbed Jack by the back of the neck, forcing him down on the floor, a knee to his back while the guard yanked Jack's hands behind his back and secured them at the wrists with plastic cuffs. Jack could hear some yelling, but what made him smile were the groans of pain coming from Ernie. Jack chuckled.

The rest of the room erupted in a fight as Zsasz hollered, “Get off him!!” and jumped the guard on Jack's back. Jervis was screeching. “You have a regrettably large head! I would very much like to hat it!!!” as he did his best to hit one of the orderlies in the head with his tray.

Jack lay on the floor laughing until there were tears in his eyes.

* 

Later that night, just before lights out, Jack was lying on his back smiling to himself. The chaos in the cafeteria had been hilarious. It had almost been a riot. He snorted and tittered. A riot. Too bad everything had been brought under control so quickly. It could have been so much more fun.

With a sigh, Jack let his mind wander while he shuffled his cards (one of the guards had tried to take the cards when he brought Jack back to his cell, but Dale, who had been following close, had prevented the guard from doing so), doing a variety of tricks without looking once at the cards. He was surprised he hadn't been punished yet for the incident in the cafeteria, not that he was complaining. Instead, he was thinking about Harley, about her naked body against his...the smoothness of her skin, the smell of her against his nose...her radiant smile. She was going to be his wife soon, no matter what had happened to them—she was going to be Mrs. Jack Wayne. Wouldn't Bruce be surprised! Jack grinned and bit his lip, closing his eyes for a moment, letting himself become fully involved in the image of his girl. He set the cards down, reaching down to run his hand over himself. He was hard just thinking about her. Jack slid his hand into his pants, touching himself gently, thinking about Harley, her soft blonde hair brushing against his chest, his stomach, her lips around his erection, her lips pressing against every inch of his body, the way she tasted on his lips, the movement and feel of her breasts, the little pants, cries and moans she made when he was inside her. The way her body would arch, her walls tightening around him covering him in the warm slickness of her fluids...he could almost hear her moan. “Oh puddin.” Jack moaned moving his hand up and down faster his imagination filled with her. “Harley...uuhhh...Harley...”

He came quickly, his body arching into the burst of fluid from his shaft. Jack dropped back against the cot, panting when he imagined her on top of him, smiling down at him while she ground her hips against him. Jack stroked himself a few more times, the ripple of physical pleasure ran though him before he sighed, cleaning himself up and rolling onto his side, wrapping his arms tight around himself. It just wasn't the same as having her here. It felt good, but it didn't feel great...not without her.

He felt a wave of pain wash over him. He wanted her here, in his arms so badly that his entire being ached. Jack stuck a knuckle in his mouth, biting down hard. He was not going to let despair win. They were going to get out of this...he just had to come up with a plan. He was making friends...and
enemies...but even enemies could be used...Jack closed his eyes letting himself drift, thinking of how to escape...what he needed to know...

A few hours later, after lights were out, he heard a light knock at his door.

Jack looked over to see Dale. Jack frowned giving Dale a questioning look in the dim lights from the hallway as the orderly scanned his card and stepped into the cell. Jack sat up. “What's up Dale?”

Dale smiled, hurried over and squatted down next to the cot. His voice was a deep whisper.

“I talked to Sandra. She told me that Barbara Kean, one of the patients here on the sixth floor would know who could perform a marriage legally here in the asylum. But you would have to bring her into the wedding as well as her lover Tabitha. But Sandra did tell me those two women are friends of your Miss Quinn.”


Dale nodded, then smiled. “Also, Sandra thinks she can get both you and Miss Quinn clothing for a wedding.”

Jack's grin expanded. “Really?”

Dale nodded. “Yep.”

Jack grabbed Dale's face with both hands, surprising the man when Jack planted a kiss on his forehead. “Dale, you are a treasure.”

*  

By the light of only his desk lamp, Crane glanced up from his notebook to look at the man sitting across from him. The man across from him reminded Crane of the actor Basil Rathbone, that same old fashioned elegant appearance. The man, named Basil Karlo was slim with an aristocratic nose, a long pointed, firm chin and dark brown eyes and dark brown hair. A good “actor's” face, though Karlo was not known for his face; instead he was known for the characters he played behind heavy make-up and special effects.

“So, you used to be the actor?” Crane leaned his elbows on the desk and steepled his fingers.

Basil frowned. “Yes, I was...before the...incident.”

Crane nodded. “Yes, driven mad by the ending of your legacy...the studios who had been so good to you dropped you for the remake of your film, chose to cast a younger, handsomer man as your replacement. The only film you ever starred in as the lead, the headline actor...you killed the actor who was to take over your role, did you not?”

Basil nodded impassively, but Crane noted something lurking in the other man's eyes.

“And nearly everyone involved in the movie didn't you?” Crane asked with a smile. “Which was why you ended up in Blackgate...until your unique abilities appeared.” Crane lifted a brow in question at Basil, clearly asking how Karlo's abilities came about without actually asking the question.

The man said nothing, he just looked down at his knees, clearly unwilling to discuss it.

Crane smiled looking down at his notes. “You gained your unique abilities from an experiment at the
prison, but you have refused to name the doctor who experimented on you. Why?”

Basil frowned “Look, I agreed to this because you promised me that you would release me...let me disappear and take my daughter with me.”

Crane nodded, gazing at Karlo, his eyes showing little emotion. “Yes, your daughter. She has been in our care for nearly three months...repeated suicide attempts. Committed by her mother, your now ex-wife. Yes, you work for me over the next few...days...weeks...however long I need you, and then yes, we will release your daughter and you onto the streets of Gotham. Fail...well...your daughter's stay will become more...permanent.”

Crane returned his gaze to his notes. “You can only maintain another form for a very limited time, correct?”

Basil, who was frowning deeply after the talk of his daughter and the vague affirmation of the time his service was needed nodded. “Yes, maybe an hour, but it's difficult. If I suffer any physical trauma...a hit or worse, the disguise crumbles.”

Crane smiled. “Well then, you will have to be careful, won't you? The two patients you will be helping with have both proven themselves to be quite violent, but I trust you know how to handle yourself?”

Basil nodded. “I do.”

Crane's smile spread slowly across his face. “Good, very good Mr. Karlo.”

*

The following day Sandra came into the cafeteria where Babs, Tabitha and Harley were eating breakfast in a corner of the room. The three women were talking about what happened in the cafeteria during dinner last night with Jack, the other sixth floorers and the new guy named Ernie.

“Jack's incredible!!” Harley giggled, her cheeks red blushing with happiness that her puddin had acquitted himself so well against a bully.

Babs laughed. “I loved the bitch remark!! He is only a one person pretty boy bitch! I guess that's you!”

Tabitha chuckled. “I have to admit, that's funny.”

Sandra came over at that point and sat down next to Harley surprising the three women. “Hey Sandra,” Babs said in greeting.

Harley smiled. “Did you hear what Jack did?”

Sandra nodded. “I did. Actually I need to talk to all three of you.”

The three women became very attentive. Sandra glanced around. No one was paying any attention to them, but Sandra spoke softly. “Mr. Wayne wants to have a wedding on Halloween. He wants to marry you Miss. Quinn, here in the asylum. But Barbara—we need your help. Mr. Wayne wants someone who can preform the ceremony legally, who is here in the asylum. He doesn't want anyone outside these walls knowing.”

Harley looked stunned, but a slow smile was spreading across her face. “He wants to get married!”
Sandra nodded. Babs’ face lit up. “Oh my gosh, that is wonderful!! I know just the person!!”

All the women looked at her. Babs smiled. “His name is Cassidy. I think he is on the fourth floor; anyway that’s where he was last I heard. He has schizophrenia, but he is a licensed preacher! He can marry you. Just have to find out what he would want in return.”

Sandra nodded with a smile. “I can slip down there on my break and find him.”

Harley giggled trying to contain herself. “I’m getting married!”

Sandra smiled. “I’m going to my aunt’s...she runs a used clothing store...and pick you up a dress and Mr. Wayne a tux. I know they won’t be the kind of clothing you guys are used to, but I’ll do my best.”

Harley gave Sandra a quick, one armed hug. “I will love it no matter what you pick! Thank you!”

Sandra beamed.

* 

During her fifteen minute break, Sandra hurried down to the fourth floor. The fourth floor patients were allowed to roam the halls, enter the common room or any of the rooms on the fourth floor. They were watched by many orderlies and guards, but there was not the sort of “immediate violence” feel of the sixth floor. Sandra stopped at the nurses station where a couple of nurses were looking over a magazine.

“Excuse me, could one of you guys tell me where to find a guy name Cassidy?” Sandra asked politely.

One of the nurses, a red head with more freckles than unfreckled skin, glanced up and pointed. “He’ll be watching his soaps in the common room.”

Sandra smiled and thanked her before heading down the hall and to the right into a nicely lit common room. The room was painted the same dull color as the one on the sixth floor, but here there was a larger TV, a couple of comfortable looking couches, several cushy chairs, a couple of gaming tables where some patients were playing boardgames and another TV in the corner were two patients were playing a video game while some others watched. Sandra frowned; the difference in the two floors was quite shocking. She shook herself and turned her attention to the man sitting on the couch watching some soap opera on the television.

The man was tall and thin, with a receding hairline of dishwater blonde hair, though the back of his hair was held at the nap of his neck showing that it was long. He wore the typical Arkham Asylum black and white clothing, but the outfit seemed to hang on him as if he were simply skin and bones. Sandra walked around and eased down beside him. The man’s face had the weathered look of old leather, full of wrinkles and in need of a shave. He glanced sideways at her when he noticed her watching him. Sandra saw that he had bright blue eyes. For a moment she was reminded of Iggy Pop except a little rougher looking and in a black and white asylum outfit.

“Whatchyouwant?” he spoke softly yet quickly, a slight twang to his speech.

Sandra smiled. “You can perform weddings correct?”

Cassidy stared at her for a moment longer, then went back to his shows. “Yep.”

“Well, I need you to perform a wedding, tomorrow, Halloween, here at the asylum, in secret,”
Sandra said softly.

Cassidy frowned. “Two loonies getting married?”

She sighed. “Two patients, yes. But you would need to be quiet about it. They don't want anyone outside of a few people to know.”

Cassidy frowned, but then shrugged. “Okay, I can do that, but I expect payment.”

Sandra chewed her lip not sure how she was going to pay him, but she charged ahead. “How much?”

Cassidy smiled. “I want four Milky Way bars...and none of those fun size shit, they ain't fun for nobody. I want full-size bars. Three pieces of orange construction paper, and I want a bottle of sparkling water...raspberry flavored.”

Sandra frowned. “That's it?”

Cassidy smiled. “Yep, that would do it.”

Sandra had to wonder about the payment, but she wasn't going to question it...it was a price she could afford.

“Okay, I will have everything for you tomorrow for the wedding. Me or another orderly named Dale will come down here and get you after lights out. Okay?”

Cassidy grinned, never taking his eyes off the TV. “Okay.” He glanced sideways at her. “Halloween wedding, eh? Couple of weirdies,” he muttered before his full attention was back on his TV show.

* 

On Halloween, Sandra arrived at Arkham carrying two bags. No one paid any attention as the large woman brought the bags in and stuffed them into her locker. No one was dressed in costume (there was one year a few nurses dressed up in Halloween costumes and set an entire floor of patients into fits, so now dressing up at work for Halloween was not allowed.) Nor did anyone pay any attention when Sandra made her way to the fourth floor with a small plastic grocery bag.

Dale had taken care of the paperwork. He had a friend in the county clerk's office who printed out the marriage license he would need, no questions asked. With a little greasing of gears here and there, Dale had arranged for it to be filled without anyone taking notice. All it needed now was for Cassidy to perform the ceremony and sign it to make the marriage official. He owed a few minor favors to a couple of people, but he was pleased with himself and happy to help Mr. Wayne.

* 

Sandra found Cassidy in his room this time reading a book while lying across his cot; judging from the cover he was reading an old romance novel. Sandra noticed that he had added a makeshift preacher collar to his asylum outfit. She couldn't be sure, but she thought the collar might be made of white construction paper.

He didn't look away from his book when Sandra entered his room. “You got the goods?”

Sandra handed him the bag. He set his book down and looked inside grinning. “Perfect. Just come and get me when your lovebirds are ready.”
Sandra nodded. “See you tonight then.”

*

The rest of the day was fairly normal. No fights, no deaths and no Crane.

Finally lights out time came. Sandra had given one bag to Dale while she took the other bag, and with a quick kiss, the two of them parted.

*

Sandra hurried to Harley's room, the bag with the wedding dress in hand. She found Harley sitting cross-legged on her bunk waiting. When she saw Sandra, Harley squeaked. “You're here!”

Sandra smiled, pulled out her card to scan the lock; the clear door popped open and the orderly slipped inside with her bag...Sandra hurried over to Harley. “I have some make-up and a veil to style your hair around, but we better get started. I brought a flashlight for a little more light, but it isn’t going to be much.

Harley giggled. “Oh, thank you Sandra! Thank you for everything!” Harley threw her arms around the orderly. Sandra blushed and returned her hug. “Okay, let's get you dressed.”

Sandra set the bag down and opened it up, pulling out a sleeveless white and ivory dress with silver accents. The dress had a sweetheart neckline, drop waist with a full ballgown skirt and a low back. The bodice of the dress was heavily beaded in silver. The front neckline was a plunging sweetheart with a beaded illusion inset that flowed from the front to a low dropped back over an flowy organza skirt. Sandra fluffed the dress out and held it up for Harley to examine. “Is this okay?” she asked.

Harley gasped. “Oh Sandra, it’s beautiful! Thank you!”

Sandra smiled, pleased that she could bring some happiness to Harley in this place. “I guessed on the size, but I'm pretty good at it so I think it's going to fit. Oh, and I grabbed these too.”

Sandra held up a pair of Christian Louboutin nude/champagne Strauss shoes covered in Swarovski crystals. Harley gasped. “Where did you get those?”

Sandra smiled. “My aunt's place. She deals in high end used clothing.”

Harley giggled. “Wow.”

“Let's get you ready.” Sandra grinned happily.

*

Dale made his way to Jack's cell, making sure he wasn't seen. With it being Halloween, the guards on duty could go one of two ways; either heavy guard presence or light. Tonight someone or something was shining down on them because the guard presence was light.

Jack was pacing his cell, waiting for Dale to show up. When he saw the big man, Jack nearly threw himself at the door. “Where have you been?” Jack asked in a low hiss.

“Sorry, had to make sure the room we're going to use was empty and to make sure no one was in solitary,” Dale explained as he slipped into the cell with his bag in hand. He set it down in front of Jack. “Sandra brought the tux for you.”

Jack pulled the tux out and smiled. “You're girl has great taste, my dear Dale!”
The tuxedo was a black on black affair with black dress shirt, black tie and even the shoes at the bottom of the bag were black oxfords. Jack immediately started to pull his asylum uniform off and quickly dressed while Dale watched at the door, keeping a lookout for any guards or other orderlies. "There's a comb at the bottom of the bag too Mr. Wayne." Dale absently pointed at the bag keeping his eyes on the corridors outside—so far, so clear.

Jack was slipping on the black dress socks, having just finished tucking in his shirt, his tie was still hanging loose around his neck. The suit was only perhaps one size too big on him, but thankfully Sandra had thought to include a belt. Jack slipped on the shoes, tying the laces before he reached into the bag for the comb. He glanced at Dale while he brushed his hair back. "Did you bring the sharpie?"

Dale nodded and pulled the marker out of his pants pocket. Jack laughed. "Perfect."

He finished combing his hair then frowned rubbing his unshaven face. He looked rough, not something he liked. He sighed—couldn't have everything he thought.

Jack rubbed his hands down his front. "Okay, I think I'm ready. Do I look acceptable?"

Dale smiled. "You look real fine Mr. Wayne."

Jack laughed. "You're my best man tonight. Call me Jack please. I know I asked you before, but I really must insist."

Dale's cheeks reddened a little from embarrassment, but he relented and nodded. "Yes, Jack. Okay, let's go." Dale looked both ways outside the cell then motioned for Jack to follow him.

* *

Each floor in the asylum had a small one room chapel, even the sixth floor. The chapel was a tiny room with a couple of chairs, a table where someone had placed a cross and a burgundy curtain across the wall behind the cross, nothing more. When Jack and Dale arrived, Barbara and Tabitha were sitting in a couple of chairs, holding hands and whispering to each other. Zsasz was standing by the cross, a finger on top of it making it wiggle back and forth. Someone had put a tiny old cassette player on the table with the cross and some music was playing, an instrumental version of John Legend's "All of Me" filled the small room. Sitting in another chair must be the man who would be marrying them Jack thought, judging by the paper black and white collar the man was wearing...the man sat with his legs crossed, chewing happily on a large candy bar.

When Jack and Dale stepped into the room, everyone turned. Babs grinned and waved. The man with the paper collar stood up with a smile as he swallowed the last bite of his candy bar.

"Well, you must be the groom. Go stand there at the front. I'll let the bride know we're ready." The man walked out of the room. Dale leaned over to Jack and quietly explained: "That's Cassidy, schizophrenic from the fourth floor."

Jack nodded and chuckled. "Perfect."

A moment later Cassidy returned only to be followed by Harley. She stopped in the doorway, Sandra behind her spreading out her dress. Harley had her hair styled in a soft bun at the nape of her neck with long soft golden strands highlighting her face in gentle curves. There were flowers decorating her hair, small white roses and babies' breath. She stood in the doorway holding a tiny bouquet of fake white roses, but it was her smile that Jack found the most radiant, the most beautiful thing about her as she stood there smiling just for him, dressed all in white. (Faintly Jack could hear
Babs gasp and whisper how lovely Harley looked with an answering whisper from Zsasz that both Jack and Harley looked stunning and how weddings always made him cry, while he wiped his eyes.

Harley stood transfixed in the doorway, gazing at Jack. He looked so incredibly handsome though the suit was slightly too big and he hadn't shaved the whole time they had been in Akham, so he looked scruffy, but to Harley he looked more handsome in that moment, waiting to become her husband, than at any other time they had been together. Jack's smile spread across his face and he held his hand out to her. Harley slowly walked toward him while the music played softly. Harley reached out and took his hand, weaving her fingers with Jack's. Jack resisted the urge to pull her in for a kiss, instead wrapping her arm around his and held her close, turning to face Cassidy. (Standing by with their phones out, Sandra and Dale took pictures and video.)

Cassidy grinned reaching over to pop the button on top of the player, turning off the cassette player. He cleared his throat before he began. Then with a solemn expression Cassidy spoke.

“Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to bring together this woman and this man, both of whom were crazy enough to get themselves locked up in Arkham and on the sixth floor no less!”

Babs and Zsasz chuckled, as did Jack and Harley. Jack took Harley's hand and held it to his mouth, pressing his lips to the back of her fingers. They stared at each other as if no one else was in the room.

Cassidy continued. “I am going to unite them, two murderous lunatics—I heard about Dr. Hurd and the orderly Mel ya'll, good job there—in holy matrimony. If anyone here sees a reason these two shouldn't be married, just keep your damn mouth shut because no one wants to hear your opinion!”

Cassidy's voice had slowly risen on the last words, but then he took a deep breath and let it out slowly before he continued. “Now: do you Jack Wayne take this gorgeous blonde Harley Quinn to be yer wife?”

Jack kissed her fingers again smiling, his eyes never leaving her face. “I do.”

“And do you Harley Quinn that this hunka hunka man, Jack Wayne as your husband?” Cassidy waved his hand at her while he spoke.

“I do.” She smiled looking only at Jack.

“Y'all got some rings?” Cassidy lifted a brow in question.

Jack pulled out the sharpie Dale had passed them just before they stepped into the chapel. He took Harley's left hand in his and on her left ring finger he wrote with the fine point sharpie, 'Property of Jack.' It was only slightly awkward as he wrote around her finger. He then handed the sharpie to her. Harley blew on her “ring” before she took Jack's left hand and wrote, 'Property of Harley.' Jack grinned at her blowing on his own “ring.”

Cassidy grinned at the two of them.

“Then by the power vested in me, Cassidy Boone, I now pronounce you husband and wife! Go on, kiss the bride!” Cassidy grinned.

Jack yanked Harley against him wrapping one arm around her waist, his other hand going up to gently cradle the back of her head just before he pressed his lips to hers. Harley dropped her flowers reaching up to caress Jack's face, her fingertips sliding along his unshaven jaw, her lips gliding over his tongue caressing his tongue. Jack dropped his hands from her face, wrapping his arms around her waist and lifting her off her feet, smiling against her mouth while he kissed her.
Harley giggled pulling away from his lips just enough to gaze into his blue eyes, her nose against him. “I love you Jack Wayne, I love you.”

Jack grinned and rubbed his nose against hers. “I love you, my wife.”

They both giggled, their kisses both hungry and desperate.

That was when they heard Sandra's voice. “I know it's not the best, but I snagged some cupcakes down at the that bakery right down the road after you leave the asylum's estate and well...Congratulations!”

Everyone turned to see Sandra standing in the doorway with a pastry box of Halloween themed cupcakes. Jack laughed. “They're perfect!”

Sandra walked over with the box holding it open for Jack and Harley to each choose a cupcake. Harley chose one decorated like a pumpkin while Jack's looked like a bat. Jack laughed. “Oh look, The Batman came to our wedding!”

Harley giggled as the two of them crossed their arms to take a bite of each others cupcake. Jack leaned close and whispered. “I'm going to take a bite out of you later.”

Harley giggled, kissing the tip of his nose then together they bit into their respective cupcakes.

* *

Not quite an hour later, Dale and Sandra were escorting Jack and Harley to solitary. The paperwork for their marriage had been signed (Harley made sure she signed everything as Harleen Quinzel so that everything was legal on their marriage license). Dale and Sandra shuffled off the inmates to their rooms and now that only left Jack and Harley.

Dale smiled. “No one is in solitary, so we thought you two might like the same room you had before for the night. The nigh staff is light tonight with it being Halloween, so there shouldn't be any trouble. I'm pretty positive no one will notice you two are both gone, especially if we get you back in your cells by morning check.”

Jack grinned. “Thank you both. You know, when I get out of here, I could really use some loyal people working for me.”

Dale blushed. “Oh I don't know Mr. Wayne, this sort of thing is all I've ever done.”

“Well Dale, when I get out I'm planning on something spectacular, something like Gotham has never seen before...just think about it.” Jack smiled.

* *

They arrived at the cell they had been in before when Jack was in solitary. Dale held the door open for them while Sandra stood a little off to the side. Jack grabbed Harley, lifting her up into his arms in a typical bridal carry, causing Harley to cover her mouth to stop from giggling too loudly. Jack grinned winking at both Dale and Sandra as he carried his bride into solitary confinement.

The light was still the pale weak light, but someone had taken the time to throw a few rose petals onto the padded floor.

Dale and Sandra stood in the doorway for just a moment. “We are going to try to give you two all night. Guard duty is light tonight and Crane isn't on the premises, so I don't see it being a problem.
I'll get the paperwork filed tomorrow with my friend at the clerk's office.”

Jack turned around still holding Harley in his arms, Harley had her arm around his neck, her head lying against his, smiling at them. “Thank you Dale, Sandra. Harley and I owe you a debt and I always repay my debts.”

Dale nodded. “No need Mr...I mean Jack. “

Sandra waved as Dale shut the door. “Good night and congrats!”

When the door closed and locked, Jack set Harley down on her feet giving her a devilish grin. “Mrs. Wayne.”

Harley giggled. “My husband. Mr. Wayne.”

Jack walked Harley back until she was up against the padded wall. “You look gorgeous.”

Harley continued to giggle licking her lips. “You look very handsome, husband...my puddin...”

Jack grinned grabbing her face firmly, but gently between his hands. “Call me your husband one more time.”

“My husband,” Harley whispered softly yet seductively with just a hint of a growl in her voice.

Jack swooned a little. “I do like the sound of that.” Then he pressed his mouth to hers dropping his hand from her face to wrap around her torso, his fingers searching for the zipper. Once he had the zipper, Jack pulled the metal slider down slowly.

Harley reached in between them to grab his tie, loosening the silken cloth from around his neck then her nimble fingers started on the buttons of his dress shirt. She tugged the shirt out of his slacks, her finger gliding down from button to button until she had his shirt open and could lay her hands against his bare skin.

Jack groaned against her mouth. “I love you touching me Harley.”

She smiled against his lips, her tongue snaking out to tease his tongue in small little licks while she brought her hands up, grabbing both shirt and jacket in her grip to shove them off his shoulders with a playful growl. “Grr...husband. My puddin and my husband.” She giggled.

Jack dropped his hands from her body, shaking his arms a little and letting the jacket and shirt fall to the floor before he reached over and took hold of her wedding dress and tugged it until the garment fell, sliding down to fall in a pool of fabric at her feet. Harley giggled softly. She was only wearing panties under the dress. Jack stared at her, reaching out to run only the tips of his fingers over her, starting at her throat, gliding over her breasts with butterfly light touches that sent goosebumps over her skin. He turned his hands over continuing his feather light touch, his nails skimming over her belly. He stopped at her panties, his fingers sliding to the sides to skim the edge where flesh met fabric.

Harley sucked her bottom lip in with a soft moan. She reached forward, snagged Jack by his slacks, working to undo the buckle, sliding the button through the hole before she pulled the zipper down slowly. Since the pants where slightly big on him, the slacks fell to the padded floor quickly. Jack giggled doing the slightly awkward danced of stepping out of his slacks, kicking off his shoes while pulling his socks off and his boxers down.

Harley giggled watching him, sliding out of her own panties, but leaving the heels on.
Jack swallowed staring at her in the dim light, wearing only a pair of sparkling high heels. Jack made a soft groan in the back of his throat. “Damn Harley...my sweets...my pumpkin pie...you look good enough to eat.”

Harley purred sliding her tongue along her lips. “Well...husband...why don’t you get over here and take a bite?”

Jack walked over to her. Harley thought he was going to kiss her, but instead he dropped to his knees and buried his mouth between her legs. Harley cried out in surprise and pleasure, pressing herself back against the padded wall, her fingers digging into the padding, arching her pelvis toward his hot, seeking tongue.

Harley reached down with one hand, threading her fingers through his hair. His face between her legs tickled slightly with his unshaven cheeks brushing against her thighs. She panted, gasping at each flick of his tongue. Jack shifted closer, his head moving in gentle rolls, taking deep sucking pulls at her sex before rolling his tongue in slow, tender licks. He ran the flats of his hands up her stomach, one hand reaching for her breast. Harley gasped, rolling her hips to meet his licking, both her hands now in his hair as she rode the waves of pleasure from his tongue, teeth and lips, while Jack’s hands roamed down over her torso, along her hips and down her thighs. Harley undulated her hips against Jack’s face, groaning and panting until she felt that fantastic warmth blossom and spread, making her body go taut and her back to arch. “Uuuhhh ...puddin!!”

Jack sat back on his haunches and grinned up at her, his mouth shiny as the dim light danced across his lips. He licked his lips, grinning at her with a devilish gleam in his eyes. He reached up and took her hands. “Come here baby.”

Jack pulled her down to him, grasping her face between his hands when she was on her knees in front of him, kissing her deeply. Harley groaned tasting herself on his lips and tongue.

They dropped down to the flower petal strewn padded floor, continuing to kiss as if separation would take their ability to breathe. Harley forced Jack onto his back with a quick twist of her hips, her arms shoving on his shoulder. She giggled. “Just lay right there puddin.”

She crawled on top of him, still wearing her heels and turned so her rear was facing him. She immediately grabbed his erection in her hands and started to sensually rub her tongue and lips over him. Jack moaned feeling the warmth of her breath, the tender caress of her lips and tongue sending shivers over his entire body. Harley very slowly, tenderly sucked his length into her mouth pulling her lips up in a slow drag, then down again, her tongue twisting around him at the same time, feeling the warm satin smoothness of him filling her mouth. She cupped and squeezed his scrotum at the same time in gentle, tender pressure, her mouth gliding down ever so slowly overed him in her saliva, then added one of her hands, sliding her hand up after her pulling lips, continuing her hand movements while her tongue caressed the head of his penis slowly.

Jack squeezed her rear, his tongue slowly licking in long erotic laps across her clitoris, playing along her labia before he slid his tongue inside her. With his other hand he dragged his thumb across her finding her other entrance and slowly slid his middle finger into her, pumping slowly while his tongue flicked in and out. He grinned at Harley’s muffled sounds of pleasure, her back arching and her sucking on him became harder. “Mm...Mmm...mmm...”

Harley groaned sucking him as far into her mouth as she could, relaxing her throat then pulling back with a slight drag of her teeth against his sensitive skin. Jack groaned, the vibration tickling up her core.

Jack sucked harder, his finger and tongue moving quicker. Harley released him from her mouth
gasping. “Oh puddin! Oh puddin! Uuhh...Uhh...Uhh...” Her hips moved with slight jerks as Jack continued his attentions without slowing. Harley dropped her head against his groin, her body tightening around him. Jack's free hand stroked up her spine his fingers dragging along her smooth skin when she came. “Uhh...uhh...uhh, oh puddin!!”

Her thighs squeezed him, her body aching back against his mouth causing Jack to grin. “Uuhh...Jack...” Jack was panting smiling. “Come here baby.”

Harley turned around while Jack held himself ready. She adjusted herself slightly then with Jack guiding her, Harley slid down him, groaning as he filled her. “Oh Jack!”

Jack grinned panting. “Mmm...Harley.”

He held her rear bouncing, his hips up in a thrust. Harley gasped meeting his thrust, their body's meeting in quick thrusts, then slow grinds. Harley smiled down at him, her hair starting to fall loose. “Uuhh...puddin...my husband!”

Jack squeezed her rear hard, loving the soft squishy feel of her ass in his hands. “My wife...fucking my wife.” He chuckled gazing up at her before reaching up with one hand to grab her hair and tug her down for a passionate kiss. They thrust and bounced together a few more times, kissing and taking each others breath until. Harley arched up, reaching behind her to stroke his scrotum, causing Jack to thrust hard upward with a deep-chested groan She stroked him gently a few more times before bringing her hands back around to press against his chest.

Harley adjusted her legs, placing her feet back against his thighs, dropping her hands on either side of his head, thrusting and grinding harder. Jack groaned smiling up at his bride, her golden hair falling in soft waves around her face. He leaned up to catch a breast with his lips tugging gently on her nipple. Harley groaned. “Uooh...ooh...” Jack smiled licking her breast, feeling his wife becoming wetter, her panting deeper, faster. “Oooh...puddin...uUhh...”

Jack grabbed her ass with both hands and started pumping harder; he was coming closer, the building pressure threatening to explode, wanting to burst. The sounds of their moans and smacking, wetness becoming more intense, more heated. Harley moaned loudly then Jack groaned. “Uuh...uhh...Harls...”

He thrust hard and fast, then Harley cried out, her orgasm racing through her. “Uuuhhh...JACK!! Oohuhh...”

Jack shoved hard and deep into her, one hand around her cradling the back of her head, yanking her down to kiss her, his other hand sliding down her lower back, pressing her hips down on him. They kissed hard and passionately at the moment he came. Jack's cries mixed with Harley's; she cradled his head between her hands nibbling his lips and tongue shuddering at the pleasure of feeling him. Jack took a few more hard thrusts, emptying his entirety into his wife.

Harley cooed contently kissing him tenderly, pulling away from his mouth only to lick his lips, then the tip of his nose and lastly his cheek. “You are mine, Mr. Wayne.”

Jack laughed holding her close. “Always Mrs. Wayne...always.”
The following morning shone with a mix of clouds, sun and a promise of rain. Alfred was out on the front lawn, dressed in his butler's attire with a garden apron over the front, with a plastic trash bag in hand, picking up candy wrappers and other miscellaneous debris left over from the trick or treaters last night. He smiled to himself. He enjoyed Halloween, especially the children in costume running up to the door, their faces full of eager smiles and laughter.

Usually on Halloween, Jack would help give out candy with the aging butler. Alfred frowned softly remembering that Jack would insist on carving several pumpkins the night before Halloween, lighting them all up, laughing and joking, telling stories about ghosts; the younger Wayne enjoyed the holiday with some of the child-like wonder that his brother lacked.

Bruce would never allow Jack to do anything too scary, warning him about frightening the little children, but Jack would make a wide variety of jack-o-lanterns for the front stoop, never venturing too close to the truly frightening. Alfred remembered Jack precariously standing on ladders to string lights through the trees where he could hang ghosts made of sheets. One year, Jack had even installed a sound system outside for spooky sounds. The younger Wayne would spend a god awful amount of money on a costume if he were going to be home for the trick or treaters (Jack did love to play dress up), while spending all the good part of the day on Halloween trying to get Alfred to dress up with him. Alfred chuckled remembering young Jack pleading with him to dress as a headless horseman with him, tugging on Alfred's jacket tails, his large blue eyes round and pleading. Jack had always been such a thin pale child, especially when compared to Bruce who was healthy and robust looking. Bruce always had parties to attend, while Jack was always home with him, alone. Alfred loved both men as his sons, but had a special place in his heart for Jack. Jack had always seemed more broken, more in need of attention that he did not receive from anyone else...Alfred sighed, his heart twisting at the memory of the little boy Jack had been.

But what made his heart twist even tighter was that this Halloween would have been different...they should have been having a wedding here at the manor. Harleen would have been here to share the holiday with Jack. The boy had finally found someone who understood him, adored him. Alfred stopped picking up the little bits of trash to take a few moments to control himself; hot tears were pricking at the corner of his eyes. He looked back at the manor with a sigh. Jack and Harleen had been so happy and he had been happy for them, thinking that they were going to make a wonderful life together. Alfred had even hoped for children. It had killed him when Miss Harleen had lost the baby, and Alfred had feared it had damaged something in Jack as well...but they both had come back from the tragedy and had been on their way to something special.

That was something the manor desperately needed—life, love...so much of the Wayne estate was clouded by the ghosts of the boys' dead parents, the manor seemed to be weighted with the sorrow of their shared loss. Jack and Harleen's marriage had offered a new hope for the family...a new beginning, but now...now...even when they were released from Arkham, the rift that Bruce had created between him and his little brother would now be damn near impossible to mend. The sorrow the brothers shared had created a chasm between them that may have grown too great to ever bridge. Alfred had known the brothers' relationship was tenuous, but he had really thought the boys were making progress. Now, knowing Jack the way he did, Alfred figured it would take a miracle to get the two young men to speak again. Though Alfred saw the fault more on Bruce's side than Jack's, both men had pushed each other away in different ways all through the years, but it was Bruce's need to shut off his emotions and pursue his quest—which Alfred understood—that created another rift that poor Jack had not understood. Alfred had pleaded with Bruce to include Jack in his pursuit of justice, but Bruce had insisted that Jack wasn't built to handle what being Batman was all about.
If only Bruce understood that Jack was terrified of being alone or Jack understood that Bruce was scared of losing someone he cared about. They both reacted to each other from a place of fear, two lonely boys who saw their parents murdered and who couldn't seem to find their way back to each other. That mugger had taken more from those boys than their parents; he had taken the two young brothers away from each other.

Alfred glanced from the manor toward the gate. He wanted to go to the asylum and see them both, but he wasn't sure how Bruce would react. When he had mentioned the idea, Bruce had told him he thought it was a bad idea, that Jack wouldn't react well to a visit. As Alfred stood there looking at the gate, a crisp breeze blew through the trees sending a few colorful swirl of leaves dancing on the wind. Alfred watched the leaves dancing on the air and he decided that blast it all...he wanted to see both Jack and Miss Harleen and check on them. Alfred smiled. Bruce was gone for the day and would not be there to assert his heavy opinion. He would drive himself to the asylum right away. With that decision made, he shoved the last candy wrapper into the bag and headed inside to change.

* 

Bruce was sitting in his office going over some proposals from the Wayne Research Institute. They were wanting to develop a new type of seed that would take in dry soil and require little water. It was an interesting proposal. He was just contemplating calling to arrange a visit to the lab to discuss the matter with their newest employee, the very interesting Dr. Pamela Isley, when he received a call on his cellphone. Bruce frowned seeing that it was from Barry, the family lawyer. Bruce picked up on the second ring. “Barry what’s up?” he asked his eyes still running over the proposal.

“Did you know all your brother's money is gone?” Barry steamrolled ahead without a hello or good morning.

“What are you talking about?” Bruce frowned, setting the paperwork he had been looking over down on the table and focused his attention on the conversation.

Hardgrove continued. “Okay, the sister of Kopski did file a civil suit. So I thought, since this is your brother's mess, it should come from his accounts. So I called up the accountant to ask about the funds available, but, according to your accountant, your brother's checking account has a thirty-seven dollar balance.”

Bruce frowned in confusion putting his fingers against his temple and rubbing slowly while he spoke. “I don't understand. Why were you looking into my brother's finances?”

Barry took a deep breath. “I thought that I would look into your brother's finances and talk to you about having a check issued from your brother's account since he is the cause of all of this, BUT either your brother has moved all his money to a secret location, an unknown bank account, under his mattress! Fuck if I know! But all I do know is there is no money to pay off the sister from your brother's account,” the lawyer growled in frustration.

Bruce dropped his fingers to his nose and began to rub the bridge wishing he had a drink in front of him, but thankful at the same time thankful that he didn't as he sighed and replied. “I'll pay it,” he said simply, fatigue evident in his tone. “I'll cut a check today.”

Hardgrove sighed. “I'm sorry about this Bruce.”

Bruce shook his head though Barry couldn't see the gesture while Bruce spoke. “It's fine Barry. Look, come by at lunch and I'll give you the check, all right.”

Barry sighed. “Not a problem. See ya soon Bruce.”
Bruce hung up. He knew that Jack hadn't blown all that money...and it was a LOT of money. Jack wasn't stupid—his little brother was never stupid, especially with money. Bruce rubbed a hand across his face thinking about Jack...wondering why he would have moved his money and knowing Jack, it was probably untraceable. He bought a lot of clothes, fast cars, bikes, but he wasn't stupid enough to go broke was he?

Bruce shook his head. No. Jack was genius level intelligent. Jack was smart, crafty even if he was prone to violence and his moral compass seemed...askew. His little brother had simply moved the money somewhere else. The question was why?

Bruce thought about calling Sage for a moment, asking him to trace the money, then decided against it. That wasn't any of his business. He would trust that Jack had a good reason, for now.

* 

That morning Harley woke to the warm feel of Jack's arms tight around her, her senses were filled with Jack. The taste of him on her mouth, the smell of him against her nose, the softness of his skin in her embrace; she wanted to remember the smell of every part of his body, the feel of every part of his skin where it touched hers. She loved him more than words could express, she loved him and now he was her husband. She smiled at the sound of his voice, the soft whisper of Jack's voice, his fingers stroking through her hair softly. “Mmm...my Harley.”

She giggled, just a faint whisper of a laugh on her lips before opening her eyes slowly to gaze up into Jack's blue eyes. Jack's smile spread across his face as he whispered.

“There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.”

She opened her eyes fully with a smile. “Shakespeare?”

He chuckled softly brushing his thumb along her cheek, then against the corner of her mouth, before he pressed his mouth over hers, kissing her gently. Harley wrapped her arms around him, then a leg around his hips. Jack laughed nipping at her mouth.

“My frisky little murder kitten, Mrs. Wayne.” He chuckled softly. Harley laughed sliding her tongue once more into his mouth. Jack made muffled sounds of pleasure rolling completely on top of her. Harley laughed, wrapping both legs around him. Jack nibbled at his wife, rocking both of them back and forth laughing, kissing and nibbling.

Their kissing had just began to become more heated, Jack’s erection pressing against her. Her warm body, the softness and sweet smell of his wife taking over his senses when there was a knock at the door, then the sound of the locking mechanism springing loose. Jack reached over grabbing her dress, rolling off of her and draped the dress over her, then swiftly grabbed his jacket to throw it over his lap just as Dale stuck his head in carrying a tray. From the smell of it, the tray contained breakfast.

Dale grinned a little sheepishly. “Sorry to disturb you guys, but I wanted to let you know that we are short staffed today. Apparently a lot of Halloween parties ran over last night and a few guards over did it with the partying. Anyway since we are so short staffed right now, all patients on the sixth floor are eating in their rooms. I thought I would bring you guys breakfast and I can probably buy you another hour, maybe two before I have to take you guys back to your rooms.”

Jack grinned. “Dale my friend, thank you. I would go over there and kiss you, but I'm a little under dressed.”
Harley rolled over, holding the wedding dress to her and waved with a laugh. “Thanks Dale! Tell Sandra thank you for me too!”

Dale blushed setting the tray on the floor. “I will—see you both in an hour or so.”

Dale then stepped out, quietly closing the door behind him. They could hear the locks reengaging. Jack kissed Harley on the forehead before standing up and hurrying over to pick up the tray. “You stay right there pumpkin and I'll serve you breakfast.”

Harley laughed, “Oh puddin!” while watching Jack jump to his feet, toss the clothing aside, then naked walk over to the tray on the floor. She grinned running her tongue over her teeth, her eyes on his tight ass and long lean thighs. He bent over, lifted up the tray (which gave Harley a mouthwatering view) before he walked back over to sit cross-legged in front of Harley. She pushed herself up. The tray was filled with heaps of scrambled eggs, a pile of toast with butter and jam on the side and some of the flat cardboard like bacon, along with two covered white plastic cups with hot black coffee. Little plastic containers of cream and sugar, the ones usually found in a diner, were on the side of the tray. It wasn't the best food, but this morning it was a luxury meal. Harley's stomach made a loud growl. Jack chuckled handing her one of the plates.

“Our first meal as a married couple!” Jack grinned picking up one of the plastic spoons on the tray and handed it to Harley. She giggled as she took the spoon. “Married. I'm married to Jack Wayne,” she said his name dreamily.

Jack laughed and took a large spoonful of eggs. “What are you talking about? I'm married to Harley Quinn! The sexiest woman in Gotham. Hell, the sexist woman on the planet.”

Harley giggled, blushing. “I love you Jack...my puddin.”

Jack smiled reaching over to stroke his fingers along her cheek. “My beautiful wife.”

Harley laughed picking up some toast, spreading some butter on it and took a bite.

Jack took a bite of bacon while he spoke, pointing at her with the bacon. “We need to think about how we are going to get out of here.”

Harley picked up her coffee, poured some sugar and cream into her plastic coffee container. “How Jack? There are guards, orderlies, doctors...” For a moment she looked defeated. She set the coffee down; her voice cracked a little when she spoke. “I just...” She angrily wiped her eyes. “Jack...Crane isn't going to let us go...let me go...he wants...he...Crane...Crane thinks he loves me. He said he wanted to...to rebuild me. Destroy me, then remake me into...something of his...I...”

Jack put his food down, moving over to sit beside her, catching her chin with his fingertips, turning her to look at him. “What did he say exactly?” Jack's touch was tender, but his voice was cold.

“He said he wanted to make me into something better...his creation.” Harley swallowed, one tear slowly trailing down her cheek, her voice a whisper. “He wants me to be a representation of fear Jack, his representation of fear. He wants to destroy you too Jack.”

Jack smiled at her and wiped her tear away with his thumb. “He is not going to win Harley. Not against us.”

She smiled. “You're right Jack...you're always right.” Jack pulled her into his embrace, cradling her head against his shoulder holding her tightly.

Jack grinned. “I know just who is going to help us,” he said softly.
Harley frowned against his shoulder. “Who Jack?”

Jack smiled. “Dale and Sandra.”

Harley sat back so she could look into his eyes. “You think they'll help us?”

“Yes I do. You can tell they're dissatisfied with how things are run around here, with how we're being treated. Plus they helped us to all of this...” Jack motioned around him taking in the solitary room. “…our wedding, so yeah...I just need to put Dale in contact with Alex and Frost. I don't think it will take much of a push to have them seeing the world the way we see it toots.” Jack kissed the tip of her nose before letting her go and picking up her coffee, putting it back in her hands.

“Is there like a phrase, a code word that only Alex would know? Like a secret safe word or something from you that you could tell Dale or Sandra?” Harley took a sip of the hot coffee, the warmth and caffeine chasing away her dread of Crane. Jack scooted closer beside her before picking up his plate of food and started eating again, but not before he giggled. “Safe word...heheh...”

Harley smacked him lightly on the shoulder, but she was smiling. “You know what I mean!”

Jack chuckled around a mouthful of eggs before he continued. “Actually there is a joke I've told Alex. I don't remember...a hundred times. It's become sort of an inside joke with us. Then the joke gradually became a signal. Anytime I told the joke during poker, it came to mean I was in trouble during a card game. Then Alex would make sure I got a card I needed.”

Harley gasped. “Jack Wayne—did you cheat at poker?”

Jack laughed. “That's what you're upset about? Yes, but only in the beginning when I was learning the game. Now...I can win without any help.”

Harley chuckled around a bite of her eggs. “What's the joke?”

Jack took a sip of his coffee before he spoke. “Okay. There was a man with one arm that came to America trying to look for a job, but since he only had one arm, no one wanted to hire him. So the poor man decided to kill himself by jumping off a building.

He went to the highest floor of the building and was about to jump when he saw a man on the street with no arms dancing.

So the man thought to himself...”I have one arm and I'm about to kill myself, but that man has no arms and he's dancing! I need to know his secret!”

The man comes down from the building and goes to the man with no arms and says. “I have one arm and I was about to kill myself, but you have no arms and you're here dancing. Tell me how you do it? How do you stay in such high spirits?”

The man with no arms stares at him and hisses. "Dancing? I'm trying to scratch my ass!”

Harley snorted almost spilling her coffee. “Jack!! That is terrible!”

Jack grinned picking up his coffee and taking sip. “I know!! The first time I told it to Alex, he laughed himself sick. After that, the joke became a signal. That joke was always just long enough for Alex to slip me a card or two during the game while I had everyone's attention. If Dale starts tell Alex that joke, he'll know it's from me.”

Harley gazed at him. “What message would you get to Alex?”
“Right now...help us find a way out of here. Well, at least to let Alex know we need help. If Dale can at least recite the joke, Alex will know we need help,” Jack concluded simply.

Harley nodded as she finished her coffee. Jack reached for her. “Harley. I want to make love to my wife one more time before our time runs out.”

Harley smiled softly swallowing down, a sudden twist in her chest and her eyes burning. “Yes puddin...I would like that...”

Jack pulled her away from the tray and into his arms as he laid back against the padded floor. Harley leaned on his chest gazing down at her puddin. She reached out and ran her hand across his fuzzy jaw. Jack chuckled and dumped her onto her side making her laugh before they rolled to face each other. Jack reached out, brushing his fingers along her jaw. “You are the most beautiful girl I've ever seen Harley.”

She smiled softly gazing with love in her eyes. “You are the most handsome man I've ever seen Jack. I love everything about you.”

He played with a lock of her hair. “Everything?”

Harley nodded. “I love everything about you. Everything we've done together...all of it, every minute of it.”

Jack’s grin was bright. He tugged at her hair gently. Harley brushed her fingers along his collarbone and down his chest, tracing his tattoo, then along the flow of his lean muscled pecs, then lower, over his breast bone. Jack let go of her hair, his fingers tracing a line along her cheek, then slowly caressed the shape of her lips, his gaze drinking her in. Harley brushed her fingertips along his jaw. Jack chuckled and dumped her onto her side making her laugh before they rolled to face each other. Jack reached out, brushing his fingers along her jaw. “You are the most beautiful girl I've ever seen Harley.”

He whispered, his breath warm as it caressed her flesh. “There is no life without you Harley. You are my everything.”

He slid lower, a kiss between her breasts, a lick along her navel, a tender bite at her hip before he pressed his lips to her stomach, dragging the tip of his nose from the curve of her belly back up the flow of her body to between her breasts again. He pressed his soft lips against the nipple of each breast, his tongue flicking out to tease each nipple as if he were paying homage to a goddess before he returned to gaze into her light blue eyes.

She could feel him, hot and hard against her body and she wanted him inside her immediately; her body ached for him to fill that part of her, not just physically, but her very essence needed him. Jack reached down between them, touching her tenderly, a soft stroke of his fingers between her legs. Jack took a moment to grab one of her legs, kissing her knee. Then he stroked her again with his fingers playing along her clitoris. Harley moaned in response spreading her legs wider. He directed himself to her wet opening and slowly glided inside, the two of them becoming one again. Jack groaned, the way her body seemed to fit around him so perfectly made him melt into her. He loved her with every fiber of his being, he wanted to lose himself in her.

Harley brought her legs up to wrap them around his waist, her hands slowly caressing his face and
shoulers tenderly while Jack began to move in a slow, tender rhythm that her body fell into easily. Soon they were rocking together, her hips meeting his slow thrusts. Each time he buried himself deep inside her, they would both groan as one. They moaned softly, staring into each others eyes, nipping at each other lips and tongues. Harley stroked his face, as if she were trying to memorize each plane, each angle with her fingertips while Jack leaned on his elbows, his fingers stroking through her silky hair, his mouth exploring her lips and tongue. Jack kissed her tenderly before dragging his lips along her cheek then to her ear where he whispered while his teeth grazed across her ear, his breath coming in heated pants across her skin.

“Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me proved,

I never writ, nor no man ever loved.”

Harley groaned arching her hips to met his thrust. She gasped and wrapped herself tightly around him, hooking her ankles around his waist, her hands grabbing fistfuls of his hair. “Jack...uuhh...Jack.”

Jack smiled thrusting deeply yet not fast; he kept his movements as slow as possible wanting her to feel each inch of him pressing into her just as he wanted to feel the way she enclosed him, wrapped around him in a tight wet embrace. Jack's movement sped up just a little, not too much, just enough to cause them both to gasp, their shared breath coming in deep pleasurable pants, when her body clenched and her breathing became more rapid. “Uuuuhhh...Jack...Jack!!”

Jack groaned softly, brushing her hair, the sides of her face. “Harley...Harley...”

The sounds of their panting mixed with the soft smack of flesh hitting flesh...

Harley groaned sliding her legs down to hook her feet around his thighs, her hands pulling tenderly at his hair before sliding down his back, feeling the musical way his muscles moved when he pushed himself up on his hands, the stretch and pull of muscle when he arched his back, pressing his hips toward her. Her hands skated back up where she wrapped one arm around his shoulder, her other hand gliding down his side while she kissed him hard and feverishly. She could feel that warm burn rising, racing to completion, bursting then spreading out from her groin through her entire body, opening like a flower to the morning sun.

When Harley came, her cries were muffled against Jack's tongue and lips when he caught her mouth, catching her orgasm. “Mmmhhhuuuhh...” Harley's fingers pressed hard into his skin, her body arching up, her legs tightening around him.

Jack's groans mixed with hers, his thrusts taking up speed feeling her orgasm around him. He tried to remain slow, moving gradually, but it was so difficult. She was so wet, so warm and welcoming that he wanted to let loose and pound her until he came like an eruption, but he dug his fingers into the floor padding and kept his thrusts slow, careful. Jack rose up on his knees slightly, taking one of her legs and hooking the limb over his shoulder then slowly pressing back, pressing into her, leaning down to kiss her. She reached up, her hand threading through his hair, returning his kiss with a smothering passion. Jack placed one hand over her head, the other at her side leaning in slowly, gradually pressing into her then picking up a slow rhythm of gentle thrusts, his lips and teeth catching her tongue and lips in a burning kiss.

Jack's mouth dragged along her lips, across her cheek to her ear, his tongue tracing out of the edge of
her ear sending tickles down her spine while his hand dragged down her neck to her breast. He cupped her breast in his long fingered hand and squeezed gently. Harley moaned softly, a whisper of pleasure as she wrapped her arms around him, her hands skating over his sides then around his back holding him to her while his hips moved, thrusting in and out.

He dropped her leg back down again, sitting up on his knees, holding himself on his hands and continued the same slow, sensual thrusting, his mouth back to caressing her lips and tongue. Jack’s breath came in deep moans, his hips thrusting in smooth movements.

“Harley...” Jack moaned her name.

Harley glanced down watching the way he moved his shaft in and out of her causing her to shudder. She made a guttural sound of pleasure then her body jerked toward him. “Ahh...ahh...puddin...ah...grr...harder Jack! Harder!!” Harley growled on the end of her moan which caused Jack to jerk, the combined sound of her pleasure mixed with the waves of erotic heat from her body made Jack shudder. He smiled and sat back on his knees pushing Harley’s legs forward, his hands spread across the backside of her thighs as he started to thrust faster, harder, slamming his hips against her. He grinned, watching the way she jerked with each thrust, watching her breasts bounce each time his thrust met her body. Harley’s hair was spread out around her head like a golden halo; the dim light made her glow.

She smiled up at him, her hands resting on his stomach, sliding to his hips watching his face, or the way his body met hers. Jack whimpered slightly, mixed with a groan. He pressed his hands into her flesh thrusting harder, faster, watching her breasts bounce, the expression of pure bliss on her face.

“My girl...ahhh...uuh...God. My Harley!” Jack felt that warm tickle just before he burst, his orgasm ripping through him causing him to ejaculate in a rush of pleasure. He arched his back, digging his fingers into her legs almost painfully.

Harley screeched in surprise when he came, triggering another orgasm that made her almost vibrate as the pleasurable warmth rippled through her.

Jack collapsed on top of her exhaling. “Damn.”

Harley giggled wrapping her arms and legs tight around him. “I love you Jack.”

Jack nuzzled her neck. “Mm...I love you too my Harley.”

He chuckled softly licking her neck, his teeth brushed the softness of her throat while he whispered. “Find what you love and let it kill you. Let it drain you of your all. Let it cling onto your back and weigh you down into eventual nothingness.

Let it kill you and let it devour your remains.

For all things will kill you, both slowly and fastly, but it’s much better to be killed by a lover.

...Being without you Harley, is killing me slowly,” Jack whispered.

Harley held him tight, her hands gliding gently down his back, then back again in a tender caress. Her hands glided over his shoulders. “Me too puddin...me too.” Her voice broke just a little.

“I'm going to get us out of here Harley. I am going to get us out,” Jack promised.
Before long both Jack and Harley were back in their separate rooms. It was afternoon, nearly one in
the afternoon. Harley was lying on her cot holding her hand up and dreamily examining the slightly
smudged “ring” on her finger. She grinned. She was married, married to Jack Wayne. She pressed
her lips together on a wave of intense emotion when she heard a light knock at her door.

She turned to look out the clear wall to see Sandra standing there looking pale and unwell. Harley sat
up. “Sandra?”

She sighed. “Crane wants you.”

Harley blinked in surprise, noticing the lack of a wheelchair. It was only a little thing, but it made her
smile. She stood up, slipped on her shoes, and walked over to the door.

“Let's get this over with,” she muttered.

Back in his cell Jack was practicing some magic tricks with his cards. He had been doing push-ups
earlier, breaking into a sweat, his focus on his night with Harley. But now he was sitting cross-
legged on the floor. He had been smiling all day, his thoughts on his wife, on his Harley and their
evening together when Dale came to the door.

“Mr. Wayne...I mean Jack,” the orderly corrected himself. “You have a visitor,” Dale said as he
scanned the door lock. Jack lifted a brow noticing the lack of wheelchair and straightjacket.

Jack frowned sliding his cards into a deck and set them on the nearby cot. “Is it Alex again?”

Dale waited while Jack slipped his shoes on. “You mean the man from last time with the one arm?
No. This is an older gentleman. He looked like a butler from one of those old British crime movies if
you ask me.”

Jack's face lit up. “Alfred!”

Jack hurried out of his cell stopping for a moment before turning around to stare at Dale. “No
wheelchair?”

Dale smiled. “Do I need one Jack?”

Jack gave him a bright smile. “No, no you don't.”

Jack started walking again with Dale walking behind him. “Hey Dale, could you do a favor for me?”

Dale paled only slightly. “Depends,” he said noncommittally.

“I need you to make a phone call for me to that guy who visited me last time. The only thing you
need to do is repeat a joke.” Jack grinned over his shoulder at Dale showing off his perfectly straight
white teeth. Jack's blue eyes flashed in the light as they walked, for a moment giving Dale a chill that
was quickly gone.

“I suppose I could do that,” Dale said softly, seeing little harm in repeating a joke.

Jack grinned. “Perfect. Now, here is the joke you need to memorize and don't worry, my friend will
know exactly what it means.”
Dale nodded silently and intently listened to Jack's joke.

*

Harley arrived at Crane's office only to find another dress, shoes and a bag of makeup and hair supplies waiting just as before. Harley balled her hands into fists, glared at the dress, a navy blue tank dress with little rhinestone details around the collar, a pair of black flats and a little white shrug. Harley ground her teeth for a moment contemplating ripping the dress to shreds, but before she let herself lose control she took a deep breath and let it out slowly. She could do this—for Jack's safety, she could do this...it was just...she guessed lunch this time, just lunch.

She turned around to face Sandra who was standing in the doorway watching Harley. “Let's do this Sandra,” Harley said with a growl.

Sandra nodded giving her a small smile.

*

This time Harley didn't leave the office. After dressing, having her hair and makeup done by Sandra, the orderly left her in the office. A few minutes later Crane came walking in briskly.

He smiled. “Ah, look at you! Don't you look lovely today!”

Sandra had done Harley's makeup light and fresh, pulling her hair back in a high youthful ponytail. She was sitting with her hands folded on her lap when Crane walked in. She thought about attacking him, grabbing something off the desk, anything that could bash his head in or gouge out his eyes...but then when she let the thought run its course. She realized that she had no idea how to get Jack out, how to get out of the asylum...that getting caught again might be worse...killing Mel and Jack killing Hurd was one thing...Crane clearly had the means to cover those things up...but killing Crane. Harley steeled herself, telling herself she could get through this...

Crane swept into the room, dressed in a tailored pale three-piece blue suit with pale white vertical stripes, an eggshell dress shirt with matching tie and pocket square; he looked elegant, in control. The door behind him had just begun to swing close when an orderly came in pushing a cart right behind Crane. Harley's nose wrinkled with displeasure...she smelled fish.

Crane moved a few things from his desk to make room for the orderly to set out the plates of food. Harley watched as two plates loaded with fish, along with little green onions and what smelled like garlic. Harley gave Crane a sour look. “I hate fish.”

Crane, who had been arranging the silverware, glanced over at her in surprise. “You do my dear?”

“I do.” Harley narrowed her eyes at him.

The urge to grab the plate of fish and plaster it all over his face was strong, but she didn't move. Crane frowned, then motioned at the orderly. “Take these away and bring us each an avocado and egg sandwich Brian, but leave the wine and dessert.”

The orderly, Brian, paled and looked slightly scared for some reason, but he nodded taking the plates and headed off at a quick pace out of the office. Crane smiled, reaching over and taking the bottle of wine from where it rested in a pitcher of ice. He took a moment to open the bottle of wine. “That my dear is precisely why our dining together is so important. It's a way for us to learn each others likes and dislikes.” He poured her some wine and handed the glass to her. Harley reached across the table, taking the glass of wine from him. Crane dragged the tips of his fingers along hers when they touched. Harley suppressed a shudder of revulsion and anger as she took her seat again, but then she
downed the wine in one fairly quick swallow. Crane lifted a brow. “More my dear?”

She nodded on her swallow. “Please,” she said after she had gulped the wine down and held the glass out. Crane leaned over his desk and filled the glass to the top. Harley sat back and downed the wine in several hard swallows.

Crane gave her an amused grin. “I thought today, my dear Harleen, we would discuss your past.”

Harley narrowed her eyes at him over the rim of the glass. “My past? What about it?”

Crane smiled. “I was reading more thoroughly through your file. Did you know that Guy Kopski died?”

Harley didn't react except to mutter. “So?” she downed the last of her wine from the glass.

“You filed charges against him for attempted rape did you not?” Crane crossed his legs sipping his wine, his eyes boring into at her.

Harley frowned. “So, he deserved what Jack did to him.” She held her glass out.

Crane smiled, stood up and filled her glass once more before taking his seat. “Like your step-father did? I assume he isn't actually missing, just dead. Didn't he beat you? Did he, your step-father, attempt a sexual assault on you at any point Harleen?”

Harley gripped the glass tightly in her hand; the glass creaked in protest. She stared at him before she took a sip. She rolled the red wine in her mouth then swallowed before speaking. “What are you getting at Dr. Crane?”

Crane took another sip of his wine. “Just trying to understand you Harleen. Understand why you changed your name or rather...didn't you allow it changed? I thought I would give in to your little identity crisis and call you Harley, but I've decided that since you are going to be my creation...Harleen would be better. But back to my original question, why the change? Why is that Harleen? Are you scared of yourself Harleen? Is that why you created Harley? Does Harley represent something to you? Something about yourself?”

Harley stood up growling. “Not another word!! You stop it!!”

Crane stood up as well, setting his glass of wine down before he began to walk slowly over to her. “As a doctor, like myself, surely you see what you are doing by creating another personality...but let me create her for you Harleen. These men in your life: dishonest, disloyal, hurtful...is that why you're with Jack?” Crane stressed Jack's name, giving a “k” a hard crack of his tongue. “A man, clearly going insane...I mean, he bit the throat out of our friendly Dr. Hurd...that is not the action of a sane man.”

As Crane spoke, he stepped around his desk slowly, carefully, forcing Harley to either let him get close or move out of his way. She realized when she took a step back, she was a little dizzy...the wine...too much on an empty stomach she supposed.

Crane continued. “Is that why you want to shed your skin? Become something new, something glorious? A woman who can kill without regret, take charge of her life? Well, my dear, dear Harleen—that is exactly what I am offering you. I'm offering you not just power, but the strength of fear. Once you become what you are destined to be...my Lady Crow...then all will fall at your feet.”

“You're crazier than Jack and me put together if you think I will become your Lady Crow or whatever!” Harley wobbled then, nearly tripping over her chair and dropped the wine glass where it
shattered on the floor. Crane reached for her, but she shoved her hands against his chest.

Crane looked down at her hands, then his eyes widened. She let go, taking another step back from him, but his hand snapped out grabbing her left wrist in a painful grip. He yanked her arm up and stared at her hand.

Crane snarled. “What is this?”

He was staring at her ring finger where Jack had written, “Property of Jack.” Crane's left eyelid twitched. “What is this?!?”

His grip was painful, but Harley just smiled.

* 

Alfred sat on a stiff plastic chair by the partition, glancing around the room. The place was unsavory and it made Alfred's stomach turn to know that Master Jack and Miss Harleen were in here. He could only imagine what it was like within the confines of the asylum itself. Alfred rubbed his hands along his thighs, straightening out imagined creases in his black slacks, and then the door on the other side of the partition opened. Jack was escorted into the room by a heavily built orderly with a stern face.

Alfred frowned when he saw Jack. The awful black and white asylum outfit hung on Jack...he had clearly lost a little weight. His hair had grown out some, just a little, but enough that only Alfred would notice, long strands framing his face as they hung loose instead of slicked back as he usually wore it, and Jack clearly hadn't shaved since he had been committed. The young man looked disheveled, which would be a mild statement. What made Alfred's stomach roil was that he could see the fading remnants of bruises on Jack's face. They were faint, but being a man who knew Jack's face well (for all intents and purposes Alfred was Jack's father) and he recognized, from years of Jack getting himself into fights, the slightly yellow and dim purples on the young man's face of recent bruising.

Jack took the chair across from Alfred. Jack's smile had started off slightly mocking, as if he were putting on a show, but when his blue eyes landed on Alfred Jack's expression broke, a real smile replaced the fake and there were hints of tears in his eyes, just at the edges of real genuine happiness at seeing the older man.

“Alfie! You came to visit! Let me guess—Brucie doesn't know.” Jack placed a hand on the clear partition between them.

Alfred leaned forward placing his own hand on the clear plastic. He could see the healed scrapes on the young man's hands. “Master Jack. How are you doing?”

Jack frowned, dropping his hand. He glanced back at the guards and orderlies. “It's...” He swallowed. Seeing Alfred had triggered feelings in Jack that made him uncomfortable, but he loved the old man, trusted him.

“It's awful here. They're keeping Harley and me apart Alfie.” Jack's voice broke slightly.

“Master Jack. I'm sorry.” Alfred frowned slightly. “Is there anything I can get you? Anything I can do?”

Jack smiled, the words said with a slight laugh. “Well I could really use a cigarette and a couple of bottles of bourbon...” Jack chuckled, but he could see that Alfred was serious. Jack tilted his head studying the older man. He laughed again, but it wasn't a mocking laugh; it was a laugh filled with pain as he said. “Wanna break us out?”
Jack said it with a smile, not really serious, but Alfred looked serious, deadly serious. There was no hint of mocking in his voice or tone, his face was a cross between seriousness and being upset. Jack could see that the man was barely holding himself together.

Alfred said softly, just loud enough for Jack to barely hear, “I'll look into what can be done Master Jack.”

Jack blinked in surprise leaning forward. “Really?”

“Yes Master Jack and I'll talk to Master Bruce.” Alfred frowned and nodded as if confirming something to himself. “You and Miss Quinzel do not belong in here. This place, from the little I've seen is...unsavory. I'm not sure what Master Bruce is thinking...but I will discuss this with him, I promise you that.” Alfred was frowning deeply when he finished.

Jack smiled, his heart tightening in his chest. It felt...good to know that Alfred cared about him that much.

“Have you heard how Miss Harleen is doing?” Alfred asked with clear distress in his eyes. Jack glanced around and leaned forward with a whispered. “I got to see her last night. She is holding on Alfred. It's hard on her...” he hissed. “They've hurt her Alfred, they hurt my girl. ”

Alfred felt a chill race down his spine, and he could see the pain in Jack's eyes.

Crane surprised Harley when he nearly yanked her off her feet glaring at her left hand. He dragged her close, his grip on her wrist was tight enough that she felt the pain racing down her arm and the limb began to tingle, an ice chilling numbness began to spread down her arm, but she giggled. “It's my ring. I belong to Jack. We got married right under your nose! I'll never be yours!! NEVER!”

Crane narrowed his eyes at her, glaring down at her. He wasn't sure if she was lying or not. He could interrogate some of the staff, but he didn't want to draw attention or to sow discord among the ones he did employ for his extra sessions and experiments. So he could do the next best thing...

“I will break you Harleen. I will destroy you and remake you into my creature.” He shook her a little as he continued. “I was going to save this, but I see you have forced my hand.” Crane's smile didn't reach his eyes, but just before she could land a kick or a blow, he lifted his hand back, exposing something under his wrist. She didn't quite see it, didn't know what it was under his wrist, but suddenly a cloud of greenish gas hit her in the face. Harley gagged then coughed. She continued to cough violently.

“There, there my dear—let the toxin do its work. Do you like my new form? Gas, absorbed through the pores and each breath you take sucks it down into your lungs. It should be hitting the bloodstream now, the effects are almost instantaneous. Tell me, what do you see? What is it you fear, my dear?” He yanked her forward and wrapped his free arm around her waist, tugging her against him as if they were about to perform a dance. Harley continued to cough, her struggles becoming weaker. She looked up as the room around her wavered, becoming grey and indistinct, the room's existence didn't seem solid any longer. Her blue eyes shifted to Crane, whose face seemed to waver and morph like the room, insubstantial as if it couldn't decide on a form, as if it were made from puddy. Crane's face elongated, the flesh blackened and tore away to reveal the muscle, then the bone underneath. Harley started to panic, breathing became difficult while she watched in horror as Crane transformed.
In the next beat of her heart, the skin reformed and she saw her step-father. His eyes glowed and his smile stretched and streaked across his face, blood started to leak slowly from his eyes running down his face.

“Now, now Harleen...what is it you're seeing?” Crane's voice came out of the monstrosity that was her stepfather, then his voice changed and it was her stepfather's voice.

“Little Harleen. You stupid fucking little bitch. You know no one wants you. That's why your mother lets me beat on you. She's hoping I'll kill you one day. No one wants you, little slut.”

(Crane let her go with a smile, watching her react to his newest toxin. He had no idea what she was seeing or hearing, but watching her was beautiful.)

Harley dropped to the floor cowering from whatever her his toxin was helping her mind to form. “NO!!”

“I'm going to hurt you Harleen. Teach you a lesson!” The voice of her stepfather seemed to come out in a roar like a beast. She looked up again and screamed when the face changed, melting and morphing until she saw half of the face as Guy. “You fucking cunt. I'm going to teach you a lesson. No one will ever want you, love you? You think that fucking rich boy loves you? He only wants to use you...you're his toy, you mean nothing to him. You mean nothing to anybody!”

The face changed into Jack's and he was laughing. “I don't love you Harley...how could anyone love you?”

Harley chin trembled, but then the face transformed again, the mouth too big, the eyes filled with green flames, the teeth elongated into fangs that moved closer.

She screamed.

*

One of the orderlies walked over laying a hand on the Jack's shoulder, his squared off fingers pressed down into Jack's shoulder, digging in until Jack was forced to lean to the side. This orderly wasn't especially tall, but broad shouldered with a military style haircut, a jaw so square that the angles looked like they might cut glass and deep set brown eyes. His name tag read Norman.

Jack glanced up at Norman. “Time up Mr. Bates?” Jack grinned at his joke though the orderly showed no response. Jack sighed. “Doesn't anyone watch the classics anymore?”

Norman grunted and pressed his fingers into Jack's shoulder a little harder. Alfred saw the younger Wayne jerk uncomfortably.

Jack frowned. “Well, I guess our time is up Alfred.”

Alfred frowned looking around for someone of authority, anyone he could speak to as he protested. “I was told I would have an hour!”

Norman tugged on Jack forcing the young man to his feet. He said in a surprisingly high pitched voice, “Talk times over mister. Wayne, back to your room.”

Jack hissed at Alfred. “Get us out Alfred!! Please!”

Jack struggled, pulling away from the orderly named Norman. “Don't let Bruce keep us here Alfred!! This place isn't what he thinks!”
The orderly reached out and grabbed Jack yanking him back and forcing him to turn around before he shoved Jack to the door causing the younger man to stumble. Jack turned and yelled, “Please Alfred!” Then he was shoved through the doorway.

Alfred stood up glaring at the guards who started to file through the door leaving. “I want to talk to someone in charge! This is unacceptable!”

No one answered him.

*

Jack was shoved down the hall by Norman who was flanked by two guards, each with their batons out. “Hey where's Dale?” Jack turned to ask the orderly named Norman. Norman said in a voice with little color to it except for its high pitch. “He's busy Mr. Wayne. Now don't give me any trouble. I won't hesitate to sedate you.”

Norman shoved Jack along until they came to the fork that led to the elevators and back up to the sixth floor. Jack started to turn, but Norman grabbed his shoulder and roughly steered Jack in the other direction. “Hey, where are we going?” Jack stumbled.

“Someone has a score to settle with you Mr. Wayne. So you're going to the aviary.” Norman finally smiled.

“What?” Jack tried to turn, but he was roughly shoved forward. As they passed another hall, Jack happened to glance down it and nearly stopped. He stumbled staring as he was shoved past, but he could have sworn he saw his father. Jack’s heart seemed to skip a beat and he allowed himself to be roughly shoved, but Jack felt himself break out into a cold sweet. That couldn't have been his father...could it?

*

Crane smiled, crouched down next to Harley to study her. Her reaction to his toxin had been immediate and he couldn't be sure yet, but it seemed more extreme than last time. But he needed to test it. He reached out to stroke her hair which caused her to sob and cower, pulling herself into a tighter ball. He smiled broader, pleased.

She was on her knees, her arms over her head sobbing. He stood over her watching her, basking in the beauty of her fear, just as the door open and the orderly came in with their lunch. The young man stopped in his tracks when he saw Harley sobbing on the floor.

Crane turned; he had just started to walk toward his desk. “I want her taken to the blackout box.”

Brian frowned. “But...”

Crane stopped on his way around his desk, his fingers resting on the top of the desk. Crane spoke without turning around. “Do it or you can look for another job.”

“Yes sir.” Brian put the sandwiches down on the desk and hurried over to Harley. He struggled to get Harley on her feet. She cried and pushed back on the orderly, taking a swipe at him, her hand connecting with his face as she yelled. “DON'T TOUCH ME GUY!!!”

(To Harley she was seeing Guy who was laughing, his face distorted and monstrous, maggots leaking from his mouth as he hissed. “I'm going to fuck you up Harl...going to make you mine. Jack Wayne doesn't love you, never did...you belong to me—just like you always have.” )
Harley screamed again, struggling against Brian. The young orderly was talking soothingly to her, trying to hold her steady. “It's okay miss, it's okay.”

Crane sighed, walked around his desk and yanked open a drawer. He searched for something while the young man was struggling to get a hold of Harley. The orderly continued to mewl nonsensically at her while he struggled with getting a hold on her; it was quite embarrassing and made Crane quite irritable. The man was supposed to be an orderly, but clearly, competency could not be assumed. Crane picked up a case from inside the desk, a flat, black case and snapped it open. Inside were four syringes with a strange greenish liquid inside. Crane picked up one of the syringes, held it up and tapped the cylinder. He stepped over and without hesitation plunged the needle into Harley's neck while she struggled with the orderly. Within seconds she collapsed.

Crane smiled. “There. Now take her to the blackout box and don't forget to turn on the sound system.”

Brian struggled to hold onto Harley's dead weight. He trembled, but answered, “Yes sir.”

The young man lifted her up into his arms and walked out of the office carrying Harley's unconscious body. Crane walked back around to his computer and sat down, flipping open his computer and with a few taps of the keys he had his monitors up.

“This should be most interesting,” he said softly to himself.

* 

Alex frowned setting his phone down. He knew Jack was in trouble...the obvious part of that trouble was being committed to the asylum, but now...he had just received a call from some man named Dale, an orderly who worked at Arkham and claimed that he knew Jack. Alex had been about to hang up when the man on the other end proceeded to tell a joke...that old terrible joke that Jack always told when he was in trouble...usually at cards. Jack hadn't used it in a long time...mostly because Jack never got into trouble that he couldn't get himself out of...

Jack hadn't used the joke in so long that Alex had almost forgotten about it until he received that phone call.

Alex sat back, his features twisted in contemplation, leaning against the headboard of his bed. He was usually asleep at this hour since he was active at night, not during the day, which was another reason the phone call had been odd.

Alice who was lying on her stomach partly asleep, mumbled next to him, wrapping her arms around her pillow. “Who was it Alex?”

He frowned. “Someone from the asylum.”

Alice came awake and sat up surprising him. “What did they want? Are Jack and Harley being released?”

Alex shook his head. “Nah...it was a message...from Jack I think.”

“You think?” Alice frowned at him.

Alex sighed putting his arm out. Alice slipped closer and laid her head on his chest, wrapping her arm around his middle. Alex continued. “Jack used to tell this awful joke about a man with one arm. Anyway, I don't remember how it started, but Jack would tell this joke every time he was in trouble at a card game. Anyway, this guy from Arkham just called me, said he was a friend of Jack’s and
told the joke.”

Alice frowned against his chest then she whispered. “He's asking for help, right?”

“I guess so. I mean...well, I told you what it was like when I went to visit...” Alex sounded preoccupied when Alice said softly. “Then you have to help them Alex. You have to help them get out of there. I bet that's what that call was about.” Alice sat up and took Alex's face in her hands. “We have to help break them out of Arkham.”

“How do we do that?” Alex asked.

Alice smiled. “I think we first need to get a hold of that guy who was driving them...what was his name? Freeze? Snow...something cold...” Alice murmured.

Alex grinned. “Frost.”

*

When they arrived at the aviary, Jack was shoved through the door. He stumbled inside and the door was yanked closed behind him. Jack stood by the door gazing around. The place had clearly been left to rot. The glass walls that ran up the sides like a greenhouse were covered in grime and moss. There were a few ferns and other plants in here that had been left to run wild, taking over the stonework and the cages that Jack could see hanging from the ceiling or displayed along the walls. There were also old trees with long branches that hung alongside artificial branches that hung throughout the aviary, covered in the ancient waste of long dead birds.

Jack wrinkled his nose. The place smelled dank, mixed with rot and decay. He looked around slowly, trying to figure out what was going on when he saw Ernie step out of the darkness. “Hey pretty boy, time to pay the piper.”

Jack groaned. “What the actual fuck.”

*

Brian carried the unconscious patient to “the room” on the sixth floor where they kept the blackout box. It was a small box, three feet long by two feet high and two feet wide, just big enough for the patient to be curled up inside with no room to move. Unlike the original type of blackout box the CIA used to use for interrogation, the asylum—or Dr. Crane—had at least put in air holes for the patient. Other than that, it was the same as what the CIA used to interrogate prisoners.

Brian had heard about the blackout box from the other orderlies who laughed about how the patients would react. They joked about the screaming and the crying. About how freaked out the lunatics would be when they finally pulled them out of the box. The stories had made Brian sick. Yet here he was carrying a patient to the box. For a moment he considered just walking out, but he needed this job and what did he know; maybe this treatment actually helped?

The box was just a basic wooden box, mostly used on the sixth floor patients since they were usually, though not always, the most violent patients. Though Brian hadn't heard of it being used since he started to work here, which was about six months ago, here it was. But today...he felt his stomach do a somersault as he flipped the lid open with his foot and placed the woman he was carrying inside. No sooner had he lowered her in than her eyes flew open. She jerked as if someone had pinched her, then looked at him. For a brief moment Brian thought about how pretty she was, with her long blonde hair, blue eyes...a sweet face, but then she screamed and her eyes went wild. The patient started to stand. Brian panicked slamming his hand down on her head and shoved her
down hard back into the box before grabbing the lid and slamming it on top of her, probably hitting her head pretty hard. She cried out in pain and tried to push on the lid, but Brian sat down on the box, working in a frenzy to find the lock. He found it after a few moments of struggling to keep her inside the box, flipped the lock that was dangling by one of his legs into place before he hurriedly slid the padlock—that had been hanging on the latch—into place and locked it as the woman struggled and screamed.

Once she was secure, he jumped off and backed away. The woman screamed again, banging against the box. “LET ME OUT!! LET ME OUT!! THEY’RE IN HERE!! PLEASE!!” Brian stood there for a moment staring at the box, his own fear making him tremble. He was shaking, listening to the woman screaming, then her screams dissolved into crying. He looked around for the sound system that Crane told him about. When he saw it he walked quickly over and turned on the system. Brian turned on the system and the loud sounds of a squalling baby echoed through the room via hidden speakers. Brian stared at the box for a moment; over the maddening sound of a tortured baby over the speakers, he could only just barely hear the woman crying inside before he turned and rushed out of the room.

* 

Inside the box the fear toxin worked through Harley. She couldn't move, the box was too small, too cramped, making any movement difficult. A little light worked its way through the tiny holes in the lid, but it wasn't enough to see by, only enough to make the darkness seem to move and shift around her. Harley whimpered, she was sure she saw something crawling along the inside of the box, but then the sounds of a baby's cries filled the tiny space.

Harley whispered in pain. “No...oh please no...”

And then she heard the voices. First Harleen's voice whispered. “You don't think he could possibly love you, do you?”

Then the voice of her stepfather hissed at her. “You worthless slut...”

Then Guy's voice. “You whore...”

Then the crying child and Jack's voice. “You let our child die Harley...”

Then something in the box rose up, a thick blackness that wrapped itself around her, sucking all the air from the tight space. Harley gasped, suddenly unable to breath. That was when she started to feel the touch of things on her skin. Simple brushes, light, a breath moving the hairs on her arm, on the back of her neck...then more solid touches as if something were trying to burrow into her flesh.

Harley jerked trying to brush whatever it was off, but she couldn't move, but then the shadow voices started again.

Her stepfather's voice hissed. “You always were a dumb bitch. You deserve every beating I gave you...little cunt.”

Guy's voice drifted over her skin. “No one would find you attractive...you always were so stupid. You little whore...”

She shuddered as the things that she felt crawling on her skin increased in number, rolling over her then through her flesh, burrowing into her. Harley was crying, sobbing then screaming as the darkness...the fear and all her monsters sank into her.

*
Sandra had just come on duty. She was assigned for the night shift, which started around five o'clock. She had just stepped off the elevator and was heading over to the employee 'lounge' which was a small room with a beat up couch, a TV from the last century, a coffee machine, tiny employee refrigerator, snack machine and a soda machine. She had just started to turn into the room when she saw Brian running down the hall and straight for the elevator.

“Hey Brian.” She waved, but he dashed by her and into the elevator, turning to slam his finger on the buttons. Sandra turned frowning at him. “What's wrong?”

Brian stared at her. “Crane had me put that blonde he likes in the blackout box,” Brian hissed just as the elevator doors closed. Sandra stood there for a moment holding her bag lunch in one hand, her purse in the other. “What?” she said softly in disbelief. Sandra dropped her bags and turned rushing for the room where she knew the box was kept.

* 

Ernie grinned. “Told you I was going to make you my bitch. Lucky for me, couple of the orderlies are old buddies of mine. They were more than happy to give me this space so we can have a little private time.”

Jack giggled. “Oh look at you! Feeling all confident about yourself! Decided you could take me on all by your lonesome! I'd be impressed if you weren't so stupid.”

Ernie snarled and stalked closer. Jack was sure the man figured his size was intimidating, but Jack thoroughly believed in the old saying; the bigger they are, the harder they fall. Jack stepped backwards letting Ernie think he was intimidating him while on the inside Jack was angry and bored.

Ernie continued to grin, which Jack felt did absolutely nothing to improve the man's face. “Back in Blackgate I had little bitches sucking me off willingly...they wanted to be mine...wanted what I could give them, protection...things ain't going to be any different here. You're going to go down on your knees and when you'er done sucking me off...you'll be lucky if all I do is beat you senseless for what you did ya little bitch.”

Jack chuckled. “What I did? You mean stand up to you? Kick you in the dick? Or when I said you had a small dick?” Jack's smile spread across his face. “Oh that was just the flirting Ernie. What I'm going do to you right now is the main attraction and believe me...you are going to be screaming.”

Jack decided he wanted this over quickly. When Ernie was closer, Jack rushed forward and slammed the side of his hand against Ernie's Adam's apple, immediately sending the man gasping and choking. Ernie stumbled back, but Jack next took a couple of swings, landing hard hits to Ernie's ugly face. Ernie stumbled backwards a couple of steps, but no stranger to violence, he came back with a quick lunge, actually surprising Jack when his hand shot out and grabbed Jack around the throat before he punched him in the face, his meaty fist cutting over the skin on Jack's left cheek. Jack yanked his head back, broke loose from Ernie's hold, stumbling with the strike, though the blow split his lips. Jack tasted blood. His knees hit against a stone planter smarting for a moment. Ernie followed him, pressing his advantage, but Jack pushed himself away from the planter rolling to the left so that Ernie's next swing missed.

Jack chuckled. “What's the difference between your penis and a joke?”

Ernie snarled and took a swing at him which Jack easily dodged continuing to talk. “Nobody laughs at your jokes!”

Jack snickered, but Ernie landed a hit, striking Jack in the side. Jack expelled a burst of air wincing
Ernie grabbed him and threw Jack to the mossy, dirt covered walkway. Ernie reached down to grab him, but Jack twisted his legs, surging to his feet with his fists following in a flurry that landed a hard hit to Ernie's mouth bloodying the big man's lip and leaving cuts on Jack's knuckles from the other man's teeth.

Jack danced backwards, breathing hard, but grinning. “That all you got?”

Ernie hissed. “You fucking bitch!”

He swung, his fist snapping straight out at Jack's face, but Jack's arm snapped up to deflect his opponent's wrist while twisting his hand to grasp the other man's wrist tightly and forced his arm upward. Jack struck out with his right fist, but Ernie grabbed Jack around the throat. Jack grabbed the man's wrist trying to pull Ernie's large ham sized fist off his throat while keeping the other hand up in the air. Ernie panted, hissing through his teeth, sweat rolling down his face. Jack ground his teeth struggling. Ernie was not just big, he was strong. They stayed like that, locked in a dance that only gave a step or two to each partner when the stalemate was broken when Jack walked Ernie back a step or two, then let go of the hand at his neck, swung that hand up between them, smashing his forearm hard enough into Ernie's forearm to break the big man's hold. He wrapped that arm around Ernie's and thrust his fist into Ernie's diaphragm with two hard jabs, leading with his knuckles so that the punches hurt more.

Jack's fist struck Ernie in the chest to little effect, but Ernie turned slightly and slapped Jack's second hit to the chest away, throwing Jack off enough that Ernie could get a hit in, his big knuckles giving Jack a glancing blow to his chin. Jack hissed in anger, backhanding Ernie.

Ernie broke free of Jack's hold, dropped himself forward, leading with his shoulder and rushed into Jack. Ernie grabbed the slimmer man around the waist before throwing him to the floor of the aviary. Jack gasped as the air was knocked from his lungs in a painful whoosh when his back slammed into the stone walkway.

Ernie straddled Jack, reaching down toward him, but Jack punched upward just as Ernie leaned over trying to wrap his hands around Jack's neck. Jack thrust upward with the palm of his hand to slam Ernie in the nose, which broke with a sound like hard fruit being hit with a hammer.

Ernie roared in pain and grabbed his nose with both hands. Jack bucked then swiftly shimmied himself out from under Ernie just as the big man stumbled to his feet, blood gushing from between his fingers.

Jack, panting painfully, blood flooding in thick rivulets down his cheek, nose and lips walked toward Ernie who was actually making little liquid sounding wheezing noises. Jack grinned and reached forward grabbing the big man's pants and with an economical amount of movement Jack had the guy's pants down to his knees. Ernie looked at Jack askew then grinned despite his painful bloody nose. “Decided to see the light did ya pretty boy?” Ernie chuckled stuffily.

Jack chuckled. “Oh I know exactly what I want big boy.” Jack grinned grabbing Ernie by the balls, digging his fingers in painfully.

The sounds Ernie made went from liquid wheezes to higher pitched gasps of pain, choking and gagging at the new level of pain. Jack smiled, his teeth covered in blood. “Now Ernie, isn't this what you wanted? I mean I'm willingly touching your cock, ain't I?” Jack twisted his hand digging his fingers in until he felt the warm ooze of blood as skin tore open under his assault. Jack spit blood while he spoke standing causally with his hand wrapped around Ernie's now bloody testicles.

“You know, I thought about killing you. It would make my life a lot easier, but then I thought...that's
just not funny! I mean, locked in an asylum you have to get your laughs where you can right?” Jack
smiled at Ernie who was continuing to writhe and groan, sweat now pouring down his face. His
hands weakly grasped at Jack's wrist and then Jack cocked his head to the side. “Don't you think it
would be funny if I castrate you? Because I sure do.”

Jack twisted and yanked with all his strength feeling his hand flood with blood. Ernie howled in
pain, but then with a quick hard yank, Jack tore tubules, connective tissues, and wrenched Ernie's
testicles off. He casually threw them across the aviary though he didn't quite hear the wet splat of
loose flesh hitting the ground over Ernie's strangled cries. The large man dropped to his hands and
knees, howling in pain, blood pouring from between his legs. Jack wiped his bloody hand on Ernie's
shoulder before he smiled and brought his foot down hard on one of Ernie's hands, using his heel to
grind down on Ernie's fingers, bringing his foot up to slam the heel down again, then grind again, the
fingers of that hand snapping and splintering. Jack stomped down with all his strength a few times in
quick session, the man already in too much pain to fight back as Jack crushed Ernie's hand. Ernie
topped over onto his side gurgling, covered in his own blood, his hand a mangled mess, fingers
twisted at odd angles.

Jack crouched down, balancing on the balls of his feet smiling down at Ernie. “I hope we have an
understanding now. No one touches me but Harley, no one touches my friends either. And lastly, no
one is the big “dog” around here but me...got it?”

Ernie twitched on his side groaning, whining and gurgling. Jack watched him a moment longer, then
smiled. “Nice talk.”

* Sandra raced down the hall to “the room.” Everyone new about the blackbox. Sandra had been here
long enough that she had seen Crane use it only once on a woman named Becky Albright...his other
interest. It did not end well at all. Sandra didn't want to see Harley end up like Becky...

Sandra burst into the room. The box was located in the middle of the room, sealed shut, the sounds
of a crying infant continuing on and on. Sandra hurried over to the sound system where it sat on a
plain table and turned it off, but once the room was quiet, something else made her go still, her blood
got cold. No sounds emanated from the interior of the box.

She raced over to the box, grabbed the lock; she yanked on it, but it was locked tight and she had no
idea where the key could be...it had to be in here somewhere...or would Crane have it? The orderly
cursed under her breath as she raced out of the room. She didn't go to Crane, not only would it take
too long, but there was no guarantee he would give her the key. Instead Sandra raced to the supply
closet.

* Jack stepped away from Ernie, watching the man lying on his side whimpering like an agonized
child. Jack giggled licking blood from the corner of his mouth when four guards came rushing into
the aviary, finally responding to the screams of Ernie. Jack turned and waved. “Hey boys! We had
an exciting first date! We even got to second base! WooWoo!”

The guards saw Ernie lying on his side in a spreading pool of blood. Their reaction was instant, the
four guards rushed him, yanking their batons out at the same time. Jack grinned winking at them,
then made a kissy face before he threw his arms out and took a perfect stage bow. The men rushed in
and surrounded him. Jack didn't fight them; he let them beat him, dropping down on his knees,
putting his hands on the back of his head. He clenched his jaw, kept a smile on his face, closed his
eyes and focused on Harley, his Harley. As they hit him, knocking him flat to the ground, grabbed
his arms yanking them behind his back, Jack smiled, his focus on his wife.

*  

Sandra raced down the hall, turning to run down to the end of another hall and yanked open the supply closet door. She knew that some of the janitors kept a tool box in here. They weren't suppose to...no dangerous items on the sixth floor, but she knew they hated having to run downstairs if they needed a wrench or a hammer. Sandra reached up yanking on the cord that hung from the ceiling. The bulb above her clicked on, the white light almost too bright. She searched frantically until she saw it, the plastic tool box shoved behind the piles of toilet paper. Sandra grinned.

She grabbed the box, yanked it out and threw open the lid. Inside the box she saw a wrench, hammer, pliers, nails...she grabbed the hammer and took off, leaving the door open in her haste. She raced back to the room where Harley was, sliding up to the box and with all her strength she took the hammer to the lock. Sandra had to hit the lock four more times before she finally broke it, ripping the metal that was attached to the wood off the box. She dropped the hammer and yanked the lid up.

Harley was inside, curled in what looked to Sandra like an impossibly tight ball. She neither moved nor made any sound at all. Sandra crouched down and scooped Harley out. Harley didn't react to Sandra. The orderly frowned, but she held her close and hurried out.

Sandra carried Harley to her cell, awkwardly opening the door and carrying her inside. She laid the young woman down, easing her legs down, then tried to tug Harley's hands away from her chest. Harley opened her eyes then, and Sandra could see they were bloodshot.

“Jack hates me,” Harley whispered, her eyes glazed at full of something that made Sandra fearful.

Sandra narrowed her eyes and reached out grabbing Harley's left hand and held the limb up forcing Harley to look at her hand.

Sandra hissed. “You see that, on your finger? He loves you. He married you. That's the drugs talking. I know you're strong enough to fight whatever Dr. Crane did to you. You're a fighter.”

Harley's eyes focused on the words on her ring finger. They were smeared now, but still mostly legible. “Property of Jack.” Harley said it out loud.

Sandra nodded. “Don't let Dr. Crane win Miss Harley. Please.” The big woman reached out and gently stroked her fingers over Harley's hair, her voice soothing. “You know Jack loves you. I've never seen anyone love someone like you two...Don't give in. Don't give in to any of...this.”

For a long few minutes Sandra was terrified that she had been too late, that Harley was gone and that Crane had won, but then Harley took a deep breath and hissed. “I'm gonna kill him Sandra. I'm going to rip his tongue out and make him eat it.” Harley giggled, tears springing to her eyes. “I'm gonna make him pay.” She giggled again, turning to smile at Sandra.

Sandra smiled sadly stroking her hair. “Dale and me...we are going to get you guys out of here. I promise.”

Harley sat up and wrapped her arms around Sandra. The big woman held her and gently stroked her back. Sandra didn't care what these people may have done or whether or not they were truly unstable, but no one deserved to be treated like this...she would find a way to get them out.

*  

Jack was being dragged between two guards, laughing the whole time. “You guys want to hear
some eunuch jokes? I bet Ernie would appreciate them right about now!”

One of the guards, a homely red-headed man with a badly pock-scarred face hissed. “Shut the fuck up or we'll make you a eunuch!”

Jack chuckled but continued on, not the least bit intimidated by the guard's threat. “A guy goes to a doctor and says, “Doctor, I want to be castrated.” The doctor is taken back and wonders why the man wants to be castrated.

“Are you sure?” asks the doctor.

“Yes. My wife insisted on it.” He replies.

The doctor raises his eyebrows and says, “You know very well that this process is not reversible. It is permanent and cannot be undone at all, right?”

The man, now getting impatient, shouted at the doctor,” Hey! Are you gonna do it or do I get someone else for the job?”

The doctor agreed to the man’s pleas and proceeded to castrate him. Later the man is taken to the ward to recover.

The next day, he had problems walking to the loo because of the pain in his groin and as he walked, he saw another guy walking more or less like him. He approached him and said.

"So you also decided to undergo the operation?"

“Yes,” replied the other man. “My wife insisted that if I wanted to sleep with her, I had to get a circumcision.”

“Damn!” said the guy, his face turning pale. “Circumcision! Circumcision! Circumcision! That was the word! My wife is gonna kill me!!

One of the guard's dragging Jack snickered which earned him a hard swat from the red-head, but they had arrived at Jack's cell.

“Toss him in,” the red-headed man snarled.

Jack was tossed into his cell without any medial treatment, the door slamming shut. “I hope you rot.”

The red-head guard hissed before walking away.

Jack lay on the floor of his cell and gave the retreating guard the finger laughing to himself as he did so. He winced a little as he pulled himself up using the edge of his cot for balance. His whole mouth tasted like blood and everything hurt a little. Jack snickered muttering out loud. “Bet I feel a hundred times better than old Ernie.”

He dropped onto his cot, dropping his arm over his eyes when he heard someone move in his room. Jack was immediately on alert. He very carefully and slowly moved his arm turning his head toward the sound.

“Hi Jack.” A figure stepped out of the darkness and Jack's eyes widened, his voice a pained whisper, his blue eyes round and wide with confusion. “Mother?”
“It's me Jack.” His mother stepped closer, the little light coming into the room danced over her skin. Jack stared, his expression a cross between hope and fear. It was her, just as he remembered her. She wore her hair in a bob, her soft brown hair curling just under her ears, her smile warm and inviting and her eyes, a soft light blue, were filled with love, just the way she always looked at him when he was little. She was the only person who had ever looked at him with such unconditional love...until Harley.

“Mamma?” Jack looked at her confused, his hair falling across his forehead making him look even younger. He stood up, running his tongue over the split in his lip, the sting telling him that he wasn't dreaming, that this had to be real. She was dressed exactly like she had been the night she was killed, the dark blue dress that brought out the light blue of her eyes, the black wrap around her shoulders, everything was as he remembered it in graphic detail, all the way down to the pearl necklace round his mother's neck.

Part of him wanted to dash forward and wrap his arms around her, to be lost in the scent and warmth of his mother's embrace...her unconditional love, but he knew she couldn't be real. It had to be a trick, a drug...something that was causing him to hallucinate; she couldn't really be here no matter how much he wanted her to be. Jack knew he wasn't completely sane by conventional thinking...but Jack knew he wasn't insane either.

“You're not real,” Jack stated his voice cracking slightly. He blinked rapidly fighting the pain in his chest, the tears that were slowly welling at the corners of his eyes, threatening to spill down his cheeks. “You're dead. I saw you die. You and Daddy. I saw you both die.” Jack's voice came out in a hoarse panicked whisper.

“Oh Jack, I'm real sweetie.” Martha smiled and held her arms out. “Let me hug you and you'll see that I'm just as real as you, my little boy. You have been through so much pain. I'm so sorry. Let me hold you.” Her voice was tender, just like he remembered. Jack could feel himself starting to tremble. He hated that he was being so weak!! This was not real. His mother was dead. Dead. Dead. Dead.

Jack took an involuntary step back, his legs knocking against the cot, tears gathered in the corners his eyes. When he blinked, they slid slowly down his cheeks, but he gave them no notice, his eyes fixed on the woman in front of him.

His voice came out in a whisper again. It was as if speaking louder would either somehow confirm his insanity or would keep the vision of his mother from gaining reality. Jack whispered as if he were talking to himself, trying to convince himself of the reality he knew. Jack pointed at her.

“No...no...I...I watched you die! I watched that man shoot you...you and Daddy both! There was so much blood!! Blood everywhere!” The tears ran down Jack's cheeks, falling without his notice. “That man hurt me! There was so much pain and then Daddy died...then you died...there was so much blood...even Bruce cried...” Jack's voice faded to less than a breathy whisper, distracted, as if he were talking to himself. “You didn't move...Daddy didn't move...Bruce was crying...the pearls were everywhere...dropping, bouncing, rolling like drops of water...” His voice dropped until he almost sounded like the little boy who had lost his parents that night.

Martha smiled. “Oh my sweet little boy.”

She stepped closer and when she reached out and touched him, Jack jerked away in shock. He could actually feel her fingers on his cheek. Jack tried to remain calm, but he had no idea what was
happening. He started to breathe heavily, panting almost. He felt slightly dizzy, cold, confused, breaking out into a colder sweat.

“This isn't real, this isn't real.” Jack muttered, his eyes stared at her with a cross between a plea that she really was there and his adult denial that any of this was real. But when she reached out grabbing him and wrapped her arms around him Jack felt a sliver of his mind shatter. His mother whispered. “Oh Jack! My sweet, sweet Jack.”

Jack went rigid; he could feel her arms, feel her, she was breathing, warm, alive, solid. For a moment Jack didn't react, he simply stared into the darkness of his room, but then, when her arms tightened around him, Jack burst into tears wrapping his arms around her in response, his voice came out in a hoarse pained whisper. “Momma...”

He didn't see the needle that seemed to ooze out of her skin and form onto the palm of her hand. She pulled her hand back and plunged the needle into the back of his neck. Jack gasped in shock, the pain of the needle was nothing compared to the confusion he felt. Jack shoved away from her.

“Momma? What...what're you doing?” Jack asked in confusion. He reached behind his neck and yanked out the needle. He gazed down at it in confusion, the pale ambient light made the metal needle glimmer in his hand. His body felt oddly sluggish, as if he had had too much to drink; he was losing control, his legs felt like rubber, his entire body seemed to lose its ability to stand. He stumbled back, hit the cot and flopped onto it, the metal frame rattling from the impact.

“What did you do?!?” Jack asked his voice slurring.

“Nothing dear...nothing at all.” His mother smiled at him, that same tender smile he remembered as a child. Jack fell backwards against the cement wall, starting to slide sideways as he lost all of his ability to control his body. His mother came forward, shifting his body so that he was lying on his back. She brushed his hair away from his face when Jack laid back on his cot staring up at her with shocked blue eyes. Her fingertips trailed along his bloody swollen cheeks and split lip.

Jack's eyes fluttered as he continued to stare up at her. He struggled to speak, his voice came out barely whisper “Momma?”

She smiled. “Oh Jack. You really should consider joining me and your father. You are really no good here are you? Bruce, poor dear Bruce, he shouldn't be burdened with a little brother like you. You have done nothing but cause him pain. Think about it Jackie. Think about a world of no pain, nothing...”

The drugs lulled Jack's eyes closed. The last thing he saw was his mother bending over him.

*  

Jack came awake with a start, the feeling of stinging pain on his lips made him groan. “Ouch.”

“Just lay still.” A woman's voice answered him.

Jack frowned as his vision cleared slowly, though his head felt like it was stuffed full of cotton, too heavy to lift. He gradually looked around, blinking constantly under the harsh white light, trying to figure out exactly where he was at the moment. Jack tried to move, tried to sit up, but he realized he was strapped down to a gurney. As Jack's vision focused, he could see that the walls were painted that horrible watery blue-grey mixed with white tiles colors that hospitals seemed to favor.

A woman came into view, leaned over to dab his lip with something that stank like a son-of-a-bitch. Jack hissed, “Fuck,” and yanked his head away. The woman narrowed her grey eyes slightly. “Mr.
Wayne. If you do not stop struggling, I will be forced to sedate you. Do you really want that?”

Jack gave the woman a dirty look. The nurse—her face seemed to be carved from marble—pretty he supposed (though everyone paled next to Harley as far as he was concerned), but her eyes lacked any life to them. They were dull, hard and humorless.

Jack gave her his most stunning smile. “What did the nurse say when she found a rectal thermometer in her pocket?”

The nurse didn’t answer him, she simply continued to clean his face then moved over and picked up her suturing kit. She set the kit down near his head, popped it open and began to work roughly on the pressure wound on his cheek. She held a needle up just where he could see it. “Going to numb the area—this will sting.”

She shoved the needle against the wound causing Jack to jerk with pain though he didn't make a sound. Jack grinned at her when he saw she was annoyed. Good, he thought. Jack continued undaunted, finishing his joke.

“Some asshole has my pen.” Jack chuckled, but the nurse simply gave him a dead pan look.

The nurse stuck the needle through his skin before the numbing agent had begun to work. She gave a hard pull on the needle through the pressure wound on Jack's cheek, tugging the skin as she did so, a hard painful tug that for a moment felt as if the needle was ripping his skin. Jack hissed wincing a little. He didn't want to give her the satisfaction of seeing that she had actually caused him some pain, but it was hard not to react to the sharp needle pulling through the skin on his face. He took a steady breath before he continued, doing his best to act as if she had done nothing to hurt him, instead focusing on his joke.

“Nothing? Not even a smile? Wow, you are a nurse Ratched aren't you?” Jack chuckled. That was when she shoved the needle through his skin again, roughly, making Jack hiss loudly.

He chuckled. “Didn't like that, eh? Did I insult your sensitive nature?”

The nurse spoke through her teeth. “You mean nothing. You are just another crazy lunatic who we're wasting money on trying to cure.”

Jack made a face. “Wow. Geez, glad to see you enjoy your job.” After a couple of seconds he said softly not really speaking to her, but needing to say what he saw out loud. “I saw my mother.”

The nurse snorted. Jack glanced away from her and toward the wall. “I did. I'm not crazy. At least not like Dr. Crane thinks.”

The woman snorted. “Dr. Crane is a special man. Gifted. I don't know why he wastes his time on lowlifes like you lot.”

Jack hissed. “Crane is a narcissistic, obsessive psychopath and I'm going to kill him.”

The nurse jabbed Jack in the cheek with the needle. Jack jerked away from her in pain, but since he was strapped down he couldn’t really move far. She tugged hard smiling when Jack winced again. Jack glanced up at her his eyes finding her name tag. Mallory.

Jack grinned. “Hey nurse Mallory, did you know that Mallory means unfortunate? Which I suppose fits you perfectly because you unfortunately have the personality of a thunder-cunt.”

“Mr. Wayne, one more word and I am going to sedate you,” Mallory promised between her teeth.
Jack just grinned at her, but he didn't say another word, instead settling for mocking and annoying expressions until she was done. Mallory picked up her suturing kit, cleaning up and putting it away before she turned toward the door. The way Jack was strapped down and the way she had been hovering over him he hadn't seen the guard who now came over and grabbed the gurney that Jack had been strapped down to. “Get him back to his room,” Mallory said indignantly.

The guard nodded. “Sure thing miss.”

The guard backed the gurney up and turned Jack around so that his feet were facing the door. Jack was wheeled out, but he arched his head trying to see past the guard as he yelled loudly. “You know, I don't know if there is such a thing as a cunt-bag, but if there was you'd be it!! Congratulations thunder-cunt!!” Jack started laughing hysterically while he was being wheeled back to his cell.

Mallory snarled to the empty room. “I fucking hate him.”

*

Once back to his room, the lights were out. Jack curled into a fetal position on his cot facing the wall, his face throbbing a bit. He was running over the vision of his mother he had had...that had to be it, there was no other explanation for it, a vision, no matter how vivid it seemed. But if he were having visions that were that clear, that concentrated...he had felt her arms around him, he smelled her perfume...but at the same time the syringe...His mother could never have done that, Jack was sure of that, she could never have hurt him. Jack curled in tighter wishing Harley was there with him. Jack fought the urge to cry, but tears leaked from his eyes regardless of his wishes. He tried to focus on the memory of Harley in his arms. As he focused his attention on Harley, he told himself that his mother had just been an illusion...she hadn't been real. Why he had dreamed her up after all these years he didn't understand, but she couldn't possibly be real...

*

Later that night in Crane's office, the doctor was livid. That orderly had completely destroyed his experiments with Dr. Quinzel! She had dared to “rescue” her instead of leaving Harleen in the box like any other orderly would have done. His first reaction had been to storm out of his office and demand Harleen's return. He was sure he might have broken her, cleaned the slate to create his beauty...but now it had all been ruined!

Thoughts of pumping the orderly full of his fear toxin, ripping her psyche in two and leaving her a whispering mess had danced merrily through his thoughts, but he had dismissed them. This orderly...he searched his mind...yes...Sandra...he remember her, a swooning student at one point before she began working here at Arkham. Crane smiled. Yes, yes he had thought about using her once in his experiments. She had a phobia of heights, he remembered from a class discussion...quite a severe one if he recalled correctly. She had been here at the asylum for long time, so firing her would not be something he could simply do...perhaps he didn't need to fire her, perhaps he simply needed her out of the way. Dr. Arkham would be easy...Sandra Millner could simply be moved to another floor, denied access to Dr. Quinzel. Besides, he hadn't really expected to use the box on Harleen...his anger at seeing Jack Wayne's name on her finger had caused him to lash out.

Crane tapped his fingers against his lips as he walked over to his desk and opened the bottom drawer where he kept a bottle of gin and a glass. He poured himself some of the drink and swallowed it quickly. Maybe he could use Harleen's affection for the orderly against her...he smiled slowly. Yes, yes...that just might be a good idea.

*
The following morning when Sandra came into work, she was stopped at reception.

The woman there, a young lady from Texas named Nadine, with long brown hair and a sweet smile stopped her. “Sandra honey, I was told to give you this when you came in today.”

She handed Sandra an envelope. Sandra frowned setting her purse and lunch down before opening up the envelope; inside was a note from Dr. Arkham.

“I am to inform you Sandra Millner that you are being moved to the second floor where we keep our more delusional, though harmless patients. You are being moved for now because it has been brought to my attention that you have been interfering with patient care. Further interference will result in disciplinary action.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeremiah Arkham.”

Sandra stared at the note her heart sinking. Inside the envelope was another key card, only for the second floor. Nadine frowned with a slight wince. “I was told to get your old key card from you.”

Sandra nodded, pulling the card from around her neck and handing it to Nadine. With a sigh she headed off to the second floor. What would Harley do without her? Sandra glanced over at Nadine who was giving her a sympathetic look...clearly the asylum gossip machine had already been at work and news of her being moved had made the rounds, though she doubted anyone knew the real reason. Sandra chewed her bottom lip in thought. She needed to let Dale know.

*

That morning at Wayne Manor, Alfred carried a breakfast tray up to Master Bruce’s bedroom. Bruce had been out rather late last night fighting crime on the streets of Gotham as Batman. He had come back early this morning with several bruised ribs, a blackening bruise on his left cheek and a bloody lip. Alfred sighed. Yesterday before Bruce left for the night, Alfred had tried to talk to him about Jack and Miss Harleen. When he had mentioned going up to the asylum to visit them, Bruce had been most upset, telling the older man that it was not because of the visit that he was upset, but because he had not wanted Alfred to see how far Jack had fallen. Alfred had tried to approach the subject of bringing Jack and Harley home, but Bruce had not been in the mood to talk yesterday about his brother. Alfred had let the subject drop, but this morning he thought he would try one more time. He owed it to the youngest Wayne.

Alfred knocked on the door and Bruce's muffled voice came from the other side. “Enter.”

Alfred had set the tray down on a table by the door; he now opened the door, picking the tray up and carefully entered the room. Master Bruce was doing several high intensity sit-ups. Alfred frowned. When Bruce worked out with that much speed and focus, it usually meant he was unhappy about something.

Alfred set the tray down turning toward Master Bruce. “I was hoping we might revisit our aborted discussion of yesterday.”

Bruce sighed, stood up and grabbed a hand towel he had flung over the back of a chair, running the cloth over his face and chest. “Alfred, Arkham Asylum is one of the best mental care facilities in the state.”

“Yes, I understand that Master Bruce, but if you had seen...” Alfred started, but Bruce held up a hand. “Look, I asked you not to go visit him Alfred. Jack manipulates you, he always has, and Dr.
Arkham had advised against visits. But...” Alfred had started to interrupt, but Bruce cut him off. “I did hire someone to look into Arkham Asylum.”

“You did Master Bruce?” Alfred smiled looking relieved.

Bruce nodded. “Yes. I know Jack and I have never seen eye to eye Alfred, but you can't think I'm monster enough to leave my brother someplace bad for him, can you?”

“No, never Master Bruce. Forgive me. I...I just didn't like seeing Master Jack like that.” Alfred looked pained and tired. “He didn't look at all himself and I never had the chance to see Miss Harleen before I was ushered out.”

Bruce stepped over to the butler and wrapped an arm around his shoulders. “I understand. Don't worry Alfred, I'm sure Jack and Dr. Quinzel are getting the best care possible. But the man I have hired to look into the asylum is one of the best.”

“Next to you Master Bruce?” Alfred lifted a brow in question.

Bruce smiled slightly. “I—yeah. I didn't want to do the investigation myself Alfred, I didn't want to muddy the waters with my personal investment in Jack's welfare...I didn't want to be blinded by my relationship with my brother.”

Alfred nodded. “I understand. Just promise me Bruce, “ (Bruce noticed that Alfred dropped the Master part which demonstrated the intensity of his feelings) “that you will get Jack and Harleen out of there if there is any hint of impropriety at that asylum.”

“I swear Alfred,” Bruce said softly.

*

That morning when Dale came to pick Jack up for breakfast, Dale looked a little pale. The rumor mill had circulated the building and Dale had heard that Sandra had been moved down and forbidden from coming onto the sixth floor. Dale was angry and scared. The rumor said the order had come from Crane through Arkham, which really wasn't surprising. Everyone knew that Crane was the real power in the asylum. The other rumor that had been making the rounds of the asylum was not a rumor at all, but the story of what Jack Wayne had done to Ernie Chubbs. That assault was going to have some frightening consequences...not just for Jack, but possibly Harley and maybe even him. Dale arrived at Jack's door distracted and worried.

Inside Jack was doing push-ups and clapping between each push. He had his shirt off, a fine film of sweat covered his lean muscular body indicating that he had been at this for a while, his eyes focused on the wall in front of him. Jack's focus was on the push, clap, push clap rhythm and the song he was singing, his voice alternating from loud to soft. Jack was singing loudly at the moment (much to the annoyance of a few of his fellow inmates.) But the singing was helping him focus and ignore the hallucinations he appeared to be having...four times now, seeing his father (as recently as half an hour ago, he could have sworn his father had walked by his cell)...and then the visit from his mother...seeing his father he might have been able to dismiss as a trick of his mind under stress, but his mother? That hallucination had been the worst, the thought that he was losing control of his faculties frightened him.

Jack started singing loudly again, singing without sounding out of breath, the workout not taking away from the quality of his voice.

“...I try to make you see my side
Always try to stay in line
But your eyes see right through
That's all they do
I'm getting tired of this shit
I've got no room when it's like this
What you want of me, just deal with it...

Jack did a few more push ups then came to his feet smoothly, hissing the last of the song, ending with a growl...

"...If you were dead or still alive,
I don't care..."

Jack wiped his unshaven face off with his hands letting out a loud breath and ran his fingers through his shaggy hair thinking to himself that he didn't care...not about Bruce. Bruce...his brother, someone he should have been able to depend on, someone who should have understood him...or at least tried. Jack's eyes teared up angrily as he reached down and grabbed his shirt off the cot and threw the black and white shirt on. He loved Bruce, despite everything his brother had done to him, he loved his big brother and there was a part of him that still wanted Bruce's approval. It angered Jack that he couldn't stop loving his brother. Jack smiled sadly then huffed wondering if he would spend the rest of his life pursuing that love and understanding from a brother too emotionally stunted to give it to him. Jack closed his eyes. Why was his brother's understanding so damn important to him? Maybe it was because Bruce was his only close blood family...who knew...

That was the moment he noticed Dale coming up to the door and scanning his card. Dale slipped in not closing the door, but bringing it partly closed.

Jack frowned at the orderly. “What's up?”

Dale looked worried. “What you did to Ernie Chubb is making the rounds. Ernie used to run this boxing jig called The Second Ring in Gotham before his arrest, lot of the guards here used to hang out there, some of them even participated, making a few bucks on the side, so a lot of the men here knew Ernie...owed him something. You just made yourself a whole of lot enemies besides Dr. Crane with what you did to him.”

Jack frowned but shrugged. “I'm not worried about it.”

Dale frowned. “You should be. Right now they are focused on you, but it won't take long before they shift that attention to your girl...I mean wife. Everyone knows about you and your girl. If they started to think they can't get to you, they will try to get to her sir.”

Jack went still, frowning. His voice dropped to a deadly whisper. “I will kill all of them if I have to...”

Dale frowned paling at the determination in Jack's voice. Dale figured that meant more people on the Arkham staff would end up dead besides Dr. Hurd. Dale sighed, not sure what his feelings were on that subject...it surprised him how little he actually cared about any of them outside of Sandra. With a sigh Dale motioned Jack to follow him. As they stepped out, Dale handed him an apple. Jack frowned in confusion looking at the fruit then at Dale. Dale shrugged. “I'm going to do something
that might get us both in trouble, so you're skipping breakfast for this...but. Anyway...well Sandra is
gone.”

Jack took a bite out of the apple giving Dale a quizzical look. “What do you mean gone?”

“She was moved off the sixth floor. I don't know all the details yet. I'll see Sandra at lunch and find
out, but I heard it had something to do with your Harley. She helped her in such a way that she
pissed off Crane. He had her taken off the sixth floor.” Dale sounded upset.

Jack stopped, putting a hand on Dale arm. “Hey, she's fine Dale.”

Dale nodded. “I know, just don't like the fact that Crane knows about her helping Harley. Puts a
target on her back.”

Jack frowned taking another bite of the apple. Dale put his hand on his shoulder encouraging Jack to
keep moving. Jack fell into step next to Dale. Jack glanced sideways at the big man. “So where are
you taking me?”

After a couple of seconds Jack noticed they weren't going to the cafeteria, the gardens, or Crane's
office. “Dale, what's going on?”

Dale smiled. “Miss Harley is in the common room. I figured you wouldn't mind skipping breakfast to
catch a few hours with her. I dropped her off myself. The guards on duty right now are a bunch of
newbies—freshmen we call ’em—they won't bother you as along as you behavior yourself. The few
orderlies there won't lift a finger unless provoked, so I think you'll be safe enough. I also figured
we're pretty safe considering that Crane is not on the property yet. He and Dr. Arkham had some
meeting downtown this morning. They're going to be gone for a couple of hours.” Dale gave him a
smile. “It was Sandra's idea to get you two together while he was out...she had suggested it
yesterday.”

Jack grinned. “Dale, I really do love you. Give Sandra a big wet kiss for me too.”

Dale blushed as he thought about Sandra and chuckled. “Sure thing Jack.”

* 

The two men picked up their pace and headed to the common room. Jack passed one of the halls,
glanced down and nearly stumbled when he saw his mother standing there. He had accidentally took
two steps past the corridor and had to double back a step or two, but when he looked back, she was
gone. There was just some custodian standing at the end of the hall sweeping. Jack felt his blood turn
cold, but his heart sank as well. He shook his head. This place was really getting to him, but his eyes
stung and he wiped them, angry at himself that he was letting not just his mind get the better of him,
but that he was letting himself feel so intently for a mother that was long dead.

* 

The common room had a few more of the sixth floor patients occupying it currently than was usual.
There was Tabitha and Babs sitting together playing a game of Jenga, Arnold Vesker was on the
couch with his sock puppet, clearly engaged in an intense conversation. Zsasz and Aaron Helzinger
were playing Go Fish at one of the tables and Robert Greenwood was sitting in a corner on the floor
coloring. Lastly, Jack saw Jervis sitting by an old CD player. There was music playing. Shinedown's
“Her name is Alice.” Jervis was leaning across the player not too dissimilar from a cat laying across
speaker, a contented smile on his face. There were five guards and four orderlies lounging against the
walls of the common room talking and only keep a peripheral view on the patients. As long as
everyone seemed occupied the guards and orderlies were content to leave them be. Dale leaned close and whispered to Jack. “They let Jervis have the CD player. Whenever they allow the player in the common room, if Jervis is in here, they let him choose the music. He gets really volatile if he doesn't get to control the music. He's convinced its part of his tea party, but if you play along with his delusion, he'll usually take requests.”

Jack nodded just as the music changed to the song “White Rabbit.” Jack made a face and giggled. “He has a theme I hear.”

Dale shrugged. “Well, he does think he's the mad hatter. Anyway, there she is...”

Jack’s eyes followed Dale's pointed finger to see his Harley. Her back was to the door, her long blonde was hanging down her back in a loose braid, her feet were hooked around the legs of a chair and she seemed to be intently coloring. Jack glanced at Dale giving the big man a grin before he slowly walked over to her. Dale watched him go with a grin.

As Jack approached Harley, he glanced over her shoulder. She looked to have drawn a characterization of Crane and was using a red crayon to draw what he hoped symbolized blood, all over the stick-figure picture.

Jack chuckled. “I do like the use of red. Red usually is the color of assertion, strength, romance, excitement, vitality, physical power, outgoing behavior, ambitious and impulsive. Or I'm guessing in your case, the color of murder.”

Harley turned looking up, her blue eyes widening. “JACK!!”

She leapt up, knocking her chair back and threw herself into his arms, throwing her arms around his neck. Jack grinned taking a step back when her body impacted with his, lifting her off her feet. The guards and orderlies all glanced toward them, but made no move to break them up. Jack squeezed Harley tight, holding her against him and burying his face against her neck.

His voice came out muffled while he pressed kisses to her neck, jaw and ear.

“Mmm...Harley.” He purred kissing her cheek, then her eyelids, the tip of her nose and lastly her lips.

Harley smiled. “Oh puddin I missed you.”

“I missed you too pumpkin.” Jack gave her a squeeze, holding her tightly then pressed his lips to hers again. Harley opened her mouth against his, her tongue sliding into his mouth to wrap with his tongue. Jack reached up to cup her head, his tongue diving into her mouth to caress her tongue. Harley made a soft whimper, tightening her grip on him, her fingers digging into the material of his asylum uniform, pressing her body against his and never feeling she was close enough. Jack dropped his hands down to grab her rear yanking her close against his hips. He growled gently, pressing his fingers into her soft flesh hard enough to bruise her.

One of the guards started to move toward them to break them up when Tetch started to yell. “NO ROOM! NO ROOM!! WHY'S A RAVEN LIKE A WRITING DESK?”

Babs stood up and yelled. “Shut up Tetch!”

“Don't call me that!!” Tetch yelled back.

Babs giggled. “Oh why? Would Alice not like it?”
Tetch stood, his eyes wild. “DON'T YOU MENTION ALICE!”

One of the orderlies, a young man with wavy blonde hair and a nice smile who had been leaning against the wall flirting with one of the guards, a big dark skinned man with large brown eyes, came over. “Shh...all right you two, enough yelling. What's the issue Hatter?”

Tetch pouted glaring at Babs. “No room.” His tone was that of a petulant child.

Babs made a face and stuck out her tongue taking her seat across from Tabitha again.

Dale came over putting a hand on his fellow orderly. “He just wants to change the CD. Hold on I'll go get them so he can pick, Reggie.”

Reggie, the new guy, nodded. “Thanks Dale!”

Harley grabbed Jack leading him over to the far side of the room. She sat on the floor tugging Jack with her. Though Harley tried to sit on the floor Jack grabbed her, yanking her onto his lap.

Jack kissed her rubbing his nose against hers saying softly. “Dale says Crane is not here yet today, thinks we might have a few hours together.” He grinned at her before leaning in to nibble on her ear. Harley giggled, leaning into his attentions, his lips and teeth on her ear and throat sent goosebumps racing down her skin.

“I heard what happened with you Jack, everyone heard what you did to that man,” Harley said softly. “I heard these new guards talking about it when we first came in after breakfast. They think the other guards are just making it up to scare them.”

Jack chuckled. “Oh, I did it. Ernie Chubb is going to be singing soprano.”

Harley giggled laying her head against his shoulder, her arm around him while she caressed his chest with her other hand. Jack reached up brushing his fingers along her ear, then through her hair kissing the top of her head. Harley closed her eyes, one tear sneaking free and sliding down her cheek. Being here with him in his arms was all she ever wanted. She would stay strong just to be with him again. They were both quiet for a few minutes, just enjoying being with one another. Jack pressed his cheek against the top of her head, caressing her cheek tenderly with his long graceful fingers.

“When we get out of here Harley, we're going find our own secret place. Maybe that house on the island I told you about. We are going to live away from everyone, plan our revenge on Bruce...do what we want and no one will be able to stop us again.” He sighed softly rubbing his nose against her hair.

Harley giggled. “Oh puddin.”

She sighed contently pressing herself harder against him. Jack continued to caress her hair and thought about telling her that he had seen his father...his mother...about the fact that his delusion had been strong enough that he felt his mother's arms around him, but before he could say a word, Harley whispered, her voice laced with pain. “Did you hear about Sandra?”

She felt Jack nod before he spoke. “Dale told me just before he brought me here. What happened Harley? Dale said she had done something with you that upset Crane,” Jack asked while his fingertips glided softly her cheek, he decided to wait on telling her about seeing his parents, it was only a small concern. Maybe later, he told himself. He kissed her forehead before pressing his cheek against the top of her head.

Harley frowned closing her eyes trying not to imagine the box or the things she had heard or seen
while inside. “Crane put me in a box to punish me. Sandra got me out. Simple as that.”

She felt Jack stiffen beside her, his voice a deadly whisper, she could almost feel the ice of it race across her skin. “What? What did he do?” Jack asked.

Harley pressed closer. “He saw your name on my finger. I was stupid, but I wanted to piss him off, wanted to make him angry so I rubbed it in his face that we got married under his nose....he gassed me with his fear gas and threw me in a box.”

Jack tightened his hold on her. “I swear I'm going to kill...”

“Jack I...” Harley started but Tetch yelled loudly, “CLEAN CUPS!”

They both heard the sound of the CD player being popped open and then quickly snapped closed, the clear sound of plastic snapping into place then the sound of new music started to play, the mellow vocals of Frank Sinatra rolled through the common room singing “It Had to Be You.”

Jack kissed her ear, brushing his nose against her ear, and his tongue followed, tracing the ticklish, sensitive skin. He stared off, anger burning behind his blue eyes despite the affectionate licking on Harley; his mind was racing with how he was going to punish Crane. The thought of how many people he was going to kill for what had been done to the both of them, but mostly for what they had done to his Harley...his girl. Jack was going to laugh watching this place burn to the ground. He was going to burn everything, he thought to himself: Arkham, Gotham, Wayne Manor...all of it would burn one day and he was going to laugh watching it all go up in flames.

But for now Jack wanted to focus on his girl, on what he could do to help her. Jack smiled against her ear wanting to make her forget what had happened to her, wanting to make her happy, make her laugh. “Dance with me Harley. While we're together, dance with me.” Harley rolled her head to face him, catching his lips gently with her teeth, brushing her nose against his skin, taking a deep breath, smelling his skin, feeling the warmth of his body against her.

“Yes Jack.” She giggled in delight. “I'll dance with you.”

Jack stood, lifting her with him while he grinned ear to ear. He pulled her into his arms, one arm around her waist, the other hand holding hers, then together they started to waltz from their corner to the center of the common room. Jack grinned down at her. “Ever see the movie Living in a Big Way? 1947? Gene Kelly? Marie McDonald? No?”

Harley chuckled and shook her head. “No puddin, I haven't.”

Jack did a spin with Harley; everyone in the room was watching them.

“Oh pumpkin!” Jack lamented. “I need to have a whole afternoon of showing you old movies my sweets! Okay, well, just follow my lead pumpkin pie.” Jack grinned at her. He sang while he moved her around the room. (Some of the patients grabbed furniture scooting it out of the way so that Jack and Harley could twirl past.)

“For nobody else gave me a thrill

With all your faults, I love you still

It had to be you, wonderful you

It had to be you...”
Jack smiled down at her taking both her hands and holding them in his, swaying with the music while he smiled at her. Harley couldn't keep the smile off her face; Jack always made her smile.

He let her go of her hands, then both of them spun, their shoulders touching as they rolled along their backs, then back to facing each other again. Jack laughed as he took her hand, wrapping her arm around his and swayed with her, their feet crossing over the front of each others, dancing forward before the two of them spun together slowly while the music played over them. Harley giggled, for the moment she forgot all her troubles. Her only focus was Jack's blue eyes, his smile, his sexy, bright, perfect smile, his body touching hers, and his hands wrapped around her hands.

No matter where they were, Jack made her happy, she thought. Harley reached down grabbing the skirt of her asylum uniform, swaying the skirt with her as she moved, dancing, nearly prancing in the common room to the music with her husband.

Jack turned letting go of her arm to slide his hand up her back, spreading his hand and pressing the flat of his palm between her shoulders, holding her against him while they swayed gently before he grabbed her hand again, dropping his other hand down to her waist and twirled her around the room.

Everyone watching (including a few orderlies) clapped or hooted as Jack led Harley in a full waltz around the common room, the two of them only having eyes for each other.

Jack sang to her again with a broad grin on his lips.

“It had to be you, it had to be you
I wandered around and finally found, that somebody who
Could make me be true
Could make me feel blue
And even be glad just to be sad, thinking of you...”

* 

While they were dancing, the music had changed to “Somebody to love” by Jefferson Airplane. Jack chuckled, grabbed Harley's hands, the two of them weaving together to the music, shimmying down to a crouch then back again. Jack yanked her back, wrapping his arms around her. Harley wrapped her arms snug around his neck, their body pressed together as they swayed and weaved to the psychedelic music.

Babs and Tabitha stood up and started to move to the music, the two woman grinding and swaying against each other as they laughed. Zsasz tapped his foot smiling while continuing his game with Aaron who was bobbing his head in time to the rhythm. Arnold had stood up and was dancing, his cheek pressed against the head of his sock puppet who had its head laying on Arnold's shoulder. Robert was clapping to the music watching everyone else while Jervis just smiled and leaned against the CD player contently.

* 

Nurse Mallory shoved the door to the common room open. She had heard the sounds of music drifting down the hall. She had been looking for Dr. Harleen Quinzel, but had found the patient missing from her room. Mallory had been sent to fetch the patient for Dr. Crane who had returned early. Mallory was in a foul mood. She was a head nurse, not some common orderly sent to fetch patients! Yet here she was. If she didn't admire Dr. Crane...and hope to garner his attention, she
would have refused. But here she was, in a foul mood searching for a missing patient.

When she flung the door open to the common room she was appalled by the scene before her. She stood in the doorway glaring. Patients were dancing!! To music!! The common room was for quiet and contemplative tasks, or mind-numbing boredom, she didn't really care, just as long as they were quiet!

She narrowed her eyes seeing Jack Wayne dancing with the patient she had been sent to fetch, Dr. Quinzel. Mallory's expression went from exasperated to reddened and ugly as she marched over to the orderlies who were just watching the patients without doing anything to stop the ruckus they were causing! What on earth were they even employed for if they couldn't do their jobs, she thought.

Across the room, Dale saw her approach like a storm sweeping in and destroying everything in its wake. He muttered under his breath. “Fuck.” The younger man he had been speaking with, a man name Lorry glanced over and hissed. “Oh shit Nurse Ratched!”

Mallory growled when she was close enough. “Why are there so many patients in this room at the same time? And who allowed the music? And those two...” she pointed a finger at Jack and Harley who were spinning around the room laughing together. “Why are they being allowed to...to...frolic in the common room like that? This room is for quiet!” Lorry had to struggle not to laugh at the use of the word “frolic.” He opened his mouth to answer her, but then snapped it shut when Nurse Mallory turned on Dale instead, her face contorted in an ugly expression of rage.

“I want these patients taken back to their rooms and I want that music off—there is to be no music in the common room. Ever.” She pointed behind her angrily.

Dale narrowed his eyes. “Look Mallory. I know you've just transferred here from Gotham General, but the patients are allowed some music in the common room.”

Mallory glared right back. “I'm the head nurse in this institute and I say: no music.”

Mallory turned away from Dale muttering under her breath. “If you want something done...” She stomped over to where Tetch was practically laying over the top of the CD player smiling happily as he watched Jack and Harley dance. Nurse Mallory shoved him aside.

“Off! Now!” She hissed at Tetch shoving the shorter man away from the CD player.

Tetch's eyes widened in what would have been a hysterically funny expression, Dale thought, except for the violent outburst that followed.

Tetch yelled at the top of his lungs throwing himself right in Mallory's face, spittle flying from his lips. “HOW DO YOU FIND OUT THE WEIGHT OF A WHALE?!”

Everyone stopped and turned toward the little man as the sounds of “Incense and Peppermint” started to play in the background.

Jack yelled back at Jervis and Mallory laughing. “I DON'T KNOW? HOW?!”

Tetch replied as Mallory tried to yanked the CD player away from him. He scuttled over grabbing the player and, holding it to his body, yelled back while glaring hatefully at Nurse Mallory. “YOU TAKE HIM TO THE NEAREST WHALE WEIGHT STATION!”

All the patients started laughing. Mallory pressed her lips into a hard thin line, her nose wrinkled up as she sneered at Tetch and the other patients. She reached out shoving Tetch up against the wall. She grabbed the CD player out of his hands.
Tetch screeched. “NO!! NO ROOM!!”

Jack laughed and yelled. “Hey Thundercunt! Let him have his player!”

Mallory turned and glared at Jack. “You shut up or I swear I will stick you in a hole you psychotic.” She turned her attention back to Tetch. Her anger spiking, Mallory yanked the cord out of the wall and threw the player across the room, forcing Jack to grab Harley and spin her out of the way as the player hit the floor and burst into plastic pieces. Everyone in the room froze for the space of two heartbeats before Tetch screamed. “Futterwacken!!!”

The man threw himself at Nurse Mallory, knocking the woman off her feet, Tetch going down with her. “I will prick you!! Cut you!! Cause you to bleed!!” He started giggling as he yelled in a singsong voice just before he started to beat on Mallory.

Jack snorted and yelled. “Beat the Thundercunt Hatter!! She stole the tarts!!”

Harley giggled hanging onto Jack.

The guards began to swarm toward Mallory pulling out batons or tasers while the orderlies started to yell at everyone to settle down, but the other patients rushed to Jervis's aid. Babs and Tabitha rushed the orderlies, Lorry and Reggie. Babs slammed into Reggie, knocking the man to the floor, the two of them sliding against the wall. Babs giggled while grinning down at the young man. “This is fun!” Getting to her feet, she dragged Reggie with her before she slapped him across the face hard enough that he went down.

Tabitha kicked Lorry in the balls with an annoyed sigh.

Robert leapt to his feet laughing and yelled “DINNER!” rushing toward Nurse Mallory, but one of the guard's was ready for the cannibal, moving after the shorter man and hitting him with his taser at the same time knocking him across the face with his baton, breaking the cannibal's nose.

Zsasz smiled and stood up holding out his hand to Aaron. “Shall we?”

Aaron laughed. “Been a while since I was in a brawl.”

Two guards yelled at them. “On your knees!”

Zsasz laughed. “Oh I don't think so, not this time.”

Jack, holding Harley's hand, made a rush for the door. Jack wasn't sure what he was thinking, he knew the chances of them getting out like this were zero, but he had to try. No sooner had he stepped toward the door, two guards rushed to block them. Jack was about to drop Harley's hand and rush one of the men, but it was Harley who dropped his hand.

She snarled. “I'm so sick of this place!”

She took two quick steps forward then leapt up and spun, the move clearly something she knew from being a gymnast. Jack grinned watching her, angry and graceful, her foot connecting with the guard's face in a bright spray of blood when she broke his nose. She whipped around using her whole body to spin, transferring her weight to her right leg as she brought her left leg around for another swift kick that knocked the guard's head to the side.

Jack moved swiftly. He struck out, his fist hitting the guard in the bend of his arm the impact strong enough that the guard was forced to drop his taser. The guard brought his fist up, impacting across Jack's jaw. Without the taser in his other hand, the guard was free to punch Jack with that free hand,
though Jack leaned back in time that the fist only grazed across his chin. The guard tried again to hit Jack, but Jack brought his arm up, blocking one blow, then the other with his left forearm. Jack then let his arm drop, but brought it forward to drive his knuckles into the guard's diaphragm, then up again with the same fist, striking the man across the cheek causing his head to twist and the man to drop like a dead weight.

Jack glanced over to see Harley's guard landing next to Jack's guard, both unconscious. Jack grinned at Harley. She winked at him just as an alarm started to blare loud and long. The sprinklers came on, drowning out any sound and soaking everyone in the room.

Jack reached for the door but it was kicked open and several of the old guards, the ones Jack now knew had a vendetta against him and Harley, burst into the room, accompanied by several doctors. All of the guards and doctors had on gas masks.

Jack hissed. “Fuck me running.”

The guards, armed with riot shields started yelling. “DOWN ON THE GROUND!! DOWN ON THE GROUND NOW!”

One of the guards threw what looked like a grenade into the small common room, which immediately erupted into smoke causing everyone without a mask to start coughing. The next few moments were complete chaos. Jack grabbed Harley's hands yanking her backwards as the older guards swarmed into the room. Jack pulled Harley behind him, but one of the guards hit him with a shield knocking him off his feet, though Jack maintained his hold on Harley and pulled her down with him. In seconds several of the guards had both him and Harley, along with the other patients on the floor, facedown on the floor while the doctors roughly, efficiently administered sedatives. Jack struggled when he heard one of the guards saying, “That Dr. Quinzel's to go to Crane's office, he wanted to see her as soon as he returned. Don't drug her, but you might want to cuff her.”

One of the doctors, an older man with a hound dog face shook his head. “I won't put her out, but she isn't going to cooperate if we don't give her something.”

The guard threw his hands up. “Okay doc, your call.”

Harley let out a vicious scream. Jack started to struggle snarling incoherently, his blue eyes following Harley as she was carried struggling out of the room. Someone was helping nurse Mallory who was leaning on one of the doctors.

“Put Wayne in solitary! And Tetch too!” Mallory, soaked to the skin and looking like an ugly drowned cat, caught Jack's eye as she was escorted out. The smile she gave him was nasty and full of malice.

* 

Harley blinked. She was only dimly aware of the two female nurses setting her down in a chair in Crane's office, stripping her and changing her into a soft pale yellow cap sleeve tea dress. She blinked in confusion at the young nurse who put her makeup on and the other one who brushed her hair out and blew it dry until it shone in golden waves along her shoulder. The two young nurses also put plastic restraints on her wrists and ankles leaving her trussed up like a turkey for Crane.

The drug she had been subdued with was just starting to wear off when Crane came into the room, dressed in a three-piece black and red plaid suit with a gold chain running across his stomach. A young man behind him carried in a tea tray. She watched as tea was set out and the young man left giving her a confused and quizzical look. Crane lifted open his laptop, his eyes scanning something
before music started to play, Mozart's Requiem.

Crane sighed. “Sorry for arriving so late my dear, but an institute like this requires financial assistance to continue and thus sometimes, we must go and present our best faces.” He smiled at her. “Tea?”

Harley struggled to say something, the drug losing its effect, but it had made her mouth dry. “Yes please.” She hated sounding so pathetic, but she needed a drink.

Crane smiled. “Very good dear.”

He poured off the tea into two cups, adding cream and sugar to hers. He walked around the desk carrying the cup and gently placed it in her cuffed hands, waiting until he was sure she had a good hold on it. He smiled as he returned to his chair. “Now, I must apologize for the box. You...upset me yesterday.”

Harley just watched him over the rim of her cup as she greedily sipped at the tea.

Crane smiled watching her, his eyes taking in every detail. “You look stunning today.”

Harley narrowed her eyes; the urge to throw herself over the desk and beat the shit out of him with the tea cup in her hand was almost overwhelming. She was tired of being his victim, but instead she said softly. “Why are you so obsessed with fear?”

Crane blinked, taken aback by her question. “What?”

Harley, feeling more and more herself as the sedative wore off and angrier that this man was doing his best to manipulate her, twist her and break her. No one would do that to her...no one. She sat up straighter. She was a psychiatrist too. She could manipulate and twist with the best of them.

“Why fear?” she asked.

Crane frowned, studying her as if he were looking for something in her demeanor that would tell him why she wanted to know. He continued to stare at her for a long moment. Harley smiled at him, her best, “I'm a sweet innocent” smile. After another few heartbeats she seemed to have won him over.

Crane ran a hand over his tie and vest; he decided to be honest with her, she was after all going to be his lady, Lady Crow to his Scarecrow, (the moniker 'Scarecrow' seemed fitting and had just come to him.) When he had fully crossed that line he was working toward, the line between Crane disappearing into the nightmare of the Scarecrow, all would be so much better. Crane smiled, he would need to tell her after he recreated her that is, about his mission...his desire to rule Gotham by fear. But for now he would tell her about his obsession.

“My father started me on my study of fear. It was his fear that kept him from saving my mother from a deadly fire. He became obsessed with overcoming his fear...of working to create an antidote to fear.”

Harley sipped her tea. “I'm assuming he wasn't successful?”

Crane shook his head. “No, no he wasn't.” Crane's eyes took on a distant look as he peered into the past. “He experimented on me, trying to force me to face my own fears as a child.” Crane glanced toward her before picking up his tea cup and taking a sip. He continued. “He may have failed in eliminating all fear, but he did inspire me. Fear cannot be overcome, but it can be controlled, used, harnessed, turned into a weapon. It's not about overcoming fear, but rather it's about using fear. Using it to subdue others. To remake, protect...to use fear as a means to an end...or simply as a
means to destroy...” Here Crane leveled his gaze at Harley.

Harley felt a shiver run down her spine but she did her best to keep her response from her features. “What is it you fear Dr. Crane?”

Crane lifted a brow at her with an amused expression. “And why ever do you ask Dr. Quinzel? Do you think knowing will give you some sort of power over me?’’

Harley smiled. “No, just professional curiosity.”

Crane rubbed his chin with his finger and thumb. “There is nothing to fear but fear itself...that...that is what I'm scared of—fear.”

Harley tilted her head. “Explain.”

Crane smirked at her professional tone. “I think that's enough Dr. Quinzel.”

Harley smiled. “Maybe you're right, telling me would give me some power over you. Maybe that's the answer right there, you're scared of being powerless. Is that why you want to control people's fears? Because of the power it gives you?”

Crane narrowed his eyes. “That's enough.”

Harley smiled. “Why? Did I hit the nail on the head Dr. Crane...that's what scares you isn't it, lack of power...to be powerless...”

He stood up and went to his office door, opened it, spoke to someone waiting outside. “Take her back please.”

Nurse Mallory was waiting outside the office door. “Of course Dr. Crane.”

Mallory came into the room pushing a wheelchair. Harley made a face, but she grinned at Crane. “Now I know what scares you!”

Crane gave her a narrow eyed look of anger which just made Harley grin more.

* *

Jack was dragged down the hall to solitary. He was deliberately being a dead weight, forcing the two guards to drag him down the hall while he grinned the entire time. One of the guards laughed squeezing his arm painfully. “Guess what Mr. Wayne, Mr. Hoity Toity, Mr. Blue Blood, you get to stay in solitary for the rest of your time with us here at Arkham and God only knows how long that will be. By the time you get out, they'll just turn right back around and throw you back in because you'll be batshit crazy. I'm sure Mr. Bruce Wayne likes not having to share all that money with a nutjob retard like you.” Jack made no reply except to catch his feet on the floor almost causing all three of them to go face down. The guards stumbled, making Jack titter. They roughly yanked him along, his weight going dead again in their hands forcing them to drag him.

The same guard muttered. “Seems you really pissed off Nurse Mallory. You know what that means? She is going to make your stay fucking hell buddy.”

Jack chuckled. “Well, you can tell Nurse Thundercunt for me that she wins the gold metal for extreme-cuntness!”

The guards made no response, but Jack had laughed himself to tears when the guards tossed into
solitary. The door slammed shut on him before he could get his feet under him, and rush toward the door. He did it anyhow, slamming his fists against the padding with a laugh while yelling. “You can also tell her that she's a colossal cunting fucknugget!” Jack snickered sliding down to sit on the floor with a sigh. He looked around, the shadows were deep and inky on the rim of the one sickly yellow light that came from above. He frowned running a hand through his disorderly hair when something made his skin crawl, like a breeze had blow over him. That was when he heard someone move in the shadows.

“Hello Jack.”

Jack watched in horror as his father stepped out of the shadows. Jack stared up at the towering imposing figure of his father. Thomas Wayne looked down at his youngest son, his expression grim.

Jack whimpered. “No, no no...this is not happening.”

His father smiled at him. “I was waiting for you Jack. Following you, watching your every move. You are such a disappointment Jack, but I suppose you always knew that. You were never as good as your brother. He is the perfect son while you...in an insane asylum? I should have known. Your constitution was weak, always weak...like your mother.” Jack pulled himself away pressing back against the wall shaking his head in denial. “No no no...you...you would never say that. My father loved my mother...he loved me...” His father shook his head, the shadows playing across his features made his face look like that of a skull. Jack squeezed his eyes shut while his father continued. “Love you? How on earth could I love such a weak and pathetic boy like you Jack. Jack, Jack...the family disappointment, the family nutcase. It's good that Bruce locked you away. I never wanted you. Neither did your mother, did you know that? She cried when she saw what she had given birth to...”

Jack wrapped his arms around his head and screamed. “NO!! GO AWAY!! YOU ARE NOT MY FATHER!”

Then he started to laugh, a sound that quickly turned into sobbing. “You're not my father,” he whispered as if trying to convince himself. “You're dead. You died. I saw it, you, mother, I saw it...blood everywhere....”

His father stepped closer laying a hand on his head. Jack jerked, lurching away and into the shadows. He watched in horror as the figure in front of him morphed and shifted until his mother was standing in front of him. She smiled. “Hi Jack.”

Jack started to laugh, a high-pitched desperate sound.

“We'll talk again son...real soon I promise,” his mother whispered.

Jack didn't see her leave. He gripped his head, bending into himself giggling. “Not real, not real.”

* 

Dale walked swiftly down the hall and slipped into the first supply closet he came across, closing the door. He didn't bother to turn the lights on as he leaned against the wall breathing heavily. He had just had a confrontation with a couple of the guards. Nothing really dangerous, but they had questioned him about Jack Wayne and Dr. Quinzel. Dale had diverted their attention...answering vaguely before he steered the conversation in another direction, but it was becoming clear that some of the guards were noticing his relationship with Jack Wayne. Dale snarled to himself slamming a fist into the wall that left a large hole.

Dale shook his hand out, the pain giving him focus. He wasn't about to abandon Jack and Harley.
That just wasn't his style. Besides, Sandra would never forgive him. Dale rubbed his knuckles against his chest muttering out loud. “Damn that Nurse Mallory. Damn that bitch.”

She had only been at Arkham two days and already she had caused more trouble than... he shook his head. All right, she had Jack moved permanently to solitary which would make it difficult to get him and Harley more time together. Dale could go over her head, but he was fairly confident that would just put a target on his back. It wouldn't take much for Crane to have him moved off the sixth floor too, and with Sandra gone, that left only him on the sixth floor to help out his friends. His brow furrowed. Friends. Is that what they were? He shrugged, unsure of the answer, but what he did know was that they would need help in here.

He frowned, he needed to do something, but for now the only thing he could do would be to stay on duty as long as he could. Today that would mean an almost twenty-four shift. One of the other orderlies, a young woman named Nancy, had been trying all day to get someone to cover her shift tonight so she could be with her daughter for her birthday. Well, Dale decided he was going to take her shift so he could get Jack and Harley together.

Dale took a calming breath. He needed help in getting them out of the asylum. He would simply have to talk to Jack, but for now, he would do what he could to get them time together.

*

It was nearly midnight when Harley heard a soft knock on her cell door. She rolled over to look at the clear wall and saw Dale standing there. She stood up quickly, slipped on her shoes and moved over to the door just as it popped open. Dale motioned her out the door.

“I meant to be here sooner. They took Jack to solitary. Nurse Mallory has made it so that Jack will be in solitary for...” Dale shrugged. “The foreseeable future.”

“What?” Harley spun around to face the big orderly, her voice rising.

Dale put a hand on her shoulder and turned her around to head down the hall. “I'm sorry. I can't do anything about that, but I can take you to see him. I'm pulling a double shift just so I can do this.”

Harley stopped again and threw her arms around Dale hugging him tightly. Dale blushed bright red making his whole bald head look like a tomato. “It's okay Miss Harley...I mean...it's...no need to thank me.”

Harley smiled and gave him a loud kiss on the cheek.

*

It was dark in the solitary hall when Dale and Harley arrived. Dale frowned muttering. “There should be a light on down here.” He looked around until he found the switch and flipped it, the hall suddenly lighting up. As the two of them made their way down the hall, they could both hear the faint sounds of Jervis from behind the door of one of the cells. He was singing to himself. “Twinkle twinkle little bat! How I wonder what you're at...”

Harley frowned. He sounded so sad. Dale turned to the other cell and scanned his card then pushed the door open. He looked down the hall as he ushered her inside. As soon as Harley stopped through the door, Dale snapped it closed behind her.

She stood there looking around the room. Just as last time it was dark inside the padded cell, the only light coming from a dim fixture above. She stood near the door looking around and frowned trying to peer into the darkness. “Jack?” she called softly.
She heard movement, shuffling then Jack's voice. He sounded hoarse and in pain. “Harley? Is that you or are you an illusion too? My mind is breaking, you know.” He giggled. “I'm going quite mad.”

“Jack?” Harley stepped further into the room searching for him. She couldn't see him at all. “Jack? Where are you? What are you talking about? Of course it's me.”

“You didn't answer me, are you real?” His voice drifted through the darkness.

“What're you talking about Jack? Of course I'm real.” Harley frowned in confusion.

Jack seemed to surge out of the darkness grabbing her by her shoulders and slammed her up against the padded wall. His blue eyes looked wild and his fingers pushed into her shoulders painfully. Harley gasped in pain, her voice strained. “Jack, you're hurting me!”

Jack leaned close, his eyes boring into hers, his grip becoming tighter, harder, as if his fingers would dig into the bones of her shoulders. Harley gasped in pain, cringing, and repeated louder. “Jack, you're hurting me!”

Jack snarled at her, “Are you real?!” He yanked her back and slammed her against the wall again.

Her head bounced against the padded wall, the impact knocking the air from her. Harley gasped in pain her voice coming out in a sob. “Jack! Jack...it's me...I'm real, I'm real!”

She put her shaking hands up on his chest. “Jack...it's me.”

Jack squeezed her shoulders, glaring at her until she was sobbing. “Jack please!!” Harley pleaded.

He hissed, spittle hitting her face as he leaned in close, madness clear in his blue eyes. “How do I know it's you?”

“Because I love you. I love you Jack.” Harley whimpered, the pain becoming unbearable as she looked into his eyes pleading with him to know it was her.

Jack's grip dropped and he yanked her into his arms. “Harley. Oh god Harley, I'm so sorry.”

Harley wrapped her arms around him, burying her face against his chest. “Oh Jack.”

Jack hugged her, stroked his hands over her hair, then pulled her back to cup her face between his hands. “Forgive me?”

Harley blinked back tears. “Yes, of course Jack.”

He wiped her tears away with his thumbs and kissed her, whispering her name over and over again. “Harley Harley Harley...my Harley...”

He covered her face with kisses, then against her mouth. He brushed her lips with his tongue. Harley opened her mouth to him, wrapping her arms around his neck. Their kissing immediately turned desperate, passionate. Jack grabbed desperately for her, pulling her against him, sinking to the floor of the cell. Harley grabbed at his shirt struggling to get it off of him while at the same time unwilling to take her mouth away from his lips. Jack let her go only long enough to swiftly unbutton his shirt. Harley yanked at her dress, pulling the heavy thick dress over her head, dropping the dress to the floor, then just as quickly she stripped off her undergarments. Jack sucked in a breath as the dim light danced over her pale skin. “My Harley,” he uttered softly.

Harley growled in response and immediately grabbed Jack's shirt to yank it off his shoulders, her
mouth attacking his with licks and bites. Jack groaned, reaching for her again, but Harley pushed him onto his back, moving down to his pants, her hands working desperately and quickly to undo the slacks, grabbing them and yanking them down his legs, taking everything with them until he was naked too.

Immediately Harley ran her tongue up the length of his already hardening shaft; forcing his legs apart, she laid herself down between his thighs. She wrapped a hand around his erection at the same time that her lips greedily wrapped around the hard shaft, sucking him deeply into her mouth. Jack groaned loudly, his fingers grabbing fistsful of her blonde hair holding on as if he needed to make sure she remained real, he thrust his hips up into her waiting mouth, arching his head back with a loud groan of pleasure. Harley wrapped her tongue around him, sucking on him in desperation. She slowly lowered her mouth down on him, relaxing her throat to feel the smooth satin of his shaft against her lips and tongue, taking him all the way into her mouth. She shoved her hands up his torso worshippings his body in the way only a lover could.

Jack jerked when Harley took him deeply. The drag of her lips, the twist and jerk of her hand on him, had him whimpering. He needed her badly. Needed to know he really wasn't alone, that he had her...she was real...his Harley...

She coated him in her saliva sucking slowly, tasting the salty flavor of his pre-ejaculation on her tongue, dragging her lips up his length, her tongue twirling around the head of his penis with delight. She grinned taking pleasure not just in the little moans Jack was making or the way his fingers felt, their grip tight in her hair, but also in the way he was trembling, groaning her name over and over.

“Harley, Harley...my Harley...uuhh...” Jack's body arched toward her.

She bobbed her head slowly, sucking and pulling until Jack couldn't take anymore. He yanked on her hair pulling her up. Harley giggled, moving up his body to straddle him, Jack swallowed feeling how wet she was against his stomach. Jack smiled up at her, his perfect harlequin, the light made her hair dance like a golden halo.

“Am I real enough Jack?” she asked in a sweet whisper.

Jack chuckled. “I don't know Harls. I think I need a little more proof.”

Harley grinned. “Oh you do?”

She slid back and reached down, grabbing his shaft holding him as she lowered herself down on him. Harley groaned. The feel of Jack filling her, stretching her, sent ripples of heated pleasure up her spine. “Oh Jack!” Harley groaned, arching her body. She moved slowly at first, her hands running up his chest before she dropped down, her elbows on either side of his head. She kissed him tenderly whispering.

“I'm real Jack. I'm real,” while she bit his lips, her tongue caressing his in a slow sensual dance.

Jack wrapped his arms around her torso holding her close to him, the warmth and dampness of her surrounding him, his need to have her combined with the feeling of helplessness he had been feeling just prior to her being with him intensified their love-making. Harley brushed her fingers along his face, tracing his cheeks and mouth, while continuing to move her hips slowly up and down, grinding then a slow piston, her mouth never leaving his own.

Harley whimpered when she came, her body tightening around him, her fingers reaching up to grab fistsful of his hair when she groaned out his name. “Jack...uuhh...Jack...”
Jack followed swiftly behind her, the feeling of her holding him tightly. The pleasure of her orgasm yanked his own from him. Jack gasped, bursting into her, his entire body reacting to the orgasm. “Harley...” he groaned, his grip around her tightening.

Neither one of them wanted to move. Jack lazily stroked her back, the tips of his fingers weaving up and down her spine. Harley had her head nestled against his neck, her blonde hair covering her face. She occasionally kissed his throat or his jaw but otherwise she didn't really move much.

After a few minutes, Harley whispered. “What happened Jack?”

He frowned staring up at the ceiling. She started to move, but he stopped her. “No, don't. I want to stay like this...” He smiled, playfully thrusting up. Harley giggled tightening her thighs around him in response.

She waited for him to tell her, but he remained quiet. She gently caressed his brow, her fingers playing softly over his ear or along his jaw. After a few more moments Jack said softly. “I've seen my mother and father.”

* 

It was early evening though the wind had picked up and the rain that started to fall outside made it look a lot later. Alex was sitting in a booth at the diner where Alice worked, tapping his foot trying to remain calm, using his one hand to slowly turn his cup of coffee around on the table. Alice came over and leaned against the table in his booth.

“Alex, don't worry so much.” She reached over and ruffled his hair.

He looked up at his girlfriend who was smiling as if nothing at all was or could go wrong. She was dressed all in pink and white today, looking adorable Alex thought; he definitely didn't deserve her..

He sighed. “I...”

He didn't get to finish when Alice came to attention, her focus drawn to the front of the diner. Alex turned in his seat to see the man Frost come in. It was easy to tell that man was an ex-cop just by the way he held himself, his eyes darting around the room looking for trouble, but remaining calm and ready. He glanced in their direction and Alice waved at him.

“I'll go fetch him for you,” Alice said bending over to place a quick kiss on the top of Alex's head. A moment later, Frost was sitting across from Alex. The two men nodded.

Alice smiled. “Get you something Mr. Frost?”

“Coffee, black and ah...you guys wouldn't happen to have any apple pie would you?” Frost asked with a hint of a smile.

“Sure do sweetie, just give me a moment. Alex, honey, you want some pie too?” Alice smiled at her boyfriend and he sighed. “Sure honey, thanks.”

After she left, Frost leaned forward. “So, Jack and Harley—you got a plan?”

Alex shook his head. “No, not yet, but last night I did a bit of looking online, found some old maps that had been scanned into the system, Arkham apparently has not only an extensive old sewer system that runs underground, but they also have extensive storm tunnels...all of it unused, just laying there underground waiting for a couple of smart minded individuals to form a break-in.”
Alex grinned brightly picking up his coffee and taking a large hot swallow.

Frost nodded. “Are they safe? I mean, it doesn't do us any good to get them out if we die because a tunnel collapsed on us.”

Alex sighed. “Okay, that I don't know.”

“We need someone on the inside,” Frost muttered just as Alice came back with his coffee and pie for them both. She slipped into the booth next to Alex. “You guys talking about breaking Jack and Harley out, a rescue mission?”

Both men nodded. “And you never got the name of the guy from the asylum who gave you the message?” Alice asked. Alex shrugged. “He didn't really give me a chance,” he muttered.

Alice frowned running a finger along the pocked and scarred surface of the table. “Maybe I can go visit Harley, see what I can find out?”

“Hey, actually that is a good idea.” Alex grinned.
Fed Up

It was late. Jack wasn't sure exactly how late, only that he was exhausted. Harley was curled against him with her head on his chest and her hand resting against his stomach while she slept. Once or twice she had cried in her sleep and he would tighten his grip around her, holding her close until she settled down. She murmured in her sleep a few times, calling out for him...cursing Crane. That had made him laugh, but mostly she cried for him. Jack held her tight. He didn't want to sleep. He wanted to cherish every moment with her, to be here, to comfort her when she dreamed...but he was also scared to close his eyes.

Jack chewed his bottom lip in thought. He was scared and that made him angry, furious. He had been scared so many times in his life and he would lash out when that happened until he had found a way to control his fear, but now...was he losing his mind?

He had told Harley about what he had seen, his parents. She was convinced that Crane was behind it. He smiled softly. She had so much confidence in him, she trusted him. Harley had kissed him and told him she didn't care if he was losing his mind; she loved him and told him she would lose her mind with him; wherever he went, she had said she would follow.

Jack smiled and squeezed her close, closing his eyes. Harley was his only solace, his partner and other half. He would find a way through this for her. Besides, if he was losing his mind, the thought of having her with him, just as crazy, was comforting.

*

The following morning, Bruce was drove into the city despite the day not being a work day. He had a date with a model, a gorgeous French model who was named Camille Lenoir; tall, slim, blonde and she had just flown in from Paris this morning to spend the day with him. It would actually be nice, a chance to put his worries on the back burner and maybe put thoughts of Selina aside. It bothered him that he just couldn't get her out of his thoughts. She haunted his dreams and his mind, which had only been made worse by the call. He wished she would make contact again, but he had heard nothing. Bruce sighed; he would focus on today. He didn't love Camille, but he did enjoy her company. Their relationship was more friends-with-benefits than anything more serious. They both liked it that way and perhaps that was best all around. He wasn't meant for love and family,

Bruce thought to himself. Maybe none of the Waynes were...

Bruce smiled, shaking off the gloom and looking forward to the day, especially after how badly he had slept last night. He had awakened from a bad dream this morning, a dream about Jack that had been dark. Jack in the dream had been laughing, that laugh that had always overcome Jack when he was in the midst of one of his fits, usually after he had done something violent...it would always take days to calm him down again. Bruce hated those times, Jack alternating between laughing and crying. The worst times when Jack was like that, but there was no evidence that he had done anything...that always left Bruce feeling cold. He hated not knowing things.

Bruce shuddered and wondered sometimes if Jack still had those fits, except now he was much better at hiding them? Bruce felt a cold chill rush over him.

Bruce shuddered, shaking off the hazily-remembered dream like raindrops and let his thoughts return to his plans for today when his phone rang. He reached down hitting the button, unable to see the displayed number; immediately the phone was on speaker. “Bruce here.”
“What the hell are you doing Bruce Wayne?!” The voice was loud, deep, resembling the smoking purr that Lauren Becall's voice was famous for having. The sound of it almost had Bruce veer off the road in shock. “Aunt Agatha?”

“Yes it's your Aunt Agatha. What the hell is your brother doing in the asylum?” He couldn't be sure, but it sounded like she was in a car, a convertible with the top down. If Bruce knew his aunt, she would be speeding and driving dangerously.

Bruce and Jack's Aunt Agatha was not a typical aunt. She was a lot more like Aunt Mame from the movie than a little old lady—not that she was 'old' exactly—but she wasn't a young woman anymore, though no one would dare to say that in her presence. Agatha Wayne was statuesque, model beautiful with short black hair cut in a young boyish style and brilliant blue, intelligent—canny—eyes seemed to see everything. She was almost as tall as Jack and Bruce, but she had a presence about her that made her seem much taller. She had never married and had never had any children, preferring to spend her time traveling, which was why she didn't take the boys when her younger brother was killed—she just wasn't 'mother' material. She loved them, but she knew she wouldn't be good for them, not in the stable home foundation way they needed.

“Aunt Agatha...why are you calling?” Bruce was confused as he turned down a street trying to keep his focus on the traffic.

“Because I just heard about what you did to your brother, that's why. Really Bruce, how could you do that?” Agatha sighed. “I mean, I knew you boys butt heads, but to have him committed? Really Bruce, I'm shocked and disgusted.” Agatha's tone was low and would have conveyed her displeasure even without her words.

“Aunt Agatha it's...look, Jack has been violent in the past. He beat a man to death—what was I suppose to do?” Bruce sighed.

“I emasculated a man once with the heel of my shoe, but your dad didn't have me committed! You were supposed to get him the best help money can buy and let him stay home. Besides the fact that you're rich enough for that, those places are never as good as they claim to be. I should know.” Agatha was speeding down the autobahn, a cigarette between two of her fingers, one hand on the wheel and an opened bottle of vodka in her cup-holder. She smiled as she expertly handled the 2017 Jaguar F-TYPE SVR AWD Convertible purchased by her latest boyfriend, a German businessman who made his money...well she didn't know how he made his money nor did she care, all she cared about was that he spent it on her.

“And did I hear right? Jack's engaged too? God Bruce...I'm just...ugh. Is it true you committed her too? What is going on with you? Maybe you should have thought about having yourself examined? Anyway, I called to let you know I'll be state side in a few days, a week at the most.” Agatha took a puff off her cigarette.

Bruce hit the gas too hard receiving some honks and colorful shouted insults at his accidental jerk reaction with the car. “What?” Bruce glanced down at the phone for a moment as if the inanimate object would have some answers.

“I'm coming to visit. I want to know exactly what is going on with your brother and...you Bruce dear, what is going on with you. This is just not how the Waynes do things. I'll call again when I arrive.” Agatha's phone cut off without a goodbye.

Bruce started to say. “It's not that eas...” But then the phone went dead. Bruce groaned before he hit the auto dial for Alfred. Bruce spoke on as soon as the phone clicked.
“Alfred, we have a little problem coming.”

“What is it Master Bruce?” Alfred inquired with that calm that he always seemed to have even when upset.

“We have a code ten,” Bruce said his eyes hard as he drove.

Alfred groaned. “I'll stock up the vodka.”

*

Dale looked exhausted. There were bags under his eyes and he was moving slower than usual. He was about to go off duty when he came to pick up Harley from solitary, wanting to get her back safely to her room.

Dale knocked and opened the door slowly hoping that they were both dressed.

He spoke softly. “Sorry, but I need to get Harley back to her room before the shift change.”

Jack and Harley were dressed, lying curled around each other when the knock came. Jack sighed holding Harley against him, his face buried against her neck. She could feel just a slight tremble coming from Jack as he whispered, “I love you Harls.”

Harley held him tight, sniffing, trying not to cry; she didn't want to leave Jack crying. “I love you too Jack...my puddin.” She gave him a soft sweet giggle which made him smile. Jack stroked his fingers through her hair and along her neck. He could feel her shivering in his arms. He pressed a kiss to her ear, then along the soft place just under her ear. “I will get you out of here Harley. I swear. We're going to get out and we 're going to rain hell on Gotham.” He chuckled. Harley smiled, squeezing him.

They both stood up slowly, then Jack cupped her face between his hands and kissed her. The kiss was the kind that made every inch of her feel as if it were on fire, butterflies bursting in her stomach, her heart swelling. Tears came to her eyes despite her best efforts and slowly ran down her cheeks. Jack leaned back, frowning at her tears then kissed them away.

“Don't cry Harls,” Jack whispered.

“T'm sorry puddin. I just...I can't take this much longer.” Harley whispered, struggling to hold back her tears. Jack brushed his nose against hers. “I know Harls. We are going to get out. I swear.” The conviction in his eyes had Harley nodding in agreement.

Harley wrapped her arms around him one more time, kissing him hard before she let go and swiftly walked over to the door, dashing past Dale. Dale glanced over at Jack with a sad smile. “I'll try to bring her back tonight.”

Jack smiled and nodded at Dale. “Thanks.”

Then the door closed and Jack was left alone again.

*

Harley frowned, walking just in front of Dale and angrily wiped away the tears that just wouldn't stop falling. Her walk was brisk, but Dale caught up to her placing his hand on her shoulder more just in case someone saw them, but also to give her a bit of comfort.
“When do you think I'll get to see him again?” Harley asked as they made their way down the halls.

Dale yawned as they walked. “Should be able to tonight. I switched all my shifts to night shift. That will make it easier for me to get you away from your cell without anyone noticing. The night shift is always a little more lax.” Dale gave her shoulder a reassuring squeeze. “I wish I could stay on duty twenty-four hours, but...” He shrugged. “And with Sandra gone...”

Harley reached up and squeezed his hand. “You know we appreciate everything you're doing for us Dale.”

Dale smiled with a slight nod. “Thanks.”

*

After Dale had dropped Harley off, he made his way to the employee lounge to pick up his book and head downstairs to clock out. He had just stepped into the lounge when he heard a couple of the other orderlies talking, one man, one woman that Dale knew only in passing.

“God did you hear who they brought in to replace Sandra?” The one man—Dale struggled to recall his name....Norman! Norman usually worked on the fifth floor, but sometimes covered for the sixth. He was an okay guy, nothing special; he didn't go out of his way to cause the patients any issues, did his job, no more, no less. The younger woman he was speaking with was Essie. Nice, calm, did her job well. He knew Essie was friends with Sandra.

Essie hissed. “It's not true is it? I heard it was Daisy Maverick from long term care.”

Norman nodded. “It's her all right.”

“I thought she had been fired after that incident with those patients dying six months ago.” Essie leaned on the wall sipping her soda.

Norman shook his head. “She was put on administrative leave for like two weeks. Those patients didn't have any family, so no one put up a stink. I think Arkham only gave her that long because he wanted to be sure there was something on record of some sort of discipline. I don't know. All I know is that she's on our floor now.”

Essie shuddered. “Shit.”

Norman shrugged. “Well, look at the bright side. Everyone on this floor is violent. If Daisy is stupid enough to try anything with the patients here, she might just get more trouble than she can chew.”

Essie hissed. “Norm that's terrible!” But she chuckled.

He laughed. “I know, I know...”

Dale paled. Everyone had heard about Daisy Maverick. She was not just a hard-ass with patients, she was one of those nasty type of people who liked power and liked to used it making people feel small and useless and he had heard stories of her cruelty. He closed his eyes for a moment. This was the last straw; he had to get Jack and Harley out of here....he just needed to come up with a good plan.

*

It was late in the morning by the time someone came to get Harley to take her to the showers.
Breakfast had been running late and ended up being served as a cold breakfast (cereal, fruit and some
luke warm tea) in their rooms because something had happened with one of the stoves in the
kitchens. Harley had heard a couple of nurses talking about it as they walked by her cell, something
about one of the stoves catching on fire and that had pretty much thrown everything off schedule,
which meant the patients on the sixth floor would be spending most of the day in their cells.

The orderly that came to get Harley was another that she hadn't seen yet. She was a big woman, like
Sandra, but where Sandra's homely features were pleasant because of how sweet and caring the
woman was, this woman looked like a freaking Frankenstein monster with her military short hair cut
and hard features. Her eyes looked like little black beads and her lip-less mouth was just a slash
across her face. She wore her uniform more like a military drill sergeant. She even had a belt on
around her middle where Harley saw what might be a pair of metal handcuffs, a baton, and a stun
gun; she certainly was prepared Harley thought with a grin. The woman orderly scanned her card,
opened the door, and snarled.

“Put your shoes on—showers.”

Harley slipped her shoes on and stepped over to the door with a broad smile. “I'm Harley.” She put
her hand out, but the woman gave her a derisive look as if Harley was the most disgusting thing she
had ever seen.

“I'm Daisy and I'm the new head orderly on level six. You will not make small talk with me. I am not
your friend. You will do what you are told when you are told. Got it?” Daisy glared at her, her little
black eyes were cold and humorless.

Harley grinned and shrugged. “Sure thing Daisy. Though you don't look like a Daisy to me, you
look more like a Frank.”

Daisy glared at Harley. “I know exactly who you are; you're that bitch who's engaged to Bruce
Wayne's retarded brother aren't you? You're Dr. Crane's little pet. Nurse Mallory told me all about
you. How you're suppose to be treated differently than everyone else here because Crane likes
you...well, I don't give a flying fuck what Crane or Mallory wants. I run this floor the way I see fit.
There are no favorites, no favors, especially for little whores like you. Think you're somebody by
trying to marry the rich man's crazy brother? Think you're hot stuff because you're so pretty. None of
that matters here. I'm going to make an example out of you...everyone will know what happens now
that Daisy Maverick is in charge. So any backtalk is going to land you in a world of hurt, got that?
Or do I need to teach you a lesson?”

Harley was quiet for a long moment; she wasn't sure what had gotten into her, but she was tired, tired
of nasty, bossy people who thought they had power over her and over Jack, tired of people telling
her what to do, and just plain tired of this whole fucking place. She grinned wide and giggled as she
said loudly. “I guess wearing a mask for you on Halloween is redundant with a face like that.”

Daisy grabbed Harley by the front of her dress. The woman held Harley up, having lifted her up off
her feet just enough that Harley had to wrap her hands around the larger woman's arms to keep
herself from adding too much strain and ripping her dress. Daisy hissed, her tiny black eyes like hard
little rocks. “I'm going to let that one go, but you insult me again it won't be pretty.”

Then Daisy practically threw Harley out of her cell, sending Harley stumbling a few steps down the
hall. “Get going, another word and I will stun you and fucking drag you to the showers.”

Harley made a face as she started walking in front of Daisy. The showers was a large room with five
shower heads along one wall with divides between each shower. There were no curtains or doors,
everything was in the open, the divides only offering the illusion of privacy. When Harley arrived
she saw Babs and Tabitha were already washing, one of the other female orderlies was here leaning
against the wall, on her phone only half paying attention while Babs and Tabitha chuckled about something they had been discussing while washing their hair. When Harley came in with Daisy, the big woman shoved Harley hard enough that the rubber soles of her shoes slipped on the damp tile floor, causing Harley to fall forward, crashing to the floor.

Daisy chuckled. “Oops.”

The other orderly started to come over to help Harley to her feet. “Oh my god, you okay?”

Babs and Tabitha turned, staring at the confrontation.

Daisy turned on the other orderly snarling. “Out. I got this under control.”

The younger woman stopped in her tracks, fear washing across her face. She started to protest, but Daisy glared at her. “Not another word—you know who’s in charge here. I have this, now get out.”

The younger orderly nodded and hurried out without another word. Harley had gotten to her feet when Daisy grabbed her by her wrist and yanked Harley across the floor to the shower. Harley started to struggle.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” she yelled trying to hit the big woman, but Daisy held her out easily, clearly far stronger than Harley. She yanked her to one of the showers, whipping out a pair of old fashion metal handcuffs from around the belt she wore around her uniform, yanked Harley’s arm up and cuffed her wrist to the shower head.

Harley yelled. “What are you doing?! Let me down!!”

Daisy snorted. “Watch me blondie.” Then she turned on the shower head full blast. Harley gasped in shock as ice cold water hit her in the face.

Harley dangled, her toes just barely touching the floor trying to keep her face out of the water gasping for breath. Babs and Tabitha were both watching when Babs hissed. “You can't do that!”

Daisy turned on the slimmer woman and stepped within arms reach of her, her black eyes hard. “I can do whatever I want sweetheart.”

Then Daisy whipped out her stun gun and jabbed Babs in the side, startling the young woman. Babs cried out in shock and pain, slipping on the wet tiles and landing with a thud on the floor. Tabitha let out a yell. “Don't you touch her you bitch!”

Daisy hissed. “You have a problem there black barbie?”

Tabitha went very still. “What did you just call me?”

Harley had reached up and grabbed onto the shower head with her other hand, dangling, her rubber soled toes scraping against the wet floor. She was so angry she almost couldn't think straight. She hated this place, hated the mean, nasty people who worked here, the cruelty for no other reason than to have power over someone else. She hated Crane for hurting Jack and her, for treating them like objects instead of people. She hated Bruce for being so weak and self-righteous and right now, she fucking HATED Daisy for taking Sandra's place, coming in here like she owned the place and immediately trying to hurt her. Harley was tired and she was fed up.

She lifted herself up. Luckily, despite not keeping up with her gymnastics like she should, her upper body strength was still sufficient for the task. She was able to lift her legs up, after kicking her shoes off, and put her bare feet against the wall, though it was difficult with the ice cold water blasting
down on her. She couldn't keep her eyes open and she kept having to jerk her head to the side in order to catch a breath of air. She could hear the heated exchange going on between Tabitha and Daisy despite the power of the water hitting her constantly in the face. From the sound of it, it was only a matter of time before Tabitha made a move and Harley wasn't about to force Tabitha to fight Frankenstein's monster alone. Besides, Harley had had enough of being the victim of this place. She was terrified of whatever it was that Crane was doing to Jack...the plain, raw fear in Jack's voice when he spoke of seeing his parents last night. Her puddin was shaken and scared, thinking he had completely lost his mind. Harley put all her weight against the shower head, hauling back as hard as she could. The metal of the shower head groaned. Harley squeezed her eyes and mouth shut against the constant spray of water. She thought she heard the electrical “zap” of the stun gun again at the very moment the shower head broke free, dumping Harley down hard on the slick tiles.

She hit her head hard against the tiles, which immediately sent her head and vision swimming. Harley blinked, watching the water come down in a flood like from a faucet instead of the blast from the shower. Dizziness nearly overwhelmed her. Harley giggled thinking she had hit her head pretty hard. Probably a concussion, she thought wryly. She rolled groggily onto her side to see blood mixing with the water that flowed down the drain. Harley laid on her side trying to get her bearings and clear her head.

Tabitha hissed in pain when Daisy hit her with the stun gun. Even naked and wet, the younger woman had moved quickly enough that Daisy hadn't been able to completely press the prongs of the weapon against her, but even so the shock had hurt. But Tabitha didn't drop. She had backed herself against the shower wall, her hands balled into fists and glared defiantly at Daisy. The big woman gave her a nasty grin at the same time that she yanked free her baton.

Now armed with both a stun gun and baton, Daisy stalked toward Tabitha. “You are in for a world of hurt missy. Daring to strike an orderly? Trying to interfere with my work? Just might end up in solitary and you know...I've been known to forget to feed people in solitary from time to time.”

Tabitha glared hatefully at the older woman...her dark eyes glanced toward Babs once, who still lay on the wet tiles after Daisy had zapped her. Babs had pulled herself into a fetal position against the shock of the weapon. Tabitha growled. “No one touches Barbara.”

“Looks like I just did and I touched you too.” Daisy grinned. “I can do a lot more too...no one here will raise a finger against me. I have Arkham on my side, Crane, Mallory. I have full authority to do whatever needs to be done to keep you lot of in line. I own this floor, just going to use you three as my examples. Make sure the rest of you know who the boss is.”

“Whose floor is this Frank?”

Daisy turned at the sound of Harley's voice to see the drenched, shivering, with watery blood mixed in her damp hair. Harley stood there snarling, her hair stuck in long curling wet strands to her face making the little blonde look like a maniac. Harley held the shower head in her right hand, her hand still cuffed, but now free of the wall, and swung with all her strength, using her entire body for the hit, using the slick tile flooring to twist herself fully as she struck Daisy across the face with the remains of the shower head. Daisy went down exactly how Harley thought a sack of potatoes would go down. Daisy lost her hold on both the stun gun and the baton, which went skidding across the tiles.

Harley giggled. “Well that was easier than I thought.”

Harley grinned at Tabitha, but that was the instant Daisy's wrapped her hand around Harley's ankle and yanked. Harley let out a yelp of surprise, her feet going out from under her. But this time she didn't hit her head. The instant that Harley began to fall, she twisted her body around, landing on her
elbows which sent a jarring rattle through her entire body. Harley hissed in pain, one of her arms going numb and the air was knocked from her. Daisy hissed and snarled like a wild animal. “You think it was going to be that easy? You think you can hurt me missy! I know all about hurting patients, all the ways to make you scream.”

Harley pulled herself forward on the slippery tiles and snarled right back. “You know, for a minute I did think it was going to be that easy! What the hell is wrong with everyone they hire here?! Don't they have you guys fill out a psych eval!!”

Harley twisted her body and slammed her bare foot into Daisy’s face. Tabitha launched herself at Daisy landing on the woman's back and doing her best to grab her by her short hair. Daisy held onto Harley's ankle yanking the smaller woman toward her, her lips bloody and staining her teeth.

“I'm going to rip your face off!” Daisy hissed.

Harley giggled. “Eww!!” she kicked again yelling. “I'm so fed up with this place and you are butt ugly!!”

Tabitha yanked back on what little hair she could get a hold of on Daisy’s head. This time Harley's strike with her foot broke the woman's nose with a sickening crush of bone. Daisy let out a scream, releasing Harley who scrambled to her feet, but Daisy reared back knocking Tabitha off her back.

Daisy grabbed her bloody nose gurgling. “You fucking bitch!”

She started to move at Harley when suddenly the big woman jerked, her feet slipping and she hit the tile floor hard. Standing behind her was Babs holding the stun gun. Babs looked pale, wet and naked, but she grinned at Harley. Harley chuckled and walked over to Daisy who groaned.

Harley stood over her, her hands on her hips. “Now, whose floor is it bitch?” Then she kicked Daisy in the face as hard as she could, knocking Daisy out.

The orderly who had been sent away came rushing back into the showers. “I heard a commotion, what's....”

She looked at the three women in shock but Harley smiled and held out her cuffed hand. “Can you help a girl out? I really want to take a shower after that.”

*  

Jack lay on his back, wearing only his asylum pants, bare chest and bare feet, his legs crossed at the ankles, staring at the darkness. He was on the edge of the single light. The weak yellow light made him sick to his stomach. He preferred the darkness. He closed his eyes and let his mind drift. He could hear the muffled sounds of Tetch talking.

“Everything is QUEER TODAY!!”

Then the sounds of Tetch in the other cell singing to himself.

“The me I never knew

Begin to stir sometime this morning

The me I never knew

Appeared without a word of warning
You smiled and you uncovered
What I had not discovered
You made me, seethed me
I never knew ...”

*  
Jack let Jervis's singing lull him, closing his eyes, the words flowing over him. He grinned and sang along softly, his voice a whisper.

*  
“The me I never knew
Has learned to love and love the feeling
The me I never knew
Can see a world I've been concealing
Today a new song's playing
The words are simply saying
"From now, I'll be the me, I never knew...”

*  
His mind was drifting, working, thinking of ways to escape and dismissing them. Jack pressed his lips together into a hard line. He was fed up. His girl was hurting, he needed to get her out of this place and he was definitely fed up. Fed up with this treatment, fed up with the loss of control and fed up with feeling weak, powerless.

At one point, as he laid on the floor, almost in a meditative state, he thought he heard movement at his door, but when nothing happened Jack dismissed it. The door didn't open and there was no knock. He knew it was far, far too early for Dale to be on duty and bringing Harley back. Though he desperately wished she was here, he couldn't function without her...he felt incomplete without Harley beside him. Jack squeezed his eyes tight on the pain, then took a breath and let it out. No, he was getting tired, tired of all of this.

He was going to make so many people pay.

Jack shook himself, allowing himself a little smile. Jervis started singing a new song, the little man's voice cut through the padding.

“Curiouser and curiouser I find I grow curiouser
But each time I ask a question why there’s no reply
Some days are gloriuser and gloriuser
They can’t be more gloriuser
But soon as those days begin to die I’m back to why…”

*

Jack smiled, letting himself drift, the song carrying him and ignoring the sounds outside his cell figuring they were nothing more than the scurrying sound of those rats this place employed. Except for Dale and Sandra… which was another reason Jack needed to bust out of here and rescue those two from this place and open their eyes to the possibilities the world had to offer on the outside.

Jack smiled to himself when he started to smell the scent of cookies? Jack’s eyes flew open and he saw barely a haze of greenish gas in the air. Jack shoved himself up pushing himself backwards into a corner watching as the gas drifted into the room like an entity, filling the available space.

“No, no, no,” he hissed, anger mixing with fear as his nostrils flared.

Crane, it had to be Crane, he thought and that fucking fear toxin he had been dosing Harley with…he wasn’t sure what the man wanted with him, but he was confident it wasn’t to try to make him better. He could feel the gas beginning to take effect as the shadows around Jack’s room moved. He struggled, fighting off the narcotic’s effects, but it was difficult.

Jack’s vision became wobbly, his head spinning and nausea over came him. He giggled for a moment thinking to himself if Crane wasn’t such a fucking douchebag and after his girl, they might have a lot to talk about, share, with Crane’s use of “fear” gas and Jack’s own toxin he had been working on before Harley stole all his attention. Jack giggled again. He would do it all over again though…Harley was far more fun than any of his “experiments” had been...

Jack was pressed up against the padded wall, willing his heart rate to slow, when the door to his cell opened and his mother slipped inside. Jack groaned in pain as he slid down the wall, brought his knees up, and covered his head with his arms. “Not again...no no no...not real.”

His mother came over, squatting down and stroked her fingers through his hair. Jack jerked away scrambling to the other side of the room. He felt the warmth from her body and the gentle caress through his hair. It made his skin crawl to know his illusions—no, delusions he corrected himself—were so real.

“Oh my poor little boy, all alone in the world. No one wants you sweetheart,” Martha cooed softly. She was dressed as before, in the last outfit Jack had seen her in while alive. “Isn’t that your biggest fear Jack, that no one would ever want you?”

Jack had brought his knees up close, wrapping his arms around his head while his mother continued. He was doing his best to wish her away, to ignore the words that came at him like daggers, slicing at his defenses.

“That’s really why you attacked that man wasn’t it...because he was going to take away someone you thought loved you. How could Harleen Quinzel ever love someone as pathetic as you Jack. Oh my boy...I wish you had never been born. Always wanting someone to play with, but no one wanted to be near you, not even your brother wanted you...” She smiled at him and Jack narrowed his eyes glaring at her. The drug was making him nauseous and fear kept fighting to overtake him, but Jack wasn’t going to give in without a fight. Something in him broke a little more. He was fed up.

Jack squeezed his eyes closed as his mother continued to say hateful things, but when Jack wasn’t looking at her, his mother’s voice changed to his father. “Pitiful. I wish you had never been born.”

Then his mother again whispered, her voice slightly sing-songy. “If only I had miscarried...”
Jack squeezed his eyes shut, tears starting to leak from under his lashes when his mother whispered. “So alone. So unwanted.” Jack had always feared he wasn't wanted. They had Bruce, handsome, perfect Bruce, why would they want a skinny, ugly son when they had Bruce? Jack squeezed his eyes closed, all his old fears, old pain, the loneliness, the isolation, the inability to make Bruce love him. Jack tried to fight the tears but he couldn't. All he had ever wanted growing up was Bruce's approval...

Jack gathered himself, letting his anger lead him, the unfairness of everything he had endured, the great fucking joke that none of this mattered. His mother didn't matter. His father didn't matter. And Bruce...Bruce didn't matter. The only think in his whole world that mattered, that was really important, was Harley...Harley willingly sharing his view of the world...Harley wrapped in his arms. His Harley.

Jack raised his head, his eyes a hard clear blue, his voice dripping with venom now. “You're the one who left! You're the one who left me all alone, left me and Bruce alone with NO ONE!! You and Dad were the ones that died!! Neither of you were strong enough!! I hate you!! Alfred was a better parent than you ever were!”

Jack wiped viciously at his eyes, the tears making them red, which only made the blue of his irises glow in the dim light. Tears flowed freely down his cheeks despite his efforts to stop them. His voice dropped for a moment as he groaned in pain. “You left me alone. You took everything good with you. Everything good in me you took with you when you left me behind! But Harley brought some of it back. Do you hear me? Harley brought me back. Harley loves me! Loves me like no one else ever has and no one ever will!! You hear me?!”

By the time Jack was done yelling, he had risen to stand, his chest heaving. His mother stared at him with pity in her eyes, but then she morphed and shifted, her body wrapping around and into itself as she became Bruce. Bruce in one of his black suits, the blue of the tie almost a perfect match to his blue eyes. He was every inch the playboy billionaire, adored by the Gotham public for his good deeds, big pocket book and his willingness to spend. The man at whom women threw themselves, begging for his bed. The man everyone loved, admired, wanted to be near or to be like. The fact that he was good looking on top of it was just icing on the cake. Jack stared in horror at the transformation, not understanding what was happening.

“Oh my little pathetic brother. You were always so weak and afraid, crying about everything. Weeping all the time over our dead parents. Do you have any idea how freeing it is not to have to deal with you anymore?” Bruce laughed.

“They finally be the only heir, not to have to drag your pathetic ass around!” Bruce smiled at Jack, the smile not reaching his eyes, his deep blue eyes, so much like their father's, flashed in the dim light. “You pathetic weak joke...you always were a joke, Jack. Did you know that Alfred and I would talk about what a waste you were behind your back.” Bruce sneered at him. “Alfred never liked you Jack. Taking care of you was hard on him. He wanted to smother you in your sleep Jack.” The laugh that came from Bruce was horrible, something that made Jack shiver.

Bruce stepped closer, smiling nastily at Jack. “Now, maybe...I think I need to add that girl of yours to my list of conquests...I'm sure she was only using you to get my attention anyway, and boy did she ever get my attention. She has a body that doesn't quit and I'm planning on finding out just flexible she is. Yes, yes I think when we're finished here I'll go visit her myself.” Bruce laughed. “Can you imagine how excited she will be to get me instead of you?”

Jack had taken a step back when his mother had changed into Bruce. But now he was practically vibrating, his eyes stoney as he stared at his brother. Jack's hands balled into fists.
Bruce stepped closer still. “Everyone will be so happy when you're dead Jack. Especially your girl.”

Jack let out an incoherent snarl. While Bruce had many conquests over the years, Harley had been Jack's first, the first woman he had been intimate with, and she would be the only one...the only woman he ever wanted. He would not let Bruce take her away from him. Bruce talking about Haley like that, mentioning her name, talking of making her his was enough to snap Jack out of his black depression.

“DON'T YOU TOUCH HER!” Jack launched himself at his brother grabbing Bruce by the front of his suit and tossed him across the padded room. “I fucking hate you Bruce!! I love you and I hate you!!”

Jack's eyes were crazed, tears of pain and rage falling freely...and he laughed. Laughed at himself for ever caring what Bruce felt about him, crying over the boy he never was...tears began their slow descent down his cheeks while Jack continued to laugh at the fact that he did indeed both love and hate his brother with equal passion.

“I fucking love you Bruce, but I hate you so much. I hate everything about you from your perfect life, perfect looks to your perfect law and order attitude!! And I swear if you lay a hand on Harley I will rip it from your body and fucking beat you to death with it!!” Jack snarled.

Bruce had just gotten to his feet when Jack charged him again, this time slapping his brother across the face. He didn't notice the way the skin vibrated unnaturally or that there was a slight shift in his brother's features along with the blood from a split lip and now bloody nose. Jack was too angry, too hurt, and if he was in the correct frame of mind to admit it, too scared to care. He had had enough, he wanted to fight back, to tear apart all the things he had thought he loved, his parents, Alfred, Bruce...the only thing in his life that was sacred to him now was Harley. The only person to stay by him, to stay by his side through everything was her, and he would kill anything and anyone who stood in their way—or anyone who touched her...even his brother.

Bruce took a swing at Jack, making contact with Jack's face, the hit created a smart meaty sound of bone hitting flesh. Jack didn't back away despite the pain that blossomed along his cheek. He immediately felt the hot wet flow of blood down his face, and from his nose. He tasted it on his lips and tongue. Jack laughed.

Jack lunged as he let out an exuberant, “Yeah!” He grabbed Bruce around his head, holding on tight, digging his fingers in (again he failed to noticed that his fingers sank into his brother's flesh a little too much, too easily.)

Bruce tried to kick Jack between the legs, but Jack let go, dancing back from Bruce with a snarl. He lunged, grabbing Bruce around the back of his neck again, shoving Bruce backward up against the padded wall before he slammed his forehead against Bruce's head hard enough that Jack blinked, seeing stars for a split second as well as opening a pressure wound on his forehead causing blood to run down between Jack's eyes. Bruce let out a groan reaching up to try to grab Jack around the neck. Jack slugged his brother three times hard in the face, bloodying both Bruce's face and Jack's knuckles, but then Bruce grabbed a hold of Jack and threw his little brother with enough strength that Jack went flying across the room hitting the padded floor hard.

The air was knocked from Jack’s lungs in a painful rush when he hit the wall then the floor, but Jack gasped in air and started to laughed against the pain. His laugh came out in a strange choking croak before it became a true, yet slightly hysterical laugh.

Gasping for breath between the laughs, his teeth and lips bloody, tears in his eyes, Jack glanced up at his brother. “Come on Brucie!! That all you got!! Hit me again, you know you want to!! You've
always wanted to, but your perfect control never let you!! Brucie Brucie always in control of his temper!!"

Bruce seemed to grow in size. Jack couldn't be sure if it was the fear gas, the hits to his head or he was that crazy now, but he was sure that Bruce grew. Bruce roared, sounding nothing at all like his brother, reaching down to grab Jack, hauling him to his feet. Jack laughed and punched his brother hard in the diaphragm making sure to use his knuckles, hitting with as much power as he could right under his brother's breastbone. Now he felt the strange give of his brother's body, but he didn't have a chance to understand what was happening.

Bruce gasped, dropping Jack, but Jack was ready, landing on his feet in a crouch. Jack surged up and twisted his lean body, using his elbow to smash into his brother's face. He then shoved Bruce, causing the taller man to stumbled backwards into the wall. Jack leapt into the air with a roar of his own, bringing his fist down onto his brother's face. Jack struck again three times in hard succession, as fast as he could, blood flying from his brother's face.

Jack was laughing the whole time. “Oh lookie lookie!! Who's the pretty boy now!!”

That was when Bruce face dissolved, melted away like mud or putty and another man's face emerged. Jack blinked going still in shock, his bloody fist poised for another strike. Jack let go of the other man in shock, stumbling backwards his eyes round. “Who the hell are you?!”

The man staggered toward the door, but Jack snarled, gritting his blood covered teeth. “Oh no you don't…”

He rushed the strange man grabbing him around the middle, surprising the new man when Jack growled and lifted him up in the air just before Jack rolled the man over his shoulder and slammed him into the padded floor. Jack jumped him straddling the stranger and sitting on the man's torso, his fists swinging away with crazed eyes. He didn't know who or what this man was, but he had had enough. Enough of the pain, enough of the deception, enough of people using Harley.

Jack hissed. “I'm going to fucking kill you!”

The man threw his arms up blocking a couple of blows before he bucked and twisted, tossing Jack to the side. Jack started to roll to his feet, but the other man hit him across the shoulder and into his cheek throwing Jack off and sending him tumbling into the darkness of the cell. Jack winced, his lips cutting against his teeth. The man got to his feet. He turned at the snarl of Jack rushing out of the darkness. The man let out a yelp throwing both arms up at the same time that his appearance changed to that of Martha Wayne.

“Oh Jack, Jack please sweetheart, you wouldn't hit your mother would you?” She smiled and held her arms out to him.

“Oh Jack, Jack please sweetheart, you wouldn't hit your mother would you?” She smiled and held her arms out to him.

“You're not my fucking MOTHER!!” Jack snarled coming in hard and fast, his fists connecting first with one cheek then the other. He laughed, crying at the same time as he seemed to beat his mother until she collapsed at his feet. Jack's knuckles were bloody, scraped and he was panting out of breath. There were several minor wounds on his face and his lip was split again, but as he looked down at the beaten up form of his mother Jack giggled. “How's that mother? Didn't see that coming did you? But you made a fatal mistake pretending to be Bruce. You might have managed to break me, but Bruce…” Jack laughed. “And threatening Harley? You really are stupid. No one threatens my girl.” Jack reached down, his mother transforming back into the strange man. The man on the floor put his hand up trying to protect himself from Jack. “Please, please don't kill me!! Crane made me do it! I had no choice.”
Jack stopped, his hands in front of him, fingers spread to wrap around the throat of the man who had been plaguing him. “What?” Jack asked softly.

“My name is Basil Karlo and Crane has my daughter!” Karlo pleaded. He started to cry. “My daughter is a patient on the second floor, suicide attempt while I was in prison. My estranged wife put her here, but Crane promised if I broke you he would release us both, allow us to disappear.” Karlo stared with pleading eyes at Jack. “I had no choice, you have to understand. My daughter means the world to me...”

Jack took a few steps away from the man. He shivered, suddenly chilled. He was covered in a thin film of sweat, bloody and still very angry, but he took a few calming breaths. He chuckled then, running a hand over his face then smiled down at Karlo once he trusted himself to speak. “You know, I might have to thank you. Beating up my brother was cathartic. Granted, you don’t fight as well as him...but still...” He shook out his arms, taking a few breaths before turning back to the shivering man.

“Crane put you up to this?” Jack asked

The man nodded. “Yes. He brought me from Blackgate.”

“And you can change how you look...” Jack’s voice trailed off.

Karlo nodded. “Yes. I can’t let them keep me daughter.”

Jack smiled. “Then maybe Basil Karlo, you can be my few best friend.”

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Basil Karlo left solitary...looking like one of the guards and blending in to the background of Arkham Asylum just like Jack Wayne had suggested to wait for the signal...whatever that was going to be, but Jack Wayne had promised: when they broke out, they would be taking Karlo and his daughter with them. Basil wasn’t sure whether he should trust the young man, but he could have killed him, killed him for what he had done to him, but Jack Wayne had instead chosen to help him. It was a much better deal than he was getting from Crane and who knew? Maybe with Jack Wayne's help, Karlo might be able to put his skills to some real, money making use.

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It was much later in the afternoon. After the incident in the showers Daisy was taken to the infirmary. Harley was not looking forward to their next run in. She suspected it wasn't going to be pleasant and she wasn't going to have to the backup of Tabitha or Babs next time, but she didn't care. Harley was done, done with all of this...she wasn't going to be the victim any longer. Her mood was still with her when Nurse Mallory showed up at her door with two guards armed with batons and tasers. Mallory glared at Harley from the other side of the door. “Behave Quinzel or I have Crane's authority to put you down. Either way, you are going to his office.”

Harley smiled. “Look at you, Miss Fetch and Carry.”

Mallory sneered, but said nothing, she simply scanned her car and stepped out of the way, the two guards rushing into the room. Harley yelled and fought, but they were trained and before she had put up much of a fight they had her slammed up against the wall, rolled her struggling into her straightjacket and strapped her to the wheelchair. The ride to Crane's office was carried out in silence which was fine by Harley; her tongue felt sharp today and she wasn't much in the mood for trying to be nice. As Mallory wheeled her by the other cells Harley saw Babs sitting on the floor of her cell.
She saw Harley and grinned, waving with enthusiasm which made Harley grin.

* 

When they arrived at Crane's office, there was the usual waiting for her. A dress was hung up on the wall, this time a black dress waiting for her. This one was more “Gothic” in look and design than the previous dresses, a sleeveless black tea-length dress with a sweetheart neckline, and a pair of stylish black heels, which made Harley's heart skip a frightened beat. For a moment she was reminded of the scene in the movie “Legend” where Lilly is given the black dress...though she had to laugh...Jack was her dark prince charming, he gave her death and violence like roses and jewelry, appealing to that dark part of herself that she never knew was there; Jack knew her, he was part of her, the deepest part of her. There was nothing left of her that didn't belong to him and vice versa...Crane could only pretend to be like Jack, but he would never have her...never.

But the other thing waiting for Harley in Crane's office that caused the blonde to break out into a wide smile was Sandra.

Harley squealed with delight, the entire wheelchair squeaking with her excitement as she rocked forward. “SANDRA!"

Mallory hissed at the large orderly. “You get her dressed, fix her hair and make-up, then you leave—got it.”

Sandra nodded. Mallory gave her a narrow eyed glare then stepped out, slamming the door. Harley was vibrating in the chair. “What are you doing here?” She was all smiles, despite the situation.

Sandra came over quickly, her smile pensive. “I guess Crane figured you wouldn't fight me getting you ready so he brought me here just for this. How are you doing? I've been so worried and then I heard you were part of an attack on Daisy Maverick?”

Harley giggled while Sandra went about freeing her from the wheelchair and then the jacket. “Yeah, it was me Babs and Tabitha this morning in the showers. That Daisy was being a royal pain in the ass.”

Sandra frowned taking the dress off the hanger after she had freed Harley. “You really need to be careful. That woman...she is nasty. There are so many rumors about her. They suspect she killed a couple of patients in long term care and abused some others in the eating disorder area. She doesn't work well with anyone. Actually I'm sorta surprised it took them this long to put her on the sixth floor. Your level seems to be where all the bad ones end up.” Sandra sounded sad as she helped Harley into the dress.

“How did you get onto the sixth floor?” Harley asked while Sandra zipped her up. The big woman smiled. “I wanted to make a difference. I don't think you guys are violent for no reason. Every one of you has a reason. Find the reason, start helping from there.” She shrugged. “I don't know...just have an attraction to extreme personalities too...plus it didn't hurt that I saw Dale one day and found out he worked on the sixth floor.” Both women giggled together as Sandra pulled out a chair and sat Harley down, reaching for the bag with the cosmetics and hair supplies. She started to brush Harley's hair, skillfully sweeping the thick blonde hair up into a graceful updo that made Harley's face look young and fresh.

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Sandra hated to leave Harley in Crane's office after fixing her up, but she didn't have a choice. She sighed, grabbed her purse and headed out for lunch. Usually she ate lunch on the grounds (or with
Dale lately), but today she was feeling down, missing Dale and worried about Harley. So she decided to treat herself to lunch downtown at a little family owned restaurant that had some of the best food she had ever tasted. She was considering asking Dale out to dinner, a real, go out to dinner stay the night in my apartment type dinner. She blushed at her own thoughts, stepping out of the elevator when a female voice greeted her. A female voice of someone becoming very upset.

“Why can’t I see her? There is no rule against friends coming to visit is there?”

The agitated woman was at the reception desk, dressed in a pair of simple jeans and a like pink t-shirt, her hair pulled back in a pony tail and a large white fake leather purse over her shoulder. She was snarling at the receptionist.

“Well, then I want to speak to someone in charge! I'm here to see my friend and I find it really suspicious that she isn't allowed to see anyone!” The young woman glared at today's receptionist. Sandra frowned seeing that this young woman was yelling at Kelly. Kelly was new, a temp who was taking Agatha's place. Agatha had still not said whether she was coming back or not. Sandra sighed. She hated to see anyone having a difficult time so she walked over to the receptionist desk.

“Maybe I can help you miss, who are you wanting to see?”

The young woman turned, glaring up at Sandra. “I'm here to see Miss Harley Quinn!”

Sandra blinked in surprise, then grabbed the woman by her upper arm and hauled her away from the receptionist window.

The woman yelled. “HEY! Whatyathinkyerdoing!!”

Sandra glanced to Kelly who looked relieved and was speaking to one of the nurses. Sandra bent down. “I know Harley. I'm going to lunch—come with me and we can talk.”

The woman frowned, looked back at reception then nodded. “Okay. I'm Alice by the way.”

Sandra smiled in a way she hoped would relieve some of Alice's tension. “Sandra.” The two women were seated at the back of the busy restaurant, the smells of garlic bread, pizza and other more traditional Italian dishes filled the small space with delicious scents. Sandra had a plate of Pansotti alla genovese while Alice had ordered Fettuccine Alfredo. Both women decided to eat a few bits of their food before they started really talking. The drive over her had been quiet, but now Alice swallowed and gave Sandra a hard stare.

“Okay, so why can’t I see Harley?” Alice took a sip of her soda.

Sandra frowned. “Because right now she is with Crane, though I doubt he is going to let anyone see her.”

Alice looked annoyed. “Why not? Alex got to see Jack. Although the visit didn't last long, but...”

Sandra sighed. “It's complicated, but Crane has taken a special interest in Harley. He isn't going to let just anyone see her.”

“Special interest?” Alice asked before taking a bite of her food.

Sandra nodded, glancing out the restaurant's front window. “Yeah...” Sandra glanced down at her food then back to Alice. “How would you feel about helping me break them out?”

Alice, her fork half way to her mouth grinned, her eyes dancing. “Oh, you are just the person I was
hoping for Sandra. I have a few people you need to meet.”

Sandra grinned. “I have someone else who can help us.”

Alice took a bite of her food speaking around it. “I knew coming here was a great idea!”

* 

Harley was waiting for Crane, sitting in the chair across from his desk. Sandra hadn't cuffed her, but Mallory had marched right back in and put the plastic cuffs on her wrists. Harley was occupying herself with imagining ways to kill Nurse Mallory when Crane walked in, dressed in a tailored beige suit with thin dark brown lines, a chocolate colored dress shirt and a tie that was a deep burnt orange with a hint of blood red, a guard walked in behind him instead of an orderly, pushing a cart. The smell of beef stew wafted from the covered dishes. Crane came around his desk smiling, picking up the bottle of wine that the guard had set down as he did so, and opened it up with a pop of the cork. He filled two glasses, picked up one, and leaned over handing the glass to Harley. She took it carefully in her cuffed hands, sipping the red wine with a rich heady flavor.

“I’ve decided to bring our lunch in today my dear, from a nice French restaurant downtown called Rye. I ordered us Bœuf bourguignon.” Crane lifted up the lid of his laptop, his eyes moved as he looked through his music selection holding his wine in one hand while with the other long fingered hand, he scrolled through his computer files.

The guard set out the dishes and left without a glance at Harley. Harley wrinkled her nose. “Smells like beef stew.”

Crane chuckled. “I suppose to the untrained nose it does, but it is beef simmered in red wine. Ah, here we are...”

Crane hit a button on his computer and the music started to play, Chopin's Nocturne in B-flat minor Op. 9 No. 1. He smiled and closed his eyes for a long moment before he gazed at Harley. “Now. Tell me about your issue in the showers today.”

Harley frowned at the food in front of her after doing her best to scoot her chair closer. Her stomach rumbled, which made her sigh. She couldn't really accomplish anything if she starved herself. Crane smiled at her taking a bite when she started to eat. After he took a few bites Crane dabbed his mouth with a napkin. He noticed her reluctance to talk and decided to tell her about his plans instead. “I’ve decided that it is time to take your transformation to the next level.”

Harley, who had shoved a huge bite into her mouth looked up at him startled. With her mouth full she mumbled. “Next level?”

Crane smiled. “Yes. I'm planning on moving you to a more secure area, away from the asylum and the influence of your fiance or the other patients. I have a place of my own, inherited from my father. I think it will be a perfect spot. We still have much to do.”

Harley dropped her utensil. The silverware made a clatter against her plate. Harley stared at him. “You can’t do that.”

Crane smiled. “I think you will find that I can my dear. In the paperwork for your commitment, it seems your Mr. Bruce Wayne was not as thorough with the details as he should have been in his need to be done with you and Jack both. He gave me leeway to enact whatever treatments I deem necessary, that also included taking my patients wherever and to whatever facility I deem necessary. So you see dear, you will be coming with me. The move will take place within the next forty-eight
Crane picked up his glass of wine and took a sip, smiling pleasantly.

Harley's voice trembled. “I won't leave Jack.”

Crane smiled. “My dear dear girl, you have no choice. Don't worry, once I am done with you, you will see everything differently.”

Harley didn't think before she reacted. She snarled, grabbed the fork from the table at the same time kicking her heels off, and launched herself across the desk. Crane was so surprised by the violent outburst that he didn't react except for his eyes to go wide when the blonde was suddenly over his desk and in his face.

Harley's lunge knocked the food everywhere, the fork wrapped between her bound hands. Crane yelped in surprise, his deck chair flying backwards with Harley on him. The unexpected weight and Crane's reflex of flinching back caused the chair to fall back, both of them going down with it. The chair tilting back and Crane throwing his hands up was enough to knock Harley's strike off, missing her intended target, Crane's neck. Instead Harley buried the fork in his shoulder, ramming it with enough strength to pierce straight through his three-piece suit and into the flesh of his shoulder.

She screamed yanking the fork out painfully. “I'll never be yours! NEVER!”

She had the bloody fork over her head, about to stab Crane again. She hadn't heard the door burst open, but just as she raised her cuffed hands over her head with the knife poised for a lethal strike, two taser prongs hit her in the side. Harley jerked, her teeth snapping together, causing her to drop the fork from rigid, uncooperative fingers. Crane shoved her back, sending Harley sprawling on the floor. He rolled in the opposite direction yanking open the bottom desk draw where he kept more than just his fear toxin syringes, but he also kept sedatives for patients...just in case. Crane grabbed for the case where he kept the syringes while the guard who had burst in at the sound of Harley's attack, yanked his baton out.

Harley gasped in pain when the electricity stopped coursing through her system, shakily pushing herself up on her knees and slamming against the side wall with her body, struggling to get her to feet. The guard rushed forward with a shout. “GET DOWN!”

Harley snarled, her eyes going from the guard to Crane, but by now Crane had what he wanted.

He stood up, his perfectly combed hair falling across his brow and into his eyes, his suit slightly wrinkled, but he smiled as if he found her behavior adorable. “All right Harleen, I understand you're upset, but really my dear—is this any way for you to behave?”

“I'm not going anywhere with you!!! EVER!” Harley snarled.

Crane sighed as he turned to the guard. “Hold her.”

The guard moved swiftly, grabbing Harley's upper arm and shoved her forward. She tried to fight back, but the guard threw her up against the wall. Harley's face hit painfully and she felt her teeth cut into her lips, evoking a sharp intake of breath at the pain. She started to use her bound hands to push herself off the wall when the guard shoved the side of his baton against the back of her neck, pressing her up against the wall with the baton and his body weight. Crane walked around the guard while Harley snarled and struggled. Her hair had fallen loose from its updo, falling into her eyes which were full of hate as she glared at Crane. “I will never be what you want me to be!! You are never going to make me yours!! I hate you!”
Crane smiled. “Oh my dear, I will make you mine. You do not need to worry about that.”

Without further words, he brought the syringe up and, despite her fighting, he stuck the needle into her neck. It was only a matter of seconds before Harley slumped against the wall and into unconsciousness.

*

It was early evening, around six in the evening. Dale had slept heavily through the daylight hours, exhaustion knocking him out as soon as he had hit the pillow. He hadn't even had time to shower before he was out for the night. He had gotten up maybe an hour ago, showered and was now making himself something to eat before he drove back to the asylum for the night shift which was seven to seven. He would arrive after dinner, the patients all left in their rooms. Lights out began at 10 pm. An hour after that Dale would be able to transfer Harley to solitary for the night if everything went as planned.

He was just finishing off the scrambled eggs he had made himself when his phone went off vibrating against the count top.

“Shoot,” he muttered.

The phone had gone off a few times during the afternoon. He had only been dimly aware, just enough to dismiss any messages and he thought he had heard it go off while he was in the shower, but had forgotten about it when he went to make something to eat, the demands of his stomach overriding anything else.

*

Dale walked over carrying his empty plate to the sink and picked up his phone. It was a text from Sandra. The text read:

Dale, met someone who is friends with J & H. Wants to help break them out. Heard rumor before leaving work that H is going to be moved by C soon. Heard 48hrs. Must get out tomorrow night. Call Alex.

*

Then a number was provided. Dale stared at the number and Sandra's text. Break Jack and Harley out of Arkham? Tomorrow? Dale cringed. How on earth could they accomplish that? And should he help? That would be making him an accomplice to a crime...wouldn't it? Dale sighed. Even if it wasn't a crime, it would be his job. He would call Sandra at his lunch break if he called at all. He needed to speak with Sandra, but she would be sleeping soon and he didn't really have time right now...

“Damn it,” Dale groused.

*

When Harley regained consciousness, she was back in her cell, dressed again in her asylum clothing, lying on her cot, and feeling a massive headache coming on. She had apparently slept through dinner because when she sat up, she saw that there was a tray waiting for her on the floor. Harley winced, tossing her legs over the side, moving slowly because she felt a little dizzy. She let herself sink to the floor by the tray. When she lifted the lid all she found was cold, mushy oatmeal...someone's idea of a joke...probably Mallory if Harley had to guess. She dropped the lid back in place not really hungry after all. She leaned back against her cot with a sigh. Crane was going to move her away from Jack.
Someplace no one would probably find her...she wrapped her arms around herself. She couldn't leave...it was bad enough being apart from Jack in this place, but then to be taken someplace where she couldn't find him, couldn't hope to see him, to be completely under Crane's thumb...Harley shuddered. She needed to do something now. She had just stood up, thinking that maybe pacing would help her think, come up with some form of escape when there was a knock at her cell door. She turned to see Dale waiting for her. He smiled scanning his card and opened the door. He motioned her out while whispering quietly.

“We need to hurry. Can you make your cot look like there is a figure in it?” Dale asked, his eyes shooting back and forth down the halls. Things had been strange when he came on duty tonight. No one would talk to him, no greetings, nods—nothing. Usually someone would wave or nod hello, but tonight it was as if he had made some sort of shit list. The other thing he noticed was that the guards were a lot of the older ones, the guys he knew for a fact were chummy with Ernie Chubb. Dale's heart had sunk to his stomach when he realized. Something was up. He wasn't sure what exactly, but he had a really bad feeling which was why he had hurried down to get Harley as soon as he could. He wasn't sure what was in the air today, but something was definitely wrong. He was sure he was being watched too. Every time he turned around, someone seemed to be there. It was as if every eye in the place was on him; orderlies, guards, nurses...doctors...everyone was watching his every move. It had been creepy. Which was why, as soon as he realized he was alone at one point, he had rushed down here to get Harley.

Harley did as Dale asked as quickly as she could before hurrying over to him. She slipped out of her cell and the two of them started walking.

“What's up?” she asked. “You seem especially nervous.”

Dale frowned. “Just...something is up.”

Harley frowned. “That might be my fault. I attacked Crane, stabbed him with a fork. Oh...and I did attack one of the orderlies.”

Dale blinked. “Both of those were today?”

Harley nodded. “Yep. I was in a pissy mood. What can I say!” Harley giggled.

Dale frowned deeper. “You weren't disciplined for either altercation?”

“Well, no, I guess not. I suppose being Crane's favorite has its advantages.” Harley spoke softly clearly uncomfortable with that idea. “Crane says he is going to move me in the next forty-eight hours..., well quite a few hours less now, give or take. That's why I attacked him. I'm getting fed up Dale...fed up with just letting stuff happen to me, to Jack...” Dale was about to open his mouth when both he and Harley heard a long low whistle. “Well lookie there Jackson, it's that orderly Dale...ain't he the one that everyone says is playing favorites with the patients?”

Dale stopped in his tracks reaching out to grab Harley by her upper arm. They were in one of the halls near solitary. This hall had no cells and was near the laundry room. The halls were big enough to comfortably walk two, maybe even three abreast making it a long, dark, and wide hallway. There was no one here, only a few lights that lit this hallway at the best of times, and now it looked as if a few of the bulbs were out casting shadows down the hall. Standing at the end of the hall was the man who spoke, Billy North, a tall thin bald man with a thick brown mustache (Harley immediately thought “pornstache” and shuddered.) The man was bareheaded, wearing just the basics of his guard uniform, but he had his baton out smacking his opposite hand with it. Next to him stood Jackson Smith, another of the older guards and a man Dale knew for a fact was one of Ernie Chubb's friends on the outside. Jackson had dark skin and he was missing a couple of his teeth. The gap toothed
“Well, well, if it ain't that pretty little patient that has Crane all in a ditzy and Dale...the ass kisser. Where are you off to with that pretty little patient Dale? Thinking to slip her into solitary with her boyfriend and after what she did to Daisy? And Crane for that matter, not that I'm shedding any tears over Crane.” Billy walked forward, his attention back on Dale. “You think we're all stupid, that ain't any of us figured out you been making sure those two get time together?” He used his baton to point at Harley. “That fucking murderer Jack Wayne gets to have his bitch? Crane thinks he can play with that whore too and what about the rest of us? We're suppose to watch our friend get emasculated by that faggot Wayne and do nothing about it? Well, Jackson and I feel that that just ain't fair, right Jackson?”

Jackson who had his baton resting on his shoulder like a bat, had said nothing and he didn't say anything now except to grunt. Billy continued stepping closer. “See me, Jackson and few others think you need to be put in your place Dale. And as for you blondie, we think you need a lesson too...a lesson for your boyfriend that is...no one gets to be favorites around here. We don't care what Crane says.”

Dale hissed at Harley. “Get behind me.”

Harley blinked in surprise, then replied quietly. “Don't worry Dale—we can take them together.”

Dale turned to look at her in surprise when Billy rushed them, swinging his baton at Dale. He slammed the baton down on Dale's shoulder, pain radiated down from the impact, but Dale (thought he wasn't a fighter) was a big man and while the impact hurt, it didn't do much more than make him grunt. He lashed out using the palm of his hand to hit Billy in the face. The sound of the man's nose breaking was loud despite the sounds of the four people fighting.

Jackson came at Harley. She focused herself on the lessons that Jack had given her and her gymnastics and her anger that had only been brewing all day as things kept happening to her. She ducked back avoiding a swing from Jackson's baton, brought her right hand up and slammed the palm of her hand against his forearm, forcing the man's arm away from her. She brought her leg up, doing a slight spin when she did, the side of her lower leg catching Jackson in the side knocking him off balance. The man took a few steps forward, but he spun, surprising her when his baton smacked her hard across the face. A split along Harley's cheek opened up and she tasted blood in her mouth. She smiled at him with bloody teeth and giggled. “One for you.”

* 

Billy lunged, but Dale jumped to the side, the man started to go past him in the narrow hall, nearly knocking into Harley and her opponent. Dale turned and kicked Billy in the ass sending him sprawling down the hall. Billy snarled and rolled quickly to his feet. “I'm going to fucking kill you Dale!”

Dale had his hands up. “Look Billy, I don't want any trouble. Just let us go, no one else needs to get hurt.”

Billy chuckled at that. There was blood running down over his lips from his nose which he wiped away with the back of his arm. “You know what Dale? You brought trouble with you.”

Billy charged at Dale. He swung his baton at Dale, but the larger man grabbed his opponent's arm forcing Billy's arm downward, as he brought his knee up, smashing his kneecap into Billy's elbow with an audible crunch and a howl of pain from Billy. The guard dropped the baton and the weapon skittered down the hall into the darkness.
Harley was dancing out of Jackson's way, pretty much letting him tire himself out as he continued to take swings and punches at her while she lightly danced out of his grip even with the limited space in the hallway. She giggled. “You know what? I'm going to kill you. Not for anything you've done to me personally...though you are trying to hurt me right now. But I'm going to kill you because of all the crap I've put up with since being in this GOD forsaken hole! You're gonna wish I had the bat my puddin bought me because what I'm going to do to you is going to hurt a lot worse!”

Jackson hissed a simple. “Bitch!”

He lunged at her, but Harley was ready for him. She caught his arm with her hands, spun herself around so her back was to him, brought her knee up and smashed his wrist against her upraised knee in three hard and quick smashes until his hand let go of the baton. She dropped his arm, caught the baton and spun away from him while lashing out with the weapon. She hit Jackson in the side of the head hard enough that a loud echoing crack sound that vibrated down the hall. Jackson stumbled, falling to his knees and grabbing his head. Harley was panting, but she hissed holding the baton up for a moment.

“Who wants scrambled eggs!!” Then she brought the baton down on top of Jackson's head, her eyes wide as she continued to hit the man over and over again giggling while she did so with a hissed. “Oh, well...almost as good as my bat.”

Dale and Billy were not evenly matched, the baton gone. Dale took a couple of quick jabs at Billy. He had taken boxing when he was in high school and college. Granted that had been ages ago and he still didn't think of himself as a fighter, but he still remembered some of the basics as he weaved and jabbed at Billy. It was clear by the way Billy was holding his arms that the only real fighting training he had had was...not much. He blocked a few of Dale's jabs, but Dale broke through his defenses and his large fist connected with Billy's nose, smashing against the already broken bone.

Billy howled in pain. In a blind rage, he grabbed Dale by the front of his uniform and threw the big man down the hall. Dale tried to roll with it, trying to lead with his shoulder, but instead he hit the linoleum floor awkwardly sending shooting pain through his shoulder. Dale rolled some, stumbling to his feet, but Billy was already charging him, ramming him in the gut with his shoulder and carried Dale off his feet for a few seconds before twisting and slamming Dale up against the wall.

Dale let out a blast of painful air from his mouth, wincing in pain. Billy tried to hold Dale against the wall, but Dale wrapped his one hand around Billy's arm, bringing the fist of the other down on Billy's nose, smashing against the already broken bone.

Billy dropped to his feet wobbling, but kept from falling over. Billy had stumbled back, sweating and panting as well. Both men could hear the continued “whacks” coming down the hall from Harley, wet, meaty sounds and her giggling.

Billy came at Dale again, his fists flying as he tried to score a hit on Dale. Dale's boxing was coming back to him as he slapped away Billy's blows. Billy lowered his strikes from trying to reach Dale's face to focusing his strikes at Dale's chest and abdomen. Dale knocked two or three strikes away, but Billy slipped one under Dale's guard. The punch to his midriff nearly knocked the air from Dale's lungs. Dale reached out to grasp Billy by the shoulder, his large hand squeezing painfully, but Billy backhanded Dale, forcing the large man to stumble backwards. He shook his head to clear it, the hit to his face causing him to see stars for just a moment.
Dale stepped forward then, the two men exchanging a series of blows, none of them hitting as they blocked one another. Dale knocked Billy's hands away reaching for the man's head. He grabbed Billy around then skull and slammed his forehead down on Billy's with a sickening 'thud', making both men stagger. They exchanged a few more blows, each knocking the other's strikes away until finally Dale scored a stunning hit to Billy's temple. Dale reached out, grabbed Billy and spun the man around while at the same time wrapping his other arm around Billy's neck. Billy struggled like a mad dog, but Dale held on, putting one hand on Billy's head, digging his fingers in around his skull while he tightened the pressure of his arm around his opponent's neck. Billy hissed and seethed, struggling against Dale, but the orderly was a little taller and a little stronger. He leaned back putting pressure on Billy's throat, pressing down hard, stumbled back until Dale hit the wall. Billy kept struggling, Dale pulled back harder and harder, his nails cutting into Billy's scalp. Billy's tongue was sticking out and he was making horrible choking noises, but Dale didn't stop, couldn't stop. He was terrified—all he could think about was what these men would do to Sandra, to Miss Harley, to Jack...the horrors of working at Arkham, the things he had seen, the horrible, terrible abuses he knew about, but said nothing. All the times he said nothing, let things happen that he knew were wrong...and before he realized what he had done, Dale had choked Billy North to death.

The moment Dale realized what he had done, he dropped Billy's body to the floor. The finality of the sound of Billy North's body hitting the floor made his blood go cold in his veins.

“Oh shit...oh shit...” Dale whispered, his eyes large, his hands shaking. Dale stared down at his hands. “Oh shit no.”

Harley stepped over to Dale with a grin revealing her bloodstained teeth. She was splattered with droplets of blood and brain matter. “Oh wow Dale. I guess you're one of us now. That was impressive!”

She smiled brightly and patted him on the arm.

Dale paled more. He didn't know what to do...He glanced over to the other guard. The man's head was smashed in and there was blood on the wall. He would have thought there would be more, but it looked as if most of it was on Harley. Harley just smiled at him and Dale realized that maybe he had been wrong about Jack Wayne and Harley Quinn...maybe they both really were crazy, but now he had committed murder...because of them? For them? Did it really matter? They hadn't asked him to kill for them, he had just.... Dale took a shaking breath then let it out slowly. “Can you help me move these bodies?”

Harley smiled brightly, and in a chirpier voice she said. “Sure thing Dale!”

Together the two of them dragged the bodies, one at a time, into the laundry room. No one would be there until morning. That gave Dale a little more time to think of what to do. Harley tilted her head gazing at him and smiled as she realized what he was probably fretting about.

“Jack will probably be able to tell you what to do with the bodies. My puddin is a genius.” Harley smiled.

Dale nodded dumbly, clearly in shock. “Ah...let me grab some bleach and clean up, then I'll take you to Jack.”

Harley smiled. “Sure thing, but I'll help.”

* 

It only took them a few minutes to clean up the blood and other....things. Disposing of the sponges
was easy, but the bodies still laid there in the laundry room, like rocks around Dale's neck. He took a
steadying breath, wishing he had some whiskey and hurriedly took Harley to see Jack.

* 

When they arrived, despite the hour, they could hear Jack and Tetch singing back and forth, their
voices muffled by their cell doors, but still audible. Jervis was singing loudly. “Off with their heads!
Get a Hatchet! And Just Detach it!! We'll be much better off with them dead!!”

Then Jack voice would answer Tetch. “Off with their heads! Separate them! Abbreviate them! And
I'll trust you to pick up the threads!” followed by the sound of Jack laughing.

Dale scanned his card and opened the door. Harley dashed in past Dale. “JACK!”

She rushed into the room to see Jack standing in the middle under the pale light wearing only his
asylum pants, the remains of dried blood on his face. Never in all her life had Harley seen an image
of desire, lust, sexiness like the image of a half naked Jack, bloody mouth, shaggy hair, unshaven
and that smile. He made her entire body tighten with desire, but her heart swelled at the sight of him,
his blood pumping hot. He was her lover, her partner and her port in the storm of life. The one
person in all the world who knew her soul. Jack smiled, raising his arms to her with that wicked
smile of his dancing across his face. Harley ploughed into his embrace. Jack laughed and held her
close, picked her up and swung her around once then promptly followed that with a deep, knee
weakening kiss. Dale stood in the doorway looking back and forth while Jack and Harley kissed.
Harley ran her fingers through Jack's hair, biting and sucking at his mouth and tongue. Jack's arms
were tight around her, pressing her body flush with his, needing to feel every inch of her.

Dale hated to interrupt them, but he cleared his throat. He needed to do something with those bodies.

“Harley said you might know how to dispose of a body?” Dale asked softly and realized that it
sounded strange coming from his mouth.

Jack tugged on Harley's bottom lip, then glanced over her head lifting a brow at Dale as he tilted his
head to the side. “Oh? And what have you two been up to today?” Jack glanced down at Harley
with an amused look.

Harley giggled. “We had to kill two guards on the way here. Friends of Ernie Chubb.”

Jack held Harley close, his gaze serene, smiled at Dale. Only Harley saw the flicker of anger that
danced across his blue eyes and felt the way his grip on her tightened. “Oh?” Dale nodded, but when
he started to speak his voice sped up as if a top had come loose and everything poured from his
mouth. “I...I didn't have a choice...and...Sandra met with someone named Alice, gave me Alex's
phone number...they want to get you out...and Sandra said there's a rumor about Crane taking
Harley...seems we need to bust the two of you out tomorrow night.”

Jack's grin spread across his face, though again, only Harley saw the darkness, the shadows behind
his blue eyes. “Really? Well, it seems that circumstances have made a turn in our favor, my sweets.”
Jack licked the tip of her nose before he continued. “I just made a new friend today who will be a big
help then.” He looked down at Harley. The calm was a mask; she could feel the tension in his body,
the way his fingers tightened against her. “Crane plans to what?”

Harley reached up to stroke her fingers along his jaw. Jack grinned as his eyes scanned her face, his
smile expanding at the droplets of blood on her face. Harley whispered softly. “He plans to move me
outside of Arkham.”
Jack stiffened even more, like a predator about to strike, every inch of him vibrated with the need to lash out. His grip on her was almost painful. “What?”

Harley nodded. “He told me at lunch.”

Jack made a low, barely audible snarl. Harley reached up and cupped his face between her hands. “We need to get out puddin.”

Jack nodded though he didn't trust himself to speak quite yet.

Dale, looking nervous, pressed. “Harley said you could help me with the bodies...”

Jack waltzed over and leaned against the wall keeping his other arm tight around Harley holding up his free hand and counting as he went over in his head what Dale would need. “You need some acid, you know, to destroy their fingerprints, faces. Then you're going to want some pliers for the teeth, then simply leave them, I mean the bodies, in a drawer in the morgue.” He shrugged. “It'll probably take a day or two before anyone even finds them...but we only have to worry about one day.” Jack’s eyes lit up as something occurred to him that had a smile dancing across his face. “Dale, how do you feel about being dead?!”

Dale stared at Jack in horror, but Jack laughed. “I mean when we escape...leave your name tag and wallet with one of the bodies...why not? Give yourself a clean slate my friend.” Jack smiled.

Dale looked between them, his face pale, but he took a breath and seemed to make up his mind. “I'm...I'm going to take care of that...then I'll give that Alex a call. We're getting you two out tomorrow night.” With a nod, Dale stepped out pulling the door closed. Jack and Harley heard the locks click into place.

Jack grinned as he looked at Harley. “Things are looking up Harls!”

Harley reached up to place her fingers along his cheek and force him to look down at her. Her eyes caressed his face while her thumb slid across his lips. Her voice was soft while she traced the new wounds on his face. “After tonight, we are never going to be apart again.” She frowned slightly then. “What happened Jack?”

Jack didn't want to talk any longer, he didn't want to do anything but devour her, love her. He pulled her closer to cover her mouth with his, his arms going tightly around her pulling her up against him. Harley moaned softly, her arms circling around his neck. Jack sank to the floor taking Harley with him. They were on their knees when Jack hissed. “Get that dress off Harley.”

Jack pulled the tie on his pants watching Harley strip, licking his lips slowly, that burn he felt for her consuming his entire being as he slipped out of his pants. His breath picked up, a slight pant, the desire in him burned through his body, his need for her hurt him. Every moment without her killed him slowly. He reached up, grabbed her hips and yanked her down. He slid one hand into her hair once she had dropped to her knees, wrapped his hand in a fist around her hair to pull her head back. Harley grinned, gasping at the pull of Jack's hand in her hair, forcing her head back. He leaned close, biting her throat slowly, tenderly, his other hand covering her breast while his lips and teeth worried at her neck, sucking on the tender exposed skin, working to leave a deep purple mark. He wanted to sink into her, to take her slowly, leisurely, enjoy every moment with her. He deliberately slowed himself down, his mouth brushing along her tender throat, sucking softly, his fingers tangled in her hair tugged ever so gently, sucking on her soft skin until he was sure he had left a purple bruise. He smiled—his favorite color.

Harley's hands reached up to wrap around Jack's shoulders holding him to her, caressing the back of
his neck and along his shoulders. She lowered herself down to the padded floor sitting back on her rear and spreading her legs around him. Jack sat back on his knees, his mouth continuing its journey along her throat. Harley leaned back, her legs spread around him, inviting Jack to feast on her. She made a soft noise of pleasure, her core burning bright when he lowered his mouth to her breasts, dropping his free hand from her body to lean on his hand while his tongue caressed her breasts, long, slow licks across each nipple sending shivers down her spine to her groin where she ached with need. Next to her nipple Jack sucked on her skin, bruising her with his mouth again, marking her as his with another purple mark.

He kept the one hand in her hair, pulling, tugging her hair, forcing her head back. Harley scooted herself closer to him when Jack released her hair grabbing her up and yanking her onto his lap.

She groaned softly feeling his erection, warm, hard between her legs, but he didn't take her, didn't do what he wanted, which was to shove himself deeply into her and pound his way into blissful, mindless pleasure. Instead, Jack wrapped his arms around her, kissing her with a tender sensuality, taking his time to feel every inch of her lips, to drag his tongue along her chin, tasting her skin, then returning to caress her lips with his tongue while his hands worked to touch every inch of her, to feel the smooth glide of her body under his fingers.

Harley's fingers slid into his hair, massaging his scalp, their bodies moving as if they were making love, her damp opening rubbing against him, coating him with her fluids, feeling that delicious ripple with her clitoris as she rubbed against his hard length. Her body rolled and glided over him. Harley made small moans and pants, pressing down and rubbing just a little faster.

Jack's hands snaked up her bare back, his fingers gliding over her flesh, then back down where he spread his fingers wide to hold all her smooth curving backside, pressing her down on his shaft, enjoying the feel of her rubbing against him. Jack hissed with desirable agony, groaning at the wet, warm and sliding feel of her against him. Jack kissed her chin, then dragged his tongue along her left shoulder pressing his teeth into her skin.

Harley gasped quietly. It hurt just a little because she was sore from her fights today, but it was a pleasurable pain, the hard press of Jack's teeth into her skin, then he sucked and bit her shoulder leaving another mark.

One of his hands crawled up her side to cup the side of her breast, the pad of his thumb finding her nipple and rolling it slowly, leisurely, grinning at the way Harley's breath caught, her little gasps of pleasure.

Jack purred, his mouth against her lips. “I want you Harley. I want to fuck you, bury myself in you...” Harley kept rolling against his hard member. Her clitoris rubbed against him, building slowly. She rubbed harder, a little faster panting.

Harley groaned. “Oh Jack yes...fuck me Jack...puddin...”

Jack grinned. “Say 'fuck me puddin.' Say it Harley.”

He pinched her nipple, not hard, but just enough to make that tickle in her groin jump and spread further. Her hips rolled over him just as that tickle exploded into a full orgasm. Harley pressed her fingers hard into his skin when she moaned low, gasping. “Oh fuck me puddin...”

Jack grinned, feeling the flood of her orgasm against him. He sat back on his rear, bringing her back to his lap where he held himself steady and lowered her down on him unhurriedly, wanting to feel each inch sliding into her. Jack groaned when her body welcomed him, stretching then tightening around his member. Jack wrapped his arms tight around her, thrusting up leisurely and plunged into
her depths.

Harley moaned, her arms wrapped around her lover, her body undulating with each thrust of his hips. She arched back while Jack’s mouth caressed down her neck to her breasts. She squeezed her thighs around him meeting his thrusts with her own gasping. “Oh puddin...uhh...Jack...”

Jack smiled and leaned her back until she was against the floor. His continued to kiss her, not willing to part from her lips. Jack lifted up on his hands, continuing his slow thrusts into Harley. She spread her legs wide running her hands down his chest. Harley arched her head back moaning while Jack continued his slow plunge into her, their hips rolling and thrusting together. She reached up to cup Jack’s neck, then slid her hands up to his face covering his mouth with hers and moaning on each breath. “I love you Jack. I love you...”

Jack’s brow furrowed with the intensity of his feelings for her, both emotional and physical. Harley felt almost too good. He pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, fighting off the urge to let go, to climax...Jack groaned. “Harley...Uuh Harley I love you.”

Harley pushed herself up on one elbow, wrapping a leg around his thigh and moaned. “Faster Jack...oh please faster.”

Jack growled and began to thrust harder, faster, their panted breaths mixing together. Jack grabbed her hip, holding her firmly and thrust deeply. Harley cried out arching back, her orgasm rippling through her. Jack hissed dropping to his elbows and burying his face against her neck when he came with her. They both continued to thrust, riding out their shared orgasm until finally Jack collapsed against her.

Harley giggled, rubbing her fingers in his facial hair as she kissed his brow. “Mmm, my puddin.”

Jack chucked rolling off of her and out, pulling her toward him. He rolled onto his side to face her, his arms tight around her.

“We are going to get out of here Harley. We are going to be free soon and things are going to be different.” He kissed her lips, then her eyes causing Harley to giggle.

“Different?” Harley asked caressing his face.

Jack nodded. “Yup. We’ve been letting society hold us back. Been trying to play the game in secret. Not anymore...Bruce and Gotham think I’m a monster, that I’m crazy? Then I’m going to give them a monster Harley. I’ll show them crazy.”

Harley giggled in response wrapping herself around him and whispered. “I'll follow you anywhere Jack...anywhere at all.”
She's a Tear in My Heart

Dale was sitting nervously outside on one of the old benches that sat out here for smokers and let the cold Gotham night clear his thoughts. His right leg bounced as he watched his breath come out in steamy puffs. It had taken a lot of work, but he had done exactly as Jack had instructed. He had found some acid in the morgue (for a moment he had to wonder why there was acid in the closet, but he didn't dwell on it) which was located in the basement. A few other rooms were down there, one for storage supplies for the morgue and another that was for...well, he wasn't really sure, but there were definitely some strange things in that room; a chair that looked sort of like a dentist chair, and some tools he could only hazard a guess at...but all of it had looked unpleasant.

Once he had the acid, Dale had then moved each body down to the basement in a laundry cart. No one paid any attention to him as he pushed the only slightly squeaky cart. He had found out on his way to retrieve the cart that neither Billy nor Jackson were on duty that night...thank God for small favors, so they wouldn't be missed right away. Even if they were supposed to be on duty tomorrow, it would be another day or so before anyone realized they were missing, and hopefully he would be gone by then, disappearing along with Jack Wayne and Harley Quinn into the shadows of Gotham...though the idea of putting Sandra in danger, making her an accomplice and on the run too...he didn't want that for her. Maybe there was a way to get her out of this before she became involved any deeper; though if things worked out, no one would ever know Dale had anything to do with the bodies at all.

Dale had brought the bodies down to the morgue and put them each in on a slab that slid into one of the many drawers on the wall. They didn't get a lot of bodies down here, which was why the coroner for the asylum only worked part time, so Dale knew the bodies would be able to sit down here for several days and maybe—if good luck was with him—a couple of weeks before they were discovered. The coroner was in and out of the asylum, only really working if someone died, and even then he just prepared them for pick up by the funeral home. An autopsy was only performed if the patient died under mysterious circumstances, and then only if someone pressed for the autopsy. Most of the time deaths were just written off or got lost in the miles of paperwork...these were mostly unwanted people...a few deaths didn't bother anyone.

Once Dale had the bodies on their slabs, he systematically used the acid while wearing a pair of thick rubber gloves he found in the supply closet down here. Dale carefully removed fingerprints, then, after the horrible and intensive work of removing their teeth, he had used the acid to destroy their faces.

Dale felt weak and shaky. It had been some of the most disturbing work he had even done, yet he had done it, without stopping, without hesitation. Now he was sitting outside, fumbling as he lit a cigarette he had bummed off one of the other orderlies. When he finally had the cigarette lit, he took a deep pull on it and immediately started coughing, hacking like he was going to spit up a lung. Dale had given up smoking years ago...but now seemed like a damn good time to start up again. Dale took a slower pull, letting the smoke burn his lungs and the nicotine soothe his nerves before he pulled out his phone. Dale chuckled a little, the laugh just on the verge of hysterics. He had a pocket full of bloody human teeth and was dialing a number to a stranger to help him break out two patients. Let's be honest, Dale, he said to himself, two lunatics who he now was bound to. Where on earth had his life taken this turn? Dale wondered as he typed in his text and hoped that this Alex would pick up so they could get the ball rolling on an escape. He didn't think he could stay at the asylum longer than a day or so knowing those bodies were down in the morgue just waiting to be discovered. Dale inhaled on the cigarette, thinking he might stop and buy a bottle of whiskey on the way home as he used his thumb to text; years of texting this way made him agile with his large thumb on the small
“This is Dale Armstrong at Arkham, was told to contact you about breaking out J & H.”

Within seconds he had a response. “Don't use yr whole name fucker! Stupid. Meet me at the House of Pancakes as soon as you get off. A.”

Dale sighed taking a long drag on the cigarette. On to the next step.

*  

It was almost half an hour before Dale would be off for the day. The sun was beginning to rise on a grey morning while the air was becoming more and more crisp as winter began to settle throughout Gotham. Dale wished he had thought to bring his coat with him; it was getting colder all the time. He yawned and rubbed the back of his sore neck with one hand, while under the arm of the other he had a fresh dress for Harley. Dale sighed, wishing he had another cigarette since he seemed to be back to smoking again. He twisted his lips thinking about collecting Harley's bloodstained dressed...stained with the blood of...Dale shook his head. Mustn't think about what happened. Getting rid of Harley's bloody dress, unlike the bodies, wouldn't be an issue. It was a little surprising how many patients had to have their clothing changed because of bloodstains...it was such a frequent occurrence that no one even batted an eye about it, no matter how much blood was involved.

Dale cracked his back and made his way to solitary in order to move Harley back to her cell when he saw a guard standing by the door. Dale stopped and stared, his heart speeding up and his blood going cold. Did that guard know what Dale had done? Was he here because he knew that Dale had killed a man? Dale didn't recognize the guard, something about the way he was slumped against the wall seemed off...his clothing didn't seem quite right either. The man turned to look at him and Dale's frown deepened. No, now that he was looking at the man, he did recognize him. He looked like this actor he had seen in that cable show..."Orange is the New Black." The guard looked like the electrical engineer from the show...what was the character's name? Dale narrowed his eyes, as if that would help him recall, until finally...yes, Joel Luschek. Dale frowned...that was weird. As he stepped closer the man smiled.

“You the orderly named Dale?”

Dale nodded and slowly said, “Yes.”

The man smiled. “I'm a friend of Mr. Wayne's.” He tossed his head over his shoulder at the cell door behind him. “He asked me to come back just before shift change to meet a friend of his named Dale and to meet his girl.”

Dale looked confused. “I don't recognize you. I mean...I do, you look like this actor.”

The man grinned, his face morphing. “That's because I don't actually work here.” Now the man looked like Basil Rathbone...another actor.

The squeak that went up from Dale would have been loud and high enough in pitch to do a cheerleader proud, if the big man hadn't slapped his hands over his mouth to prevent the loud shriek of surprise escaping his lips. He stared in round-eyed horror and shock from watching the man change appearance, his face, the flesh moving and shifting like Silly Puddy!

The guy grinned. “Name's Basil Karlo, but you can call me Karlo.” He put his hand out to Dale. Dale stared at the hand not sure what to do, but ultimately decided not to touch him.

Dale nodded, his eyes still wide and his hands over his mouth. Karlo shrugged, taking his hand back.
then gave Dale an expectant look. “You ah...gonna open the door?” Dale nodded, his hands still
over his mouth as he stepped past Karlo. He dropped his shaking hands down from his mouth and
slid his key card through the reader. The door's latches disengaged and Dale pushed open the door,
 focusing on the immediate task rather than who—or what—was right next to him.

* 

Jack and Harley were both dressed again, curled together and sitting up against the padded wall. Jack
 held his wife close while he stroked his fingers lovingly through her hair. He spoke softly for only
 Harley to hear.

He had explained to her his experience of seeing his parents, that it had all been the work of Dr.
 Crane, that the man had somehow found a face-changing actor named Basil Karlo who would be
 helping them escape. Harley frowned while Jack played lazily with her hair.

“He has Karlo's daughter here in Arkham under lock and key. The young lady tried to off herself
 when her dear old dad went to Blackgate. I don't know if that part's true, but I wouldn't doubt
 it...anyway, I guess when Crane learned about dear old Karlo's neat ability, he decided to use the
 man's daughter to get Karlo to work for him..trying to drive me crazy.” Jack said the last part with a
 hiss of anger. Harley squeezed her arms tight around him. Jack smiled softly relaxing into his wife's
 embrace. “So he's now going to help us get out in exchange for getting his daughter out too?”

Jack nodded. “Yep. Karlo can't get her out himself...he can't hold an appearance for too long,
 especially if he's stressed or gets the shit beat out of him like I did to him.” Jack giggled before he
 continued. “Anyway...he might come in handy on the outside...and it's always good to make new
 friends Harls; to be social. At least that was what one of my doctors said when I was a kid.” Jack
 chuckled at the memory.

They both heard the sound of the cell door open.

Dale stuck his head in cautiously. “I brought you a clean dress Miss Quinn.”

“Oh thank you Dale! This one is stiff with dried blood. Really uncomfortable!” Harley gave Jack a
 quick kiss on the cheek before she hurried over to take the dress from Dale just as Dale stepped in, a
 strange man behind him. She wrinkled her nose, but slipped into a darkened corner to change behind
 Jack. Jack stood up with a wide smile and threw his arms out. “Look at my new friends!! We are
 going to have such a great time together!!”

Dale still looked pale and uneasy, but Karlo looked determined, pleased even.

Jack grinned. “All right my friends, we need to plot our escape...I was thinking we might start
 festivities off with explosives!”

* 

An hour later Dale was walking Harley back to her room after speaking with Jack and Karlo. The
 plan they had come up with was only tentative since Dale would be speaking with Alex in another
 hour or so to see what exactly they were going to do to attempt this escape. Jack had wanted to blow
 off his cell door, but Dale had talked him out of it. An explosion would sound alarms and bring
 down the guards, making their escape that much more difficult. They had discussed it back and forth,
 eventually agreeing to no explosives (much to Jack's disappointment.) Instead, Dale would bring
 Jack a guard's uniform so that Jack could slip out and hopefully slip unnoticed through the asylum to
 their meeting spot.
Karlo would create a distraction while Dale would make sure Harley's cell door was left unlocked. He would have already gone to retrieve Karlo's daughter, while Karlo would pretend to be one of the dead guards, which had upset Dale. Harley had suggested Jackson since that was the man she had killed and not the guard that Dale had been forced to eliminate. Dale agreed, but again he didn't like it; not one bit. And they were all to meet in the basement to access the storm tunnels...that was all they had so far...no map of the tunnels...no pick up at the end. Hopefully when Dale met with Alex they would be able to close the loose ends in their plan...which, as far as Dale was concerned, were a lot. When they arrived at Harley's cell, she turned around and threw her arms around the big man's neck hugging him tight. “Thank you Dale, thank you so much.”

Dale held his hands out away from her awkwardly looking around to make sure no one saw her hugging him. After a couple of beats Dale sighed and returned her hug. “It's okay Miss Quinn.”

* *

Dale had just stopped off at the lounge to pick up his things when he decided to take a quick trip down to the laundry room to make sure everything really was cleaned up. He felt like he had left his stove on, that there was a nagging, tickling sensation that kept making him think he had forgotten something...though he supposed it was actually just fear and doubt...

He was on his way when his phone went off. Dale looked around; he was in one of the halls that contained a few of the patients rooms, though it was early and many of them were still asleep. He pulled his phone out of his back pocket and answered. “Dale.”

“Hey Dale!”

Dale's face brightened. “Sandra—good morning.”

He could hear the smile in Sandra's voice. “I just wanted to make sure you got my message.”

“I did. I texted him. We're meeting in just a little while,” Dale replied as he leaned against the wall. He was unaware that in the cell next to him, Robert Greenwood's eyes came open. He laid there on his cot unmoving except to close his eyes once more and listen.

“Going to get them out tonight,” Dale said closing his eyes with exhaustion. “Sandra...I...”

“What is it Dale?” Her sweet voice relaxed him. Dale wanted to tell her what he had done, but not now...not like this and not over the phone. It would hurt more to tell her in person, but he needed to because he wanted something more with Sandra, and because of that he wasn't willing to lie to her. But for now... “It's nothing. Yeah, going to get Harley and Jack out tonight. I'll let you know when I learn more.”

Sandra replied softly, giving in to her impulse. “Love you Dale. Call me and let me know how I can help.”

Dale's eyes flew open wide at her words. They were so sweet, so innocent...so special...after what he had done last night...killing a man, Dale wondered if he deserved her, but he smiled and whispered back. “I love you too Sandra. I'll call, I promise.”

Dale ended the call. He smiled as his heart skipped a beat. Despite everything, those three little words had made him forget about the mess he found himself in. He pushed away from the wall and hurried down the hall.

Robert rolled over onto his stomach with a large vicious grin.
It was still dark out when Dale parked his car. He shivered, walking down the rain soaked street the neon lights of the Pancake House up ahead reflecting off the wet sidewalk. Dale hurried inside running a hand over his damp head and looked around. The place wasn't too busy yet. It was still early, but he saw a man sitting in a booth who stood up and waved, a man with one arm.

The interior of the House of Pancakes restaurant had warm yellow lighting, wood paneled walls and wooden chairs along with booths with burnt orange vinyl seats. The walls were decorated with poster size images of pancakes, crepes and other breakfast dishes all photographed in a high fashion art style. The entire interior smelled of maple syrup and pecans.

Dale stepped quickly over to the one-armed man's table. Sitting with Alex was a young sweet looking young woman. She smiled and spoke. “You must be Dale! You look exactly how Sandra described you!”

Dale blushed.

Alex put his hand out. “Alex. This is my girl Alice, and Frost should be here soon.”

Dale shook hand and slipped into the booth. “Sorry Sandra can't be here.”

Alice waved him off. “Don't worry, she texted me...work. I figured you and I will both send her the details about tonight.”

Dale frowned. He started to say something, but a young dark-skinned woman came over to their table. “Would you like some coffee sir?” She smiled at Dale.

Dale nodded. “Yeah, sure, thank you.”

“I'll get that right way and be back for your order.” The waitress hurried off.

“So, what's the plan?” Dale asked looking between Alex and Alice just as a shadow fell over them.

“I think the storm drains are going to be our best bet,” a quiet voice said. Dale looked up to see a tall man in a nice suit looking down at all of them.

“There you are, thought you might have fucking ditched us. Dale, Frost—Frost, Dale,” Alex said motioning with his one hand between the two men as Dale scooted over to allow the new man to sit.

“Sorry, got caught over on the bridge,” Frost explained taking the seat next to Dale.

Alex leaned forward placing the elbow of his one arm on the table. He had just started to speak when the waitress returned with coffee. She blushed deep red at the sight of the other man who had just joined them. “Coffee sir?”

Frost nodded. “Thank you.”

She hurried away returning swiftly to pour Frost a cup of coffee. “Are you ready to order?”

Everyone glance at one another as if they weren't sure whether conspiring to break someone out of an asylum was supposed to be discussed over pancakes, but Alex leaned back. “How about Pigs in a Blanket for me...” He glanced at Alice. “Coconut Pancakes?”

Alice giggled. “Aww, you remembered!”
Alex grinned. “Course I did.”

Frost frowned. “Just buttermilk for me.”

Dale frowned in thought for a moment. “You have blueberry pancakes?”

“Sure do.” The waitress smiled, her eyes lingering on Frost.

Dale nodded. “Then that's what I'll have.”

She grinned. “I will get that order for you folks right away.”

Frost watched her walk away with a small smile on his face.

After she left, Frost sipped his black coffee. “After looking at the maps, I think the storm drains are our best bet. Should be able to get them completely off the asylum grounds. There's a tunnel that leads straight to the river near Aparo Park where I can pick them up. If the maps are accurate, you can access the storm drains from the basement of the main house.” Frost glanced at Dale with lifted brows.

Dale nodded. “There's a closed off section down there...just an old piece of wood boarding up this one area...that might be the old access tunnel. But what if it isn't?” Dale looked at everyone in concern.

Frost glanced at Alex. Alex sighed. “I don't know man. If we had more time, we could come up with something better. I guess if you can't get to the tunnels, then contact me....I'll think of something.”

Alex flopped back against the vinyl seating with a sigh. He hoped he could think of something...

*

It was late afternoon when it started to rain heavier outside. Harley was sitting on her cot daydreaming about Jack and what they would do when they got out of Arkham as she brushed her fingers through her hair. She was humming softly, then just as softly, almost a whisper under her breath, she sang to herself thinking about her husband.

“You'll never know just how much I miss you

You'll never know just how much I care

And if I tried, I still couldn't hide my love for you

You ought to know, for haven't I told you so

A million or more times?

You went away and my heart went with you

I speak your name in my every prayer

If there is some other way to prove that I love you

I swear I don't know how

You'll never know if you don't know now...”
Harley hummed softly, swaying her head back and forth to the music when she heard the beep that indicated that her door was open. She glanced over to see one of the nurses, not Mallory (thank goodness Harley thought to herself), but a young woman with dark hair and equally dark eyes.

The young nurse smiled. “Wow, you got a great voice.”

Harley giggled. “Aw, thank you. What's up?”

“Heading to the common room,” the nurse said with a slight smile and stood aside for Harley to exit.

Harley, surprised, popped up from her cot. “Really? I thought after last time...”

The woman shrugged. “I just do what I'm told.”

Harley giggled, slipped on her shoes and hurried pass the nurse. Harley saw her name tag read Duncan.

Duncan smiled while the two of them began to walk down the empty hall. “Guess a couple of you guys are acting like restless zoo animals with the rain outside. Lots of pacing, plus Mallory isn't here right now so a group of us nurses voted to let you guys hang out in the common area for an hour, maybe two depending on behavior, and whenever Mallory comes back. Come on.”

Harley fell into step in front of the nurse. “So, where is that orderly Daisy?”

Duncan shrugged her shoulders. “Don’t know, don't care. Though I think she is down in HR doing something. She is supposed to be back on the floor in an hour or two.”

“Won't she be mad about a bunch of us nut jobs being in the common room?”

Duncan laughed. “Not her call. It's the nurses' call and like I said, Mallory ain't here and we took a vote. Though some time in the common room would be better than trying to sedate you all.”

Harley made a face. “Yeah,” she agreed. “Much better.”

*

The common room was crowded by the standards of the sixth floor. Babs and Tabitha, as always, connected at the hip, were curled together on the couch with a book opened on their shared laps. Zsasz was sitting across from Arnold and Sockie, the two—or maybe it was three, Harley wondered—men playing a game of Chutes and Ladders. Zsasz glanced up and gave Harley a small wave.

Harley could see Robert Greenwood over at one of the tables coloring with vicious intent, crayons spread all over the table along with what looked like hundreds of pieces of paper all with tears and scribbles on them. Aaron was silently putting together a jigsaw puzzle while the TV droned on, more like white noise than an actual show. Harley glanced up at the TV; some talk show was on...one of the hundreds that looked like every other talk show, the audience members jumping up and down shouting with joy at whatever the talk show host was doing or saying, a short haired blonde woman was dancing as the audience went wild.

Harley’s gazed shifted from the TV to someone she hadn't seen before, a young woman. The new patient—or maybe she wasn't new, just that Harley had yet to run into her—was a skinny woman, almost skeletal, with long, nearly white blonde hair. She sat in a corner facing the wall, her arms wrapped around her legs while rocking back and forth. There were a couple of guards that Harley had seen before...they glanced at her, and one of the men winked at her before making a rude gesture with his tongue. Harley made a disgusted face, giving him the middle finger which made the other
guards laugh, and turned away. She saw several orderlies, all people she had seen before, two nurses, both young women who were being ogled by the guards, and a couple of doctors, one of which was trying his best to get the nurses' attention. The other doctor was standing near the rocking woman trying to speak to her, trying to get her to stop rocking, while the rest were talking among themselves. One of the nurses was on her cellphone busily texting at hyper speed with her thumbs.

When Harley stepped in, everyone looked up. Babs waved. "Harley come here!"

Harley smiled making her way over to Babs and Tabitha. "How are you guys?" Harley asked as she plopped down next to them.

"Oh we're fine. We both got an ice bath as punishment for kicking Daisy's ass, but other than that we're good." Babs smiled while Tabitha made a face.

"Anybody seen her today?" Harley asked glancing around the room. "Daisy I mean."

Babs snorted. "Nope though I heard on the grapevine she would be in today. Blah..."

Harley chuckled. "Guess we couldn't be lucky enough for her to quit."

Babs chuckled. "Yeah..."

"So what're you and Tabitha reading?" Harley asked glancing again at the TV.

"Oh we're just plotting our honeymoon when we get out of here." Babs giggled.

Tabitha sighed. "Vacation, not a honeymoon."

"Whatever." Babs chuckled throatily.

"You!!! Come here!!" someone shouted. All three women turned around to see Robert, crayon in hand pointing at Harley. Harley made a face pointing at herself. "Moi?"

"Yeah you—come here." Robert grinned.

Harley made a face glancing at Babs and Tabitha. "Should I ignore him?"

"Nah, better go see what he wants. If you ignore him he'll get louder and we'll all end up back in our cells."

Babs sighed grumpily. "Though holler if you need help. Kicking ass is becoming a specialty."

Harley giggled and said, "Will do!" She stood up giving the two women a salute before she walked over to the table where Robert had been coloring. She pulled out a chair across from him and sat down.

"So what do you want?"

Robert had sat back down and leaned across the table. Harley's lip curled in disgust. He smelled like rot and ammonia. "Are you mentally divergent?"

"Are you mentally divergent? I am. That's why I eat people...eat women...because I'm mentally divergent." Robert giggled. "You know what crazy is? It's majority rules!"

Harley narrowed her eyes at him. "Did you actually want something or are you just going to sit there and spout off oddities at me?" She folded her arms over her chest staring hard at him. The little man
rubbed her wrong and not just because he was a cannibal. There was something just...off about him...something worse than being unstable, he made her skin crawl.

Robert picked up a red crayon and started to eat it as he murmured. “I heard something interesting today!!”

Harley tilted her head. “Oh, that the red crayons taste like cherries? They don't. Don't believe everything you hear.”

Robert laughed and pointed at her. “Ahh...I heard someone is gonna try and get out of here.”

“What?” Harley's voice dropped to barely a whisper, more just a breath. “What did you say?”

“You heard me girlie. No more monkeys jumping on the bed!!” Robert chuckled. “You're getting out. You're going to take me with you.” Robert leaned forward and smiled, the red wax of the crayon staining his teeth, hunks of the red wax caught between his teeth.

Harley leaned forward and kept her expression neutral. “I don't know what you're talking about.”

“Oh, yes you do. I overheard big and bald talking on his phone to his delicious girlfriend...chomp chomp!” Robert chuckled. “He was saying you two are escaping tonight. You take me or I will tell everyone here...I'll tell Crane. I bet he wouldn't like to hear his little pet bird is wanting to fly away!” Robert picked up an orange crayon and started to eat it.

“You wouldn't dare.” Harley hissed back.

Robert grinned, orange wax mixing with the red. “Oh wouldn't I?”

“I'll kill you,” Harley snarled low, her blue eyes hard. “Don't fuck with me Robert. It will not end well for you.”

But Robert only laughed. “Ooo, I'm so scared. I've eaten girlies like you, all soft and squishy. You don't scare me.”

Harley's eyes twitched. “You haven't met me.”

Harley sprang up from her seat knocking the chair back and flung herself across the table grabbing a hold on Robert's shirt and yanked him back across the table with crayon's scattering everywhere. One of the guards started to move, but his buddy put his hand on his chest grinning. “Let's just see who wins. Just make sure the other nuts don't get involved.”

The doctor who had been doing his best to communicate to the woman on the floor, yelped loudly and gathered his patient up ushering her out of the room. The nurses started to react. “Hey!” The same guard who had stopped his buddy said, “Hey guys, I'm taking bets: Blondie verses the Cannibal! Who's in?”

* 

Harley threw Robert to the ground and kicked him in the side. She was in a panic, though her face didn't show it. She couldn't let him talk!! He would ruin everything and she certainly wasn't going to bring the cannibal with them either. Which only gave her two choices, kill him or make it so he couldn't talk.

Robert scrambled away from her rolling across the floor as he moved to put some distance between them. He tried to kick her at the same time that he came to his feet quicker than Harley expected he
could. Harley rushed him though, swinging with her fists and hoping to put him down quickly. First right, then left, snarling while she swung. Robert dodged Harley's first swing, but her second punch connected, her knuckles slamming into Robert's shoulder when he dodged.

The two guards hooted. “Come on sexy nut bean, beat the shit out of him!!”

Robert snarled, gnashing his teeth at her. “I'm gonna take a bite! Taste me some sweet sweet meat.”

Harley made a disgusted face before she growled. “You're pathetic! You only eat woman because you know there is no woman on this entire planet who would have you!!”

Robert growled and took a swing at her, but Harley brought her forearm up to block his strike. Harley hopped back and twisted her entire body, bringing her leg around in a full swing, the side of her foot connected with the side of Robert's head sending him stumbling back into the guards. The nurses squealed, but one of the guards turned Robert back around and shoved him back toward Harley.

“You gonna let her get the best of you? Go get her!” The guard laughed.

Robert sucked on his bleeding bottom lip and glared at Harley. “I'm gonna tell...” he said in a sing song voice. Harley narrowed her eyes, panting slightly, a thin film of perspiration making her skin shimmer in the yellow light of the common room, her fists up as she bounced lightly on her feet. “You're not telling anyone anything.” She sneered with a dangerous shine in her blue eyes.

Robert came closer, took a jab at her. Harley swung her right fist at Robert's face, hitting him across the cheek with the hard smack of flesh against flesh, snapping his head to the side and making him stumble with the blow. When his head came back around, Robert was bleeding worse from his lips. She didn't give him more time to recover before she snapped her right fist out again, striking the cannibal square in the face, his nose making an audible snap accompanied by Robert's cry. “Fucking BITCH!”

Harley couldn't stop the grin from spreading across her face. She shook out her right hand before wrapping her fingers in a fist again. Robert snarled and let out a yell, charged her. He ploughed through her defenses, grabbed Harley around the waist, lifted her just enough that her feet were off the floor, and like a bull, rammed her backwards until her back hit the wall.

She nearly tripped over a chair before he shoved her up against the wall knocking the air from her in a painful whoosh. Harley struggled, slammed her elbow down on Robert's back as hard as she could with several sharp strikes. He grunted, then he twisted while she hit him. He ducked his head down lower and buried his teeth in her side. Harley screamed when he took a bite at her hip before releasing her and started to stagger back when one of Harley's elbow slams struck true, hitting him squarely in his neck. As the cannibal staggered a step back from her, Harley snapped her leg up to kick Robert in the face, her foot smashing into his already broken nose.

“You little weasel!” she hissed and hit him a second time with her foot, snapping her leg up, the toes of her shoe catching him in the mouth a moment after the first kick caused Robert to stagger back, his hands rising to cover his ruined nose. Harley snarled raising her leg up again, but this time she brought her leg straight up then slashed downward bringing her foot down on Robert, hitting the hands he had covering his nose and knocking him backwards when he tried at the last moment to deflect her blow.

He stumbled back, his face a bloody mess, but Harley followed him with a spin kick, using her entire body along with the grace of her gymnastics training to hit him again, knocking him back another handful of steps. Harley bounced on her feet for a split second after she landed and twisted around
the opposite way for another full body spin kick, this time knocking the cannibal off his feet entirely. Robert slid over the floor.

Everyone who was watching the fight gasped in surprise, dashing out of the way as Robert slid and slammed up against the wall. Harley let out a scream of rage, rushed across the floor toward Robert and before he could push himself up, Harley was over him. With a snarl she brought her foot down on his neck in several quick hard stomps, slamming his jaw, cheek and neck in hard succession screaming the whole time. “YOU FUCKER!! YOU CANNIBAL BALLSUCKING FUCKER!”

The guard who had wanted the fight yelped. “OH shit!! Stop her!!”

He yanked out his stun gun, his partner doing the same as both men rushed toward her and hit Harley in the back at the same time.

Babs screeched, trying to go to Harley, but Tabitha held her back. “HARLEY!!”

Harley wasn't aware of what was happening. The double jolt of electricity hitting her in the back caused her to collapse on top of Robert, sliding off and hitting her head against the floor with a “thunk” that anyone nearby could hear. She blinked, a wave of dizziness accompanied by pounding pain washed over her. She could hear yelling and the sounds of a struggle from somewhere off to her side. One of the nurses with short dark hair appeared at her side yelling. “I'm going to sedate her then we can move her.”

Harley wasn't aware of the response before she felt the sting of the injection and then the warm fuzzy feeling of drugged darkness descending on her. She slumped, instantly out.

The nurse stood up. “Move her to…”

The other nurse, a young blonde, motioned. “Hey let me get a chair. We should just dump her with Crane. He'll know what to do with her.”

“Okay, get this one to the infirmary. I think she broke his jaw, maybe worse”

“I'm getting really tired of these fights in the common room.” The dark haired nurse sighed. “Completely disrupts the day,” agreed the other. “It's getting to be a daily occurrence…and you notice that blonde.” The woman pointed at Harley. “She seems to be the main instigator or at least at the center of it every time a fight happens lately.”

The dark hair nursed frowned. “There is always one who has to be a problem child.”

* 

When Harley regained consciousness, the first thing she noticed was the classical music playing. She found herself in Crane's office and lifted her head up with a gasp looking around in confusion. She had been cleaned up and dressed again. This dress was a green midi dress with a black velvet motif that started at the pointed collar and extended to the decorative buttons, cuffs, and waistline. The material had a checkered design, and flannel-like fabric that made the dress comfortable. Someone had pulled her hair back from her face and braided it and she was also wearing a pair of black velvet Mary Jane wedges with pointed toes and knotted straps. Harley could even feel lipstick on her lips. All of it made her feel nauseous and angry at the violation again. All of this just fed her resentment at being used, at being some man's doll!! She snarled and jerked, but she was strapped down in a wheelchair. Instead of a straightjacket, she was simply handcuffed, her wrists firmly held to the arms of the chair and her ankles to the foot rests. She struggled, but all that did was make the wheels jerk forward or back and threaten to topple her over onto her face or side.
She had just settled back in her chair when the door opened and Crane himself entered. He was carrying a cup of tea. Today he was dressed in an almost chocolate brown suit with thick red stripes that formed a checked pattern, with a crisp white shirt underneath, and a white tie with a deep red floral print. He smiled when he entered. “The music, Satie’s Gnossienne No. 1, one of my favorites. I find it calming.”

Harley snarled as she again shook the wheelchair. “I don't find it calming! I find it irritating!”

Crane sighed, took a sip of his tea and set the cup and saucer down on his desk. He sat on the edge of the desk, one leg over the corner and folded his arms over his chest as he looked sadly at her. “Because of your little performance in the common room, I am forced to take action sooner than I intended my dear. Your room isn’t quite ready, but since I must do something with you after your behavior, I will simply move you sooner rather than later.”

Harley stopped struggling and stared at him in dawning fear. “What?”

As if on cue, the door opened and four people entered the room, four large men dressed in black tailored suits. Crane smiled. “Is the car ready?”

“Yes sir.” One man would have reminded Harley of The Rock except for the odd set to his eyes answered Crane.

Crane smiled. “Good, go ahead and take her. I will be along shortly.”

Harley screamed in panic. “NO! YOU CAN’T!”

Crane smiled at her. “You will find my dear, that I can.”

The men stepped over to Harley who started to scream and struggle against the handcuffs, rattling her wheelchair dangerously back and forth to no avail. “DON’T TOUCH ME!! JACK!!”

She didn't know why she called for Jack, but she didn't know what else to do; everything was falling apart. Harley struggled, but one of the men shoved a ball gag painfully into her mouth, strapping it on around the back of her head while two of the others lifted up the wheelchair and simply carried her out of the room with Crane calling after them.

“Please be sure to use the back exit.”

Crane watched them go, picked up his tea cup and took another sip before frowning down at the contents with a muttered, “Cold. How sad; there is nothing worse than cold tea.”

* 

Deep in the middle of Gotham, Sage groaned as he cracked his back. He hated early mornings or early afternoon, pretty much any time of the day before six in the evening. As a private dick he usually kept late nights, but for the job he was working on for Mr. Wayne, Sage needed to be up early...or at least earlier so he could hit the library. Some of the records he wanted to access were available online, but surprisingly quite a few were not available online yet which forced him to head to the downtown Gotham library...the main library in Gotham from which all other city's libraries connected. The front of the library looked like a tribute to ancient Roman architecture with its large Corinthian columns to the massive marble tympanum which depicted the nine Greek muses. Sage thought that it was a beautiful yet imposing building. The inside was just as overwhelming with seven floors one could easily become lost navigating.

Wishing he had a cup of coffee or a cigarette, Sage was sitting at an old microfiche reader looking
through even older newspaper clippings about Arkham Asylum. He had been surprised when he found out he would have to use a microfiche reader and even more surprised to learn the library still had one. Apparently while the Gotham City library was modernizing, the process was slow and the older newspapers were way down on the list of library archives to modernize.

Sage frowned scribbling on his notepad while he fished through the Gotham Gazette. The incidences by themselves at Arkham were not all that surprising...missing patients, unexplained deaths, injury...but as Sage made notes, he started to realize that Mr. Wayne's suspicions were on the money. This place wasn't what it seemed. There was clearly something going on at Arkham Asylum...and it wasn't about helping patients.

* 

With his hands behind his back, Jack paced his cell while wearing only his asylum pants. He had tried to sleep, but sleep just wouldn't come. It was partly the excitement of knowing that soon he and Harley would be free again, but this time they wouldn't even have the constraints of being part of the Wayne family to stop them. They were really going to be free. He grinned with excitement and anticipation.

He danced around the room at one point while singing at the top of his lungs, his voice carrying melodically down the halls of the sixth floor. With his eyes closed, he swayed and waltzed, pretending his wife was in his arms.

“I don't care where I go when I'm with you
When I cry you don't laugh cause you know me
I'm in you
You're in me
You gave me the love, the love that I never had
You and I don't pretend; we make love
I can't feel anymore than I'm singing...

* 

He laughed when he heard Jervis from his cell, his voice muffled, but the shorter man was singing loudly joining Jack.

“I'm in you
You're in me
You gave me the love, the love that I never had...”

* 

Later, Jack alternated from pacing with doing push ups, doing them until he was covered in sweat and his arms were shaking with fatigue. Next he jogged around the small, dark enclosed space until lunch. Eventually, lunch was brought—a turkey sandwich, milk and some carrot sticks...not even a pudding cup. How medieval, Jack thought as he sat and ate.

He had spent his afternoon practicing katas; punches, kicks, jabs a few roundhouse kicks, and other
maneuvers...practicing every bit of martial arts, boxing...everything he knew until he was finally so worn out, sleep was the only thing his body was capable of doing. He dropped down to the padded floor lying on his back, his eyes closed, his thoughts on Harley. He grinned for a few minutes imagining her on top of him, naked, her blonde hair falling around her shoulders, tickling the tops of her breasts, the way her skin felt under his hands, silky, soft...creamy. The way she felt when he was buried inside her, that warm wetness, the way her muscles tightened, squeezing him, that feeling of pumping into her...the little sounds of pleasure she made. Jack pressed his teeth into his lip just imagining her.

That was the image he took with him when he fell asleep.

He wasn't sure how long he had slept, but he woke to the sound of his door opening. Jack sat up and rose to his feet in a swift, graceful movement. Dale moved swiftly stepping into the room. Jack could see he was carrying a duffel bag with him.

“We have a problem,” Dale said grimly.

* 

When Dale had come into work that evening, he had been surprised to see Sandra waiting for him. The large woman was pacing, looking pale and worried. When she saw Dale getting out of his car she rushed to him and threw her arms around him. “Oh Dale, it's awful!”

Dale, happy to hold her, relished the feel of her in his arms before he asked. “What's awful?”

She leaned back from him, though she didn't leave his embrace. “It's Harley Dale...she's gone.”

“What do you mean gone?” Dale felt himself go cold.

“Crane moved her ahead of schedule...because of a fight in the common room. She attacked Robert, beat him up pretty badly, his Adam's apple and jaw are both broken.”

Sandra shook her head. “Anyway, rumor is going around that Crane took her...I went to check her room...she's gone Dale.”

Dale frowned holding her close as Sandra began to cry. Damn it, he thought angrily. Damn it, damn it!! But...they would still get Jack out...had to...from there they would just have to figure out how to get to Harley.

Dale took a deep breath before lifting Sandra's face up to his, cupping her face in his larger hands. Her eyes were red, her nose stuffy, but she was still beautiful to him. “I'm going to get Jack out, then we'll go after Harley. Jack isn't going to do nothing, you know that.” He gave her a smile then kissed the tip of her nose. “No worries Sandra.”

She nodded and hugged him once more. “I...I'll figure out where Crane lives! I can do that while you're getting Jack tonight!”

Dale nodded. “That's a good idea.” He pressed his mouth to hers, Sandra opened her lips to him kissing him back with a passion that made Dale melt. No matter what happened, Jack and Harley had given him this; without them he may have never found his way to Sandra.

After another full minute Dale released her. “I better get in there.”

She nodded. “I'll text you with a location. I know you can't get her tonight, but...”
Dale nodded then shrugged. “I don’t think Jack will want to wait...not sure how tonight is going to play out, but—but I will see you soon.”

Sandra caressed his face with a nod before she stepped out of his arms and hurried to her car. Dale watched her go with a sigh before he turned and headed into the asylum, yanked out his phone and texted Alex.

*  

“What do you mean we have a problem?” Jack went still, predatory still. Dale immediately felt the need to turn and flee, but he fought it. He took a breath. “This afternoon Harley beat up Robert Greenwood in the common room. No one is sure what the fight was about, but Harley crushed his throat and broke his jaw.”

While Dale was talking, a smile spread across Jack’s features at the details of Harley’s assault on Robert. That was his girl! He giggled then shook himself. “So what’s the problem?”

Dale sighed. “Crane moved her this afternoon instead of tomorrow.”

“What?!” Jack grabbed Dale, surprising the larger man when Jack yanked him forward nearly off his feet, causing the big man to drop the duffel bag he was carrying. Jack had grabbed him with a strength Dale would never have guessed that Jack possessed. Dale reached up to grab Jack’s wrists. Jack’s face transformed into something crazed, insane. Mad. Jack’s blue eyes were wide and Dale would swear at that moment—and he would recall in the future—that they glowed with a sinister inner light. “Where is she?!”

Dale stuttered, feeling real fear for the first time, real fear of Jack. “I...I don’t know for sure, Jack, but Sandra thinks Crane took her to his estate. I guess it was his father’s estate, but she’s working to get the address. But I...we’re going to break you out now...we need to go...now. Jack...Jack?”

Jack was staring at Dale, but it was clear he wasn't really seeing him. Dale pleaded. “Jack?”

Jack closed his eyes for a moment. Dale could almost see the turmoil in the other man, but then Jack took a breath and seemed to come back to himself. “All right.”

Jack released Dale and slowly took a step backwards. Dale didn't move for a couple of heartbeats waiting to see what Jack would do, but when Jack didn't attack him, he reached for the bag. “I have a guard uniform in here for you. Dress and meet me down in the basement. I'm going to move Karlo's daughter and Karlo should be down there waiting for you. I've included a key card with the uniform.”

Jack nodded and picked up the bag. He looked pale, shaken. Dale frowned watching him. “Jack?”

Jack’s eyes snapped to Dale. “Let’s go. I'm getting Harley back tonight.”

*  

Dale left the door open to Jack’s cell and slipped Jack one of the key cards that had belonged to one of the dead guards from last night. It would be at least twenty four hours before anyone realized that Jackson hadn't actually come into work that night despite his card being used. Hopefully, Dale thought...

*  

Jack seethed with rage. His Harley was not here, Crane had moved her, taken her...he was literally
shaking with unspent violence. Sitting on top of the pile of clothing was a flashlight, not a heavy duty one unfortunately; it was a fairly cheap flashlight, but it would do for the tunnels. Jack picked it up and clicked it on and off before he set it aside. When he yanked the guard outfit out of the duffel bag, Jack was surprised to see a baton fall out of the rolled slacks and hit the padded floor near his bare foot. Jack looked down at the baton, a black heavy high-density plastic stick. He frowned, studied the object before he reached down and picked up the baton. A slow, vicious smile spread across his face.

Jack dressed quickly. He slipped on the black slacks and dark blue shirt, slid on the heavy duty vest, then pulled on the heavy military style boots, knee pads, and shoulder guards. Included with the uniform was a dark face scarf. Jack pulled it down around his neck before pulling it up to cover the lower part of his face.

He smiled under the cloth. “This is going to be fun.”

Jack left his cell with the key card around his neck. The first thing he did was scan the door to Jervis Tetch’s cell. The door popped open. Jack pulled the door open to see Jervis sitting cross legged in the middle of the room, the one light shining down on him. He looked up at Jack. “Is it my unbirthday?”

Jack laughed. “It’s everyone’s unbirthday!”

*  

Two of the guards were talking as they walked down one of the halls. One of the men, a tall lean dark skinned man named Tom was talking with a shorter pale man named Quincy. “I’m telling you that Barbara chick...she just needs the right guy you know? That’s the only reason them chicks are lesbians...they haven’t had the right guy. Now you let me have a few minutes with her, I could turn her I’m sure of it.”

Quincy gave Tom the stink eye. “Man, you're sick you know that. They don’t want anything to do with you. You just being a perv.”

Tom chuckled. “What's wrong with that?”

Quincy shook his head. “Man, you dirty.”

Tom laughed. “Maybe...what about that other blonde. What's her name? Harley...now that one...Mmm...yeah...”

Quincy shook his head. “Dude, you need to shut up.”

“I agree with your friend. You should really shut up.”

Both men turned at the sound of a voice to see a guard running at them. Grinning ear to ear, Jack didn't slow down. He ran up to them so swiftly that neither man reacted before Jack had hit Tom across the face with the baton. The man let out a groan, grabbing his bloody face where Jack had broken his nose and split his lips, Jack followed the hit to the face with another vicious slug to the back of Tom’s head. The guard went down quickly as Jack landed another vicious blow and then another, cracking open Tom's skull. Quincy struggled in shock to pull his stun gun free of his belt, but Jack twirled around like a dancer, flipping the baton and holding it with both hands. He slammed the heavy stick into Quincy's side in a series of hard thrusts, then smashed its end into the guard's chest, cracking the man's breastbone. Jack raised the baton and swung it with all his strength across Quincy's face, shattering his nose and breaking two of the man's front teeth. Quincy dropped to the floor, groaning, but barely conscious.
Jack laughed. “Hahaha!! Hehehe!!”

He hit Quincy three times in the back of the head before he sidestepped around the two downed guards and gave them a jaunty salute. “Sorry boys!! Got places to go, people to kill!!”

Jack didn't encounter anyone for a few more minutes as he made his way to the some of the cells. Most of the patients were sleeping, but Jack slid his stolen card through the card readers to release the locks of Babs' cell, Tabitha's and Zsasz's before he made his way to where he knew one of the nursing stations was located on the sixth floor. He grinned darkly, his blue eyes flat.

He heard talking as he approached the station. Two women. He peaked around the corner to see a large woman with a short military haircut...he couldn't be sure, but judging by the bruises on her face, the tape on her nose, swollen lips, he was going to guess that she might be the orderly Daisy that Harley had told him about last night when they were together, laying in each others arms...Jack shuddered then, the rage boiling over again making him see red at the edges of his vision knowing she wasn't here. He held onto the rage, better that than the overwhelming pain of escaping, but not having her at his side; his whole being hurt without her, his Harley, his love. He took a steadying breath and focused back on the now. The other woman was dressed in a simple nurse's outfit...not Mallory, though. This woman was short, strawberry blonde. Jack smiled. Taking care of her would be fun, a great bit of therapy before he left Arkham and something he could tell Harley about...she would love that.

The two women were talking in hushed tones, but Jack was close enough to hear them.

Daisy snarled. “I can't believe Crane moved her. I was going to give that fucking bitch the beating she deserves after what she did to me.”

The nurse, a young woman named Allison who had a small crush on Daisy grinned. “Well, you can always beat on the other two, Barbara Kean and Tabitha Galavan, they're both still here. And if you do, can I watch?” Allison looked at Daisy with adoring eyes.

Daisy grinned reaching out to stroke Allison's jaw. “You sure can honey.”

Allison giggled.

“Hey, bearded lady! Beauty is only skin deep ...but ugly goes all the way to the bone!” Jack laughed doing a little finger wave from around the corner.

Daisy reared up startled and stared at the guard. “What the fuck did you just say?”

Jack giggled. “Oh, ugly and deaf? Wow, here, how about this one: I'll say it really loud for you. Which sexual position produces the ugliest children? Ask your mother!!!!” Jack leaned on the wall laughing at his own jokes.

Daisy came around the nurses station. She snarled and huffed like a bull. “I'm going to beat the shit out of you, little man.”

Jack grinned behind his mask. “Do you wanna lose ten pounds of ugly fat? Cut off your head!”

Daisy charged him, which was exactly what Jack hoped she would do. He needed this...the guards were satisfying, but this woman had hurt Harley, had planned worse and Jack really needed someone to get his frustrations out on, someone to pay for Harley not being here.

Daisy rushed him and Jack strolled forward, his arms back, his left foot leading. He swung his back hip toward the ball...or in this case, Daisy’s face, his arms following his hips, Jack extended his arms
and the baton met with Daisy's face in an almost beautiful perfect baseball swing. For Jack it was almost as if the whole thing happened in slow motion.

The baton struck the orderly square in the face, shattering the large woman's already damaged nose, reopening her busted lips and creating a thoroughly bloody mess of her face. Jack hit her with enough power to knock her back several steps before she toppled over like the giant from Jack and the beanstalk. Jack jumped up and down, squealing with delight. “AND HE KNOCKS IT OUT OF THE PARK!!! THE CROWD GOES WILD!” Jack added his own fake cheering.

Allison screamed and grabbed for the phone on her desk, but Jack saw her from the corner of his eye and dashed over the few steps before he leapt over the counter to slam into the young woman and drove her bodily to the floor.

“That felt invigorating! Nothing like expressing your anger!!” Jack rolled his shoulders and shook his head back and forth with a light growl.

Jack frowned when he heard Daisy groaning in pain and starting to stir on the floor. “Damn...tough woman.”

Jack strolled over to her while spinning the baton between his fingers. He took a position over her, his feet on either side of her shoulders. He gave her a smile as her eyes focused up on him.

Jack chuckled. “Lady, you're harder to kill than a cockroach on steroids.”

“Who are you?” she asked, her words slurred on the blood and bits of broken teeth in her mouth. Jack grinned.

“I'm Harley Quinn's husband, bitch.” Jack swung the baton and yelled. “FORE!”

* 

Dale arrived at the room where Karlo's daughter was being held. The floor was quiet and lacked the amount of guards that the sixth floor had roaming around. He saw a couple of nurses on his way here, but they simply nodded a greeting or did nothing at all, not even batting an eye at his appearance on their floor. He had stopped and picked up a wheelchair on his way here and quietly slipped into the young woman's room.

Dale stopped in his tracks when he saw the young woman. She was tiny, thin and no older than twenty, if that. Her wrists were bandaged, but what made him pause was the IV. He could tell simply by the color of the liquid that she was being fed a powerful sedative to keep her under...probably on Crane's orders. Dale shivered. He had always known Arkham was bad...the sixth floor being the worst, but this...an innocent young woman in need of real help being used as a pawn to control her father...that was low. Dale sighed and wheeled the chair over to her. He carefully worked to disconnect her from all the IV's and monitors, shutting them off carefully to make sure he didn't raise any alarms (the guards where were talking over by one of the nurses stations, when both looked down at the same time a buzz went off from their belts signaling that someone had tripped the silent alarm in Karlo's daughter's room.) After removing the IV's and bandaging her up, Dale easily lifted her into the chair, placed a blanket over her thin legs and a strap around her waist to prevent her from
slipping out of the chair.

Dale wheeled her to the door, opened it and looked both ways; the coast was clear. He wheeled her out of the room and immediately headed to the elevators. He had just arrived and hit the button when he heard movement behind him. He turned to look down the hall where he saw two guards walking toward him. Dale's eyes widened. They were walking with that determined stride, clearly on their way toward Dale.

“Shit, shit, shit!” Dale hissed hitting the button on the elevator even though he knew pushing the button again would not make the thing arrive any faster. Dale looked around frantically and saw the door to the stairs...He spun the chair around unbuckling the unconscious young woman. One of the guards yelled. “Hey, you there!”

But Dale lifted the young woman up and heaved her over his shoulder, turned and made a run for the stairs.

* *

Jack whistled while he strolled down the hall to the elevators, spinning his bloody baton easily. He had made a detour to open up Wesker's cell and Aaron's just because he felt like opening their cells, before he decided to stop at the employee lounge on this level, just on the off chance there was someone there he needed to teach a lesson to on rudeness and because he was craving a Snickers candy bar.

Approaching quietly, Jack could hear the low level sounds of a TV playing. Jack peered around the corner; the only light was coming from the TV. He could see two orderlies sitting on the couch in front of the television. Jack couldn't been sure from here, but something about them seemed familiar... Maybe they all looked alike, the orderlies tended to all share a similar theme in regards to appearance, big bodies, tiny heads and ugly faces. Except for Dale and Sandra of course.

Jack tilted his head, watching when one of the men turned to speak to the other. For a moment both men's profiles were highlighted by the TV and Jack was sure he knew them, from the electrical shock treatment. Jack's eyes narrowed and his nostrils flared slightly. They had both been there, once when he was being shocked, and then with Harley. Jack's smile froze in a rictus grin that didn't reach his eyes. The anger in him became hotter, a burning rage. He crept into the room, sliding along the wall to move closer, all while remaining absolutely silent. The men's profiles came into view again when they turned to speak to each other. Yes, Jack thought, he did remember them...strapping Harley down, holding her down...the same when he had his treatment. He recalled their vicious smiles, saw that they took joy in his pain, in Harley's pain.

One of the orderlies that Jack elbowed his friend. “Hey, you check out that new nurse on the day shift yet?”

The other man growled. “And how would I do that? She's on day shift, stupid.”

“If you wait around in the parking lot you can see her come in! Geez man. She wears these tight little white nurse uniforms...” The man giggled while his friend just said flatly. “They all wear the same thing.”

“Oh, not this one. You can tell hers is extra...tight.” The man held his hands up and in the light from the TV Jack could see the man do an hour glass figure. The other orderly sighed. “Okay Ollie, I'll hang out after shift to see her okay?”

The man named Ollie nodded. “That's the spirit Ed!”
Jack crept up slowly. Just when he was behind the one man named Ollie, he grinned holding the baton like a bat and whispered to himself. “He sneaks up on the ball, he eyes the pitcher. The crowd watches intently. Will Jack Wayne hit the ball out of the park? Will he hit a home run, ladies and gentlemen? Or will it be just a sloppy, bloody mess of bone, brains and revenge? Stay tuned folks!”

Jack swung the baton as hard as he could. The heavy plastic stick connected with the side of Ollie's head with a sickening sounding “whack” and “crack.”. Ed, sitting next to Ollie, yelped when a warm splatter of blood hit him across the side of the face. Within the next heart beat the man was throwing himself off the side of the couch in surprise.

“What the fuck!” Ed yelled.

Ollie went down quickly, falling forward limply with blood leaking from his skull without ever knowing what had hit him. The other orderly tried to make a run for the door, but Jack grinned and put himself in the offending orderly's way. “Going so soon? I mean really—how rude. I thought I would stop by and have a chat with you...you know about cruelty to patients, being complicit in abuse...that sort of thing.”

Ed reached down toward his belt, his hand wrapping around a taser.

Jack chuckled. “Mm...so it comes down to a quick draw...how fast are you compared to how fast I am, eh? But you see, Ed is it? Ed...while you have fear of death on your side, I'm pissed—very pissed.”

Ed moved throwing his arm out with the taser, but Jack brought the baton down in a vicious swing that hit the man's extended arm. The crack of the plastic striking meat and bone was loud. Ed's arm went numb though he managed to shoot the prongs from his taser, hitting Jack in the chest. Jack hissed jerking slightly at the initial shock, but he reached up with his left hand and yanked the prongs out with a laugh.

“Oh Ed! Darling, bad, bad choice.” Jack laughed and swung his baton to hit Ed across the face, whipping the man's head to the side, blood flying from his mouth, highlighted by the flashing colors of the TV.

Ed dropped to the floor with a muffled cry of pain and surprise. Jack smiled happily and stepped closer to take a few more golf-like swings at Ed's head, just to be sure he was down before he turned to look around the room. After a second or two, he spotted the candy machine.

“There you are darling!” Jack cooed. “Now, what a growing psychotic needs is a Snickers. What's that commercial? You're not yourself if you're hungry? Well, I'm definitely not myself.”

Karlo was pacing the basement wearing his true face. It had taken a lot more work than he had expected, but he had removed the plywood to reveal the old storm tunnels. Karlo had stepped inside to take a look. The smell was of old water and wet stone with an undercurrent of rot. He had shone his flashlight around looking at the old brick. The tunnel was wide enough for two people to walk abreast. The first few feet would require them to walk bent over, but after that they would be able to walk upright easily enough. It was pitch dark in here; hopefully he wouldn't be the only one with a flashlight.

Karlo stopped his pacing to pull something out of his back pocket. He held it up and shined a light on it. Between his fingers he held a photograph of a young girl. In the picture, she was no older than fourteen, skinny with long brown hair, but with a smile that transformed her face into something
special. Karlo teared up looking at his daughter hoping this plan worked and they were able to escape together.

*

Dale was doing his best to get down the stairs as quickly as he could with the thin body of Karlo's daughter over his shoulder. He could hear the guards behind him occasionally yelling. “Stop! Come back here!”

Dale snorted. Like that was going to happen. He shoved the door open, bursting out onto one of the floors. He wasn't sure where he was as he ran with the young woman and turned a corner. His heart did a leap; there was an elevator at the end of the hall he had chosen to turn down. Dale rushed for it hoping that he could get the elevator to arrive before the guards found him. He slammed his finger on the button.

“Come on, come on!” he hissed jamming the button.

Dale cursed, “Fuck,” when he heard the doors open and the guards' voices.

“Which way did he go?”

“I don't know—should we split up?”

Dale was sure he was going to have a heart-attack when the elevator dinged. The doors began to slowly open when he heard the sound of footsteps. He turned to see both guards running down the hall toward him. “Stop right there!”

Dale turned toward the elevator to see Jack Wayne standing there. Jack grinned taking a bite out of a Snickers bar. “Hey Dale.”

Dale choked. “Mr. Wayne? I mean, Jack?”

Jack grinned. “Yep.” He saw the guards coming down the hall and grabbed Dale by the front of his uniform yanking the big man and the young woman he was carrying, into the elevator at the same time that Jack stepped out.

“Jack what are you doing?” Dale yelped, but Jack grinned. “I'll be along in a second. I haven't worked out my anger issues just yet. It's therapy time!”

The doors closed on Dale's surprised face just as Jack shoved the last bite of his Snickers into his mouth and swung his baton. “Hey boys.” Jack chuckled.

The two guards were confused for a split second at the guard stepping out of the elevator and letting the man they were chasing rush into the elevator behind him. They stopped running as the man they had originally been pursuing disappeared behind the elevator doors.

“What the hell!! We're trying to stop that man! He's kidnapping a patient!” One of the guards, a burly man with a beard that ran up his cheeks, exclaimed angrily.

Jack turned to look behind him at the closed doors. “Oh, you were? Sorry.”

He smiled turning back around and walking toward the guards as the two men rushed up to meet him. The younger of the two, a sandy-haired blonde, stopped when he saw the blood on Jack's face. “Hey man, you hurt?”
Jack smiled wide. "Why yes, yes I am hurt. My girl isn't here, a part of me was torn away and I'm beyond feeling anything but pain at the moment. And so are you."

Jack dropped low, not quite a crouch and swung his baton from the side, slamming the hard, heavy plastic into the blonde's knee. The sound of the man's knee cap breaking filled the hall. He let out a squawk of pain and fell back. The burly guard yelped. "What the..."

Jack rose in a graceful move, grinned and continued his swing, this time driving the baton in an upward sweep, the end of which caught this bearded guard under the chin and snapped his head back. The man fell backwards hitting the floor hard, his head bounced against the floor, out cold. The young blonde was trying to drag himself down the hall with a scream for help. Jack danced past him with a bounce of his head and a smile as he turned, swinging the baton downward to clip the guard in the forehead. The blonde dropped without another word. Jack frowned for a moment before he decided to beat the blonde's head in, then did the same for the other guard. Jack snarled, but smiled using the baton in a series of quick overhead strikes, his smile never faltering, until the backs of their heads were a gruesome mix of blood, bone and brains.

Jack grinned. "Life's a bowl of cherries fellas and this is the pits!" Jack laughed, then frowned. He took a breath and paused to wipe the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand, smearing blood across his skin. He smiled again. "That was fun. Harley would have loved this."

With a pained sigh, Jack turned and strolled to the elevator. He pushed the button, slipped inside when the doors opened. He chuckled and waved at the two bloody and dead men. "Tootles."

*Karol was holding his daughter gently to him, Dale standing next to the man and clicked on a flashlight he had clipped to his belt just as Jack stepped off the elevator. "Are we ready?" Jack asked, walking quickly toward them.

"Yeah, did I hear an alarm?" Dale asked glancing up toward the ceiling listening. Jack nodded. "Yeah, started about a minute ago. Guess they've started finding the bodies."

Dale's face complexion paled, his voice a whisper. "Bodies?"

Jack shrugged. "I wasn't going to leave Akrahm without leaving a few gifts behind." He smiled. Dale broke out in a cold sweat, but Karol had already slipped into the tunnel. "Come on! We need to get moving."

Jack walked past Dale. "We have a map right?"

Dale didn't follow right away, but Jack stopped in the tunnel's entrance. "You coming?"

Dale swallowed and nodded thinking to his own dead body in the morgue. "Yeah...yeah I'm coming." He pulled out his phone. "Alex sent me a map a few minutes ago. Let's get going."

Jack smiled and patted Dale on the back as they entered the tunnels together. "You're a good man Dale."
Better Run, Better Run

Crane studied himself in the mirror of his private room while he finished knotting his tie around his neck. He smiled with the thought that tonight he would begin the process of rebuilding Harleen, truly rebuilding her to create the woman that could stand alongside his new identity. He had wanted to take the process much slower, to break her apart piece by piece until there was nothing of her former self, but circumstances had prevented that. He would have to begin tonight using far harsher methods than he had previously used, but he was flexible, at least where his experiments were concerned. He enjoyed order, but fear had taught him that sometimes a little chaos was good. Chaos kept him on his toes and forced his brain to work quickly to come up with a solution. Crane smiled again. Harleen was forcing him to work on the “fly” so to speak. She was quite a woman, just what he wanted to stand at his side when he rebuilt Gotham.

He had just finished fixing his tie to his satisfaction when his cellphone rang. Crane frowned; no one should be calling him at this hour. He reached over and picked the phone up from the dresser, glanced at himself in the mirror and fixed his hair as he hit the button to answer.

“Crane here,” he answered holding the phone to his ear while he adjusted his suit jacket and ran a hand over his hair.

“Sir, we have a problem at the asylum. Jack Wayne has escaped. He also released some of the other patients on the sixth floor. It’s turning into chaos here!” The voice on the other end was like many of the other voices of the men he hired to work at the asylum. They all sounded the same to him.

“What?” Crane kept his voice calm, but his anger flared at being called when he had work to do, and it took a few seconds for the actual words to sink in. “Jack Wayne has escaped?”

“Yes sir, he killed at least two guards and two orderlies, and there might be more. We think they’ve gone to the basement.” The voice of the guard on the other end sounded panicked.

Crane’s brow furrowed as he tried to imagine why the basement. In the next second he knew.

Crane whispered. “They’ve?”

The man at the asylum sounded on the verge of hysterics. “He has an orderly helping him and a guard...they’ve a hostage too.”

Crane asked with confusion. “A hostage?”

“A young woman who was in the suicide ward,” the man said.

Crane’s eyes widened. A young woman from the suicide ward...a guard helping him...Karlo. Crane’s lips twitched. The anger that filled his eyes would have been frightening if anyone else had been in his presence to witness it. Karlo was working with Jack Wayne, Crane realized. Against him!!!

Crane snarled. “Where did you say they were headed?”

The guard’s voice trembled at the sound of Crane’s fury. “Ah...the basement sir.”

Crane started to pace the room. “They are heading to the storm tunnels.”

The guard sounded confused. “Storm tunnels sir?”
Crane took a calming breath and answered as if he were speaking to a child. “There is a boarded up section of wall down there, behind that is a tunnel leading into the old Gotham storm tunnel system. It will take them into the city if they follow the correct path. That is where they are headed. The storm tunnels. Send men down there. I don't care what you have to do, stop him. Kill him if necessary.”

“Kill, sir?” The man asked in shock.

Crane nodded though the man on the other end wouldn't be able to see him. “Yes. I don't want Jack Wayne leaving the asylum, ever. Do you understand?”

The guard on the other end sounded nervous. “Yes, yes sir, I understand. Uh...what about the other patients?”

“Do I have to explain to you how to do your job? Restrain them and get them back in their rooms!” Crane snarled.

“Yes sir,” the guard replied swiftly. Crane ended the call and slipped the phone into the inside pocket of his jacket with a smile. The storm tunnels, how perfect, he thought. They had no idea what was down there, what they would be walking into...like Birthday Boy, Crane had other little...experiments that he kept. What lived in the tunnels was another one.

The one in the basement had become a little troublesome, thus the blockage between the tunnels and the asylum, not that it kept him out, but it did give him pause. But Crane had kept his pet entertained with gifts through the months. This pet was not a failed one...oh no...Barton Mathis was many things, but he was certainly not a failed experiment. Crane chuckled. They would most likely run into his friend down there...Mathis hadn't had living flesh to work with in such a long time. It would be such a treat for him to have something alive and kicking. Crane smiled. It would be a fitting end for Jack and his traitorous friends.

*  

Harley woke slowly, stiff; her whole body ached. She groaned and rolled onto her side. She felt as if the orderlies had carried her around like a sack of potatoes, maybe even dropped her a few times. She had only been on her side a few minutes when she realized that she wasn't on her cot in her cell, but on an actual bed. Her eyes flew open and Harley pushed herself up to a sitting position, a little too quickly; a wave of dizziness forced her to lay back down. She groaned, putting her fingers to the bridge of her nose. She let herself lay there for a few minutes, letting the vertigo ease before she tried to sit up again.

The first moment of relief she felt was realizing she was still in the dress she had been wearing when she was in Crane's office. Well at least she hadn't been stripped again she thought to herself, just her shoes were missing. The next thing she realized was that there was a light on, a bedside table light. Harley frowned as she examined her surroundings; though the light only illuminated a little of the room clearly it was enough for her to see where she had been taken. She was on a large queen size bed with an off-white comforter, no designs on it, no decoration at all. The bed itself was a simple rectangle of basic dark wood, all sharp edges and squares, nice, but lacking anything one could call character.

The room was white, the walls had that “modern” white look to them, but the white only made the few decorations on the wall stand out in sharp contrast. Along one wall were two rows of African tribal masks. On another wall, there were five masks that all looked to be from India and on the last wall were tribal masks that looked to be South American. She couldn't see them clearly from her position on the bed, but it looked as if each mask display had a little plaque underneath, like a
museum exhibit, and now that she thought about it, that was almost exactly the feel she was getting from the place, the sterile, perfectly preserved sense of a museum. There was even the same eerie quiet that prevailed in a museum, that unspoken agreement that everyone and everything should remain still and silent when viewing art or gazing at relics of the past.

All of the masks on display gave Harley a feeling of unease, a sense of fear. Each one showed a horrible face, twisted, demonic, nightmarish. She frowned and shivered. She slowly turned and placed her feet on the floor. The wood floor was cool, but not cold. Harley eased herself up to a standing position. Whatever drug Crane had used on her made her legs feel rubbery, which resulted in another wave of vertigo that made her contemplate sitting down again, but Harley kept her feet under her with an effort. She took a steadying breath, clenched her fingers into fists, and walked slowly toward the bedroom door, which was slightly ajar. She pushed the door open carefully—no creaking, she thought with relief—and looked out into the hall.

The hallway was much like the bedroom; the walls were a plain harsh white, but rather than masks, the walls held several large paintings, each hung in the center of wide sections of the wall, putting the images clearly on display in such a way that one's vision was drawn directly to the painting. The stillness that she had felt in the bedroom continued out here in the hall. Harley frowned at the track lighting above each piece of art that ran down the hall and whispered to herself, “This guy needs a new hobby.” Harley walked carefully and stopped at the first image. It was a large photograph in black and white. The focus was an extreme close-up of someone painted up to look like a demon. Under the image was a little plaque with the title of the picture, “Eater” by Moppee.

Harley made a face and walked to the next image. It was a large painting of a sightless head, its mouth open and all sorts of horrors were spilling into the gaping mouth. The colors were all blacks and pus yellow, the background of the image showed the remains of buildings that looked to Harley as if they had been bombed, reminding her of images she had seen as a child. It had been in a school book, a photo of the destroyed remains of cities in Poland during World War II. The sky in the painting was the same sort of jaundiced quality as the large head. The painting was untitled, the artist Zdzisław Beksiński.

The doctor part of Harley's brain kicked in. If this was Crane's home, then the man was more than just obsessed about fear—he was consumed. But there was a strange sort of balance between the look in his home and what he was displaying. It was clear to her that he was trying to maintain a balance between the violent and gruesome world of fear, versus the tightly controlled order of his home and office. Two opposing forces clashing and pushing against one another. In Harley's expert opinion, something was going to break. The masks, the art work, some of which she had seen in his office, were all extentions of his compulsion. The man worshipped fear, at least that was Harley's opinion, but it was more than that...all of this was Crane's attempt at controlling fear. That was what he wanted to do, control it and thereby control others. She had suspected as much, that not being in control, lacking power, was Crane's biggest fear, just like she had told him. But seeing this house, this fanatical need for order and cleanliness...Harley shivered.

She wrapped her arms around herself as she continued down the hall and saw that each section of wall contained a new image of horror, of fear from paintings by Nicola Samorí to drawings by Aaron Bussard. It wasn't until she was near the end of the hall that she heard the first strands of music, a sound of a mournful violin.

Then she heard Crane's voice, though she didn't see him. “Tartini Violin Sonata in G minor "Devil's Trill Sonata," one of my favorite pieces.”

Harley looked around the corner into the living room of the house. It was a grand living room with tall almost cathedral-like ceilings. All the walls were the same stark white color, each holding a work
of art. As Harley stepped into the room, she saw that one wall was all glass, a wide clear window that looked out on the Gotham skyline. She wasn’t sure where she was, but the house was clearly located on the outskirts of Gotham, close enough and high enough up that Crane had a rather gorgeous view of the city. There was a fireplace against the far wall trimmed in an only slightly different shade of white from the walls and a fire burned within it providing a little bit of warmth to this room that the room she had just left lacked. Over the fireplace was a sculptured panel replica which depicted Lord Narasimha killing a demon, (at least according to the little plate description near the fireplace.)

The floors were pale, almost grey wood with a long couch with plain clean lines, also in grey. A white coffee table with nothing on it, nothing to mar the perfection of the surface, sat perfectly before the couch.

Harley gazed around. Everything in the room was arranged just so; no clutter, no mess, everything had a place. There were tall white bookshelves on the wall, the books lined up on the shelves in perfect order. No book stuck at an odd angle, or taller than the rest, nor shorter. Each book was perfectly aligned with the other books on the shelves. In this room there was the addition of grotesque and nightmarish sculptures. One stand had a replica of a marble piece by Eugène Thiver's work “Nightmare” which was of a nude woman reclined on her side with a nightmare creature perched on her hip, the woman reaching out in agony to try to push it away.

The sculpture next to that was a human-animal hybrid, with the body of a big horn sheep, yet the face was human. Harley made a face of disgust, yet at the same time, fascination. She walked around the piece to view the plate with the name on it, Kate Clark “Tale.”

The strange and frightening art pieces extended onto every wall space that wasn't taken up with something else. She could see a large dark painting of the darkest, terrifying imagery. She seemed compelled to step closer as if being drawn by the image. When Harley stopped in front of the image, she realized it was a large print instead of an actual painting. Harley stood there staring at the image, her eyes almost overwhelmed by how much was occurring in the image. She realized instantly it was a painting of hell. Her eyes wandered over the image. The center of the print was dominated by a large black furred devil devouring a human, surrounded by smaller devils torturing and shoving humans toward the center devil. Every space of the painting showed the torture of humans with horrible bestial demons along with them. The image made her skin crawl. That was when she heard Crane's smooth voice behind her.

“It's a print of a fresco, painted by Giovanni da Modena. The image represents a scene from Dante Alighieri's Inferno. Some find the image disturbing, but I find it quite peaceful.” Harley turned around to see that Crane stood by the fireplace with a glass of something amber in his hand. He was dressed in an all black three-piece suit, the only color coming from the red tie he wore. His hair was slicked back making it look darker in the dim firelight. Her heart skipped a beat. She hadn't heard him come into the room; he had moved without making a sound.

He smiled at her. “So, do you like my home?”

Harley stood still, but her body was tense. She was ready to run or fight. “It's a bit sterile.”

Crane shrugged. “Perhaps. I enjoy a certain level of order.”

Harley frowned. “Odd, since fear is a little disorderly don't you think?”

He took another sip from his glass and set it on the mantel. Harley watched him, her eyes narrowed. “What do you want from me?” she hissed, her blue eyes shooting around the room looking for something she could use as a weapon.
Crane smiled. “Want? Why my dear, I've been perfectly clear on what I want from you. I want you to become something greater than yourself. But I brought you here because I wanted to show you something, to show you the next step. To share with you something that is very important to me. Something I've created that is special.”

He stepped away from the fireplace. Harley took a step back. She felt vulnerable without her shoes, barefoot in a dress. She held herself in such a way that it was clear she would flee the first chance she had, but Crane simply walked over to the couch and sat down.

“Come here, my dear.” He patted the seat next to him. Harley didn't budge from her position. She only narrowed her eyes further, giving him a dirty look. He shrugged and pulled out a case from under the coffee table and set it on the table in front of him. The case was the size of a large briefcase, metal, with a clean silver look to it.

He clicked opened the tabs and flipped opened the case. “Would you like to see my mask?”

“What?” Harley asked in confusion.

“We all wear masks Dr. Quinzel. You as a doctor of the mind should know that. We wear masks both figuratively and literally. I want to show you mine. It is a mask that is helping me become my true self.”

Harley stared at him for a heartbeat. She had no idea what he was getting at, but she didn't like it...she didn't like any of this. She stared at him in confusion, but then Crane smiled at her, a condescending, pitiful smile. Before he could do anything else, she dashed from the room. She raced out of the living room to head toward the other side of the house where she discovered another hall as she searched for a door. She found one within second of entering the hall. She nearly slammed into the door when she slid across the floor. She reached for the knob, grabbed it with both hands and twisted. Nothing happened. She tried again, still nothing. The knob didn't budge.

“Shit, shit, shit!!!” Harley hissed struggling with the knob to no avail.

She ran her fingers over the door, looking for a locking mechanism, something that would open the door, but there was nothing, just the smooth surface of the damnable white door. She reached for the knob once more, but the knob wouldn't move.

She heard Crane's voice, again she hadn't hear him stepping up behind her.

“Did you know that fear drives everything? Every decision we make is motivated by fear. We find someone to share our lives with because we fear being alone, we work because we fear starving, we have children because we fear disappearing. Fear is the glue that holds society together, fear is power my dear. Fear is what starts wars, makes people turn to religion, fear is the great motivator, the great equalizer as well. Without fear, we are nothing. Even lower animals experience fear; fear is what makes living worth while, it tells us we're alive. And if you can control your fear, you become a god.”

Harley turned around when she sensed Crane was right behind her. What she saw wasn't Crane any longer, but a nightmarish figure. The man before her wore a twisted gas mask, the face of which reminded Harley of a scarecrow, only this one looked as if the burlap face was melting, formed against his face and illuminating the skull underneath. The mouth of the mask, the lips, were stitched together in wide stitches that showed Crane's mouth underneath and he was smiling. Over the creepy mask Crane wore a hood that hid his hair and head, making him looked less human, like a type of Grim Reaper, stalking her. In addition to the mask, Crane wore a noose around his neck which Harley found even more frightening since he wore all this over his suit, the mix of order and chaos.
But what really made Harley's blood run cold were the needles. The contraption that Crane wore over his chest and arms looked positively medieval yet highly sophisticated, almost reminding her of a bomb the way the cylinders wrapped around his torso. Several tubes circled his torso, each containing a viscous looking orange fluid that seemed to move on its own in the cylinders, moving and shifting in a hypnotic wave. Long thin tubes ran from the large chambers around his torso, over his chest and along his shoulders where they continued to run down his arms, held in place by metal bands around his biceps and forearms, along the back of his hands to the syringes that were worn over the tops of his own fingers, or were his fingers in the syringes? Harley couldn't tell, all she could see was that the fingers of each hand ended in syringes, the needles dripping with the noxious orange fluid. Additional syringes were worn at Crane's shoulder, wrapped around him like ammunition, each filled with more of the strange orange fluid.

Crane stepped closer, his arms held out to his sides like a scarecrow that had been plucked from a field. “Witness my rebirth...” he hissed.

Harley's eyes widened. As Crane stepped closer, she could see his eyes looked milky, cloudy, like the eyes of a corpse under the mask. “Come with me my dear, take the last step, be the Lady Crow to my Scarecrow,” Crane cooed softly, stepping closer. “Overcome your fear! Become what you are meant to be!”

Harley hissed. “Never. I belong to no one but Jack and he belongs to me, you demented Halloween prop!!”

She began to turn, ready to run again, to try to find an escape, but Crane moved surprisingly quickly to slam her up against the door. As her head banged into the door, she felt the syringes on his hands jab into her upper chest right under her collarbones, immediately pushing the toxin into her.

Harley screamed in pain as the syringes expelled their toxin into her body. The pain was like nothing she had experienced. The toxin burned into her muscles, spreading acidic fire through her upper torso and into her neck and face. Crane yanked the syringes back and immediately the liquid raced through the tubes on his body to fill them again. Crane tilted his head and gazed down at Harley.

“Soon you will see what I have done for you and you will thank me.” Crane smiled behind his mask, dropped into a squat, and caught Harley before she sank completely to the floor. He held her in his arms, stroking his hand over her hair while Harley convulsed.

* * *

Dale held his phone up in front of him. The light casting back into his face made him look eerie and undead; the light created an almost skeletal look to Dale's features. It was almost enough to make Jack laugh. Jack walked over to Dale, twirling his baton as if he were simply on a casual stroll.

Back behind them, Karlo was holding his daughter in his arms, the young woman having yet to wake up. Jack glanced behind him, watching the man cradling his daughter. He actually felt sorry for the former actor. He knew how he would feel if it was Harley...Jack closed his eyes for a moment as an intense wave of pain washed over him; his whole being ached without her. How he had endured all these weeks without her next to him he didn't know, but now, just when he had thought he was about to have her again, she had been plucked away from him. Jack pressed his lips together on the anguish he was feeling. Killing those people had helped, a way to vent his pain, but he needed her and he needed her now. Just knowing that Crane had her someplace, alone...trying to make her his...trying to take her from him...Jack's whole body vibrated with rage. He took a deep calming breath. Focus now, murder later.

Jack let his thoughts drift and he smiled thinking about his hands around Crane's neck, squeezing the life slowly from the psychiatrist. Squeezing, squeezing...no, no, that would be too easy a death.
Something more graphic, something to draw out Crane's suffering...He let out a breath he hadn't been aware he was holding. He would kill Crane...slowly. In the most painful way possible. He promised that, not just to himself, but for Harley. Crane was going to suffer for all he had done and then some.

*  

Jack rubbed a hand over his stubbled cheeks, glancing back the way they had come. He could see the asylum behind them, cast in a thin light, then the dark frame of the tunnel entrance leading into the darkness where they now stood. For a moment he wondered if this was how Alice felt falling into the rabbit hole, a clear separation between two worlds. Jack gave a slight snort thinking that Jervis would enjoy the imagery. Jack let his flashlight beam roam over the walls where he stood. The tunnels were made of brick which was now covered in a thin film of slime and moss. The smell of rot and old water filled their nostrils. There were puddles of stale water where they were standing, the water looked black in the dim light from Dale's phone and the flashlights, looking like liquid darkness.

Dale's eyes were moving rapidly over the map he held in his hand, his brow furrowed in confusion. The map was not only small on the phone screen, it wasn't exactly clear either. “I...I'm not sure this is going to help much.”  

Jack came over to take a look at the map, leaning against Dale and draping an arm over the bigger man's shoulders. Dale gave Jack a sidelong look, but said nothing, simply moved the phone to give Jack a better view of the downloaded map. Jack frowned studying it. The map was indeed confusing and it wasn't just a map of the storm drain tunnels; there was an overlaid map of the sewers tunnels, and some other tunnels that were unmarked creating an almost surreal image of an extremely complicated chutes and ladders game board.

Jack chewed his bottom lip studying the tiny map then pointed at the small section on the phone's map. “I think...” He glanced from the phone, then shone the flashlight he held before him, the beam moved through the darkness, but all the light showed was that the tunnel just went straight on into darkness.

“Well I suppose we just keep going straight for right now.” Jack chuckled. “Straight ahead and onward. Can you text Alex? Maybe he can clarify the map some?”

Dale shook his head. “I can't get any reception down here.”

Jack swung the flashlight around looking at the old brick overhead. “Well, I guess it's just us and the darkness.”

Dale paled. Why did Jack have to say it like that? The big man thought to himself.

*  

Karlo was a little ways behind the two men, leaning against the wall as he gazed down at his daughter. She looked nothing like the happy girl he remembered. Of course, he hadn't seen in her well over a year, but he was sure this was not the girl he remembered. She was so thin and pale, her hair looked limp and lifeless which made him wonder if she had been starving herself too. He glanced down at her bandaged wrists. The light coming from the basement was thin, but he could see the stark white bandages against her skin clearly as if the image was burned into his mind.

Karlo felt tears burn the back of his eyes. He had failed her, his little girl—he had failed her. This was all his fault, he thought. If only he had...he shook his head, as if to expel the negative notions.
He saw no point in dwelling on what he should have done—now he could only focus on what he needed to do, which was get her out of here and someplace safe...away from him and away from her mother. She didn't need either of them in her life. She needed good, caring people to watch over her, not two self-centered assholes like her parents. Clearly they weren't suited to raise such a delicate, beautiful flower as their daughter. Especially now that her father had been turned into some sort of monster, a freak. Karlo frowned, maybe he could take her out of state, get her to Metropolis where his parents lived. They would take her, hide her without question...if he can only get out of here alive with her... Karlo's eyes widened. The elevator had just arrived which could only mean one thing. He pushed himself up from the wall, hurrying to join the other two. “We need to move. Someone's coming!”

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the elevator doors opened. The elevator practically vomited out a group of seven guards.

Karlo looked back in a panic. “Come on, we need to move.” The actor took off down the tunnel without a light and quickly disappeared into the darkness.

Jack glanced behind him. “Oh goodie, maybe we can ask for directions?”

Dale hissed. “Oh for fuck's sake.”

Jack giggled. “Come on!” He took off at a run down the tunnel. Dale shook his head clicking on his flashlight and shoved his phone in his pocket as he cursed at their misfortunes. “Fuck, fuck, fuck!”

* 

Alex looked down at his phone muttering to himself. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.”

The four of them were sitting in a large black SUV that practically screamed, “Getaway Car.”

They were parked in Aparo park, hidden among some trees and bushes which were providing modest cover for the SUV, along with the darkness and cold of the Gotham evening which was keeping those who would frequent the park at night inside which was great for the vehicle's occupants.

Frost sat behind the wheel. He turned around, placed his arm along the back of the seat and frowned at Alex. “You know they're underground right? They ain't going to get any reception down there.”

Alex sighed. “I know, but I was fucking hoping we would hear from them before they hit the fucking tunnels. What if something went the fuck wrong? What am I saying? Something always goes fucking wrong.”

Alice, who sat beside Alex, put her arms around him and squeezed him. “They'll be fine. Jack and Harley are smart and they have help. They'll be here before you know it.”

Alex muttered, leaning into Alice's embrace. “Just wish I had time to find a better fucking map or come up with a better fucking plan.”

Sandra was sitting in the front with Frost. She had been fairly quiet since they picked her up. Clearly her mind was on her boyfriend.

She murmured. “I just hope they're okay. Dr. Crane is a monster.”

Frost turned back to her. “Why didn't you and Dale ever go to the police if you knew he was doing shit to the patients?”
Sandra frowned, her cheeks flushing with shame. “Fear. Like I said, the man is a monster, but we couldn't really prove anything. If we had gone to the police, Crane would have simply covered up what he was doing. What's more, Arkham and Crane are respected doctors while Dale and I are just grunt workers. Who do you think the police would have believed?”

Frost studied her then reached out and patted her hand that she had settled on her lap. “Sorry. Didn't mean to sound like a dick.”

Sandra shook her head. “No, it's all right. We should have...gone to the police. But Crane runs Arkham and...I've seen and heard things...”

Alice leaned forward putting a hand on Sandra's shoulders in a show of support. “Hey, don't worry about it, you and Dale are doing something now.”

Sandra nodded reaching up to touch Alice's hand. “Thank you.”

Alex groaned dropping his head back against the seat. “I fucking hate waiting.”

*  

Harley sank to the floor as the fear toxin burned in her bloodstream causing her to feel nauseated, left her head spinning, and her heart felt as if it were beating hard enough that it would rip through her chest. She blacked out or passed out, she wasn't sure which, only that she was dwelling in the darkness for a few moments before her vision snapped back. Her hands shook when she reached up to touch her face.

The room around her seemed to waver and shift. The stark white walls were too white, blinding, while at the same time the walls weaved and wavered, as if there were creatures living under the surface of the walls, twisting, shifting, ready to break through in places along the perfect white, ready to burst like blemishes. There were spots on the wall where the blackness began to leak through, a slow spreading stain, just a dot of darkness that spread like ink on the surface of water.

Harley's head felt heavy and each movement caused her vision to spin, her stomach to roil. Her muscles and stomach felt jittery. Her vision was dragged upward when she saw something move, a thick black shadow against the perfect, blinding white. The shadow seemed to grow, lengthening, spreading along her field of vision while accompanied by a sound, like a moan that had gone on too long, the sound like a stretched out groan, creaking, the sound becoming higher, longer as if pull and yanked along a painful surface, growing until Harley cried out and covered her ears staring up into the face of a monster.

The Scarecrow loomed over her. It's large hollow eyes glowed a deep molten orange mixed with a brown rot that wove through the color, reminding her of pumpkins left too long on the porch, where they began to sink in on themselves. The Scarecrow's mouth opened wide, tugging against the thick stitches in it lips that held the mouth together. The hollow of the mouth was filled with teeth like the sharp points of needles. The burlap face seemed to melt back showing the skull underneath with living things moving and shifting under the fabric like the walls were doing. The monster leaned over her, its very presence forcing her back to the floor. She pushed herself up on her hands, stared at the monster, her muscles trembling, but unable to move her away from her tormentor. She could smell the sweet decay of rotting death on its breath while the figure loomed over her.

“Tell me Harleen...tell me what it is you see...let the fear take over, let it shatter you and leave you stripped bare.” The Scarecrow's voice was a combination of thick honey and oozing pus that rolled over her skin and seeped into her pores.
Harley whimpered trying to push herself away from the Scarecrow, inching backwards across the floor, her bare feet making soft squeaks against the floor’s polished surface while she pushed herself backwards, but the Scarecrow seemed to move toward without ever shifting its position. It reached out with long needle like claws. The orange glow of the liquid looked harsh against the backdrop of the monster's darkness. The creature grabbed her by her shoulders, preventing her from moving any further.

“You are my pretty little lady now Harleen. There is nowhere for you to go, no escape for you. The only place you can go is into the fear...let it consume you. Fear will lead you down the path to me...it will clear your mind and set you free to become the creature of nightmares I know you can be...”

Harley screamed and tried to push herself away from it, but the Scarecrow's fingers seemed to melt into her flesh. Harley began to cry. “NO!”

She jerked, trying to break free, but it's fingers were in her, the needles pushing deeper. It was as if her body was absorbing the monster into herself. Harley screamed as tears ran down her cheeks.

“You are going to belong to me now...” The Scarecrow leaned foward, its mouth widening, a large endless cavern filled with a deadly orange light drawing her, pulling her toward him.

Harley screamed as the Scarecrow expanded, grew to become a creature so large it filled the room, while the orange light from its mouth and eyes filled her vision. She screamed until she was hoarse trying to shove herself away from the monster, but for what seemed forever to her, she couldn't move. Then, just as suddenly, she was unable to move, she found herself sliding across the slick floor backwards, but his hands were part of her and she couldn't move far, the extension between them yanking her back. Harley felt hysteria claw at the edges of her mind. “NO!”

She yanked back, but she couldn't break free.

“Give in Harleen, give in to me...” Scarecrow leaned in closer, his mouth opening wider, becoming a vast cavern that wanted to suck her under. Then the things under its skin burst forth to spew maggots, fat black spiders, thick black snakes and other slime-coated creatures that she had no name for, spewed from every orifice along with a thick, black, noxious fluid that dripped thickly from the teeth and lips of the Scarecrow. The whole of the toxic mixture poured from the mouth and eyes. Harley screamed shrilly. She lashed out, her fist striking Crane in the face. Crane let go of her in surprise, his hands coming up to grab at his nose in shock at the flash of pain that was accompanied by a gush of warm blood from his nose. Harley had broken it.

Harley twisted her body around, coming to her feet. She struggled for a moment trying to gain her momentum, but the floor was slick and she was terrified. Her feet seemed incapable of finding purchase, they slipped against the surface threatening to throw her face first into the floor, but just when she was about to give up, she gained ground. She was able to propel herself forward away from the nightmare.

Crane snarled. “RUN! GO AHEAD AND RUN! THERE'S NO PLACE FOR YOU TO GO!! THIS IS MY REALM YOU'RE IN! I KNOW EVERY HALL, EVERY ROOM. YOU CAN'T LEAVE!!”

Harley stumbled, pitched forward for a moment, the walls and floor twisted and turned like a funhouse mirror. She reached out trying to steady herself, but when she touched the wall, things spewed forth and raced up her arm. Harley screamed again, trying to deny what she saw, but she felt them too. “NO!!”

Shaking, hystertical, the hiss and snarl of something close behind her, pursuing her and forcing her
forward, Harley ran again while swiping the nightmarish insects and other things from her arms. Harley raced down the long hall. She turned to see the Scarecrow lumbering toward her, its body swaying side to side, its steps like that of a prowling predator as steam hissed from its deformed mouth while a black substance dripped from its mouth, splattering the floor in great wet plops of goo. The Scarecrow lurched after her while hissing her name. “Harleen, come here Harleen, come to me...”

Harley raced away, heading down the hall that suddenly seemed to stretch on in front of her forever...no matter how much she moved, the white hall kept extending beyond her, lenghtening...

“Come here pretty, pretty!!” the creature behind her yelled.

Harley closed her eyes. “Not real, not real...” ,p>The Scarecrow laughed. “Oh, I'm very real.”

*

The three men hadn't delved very far into the tunnels when they heard the first gun shot crack behind them accomanpied by the beams of several flashlights. The echo of the gun shot reviberated down the dark tunnel. Everyone ducked with Jack saying in surprise.

“They're shooting at us? I call foul!”

Dale hissed. “Oh fuck, fuck, fuck!”

They kept running, their flashlights wobbling in the darkness ahead of them, joined by the flashlights of their pursuers creating an almost strobe-like affect ahead of them, creating a dizzying sight. They had run another few dozen feet when another shot rang out and someone yelled. “STOP!!”

Jack yelled back. “Stop or you'll what? Shoot?? Not much incentive there!” Jack muttered. “Why do they always yell stop? How stupid do they think we are?”

Panting, Dale pointed. “Up ahead! There's a fork in the tunnel.”

“Which way?” Karlo asked breathlessly

Dale fumbled with his phone, the sounds of the pursuring guards' footfalls echoed in the ancient tunnel. Jack grabbed Dale. “We don't have time for that! Come on.” They took off running as more shots rang out, one coming close enough that it shattered the brick wall by Jack's head sending bit of debris flying. Jack winced as slivers of exploded brick hit him in the face, cutting into his cheek.

Jack cursed as white hot pain ripped across his cheek followed by the hot ooze of blood.

“Fuck! Dale, move it!!” Jack turned the bigger man and shoved him down the tunnel to the right.

The sounds of spalshing water mixed with the noises of shouts, the flashes of beams of light and bursts of gun fire followed behind them. They kept running until there was another turn in the tunnel, this one to the left. Jack slipped in the water on the floor of the tunnel and slammed his shoulder up against the wall. Dale slipped as well, dropping his flashlight, which skittered across the floor, then spun creating a crazy disco ball effect as the light shone everywhere for a heartbeat showing everything and nothing at the same time. Karlo was ahead of them, Jack could hear the splash of the man running. Jack just barely caught a glimpspe Karlo as Dale's light spun around highlighting the man's back at the moment he turned a corner up ahead. Jack pulled himself from the wall, another gun shot rang out blasting brick, morter and slime that burst next to Jack's head.

Jack ducked and hissed. “Shit!”
He grabbed a hold of Dale by the shoulders and shoved the man ahead of him again.

“Go! Go!” Jack snarled.

Dale stumbled, almost pitching forward with the strength of Jack's push, but he kept his feet under him and took off, Jack close behind leaving the flashlight behind. The two men ran down the tunnel, turning the corner to follow Karlo. Now with only Jack's flashlight to provide any light, the tunnels were more confusing. Jack focused on keeping Karlo in his sights while they ran in complete darkness with only the one flashlight and no idea where the tunnel was taking them. The sounds of gunfire followed reverberated from the walls again, punctuated by the guards yelling. Jack turned to look over his shoulder once, the bright flash of the gun and the beam of a flashlight blinded him for a split second.

Jack shielded his eyes with his hand, but it was enough for the beam of light to disorient him for a moment. He turned back only to nearly stumble in his effort to keep up with Dale and Karlo, his vision filled with spots.

As the three made their way down the next tunnel, the ceiling seemed to suddenly drop, the side walls closed in, narrower, which forced them to crouch and move slowly, but they kept going straight ahead. They had to run in single file, pushing forward as the space became smaller. Jack heard the guards close behind them shouting to one another, but he could tell they were right behind them. He pushed through the tight space when the tunnel sudden burst open again into a larger room. Jack stumbled out behind Dale, panting lightly as he took a second to shine his light around. He could see Karlo where he stood in the middle of the room looking around, his daughter held tightly in his arms. Dale was panting, his hands on his knees. Jack moved his flashlight around the room in a quick circuit; they had three choices, left, right or forward.

Another gun shot went off, this one striking Jack in the back of the shoulder. The bullet ripped through Jack's shoulder and out the front in a spray of blood, causing him to stumble foward and dropped to his knees. The seven guards came stumbling into the room, spilling in like rats, the first having gotten the shot off that hit Jack, but the others were being forced into the room in single file, unable to shoot right away as they struggled to become oriented and spread out at the same time.

Karlo put his daughter down as quickly and gently as he could before he rushed the man who shot Jack. Karlo, like before when he had killed those people that put him in Blackgate, experienced a “blackout,” his rage taking over and he moved surprisingly fast, without thought of the possible consequences of rushing an armed man. Karlo grabbed the man's outstretched arm; his hands wrapped around the guards wrist, then in the next moment there was a loud snap. Karlo had given the guard's wrist a hard, decisive twist, breaking the wrist. The guard let out a bloodcurdling cry of pain as he dropped his gun from useless fingers.

Jack, hurt but not down, rolled out of the way as Karlo threw the guard across the room. The flashlight the guard had been holding hit the ground and spun, putting on a light show in the chamber as the beam spun crazily over the walls.

Jack lunged and grabbed the fallen weapon in his hands and rolled at the same time, coming up on one knee with the weapon aimed toward the guards.

The roaming beams of the flashlights made it hard to focus, but Jack grinned. Jack knew by the feel that he was holding a Colt 1991 which held eight bullets. He couldn't be sure, but he was going to guess the man had only fired the one which had gone through his own shoulder. Jack grinned; that left him seven bullets, more than he needed. Jack didn't hesitate as he shot the first guard that he saw illuminated in a beam of light from the spinning flashlight, hitting the man square in the chest. That seemed to cause a chaotic reaction, the other guards shouted, shots were fired randomly which sent
bullets ricocheting in the chamber. Karlo threw himself down in a crouch hoping to avoid bullets and flying debris.

Jack rose to his feet after the first shot and rushed forward, doing a slight spin like a dancer swinging his body to the side as he shot another guard in the head. (Dale, as soon as he saw Jack grab the gun rushed over to Karlo's daughter, picked the young woman up and rushed her out of the way to the far end of the chamber, using his body to protect her and hoping to God that no stray bullets found their way into his back or other body parts.)

Karlo rose up as soon as the ricochets seemed to stop and grabbed another guard by the front of his shirt, surprising the man who had clearly not seen him in the dark if his shocked expression was any indication. Karlo flung the man toward Jack like he was throwing skeet for Jack to shoot. The man stumbled toward Jack with neither his gun nor flashlight aimed at anything for a few seconds, which was enough time for Jack to grab the startled man by the collar, yank him to the side with one hand wrapped around the front of the guard's shirt and at the same time he shot the man in the head. Jack dropped that guard with a laugh.

The three remaining guards shuffled back putting some space between them and Karlo, one taking a shot at the older man while the other two tried to shoot Jack. Karlo threw himself to the floor, but the shot nicked him in the thigh and sent the actor stumbling to the ground where he hit hard, the fall knocking the breath from him.

Jack snickered with a hiss. "You know guys, violence is never the answer. It’s just a really good solution."

Jack laughed with maniacal glee.

He rushed forward, not giving the guards room or a chance to react, grabbing one by the neck and shooting him in the forehead before he threw the body into one of his companions, knocking that man off his feet. The last guard opened fire on Jack. (Dale kept his body protectively over Karlo's daughter, his hands over his head praying.) Jack felt one of the bullets brush painfully against his face, a hot graze. It almost felt to Jack like everything was in slow motion. A beam of light from one of the dropped flashlights illuminated the bullet that was speeding past him, yet close enough that he felt the wind from it, then the burn as the bullet skidded along his jaw, burning skin as it flew past him. Jack grinned viciously, the pain only heightened his senses, the blood running down his from his face felt good, invigorating. Jack lunged forward, the gun held in front of him, but his arms were not extended; they were held close to his body. The fallen guard had just gotten back to his feet as one of the spinning flashlights spun around to show the two guards Jack coming for him. They both panicked and shot wildly.

Jack was in front of both guards in an instant, reaching out and grabbing the barrel of his gun (Jack ignored the heat of his barrel against his palm) as he yanked the man forward with his left hand. Jack jammed the muzzle of his pistol against the guard's temple and shot the man twice in the head. He then spun out of the way as the other guard tried to shoot him. Jack rolled under and to the side, the guard making the mistake of holding his arm extended that held the weapon. Jack brought his right arm up, hitting the man's gun arm out of the way before Jack thrust his own weapon under the guard's jaw. Jack grinned at him, his blue eyes twinkling in the spinning lights from the fallen flashlights.

Jack hissed. "Yathzee!"

Then pulled the trigger.

*
Batman was perched on one of Gotham's many gargoyles that littered the buildings throughout the city. He was monitoring the police scanner with the communication device built into his cowl. Tonight was fairly quiet, though there had been an unusual robbery; the criminal had robbed a jewelry store, but had left a few clues...all in the form of riddles. Batman had gone to the scene and spoken with Gordon with a promise to work on the riddles while the GCPD detectives worked on them as well. He would contact Gordon if he learned anything. Right now though, Gotham was filled with the usual low end criminals stalking the night. He had left a few bad guys for the cops to pick up, but right now was a lull between work.

Batman frowned when he picked up the signal from the police radio. There was a problem at the asylum, apparently some of the patients had escaped their rooms. Batman listened...sixth floor, the violent patients were loose and causing issues at the asylum. Someone there had called the police. Bruce's heart sank...Jack. He hoped Jack was not in danger.

He leaped from the roof as he put in a call to Alfred. “Alfred, did you hear about the asylum?”

“Yes sir. You don't suppose Master Jack or Miss Harleen are in any trouble do you?”

“I'm on my way to find out. I'll keep you informed.” Batman cut off the call just as the Batmobile slid up next to him. He jumped in and took off, heading for Arkham.

* Karlo hurried over to his daughter as best he could. He was bleeding and limping badly. Dale had gone over to check on Jack who had flopped down on the wet floor, his arms resting on his knees as a fit of giggling shook his torso. Dale dropped down next to him lifting his face. Flashlights were scattered around the room making the room resemble a dance floor.

“Damn Jack. That looks bad.” Dale hissed before he moved to examine Jack's shoulder. Jack hissed in pain. “Don't worry, chicks dig scars...isn't that what they say?”

Dale huffed. “Shit...okay, I'm going to need to stop the bleeding. How are you doing Karlo?” Dale called over to the other man who had moved his daughter to his lap and was stroking her hair back from her slack face.

“I'm okay, though...yes, I'm bleeding still.”

Dale nodded. “Okay. I'm going to take care of Jack first, then you Karlo.”

Karlo nodded leaning back against the wall holding his daughter. Dale stood up going to the bodies of the guards and started to strip the shirts off of a couple of them. While Dale was busy doing that Jack frowned when he thought he heard a groan. He turned around to see the guard Karlo had dropped with a broken his wrist—the man was still alive. Jack pushed himself to his feet and walked over to the man who was lying on his side groaning loudly. The idiot, Jack thought to himself.

Jack stepped calmly over to the guard, who had his back to Jack and the others. Jack pushed his foot on the man's shoulder and rolled him onto his back. The guard couldn't be more than twenty-five, maybe twenty-eight at the most, but Jack doubted it. He had brown eyes and a mop of brown hair. Jack kicked the man's arm down that he was cradling against his chest and put his foot against the man's broken wrist. The guard screamed in pain.

Jack just smiled. “So smiley. Why were you shooting at us instead of using your delightful non-lethal ways of taking us in? Hmm?” Jack pressed down on the man's wrist.

The young guard screamed. “CRANE!! CRANE WANTS YOU DEAD!!”
Jack stuck his bottom lip out. “Aww...he don't wanna play with me anymore? I feel so...I'm just...pissed.” Jack smiled, having lowered his voice on the last word. “You know what...I doubt you're going to crawl your ass out of here, but if you do, you radio that prick and you tell him I'm coming for him and I'm going to hurt him, really, really bad.” Jack ground his foot on the man's wrist. “You got that buddy?”

“GOT IT, GOT IT!!” The guard yelled.

Jack grinned. “Fantastic.”

Then he kicked the guard in the face, knocking him out. Jack stopped for a moment and sighed. “Shoot...probably shouldn't have done that. Oh well, live and learn.”

Dale came over to him grimacing at the guard whose wrist now looked as if he would be lucky to ever use his hand again...Dale shuddered. “Here sit down—let me bandage that shoulder.”

Dale made Jack sit and carefully tore the fabric away from the bullet wound in the front, then made Jack lean foward while he did the same in the back.

Dale hissed. “This is going to leave an ugly scar, but I don't think anything vital was hit, like an artery, since the bleeding seems to be slowing on its own.”

“Oh goodie,” Jack said deadpan.

Dale took several minutes to check Jack's pulse then wrapped the wound up as best he could with what he had, which were the torn up remains of the dead guards' shirts. Dale padded the wound on both sides then wrapped the ripped cloth around Jack's shoulder. Dale next examined Jack's face, frowning as he checked the wound before shaking his head. “Not sure what I can do about that. You really need a doctor.”

Jack smiled. “I promise when we get out of here and get Harley back I'll find a doctor. Alex has one I'm sure that will work under the radar...or maybe Alfred...”

Dale didn't know who Alfred was and he wasn't sure he wanted to know, but he nodded and checked on Karlo. After a few more minutes, both men were bandaged the best Dale could do with what he had available to him. Dale sighed, tired and beyond feeling really anything at all except exhaustion. He pulled out his phone to examine the map, hoping they hadn't gotten themselves hopelessly lost.

Jack came over, moving a little slower than usual, but not by much. He stopped on his way over to Dale to search the bodies of the guards taking as many extra rounds as he could find for the gun he had confiscated. He glanced over at Dale and Karlo while removing one of the dead guard's holsters and ammo belt, before putting them on himself.

“You know, you both should take a gun. Crane wants me dead, I'm sure he would be happy enough to cut two more loose ends.”

Dale shuddered slightly. “I don't like guns.”

Jack adjusted the belt. “You might want to learn Dale. But, all right. I'll protect ya big guy.” Jack smiled, finished with the belt.

“Karlo?” Jack asked reaching down to pull one of the weapons from a dead guard's hand. Karlo looked up from his daughter then nodded. Jack grinned and waltzed over with the weapon. He handed the gun over before rejoining Dale who was studying the map on his phone. Jack leaned on
Dale putting his undamaged arm around the big man's shoulder looking down at the tiny map on the phone.

Jack twisted his lips. “I don't know about you buddy, but I have no idea where we are.”

Dale nodded in agreement. “We might be here.” He pointed to a section which he then magnified with a stroke of his fingers. The section of the map was clearly a large chamber with three passages leading off from it. Two of the passaged looked like they might actually turn back toward the asylum while the third option seemed to lead away. There didn't seem to be any other large chambers on the map though several smaller ones were sprinkled throughout the complicated system of bends and turns on the map.

Jack narrowed his eyes and nodded. “I think you're right. If we go down this way…”

Jack pointed with his finger, tracing a line in red that seemed to lead in the basic direction they wanted to go. “We should hit an opening out of these drains.”

Dale nodded glancing back Karlo. “You want me to carry her?”

Karlo shook his head. “I can handle her.”

Karlo stood up shakily, his wounded leg wobbled a bit, but he managed to keep his feet under him. He shifted his daughter's weight holding the young woman close to his chest, then nodded. “Which way?”

Jack glanced at the map, then Dale, before he pointed to the tunnel opening that led straight ahead. “That way.”

The men followed the tunnel for several feet, coming to yet another cross-roads, one way which continued straight, the other option turned left.

Dale studied their map, but he still couldn't be sure if he was reading it correctly. Both Jack and Karlo were dragging, their wounds draining them, exhausting both men. Dale glanced back at them. Karlo was leaning against the wall, sweat dripping down the side of his face. Jack seemed better, but he looked pale; the dim light from the flashlight made Jack look like a ghost. Both men had lost a lot of blood...Dale pressed his lips together in worry. There was nothing he could do for them that he hadn't already done...they would just have to keep moving.

They continued for nearly an hour when all three of them heard the sound of music. It was difficult to tell where the sound came from as it seemed to echo along the tunnel walls. Jack frowned tilting his head to the side while he listened.

“It sounds like it's coming from straight ahead,” Jack murmured.

Dale frowned. “Do you think there is an opening to the outside there?”

Jack, who had been walking in the lead, turned around to walk back to Dale. “Bring the map up.”

Dale did while Karlo leaned against the wall clearly exhausted. Jack sighed. “I don't think we have a lot of choices. Onward and upward!!” Jack grinned though his features looked strained.
Dale nodded. Karlo pushed up weakly all of the, heading toward the sounds of music.

*  

The music became louder, drowning out any other sounds. The three men followed the music until they all stepped into a small room, lit only by old carbide lamps and a few standard white glow sticks. It was a small room, black moths flittered around the lights, big, fat black death head moths, along with tiny white moths all of which danced around the lights as if seeking something. The pale light illuminated the cobwebs that were draped along the walls and hanging from the ceiling, giving the space the same look and feel of an old horror film. Here were rickety looking shelves that had been put up against the walls on all sides; the shelves were crammed full of bottles and jars. It was hard to see what was on the shelves in the weak light, but where the light danced across a jar it was clear there were body parts floating in some sort of amber tinted liquid.

In the corner was a dress-maker's mannequin, with pieces of what looked like tanned hide or skin sewn together like a coat. Beside that was a table where four mannequin heads sat, each with a different patchwork mask, sewn crudely together from the same source as the coat.

Against one wall pressed flat against the shelves of jaws, was an aquarium, the water or fluid inside a bright almost fluorescent shade of green made all the more brilliant because of the several glow sticks that had been tossed inside it. Laying at the bottom of the tank was a human head, staring up at the water with blind filmy eyes. Alongside the aquarium and in corners throughout the room were dolls, little to big, but they all shared one feature—they were all made from human skin.

In the middle of the room were two long rusted metal examination tables; each held a partly skinned and gutted corpse, though there wasn't enough skin or features left on the bodies to determine the sex of either corpse. Light music was playing from an ancient looking CD player that sat on the corner of a rusted surgical table. The upbeat tune of "Pump up the Kicks" was playing while a figure was bent over one of the bodies, working carefully and skillfully to remove the scalp, careful to keep the hair attached. The figure wore a long, ankle-length surgical white gown with a heavy leather apron of black worn over the top of the white outfit, along with a pair of milky looking plastic surgical gloves in which he held a pair of stainless steel forceps and a scalpel. The figure moved his body to the tune, singing under his breath while he worked intently at his task. Despite the music's high volume, the three men could hear the muffled high-pitched voice.

“All the other kids with the pumped up kicks
You'd better run, better run, out run my gun
All the other kids with the pumped up kicks
You'd better run, better run, faster than my bullet
All the other kids with the pumped up kicks
You'd better run, better run, out run my gun
All the other kids with the pumped up kicks
You'd better run, better run, faster than my bullet...”

Suddenly the figure turned around, holding the perfectly removed scalp in his hands to see the men standing there.
In the dim light all three could see that the “man” wore a mask that completely covered his face, clearly made from stitched together pieces of human flesh. His brown eyes were wide under the mask. The man's laugh was high and piercing. “Oooh new dolls!! Living dolls!! It's been so long!!! Dr. Crane promised and promised, but now here you are!” Jack pulled his gun up with one hand, but before he could fire a shot, the man in front of them yanked a glass capsule from a pocket and threw it at them. The capsule hit the floor, shattered and sent up a putrid yellow gas. Jack gasped when the gas hit him, burning his eyes and throat. Jack fired his weapon, but he couldn't see. He dropped to his knees just as Dale collapsed beside him.

The last thing Jack was aware of was the horrid mask of the man coming close to him, his breath smelling of decay and formaldehyde and his high pitched voice. “You are going to make such a pretty doll.”
When Batman arrived at the asylum, the GCPD were already there, the cruisers' blue and red lights flashing against the buildings in a colorful display. Fluffy snowflakes had begun to fall, mixing with the cold rain creating a deep chill in the air. Batman parked his vehicle down from the asylum, hidden by the darkness and just out of reach of the lights before he made his way to the front of the building. He could just see Gordon talking to a few uniforms, the ruby glow from his cigarette pinpointing his presence. The smoke from the cigarette mixed with the clouds of frozen breath and the heated air from the car engines to create a fog-like atmosphere around the front of the asylum. Batman made his way to Gordon, waiting until there was a moment when the man was alone to suddenly appear behind him.

“What is the situation?” Batman asked in his low rumble of a voice.

Gordon jumped and turned around. “God, I hate it when you do that!” Gordon put a hand to his chest nearly dropping the cigarette he was holding between his teeth.

Batman made no response, not that Gordon was expecting one; the veteran law-enforcement officer could always count on a no-nonsense attitude from the masked crime fighter. “Well, it looks like we got an early gift from the asylum this Christmas. Seems there was some sort of break out on the sixth floor. We have several missing patients, one possible hostage, maybe more, and at least six bodies, another two in critical condition.” Gordon stopped and rubbed the bridge of his nose. Privately, Bruce felt a chill run through him. Could any one of those patients have taken Jack or Harleen...or both? What if Zsasz had taken his brother! It didn't even have to be about money...Zsasz could have taken Jack to torture him...just for fun. Or knowing Jack and his smart mouth, his brother could have simply gotten himself into trouble with any of them. And Harleen...Jervis had a love for blondes; he could easily have taken her. Bruce closed his eyes for a moment, trying to avoid thinking of all the possibilities, the 'what-ifs'. But his first thought was that his little brother was in trouble and needed him...Bruce let his feelings fall to the background, once again letting Batman take the lead. He couldn't let his personal feelings prevent him from doing his job.

“Do you know which patients or patients killed those people inside?” Batman asked, gazing toward the asylum and bringing his thoughts back to the issue at hand. He was positive Jack had nothing to do with the deaths inside, though a tiny part of himself said he couldn't be sure...not really, though Bruce refused to believe his brother was capable of murder. If he were to hazard a guess, he would place the blame on Zsasz, but he would reserve judgement until he had all the evidence. For a moment he felt a spike of guilt. If he hadn't put Jack in here, his brother might be safe at home right now with Harleen, but instead his brother could be anywhere...or even dead and it was all his fault. Bruce closed his eyes. He loved Jack. He did and the thought that his actions could have put his baby brother in more danger was killing him inside.
Batman brought his mind back to the current situation. He had just opened his mouth to ask what else they had found when a young officer yelled. “Gordon! We found two more bodies, but these ones...sir, they're a mess. In the morgue and it looks like there was a boarded up tunnel access down there.”

“Tunnel access?” Batman asked. Gordon motioned for Batman to follow him.

*

Soon the two men and a handful of police officers were down in the asylum's morgue. Two of the cabinets were opened, revealing the remains to two men, their faces and hands destroyed by what Batman guessed could only be acid. Someone had removed their teeth as well...tough job, making identification more difficult, though not impossible. A couple of police were searching the pockets of the corpses as the young cop beside them spoke.

“I wouldn't have found them if officer Jacobson hadn't been...well, messing around sir, and opened up one of the cabinets. After we found the one body, we began to search the other cabinets, which is how we found the second one sir.”

One of the cops held up a badge they had found on the body. “Sir! I think we found our missing orderly.”

Bat wrote watched Gordon walk over to speak with the young officer while he went to investigate the tunnel entrance, unclipping a flashlight from his belt. Another young officer named Renee Lucas had told Gordon just a moment before that someone had sloppily tried to cover the entrance into the tunnels, but they found it easily. Batman shone his light into the tunnel entrance, only partially paying attention to Officer Lucas who stood nearby. There were some foot prints in the dust of the tunnel entrance, and judging by the thickness of the dust, it had been weeks since anyone had bothered with the tunnel; there were several prints here, shuffling marks, but there were too many to determine the number of people who had used the tunnel, only that it had been used within the last three to four hours, give or take. Officer Lucas had reported that they had only walked in a short way —further damaging evidence Batman noted to himself—but it was oppressively dark without a flashlight and they weren't ready to go further inside. She had also speculated that the tunnel could simply be a dead end, that someone had made it look as if the escapees had gone down the tunnel only to have fled the asylum another way. Batman thought it was a good point, but he was fairly confident one or more of the inmates had fled the asylum down this tunnel...but who? How many? And was his brother among them?

Bruce thought about his brother. Would he have gone this way? Probably, if he were trying to sneak out of the asylum...or was taken forcefully. This would be the best way to get an unwilling hostage out without being seen. Bruce scowled, but let himself fall away so that Batman could work.

Batman studied what he could see of the tunnel; old brick, damp moss and a wet film covered everything. Officer Lucas was correct. Without a light, these tunnels would be hard to navigate if not impossible. Batman was only slightly familiar with the storm tunnel systems of old Gotham. He instead spent most of his time in the sewer tunnels pursuing any number of Gotham criminals...which made Bruce remember his brother's kidnapping. Bruce cursed, but swiftly regained control. Batman also knew the old Gotham subway, a favorite hide-out for many of Gotham's underworld patrons. However, if these tunnels were anything like those, without a map, whoever had gone down here would become hopelessly lost. Again his thoughts raced straight to his brother, imagining Jack lost down here.

“Damn it Bruce, stop!” he swore at himself mentally. “Focus.” But that was easier said than done.
Batman narrowed his eyes behind his mask while his heart beat hard inside his chest with real fear. What if Jack had come this way or had been taken this way? What if right now his little brother was trapped, lost, hurt, or worse? Bruce felt real fear for Jack. He swore to himself he would never let his own fears get in the way of helping his brother again. He should have been the one there for his brother instead of locking him away in this place. He doubted Jack would forgive him, doubted he could forgive himself—especially if something happened to either Jack or Harley—but then Bruce shook his head. No, if Jack had come this way, then his brother wouldn't have done it without some sort of plan. Jack was impulsive, careless and violent, but he definitely was not stupid and if Jack had been forced to come this way, his brother would have utilized some that genius level intellect; he would mark his passage if possible...if not, Jack would find a way out. He was smart and resourceful, Bruce had to believe that.

Batman turned back toward the asylum morgue just as Gordon stepped to his side. “So what’dya think, Batman?”

Batman glanced back into the tunnel with his light, shining it over the walls and ceiling. “I think someone came this way...not sure who, but I wouldn't send officers in there without a map.”

Gordon nodded. “I got someone trying to find us one now. Just got a call of a sighting of two women hitching a ride into the city, might be Barbara Kean and Tabitha Galavan based on the descriptions. Sending some officers to check it out.”

Batman nodded. “I'm going to see if I can pick up Zsasz's trail or Tetch; keep me informed about the tunnels and I'll let you know if I learn anything.”

Gordon nodded agreement. “What about Jack Wayne or Dr. Harleen Quinzel?”

Batman frowned. “I fear that either of them could be hostages for any of the escapees. Either one of them would be worth a fortune in ransom to Bruce Wayne. I'll contact Wayne, ask him to contact either of us if someone makes contact with him.”

Gordon nodded with a look at the tunnel and turned to say, “Good luck.”

But Batman was already gone.

* 

The first thing that Jack was aware when he came to was of the blasted singing again. He could hear the high-pitched whine of the man's voice over the music that resonated in the small chamber. Jack squeezed his eyes shut, wishing for a gun or a knife so he could put his eardrums out of their misery. With a nearly silent sigh, Jack opened his eyes again. The ceiling above him had some heads dangling on hooks. Each head was missing large sections of skin from their faces. Jack contemplated the slowly rotating heads for a few moments. All of them had been scalped, a couple had their lips still while the rest did not. Jack curled his lip in disgust. There were also a couple of arms and a leg sprinkled throughout, all slowly spinning in the dim, flickering orange light of the carbide lamps that were set all throughout the room. The place smelled of sulfur, death, rot, old blood, and formaldehyde. Delightful, Jack thought to himself.

Jack struggled just a little, testing to see if he was tied down, which he was; his arms were strapped to a metal table by the wrists, his legs by his ankles, and another strap was around his chest, effectively holding him down to the cool metal table where he found himself. Jack figured he might be able to break free, but with his wounded shoulder, it would be difficult. He shivered uncontrollably for a moment. The chill of the damp room seemed to sink into his flesh and combined with his wounds, the chill settled deep in Jack's bones. He thought perhaps it was shock. Jack
mentally groaned. His shirt was missing, but his arm had been re-bandaged, which meant that their strange little friend had undressed him. Fanfuckingtastic. Jack figured he should be happy that he at least still had his pants on.

Jack looked around slowly, not wanting the singer to realize he was awake. He could see Dale, slumped against the wall in a corner. By the way the big man's shoulders looked, thrust forward, and by the way Dale seemed to be leaning, Jack guessed that his hands were bound behind his back. Jack couldn't see Karlo anywhere from his limited view, but he did see the man's daughter on a bed, strapped down like Jack. She wasn't moving, her face slack. Jack could only assume the poor girl was still under...good for her, Jack thought, because this stinks.

Jack could see shadows moving on the wall as the man who had captured them swayed with the music that was playing while he worked on something just out of Jack's line of sight. The man's voice was only slightly muffled by the mask he wore.

The high-pitched off-key singing voice continued:

“Dear Prudence, won't you come out to play
Dear Prudence, greet the brand new day
The sun is up, the sky is blue
It's beautiful and so are you
Dear Prudence won't you come out and play...”

* 

Jack lifted his head to try to get a better look at his surroundings, groaned loudly, and let his head drop back to smack against the metal of the table to which he was bound. “OM MY FUCKING GOD, you're murdering that song.”

The singing stopped abruptly. Jack lifted his head a little bit to see that the shadow had stopped moving, though the head seemed to be turned in his direction. Jack spoke up, unable to resist prodding his captor.

“Maybe try a different song. I really loved Lennon's “Happiness is a Warm Gun.” Gotta love all the sexual innuendo in that piece. Makes me think of my girl. Which you, my friend, are preventing me from getting to and that really annoys me. But back to music. Try that song. I'll sing a little for you.”

“Happiness is a warm gun Happiness bang, bang, shoot, shoot
Happiness is a warm gun, mama Happiness bang, bang, shoot, shoot
When I hold you in my arms Oo-oo oh yeah
And I feel my finger on your trigger Oo-oo oh yeah
I know nobody can do me no harm Oo-oo oh yeah...”

Jack sang with his soulful voice despite his current situation, putting a purr of want on the words that would have made Harley melt at his feet.

A moment later a face popped into view over Jack's face, startling Jack.
“Fuck!” Jack hissed.

“You have a pretty, pretty voice. You will make the most wonderful doll!!! I can hardly wait to get started on you. First I will need to replace that arm and shoulder. A hole just won't do! Fix damage to your pretty face...You must be the perfect doll!!”

The masked monster leaned in closer, his mouth almost touching Jack’s, his crazed eyes staring into Jack’s while the man leaned closer yet, as if he wanted to kiss Jack. The mask was even more hideous up close Jack thought, the putrid smell harsh and tangy on Jack’s tongue when he breathed. The masked man tilted his head. “Must be careful with you—don’t want to harm such beauty. Then you will be mine to play with forever!”

The man rubbed his gloved fingers over Jack’s cheek in a caress, then probed the wound on Jack’s jaw. Jack didn’t flinch, though the wound on his jaw burned and he felt the slime of old blood and other...things on Dollmaker’s gloved hand. Antibiotics and antivirals after getting out here. Yep, Jack thought. And a thorough, scalding shower. Maybe with lye soap, or bleach.

The man whispered. “Mustn’t replace too many parts, then you will no longer be the doll I want. But your eyes...such pretty eyes...must keep thoses...so pretty blue, could look at all day...and your lips...perfect pretty lips...” (In the background the music had changed to David Bowie singing “Oh You Pretty Thing.”) Jack could see Dollmaker licking his own dry lips as he studied Jack’s mouth.

The masked creature started to touch Jack’s lips, his eyes focused on Jack’s mouth with a hungry look when Jack spoke. “So...what do I call you?”

The man stopped just short of touching Jack’s lips, then tilted his masked head like a dog hearing a strange sound. “Me? Why...I’m the Dollmaker. I create beauty in this darkness!”

He threw his hands up to take in the entirety of the room. The man leaned back over Jack, his eyes wild behind the eyes of his flesh mask.

Jack smiled his most charming smile. “Why not.”

Dollmaker stared at the smile, then shivered with happiness before he hurried away. Jack could hear the sounds of things being scooted around and thrown. While Dollmaker was looking for something to show Jack, Jack heard a moan. He turned to see Dale moving just a little. Jack glanced back, as best he could, the way Dollmaker had gone. He couldn’t see the man so he hoped he wouldn’t hear Jack.

“Dale...Dale...”

The big man slowly lifted his head, blinked his eyes, and tried to focus. Jack hoped Dale didn’t have a concussion—that would make things a little more difficult. “Dale, come on buddy, need you to focus.”

Dale’s eyes finally shifted to focus on Jack. He started to move, but realized belatedly he was bound up and nearly toppled over.

“Shit!” Dale started to struggle, but Jack hissed. “Stop, settle down.”

Dale did as he was told, his eyes wandering around the room. There wasn’t a great deal he could see from where he was against the wall, shoved between two large bookshelves, but he could see the medical table that Jack was on...the bits and pieces of discarded flesh and bone on the floor, and the blood—dried blood and not-so-dried blood, pooled in sticky puddles. Dale pressed his lips together as he forced the urge to vomit down. Even orderlies working in an asylum like Arkham had their
limits. He tried looking around for Karlo. He could see the body parts and other things that flickered in the light of the room, hanging from the ceiling, a few jars filled with milky fluid that had things floating inside. (He thanked god he couldn't see clearly what was floating inside the jars.) Then he saw a shape lying just at the edge of a pool of weak light. Dale turned to Jack, started to tell him that he thought he saw Karlo, but snapped his mouth shut just in time.

That was the moment that Dollmaker popped back into view over Jack, holding a small figure. Jack jerked back as much as he could when Dollmaker shoved the doll in his face. It looked like the body of a Barbie doll was the base of the thing that Dollmaker presented. Jack thought he could see glimpses of the beige plastic flesh, but that was the only thing “plastic” about the doll, the entirety of it was covered in dead skin, tanned to a leather-like consistency and sewn over the body of the Babrie doll like a suit with ragged, irregular stitches. Cloudy and rotting rat eyes had been sewn into the eye sockets, connected to the tissue around them and human hair had been sewn into the scalp. Dollmaker smiled behind his mask-like face, an unhinged child pleased with his work. Jack could just see hints of chapped lips along with yellow and blackened teeth behind the flesh mask Dollmaker wore, grinning when he held the doll up.

Jack gave Dollmaker a huge smile. “So, I'm guessing you're a big Ed Gein fangirl, eh?”

“This is my first pretty doll,” Dollmaker said, ignoring Jack's comment. “But now I make them bigger! Here, here I'll show you!” Dollmaker patted Jack on the chest excitedly and dropped the smaller doll on Jack's stomach before he disappeared.

The man vanished again in the bowels of the room.

Jack made a face and muttered. “Oh he's fun...” before he turned to Dale and whispered just loud enough for the bigger man to hear. “Do you see Karlo? His daughter is over here, but I don't see him.”

Dale, his skin pale, eyes dazed, his palor giving him an overall sickly appearance, looked around the poorly lit chamber from his position on the floor, but he couldn't see much. The shadows, where the light didn't reach, were thick, creating unpenetrable pools of darkness. After a full minute in which both men could hear Dollmaker muttering to himself, or singing along to the song that had started to play, his high voice warbled while he threw things around and created a loud clatter to accompany his vocals:

“Twist your head around

It's all around you

All is full of love

All around you...”

The singing of the morbid little man made everything seem more surreal to Dale, as if he were trapped in a horror movie. He shuddered, working his wrists while he tried to find Karlo, hoping the man wasn't dead already. Finally, Dale's eye had adjusted to the dim lighting of the room and he spotted a man shaped shadow nearby, halfway resting under one of the tables. Dale couldn't be a hundred percent certain it was actually Karlo and not a corpse, but he decided to err on the side of hope. The figure was lying on his side, his arms behind his back in such a way Dale assumed his hands were tied at the wrists like him. Karlo wasn't too far from Dale, just six or seven feet distant and hopefully only unconscious.

“Yes, I see him,” Dale replied, also whispering.
Jack opened his mouth to reply when suddenly Dollmaker was back leaning over Jack, his rotten
tooth grin spread wide behind the mask.

“Look, look!” The man giggled excitedly before he thrust a dead face into Jack's field of vision. The
head that Dollmaker held, his gloved fingers balled into the hair, (which Jack thought, if the little
maniac wasn't careful and judging by the way the stitches were pulling, he might just yank the scalp
clean off...) had once been a woman—maybe? Half the face looked female, but the other half was
male, held together by crude stitching. The “doll” had two different colored eyes, the nose and the
mouth, judging by the different color of the skin, might belong to two additional people, making the
face an accumulation of four individuals. Dollmaker yanked the “doll” up showing Jack a male torso,
with no lower half.

Jack smiled and muttered under his breath. “Guess you side on the Ed Gein idea of a woman's head
on a stick, eh?”

“Work in progress!” Dollmaker announced. “You, you will be a new work...”

He dropped the “doll” which fell to the floor with a meaty sound, to lean over Jack again. “Such a
pretty, pretty face. Such pretty lips.”

Dollmaker reached over to stroke Jack's face again. Jack did his best not to wince, but Dollmaker
suddenly stood up. “Much work to do first!! Then make you into a doll I get to keep!! Forever!”

The man rushed over to where Karlo's daughter lay. Jack followed with his eyes, where Dollmaker
picked up a brush and started to brush her hair while he sang to himself.

“I made a dress from a choir girl's skin
I wore it to church, the preacher said I'd sinned
Forgive me Father for my fashion crime
Your skin is so nice I'll use yours next time...”

*

Jack muttered to himself. “Charming.”

He pressed his teeth into his bottom lip. This was his chance. He started to move the wrists of both
hands back and forth, trying to keep his movements subtle to prevent making any noise that might
draw the doll-faced man back to him, while at the same time shifting his wrists back and forth with as
much effort as he could. Judging by the feel of the straps around his wrists, he had been tied down
with...Jack closed his eyes, focusing on the feel...leather...belts?

Jack twisted his right wrist, which faced away from Dollmaker, back and forth as hard and quickly
as he could, yanking up with his shoulder every few seconds, doing the same with the left, though
not as urgently since that was the side that faced Dollmaker.

He yanked up on his arm, hissing to himself when he felt the skin burn a little. “You got this Jack...”
a little giggle bubbled pass his lips as the ridiculousness of the situation settled over him along with
Dollmaker's singing.

“Serial killers are people too
If you take away the voices I'm just like you
I'll hack you up and bury you in my yard

But why does making friends have to be so very hard?"

*

Jack moaned to himself. “Save me from badly singing psychopaths.”

*

Harley dashed down the hallway and stopped short, her bare feet skidding on the slick floor when she saw that the hall opened up into a large state-of-the-art kitchen. The hall continued down and pass the kitchen just a little more where it looked to divide into two hallways, one way leading left, the other right.

Harley dashed immediately into the kitchen looking for anything she could use as a weapon. The kitchen, like everything else in this house, was white with only a little light grey in the floor tiles and the silver stainless of the stove and the microwave to break up the blinding white. Everything else was a smooth, flat, shiny white. There were no handles on anything and nothing sat on the cabinets, no pots, nothing holding utensils, no baskets of fruit—nothing at all. The whole room didn't look as if anyone ever cooked or even ate in here.

Harley reached for one of the drawers, yanking on it with all her strength, but while she heard things inside shaking and clattering together, the damn thing wouldn't budge. She reached up for a cabinet and met with the same problem. Nothing would open.

Harley was muttering to herself in a panic. “No no no...”

Her head snapped around when she heard the monster coming down the hall singing in a soft whispery sing song voice.

“Hangin' in a field you'll never know I'm out here

I'm telling you people best beware

I creep into town, I'm hunting my prey

Back on my post by the crack of day

Lock your doors, watch your back, it's true

Turn around how do you do

I'm the scarecrow man, I'm the scarecrow man...

She saw the shadow creep across the white wall.

*

Harley's head shot up and her eyes widened as she watched the shadow crawl across the white wall, it's back hunched, the needle fingers clearly visible. The shadow swelled, taking up the whole of the wall. She could see the shadow of things swerving and crawling across the monster, its voice a sing song.

“Coming for you....coming ...coming...can't hide...I'll always find you.”
Harley whimpered. She looked around the kitchen frantically, but none of the cabinets or doors had visible ways of opening them. She took off, dashed into the hall hoping to get ahead of the monster chasing her, but no sooner had her bare feet hit the hallway than the Scarecrow loomed out at her. “Harleen!!”

Scarecrow lunged for her knocking Harley to the floor with one arm. She screamed and rolled to her back. She looked up into the Scarecrow’s face. All manner of bugs spilled from every orifice on its frightening face, swollen black bodies ready to burst crawled along the creature’s head, and the mouth of needle sharp teeth clashed together leaning closer, its breath smelling of sweet decay and dead things. At the same time, the Scarecrow leered over her while it’s sharp needled fingers seemed to grow in length as he came down at her, dripped with their deadly venom.

“Come to me Harleen!!” The Scarecrow hissed at her.

Harley screamed. “NO!!”

She thrust her hands out and pushed on the monster, trying to keep it away from her, but her hands seemed to melt into its chest only bringing her closer to it, allowing it to sink nearer.

Harley screamed again and called for her husband. “NOOO!! JACK!!”

Crane snarled; her calling for Jack angered him more than her struggling. He grabbed her by the top of her hair, the needles cutting across her scalp when he grabbed a large handful of her hair and hauled her head back before smashing her head against the floor.

“Stop STRUGGLING!!” Crane hissed, spittle flying from his lips.

Harley’s blue eyes were round with fear. The voice she heard was a mix of the voices that sparked fear in her throughout her life, the voice of her step-father mixed with the voice of her ex-boyfriend Guy twisted with the melodic sound of Crane’s own voice, creating something new and frightening. Harley’s breath came out in a shudder, but she wasn’t going to let this monster win. She had to get back to Jack. She brought her feet up and kicked the monster in the chest with as much force as she could muster; her feet landed squarely against the monster’s chest with an impact that choked off the monster’s air for a full breath, which was all she needed.

Scarecrow was caught off guard, flung backwards to land on his back knocking the air from his lungs. Harley rolled to her feet and took off down the hall, sliding when she turned left and slammed up against the wall, smashing into a copy of Hieronymus Bosch’s “The Garden of Earthly Delights,” which was framed in a heavy gilded frame. The entire side of her body hit the wall and the replica of the painting, the impact hard enough that her shoulder went numb for a few seconds, the painting tilting wildly before it crashed to the floor. A sharp tingle ran down the length of Harley’s arm to her fingertips and she gasped at the unexpected flash of pain. For just a moment, her feet slipped and she began to sink down the wall, but at the last second she caught herself and kept going.

The hall was extremely long with dark alcoves suggesting more doors. Down the hall she had just fled from, Harley could hear the Scarecrow laughing. “You can't escape me Harleen!! This is my house!! Built to my specifications! Just like H. H. Holmes, this is my domain!! There is nowhere for you to go Harleen that I can't find you!!”

Harley took off down the hall. She nearly ran past the first door, just barely stopping herself in time to turn around and grab the nob. She yanked on it and, to her surprise, the door opened.
Jack glanced over to Dollmaker, who was singing to Karlo's daughter in tandem with the song that was currently playing. Still, his high-pitched voice burned Jack's ears as he completely destroyed the song. Jack grimaced, but then he was forced to stifle a giggle when he overheard Dollmaker, in a sing-song voice whisper. “It puts the lotion on its skin.”

Then Jack heard other sounds, thick chopping sounds, followed by a wet tearing sound accompanied by Dollmaker's high pitched singing. For a moment everything that was happening was forgotten as Jack choked on his laugh thinking to himself...Great, he's trapped in Silence of the Lambs with a Bufflalo Bill cosplayer!!

Still struggling to hold back his laugh, Jack glanced back over to Dale who was clearly struggling with his bindings. The big man's shoulders were twisting with limited movement while Dale struggled, his face dripping with sweat while he concentrated, working to free his hands.

Jack leaned over as far as he could toward Dale and whispered. “Can you step through?”

Dale looked up. “What?”

Jack motioned with his head. “Step through, step through your arms?”

Dale frowned and shrugged. “I don't know.”

Dale stood up slowly, he gazed in the general direction of Dollmaker, while at the same time keeping his body hunched. Dollmaker was singing loudly again, the sounds of metal hitting metal could be heard, but neither man could see what the crazed man was doing. Dale lowered his arms as far as he could behind him, and tried to step back through the circle created by his tied wrists. He, like Jack, was bound with a leather belt. Dale had just started to ease one leg backwards, doing his best not to step on his own hands. Just as he started to try to step through the circle of his arms, Dale immediately started to pitch forward. Jack grimaced watching the big man, turning his head occasion ally to check on Dollmaker. Dale struggled for a tense moment to keep his balance, stumbled back against the wall and jammed his bound hands between his body and the cold, slimy bricks.

Dale made a noise of pain.

Jack turned back to Dale with a hissed warning. “Careful.”

Dale glanced over at Jack making a face at him. Jack just smiled in response. Dale took a breath, steadied his nerves to try again. Both Dale and Jack could hear Dollmaker talking to Karlo's daughter.

“There, there now, you are ready...I want your hair for my new doll, clip clip...your torso will make something pretty pretty...”

Dale eased his arms back down again, slowly, pressing his left shoulder against the wall behind him to help him balance while he struggled to step backwards without tripping himself up and falling on his face. He could feel the strain in his shoulders, the pull, pain shooting down both limbs, his balance wobbled as he squatted down at the same time. Dale hissed in pain, his muscles and tendons straining. He shuffled back a little then started to step, but when he brought his foot down, Dale squashed one of his fingers and toppled to the side, hitting one of the bookshelves which caused the jars on the shelves to clink together. Dale, one foot through, leaned heavily against the wall trying not to fall completely to the floor. He was pretty sure if he did, he wouldn't be able to get up. He leaned heavily against the stone wall and waited.
If Dollmaker heard the sounds of the glass jars clanking together or noticed the cloud of dust that went up from Dale hitting the shelves, he made no indication as his high-pitched voice wailed up on a high note.

“So knives out
Cut him up
Don't look down
Shove it in your mouth...!!”

Dale waited uncomfortably until the count of ten before he started to struggle again. His fingers brushed the floor as he eased his other foot back. Dale started to step back through the circle of his bound hands, thinking that he had it, then awkwardly, almost falling onto his side again, he tried to hop his other foot through. At the same time that he pushed his foot through, blinding pain hit him bringing tears immediately to his eyes. Dale brought his hands forward, but he stumbled back and slammed back against the cold stone on a hiss of intense pain, tearing rolling down his cheeks. He looked down at his hands; the left wrist looked odd. His hand seemed lower, not precisely aligned with his wrist. Dale felt a wave of nausea mixed with the pain.

Jack grinned. “Good job!”

Dale wobbled and flopped down, the pain and nausea threatened to make him vomit.

Jack whispered to his friend, “Get over here and get me free.”

Dale nodded, stood up, and making his way over to Jack in a slight daze.

This close Jack saw Dale's wrist. He could see that the wrist was already swelling and by the strange angle in how the wrist hung, it was clearly out of socket, but he said nothing, needing Dale to focus on his next task. There wasn't much he could do to help Dale until they were out of here. One task at a time Jack thought to himself. It wouldn't do them much good to worry about Dale's wrist only to end up skinned and mounted for one of Dollmaker's insane toys.

One handed, Dale worked to free the leather belt from around Jack's right wrist, at the same time Jack was yanking up his hand, trying to pull himself free as quickly as possible. Dale found his task to be difficult, using only his fingers from one hand. Each movement jostled his damaged wrist, but Dale bit down on the pain and focused his efforts on getting Jack free. Dale just barely loosened the belt when Jack yanked his hand free in a painful jerk which caused the gun wound on his shoulder to flare in agonizing pain and immediately start to bleed again.

Jack began to work on his other hand, rolling to his side within the confines of his bindings, his fingers yanking at the belt, while Dale worked to free the belt around Jack's middle. Once the torso belt was free, Jack sat up and started to work on freeing his feet as he hissed at Dale.

“Go get Karlo.”

Dale nodded hurrying over to the shadowy figured he hoped was Karlo.

Jack sat up, rushing to free his ankles when Dollmaker shrieked. “What???!! My pretty doll!! What are you doing?”

Jack turned at the sound of Dollmaker's voice to see the masked man racing toward him with a bonesaw in his hand. Jack yanked his last foot free and threw himself over the side of the autopsy
table he had been laying on, hitting the floor on the side with his bullet wound. Pain vibrated through Jack's shoulder causing him to blow out his breath at the hot pain while, for just a second, his vision was framed in black, his head feeling that wavery lightheadedness that meant his body wanted him to pass out. Jack snarled, but his attention was swiftly diverted to Dollmaker.

Dollmaker came rushing around the table screeching. “Cut off your legs!! Cut off your legs!! Then you stay pretty!! My pretty!!”

Jack rolled onto his back just as the masked man lunged. Jack kicked, caught Dollmaker in the knee, and made the man stumble and yelp. Jack rolled onto his feet, spinning around just as Dollmaker lunged again to slash at him with the bonesaw.

Dollmaker shrieked. “Stop! Stop!”

The saw nicked Jack along the side, deep enough to sting, but not enough to stop him. Jack danced back, though the room didn't provide a lot of space to move. Dale grabbed Karlo with one hand and yanked the unconscious man back out of the way of the fight, struggling to get the ties off of Karlo's hands while at the same time he was pleading. “Come on man, wake up! Wake up!”

Dollmaker slashed a few more times at Jack. Jack avoided the saw's blade, then grabbed frantically behind him for something to use as a weapon. His hands wrapped around a jar that he threw at Dollmaker. The jar burst on impact with the Dollmaker's chest, splashing onto him a thick foul-smelling liquid—along with a hunk of flesh, maybe a heart, Jack couldn't be sure. The mound of dessicated flesh hit the floor with a wet meaty sound followed by Dollmaker's wail. “My pretty bits!! You spoiled my pretty bits!!”

Jack chuckled. “You really need to rethink your aesthetic, friend.”

Dollmaker howled as he slashed at Jack, but Jack was letting the adrenaline of the fight carry him, his pain forgotten; his only focus now was on killing the flesh-masked man. He allowed Dollmaker to come in close, weaving deftly as he avoided a couple of clumsy slashes that Dollmaker made with the bonesaw, then Jack struck. His fist shot out to strike the man in the face, across his upper cheekbone. Jack's fist connected solidly with Dollmaker's face, knocking his head to the side and making the psychotic stumble back with the force of the blow.

Dale glanced up at the fight, wincing in pain while he worked to free Karlo.

When Dollmaker stumbled, Jack lunged, coming in under the man's arms, using his wounded shoulder to strike Dollmaker in the diaphram. Jack lifted his opponent off his feet and threw him to the floor. The crazed man rolled with the throw, coming back up on his feet with surprising speed, but Jack was ready for him and kicked the man as soon as Dollmaker had his feet. Jack's foot struck the other man in the chest and sent him stumbling backwards again, hitting trays and tables filled with tools, other jars filled with noxious fluid and other unidentifiable “fleshy” bloody “things” crashed to the floor. One of the carbide lights fell over, the flame going out and casting more shadows about the room.

Jack's grin widened when he saw the plate of surgical tools that had twisted across one of the tables when Dollmaker stumbled back. Jack lunged, grabbing a hold of two scalpels, one for each hand.

“Now we're talking!” Jack laughed.

Dollmaker yelled. “PRETTY!”

With the bonesaw held over his head like an axe, Dollmaker charged. Jack chuckled and lashed out
with one hand, smacking Dollmaker's arm up higher, rolling underneath Dollmaker's raised arm. He plunged one scalpel into and across Dollmaker's leg. He rolled away when Dollmaker let out a yell of frustration and pain and took a swipe at Jack. Jack ducked, using one of the scalpels to stab Dollmaker in the stomach, then rolled under the arm that held the saw. Dollmaker twisted with Jack, but Jack ducked and slammed the blade of one scalpel into Dollmaker's other thigh.

Dollmaker stumbled and dropped to one knee as the muscles of both of his legs quivered from the damage they had just taken. Jack took that opportunity to plunge the other scalpel into Dollmaker's back. Dollmaker let out a horrid little shriek, but he threw his head back catching Jack in the side of his head when he had bent over with the blade. Jack stumbled back, leaving the scalpel in Dollmaker's back. The masked man regained his feet, but Jack grabbed him and threw the flesh-masked man back against one of the tables, keeping his opponent off balance. He plunged the remaining scalpel into Dollmaker's chest with several hard thrusts and spurts of deep red blood.

With the fourth thrust, the scalpel became stuck just under Dollmaker's collarbone. The smaller man reached up and dragged the saw across Jack's forearm. Jack hissed in pain, stumbling backward. Dollmaker surged to his feet, yanking the blade out and lurched after Jack.

“I'll cut off all your limbs!! Then your pretty head!! Keep all the pretty parts of you!” The man tittered and giggled with glee.

Jack was sweating as he could feel his strength threatening to leave him, the sticky feel of fresh blood running down his arm and his jaw burning with pain. He was searching frantically for another weapon when he heard Dollmaker yell. Jack turned just as the maniac tried to catch him again with the saw. Jack blocked the strike, his forearm catching Dollmaker's forearm and preventing the man from landing his blow. Jack quickly followed with the elbow of his other arm, smashing the man in his flesh-masked face. Dollmaker stumbled back a few steps then lunged with the saw. Jack was ready to block, but Jack was ready to block, but proving surprisingly quick again, the man slid under Jack's guard, stepped alongside Jack, the saw slicing along Jack's abdomen. Jack gasped. The pain was sharp, probably not life threatening, but enough to make him gasp and grab his stomach. Dollmaker kicked Jack, sending him stumbling forward. He snapped a hand up to grab Jack by his wounded shoulder, his gloved hands digging into Jack's wound before he yanked him back and threw him off balance.

Jack crashed into another small table sending hundreds of items, jars, books, bits and pieces of human bodies, along with a number of miscellaneous “things” crashing to the floor. Jack fell back on his rear, his feet going out from under him on some sort of slippery slime that leaked from many broken jars, but he pushed himself to his feet just as Dollmaker rushed forward grinning.

“My pretty doll!!! I will love you always!” The bonesaw was raised over his head in a maniacal rush. Dollmaker lurched. Jack did the only thing he could; he brought both arms up blocking the overhead swing, while at the same time he grabbed at the man's arms struggling to prevent the bonesaw from coming down on him.

*Dale, sweating and pale with pain and fear, had freed Karlo and was desperately trying to get the man awake.*

“Come on, wake up!!” Dale hissed trying to shake the man with his one good hand. Pain lanced up Dale's arm from his dislocated wrist, threatening to take him under into unconsciousness each time he moved his hands. Both hands were still tied together, but Dale fought off the threat of unconsciousness knowing that if he did, that might be the end for him. Karlo's eyes snapped open.

*
Jack wrapped his hands around the arm that held the blade and spun his body around. Jack twisted his body, putting his back to Dollmaker, the man's arm over his left shoulder. Jack gritted his teeth, then with a grunt of effort, he yanked down and was rewarded with a satisfying pop and snap as Dollmaker's elbow either broke or was dislocated; either way, it forced the lunatic to drop the bonesaw.

Jack turned, trying to keep a hold on the man's arm, but Dollmaker shreiked, slamming his forehead into Jack's, disorienting Jack as bursts of light and dark exploded before Jack's eyes. He stumbled backwards away from Dollmaker, his back hitting a shelf of books painfully. Panting, Dollmaker grabbed up another weapon without looking, from a table, a bone chisel.

*  

Karlo sat up, gasping for air, then groaned. “My daughter!! Where's my daughter?!”

Dale reached out, but Karlo smacked his bound hands away without really seeing the man. The smack wasn't exactly hard, but it wasn't light and pain shot up Dale's arm. This time, it was too much for the injured man. Dale's eyes fluttered and he fell over unconscious. Karlo barely spared him a look before he was on his feet searching the room for his daughter. He saw Wayne and a strange man in a creepy mask fighting, but then his eyes landed on his daughter. He could barely see her in the flickering light and shadows, but he was sure it was her. Karlo hurried to his feet, stepped over Dale and rushed to his daughter's side.

What he saw made him go very still, a chill settling over him. His daughter stared back with lidless eyes. Karlo began to shake. He reached down a shaking hand to touch her hair only to realize at the last moment her scalp was no longer attached and as he was closer now, he could see that one of her arms had been sawed off and her face was an angry, skinless red.

And then a moan of pain escaped his daughter's lipless mouth, but it was more than just a groan, it was followed by the word, “Daddy?”

*  

“You are going to be my best doll yet, my masterpiece. Your face will be with me forever!” Dollmaker smiled. “I will love you forever.”

Jack giggled. “Oh darling, I'm flattered, really, but my face, lips and body already belongs to Harley Quinn and she isn't one to share.”

Jack fumbled behind him, his hand wrapping around a piece of broken glass. Dollmaker lunged forward, the bone chisel hitting Jack just under the hollow of his throat, smashing against the bone, but Jack brought his hand around that held the piece of broken glass, shoving it sideways into Dollmaker's throat. As glass sliced into flesh with a faint tearing sound, a wail of complete anguish went up and filled the chamber. Everyone turned at the sound.

Standing in the middle of the room was Karlo, who held his daughter in his arms, her face gone, stripped from her, leaving only the exposed muscle and tendons underneath. Her upper body had also been stripped of its flesh, one arm missing, and it was clear she was dead, her sightless eyes staring back with her mouth in a toothy grin though her lips were gone.

Karlo roared in anguish, his mouth becoming wider, melting open, his jaw drooping to his chest. His face oozed, clumps of flesh shifting color and sinking down his neck, melding with the rest of his flesh. His skin began to bubble, oozing and roiling, twisting and clumping in on itself. Large fleshy bubbles formed and popped as he began to gain size, his body expanding, ripping the clothing he
wore as more flesh seemed to melt and expand, losing all semblance of anything human. The actor's skin turned into a creamy brown that melted and oozed, sliding down his torso to cover his daughter's body. Karlo's roar was a mix of his physical and mental pain, while he dropped to his knees as he continued to melt.

Dollmaker and Jack seemed frozen in mid-fight watching the spectacle before them.

Karlo's cries became strange choking, gurgling sounds, his body now losing mass, melting. His daughter's body was completely lost in the amount of goo from Karlo's melting form. Together, both Karlo and his daughter melted and oozed away until there was nothing left.

Jack blanched. “Ew.”

Then he shoved the glass shard deeper into Dollmaker's throat. Dollmaker let go of the bone chisel to reach out and caress Jack's face, his voice a moan. “You were so pretty...”

The man jerked and coughed, bloody spittle spraying Jack in the face.

Jack watched the man's body drop to the floor, his blue eyes narrowed.

“I really hate Dr. Crane and his friends.”

Jack took a deep breath through his nose, then let it out slowly. He forced himself to smile and turned.

“Dale? Get up my darling!! It's time to go pick up Harley!”

* 

Harley fell into the room, lights clicking on automatically and the heavy door swinging shut behind her. She landed on all fours, but she scurried to her feet looking around frantically for anything she could use against the monster chasing her. As she stood up, she stopped in shock as the interior of the room sunk in. This room wasn't a bedroom or a study; rather, it was more like a...shrine?

The walls, unlike the walls of the rooms outside, were painted grey. The lighting was dim, but situated around the room in order to highlight the pieces of art that dominated the room. The room was clearly dedicated to a Greco-Roman theme while each piece illuminated by the lights was from that era or inspired by that time period. Harley frowned as information she forgot she had, buried along with other memories of an art history class she had taken in college, came to the forefront of her mind. The images depicted Deimos and Phobos, the Greek gods of fear and panic. Deimos was the god of fear and dread, Phobos, panic and flight. Throughout the room were images of the two gods, from a modern painting showing two beautiful young men embracing, their features identical, both fair-haired handsome young men dressed in white togas; to an ancient marble sculpture of the two young men, again depicted as beautiful men; to a small vase that showed Phobos with the head of a lion fighting alongside his brother. In one corner of the room was a large ancient vase, lit from below. The terra cotta vase had an image in black and red that depicted Ares driving a chariot, his sons, Deimos and Phobos driving their chariots alongside their father heading into battle.

There were other images throughout the room such as a large marble sculpture that resembled an altar. Here the two gods were depicted fighting a large serpent. Along one wall was a tiled Greco-Roman mosaic of the god Phobos with his lions head holding up a spear and threatening a group of armed men. Next to this work of art was another, a vertical painting in the Greco-Roman style, depicting the two brothers surrounded by armed men, the group sweeping into battle with a much larger foe. Here and there throughout the room were large, authentic looking Roman shields with
images of Phobos depicted on them while others contained images of Deimos and their father Ares. Harley stepped further into the room and her impression of a shrine became even stronger when she saw a shield lying on the floor.

The large black shield was sitting on the floor between two large marble Roman columns. The large shield was set in such a way that it resembled a bowl and in it Harley could see something liquid, dark; the lights made the surface of the liquid shine. She couldn't be sure without going over and touching it, but it looked like blood...the light reflected off the surface of the liquid, but in a thick, heavy way, as if the liquid was pulling that light down within it.

Harley felt slightly ill. She grabbed hold of a pedestal that held a large Roman vase, her vision wavering, the room spinning, each of the figures her eyes passed over seemed to move and shift, pulling themselves free from the confines of their individual works of art, turning to stare at her with hateful eyes The battle scenes seemed to come to life slowly as she watched, the figures moving stiffly, yet to her fear addled brain, they were indeed moving.

Harley swallowed down her scream, her eyes searching frantically for a weapon. She could hear the monster behind her calling for her.

“There is no place to go Harleen, no place at all. Just give in. Be mine.” The creature's voice was soft, caressing, but that only made her skin crawl. For a second, fear and despair threatened to overwhelm her. There really was no place for her to go; she was alone, lost without Jack. She wanted Jack so desperately that her heart ached, her body yearned for him. And she was terrified. She wanted him beside her, to help her fight the monster. But she knew she was going to have to do it herself and fight her way back to him...she was just scared that she wasn't strong enough.

Harley blinked back tears and searched around for something to use as a weapon, but the room contained little except for artwork. She was considering leaving the room and trying another room...there had been at least a few more doors she had glimpsed before she had come through this one...another one had to open, but then she heard what sounded to her like the scrape of nails down a chalkboard against the door she had come through. The sound made her teeth chatter and her skin crawl...

“Come out, come out.”

Harley dashed further into the room, looking for something, anything, still hoping for a weapon, a means of escape, or a way to call for help. She had moved out near the “altar” when she saw a shadow on the floor. She missed it at first, but when she started to walk over the area, she felt the seam of the door beneath her bare feet, a slight indentation in the smooth floor that shouldn't have been there. She walked backwards a couple of steps to make sure she had actually felt something, then dropped down to examine the floor. She frowned and blinked. The way the light shone down, creating deeper shadows along what looked like a...Yes, she thought, a seam? It almost looked as if there was a door set into the floor just in front of the bloody shield. She used her bare foot to feel the floor, then her fingertip...yes there was a slight indentation. Harley glanced back toward the door she had used to enter the room. She could hear the monster talking to her.

“I'm coming for you. There is no place to hide Harleen.”

Trembling, Harley dropped to her hands and knees and began to run her fingers along the perceived door. Her heart was hammering hard, painfully against her breastbone as her fingers ran over the seam. There was only the slightest divet in the floor, just enough for her to insert her middle finger and lift. She pushed the door up until it clicked on a hinge, propped open to reveal a trap door that descended into darkness.
Harley didn't waste any time deciding whether she should go down or not. She turned and lowered a leg down, her bare foot hanging in space for a few seconds just as she heard the door across the room begin to creak open. Her foot touched something that felt like a ladder rung. Panicking, she swung her other leg down, caught the rung, then as carefully as her panic-stricken mind would allow, she dropped into the darkness reaching for the trap door and pulling it as quietly as she could down on herself, plunging her once again into complete darkness.

*

Crane entered his shrine with a curse on his lips. He should not have left this room unlocked...an unacceptable slip on his part. He gazed around the room looking for Harleen, his eyes caressing over the images. It wasn't that he exactly worshipped the gods of terror and flight, but he did respect them, respected what they represented. Modern man didn't respect fear enough...and that was why he would be able to mold the world using fear. First Gotham, then who knew?! Fear would be his to command and thus people would flock to him out of fear. Crane chuckled, ah the dreams he had...but for now he must focus on Harleen, his partner in all this; once he had her “reprogrammed” properly. He had pumped her with enough fear toxin that it should completely shatter her mind, giving him a clean slate to work with, but if he didn't get to her soon, he ran the risk of her dying on him. The mind could only take so much before it completely shut down and that would simply ruin his plans.

However, he had to admit he was proud of Harleen. She was strong—surprisingly strong—her mind still fighting his toxin. He admired her. When he did finally find her breaking point and started to rebuild her, she would be glorious.

Crane peered through the eye slits of his mask. There wasn't anywhere for her to hide in here, so why wasn't he seeing her? She wasn't small enough or thin enough to hide behind any of the displays. For a moment he considered that maybe she hadn't actually entered this room, he didn't see any sign of her...Crane frowned turning back around thinking that maybe he had simply missed her running down the hall when he stopped short, slowly turning back around .

“The lab,” he said in a whisper. “You sly, smart girl.” Definitely strong and impressive.

*

Harley held on tightly to the ladder that led down into who knew what...all she could see was darkness, and heard sounds...she couldn't decipher what the sounds were, but the fear toxin had her thinking of all sorts of monstrous creatures. Her heart was beating hard enough that her chest hurt. Her whole body was shaking, vibrating with fear, and a thin sheen of perspiration had broken out on her face and arms. What she wouldn't give for a hefty dose of valium right about now, she thought. She held onto the rings of the ladder, her eyes screwed shut doing her best to fight through the overpowering fear. The urge to scream was so strong that when she sucked in a breath, the fear threatened to pour out of her in a long loud wail. She leaned her head forward against one of the ladder's rungs, tears dropping from under her lashes.

Out loud she whispered to herself. “Jack...I love you Jack.”

Thinking about her lover, his laugh, some terrible joke he would make that would irritate whoever was bothering Jack...all that made her smile. Jack wouldn't let the fear overtake him, he would laugh in its face. She just had to survive, she told herself...Harley Quinn would survive this...for herself and for Jack.

Harley took a steadying breath. She knew she couldn't go back up into the room above, so she
slowly made her way down the ladder, forced to rely solely on her tactile senses. She took a few more deep breaths, along with several tense moments of simply holding on tightly to the ladder, before she lowered herself down the ladder as carefully as she could in the dark. Harley ignored the shuffling and other horrid sounds she heard in the room behind her; she simply focused on finding the next rung. Then suddenly, her bare foot touched the icy cold floor of a room, a basement her mind imagined. She eased herself down from the ladder, turning slowly so that she could press her back up against the ladder, the solid feel of it behind her made her feel less adrift in the darkness.

Harley didn't move, trying to allow her eyes to adjust to the darkness, but the fear toxin made shadows appear in the thick, inky blackness, large sections of shadow seemed to separate and move. Harley closed her eyes again hissing at herself, tears slowly rolling down her cheeks.

"Not real. It's not real."

She reached out to the sides, her right hand touching the smooth surface of a wall. Her fingers moved along the cool surface of the wall, grasping for a switch—she knew there had to be a light switch. She tried to ignore the moving shadows by keeping her eyes closed until she felt a switch. Immediately she flicked it up and was rewarded with a low hum, followed a few seconds later by the click of fluorescent lights that flickered to life.

Harley opened her eyes as the fluorescent lights began to light up the room. Harley blinked bringing up her hand to shield her eyes, watching the room slowly come alight. The room was clearly a lab of some sort. It was filled to the brim with equipment. There were three long lab tables with the required multiple and variously shaped glass beakers, bunsen burners, tubes, chemplates, microscopes and stereomicroscopes that all mad scientists required, she thought; along with hundreds of other bits and pieces of laboratory equipment that Harley had no clue what exactly they were or what they were used for, but each piece looked important.

She stepped further into the room slowly, her heart pumping quickly in fear, her fight or flight response making her as jumpy as a rabbit. A fluorescent green liquid moved through the vast tubes, bubbling and making low hisses while the substance dripped into glass beakers. There were plastic replicas of DNA strands, several skeletons and an old fashion flip chalk board with hundreds of mathematical formulae scribbled on its surface with unintelligable notes jotted down in corners of the board. Along one wall she could see X-rays on display as well as photographs, some of them gruesome, reminding Harley of murder scenes in content and the way the photos were taken, all in black and white. As her eyes roamed the room Harley saw jars along one side, all clearly organized, much like the art work on the floors above, labeled and sorted with perfect precision. When Harley stepped closer to the row of jars, she could see that there was something floating in each jar. Her eyes dropped to the labels that read: pituitary gland and adrenal gland...there were dozens of jars each containing a tissue sample, all of them either pituitary or adrenal glands.

Harley turned to look back at the lab, searching for a weapon when she heard the soft shuffling squeaks and soft moans. The sounds made her jump, shuddering with fear. She wanted so much to run back up the ladder, but the bigger monster was up there. She stopped moving, took in a shaking breath, holding her hands in tight fists at her sides trying to calm her heart. It felt like she was going to have a heart attack. After a couple of deep breaths Harley moved carefully toward the sound despite her hammering heart and palsy like shaking. She needed to know what was making the sounds, fear of the unknown was worse than knowing, she reasoned. She stepped carefully, the cold from the floor transferred up her legs to her torso making her tremble as the cold seeped into her.

She moved slowly until she found the source of the sounds. Along one wall she found several cages, rows of them with cages on the bottom topped with cages that reached nearly to the ceiling of the basement lab. Each cage held one or two animals—at least Harley thought they were animals. Her
vision continued to shift...sometimes they were animals, then in the next second they were monsters, twisted and deformed. She saw plump white rats, rabbits and even some small monkeys. Some had little strange contraptions on their heads, others had clearly had some sort of surgery, missing eyes, missing limbs, tubes in them pumping green glowing liquid into their little bodies. When she forced herself to approach the cages, the animals scurried away into the dark corners of their cages making horrible keening noises or chittering or squeaking in terror. She let out a little shriek and backed away. She stumbled into one of the chemistry sets, hitting a couple of beakers with her hands that sent them crashing to the ground along with rows of syringes, filled with the orange toxic liquid inside. All of it came crashing to the floor.

*

Above, Crane had reached for the trap door when he heard the sound of glass shattering. He stopped, having just begun to lift the lid of the trap door, going very still and listening. He was sure he heard a muffled scream or a gasp. He smiled. She was down there...and there was no place else for her to escape to except back up the ladder...he had her...and maybe her finding his lab wasn't such a bad thing after all.

*

Harley fumbled around and stumbled; the fear toxin made everything waver. The caged animals, some of them transforming into beasts as she watched, grew larger and screeched at her. Harley cried out bringing her hands up to clamp over her mouth, her wide eyes immediately shifting to the trap door.

That was the moment she heard the thump of a door. Then she heard the monster.

“Harleen...Harleen my dear...there's no place for you to run anymore...why not just give in?”

Harley watched in horror as the monstrous scarecrow started to come down the ladder. She looked around frantically for anything she could use as a weapon and a place to hide. The only thing she saw was the shattered glass of the beaker she had broken. She quickly crouched down, grabbing the largest piece of broken glass, cutting her palm on it, but she didn't care. She wrapped her hand around the glass and ducked down under one of the lab tables, her other hand over her mouth, tears rolling down her cheeks as she had nowhere left to run and watched the monster come for her.
Devil's Trill Sonata

Harley scrambled under a table with the bloody piece of glass clutched tightly in her shaking hand. A couple of the syringes filled with the putrid liquid had fallen to the floor. One rolled toward her, then another. Harley watched them coming for her as if the vials were homing in on her, rolling slowly across the cool stone texture of the floor to bump against her toes. It took everything in Harley not to jump up with a shriek and throw herself away from the syringes, though she jerked slightly when the cold glass touched her bare toes. She couldn't be sure if it was real or not, but it felt almost as if the cold, putrid liquid inside was reaching toward her through the glass, sending a chill through her entire body. Harley stared down at it, watching the liquid reaching for her, but then her attention was drawn to the sounds of something moving in the shadows.

She leaned out as far as she dared from her hiding place to see the shadow of the monster descending into the lab.

*Scarecrow crawled slowly down the ladder, easing his feet down to the floor silently when he came to the last rung. The small eye slits in the mask made quick navigation hard in this heavy darkness, despite the flourescent lights, but Crane knew his lab like the back of his hand. He gazed around; nothing looked to have been touched, everything in its place. He could hear the animals in the cages, the whines and small shrieks of terror. He smiled slowly. Their sounds of fear gave him great pleasure, he had worked hard to cultivate that response. Crane continued to scan the room for her. The lab was quite large, this being only the first or three rooms that ran under his home. Each room was connected to this main room by hidden doors; that way if even anyone were to stumble upon his lab, they would only see a small part of what he was working on, though this room held many important aspects of his work. Unless Harleen had stumbled upon one of these doors, she was effectively trapped in this room. It was only a matter of time before he found her.

But, as Crane scanned the lab, he didn't see anything, which only meant she was hiding, and hiding well at the moment. There was no place to go, as far as she knew, except through the trapdoor.

Crane walked slowly, carefully, silently. He smiled and whispered, his voice a soothing sing-song as he turned his head one way then another, scanning for the tiniest sign of her presence.

“There is no place to run Harleen. You've run out of options. It would be so much easier if you just came to me instead of fighting it.”

He stepped carefully, each footfall pressed to the floor silently. “Just think of what I'm offering you...power, to never be afraid again, to be free Harleen. Together we could show Gotham what fear really is.”

Crane stopped at the first lab table, his hand lying on the table's surface near some of his equipment. He drummed his fingers lightly, the tips of the needles at the ends of his fingers clicked against the table. He glanced at the chemical moving slowly, like blood pumping through a body, watching the orange toxin, mesmerized by his own achievement. It really was beautiful. He had spent years working on it, testing it, distilling, mixing, extracting glands from patients, both animal and human, in order to develop the perfect serum. Testing it over and over on numerous human subjects, watching and cataloging with intricate detail his results. Crane touched his formula lovingly. It was perfection, his legacy, but if all came to fruition as he planned, then Dr. Quinzel would bear him another legacy, a child.
That was the ultimate goal with all of this, not only to create the perfect compliment to himself with her, but to have her carry on his creation...someone who was a perfect blend of the two of them, their intellect mixed with the toxin. Crane smiled, just imagining what this child would be like...who he would give Gotham to as a gift, his birthright—it would be perfect Crane thought. He was brought out of his musings when he heard a light sound, really barely a sound at all, more like a shift in the air than an actual noise. His head snapped around searching the shadows for the source. The animals were making shuffling noises accompanied by chattering and squeaks; they were clearly aware of his presence and quite possibly hers as well. Crane narrowed his eyes behind his mask. There were only so many places she could hide.

“Come out Harleen. Let us stop with this game. You are not going to win, you can't escape me,” Crane cooed. “I will set you on a pedestal, my Lady Crow, my equal. I will give you all of Gotham!! So come Harleen, come to me, tell me what you are scared of?!”

Crane walked slowly. He was in no hurry. Now that he had Harleen here, in his private abode where he controlled the environment...everything, she would not sleep, would not eat or drink unless he allowed it. Another dose of the toxin and she should be more easily controlled; the fear should theoretically, break her mind and from there the rest should be easy for a brilliant mind like his. Daily doses of the toxin, re-teaching her, molding her...until her fear broke her. And then she would fear nothing; she would be his. Crane really was looking forward to it all, playing with her. But right now he had to focus on breaking her mind, while the rest would come in time.

He walked over carefully to a corner of the room and smiled, pleased, when he saw what was still there, leaning against the corner wall—his hand sickle. For a moment Crane crouched, simply reached out and touched it, stroking the object with the very tips of his fingers over the wood surface of the sickle's handle, a flood of memories returning to him when his fingers touched the wood. His father. That was where all this began, his father, and the experiments in fear...the cellar...the clank of metal against metal, the wicked curve of the sickles hanging from the ceiling of the cellar, something made them move, the metal tapping against metal, the eerie sound had filled him with dread when he was a child, trapped in the cellar alone and pumped full of his father's experimental fear drug. The shadows were filled with sinister sounds and creatures he couldn't see in the darkness. Now he used the tool as a weapon; it had become part of his new persona, and it was a reminder...Crane shook away the memories, grasped the handle of the sickle before he stood up.

*

Under the table Harley shivered, her hand clutched so tightly around the shard of glass that it was cutting deeply into her palm, but she seemed not to notice. Her arm was shaking uncontrollably, her entire body poised to spring into action, her breath coming to her in shuddering gasps. She had never been so terrified as she was at this moment. She didn't notice the drops of blood falling onto the floor at her feet, creating small “plops” of sound, the blood splashing across her bare feet and staining her skin red. Harley held her free hand still pressed against her mouth to stop herself from making noises the monster might detect. Her fingers pressed hard enough across her lips and cheeks that she was going to leave bruises. Harley knew she needed a way to distract the monster, somewhere to focus its attention... that might give her enough time to race for the ladder leading out of here and hopefully to Jack. Harley shook for a moment as fresh tears sprang to her eyes at the thought of Jack and a rising fear. What if Crane had hurt him...killed him...No. No, she told herself. She wasn't going to focus on that. Jack was at the asylum waiting for her. She would get out of here, away from the monster and back to Jack. That had to be her focus or she would never be able to fight back, not if she thought something had happened to Jack.

She peered around the dimly lit room looking for something, anything she could use, when her eyes landed on one of the larger cages set on the floor with smaller cages on top of it. She hadn't noticed
the bigger cage before, but now that it had her attention, she saw movement in the shadows of the
cage, then something shifted closer to the bars. Harley swallowed a squeak of fright as the dog-like
muzzle, powerful jaws, thick canines, and close set eyes of a baboon seemed to form from the
shadows of the cage, coming into focus for a moment before the face morphed and twisted before
her eyes. Its back hunched, the mouth widened filled with row upon row of wickedly fanged teeth.
The clawed hands that wrapped around the bars were gigantic, the claws long and wicked looking.
The thing on the other side of the bars was terrifying, but even as Harley's heart pounded painfully
against her chest, the sight of the monster gave Harley an idea.

*

Deep in the dimly lit room of the Dollmaker's abode, Jack made his way over to Dale and dropped
down weakly to his knees in order to shake the big man's shoulder. Jack's own shoulder was soaked
in blood which had run down the front of his shirt; the pain had moved beyond that of burning pain,
to a intense stabbing pain. A pain that was now consuming his attention along with all the numerous
deep cuts and nicks that he didn't even notice; all of the wounds that he had suffered during his fight
with Dollmaker combined into a ball of constant aગañaony, all of them bleeding, all of them burning
and all of them doing their best to yank him into darkness. Which only served to annoy Jack. He
would use the pain, he would not give in to it. He fought back the pain and the encroaching
unconsciousness, to shake Dale again, snarling at the large man.

“Hey, Dale! Come on darling I can't carry you. You need to get to your feet or I might just have to
leave you behind.”

Dale groaned, his eyes fluttering. “Wha—what happened?”

The big man sat up slowly clearly dazed, pale and wobbling a little, his head swimming as he
struggled to focus. Dale looked around the room in confusion for a second wondering if he was still
asleep, lost in a nightmare. He saw the Dollmaker laying on his back and staring up at the ceiling, a
bloody piece of glass sticking out of the side of the man's neck, but then the image of a melting Karlo
came rushing back to Dale's conscious mind causing the blood to drain from his face as he realized
this wasn't a dream, but brutal reality.

“Wha...where's Karlo?” Dale asked struggling to stand. Jack stood up, looking around the room.

Jack frowned. “Well, not really clear on that sweetheart, but I have a feeling whatever it was that
very thing that made our friend such a...unique actor, that may have...well...released under the
pressure of finding his daughter dead. I can only describe what happened to Karlo as...disgusting.”
Jack grimaced at the memory, sticking his tongue before he continued.

“Anyway my friend, we need to get out of here and as much as I'm learning to love you big guy, I'm
in no condition to carry you out of here. So, can you get to your feet sweetheart?”

Dale nodded slightly.

Dale let Jack wrap his good arm around his waist. Jack did his best to help lift the big man up to his
feet. Once Dale was standing he felt better, though he now noticed that Jack had additional wounds.

Dale grimaced. “Are you all right?”

Jack grinned. “I'm alive which is more than Dollmaker and his toys can say.” Jack chuckled then
frowned at Dale. “Do you still have your phone?”

Dale frowned in response his eyes going wide. “Shit!”
He quickly stood up straight, letting go of Jack. He began patting himself down with his one good hand as he felt around for his phone, but he felt nothing.

Dale looked slightly panicked. “I don't feel it.”

Jack cursed turning from Dale, holding his wounded arm against his stomach to face the room. “Fantastic.”

Dale muttered walking over and began to pick his way through the numerous disgusting objects on one of the tables. “It has to be around here somewhere...”

Dale turned back around to search the space where Dollmaker had him tied up; he had just started to squat down and search, when he saw sitting on a shelf, pressed between two jars of what looked to be eyeballs, was Dale’s phone. Dale made a slight yelp of pleasure grabbing up the phone (purposely ignoring the floating eyes that were staring at him). He pressed a button on the phone and with a sigh of relief he saw the phone come to life.

“Great, maybe things will start looking up.” Jack said with a huge smile as the two men looked down at the map.

* 

The flakes were gathering density, coming down fuller and in greater quantity. Alex was standing outside the SUV, the collar of his coat up, smoking angrily on a cigarette. Jack should have been here by now. Alex and the rest had been here for hours. He hated to admit how worried he was becoming. Frost was clearly upset but he was remaining a lot calmer than Alex, though it was clear that Sandra was worried sick judging by the way she kept scrolling nervously through her phone.

Alex sighed taking a deep pull on the cigarette. He just knew his friend was in trouble, he just didn’t have any idea what to do about it, how he could help; waiting here, doing nothing just wasn’t Alex’s style. Going into the tunnels after him was stupid, but standing out here in the freezing darkness watching the few drops of rain turned to snow, wasn’t helping his mood either; Alex just took a long pull on the cigarette, wishing he had brought his cigars instead and maybe a bottle of tequila and waited. It was all he could do for now.

A few seconds later, Alice slipped out of the SUV. She pulled her scarf up over her mouth and nose, while yanking an adorable pink cap with a pompom on the top down over her ears against the chill. She went to stand beside Alex, watching the snowfall become heavier.

Alex glanced over at her, the snowflakes were sticking to her eyelashes and her eyebrows. He smiled. She looked adorable. “What the fuck you doing?” he asked. “It's fucking cold and you don't smoke.”

“Coming out here to make sure you're okay,” Alice responded with a smile, leaning against his shoulder. She wrapped her arms around his middle.

“Not used to seeing you this upset Alex.” she said softly. “Jack and Harley really mean a lot to you.”

Alex smiled tossing his cigarette to the ground, crushed it with the toe of his boot before he put his one arm around her shoulders. “Well, like I said, Jack saved my fucking life. And he’s one of the few fucking friends I have, someone I trust. And Harley? I trust her like I trust Jack. The two of them together made me think that 'Hey! Maybe I can find love too' and next thing I fucking know, here you are, all because I was hanging out with them.” Alex gave her a smile and a wink which had Alice giggling before he continued.
“But yeah, Jack and Harley, they're fucking special. Next to you Alice, they're the only fucking people I trust. I don't trust a lot of fucking people.”

Alice smiled kissing his cheek. “I understand Alex.”

Alex smiled. “Thanks.” He shrugged. “Plus, ya know...what his brother did to them, it ain't fucking right.”

“It's okay. You don't have to say anymore.” Alice kissed the side of his mouth.

Alex smiled at her and tightened his grip around her shoulders.

They were both quiet, just looking up at the once clear Gotham night turn thick and heavy with cloud cover, watching the flakes falling in increasing numbers when Alice whispered.

“We're going to get them both. Don't worry,” she said leaning her head on his shoulder.

Alex nodded. “I'm not fucking worried.”

Alice chuckled. “You're a fucking liar.”

Alex snorted on a laugh, especially to hear his girlfriend curse; Alice never cursed. He smiled and tightened his hold on Alice glancing up at the flakes that were coming down thicker still.

“If the snow keeps up we're all going to be fucking stuck in this fucking SUV until fucking spring.”

Alice laughed at Alex's assessment.

*  

Batman stepped back into the tunnel and clicked on his light. He stood there for a moment, running his light along the brick of the old tunnel. Except for the sighting of the two women, no one had seen the other escaped patients, so either they had left through these tunnels or they were out in Gotham already having somehow slipped away without anyone noticing, but Batman was willing to bet they had come through here. Either way someone needed to check these tunnels out and it was probably best that it be him. He was at least equipped with the tech to get him out if he became lost.

Batman stepped into the storm tunnels, shining his light carefully, looking for any clues that would tell him who might have come this way and which direction they might have taken. Alfred had only moments ago sent a map which Batman downloaded to his visor and was currently examining on the holographic display in front of his eyes. It wasn't much of a help, but it would have to do. It was the best that Alfred could do on such short notice. The storm tunnels crossed over the sewer tunnels as well as the remains of the old and abandoned subways. The tunnels became a confusing mess of interconnected pathways that created a Minotaur-like labyrinth. Batman could only hope an actual monster wasn't waiting for him at the center. A small voice inside hoped his brother hadn't been taken this way or if he had that somehow he found his way out again. Bruce closed his eyes for a second, taking a steadying breath.

As he walked carefully, doing his best to follow a trail that the maps showed him, Batman contemplated that there were a million and one ways that someone could become lost down here. For a moment Bruce felt that cold chill race up his spine and through his veins. The image of Jack, dead...or worse, lost, in these tunnels came to him. And what if something had happened to Harleen. Jack...he didn't think his brother could handle her loss. No, Bruce was sure that losing Harleen would break his little brother completely. Then he worried about Alfred. In the last several weeks since Jack and Harleen's admittance to Arkham, he had seen the old butler age dramatically. The
stress had been brutal, enough that Bruce had to wonder, question himself about his choices. That was yet another reason he needed to find them, he needed a chance to set this straight...to help Jack and Harleen properly. Maybe his aunt had been correct.

He squeezed his eyes shut, shoved his worries aside yet again, and let Batman take over, let the caped crusader calm his nerves. He would find them. He had to find them. There was no other choice.

Gordon had watched him step into the tunnels reluctantly. He couldn't authorize sending his people down here without some assurance that they wouldn't become lost, but he couldn't stop Batman. It had been plain on Gordon's face when Batman had stepped away that he wanted to stop him, but he knew his ally well enough that he didn't try to hold Batman back. And he had to admit, the tunnels needed to be searched. Gordon had simply told Batman what channel he could reach Gordon on his walkie and that he hoped Batman would keep him informed. Batman had simply nodded.

Batman took a deep breath letting his worry as Bruce Wayne and Gordon's concerns, fade away to the background, this time for good. He instead turned his mind to solving the task at hand...which was to follow the clues that had led him down here and to hopefully rescue Jack Wayne and Dr. Harleen Quinzel.

* 

Harley crept slowly from her hiding spot. It was difficult to move, staying crouched, the glass in her hand leaving a bloody trail as she slipped closer to the cage. She didn't want to approach the cage; the creature inside kept making loud huffing and snarling noises. It had retreated to the back of the cage so that she couldn't see it among the shadows that sat in the back of its prison, which only made the experience worse. Despite the fact that she already had seen the monster, not seeing it somehow made the noises coming from the cage more terrifying.

She was finally close enough to reach out. The cage had a simple slide and bolt sort of mechanism. Lucky for her, Harley thought. Her fingertips had just brushed against the cage when she saw the creature inside. It's eyes glowed red in the shadows at the back of the cage and its angry eyes bored into hers. She snatched her hand back from the cage, but the monster did nothing. It didn't try to grab her or rush the front of the cage...at least not yet. Harley glanced from the slide lock to the monster, but the glowing red eyes were gone. Harley made a startled hiss as she sucked in her breath in surprise.

She bit down on her bottom lip and reached out again, her fingers trembling. She grabbed the bolt and slid it to the side to release the cage door when she heard a voice behind her.

"There you are my precious."

Harley spun up on the toes of her feet, stumbling back onto her rear, her back slamming up against the cage door which made the whole tower of them shake and set the creatures inside to wailing and screaming. The hairy monster behind her screeched, but Harley's attention was on the monster in front of her. She looked up to see that the creature had changed. Not only had it grown larger in size, seeming to block out the little light that was in here, the monster had grown thin and skeletal. She watched in horror as the monster's features shifted, forming a new face. A deep orange glow burned from the eyes and mouth as if those holes were portals to hell. The body had grown taller, thinner, and at a cost to any humanity that it may have possessed before—the bones seemed to rip through the thin, grey flesh. Ropes of muscle pulled taut over the yellowed bones that stuck out where the flesh had pulled apart, the sharp edges of ribs punctured through the papery flesh, the twisted and distorted ridges of the spine pushed out through the flesh with pitch black feathers unfolding from the spine like spikes creating a ridge of twisted bone and feathers.
The clothing the monster wore was in tatters, hanging off of it in strips that seemed to almost form parts of its body mixing with the muscle and flesh.

The monster loomed closer filling her senses. She was almost overcome by the scent of decay; the sickly sweet smell of death wafted over Harley.

“There you are Harleen,” the monster hissed menacingly, but with a hint of satisfaction in its tone. Its voice seemed to come from the bowels of the earth, triggering a gut reaction in Harley.

She screamed.

Behind her, the monster in the cage responded to her scream with one of its own. The trapped monster behind her, reached through the bars and grabbed at Harley’s hair and shoulder, claws ripping into her skin, pulling her hair when it yanked back on her. She screamed again, yanking herself away from the cage, twisting around and slashing at the monster with her jagged piece of glass. The claws of the creature ripped across her arms, tearing through the sleeve of her dress and into the skin beneath, but her piece of glass sliced deeply along the creature’s forearm causing it to howl with a mix of fury and pain, yanking itself back into the darkness of its cell.

Harley threw herself forward and to the side just as the creature behind her burst from the cage that confined it with loud roar bursting from its lungs. Her shoulder hit against a table leg hard enough that the table vibrated causing the tinkle of glass beakers and a few minor objects to crash to the floor. Harley yelped and pulled herself into a fetal position while glass beakers full of toxin fell around her.

*

Crane had just stepped forward when Harley let out a blood curdling cry of fear and pain. The fear had been simply delicious for Crane, but no sooner had the sound escaped her lips than something big and nasty burst through the cage door behind her. Crane barely had time to react, before the baboon leapt from the cage.

The animal had been part of Crane’s experiments from nearly the beginning. It had been a large, aggressive male when he had purchased the animal on the black market over a year ago, but through the months that Crane had owned the animal, he had taught it real fear. The animal had helped in the slow development of Crane’s toxin by being his main test subject.

The baboon had lived in a state of constant, heightened fear thanks to daily exposure to Crane’s fear toxin. Part of the experiments involved a device that Crane had invented that was attached to the animal’s back with tubes that ran into the animal’s brain, sending a directed amount of fear toxin into the creature’s brain and blood system. Crane had been impressed with the primate’s ability to endure a constant low level supply of fear toxin, and over the weeks, Crane had slowly increased and changed the dosage until he had come up with the perfect amount that enhanced the animal’s fear levels to mind erasing levels. This had given Crane the perfect dosage to use on Harleen.

The baboon shrieked in terror, racing out of its cage only to be met by the monster it saw before it, a thick green and brown mass of madness. The animal stumbled in confusion and slammed into one of several chemistry sets that Crane had down here in his lab. The chemistry set on the table, like all the others, contained one of Crane’s many versions of the fear toxin. The monkey crashed into the set causing glass and the liquid fear drug to come tumbling down to the floor. The loud sounds mixed with the drug induced images sent the baboon into a frenzy.

It surged toward Crane, canines and claws reaching out to destroy the monster it saw.
The drug had been pumping for so long into its system that everything the monkey saw was a monster, a predator of some sort, there to rip it apart. It focused its attention on Crane, the biggest monster in the room, screeching and shrieking, lashing out with claws and teeth wanting to tear away the nightmare and escape.

Crane hissed in surprise, taking several quick involuntary steps back, lashing out with his sickle when the baboon attacked, its claws catching him along the arm and chest, slashing quickly and deeply. The pain seared through Crane, burning across his skin. The monkey was too drug-addled to attack with the sort of power and direction it would usually have had. The animal could not properly see the coming attack from Crane which was why Crane's first strike with the sickle was able to catch the baboon easily. The blade sank into the monkey's side puncturing its lung and heart in one vicious, deadly move. Crane yanked the sickle back, the monkey falling to the ground in a pool of its own blood to die within seconds. Crane sighed in frustration. He really hated to waste good materials.

* 

Harley barely spared the battling monsters a glance before she was on her feet rushing for the trap door. The floor was a mess of spilled liquid and shattered glass. Her bare feet slipped, going out from under her. She crashed to the floor and cried out in a painful rush as the air was knocked from her and slammed her chin against the floor. She scrambled, rolling under another table and going still, wincing at the feel of a couple of slivers of glass that had cut into her knees at the same time she lost her grip on her broken piece of glass, her only weapon. The large shard had slid across the floor and away from her.

Crane yanked the sickle out of the baboon's side, the creature twitching on its last few breaths. He stood up with the bloody sickle and looked around. He had caught sight of her for a moment just before the monkey attack then in the next instant he lost her.

"Come along Harleen. You are only delaying the inevitable."

Harley was doing her best to control her breathing and to bite down on the sounds of pain she wanted to make when she reached down to pull a couple of small pieces of glass from her knees. Her hand was shaking as she slowly pulled the glass out and laid it on the floor beside her instead of tossing it.

Crane snarled. "Harleen!!! Enough of this!! Come out!"

Crane walked past where Harley was hiding under one of the lab tables. She made a small sound, a tiny gasp when she saw his legs next to her. She scrambled in the opposite direction, staying under the table. Crane heard the tiny sound and whipped around.

"Come on, Harleen my love. Enough games." Crane was losing his temper...some of the toxin had been wasted, one of his test subjects was dead and he had been hurt. He was angry; Crane did not like to become angry. When he was angry he became like his father, violent. It was messy and he hated messy. But when he spun around he let his temper take over, Crane let the blind rage that he worked very hard to control fuel him now. He reached out, grabbed the table where more of his delicate lab equipment sat and flipped the table to the side. He roared, spittle flying from his lips. His eyes behind his mask were inflamed.

"You can't hide!! There is nowhere to go!!!"

Harley scrambled, gaining her feet and she ran, but Crane was surprisingly quick. He grabbed her by her hair and yanked her backwards.
“And where do you think you are going?”

*

Jack and Dale had been walking forever—at least that was what it felt like to Jack. Jack stopped and leaned against the brick wall holding up one of the carbide lamps they had taken from Dollmaker's room. His wounds were sapping his strength. Dale was staring down at the map on his phone when Jack spoke softly, his eyes closed. He was trying to gather his strength. “It's starting to get colder. Have you noticed that we are starting to be able to see our breath?” Jack opened one eye and looked over at Dale who glanced up from the map frowning. He blew out a breath.

“You're right.” Dale replied quizzically. “What do you think that means?”

Jack smiled. “I think it means we might be on the right track.”

Dale grinned. “An opening.”

Jack nodded. “Yep, an opening.”

They both heard a noises. At first neither of them could be sure what they were hearing, the slight sound echoed, bouncing down the tunnel. They both remained quiet, Jack holding the lamp out, the flame reflecting off the mirror around it and casting a bright light out into the tunnel ahead of them. After a couple of seconds they heard the sound again.

Jack frowned puzzled then hissed. “I think it's a squeak.”

Dale frowned too. “A squeak?”

Jack nodded and started to say something when they both saw a shadow bouncing against the wall as whatever it was came racing down the tunnel toward them. Jack reached into his pocket pulling out the scalpel he had taken from Dollmaker's room. It wasn't much of a weapon, but it would do. He tensed ready to attack whoever or whatever was coming toward him, when something burst into the lamp's radius of light.

Dale let out a yelp of surprise, jumping and stumbling backward, but Jack started to laugh as the rat raced by the two men and disappeared into the darkness of the tunnel.

“A rat!” Jack leaned against the wall laughing. “It's a rat!”

Dale, who was holding a hand to his chest as if he had had a heart attack glared slightly. “What is so funny?”

Jack's smile spread across his face. “It means we are indeed on the right path my friend. The way out is ahead of us!”

Dale blinked for a moment then smiled as he realized Jack was correct. Jack pushed himself away from the wall chuckling. “Come along my darling!! I don't know about you, but I'm sick of these tunnels!”

Dale nodded. “Me too.”

The two men started to walk again with more purpose.

*

Harley was yanked backward by the monster, she could feel her hair being ripped from her scalp
when the monster practically tore her off her feet. Harley reached up trying to grab at the monster's clawed hands, her nails scraping uselessly over the creature's hand as she struggled to keep her feet under her.

Crane yanked her back and spun her around, his anger getting the best of him causing him to lash out and punch her across the face, snapping her head to the side at the same time that he let go of her hair. Harley yelped in shock; the pain lanced through her face and she tasted blood on her tongue. Crane let go of her, the suddenness of the strike and the confusion caused by it made Harley drop, hitting the floor hard. Crane sighed. He dropped down to crouch over her reaching out to grab her chin. He turned her face one way then the other. He had hit her fairly hard, bloodying her nose and splitting her lip.

“Now look what you made me do Harleen!! I didn't want to hurt you, but this is getting ridiculous. I do not like to repeat myself and I do not like things to be messy. And you my dear have not only caused damage to my lab equipment, but you caused me to kill one of my prize test subjects. I thought this might be enjoyable, but I find myself becoming very annoyed with you right now.”

Harley frowned in confusion looking up at the monster. For a moment it wasn't a monster, but Crane in a mask. The image confused her, but she didn't have time to ponder it before Crane stood up yanking Harley to her feet with him.

“Now, my lovely. You are going to come with me and we are going to see just how much of my fear toxin you can take before you break. I need you broken, you understand. We simply must get through this part in order to realized the second part of my plan.”

Harley gasped in pain, but she smiled and hissed. “I see you...I see what you really are!! You're pathetic!! There's nothing scary about you! You don't scare me!”

She giggled, blood dripping down her chin and then she spat in his face.

The bloody spittle hit Crane's mask rather than his skin, but it still angered him. He shook her, then surprised himself when he punched her in the stomach. Harley dropped to the floor gasping, struggling to catch her breath.

Crane glared down at her. “This could have been easy, but I suppose you would not have been perfect for me if it had been. You are strong and I do admire that Harleen, I really do...which is why I chose you. Beautiful, strong willed, a delicate flower with an iron will, intelligent...it is as if you were made for me Harleen. My perfect match.”

Still struggling to catch her breath, Harley glared up at the monster. The two images, one of Crane in a mask and the other of a nightmare scarecrow were overlapping, but her system seemed to be processing the fear toxin or working its way through it because she was seeing less and less of the monster and more and more of Crane.

“I'm not your perfect match you freak!! I'm only for Jack.” She giggled then, with a sneer at Crane. “He is going to hurt you when he gets a hold of you.”

Crane laughed. “Oh your Jack Wayne isn't going to live through the night Dr. Quinzel.”

Harley stared at him, but she refused to believe him. “Liar!”
Crane smiled as he crouched down. “Why lie? The truth is so much more entertaining.”

Harley narrowed her eyes. “Jack Wayne is twice the man you'll ever be and he's far more frightening. You don't scare anyone! You're a coward, a freak!! You're just an egghead with an inferiority complex trying to be a big man now and failing!” Harley giggled. “Jack would say you aren't even funny!”

Crane moved so suddenly and quickly that Harley didn't have a chance to process what was happening until he had lifted her up and thrown her across the room. She hit one of the lab tables, slid through glass beakers and other equipment until she hit the wall, slamming hard enough into the plaster that she created an impact crater against the wall, the cracks reaching up towards the ceiling.

Crane rushed over, grabbed her by her hair again, and yanked her to her feet before he shoved her against the wall. Harley's face was covered in blood from her nose, busted lip and now a large slash across her forehead. Crane snarled, putting his masked face against hers and screamed in her face.

“You will be scared of ME!”

He backhanded her across the face. Harley gasped, tasting blood in her mouth. Crane yanked on her by her hair painfully and slammed her up against the wall a second time. “You will be scared!!! YOU WILL BE SCARED!!”

Harley laughed through the blood on her teeth and lips, her blue eyes clear as she ground out, “I'll never be scared of you, you pathetic loser.”

Harley slammed her forehead against Crane's as hard as she could. She saw stars flash in front of her eyes, but it was worth the pain to watch Crane and the monster that overlapped him stumble away from her in confusion. Harley tried to zip by him, but she wasn't fast enough, her head still spinning from the headbutt and her other wounds. Crane reached out and grabbed her, causing her to fall forward and slam into the floor. Harley gasped, the air knocked from her, but then Crane had grabbed her by her ankle and flipped her over with surprising strength. Harley snarled raising one foot and kicking him in the crotch as hard as she could.

Crane yelped, buckling over for a split second. Harley climbed to her feet, but he recovered too quickly reaching out and grabbing her to yank her forward and backhand her across the face hard. The needles on the end of his fingers cut thin, rough gouges into her cheek. Harley yelped in pain.

“Fuck!”

Crane sneered. “I'll just have to inject you with my fear toxin again, a higher dose—the highest I have yet to try should work on you.”

Harley lashed out with her fist, punching him in the face. She didn't have the strength she might have usually had behind her punch; the drugs, head butt and the punishment she had already taken made her weaker. Crane chuckled.

“Cute that you think you can defeat me Harleen. I am the master of fear, of pain and of suffering.”

“You are the master of jack shit!” Harley hissed. She ducked in low just as Crane reached for her again and punched him in his kidney, then she brought that same fist upward, slamming Crane under his chin and snapping his head back.

Crane snarled in pain and frustration and charged her, his shoulder coming in under her guard to strike her in the diaphragm. His attack lifted her off her feet and threw her across one of the lab tables. She slid off the other side in a hail of broken glass.
Sandra had her hands wrapped around her phone. Her eyes were closed though she wasn't sleeping. She had her scarf wrapped around her nose and mouth even though Frost had turned the SUV on to warm up the vehicle and everyone inside. The snow was beginning to collect on the vehicle and had grown heavier in the last hour. She was doing her best not to worry, to just focus on Dale getting here. Dale would get here with Jack, then they would go and get Harley. It was all going to work out—it had to work out. She kept repeating this to herself, it had to work out, it had to work.

Her phone rang.

The sound of the ringing phone made everyone in the SUV jump, causing the whole vehicle to shake. Sandra fumbled the phone nearly dropping it on the floorboards; her fingers were cold as she looked at the number on the screen.

She nearly shrieked which again made everyone in the SUV jump. “IT'S DALE!”

She quickly hit the answer button and held it to her ear. “DALE?”

She could hear Dale's tired voice on the other end. Never had she heard a more magical sound.

“Sandra? We're out...we're out...”

The frightened animals in their cages let out shrieks and roars of fear while Crane and Harley fought. Crane tried to grab Harley, but she held her arms up, which were covered in nicks and cuts from the broken glass around the room, her hands clenched into fists. She swung her right elbow, twisting her entire torso to land the blow to catch him across the chin. Crane jerked to the side and grunted in pain. His defenses were down (she could only guess that he underestimated her), which allowed her to hit him again with her other elbow. Crane surprised her after her second elbow strike. Even though he was staggered, his hand shot out and grabbed her around the neck. He shoved her back, slamming her against the wall, but Harley brought both her arms up, holding her hands, one around the other to create a larger fist and slammed her balled fists down on the joint of his arm as she twisted to her left, breaking his grip on her. She then grabbed Crane's head by his mask, yanked him forward and down as she brought her knee up to smash his face before she shoved him away.

She made a break for the ladder, but her escape was across the room from her. She might make it she thought...maybe find a way out of this house, but Crane grabbed her by the back of her dress. The cloth tore, the ripping sound filling the room as Crane yanked her backward and threw her to the floor. She gasped in pain as her breath was driven out of her lungs, bits and pieces of glass fragments cut into her face as her body smashed into the broke glass that littered the lab floor. Crane tore his mask off, threw it down, his eyes wild and his hair in disarray. He reached down to grab her by her throat, yanked her up and into his arms. Harley felt too weak to break his hold, letting him yank her to her feet. He held her close, his lips brushing hers when he spoke.

“I will haunt your nightmares Harleen. I will be the one thing you will always fear, but all else will be yours. My Lady Crow...that is what you are meant to be.”

He pressed his mouth to hers, forcing his tongue between her lips, gagging her. Harley shoved back, struggling to push him away, tears rolling down her bloody cheeks as he forcefully kissed her, but she was hurt, weak and the drugs still kept trying to assert control over her; the second wind she had for a minute seemed to be rapidly fading. She wanted Jack, but he wasn't here, she would simply have to save herself. She dug the fingers of one hand into Crane's suit jacket, while with the other
hand she reached for something, anything, her grasping fingers sliding along one of the lab tables, sticky with the spilled fluid, her fingers dusting over tiny pieces of shattered glass while with her other hand she pushed on Crane trying to break the kiss that he just wouldn't stop. Despite his thin frame, the man was surprisingly strong, perhaps nearly as strong as Jack, she realized fearfully. He held her pressed against him, kissing her, pressing his mouth painfully against her split and bloody lips completely unaware or ignoring her tears, forcing his mouth against hers. He had wrapped one arm around her waist, holding her while his other hand reached down to grab her rear and press her hips against his own.

Harley reached desperately for something, her fingers stretched out to find something, anything...then she felt something. It was large, glass...a cylinder. She reached for it, but the cylinder tried to roll away, she stretched her fingers as far as she could, the tips of her fingers brushed the glass...it started to roll away again, just when she thought she had lost it, it rolled toward her. Harley wrapped her hand around it, lifted it up, her eyes wide as she saw out of the corner of her eye it was a syringe filled with the dark orange liquid fear toxin. Harley didn't hesitate, she shoved the syringe into his neck and mashed down on the plunger.

* 

Frost had turned the heat on full blast. Jack was shivering, his whole body shaking; between his wounds and the cold, the man had gone ghost white. It was clear he wasn't feeling his best, but his anger was currently sustaining him. He sat between Alice and Alex, shaking and leaning back tiredly in the seat. Sandra was clearly concerned about both men, hissing low to Dale about infection, fever, but Dale waved her off.

Alex was cursing while he slipped off his coat and threw it around Jack's shoulders. “Fuck me running! What the fuck Jack! Look at you!! You're a fucking mess! Ya both fucking stink too. What did you guys find down there, a fucking alligator and you decided to wrestle it?”

Jack laughed, shivering at the same time. Alex frowned, his brow wrinkled in worry. Dale, who was squashed in the front seat between Sandra and Frost was shivering too though Sandra was quickly warming him up with kisses. She had wrapped her coat around the big man, and held his face between her hands covering his bald head in numerous kisses then made a squeak of distress when she saw his dislocated wrist which had swollen up greatly. As Jack watched the two of them, he felt a wave of intense jealousy. He wanted Harley bad enough that his entire body ached to have her in his arms. His worry for her was all-consuming now that they were out of the tunnels and he was that much closer to seeing her and killing Crane. He forced his attention back to Alex.

Teeth chattering, Jack grinned. “Well, we did meet a charming little fellow who liked to make dolls out of human flesh.”

Alex leaned back giving Jack a look, then snorted. “You're fucking with me.”

Jack grinned. “Yes, I'm fucking with you. Now, we need to get Harley.”

Sandra turned around holding up her phone “I have Crane's address, he lives right outside Gotham.”

“We need to hurry,” Jack demanded quietly, but his voice carried weight.

Sandra frowned. “You and Dale need to see a doctor. You're both in bad shape. We could...”

Jack snarled. “No doctors!! HARLEY! NOW!”

Frost quickly backed the SUV out. “On it Boss.”
Batman stopped in shock, staring into the chamber he had found. The first thing that he noticed was
the bodies of several men wearing uniforms from Arkham. All of the men had been guards judging
by the uniforms, all of them dead, stacked up in a corner of the room like wood. The next thing
Batman saw were the other bodies—or parts, skin, limbs, jars of...pieces. The room was equipped
like a laboratory from a monster film about Dr. Frankenstein. There were old autopsy tables, surgery
equipment, old blood, the smell of decay and the evidence of a fight. No fresh bodies were evident,
though he found signs of fresh blood.

Batman walked through the room looking for clues. There was so much blood, both old and new
mixed together that he wasn't sure taking a sample would be worth the trouble, but when Batman
came to one of the tables he stopped and examined it. It was an old autopsy table, but it had been
equipped with belts...old leather belts. Batman examined them. By the position of the belts, two
would hold someone's wrists down, another two the ankles the last one would go around the middle.
Clearly someone alive had been held down here.

Bruce felt a sinking in his stomach as he fingered the belts.

He found another couple of leather belts on the floor, a piece of bloody glass and a strange
substance...like clay, but nothing else, no clues to tell him where anyone had gone, who had been in
here...only that whoever had occupied this room had a sick mind and needed help. He could only
hope that if Jack had been here he had escaped unharmed...

Batman pulled some sample kits from his belt and proceeded to take samples of the blood.

Crane's face contorted in pain as the toxin hit his system. Harley had no idea what the dosage had
been or which one of his “formulae” might have been in the syringe, but she didn't care, all she cared
about was that it was clearly affecting him.

He released Harley, backing away from her, taking the syringe that was still sticking out of his neck
with him. Harley watched as his eyes dilated, becoming so wide that the white of his eyes seemed to
disappear, the black dominating. The man's face continued to morph between monster and man in
Harley's vision, the drug struggling to stay in control of her senses, but Harley smiled. She was
winning, and while the monster still seemed real, she now knew it wasn't.

Crane groaned. “Father? No! No no no, not the cellar again!! No!! Not the room!”

Harley frowned, watching Crane. Whatever he was seeing, he was clearly terrified of it. For a
heartbeat, she felt bad for what she had done...but that second of time quickly dissolved as everything
Crane had done to her and Jack, everything he had intended to do to her, came rushing back to her.
The torture, the pain...the kiss.

She didn't wait another moment. Without giving it much thought, her hand slowly closed into a fist,
er her arm snapped out, and her fist connected with the face of the monster/Crane thing before her,
striking right at the center of the monstrous, morphing face. Harley was rewarded by the sound of
bone snapping and the Crane/monster falling backward grabbing at his nose in shock as blood
gushed out in a stream of bright red. He stumbled backwards, hit a table behind him with his hip,
then rolled to the left falling to the ground when there was nothing there to catch him. When Crane
hit the floor, Harley hauled back and kicked him as hard as she could in the stomach, (though she
had been aiming for his crotch once more). She kicked him once, twice and a third time without
stopping. Though she was barefoot, her feet themselves a bloody mess of nicks and cuts, her anger
granted her a burst of violent energy. She hoped she heard a rib crack as she kicked him again while tears of anger started to roll down her cheeks, leaving lines in the blood on her face.

“You FUCKING ASSHOLE!! I’LL NEVER BE YOURS!! NEVER!! You can take your Lady Crow bullshit and STUFF IT UP YOUR ASS!!”

Crane jerked with each kick, curling into a fetal position and groaning loudly, but Harley wasn’t finished. She turned slightly, pivoted on the ball of her foot, and with all her might, kicked him again in the face, right under his chin, snapping his head back and knocking him unconscious.

Harley grinned, breathing heavily, glaring down at him, her face smeared with blood and tears. Her whole face and body hurt, but her smile was bright despite her swollen lip. As soon as she was sure Crane/the monster was unconscious, Harley dropped down to search him for keys.

She did her best to avoid being frantic because she didn't want to miss what she was looking for in her excitement. But she kept telling herself in a steady voice, he had to have keys on him...Crane would have keys...he had to...she touched something metal in his inside jacket pocket. She grinned thanking Jack for all the jackets he wore or she would never have thought that there were inside pockets on jackets. She pulled out the keys and held them up as fresh tears began to stream down her cheeks. Keys. A ring with several keys. She had a way to escape.

Harley hurried over to the ladder and made her way up.

* 

Jack, his teeth no longer chattering, leaned forward. “How far out of the city is Crane's place?”

Sandra looked at her phone. “It’s going to take us...maybe half an hour.”

Jack groaned. He leaned his forehead against his arm that was lying across the back of the front seat, pressing his eyes tightly closed on a wave of pain and exhaustion. It had already been too long...anything could have happened to her in the time they were apart...in the time that Crane had her all to himself. Jack felt tears threatening and he angrily rubbed at his eyes sitting back, dropping his head back against the seat, his eyes closed, and his breath ragged.

Alice waited patiently, glancing over Jack to Alex who looked pale and upset. She opened the first aid kit that Sandra had brought with her, looking to see what they had to work with, which wasn't much, some bandages, gauze, first aid ointment...

Alice frowned. All that would work for the minor nicks and cuts, but the bullet wound in Jack’s shoulder and the ripped burn along his jaw looked like they all needed to be disinfected with more than the simple cream that came in the first aid kit. While Alice looked Jack over, she realized there were probably several wounds that needed stitches too. There were deep slices along his arms and torso that looked nasty and jagged, like someone had used a saw on him! God only knew what kind of infection he would get, she thought. Then there was Dale's wrist which was looking worse by the second. Alice sighed. She knew by the look on Jack’s face, they were not going to get him to a hospital. She knew Alex had some people on his payroll that could help, but she didn’t think that was going to happen until they had Harley.

Alice took a deep breath and began doing what she could; she used the gauze, ointment and bandages, stealing Sandra's scarf to make a makeshift sling for Jack's wounded arm. Jack never moved, never made a sound of pain while she worked doing the best she could with the supplies they had.
She shared a look of concern with Alex, but he just shrugged.

Jack opened his eyes when Alice was done. “Alex, you got any cigarettes on you?”

“Yeah man, 'course.” Alex frowned pulling out a cigarette and handing it to Jack. Alice frowned in disapproval, but said nothing except, “Why don't we switch seats, then you can open the window."

Jack grunted. It was a little complicated to switch seats and while it was clear by how pale Jack became that moving hurt, he never said a word. Alex handed him his lighter and Jack lit the cigarette. He held it to his slightly swollen lips, staring out into the cold night taking a long deep pull on it, holding the burning smoke in his lungs for what seemed a long time before he blew the smoke out slowly staring out the window while Frost drove as fast as he could toward Crane's home.

* 

Harley stumbled when she came up the ladder, her bloody bare feet hitting the slick floor. Every part of her hurt and she was covered in blood; her feet, legs and arms were covered in a thousand tiny nicks and scrapes. She had a large swelling under one eye that was turning purple, her lip was split, a pressure cut on her chin was bleeding slowly and her mouth tasted only of blood. Her dress had been torn forcing her to keep pulling it up and there were places where she could feel glass stuck in her skin, but she ignored the pain in her need to escape. She rushed toward the front door as soon as she hit the first floor, racing toward the door with Crane's keys in her hand. The house was filled with the sounds of Tartini Violin Sonata in G minor "Devil's Trill Sonata” playing through the sound system.

When she arrived at the door, Harley leaned against the nearby wall and frantically began to search through the keys on Crane's ring to find the one that fit the lock. Behind her she had left a trail of bloody foot prints that stood out in sharp contrast to the rest of the white room.

Harley muttered. “Damn it, how many keys does he have?”

Each one she tried refused to fit the lock and she was beginning to panic more, the fear toxin still doing its work in her system, despite her fighting through it. She glanced up when she thought she heard a sound, like something grunting and groaning with effort...

* 

Crane sat up, for a moment forgetting where he was or what had happened.. Blood covered his lips, not only from the fact that his lips were split and swelling, but also from his nose which was swollen, clearly broken, blood leaking from both nostrils. His cheek on one side was round and puffy and his eye on the same side was starting to swell shut. There was more blood oozing slowly down the side of his head from another wound hidden by his hair. He could feel that he had two broken ribs, possibly three. When he reached up to touch his mouth, he reached in between his lips and pulled out part of a tooth. Crane dropped the tooth with numb fingers and looked around his lab slowly, the shadows of the room rose and fell like the tide coming in, bend over moving and shifting nightmare creatures just out of his field of vision. He could feel the fear, like a creature wanting to pounce, ready to drag him under burning through his bloodstream.

Crane stood slowly, his head hurt, his heart hammered hard against his chest feeling as if it were threatening to break free, sweat poured down his body and he was trembling. The sounds of the animals were like chattering alien creatures that echoed everywhere. He put his hands over his ears trying to block them out. Where was his Harleen...

The ladder...he needed to get to the ladder...
Harley started to cry as she flipped through the keys trying one after another. She didn't want to cry, she couldn't help it, but she was still scared and frustrated. She knew what was happening, that the fear toxin was still in her system despite the fact that she was working through it. She was terrified and she was panicking, which made her movements clumsy. Then she heard a groan. Harley turned toward the sound. It was coming from the hall she had just fled...

“No...no no no...” she hissed.

She dropped the keys, the metal hitting the floor with a loud clatter. She heard a voice that sounded liquid and mumbled.

“Harleen.”

She turned to see Crane standing at the end of the hall, leaning against the wall, his face a bloody mess. He was swaying slightly, one hand against the wall to hold himself up, the other hand on his side. “You—you cannot leave Harleen. You belong to me.”

Crane’s words slurred slightly. He could see her, but her figure seemed to pull and stretch, deforming before his eyes like a funhouse mirror. He frowned in confusion then stumbled a step backwards when, instead of Harleen he saw his mother standing there.

“Oh my little boy,” she purred.

“Mother?” Crane stood in shock, but then he saw his mother ripped apart, a creature tearing through her flesh, a horrid hybrid of woman and crow...his Lady Crow.

“You have failed me!!” she screeched, her voice mixed between a crow’s call and a woman's scream.

Crane grabbed his head, his hands over his ears. “NO!!”

The figure melted away before his eyes and he saw Harleen fall through his front door. “NO!! HARLEEN!! Come BACK!!”

* 

Harley jammed one of the keys into the lock and this time she was rewarded when the key slid into the lock easily. Her hands trembling, fear making her think that the key fitting might only be an illusion, but then she turned it, flipped the tumbler and the door came unlocked. Harley grabbed for the knob and fell out of the door, at the last second grabbing the keys out of the lock as she stumbled through.

Harley landed on her knees when she fell through the door, the pain from the impact vibrating up her body. For a moment she couldn't believe she was actually outside. The air was cold. Clouds covered the night sky, hiding the stars and heavy flakes of snow had begun to fall. The chill cut through her and the thin ripped dress she wore, the cold settling into her very bones in a matter of seconds. From the outside, the house looked to be a one-story ranch-style home, though an extremely large ranch-style mansion, a simple, though expensive home with a well tended front lawn and a car parked in the drive way. No one would ever expect what was happening on the inside.

Harley pushed herself to her feet, taking a second to look around. She could see the Gotham skyline, but she had no idea where she was exactly. But when she saw the car in the driveway, a dark blue Bentley Arnage T highlighted by the yellow trace lighting that ran down the driveway. Harley made a soft breathy gasp of hope. She started to run to the car when Crane lurched out of the door.
“NO!!! You're not leaving!! You belong to me!!”

Crane ran into her, trying to grab her and hold her, but he stumbled slamming into her instead. Harley fell forward, hitting the concrete hard enough to knock her breath from her again and open the wounds on her chin and mouth further. She started to pull herself away, but Crane, who had fallen with her, reached out and grabbed a hold of her ankle, trying to yank her back to him. To his eyes, his hand sank into her flesh. For a moment the illusion scared him, but then Crane was taking a firmer hold on her and yanked toward him.

Harley screamed.“NO!”

She was too close to escape to be stopped now! She rolled over onto her back and kicked, hitting Crane repeatedly in the face with her barefoot. Crane cried out as her heel connecting with his broken nose. His grip on her ankle loosened and Harley dragged herself away a few inches. Crane grabbed for her once more, pain and the toxin making him see a wavering mix of his mother and Harleen; his fingers brushed her calf as he tried to make another grab for her, but Harley lunged to her feet and raced to the car. She was shaking trying to find the key to the car when Crane pushed himself to his feet.

“You cannot LEAVE!!” he hollered at her plaintively.

Harley was panting, her breath coming in hard painful gasps when she realized the car key had an automatic locking mechanism attached to it. She hit the button and the car beeped as the doors unlocked and the alarm disengaged.

Harley grabbed the door throwing herself into the vehicle and hitting the lock button just as Crane slammed up against the driver's side window. His dilated eyes rolled wildly as he screamed.

“You belong to me!!”

Harley, sobbing and terrified, rammed the key into the ignition and thanked the makers of Bentley's when the car started right up. She put the car into reverse and slammed her wounded foot onto the gas pedal hard. The car sped backwards knocking Crane to the ground as she did so. He struggled to his feet again. Harley was about to spin the wheel around and drive off when she saw Crane standing there glaring at her. She turned on the car's headlights, which better illuminated the man.

Harley snarled and hit the gas, the Bentley roaring forward. Crane saw something coming toward him, the lights had turned into the huge glowing eyes of a monster, the car morphing and transforming into a large scarecrow’s head. He stared in shock.

Harley screamed in fury as the front of the car connected with Crane. She watched as he rolled over the hood, smashed into the windshield before he rolled over the side and hit the pavement.

Harley's gasping heavy breath filled the car. She stopped to stare at Crane's body. She waited a few seconds, but Crane didn't stand up. She swiftly reversed the car driving backwards then swung the car around, the screech of the tires filled the night. For a second she saw Crane's body lying in the driveway, unmoving. Harley giggled then hit the gas and took off, leaving Crane's home far behind her.

* 

Harley was shivering, her whole body shaking uncontrollably. Her hands on the wheel were tight enough that her knuckles were white. After a few seconds of driving like this, Harley was able to force one of her hands loose to reach out and crank the heat up. The blast of hot air from the car's
heater helped her relax a little, allowing her to think a little more clearly. She glanced at herself in the rear view mirror. She was a bloody mess.

The toxin was still causing her to see...things...along the road and in the shadows. She was giggling now every time she saw some nightmare on the side of the road watching her... but it was happening less and less as she drove. She did her best to follow the street signs until she was sure she was heading back into downtown Gotham. Except now that she was free, she had no idea where to go.

Jack was still in the asylum as far as she knew...she couldn't go there...especially since she hoped she had just killed Dr. Crane.

She couldn't go to Wayne Manor...she didn't trust Bruce to listen to her. Alfred might help, but she couldn't be sure...not enough to risk her freedom to go there...

She had no friends in Gotham that she trusted except maybe Jack's friend Alex. She knew where his one apartment was located in the city, but Alex kept so many places according to Jack, she couldn't be sure he would be there...Alex could be anywhere and the more time she took, running around looking the way she did in a stolen car, the higher her chances of being caught and returned to Arkham. She didn't know where Sandra, Dale or Alice lived and had no phone to contact any of them, even if she had their numbers. She couldn't show up at Alice's work like this...even if Alice was working, which she couldn't be sure of...that left her only one place she could go...someone who might help her at least find Alex.

Harley drove and headed back out to the outskirts of Gotham.

She wasn't sure how long it took her to arrive at the gates of the manor home, but by the time she arrived at Cobblepot's, she was struggling to stay awake.

Frost slowly pulled up the driveway to the large ranch-style mansion. Everyone was leaning forward looking out the front windshield. The door to the house was hanging open and there was a small pool of blood by the door, but there was no sign of anyone. Frost pulled the SUV to a stop by the front door. Jack immediately exited the SUV and headed to the door without stopping to see if anyone was following him. Alex hurried after him along with Frost who pulled out a handgun and followed the other two men. Alice, Sandra and Dale all stayed behind in the SUV, watching the three men walk inside.

Jack stood in the hall looking around slowly. The place was so white that the bloodstains stood out in sharp contrast. There was blood on the front door, bloody foot prints in the hall...a trail of blood splatter that led deeper into the house. But everything was silent. The only sound came from the low classical music that emanated from speakers in the living room. (Jack noted the music was Gabriel Faure's Requiem Op. 48.) Otherwise, he could see no sign of anyone here. Frost went through the house checking the halls and the rooms he could get into while Jack squatted down, reaching out to touch one of the smeared footprints. He frowned looking at his bloody fingertips.

Frost returned quickly. “Most of the rooms are locked somehow. I found one opened that was a bedroom and another that was some weird Roman art room with a basement. Boss, there was a fight down there, some sort of lab. Saw a dead baboon, some other caged animals and lots of blood, but no bodies...there isn't anyone here,” Frost concluded glumly.

Alex was examining some of the artwork, his nose wrinkled in disgust. “Man, this Crane dude is one
sick fucking puppy. You get a look at some of this shit he has hanging on his walls? What the actual fuck?"

That was when Alex's phone rang. The other two men stopped to look at Alex who pulled his phone out and frowned at the name that appeared on his phone...Oswald Cobblepot.

* 

Harley leaned out and pressed the button on the gate. Every movement of her body was an effort. She was in a lot of pain and exhausted by the time she found Cobblepot Manor and all of it was accumulating, catching up with her, slowing her down and making each movement an effort of will. But she had found the place, she was here. She could only hope now that he would see her and help her find Alex.

The speaker by the gate came to life on the fifth push of the button.

“WHO THE BLOODY HELL IS THIS??!!”

Penguin's voice squawked loudly back at her causing her to jump.

“Harley, Harley Quinn. I...I need your help.”

Oswald didn't answer her, nothing happened for a long minute. She had just thought of pushing the button again when the gates slowly opened, squeaking loudly on their rusted hinges.

* 

A few minutes later Harley was sitting in front of a warm fire that burned merrily in an old fireplace. She was in a large old deep blue winged back chair, wearing a pair of grey sweat pants and a t-shirt that were far too big for her, hanging on her frame making her look younger, like a teenager instead of a young woman. Her hair was damp, but clean and all the blood had been washed way leaving only the ugly cuts and bruises behind. The cuts, nicks and slashes on the bottom of her feet hand been cleaned, stitched, and bandaged, her other nicks and cuts were stitched and cleaned with fresh white bandages over them and a pair of too large grey socks were on Harley's feet. At this moment, a young man dressed in black pajama pants and a white bathrobe, barefoot, bare-chested, his hair rumpled as if he had just arisen from bed, was quietly stitching up the palm of her hand while Harley sipped gratefully from a warm cup of tea after taking the two vicodin that Oswald had given her. Cobblepot sat across from her with his own cup of tea.

He was dressed much like the young man, in matching sleep pants and robe, but where the young man was bare-chested, Cobblepot was wearing a matching nightshirt to his pants. He had on a pair of fluffy black and white slippers and his hair was combed back. Next to Cobblepot's chair was one of the young women that Harley had seen him with at the fight club, a dark-skinned beauty with radiant brown eyes. Like Cobblepot and the young man, she was dressed in matching nightwear...which made Harley wonder if the three of them had been in bed together...but she let the thought drift away and focused on her current situation.

Oswald looked at Harley over the rim of his cup.

“So, Dr. Jonathan Crane, eh? Interesting. And you say you killed him?”

Harley frowned and shook her head. “I...I don't know. I hit him with his car.”

The young woman standing by Cobblepot giggled. “Good job,” she said quietly.
Harley gave her a smile.

Cobblepot smiled giving the woman next to him an indulgent grin. “No matter my dear, don't you worry your pretty little head about the car either. I have ways of taking care of such things. But yes. I will contact Alex for you and have our mutual friend come and pick you up. You do realize that your fiance...”

Harley interrupted him. “My husband.”

Cobblepot lifted a brow. “Husband? When did that happen?”

“In the asylum,” Harley said taking a sip of her drink, wincing only slightly as the young man finished up his stitches in her palm and began to wrap a bandage around the stitched up wound.

Cobblepot grinned. “Husband...yes. Your husband will owe me a favor in return—a big favor.”

Harley nodded. “I understand. I just didn't know who else to go to.”

Cobblepot grinned. “Oh now, don't look so glum my dear. I'm happy to help a lady in distress and you made the right decision. Besides, what's a favor between friends?” Oswald thought to himself that having this little...favor to hold over Jack Wayne...for whenever he was out of Arkham (which Cobblepot had no doubt would happen soon since his little girlfriend...no wait...his wife was now loose), but this favor would be quite useful and quite valuable. He would have to hold onto it for just the right moment.

“Now, just relax my dear. Let the pain medicine work. You are perfectly safe now.”

* 

Alex frowned looking between Jack and Frost.

“It's Cobblepot. He says he has Harley and would like me to come pick her up. Says she was looking for me.”

Jack went very still. “What? He has her?”

Alex nodded with a grin. “That's what he says. I don't think Penguin would fool around about something like that...he knows I would kill him.”

Jack grinned manically, a cross between excitement and anger. “Then what are we waiting for!!”

* 

Harley was waiting with Oswald on the doorstep of his home when the SUV pulled up. Harley was leaning against the door frame; between the pills and her sheer exhaustion it was will alone that was keeping her on her feet.

The back door opened and Jack stepped out.

Harley sucked in her breath in shock. He looked banged up, bruised and beaten, his hair flopping around his forehead, his face unshaven for weeks, but she had never seen a more beautiful sight than Jack walking toward her. Harley stepped away from the door walking toward Jack as if an invisible string was pulling her toward him. He smiled, his blue eyes bright as they wandered over her face, noting the numerous bandages, her busted lip and bruises on her face as well as the fact that she was limping slightly.
Harley's expression was pained when she saw the burn along his jaw, his own bruises and cuts, his arm in a makeshift sling, but all that paled when compared to the smile that graced his face while he gazed at her.

Jack reached out and stroked a lock of her blonde hair back from her face, sliding the still slightly damp hair back behind her ear.

“Hey pumpkin,” Jack said softly.

Harley's lips trembled. “Hey puddin.”

Jack reached for her, wrapping his good arm around her waist and pulled her close, pressing his mouth to hers. Tears began to roll down her cheeks. She returned his kiss, her arms going tight around his neck.

They were finally free.
Harley had her arm around Jack's waist, practically holding him up when they arrived at one of Alex's many abodes located in Gotham. Alex was on the phone cursing up a storm ahead of them. It was clear by how agitated he was that if he had another arm he would be throwing his hand around expressively.

"I don't fucking care what time it is. I fucking pay you to be at my beck and call and if you can't fucking do that then I will pay someone who can. I will be making your life a fucking nightmare you know that right? Oh yeah...you can bet this is going to go fucking bad for you after this...it all fucking depends on how fast you get your fucking ass over to me. Got it? Yeah."

Alex hung up and muttered. "He's dead. I'm going to make it so he can't find work on this fucking continent, let alone this fucking planet! That fucking crazy old man!" Alice pressed her lips together on a smile as she put her arm around Alex's shoulder while they all walked onto the elevator at one of the most expensive apartment buildings in Gotham, the Ashland building located right off Robinson Park.

Alex had Frost park the SUV around the back of the building, driving into the parking garage underground from a single entryway that had a keypad to open the gate. Once inside, their small group took a private elevator—again, a keypad code was required to get into the building's elevator. The elevator took their group up to the penthouses where the doors opened up on a private hallway. Alex led them down the hall to one of only two apartments on this floor. He opened the door and ushered everyone inside.

"My fucking casa is your fucking casa!" Alex said with a grin. The place looked nothing like what Harley thought an “Alex apartment” would look like. Unlike the place where she and Jack had dropped him off when he was plastered that one night that seemed so long ago, this place looked as if it had been pulled off the cover of Interior Designers digest! Harley was momentarily stunned until Jack groaned a little. The apartment walls were all a warm subtle shade of gold with large windows that took up the entirety of two walls. The view looked out over the top of Robinson Park and Gotham city. The floors were highly polish stripped wood with alternating light and dark wood panels. There was a grand piano by one set of windows, bookshelves stuffed with books (which Harley noted were not in an orderly fashion like Crane's had been), an extremely large flat screen television, expensive looking furniture; the blue-grey couch was big enough to hold ten to fifteen people easily while the chairs—all in a nice cream colors—looked as if one would sink into them. A clear glass coffee table sat in front of the couch with a few books and art magazines scattered across the top of it, while on another wall rested a large, complex stereo system.

Alex frowned at his friend and immediately pointed Harley down a hall to the right. "The third fucking door on the left is the guest room. You guys are welcome to fucking stay for a long as you like. There should be some fucking clothes in there. Go ahead and shower, change. That fucking doctor of mine should be here soon. Oh and that goes for everyone. Dale, Sandra, there's a room on the right you guys can use, Frost..." Alex pointed. "There's another room down that way and Alice and I'll be heading to my room to freshen the fuck up."

Harley smiled at the one-armed man. “Thanks Alex.”

Alex waved her off with a slight shrug. “No problem Harley.”

Their small party split up, all heading into their rooms to freshen up. Harley helped Jack walk as they made their way to the room.
Harley flipped the switch on the wall when they stepped into the room. The bedroom was large, large enough to be a master bedroom containing a queen size bed covered by a thick, warm brown and gold comforter, and two huge fluffy looking pillows, that dominated the middle of the room. A large picture window looked out on the city, dark wood floors, an elegant coffee table and matching chairs, a flat screen TV that hung on the wall across from the bed, along with its own bathroom that included a tub and shower completed the comfortable bedroom. Harley sat Jack down in one of the chairs, touching his face as she gazed at him with concern.

“Will you be all right for a moment puddin?” she asked with concern.

Jack smiled at her. “Sure pumpkin. I got you here now. Nothing in the world can be wrong as long as you're beside me.”

Harley leaned in and pressed her lips to his mouth. Jack reached up with his good hand and cupped the back of her head, opening his mouth to return her kiss with a low burning passion. Harley made a soft, pained moan of need. She pulled away from him reluctantly.

“I'm going to go start the shower.” She said pointing over her shoulder.

Jack grinned. “Don't be gone long sugarplum.”

Harley giggled softly as she hurried over to the bathroom to start the warm water before limping back. Jack noticed the limping and it made the anger in his chest flare up and burn. He remembered at Crane's house...the bloody footprints. His girl, hurt by that...Jack growled, then slumped in the chair. Harley had just hurried back into the room when she saw him slump, exhausted and pale.

“Oh puddin,” Harley said softly. She dropped down on her knees wincing as she hit the cuts she had taken on her knees from broken glass. Jack noted each time she winced or her face turned pale with pain and it just made the anger in him boil that much hotter. When he got a hold of Crane he was going to make it painful...agonizing. Harley reached up stroking his hair back from his face, smiling softly and dragging her fingers tenderly over his unshaven face. Jack leaned into her touch with a whispered. “My girl.”

Harley blinked back tears. “Okay, let's get you out of those clothes and into the shower. Should I take the bandage off your shoulder?”

Jack nodded. “The bullet wound needs stitches anyway.”

Harley nodded. She was as careful as she could be when she removed the bandage, but she felt him twitch ever so slightly.

Harley pressed her lips together, her eyes shimmering with tears of pain and anger.

She quickly and carefully took off his clothing, noting every bruise, every cut and nick on his body. The gun shot in his shoulder worried her, but Alex had promised a doctor. It hurt her to see her puddin in such bad shape and it angered her. She wanted to lash out at someone, hurt someone for hurting him. She sighed, knowing that any retribution would have to wait and then she led him into the bathroom.

Though she had started the shower only a minute before, the steam filled the bathroom with warm moist air cutting through the chill of the room. Harley worked carefully to remove his clothing, the bandage, and his makeshift “scarf” sling at the last moment before helping him into the shower. Jack groaned loudly, leaning against the wall to the water from the shower head hit him in the face, using
his good arm to hold himself up by pressing it against the back wall. Harley stripped out of her borrowed Cobblepot clothing and slipped into the shower behind him. She eased her arms around him and leaned her head against his back. Jack pushed up and laid a hand against one of hers that rested around his waist. He smiled leaning back slightly.

“I missed ya Harls,” Jack said softly.

Harley smiled kissing his back, brushing her nose against his skin. Part of her was terrified that this wasn't real, that Crane's fear toxin was messing with her head, but Jack sounded and felt real. She squeezed him a little and said softly, “I missed you too puddin.”

She pressed her face against his skin, her eyes closed, just taking a moment to reassure herself he was there before she gently moved her arms from around him and leaned down to grab up the soap. She lathered her hands and began to gently wash his back. It looked horrible, but her husband didn't react to the water washing over it as watery blood washed down his back. She eased the wet gauze away noting that—as Jack had said—the wound was in need of stitches.

“Jack. Who shot you?” Harley asked as she carefully washed him, avoiding touching the wound directly, just letting the water do its work, washing over the wound. It must have stung she thought, but Jack didn't react to the water, even after the bandage was removed, though he did react to Harley's touch, leaning in when her hands stroked over his back and down his hips.

Jack shrugged. “A guard at the asylum.”

“They shot at you?” Harley asked in disbelief, her soapy hands moving along his sides and over his ribs.

Jack turned to face her. Harley ran the soap over his chest and down his stomach. There were so many small cuts and bruises on his body, he looked as if he had been through a long, difficult battle. Her heart tightened in her chest. She wanted to kill whoever had hurt him, she wanted to rip their eyes out and make them eat them. Jack felt her building tension, reached out and ran his hands down her shoulders, caressing her gently. Harley relaxed and laid her head against his chest taking a few, slow and deep breaths before she looked back up.

Jack's lips pulled into a grin. “There's my girl.”

She smiled and then chuckled. “You smell like you were in a sewer.”

Jack laughed. “Close enough. Had an interesting time, I must say. Met a man down there who liked to make dolls out of human skin...real interesting person.”

Harley smiled running her hands careful over him. “Serious?”

Jack laughed. “Yep, seriously. You can ask Dale all about it.”

Jack watched her while she rubbed the soap over his chest and down his stomach. They were both quiet while Harley washed his body. She turned him around to rinse him off while she grabbed up the shampoo and filled her hands with the liquid and stood up on her toes to wash his hair.

Jack licked the swollen part of his lip, reached up, tugging her hand down that had the long line of stitches across it so he could examine it. Harley stopped, going still behind him, dropping her other hand from his hair to his shoulder. Harley had removed the bandage over her hand before stepping into the shower. He had noticed that using the hand hurt her, that her fingers were stiff, but she kept using it to wash him despite the pain it was clearly causing her.
“You—do you wanna talk about what happened to you Harley?” he asked softly letting her reclaim her hand.

Harley frowned, reached back up to focus on his hair. “Not...not yet,” she said softly. “But soon.”

Jack frowned turning to rinse the shampoo from his hair before he asked. “He didn't...”

Harley shook her head. “No, he didn't—I swear.”

Jack pressed his lips together and Harley could see tears at the edges of his eyes. “I'm sorry Harley. I'm sorry he hurt you so badly.”

Harley looked confused while she washed his arms. “Why should you be sorry Jack?”

“What happened to you. I...I should have found a way...it shouldn't have happened...I shouldn't have let it happen. I promised to protect you.” Jack squeezed his eyes shut, but Harley grabbed his face roughly between her soap-covered hands. “Don't say that Jack. You did everything you could. You know whose fault this is, all of it? Bruce. It's Bruce's fault. Not yours.”

Jack stared at her. Her blue eyes were hard and he could see a burning hatred behind them. He stared into their depths until Harley smiled at him. “You did everything you could Jack. You came looking for me.”

Jack nodded and cupped her face in both hands.

“If he hadn't put you in there...in that awful place...” Harley choked, tears springing to her eyes. Jack grabbed her, tugged her into the circle of his arms. “We're together now Harley. We'll talk about Bruce later. I just want to focus on the fact that we're free and I have you in my arms right now.”

Harley smiled, took a steadying breath. “Me too puddin, me too.”

Jack smiled, then raised an eyebrow when he felt her soapy hands slide down over his stomach to his groin. “Harley Quinn! Are you trying to seduce me?” Jack smiled, releasing Harley and gave her that big gorgeous smile of his that Harley loved so much, the old Jack twinkle back in his eyes.

“Mm...maybe I am? Is it working?” Harley purred and dropped to her knees in front of him.

Jack eyes burned looking down at her, wet, naked...here. He stepped back to let the water run down and wash away the soap.

She kissed his thighs, her teeth catching the soft sensitive skin gently, then she bent down to lick his scrotum, her tongue running up slowly. She then nipped and kissed all around his penis, letting his shaft bounce or stroke against her cheek, but never her mouth. She licked along his stomach, biting softly at his skin wherever there wasn't a scratch, before she once again knelt low and sucked on his scrotum until Jack through he might keel over.

Harley grinned. With a hand on his hip she tugged him back to her leaning in to run her tongue over his quickly hardening erection. Jack's eyes rolled at the feel of her tongue, so much warmer than the water around them. Her lips were soft and warm, soothing, exciting. Even before she started her exploration of him, he wanted her, though right now he thought she was doing a fantastic good job of driving him crazy right now.

Jack groaned. “You want to wait...”

Harley didn't answer except to suck all of him into her mouth, her warm tongue playing over him
Jack's knees went weak and he was forced to move to the wall, leaning back his hands going down to rest against her head. Harley grabbed his hips (careful of her one hand). Harley relaxed her jaw, taking all of him into her mouth while she looked up at him. Jack gazed down at her, his mouth open just a little as he stared down at her. Their eyes locked as Harley rolled her tongue along the sensitive bottom of his shaft pressing her lips down and pulling up slowly letting him feel every moment her lips were pressed against him until she was at the head of his penis. She grabbed him with her good hand, holding him while her tongue swirled around him.

She then slowly wrapped her lips around the head of his shaft, her hand raising up slowly then up and down his length while sucking on him at the same time. Jack groaned loudly. Harley continued to suck and use her hand, but she kept her eyes on him smiling as she sucked. Jack watched her, licking his lips. She grinned dragging the very edge of her teeth along his length then nipped playfully at the soft head of his erection. Jack hissed between his teeth watching her.

She gave him a devilish smile, her blue eyes dancing before wrapping her lips round him again and tugging her lips tight against him, her tongue sliding back and forth along the underside of his erection with a loud moan on her own. She reached up and cupped his testicles in her hand squeezing gently while she sucked, never breaking eye contact with him enjoying him watching her.

She could feel Jack was close. She stuck the fingers of her injured hand in her mouth then slid her hand under, sliding her fingers between his rear cheeks, gliding her fingers against his anus back and forth in a slow teasing motion, listening for Jack's reactions. He groaned, closing his eyes for a moment, spreading his legs a little more. Harley smiled and gently slipped a finger into him. Jack groaned loudly arching his hips, his fingers in her wet hair spasmed. Harley grinned moaning with pleasure, taking that as a good sign and began to slowly, gently added a second finger, sliding her fingers in and out of him at the same time sucking on his erection, her mouth and fingers moving together in an erotic rhythm.

Jack looked down at her just as Harley's eyes rose back up to met his gaze. But it was when she smiled around his shaft and winked that Jack lost control and came with a loud groan. Harley sucked him down, swallowing, continuing her rhythm of sucking and using her fingers while Jack cried out and shuddered his fingers tight in her hair. “Oh God Harley!” Jack gasped struggling to keep his balance; his orgasm caused his legs to go weak, but Harley's continued attentions were causing him to spasm and jerk, the pleasure almost more than he could bear, until finally Harley sat back grinning like a cat licking her lips with a decidedly satisfied expression on her face.

“Now, you need to get in bed,” Harley grinned pleased with herself.

She stood up and Jack grabbed her around the back of the neck yanking her close, covering her mouth with his in a passionate kiss. He pulled away, both of them breathless.

“Oh I'm going to bed,” Jack purred.

She put her finger to his lips. “In the morning. You can have your way with me then. Right now you need rest, food, and pain killers.”

Jack started to protest, but Harley smiled kissing the tip of his nose. “Don't argue with me puddin.”

Jack pressed his lips together on a smile of pure joy to have her back. “Yes ma'am.”

* 

It wasn't long before there was a knock at their door. Harley had Jack in bed, propped up with pillows, using a towel to cover his bullet wound front and back. She had found some clothing in the
room's closet, just as Alex had promised, so that Jack was now in a pair of sweat pants, no t-shirt until his wound was properly taken care of and some warm socks. She was wearing a different pair of sweat pants and a t-shirt that hung to her knees along with some socks, though she needed new bandages on all of her wounds too. She wore her wet hair in a braid over her shoulder making her look a great deal younger. She was pale and tired, the bruises on her skin looking bright and painful. The sight of them made Jack want to kill something, his mind dancing with the thoughts of what he could do to Crane. (Harley told him about hitting the doctor with the car, but Jack suspected the man wasn't that easy to put down). Harley was sitting on the bed curled beside Jack watching the news report about the break out at Arkham when the knock on the door came.

After a couple of knocks Jack yelled. “Come in!”

Alex stuck his head in. “You guys decent? I have the fucking doctor here and I ordered some early morning breakfast. I bet you guys are fucking hungry!”

Alex walked in pushing a cart with one hand, followed by the warm smells of bacon, toast, coffee, and cinnamon trailed by a bald man in a pair of grey slacks and a matching sweater carrying a black doctor's bag.

“Guys, this is Dr. Henderschott. He is going to look you both over and stitch up that fucking crater in your shoulder Jack.” Alex indicated the man behind him as he pushed the cart over to the bed.

The doctor stepped over with a smile. Despite the argument between him and Alex on the phone, Dr. Henderschott seemed nice enough.

“Now, I was told you are both my patients? Which one is...ah...yes, I see.”

Harley had removed the towels from Jack's shoulder. Henderschott nodded. “All right, let's start with you.”

*

By the time Henderschott had left, Jack had his wound repacked and bandage, the doctor deciding it was best not to stitch it up because of the possibility of infection. He did stitch several of Jack's smaller wounds, and re-bandaged most of Harley's leaving them with care instructions and a bottle of vicodin. Alex stayed to make sure the doctor did a good job then paid that man in cash and walked him out.

Alex returned a few minutes later with Alice, Dale and Sandra in tow. Frost had headed on home letting Alex know his phone would be on if they needed him.

Alex grinned at the two of them. “Well, finally got you two out of the fucking loony bin. So, what’re your plans now?”

Jack, who had four pills in his hand, tossed them back downing them with a swallow of hot coffee and grinned. “Get back at Bruce.”

“Not going back?” Alice asked.

Jack shook his head. “No. I don't trust Bruce not to throw us back in first chance he gets. And I don't trust myself not to smash his face in,” Jack added.

Harley was sitting beside him stroking his hair. “So what are we going to do?”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “I have a few ideas, but for right now I want to disappear for a while.”
Alex nodded. “Well, you guys are fucking welcome to stay here as long as you like. I pay the fucking staff under the table for their silence so you won't have any problems with one of them fucking squealing to the cops or your brother. But if you don't want to stay here, I got a lot of fucking places throughout Gotham.”

Jack smiled. “Thanks Alex and thank you too Dale, Sandra, Alice...without you guys...”

Harley nodded in agreement. “Yes, thank you guys for everything. Especially you Dale for getting my puddin out of there.”

Dale, whose wrist looked to have been set and was in a sling smiled. “No problem.”

Jack laughed. “No, it was a big fucking problem, but you stayed which says a lot. I appreciate it and I take care of my friends.”

Dale blushed and nodded while Sandra smiled. “Thank you, both of you.”

Alex yawned. “I'm moving Dale and Sandra to one of my other fucking places so you guys can have this one to yourselves. Told Dale they both need to lay fucking low for a while.”

Jack nodded. “Thanks Alex.”

Alex made a rude sound which had Alice giggling. “Okay, well you two get some fucking rest. You can call room service for anything you need. Don't you fucking leave this apartment though, for the next couple of days at least—you two fucking got it?”

Alex gave them both a serious look which had Harley snorting on a laugh. “Okay Alex, okay.”

Alex grinned. “Good. You fucking call me when you get up, okay?”

He put his arm around Alice's waist who waved. “Good night you guys.”

“I'll ah, talk to you later.” Dale nodded giving Jack and Harley a smile.

Sandra smiled and waved, closing the door behind them when they stepped out.

Harley yawned, the pills had begun to work to ease her pain and the sheer exhaustion from the last few hours washed over her. She sagged, starting to sink down into the bed. Jack chuckled getting up to grab some food from the tray Alex had brought in with him, removing lids to reveals eggs, bacon, toast and cinnamon rolls. “HEY! No going to sleep until you've eaten, sweets.”

Harley nodded, yawning again wide enough that her jaw cracked and her eyes watered. “Sure thing puddin.”

Jack smiled broadly as he loaded her plate with bacon, eggs and a cinnamon roll. “I want you to eat it all.”

Harley giggled and sat up straight. “Okay, okay, geez.”

Jack filled his own plate before crawling into bed beside her. Jack took a sip of his coffee, the hot caffeine having no power to work against the pills nor the absolute exhaustion he felt, but it did taste good. Jack took a bite of egg, then asked, “How would you feel about renewing our vows?”

Harley, who had her mouth full of bacon, turned to look at him in surprise.

“What?” she asked with wide eyes.
Jack smiled, warming to the idea. “Well, we got married in the asylum. That was one part of our lives, We’ve shed that; we are now going to reinvent ourselves! So...we should renew our vows, have another wedding for this new part of our lives, free, shedding ourselves of the asylum and starting anew! We are now apart from the Wayne name and all the obligation that name holds. We are going to make ourselves a new name. We are free agents, with the freedom to do what we want. And I think a good way to pursue that—to set ourselves on our new path—is a wedding, this time with our friends in attendance.”

Harley giggled, Jack was talking with such enthusiasm.

“It would be nice to have a wedding with our friends there, the people that really care about us,” Harley mused around a bite of bacon.

Jack smiled taking Harley’s plate and setting it with his on the cart. “And after we have renewed our vows, we can start planning our revenge. How does that sound?”

Harley snuggled in close to Jack with a soft giggle. “That sounds divine puddin, absolutely divine.”

Jack grinned, yawning. They snuggled down into the pillows looking for a comfortable way for them both to lay. After a few seconds of shifting around they finally settled on spooning. Jack wrapped his arm around her waist, pulling Harley up close against him. He kissed her ear, then her shoulder. Harley sighed happily.

Jack rubbed the tip of his nose against her ear and whispered. “Non posso vivere senza di te.”

“What’s that mean puddin?” Harley asked sleepily.

Jack kissed the soft spot just behind her ear. “I can’t live without you Harley. Sei tutto cio’ di cui ho bisogno. You are everything I need,” Jack murmured softly holding her tightly.

“For verily love knows not ‘mine’ or ‘thine;’
With separate ‘I’ and ‘thou’ free love has done,
For one is both and both are one in love:
Rich love knows nought of ‘thine that is not mine;’
Both have the strength and both the length thereof,
Both of us, of the love which makes us one.”

* 

Harley fell asleep with a smile on her lips, safe in Jack's arms. Jack kissed the top of her head, holding her close. He promised himself, no one...no one would ever seperate them again...ever.

* 

Master Bruce had been very quiet when he came in that evening. Alfred was waiting for him down in the cave as usual, but Bruce had parked the car and walked by the older man as if he wasn't even there. Alfred frowned, watching the young man walk over to the computers, pulled out his seat and began looking through files. Alfred noted they were the files of a couple of criminals that Batman had tangled with before, Zsasz and The Mad Hatter, but other than that Bruce gave no indication what was bothering him.
That boy really needed to learn how to talk about his feelings, keeping so much of himself bottled up inside wasn't good for him, Alfred thought as he headed up the stairs to the kitchen to make some hot tea and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for Bruce. The best way to get the boy to eat was to simply place something in front of him and a PB and J sandwich always worked.

Alfred made his way downstairs into the depths of the batcave again where he found that Bruce had removed his cowl and was staring at a picture on the batcomputer of him and Jack when they were younger. Alfred frowned standing by the doorway with the tray of tea and the plate with the sandwich watching Bruce. Bruce stared at the picture, his elbows on the console, holding his head. Bruce looked stricken and it looked to Alfred that there was a dampness around the young man's eyes.

“Master Bruce?” Alfred inquired softly.

Bruce didn't look at Alfred as he spoke, his eyes never left the image on the screen. It showed Jack, young and skinny, his arm around his older brother's shoulder, laughing, his bright perfect, infectious smile across his face as he leaned against Bruce. Bruce was smiling in the image too, though not with the same abandon as his little brother.

Bruce's voice was soft and there was an edge of pain in it when he spoke. “I failed him Alfred. I failed Jack.”

Alfred walked over and set the tray down, picking up the tea and setting it in front of Bruce. He picked up his own tea, taking a steadying sip before he spoke. “What do you mean Master Bruce?”

“There was a break out at the asylum, all patients from the sixth floor, the violent patients. Jack was on that floor. He was put in there with...murderers. So was Harleen...I knew that...part of me knew that was wrong, but I didn't...” He shook his head. “I trusted the doctors to know what to do. Jack was violent...I couldn't...” Bruce stopped his rambling and continued. “When I arrived, both Jack and Harleen were missing. One of the patients to escape tonight was Victor Zsasz...I have no proof Alfred, just...Zsasz believes he is freeing people when he kills them. He kills with a knife and carves a tally mark somewhere on himself for every victim, for every soul he thinks he liberates. What if he liberated Jack? Or Harleen? Or what if he took Jack? I'm worried he was taken Alfred, that one of those patients figured they could get a ransom for Jack and took him...or worse...they just wanted to kill him. Jack isn't good about keeping his mouth shut. You know he likes to smart off, say something cocky or sarcastic...or even make one of his terrible jokes, but to someone like Zsasz or Tetch or any of those violent, unstable patients who escaped...they could have taken Jack someplace to...” Bruce swallowed and covered his face with his hands for a long moment before he spoke again.

Alfred remained quiet, watching, listening. It had been many years since he had seen the younger man this emotional. Bruce always kept a tight hold on his emotions.

Bruce continued to speak softly. “I found blood in a chamber in the tunnels. I just received the results...some of it belonged to Jack, Alfred. A great deal of the blood, in fact, was Jack's. He bled down there in those tunnels...a lot of blood. And I lost the trail. What...what if he's dead Alfred?”

Alfred paled. “But you didn't find a body, remember sir.”

Bruce nodded, but Alfred could tell he wasn't convinced. Alfred swallowed a gulp of tea then asked softly. “What of Miss Harleen?”

Bruce shook his head. “Nothing. She was just gone. Alfred...no sign of her, no blood...nothing. What did I do, putting them in there?”
Bruce looked up at Alfred, pain and self doubt clear in his eyes.

*

The next morning some police were sent around to Dr. Johnathan Crane's house. He hadn't reported in to work this morning and while the GCPD didn't do wellness checks on citizens who were not senior citizen or teenagers home alone, it was decided, after the incident last night at the asylum, it would be best to go and check on the doctor. When the two detectives rolled up to the esteemed doctor's residence, Detective Marcus Wise let out a whistle. “Now that is a damn big house! How many rooms you think a place like that has?”

His partner, Charlene Fields (or Charlie as she liked to be called) laughed. “More than you or me could afford on our salaries.”

Wise chuckled. “Yeah, more than the whole department put together.”

Charlie grinned and pulled their unmarked car up to the end of the driveway and came to a stop. They both sat in the car staring for a heart beat. The front door was open and there was a pool of something dark near the front door.

Wise hissed. “Is that blood?”

“I think it is,” Charlie said softly.

They both exited the vehicle and drew their weapons. Together they approached the front of the house, easing around the blood pool and entered the residence where they found more blood, bloody footprints and signs of a struggle. Together, calling out that they were police, they made their way down the hall, following the blood trail until they came to another room. The whole time they were following the trail Wise kept looking around him with his mouthing hanging open. Wise hissed. “Man, get a load of the artwork in here. It's morbid as fuck.”

Charlie gave her partner a look before they enter the room ahead of them, telling him with her eyes to shut up. Wise frowned, but when they stepped into the room full of the Roman-Greco art. Wise let out a whistle and muttered. “Yeah, Dr. Crane's a freak.”

Charlie sighed rolling her eyes and continued to follow the trail of blood where it led to a trap door. She shared a look with her partner. Wise frowned. “Wanna flip for it?”

Charlie rolled her eyes again and shook her head. “I'll go.”

She made her way down the ladder calling out a warning, but she was only answered with silence until she had made her way down the ladder and turned stopping cold when she saw the room before her.

“Marc...ah...you need to see this.”

*

Agatha Wayne shoved her sunglasses up her nose with an irritated sigh, leaning against the back seat of her limo. It wasn't because the sun was out that Agatha had her sunglasses on—there was a thick cloud cover which was threatening more snow soon—but rather it was the massive hangover that had her wearing sunglasses to hide her bloodshot eyes. There was no booze to make the hangover go away (she had to change planes from her private jet to a commercial airline after her pilot was arrested and this close to Christmas she had a hard time finding a new pilot) and she hated any form
of sunlight...watery grey or not...she simply couldn't face daylight without a drink in her hand. She had just arrived in Gotham nearly an hour ago at the local airport, her plane being delayed because of the weather; then it had taken another hour to get her baggage...she was ready to start ripping the airport staff a new one when her bags were found...and then there was the line to rent a car.

The woman at the car rental place had been a nasty tight ass. Yes, yes, she should have called ahead she thought to herself, but really...the rudeness of people when she had tried to explain...They really should consider letting people drink on the job, would have done wonders for that woman's personality! Trying to rent a limo in Gotham on a snowy day shouldn't have been this hard!! She had finally settled for an SUV limo. It was big, roomy and had the wheels to get through snowy Gotham roads.

She supposed she could have called Bruce for a ride, but she wanted to surprise him. And she wasn't quite ready to confront him...she hadn't had anything to drink in the last few hours and it was making her grumpy. She really needed to have had a few drinks in her system before taking on Bruce. That boy was so much like his daddy it was frightening. But finally, she was now on her way to Wayne manor she had discovered that the limo wasn't equipped with a mini bar!! Whoever had made such a bad design decision should be fired instantly! No bar? Really? She would have to go without a drink for who knew how long! Barbaric, she thought to herself frowning as she watch Gotham zip past her window. On top of all of that she had forgotten how simply freezing Gotham was this time of year!! She was wearing a mink coat...not one of those faux fur ones, but a real one. Yes it wasn't politically correct, but she figured sometimes it was worth pissing off a lot of people to look good. Though she would never admit to anyone that she did feel a little guilty and had donated a large some of money to the Mustelid Rescue in the UK.

While she sat in the back of the SUV brooding, she muttered to herself about Gotham's awful winter weather. The snow hadn't really started to come down, but she could see it, hiding in the clouds waiting to dump on them and freeze the nuts off everyone.

It was a few days until Christmas and it seemed as if all of Gotham was out on the streets making the horrible Gotham traffic a thousand times worse. Agatha made a face glancing out the window at the street decorations. If she ever needed reminding of why she never visited Gotham...

Agatha sighed again. She didn't have to be here, but she felt that she had to come personally to give Bruce a tongue lashing and to see about getting poor Jack and his fiancee out of the awful place. The asylum. Agatha frowned thinking back to when Thomas was alive. When the boys had been children. Her wild and unpredictable nature had almost landed her in Arkham back then...she shook her head closing her eyes. Idiots—the eldest Waynes were always idiots, she thought to herself.

*  

It took another hour before they arrived at Wayne manor on the outskirts of Gotham. Agatha groaned, it was snowing prettily heavily by the time she arrived. The driver pulled up to the gate and hit the button. After a moment she heard the muffled sound of Alfred's voice.

Agatha scrambled to the front of the vehicle and leaned over the drivers shoulder to shout at the speaker.

“Alfred love!! Its me!! Agatha!!”

On the other end Alfred paled. He took a steadying breath and hit the button to buzz her end muttering to himself. “I better spike my tea.”

*
Agatha came barreling in through the front door and wrapped her arms around Alfred. “ALFRED!! Lord you look even more handsome than I remember!! Age suits you!” She grabbed his face in her hands and planted a kiss on Alfred's lips. Alfred was too shocked to do anything except stand there.

When she released him he let out a mumbled. “Ah...yes. Thank you Miss Agatha.”

“Oh stop with the “Miss” Alfred! It's just Agatha! You know that.” She gave him a cheeky grin and bopped him in the hip with her own as the driver brought in her luggage and set it down. Agatha turned, all bright smiled.

“Aren't you a dear! Here ya go big boy.” She turned and planted a hundred dollar bill in the man's hand. He looked surprised, but a large smile spread across his face. “Thank you Miss.”

Agatha tittered and waved him off before turning back to Alfred.

Alfred smiled a little. Agatha still looked like a woman a couple of decades younger than she actually was, so full of life and just as beautiful. But she was also a whirlwind handful of constant energy.

She would be trying the nerves on a man in his twenties!

Alfred stepped over to her bags to pick them up. “So how long can we be expecting to have the delight of your company Miss Agatha? I do hope you are planning on staying through the holiday?” Alfred smiled. Actually having her here through Christmas would be nice. She would bring a much needed bit of life to what was promising to be a rather solemn holiday with Jack and Harleen missing. Thinking that made Alfred's heart tighten in pain. He hoped that Master Bruce was wrong, that Jack and Harleen had simply gotten away and were even now planning on coming home. The alternative was too horrible to contemplate.

Agatha smiled. “Actually, I am Alfred. The holidays with my family. I'm hoping to have Jack and Harleen—or is it Harley?” She touched her chin in thought before she continued. “I really do hope to have them out of the awful place and back home where they belong. I really want to meet this young woman who managed to steal my youngest nephew's heart! I really wondered about that boy. He seemed so uninterested in relationships of any sort!”

Alfred had begun to walk up the stairs, carrying two of Agatha's many bags with him. “Well, I'm not sure they will be home for the holidays Miss Agatha,” Alfred explained solemnly.

Agatha stopped and her tone conveyed her sudden worry. “What do you mean?”

Alfred turned once he reached the landing. “I'm afraid there has been an incident.”

“And incident?” Agatha hurried up the last few steps, coming up alongside Alfred. He nodded.

“Yes Miss. There was a break-out at the asylum where Master Jack and Miss Harleen were patients. “Along with several very dangerous patients,” Alfred said slowly and clearly despite the pain the words made him feel, “they are missing. We have no idea if they were taken against their will or if they left on their own accord, but we've heard nothing one way or the other.”

Agatha snorted while Alfred turned to lead her to her room.

“You don’t seriously expect them to show up here if they did leave Arkham on their own do you Alfred? Not after what Bruce did to them? I mean, I don't know this Harleen or Harley or whatever her name is and I haven't seen Jack in years, but he never struck me as a stupid boy. If my brother had done to me what Bruce has done to him, I would take my money and disappear, have nothing else to do with the family.”
Alfred frowned. “Master Jack loved his brother though, I don't think...”

Agatha laughed. “Alfred, Jack may love Bruce with all his heart, but try to see this from Jack's point of view. His brother betrayed him; do you really think you would trust someone, especially someone that close to you, not to betray you again if they did it once? And I'm assuming Bruce has power of attorney over Jack because of all of this?” Alfred nodded and Agatha shrugged. “There really isn't any reason for Jack to trust Bruce enough to come back. No, if they left the asylum I doubt you'll hear anything from them soon. Now, if one of the lunatics took them...” She shivered. “I rather hope Jack and Harleen simply left and disappeared.”

Alfred nodded, but said nothing.

*

Jack woke with a smile on his face. His whole body hurt like he had been beaten up. Oh yes—he had been beaten up, he thought to himself with a chuckle, but Harley was in his arms and they were away from Arkham. Everything was right with his world at the moment. He had his girl and nothing else mattered.

Jack pulled her closer nuzzling his nose and mouth against her ear. Harley giggled sleepily. He smiled, kissing the back of her ear and settled down again. His sleepy mind contemplated revenge.

Jack laid there holding Harley, letting his thoughts drift. He thought about the order of how he wanted to do things. He didn't want to kill his brother. No, nothing like that, but he did want to make Bruce suffer for what he had done. Not just putting him in Arkham but forcing Harley to commit herself, putting her in Crane's cross-hairs. That alone would have gotten anyone else murdered by Jack, but no matter how angry Jack was at Bruce, he couldn't contemplate killing his brother...not yet anyhow. There was a part of him that still wanted Bruce's love and approval. It hurt badly that Bruce had thrown him away so quickly, tossed him into that hole that was Arkham; but he still couldn't bring himself to want to see his brother dead. No. His revenge would have to be something else. A life lesson on manners and familial duty. It really was Jack's obligation to help improve his brother morally.

Bruce could wait, but that didn't mean he and Harley couldn't have some fun! Nurse Mallory was still alive and they both really owed her some payback. And then there was the orderly Daisy, who might still be alive...he should really find out. And of course Crane, unless, as Harley thought, he was already dead, but Jack's gut just kept telling him that the man wasn't dead, that he was out there...There was also Dr. Arkham. He may not have had any direct connection with either of them, but he needed to be taught a lesson for letting it all happen within the walls of his asylum. Responsibility and all that.

Jack smiled at the thought of what he and Harley were going to do...but first he was going to focus on something good, remarrying his Harley.

Jack laid there thinking to himself when he an idea came to him; a wonderful, awful idea. They would break into Wayne Manor and steal back their wedding clothes, the ones they had picked out together! Maybe they could get married on Christmas? It wasn't that far away...

Jack smiled. Now that would be fun!

Jack nibbled on Harley's shoulder, excitement for his plan making him feel jittery, cheerful and full of energy. He gently rolled her onto her back. Harley rubbed her eyes sleepily. “Puddin, something wrong?”

“Well...” Jack chuckled lifting her shirt up to kiss her belly.
She giggled softly. “What're you doing?”

“I want to talk to you about doing something fun tonight,” Jack purred slipping under the covers. Harley groggily pushed up on her elbows as Jack positioned himself between her legs keeping the covers over him.


From under the cover, she heard Jack's muffled voice. “Yep, I have a plan!”

That was when she felt him nibble her thigh through her sweatpants. Harley squealed and giggled, the sensation ticklish. “What are you doing?!”

Jack pulled the covers away from his head to grin at her. “Shhh...just listen and all your questions will be answered!”

Harley giggled and turned her head to the side a fraction to look at him sideways. “Jack...”

But he had dived back under the covers to continue nibbling at her inner thighs through the fabric of her pants. Harley wiggled in response. “JACK!!”

He sat up, throwing the blankets back and grabbed her pants, yanking them past her hips and with some maneuvering (and Harley’s help) pulled one of her legs through, leaving the pants halfway on, attached to her other leg. She wasn't wearing panties (as Alex didn't have any for women in his room) which only cheered up Jack that much more. “We are going to Wayne Manor tonight. We are going to sneak in. And we are going to get our wedding clothes!” Jack said with triumph in his tone before he began to nibble on bare her inner thighs. Harley squirmed, the sensation of his hot breath mixed with his teeth was very ticklish. “Break in? Tonight? How?” she asked between giggles and moans. Jack dragged his tongue along the inside of one thigh marveling at how soft she was and how good she smelled. He kissed the soft skin, brushing his lips back and forth along the delicate flesh. “I know the alarm codes. It should be easy.” His voice purred along her skin sending a vibration down to her groin that made Harley wiggle again.

“What if we get caught?” Harley asked in a blissful voice.

Jack eased down her thigh before pressing a kiss to her vagina, a sweet yet passionate press of his lips. When he spoke, his warm breath brushed over her sensitive areas causing her to moan softly while Jack spoke. “How often is Bruce ever home? Seriously! When was the last time my brother was home at night? And I'm not really worried about Alfred. It's not as if he would call the cops on us.”

Harley licked her lips, then shivered when she felt the flat of his tongue press between her intimate lips and slide over her clitoris in a wonderfully tantalizing manner for a moment, making her forget her next question. His whiskers tickled against her sensitive skin combined with his licking had little trembling shudders of pleasure racing up her spine. Jack licked her slow and easy a few more times before Harley was able to ask her question and only because he stopped for a moment.

“We won't hurt him right?”

Jack chuckled. She could feel the breath of his laugh caress her. “Of course not Harls! It's Alfred! Never!”

Jack leaned close to press his lips to her clitoris and sucked gently. Harley groaned, arching toward his lips. Jack grinned and sucked a little harder, slowly pressing his finger into her at the same moment. Harley moaned deeply with a gasp. “Oh puddin...” Harley, who had been on her elbows
for a little bit, but now she dropped back against the pillows with a loud groan.

Jack kept his tongue flat and soft as he licked up from the bottom of the labia to the clitoris in a long slow lick that had Harley moaning loudly, digging her fingers into the pillow over her head. He moved his tongue up and down, then side to side, slowly, but kept up the sensual rhythm. He used his tongue to explore a little, tracing her opening with the tip of his tongue, and nipping at her intimate lips with just enough pressure to tug teasingly before he was back to her clitoris where he continued to suck and lick alternately. Jack smiled moving his finger slowly, curving the digit just a little finding her g-spot, sucking and licking, building her up at a slow pace. It was a little difficult with his wounded shoulder, but the pain was easy to ignore when he was pleasing Harley. He didn't care about his personal pain; it faded to the background when it came to pleasing Harley, his wife, the woman he loved beyond anything else in the world.

When he felt Harley grab him by his hair, he knew she was close, which only made him grin wider. He shifted his position a bit, just enough to allow him to wrap his arm around her and use his hand to gently pull the hood of her clitoris back and press his mouth to her, sucking just a bit harder. Harley glanced down just as Jack's eyes looked up; the sparkle in his blue eyes was what sent her spiraling over the edge. Harley bucked and cried out, her orgasm breaking over her and spreading in a warm rush. Jack grinned, continuing his attentions to her clitoris until she was begging for him.

“Jack...oh GOD Jack please!! I need you!!”

Jack sat up with a chuckle, wiping the back of his hand over his mouth. “Oh you do?”

Harley grinned and commanded, “On your back, Mister Wayne.”

Jack laughed. “Yes ma'am!”

He laid down smiling brightly at her. Harley smiled back blinking back tears in her happiness. She leaned down pressing a kiss to the tip of his erection before she crawled on top of him to lower herself onto him slowly. Jack reached up to grasp her hips, his fingers digging in to hold her as she came down fully on him, piecing her body with his shaft. He bent his legs, spreading them wider at the same time, his hands holding onto her hips. Jack groaned his lips trembling as he stared up at her.

“Harley...my Harley...Amore Mio...”

Harley groaned running her hands down his chest just as she began to rock her hips riding him in a slow, steady rhythm. She stared down at him, her eyes hooded with passion. She loved him so much it felt as if her chest was going to simply burst, her heart break with how much she loved him, needed him. Harley dug her fingers into his chest, grinding her hips then lifting up until she threatened to pull off of him completely, then to slowly lower herself down again, feeling him pierce her body again. She groaned and threw her head back, arched her spine, her inner muscles squeezing around Jack causing her husband to gasp loudly while she groaned out his name. “Oh Jack...”

Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, watching her. It was so difficult not to orgasm right away. He had missed her so much, had feared for her, needed her and now here she was riding him. The bruises and cuts just enhanced her beauty as far as he was concerned, his tough lady, his fighter, his equal in everything. He loved her with his entire being. He reached up cupping her breasts, his thumbs dragging over her hard nipples, squeezing gently while he just watched her.

Harley whimpered softly leaning back, her thrusts becoming more forceful. She was quickly approaching her orgasm. She reached around forcing Jack to drop his knees so that she could lean farther back, grabbing a hold of his knees as her thrusts became harder, faster.
Jack groaned, panting heavily, his hands having slid down her torso. He kept a hold of her hip with one hand (ignoring the pain in his shoulder) with his other he began to run the pad of his thumb over her clitoris, rotating his thumb in a circle, which caused Harley to jerk and let out a gasp of pleasure thrusting against his thumb.

Together they began to move into a frenzy of thrusting, both of them panting together as they bodies built toward climax. Jack continued to moved his thumb over her clitoris the fingers of his other hand digging into her hip while Harley's hands dug into his knees. Together they rose, then Harley dropped forward onto her hands attacking his mouth with hers at the very moment she came. Jack wrapped his arms around her with a deep groan, his orgasm rising up to met hers. Together, their cries mixed, the two of them held on to each other in their shared climax.

Later that afternoon, with a towel wrapped around his shoulders and wearing a pair of black jeans and nothing else, Jack sat in a chair in front of the TV watching the afternoon news report with a frown. The man on the TV, Reese Getty, an older man with dyed blonde hair and the look of having had a few too many “lifts” around the eyes, was reporting with enthusiasm about the fact that renowned psychiatrist from Arkham Asylum, Dr. Johnathan Crane was missing. There was evidence of foul play found this morning at his home, but no body was discovered. The Gotham police department was asking anyone with information to contact them.

Jack called over his shoulder. “Harley! Did you hear that?”

Harley came out of the bathroom with a bowl of shaving cream, a straight razor and a towel over her shoulder wearing a pair of little short shorts and a tank top, her hair up in a ponytail at the moment, (Alice had come over on her way to work to drop off some clothing that she and Alex had purchased for them). Her clothing that she would actually be wearing out tonight was lying across the bed, a pair of black leggings and a tight black sweater.

She stepped over to Jack and set the shaving cream down on the floor. “So what did they say?”

“That no body was found at Crane's place.” Jack leaned his head back as Harley picked up the brush and dipped it into the shaving cream then gently lathered Jack's face. She looked slightly pale as she worked. Jack reached up and wrapped his hand around her wrist.

“Don't worry Harley. I'll find him and I'll kill him as painfully as possible. He'll never touch you again.”

Harley looked down at Jack, half of one cheek covered in shaving cream. She smiled down at him. “I love you Jack.” She leaned down and kissed his forehead.

He took her hand and softly pressed his lips to her knuckles. “I love you too Harls. Never again, we will never be apart again. I swear it.”

As Harley leaned down and kissed him, Jack reached up to wrap his hand around the back of her neck and gently tugged her close, their tongues brushing passionately against each other before he released her. She stood back to work, covering his face in shaving cream.

“Well I hope I hurt him enough that he is suffering in some hole somewhere,” she said with a slight snarl. Jack grinned closing his eyes and relaxing while Harley picked up the straight razor and began to shave his face.
After the shave, with his hair brushed back from his face (his hair was long enough now that it brushed the back of his neck so Harley had brushed it back and wrapped a ponytail holder around it), wearing a white t-shirt and black sweats, sat down in front of the piano in Alex’s living room. He worried at his bottom lip, gazing down at the keys. Harley was curled on one of the couches, flipping through a magazine that she had found. She was looking comfortable, her hair in pig tails, a crop top of pink on, along with some grey sweat pants. Jack glanced over to her with a smile. She looked adorable and it did his heart good to have her with him, only a few steps away from him. He ran his fingers over the keys. The piano was surprisingly tuned Jack thought. He grinned wider, cracked his knuckles, wiggled his fingers before he began to play. Harley smiled at the sound of his playing, looking up from her magazine. She grinned wider as she realized he was playing Black Sabbath’s “Paranoid.” She watched Jack with his eyes closed while he played, his entire body moving to the music, his fingers not slamming against the keys exactly, but he was playing with power, his long elegant fingers flying across the keys. If he was in any pain, Jack didn't show it. Harley caught her bottom lip with her teeth, her body heating and tightening for him while she watched him, the most beautiful man she had ever seen, but her heart...God she loved him so much.

She stood up and walked over to him, stepping up behind him and wrapped her arms around his neck, pressing a kiss to his ear, then his clean shaven jaw. Jack didn't stop or hesitate in his playing; he simply leaned back against her smiling contently.

*  

It was nearly midnight when the two of them left the apartment on Jack's little adventure. Alex (who had disapproved of their plan, but knew when he couldn't talk Jack out of doing something) had arranged for there to be a car waiting for them in the parking garage, a black 2016 Series-2 BMW. Jack had his hair pulled back in a tail at the nape of his neck, dressed in black jeans, a black turtle neck with a black leather jacket. (Earlier, Harley had observed that both of them looked as if they were going to a midnight Goth funeral.) He jangled the keys as they approached, but Harley stepped forward quickly to put herself between him and driver's door.

“Oh no you're not,” she said, her hands on her hips.

Jack frowned or at least tried to frown. A smile kept tugging at his lips looking at Harley, her face in a scowl which only made her look cute, her tight black clothing making her figure look delectable. Jack lifted a brow at her while trying not to grin. “Oh no I'm not?”

“Hand over the keys mister. I'm driving.” Harley stuck her hand out.

Jack frowned more, his bottom lip sticking out slightly. “Why not?”

“Your shoulder! You don't need to be aggravating it.” Harley frowned at him.

Jack narrowed his eyes. “You'll aggravate your hand.”

“Better my hand than your shoulder.” Harley grinned. “Plus if you let me drive I'll make it up to you puddin.” Harley dragged out the “puddin” sticking the tip of her tongue out suggestively as she did so.

Jack stared at her mouth then grinned trying to look grumpy and failing.

“Ugh! Fine you win!” Jack tossed her the keys. Harley grabbed them out of the air with a smile and headed to the car, a bounce in her step that made her rear wiggle delightfully Jack noticed as he stared at her backside and followed her to the car.
It took them almost an hour to get to Wayne Manor, between the steadily increasing snow and the increase in holiday traffic, despite the late hour. As Harley pulled up alongside the main gate they could see that no holiday lights were on the manor house, but a few trees along the front had light wrapped around them shining brightly in the crisp snowy air. The lights of the manor itself were out except for a light on the second floor and maybe another around the side of the house, but from their position on the outside and on the other side of the gate, it was difficult to determine.

Jack motioned to Harley. “Drive around to the west side, there's a side road there and some bushes, it should be a good place for you to park the car where it won't be seen from the house. There's another gate over there too, a small one meant for the garden staff. From there we can make our way across the lawn to the conservatory. There is a door there that leads into the conservatory, then into the main body of the house.”

Harley drove to where Jack indicated. She pulled the car into some bushes and the two of them hopped out. Jack took Harley's hand, holding on tightly to her as he moved through the darkness with confidence, knowing exactly where he was going. They arrived at a smaller iron gate, big enough to drive a riding lawn mower through onto the main property. Harley saw a keypad built into the gate. Jack bent over, the outside lights from around the manor providing the only light, but it didn't seem to hamper him as he quickly punched in the code. The gate made a soft click and then sprang open. Jack pushed it open further and bowed, one arm out toward the manor.

“My lady, our burglary awaits!”

Harley giggled at him and took a step to slip past him, but not before Jack wrapped his arm around her waist nearly lifting her off her feet as he pressed her body against his own, wrapping his hand around her rear and squeezing. “I like you in these tight body hugging outfits Harley. Makes me hot for you.” Jack waggled his eyebrow with a low growl in the back of his throat.

Harley giggled. “Mmm...puddin.” She rubbed up against him. “When we get back?”

Jack smiled, brushing the tip of his nose against her. She could feel the warmth of his breath against her mouth, a tender caress, a promise of fulfillment.

“Yes, most definitely,” Jack purred squeezing her rear which made Harley press her lips together on a giggle of pleasure.

He let her go, stealing a kiss before the two of them slipped through the gate, then together, trying not to giggle, they started to race across the lawn, but Harley stumbled in the snow that had accumulated on the grass. Her feet were bandaged, but it still hurt her to put too much pressure on them for too long; there was no amount of cushioning that would protect her feet from the pain of running until she had more time to heal.

Jack turned and started to pick her up, but Harley squeaked. “Jack! Your arm!!”

Jack frowned in thought then grinned like a little boy. “Okay, hop onto my back.”

“But Jack...” Harley started to protest. “Your shoulder...”

Jack sighed with a slump of his shoulders. “Harley come on! It'll be fine. We stand out here arguing though, we're gonna get caught. Come on...trust me sweets. I promise I'll be fine..” Jack gave her his stunning mischievous smile and Harley melted.

“Fine.” She pouted.
Jack chuckled crouching, both arms behind him for her to hop onto his back Harley climbed onto his back slowly, doing her best to be as careful as she could with his wounded shoulder. If he felt any pain, however, he didn't give any indication as he stood up using both hands tucked under her thighs and lifted her up. Harley stifled a squeal against his shoulder, one arm going around his neck, but then Jack was dashing across the lawn as if she weighed nothing.

By the time they made the house, both of them were laughing. Jack set her down by the door that led into the Wayne Manor conservatory.

“See? Told you!” Jack hissed with a giggle.

Harley wrinkled her nose at him. Jack dropped to a crouch to examine the door. It was even darker here with little light except for a single, small yellow light shining down from above the door. The door had a key lock above the knob instead of a keypad and they had no keys.

Harley frowned looking down at the door. “How are you going to get it open?”

Jack stretched his fingers out and wiggled them.”Watch and be amazed!”

Jack grinned and pulled two paper clips from the pocket of his jeans. He held them up for Harley to see. “Thanks to Alex, I have all the tools I need.”

Harley tilted her head and quietly watched as Jack put one paperclip between his finger and worked to shape it quickly into what looked to Harley like a hook. Next he took the other paperclip and pulled it out into a long straight piece. He took the more hooked edge, slipped it into the keyhole, pushed the straight paperclip in over the top of that one and started to work the lock. Harley watched him, smiling softly. His face was so intent, his blue eyes focused on the task. She reached out and stroked her fingers along the side of his face. Jack looked up at her and smiled softly. He winked at her which made Harley all giddy inside. Within a minute of Jack working at the lock, he had it opened with a grin.

He turned the knob and bowed to her. “My lady.”

Harley giggled, slipping into the dark conservatory with Jack right behind her.

* 

The two of them—holding hands again—made their way quietly through the house. They hurried down the hallway and through one of the ballrooms, headed through the gallery when Jack pulled Harley against the wall into the shadows. They both leaned forward a little when they heard the sound of footsteps echoing down the hall. Jack leaned forward to look down the hall, Harley leaning with him. They both caught a glimpse of Alfred. He looked weary as he walked slowly, a cup and saucer in his hand. He seemed to be headed toward the Great Hall, possibly going to the kitchens. Seeing him made Harley's heart ache. She wanted to run to him and throw her arms around the kindly older man. She felt Jack squeeze her hand. She glanced at her lover to see that his blue eyes looked hurt. He followed Alfred with his eyes until the older man disappeared from their sight.

Harley whispered. “You okay?”

Jack nodded. “Yes, just...yes, I'm fine.” He gave her a weak smile bringing her hand that he held up to kiss her knuckles. Harley leaned in and brushed her lips across his, but didn't say another word.

They waited a couple of minutes until they heard nothing, but the house settling before they hurried down the gallery to to the Great Hall and toward the stairs.
Both of them suppressed giggles of excitement as they made their way up the stairs. It felt funny to be breaking into a house they both lived in. Jack pulled Harley to the top of the stairs, tugging her into his arms where he kissed her passionately a soft growl on his lips. Harley leaned in to Jack, her arms going around his shoulders and her hands grabbing the tiny tail of hair at the back of his neck and tugging while kissing him. Jack gave her rear a squeeze before he released her, turning to head toward his room where their wedding clothing should still be when they both stopped in their tracks.

Standing there in a long champagne colored silk bathrobe decorated with Japanese cherry blossoms and fuzzy pink slippers, holding a bottle of vodka in one hand and a tumbler in the other, was Jack's Aunt Agatha.

She stared at the two of them, her blue eyes wide. “Jack?”

Jack blinked in shock. “Auntie Ag?”

“Oh MY GOD!! Boy what are you doing here?!” Agatha exclaimed as she came rushing over to wrap her arms tight around Jack, almost knocking the younger man off his feet. Jack didn't have a chance to catch a breath before the older woman was smothering him in a hug (careful not to drop her drink). Jack made a pained face that Harley found comical, her hand coming up to cover her mouth to stop herself from laughing out loud.

Jack groaned struggling to catch a breath. “Auntie!! Shhh!!! Please!! No one's suppose to know we're here!” Jack hissed, hugging his aunt back at the same time wincing again as the woman managed to hit every single wound Jack had before she pulled back to look at him, holding her bottle and glass to her chest.

“Oh, oh!” Agatha grinned. “Follow me—hurry!”

She quickly took off down the hall in the opposite direction with Jack and Harley right behind her. She came to a door that was partly opened and hit it with her hip, swinging the door the rest of the way in and hurried inside with Jack and Harley following close behind her. Harley turned and closed the door softly before turning around to face the room. The room was one Harley had never been in before. The guest room had a large king size bed, rich dark wood paneling with its own small fireplace, a crystal chandelier, thick beige carpet, wood furniture, flat screen TV, full bathroom and built in bookshelves. The room wasn't as big as Jack's room, though it was bigger than the room Harley had stayed in when she lived at the manor. There were also several open suitcases with a woman's clothing and makeup littered everywhere.

Agatha grinned. “Sorry about the mess luvs, I just got in today.”

Agatha set her vodka and glass down, then dropped to sit on the side of the bed. “So, what's going on Jack? I came to lecture Bruce when I heard he had had you committed to Arkham. Who by the way, still hasn't come to say hello. That boy breezed in here and breezed out without a 'Hi Auntie Agatha' before he was off with some woman or something. I mean, not that I care. I go out every night myself, but really...I at least stop to say hello.” She rolled her eyes before she continued. “I still can't believe he did such a thing, and to his little brother. Waynes take care of Waynes. Sometimes your brother is just too much like your father. Anyway, is this the Harleen Quinzel I heard so much about!! Oh goodness dear, you are lovely!”

Agatha jumped right back up and grabbed Harley into an embrace. Harley's eyes bugged as she looked to Jack for help. Jack was grinning and shrugged at her.

“Aunt Ag, this is Harley Quinn, my wife.”
“Your wife?? What?” She let go of Harley, though she kept her hands on the younger woman's upper arms to hold her in place while she looked her over.

“God damn, you are a pretty little thing!” Agatha exclaimed with a smile. “Good job Jack!” She grinned at Harley with twinkling eyes.

“Oh goodness, here I am being rude. Sorry darling you'll just have to get used to it. I'm the rude one in the family. Would either of you like a drink before you tell me everything?”

Jack glanced at Harley, who still seemed a little stunned as she shook her head.

Jack smiled. “No thanks Auntie.”

Agatha grinned, giving Harley a quick kiss on the cheek before releasing her and took her place on the bed again, grabbing up the bottle and pouring herself a generous amount of vodka into her glass. “All right, what is going on and why are you two sneaking into your home?”

Jack took a seat, pulling out a chair and tugged Harley onto his lap, wrapping his arms around her as he spoke.

“Long story short, Bruce had me committed. Harley committed herself to be with me. Some bad shit happened in the asylum.” Here Jack's features darkened, but he continued. “We were given the chance to break out and we took it. We also got married while we were in the asylum—Bruce doesn't know yet, about us being married or us breaking out, and I'm not inclined to tell him yet.” Jack smiled at Harley, brushing his lips briefly across hers before he continued. “We decided not to come home because I'm not ready to face Bruce yet. But we wanted to renew our vows since we're now free. You know, sort of a symbolic gesture, about to start our lives anew sort of thing.” Jack gestured vaguely as he continued. “Anyway we decided to break into the house and get our wedding clothes without Bruce knowing. Bruce doesn't know we're out yet and I want to keep it that way.”

Agatha sipped on her vodka. “Not ready to tell Bruce you're out.” She nodded sagely. “I understand, though you know he'll probably find out in a day or two.”

Jack shrugged. “He doesn't need to know where we are though.”

Agatha nodded. “True, true. And you want to renew your vows in front of friends you trust and maybe some family?” She smiled with her chin tilted down a fraction and her eyebrows lifted sightly, clearly indicating herself. She finished off her glass and poured more of the clear liquid into it. “When were you wanting to renew your vows?”

Jack glanced at Harley who answered for them. “We were thinking Christmas.”

Agatha nodded sipping her drink. “I have a counter proposal for you two. How about you let old Auntie Ag work a little of her magic. You two wait until New Year's to renew your vows...much more symbolic if you ask me...and I arrange everything.”

Jack frowned in confusion. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, you let your Auntie throw you a proper wedding. Oh and before you get your panties in a twist Jackie, I won't tell Bruce. I won't tell anyone you don't want to know, but that's no reason you two can't have a decent wedding!!”

Jack gave his aunt an incredulous look. “Are you serious?”

Agatha sighed. “Nobody ever believes me when I'm telling the truth. I guess it's the curse of every
devastatingly beautiful woman. Yes, I'm serious!! No nephew of mine is going to have a shoddy wedding!! First things first—new wedding clothes! You can't use the ones you have...I mean we're talking new beginnings correct? Well new beginnings means new my dears! Besides I get the impression you bought the dress with her?"

Agatha looked between them. Jack and Harley nodded.

“Well that simply won't do! Harley you said? Not Harleen?” Agatha turned the full force of her attention on Harley.

Harley nodded, suddenly wide eyed and with no idea what was about to come next. “Yes.”

“You, my dear, have to go shopping with me!! I always wanted a daughter to buy a dress for! Well not really, because that would have meant getting pregnant which would just have ruined my figure! Can you imagine me a mother?” Agatha laughed. “So, you two scurry off back to hiding. Get yourselves a phone. I'm assuming you don't have one at the moment.” Agatha stood, taking her tumbler of vodka with her and hurried over to the desk in the corner where she pulled out a notebook and pen quickly jotting down something which she brought back over and put in Jack's hand.

“That's my number, dear. You call me when you have a phone. We are going to plan a secret wedding for New Year's Day!! It will be fantastic! I promise! And Bruce will never know a thing!”

*

Later that evening as they drove back to Alex's apartment Harley asked.

“Aunt Agatha...you never mentioned her before.”

Jack chuckled. “No...that's the first time I've seen her since we were teenagers.”

“She is sort of like a hurricane making land isn't she?” Harley chuckled.

Jack laughed out loud. “Yes, yes she is.”
Retributive Strikes part I

Harley found herself in a dark room; she could only assume it was a room because she felt claustrophobic, as if walls were closing in around her. She was standing in the middle of the room, but she could hear sounds of things moving around her, shadows shifting, the sounds of grinding, but whatever was making the sounds remained just out of her focus.

“Jack?” Harley called, her voice trembling. “Jack are you there? Please...I don't want to be here without you...”

Then she heard his voice, a voice that made her blood run cold; Crane's soft, melodic voice. “I'm here for you Harleen. I'll always be here, waiting...in the darkness...always waiting for you.”

Harley took a step back, but she couldn't be sure where the voice was coming from. It seemed to come from everywhere and no where; it was so dark and she was...scared...terrified. She started to tremble. “Don't touch me!” she screamed, her body shaking, wanting to flee, but wanting to fight too and too frightened to do either.

“Where's Jack?” she cried out and Crane's voice answered her. “Jack? Oh Jack won't be coming for you; you'll be mine...forever...I killed Jack...do you want to see?” Harley turned just as Crane's face seemed to push through the membrane of the darkness, ripping through it and in his hand he held Jack's bloody head.

Harley screamed.

*

“Harley!! Harley!! Wake up!! Wake up, it's a dream!!”

Her eyes flew open, she was covered in a sheen of sweat. A weight pressed down on her chest while something tried to grab her hands. Harley screamed again. She lashed out, her fist connecting with something just before her wrists were grabbed and her arms were pinned over her head.

Harley sobbed. “No!! NO!! Let me go!!! JACK!”

“Ow! Damn Harls, your swing is getting better. Hey, hey it's me sweets. It's your puddin.” It was Jack's voice talking to her.

She was finally able to focus and looked up, realizing there was actually a little light in the room to see Jack sitting on her, leaning over her holding her hands down.

He smiled at her with lifted brows. “Hey sweets.”

“PUDDIN!” Harley burst into tears. Jack released her, rolling off of her and swiftly pulled her into the circle of his arms, pressing her head against his chest. She wrapped her arms tight around him sobbing. “Puddin...it was him again.”

“Shh...it's all right Harls; I have you. I have you.” Jack stroked her hair, holding her close. He kissed the top of her head and started to sing in a low, soft voice, gently rocking her.

“Only you can make all this world seem right

Only you can make the darkness bright
Only you and you alone can thrill me like you do
And fill my heart with love for only you...”

They stayed like that for a long while. Jack just holding her and caressing her hair or running the tips of his fingers down her spine.

Harley whispered against his chest. “I'm sorry puddin.”

Jack smiled. “Don't be sweets. You did the same for me last night.”

Harley sniffled and smiled. “We're quite a pair.”

Jack chuckled. “We are. At least we have each other.”

Harley shifted a little so she could see Jack's face. He reached out and used his thumb to stroke her cheek. “I'm never going to let you go. No one is ever going to hurt you again.” Jack brushed his nose against hers before he kissed her lips and whispered, “I won't let anyone take you from me ever again Harley.”

Harley moaned softly, returning his kiss, then pulled back just enough to murmur, “I won't let anyone take you away from me again puddin...no one.”

They held each other tightly and fell into sleep again, their embrace keeping away the nightmares.

* 

Several days later, when Christmas dawned in Gotham, it was a white Christmas. During the night, snow had dumped onto Gotham city, covering everything in white. Alex and Alice had brought a small tree over—already decorated—to the apartment which had filled Harley with excitement. The small tree was set up by the large windows near the piano. (Jack had managed to acquire a phone from Alex to keep him in contact with Aunt Agatha over the last few days as well.)

Christmas morning Harley woke with a happy smile on her face. Neither of them had bad dreams in the last few days. She knew as a psychiatrist that the lack of dreams didn't mean the PTSD both of them were suffering was gone, but they were having a period without the horrible nightmares and she was happy about that. And it was Christmas and her puddin was in bed with her. What more could she ask?

Jack was curled up behind her with an arm around her waist. She could feel the warm tickle of his breath against her hair. She snuggled down into the pillows squeezing her eyes closed, her teeth pressing into her bottom lip smiling from ear to ear. This, right now, with Jack's arm around her was the best thing she could ask for this Christmas; she didn't want anything else in the world but him. If Santa Claus was real she would kiss the big jolly man right on the mouth and tell him thank you!

She sighed happily thinking that maybe she should get up and see about putting some coffee on and doing something about breakfast when Jack's hand slid down, his long fingers searching lower until he found the hem of the oversized large night shirt she had worn to bed. Harley giggled and squirmed a little.

“Puddin, you awake?” Harley asked only to be answered by his fingers making their way down between her legs. Harley shivered feeling the heat of his fingers transfer through the fabric. He pressed lightly which caused her to moan softly. “Puddin...it's Christmas morning!”

Jack mumbled back against his shoulder. “I know...it's time for Christmas morning nookie.”
He stroked over her through her panties causing Harley to squeal with delight. “Jack!! Alex and Alice will be here soon, along with the tattooist for our Christmas gifts.”

Jack purred licking along her ear. “Then we'll just be quick.”

Harley giggled then pouted slightly when Jack removed his hand from between her legs, but it was only in order to slide his hand along the back of her hip and under her panties shoving the thin fabric down. She giggled helping Jack slip her panties down her legs where she kicked her legs until the cloth reached her calves before she managed to kick the panties down, losing them somewhere at the end of the bed where many socks had disappeared as well over their time here.

Jack grinned and chuckled. “Mm...soft, warm skin.” His hands rolled over the curve of her rear spreading his fingers and squeezing. Harley giggled pressing her backside up against him. Jack took his hand away from her and she felt him shifting a little before she felt the warmth of his erection pressing against her backside.

Jack purred. “Take your top off Harley.”

She sat up, keeping her back to Jack as she pulled the t-shirt over her head. Jack watched her, the light, dim and liquid coming through the part in the curtains shone against her pale skin in a way that made his mouth water with desire. Her golden hair tumbled down her back in a soft wave. Harley glanced over her shoulder at Jack with a coy smile. He reached out and traced her spine with the tips of his fingers. “Mmm...you are the best present Harls.”

Harley giggled still not turning around as she snuggled back into the bed and pressed herself up against him, feeling the warmth of his body pressed against hers, the tight way he held her against him made her feel happy and secure. Jack ran his nose against her hair, his hand sliding down again to press between her legs. He rubbed gently, sliding his middle finger between her intimate lips, grinning at the moist heat he was generating with the slow stroke of his fingertip over the nub of her clitoris. Jack pressed his hips up against her, loving the way her body molded to his, as if she were made for him. Harley groaned, rubbing against his erection, the warm heat mixed with the satin softness of his hard member felt good, made her ache for more.

Jack switched his soft gentle strokes to something a little more aggressive, pressing down and rolling the tip of his finger, finding that perfect spot that had Harley rolling halfway on her back toward him, her arm going up to encircle his neck, seeking a kiss. Jack leaned toward her, kissed her gently, passionately. He slid his other hand under her, wrapping around to grasp a breast, catching her nipple between his thumb and forefinger. Jack licked her ear rolling the pad of his finger around her clitoris, slowly, but with enough force that caused Harley to gasp and groan, coming hard and fast, her body arching against Jack's, the ripple of pleasure racing up and bursting like a firework in her. Jack giggled pleased with himself for making her orgasm. He closed his eyes, enjoying the sounds she made while he touched her, the way her body moved, his nose pressed against her neck, surrounded by her scent. He loved her so deeply that sometimes it hurt.

After she came, he recovered his hand, reaching for his shaft. He slid the head between her round, firm butt cheeks, delighting in the warm satiin of her backside

Jack cooed softly. “Harley, you're my best present.”

Harley giggled. “Mm...puddin...”

Harley lifted her leg, wrapping it back behind her over his hips. Jack pushed himself inside her, the warm dampness of her surrounded him. Jack entered her with a groan that matched her own, pressing his hand to her hips once he was buried deep within her and started to thrust, moving
slowly, sensually, pulling back then thrusting forward enjoying the feel of her firm buttocks against his pelvis.

Harley groaned and bounced forward a little before she reached behind her to grab onto Jack's hip digging her fingers into his skin and grinding backwards. Jack released her hip instead grabbing her leg that she had hooked around him and lifted her limb up, wrapping his arm around her leg, his fingers squeezing her inner thigh while Harley slid her other leg between his, her foot hooked around his calf. He shoved firmly, thrusting up with a quick, deep jerk of his hips picking up a steady bouncing rhythm.

Harley moaned deeply as she arched against him, Jack's mouth was against her shoulder, biting, sucking at her skin, while thrusting into her. His arm that was under her moved to grasp her hand. He held her hand while thrusting into her.

Harley twisted partly back in order to see Jack. He smiled down at her, letting go of her leg to wrap his arms tight around her, cupping her breast. He released his hold on her hand, cupping both breasts, kissing her slowly, passionately, his tongue playing with hers in a sweet caress, his hip movements slow, almost agonizing as he moved in and out, thrusting against her causing her to purr with pleasure.

Harley groaned digging the fingers of one hand into the blankets, her head thrown back. “Harder Jack...”

Jack grinned picking up speed, thrusting hard and deep into her which caused her to cry out louder. “Ohh...yes Jack!!”

Jack grunted against her throat. “Damn Harley...uhh...”

Once he started to fuck harder Jack couldn't stop himself, she felt just too good. He was thrusting hard and fast enough that the entire bed began to bounce with them, their cries mixing together. Her body twisted part way around toward him, her breath coming in pants and gasps; Harley wrapped her hands around Jack's where he held her breasts.

“Jack...oh Jack...” she panted hard until she couldn't form words any longer. She climaxed with a gasp, her body clamping down on Jack's erection which sent him spiraling after her, bursting inside her, his cries mixing with her own.

He continued to thrust for a few more seconds, his body refusing to stop right away until finally he became still, holding her tightly against him.

Jack chuckled. “Merry Christmas.”

Harley responded with a giggled. “Happy Holidays.”

They were both laughing, snuggled close together, Jack kissing her softly between their shared giggles, when they heard the sound of a buzz at the front door of the lavish apartment followed by the sound of the door opening then Alex's voice.

“You two better not be making a fucking porno because Alice and I are coming in and we brought the fucking tattooist with us. We have some food and I ain't sharing if you guys are fucking naked!”

Jack laughed yelling back. “You just missed the climax already!!”

The sounds of Alex's loud groaning. “Aw man, get fucking dressed you two!!”
His voice was followed by Alice's laugh.

Alice called out. “We brought breakfast and coffee!”

“Get dressed you fucking pervs and get in here!” Alex yelled back.

Jack snickered kissing Harley's ear. “He called us pervs! Not sure if I'm offended or flattered.”

Harley kissed his chin. “It's Alex, I think flattered.”

Jack nibbled on her lips then down her chin, squeezing her breasts whispering. “Mm...I'm a pervert!!”

Harley squealed with laughter as he started to tickle her.

Alex called out. “Oh MY GOD will you two get the fuck in here! It's Christmas goddammit!”

* 

For Christmas, Harley and Jack had decided to get matching tattoos on the insides of their right wrists, a heart and a spade, the heart to represent their love, their joy in each other, the spade to represent the darkness, the death of their old selves and the beginning of something new. Plus, as Jack had said with a laugh, he really enjoyed cards. Alex and Alice had set up breakfast, and the tattoo artist, who Alex was paying a pretty penny to be here early on Christmas morning, was setting up her tools in the kitchen at the breakfast counter.

Harley was lounging on the couch with Alice sipping coffee and eating a muffin. Jack had his hair pulled back into a tail, dressed in black slacks, and a white dress shirt, which he currently had untucked, and unbuttoned (Harley found that made her want to throw him down and lick his chest,) the sleeves of which shirt were rolled up to his elbows. He sat in the kitchen on one of the tall stools, his feet clad in a pair of pointed brown and white oxfords. He had his arm lying on the top of the island table while the tattoo artist, a young woman with a purple mohawk named Circe, perched on the edge of her own stool, intently bent over as she worked on the tattoos on Jack's wrist. Harley, her wrist already covered in a light bandage was dressed in a pair of black leggings with a red cable knit crop-top sweater that showed just the right amount of enticing skin. Her blonde hair was piled on her head in two balled up ponytails and as far as Jack was concerned, she was the cutest thing in the room. She was sitting with Alice, who was wearing a thigh-length pink sweater dress and boots, where the two women were discussing wedding dresses from piles of magazines that Alice had brought with her, while Alex sat on a stool near Jack drinking black coffee which he had spiked heavily with some whiskey.

Alex grinned. “So, you two up for some ice skating tonight?”

Jack frowned glancing up from watching Circe work. “Ice skating?”

Alex nodded taking a sip of his coffee. “Yeah, it's part of my Christmas present for Alice. I rented out the whole fucking Sky Ice Rink on 23rd street for the night. It'll be fun and you can see me making a fucking fool out of myself on ice skates. It'll be a fucking riot,” Alex said with a clear indication he was not looking forward to it. Jack laughed. “That's sounds wonderful!! Are we going to beg the girls to wear some of those tiny ice skating outfits? Because I would be very happy to see Harley in one of those tiny skirts.”

Alex snorted. “Perv.” Jack waggled his eyebrows at Alex who laughed harder and leaned forward. “Hey man I tried man, I fucking tried, but Alice said we would have to fucking wear one too. Can you see me in a fucking sparkly leotard?”
Jack laughed hard enough that tears sprang to his eyes and Circe gave him a dirty look for moving, but Alex protested. “Hey man, you got the fucking figure for it! Me? Fuck no! I want Alice to stay my girl, not run off fucking screaming.”

Jack shook his head. “Oh well can't have everything I guess.”

Alex snorted. “Well yes, you can, but I'm not willing to fucking humiliate myself. Anyway, I invited Dale and Sandra too. They're going to meet us there and we can all look fucking stupid.”

Jack smiled. “I think Harley would love it, so yes count us in.”

* 

A little while later Jack was sitting on the couch with Harley, his arm around her shoulders chuckling as he watched Alex while he tried to one-handedly act out something neither Jack nor Harley had been able to figure out as the two couples played charades. Jack leaned in to Harley and whispered.

“I think he's suppose to be miming Rudolph the red-nose reindeer, but I'm having too much fun watching him prance around to guess!”

Harley laughed leaning against his shoulder. “I think you're right puddin! Though I agree with you, watching Alex parody having a red nose is hilarious!”

Alice was beside herself with the giggles. Jack and Harley put their heads together laughing when Jack's phone rang. Jack reached for the phone, a new slick phone with a purple and gold case that Alex had picked up for him.

Alex gave Jack a dirty look. “Oh I know you two aren't even fucking trying to guess and now a phone call? I call a fucking foul!”

Alice and Harley were both laughing as Jack answered. “Jack here.”

“Fucking Rudolph...oh, I don't even want to know. Anyway... Merry Christmas to my current favorite nephew!” Aunt Agatha's voice came over the phone with a jolly laugh and maybe a slight slur of drunkenness Jack thought.

He smiled. “How's my favorite Auntie?”

“Oh, I'm fine sugar. Had old Alfred bring me a bottle of your best bourbon and some cookies. I'm having a grand time. Bruce is still asleep. You won't believe how late that brother of yours came in last night, or should I say this morning? Anyway must have been some date!” Agatha laughed. “Anyway, I called you to ask Harley if she wants to go dress shopping tomorrow? We'll just throw a wig on her, it'll be great!” Agatha laughed again, the sound becoming muffled as she stopped to take a sip of something.

Jack lowered the phone. “Auntie Ag wants to know if you want to go shopping for dresses tomorrow?”

Harley beamed in response. “I would love to! Can Alice and Sandra come?” Harley looked over at Alice. “Are you free tomorrow?”

Alice's smile was broad as she nodded. “I actually am!”
Jack chuckled. “Harley wants to bring her girlfriends, Alice and Sandra.”

“Oh the more the merrier I say! Tell Harley I'll pick her up outside your building around one pm...I don't even want try to wake up before noon.” The older woman laughed.

Jack snickered. “I'm so glad I can be your call service. I'll let her know.”

“Good boy Jackie! All right you dears have fun, eat drink and be merry!” Agatha laughed again and hung up.

Jack smiled wrapping his arm around Harley's shoulders. “Not sure how I feel about you picking out a new dress without me.” He gave her a little pout.

Harley leaned against him reaching up to run her finger over his bottom lip giggling softly. “Just think how fun it will be to see it on the day.”

Jack kissed her forehead with a whispered. “Well, that's very true. I love you sweets.”

“Mm...I love you puddin.”

*

Evening came quickly and soon the four of them were off for the skating rink. Jack had on a long black coat on with a black fedora pulled low over his features, the only feature on the hat that indicated it was Jack was the playing card he had stuck in the brim, the Joker which he told Harley he always found to be his favorite card in any card game. Harley had on a burgundy knee-length coat with a matching cloche hat over her blonde hair. Both of them wore sunglasses regardless of the fact that it was evening, but no one in Gotham would find this little feature strange on the two well-dressed people and so Jack and Harley were able to leave the building without anyone noticing that they were Jack Wayne and Harleen Quinzel.

When they made their way out to the parking garage, Alex and Alice were waiting for them in a black car. Alex rolled down the window with a wink when he saw them. The one-armed man sat in the drivers seat. “Get in ya' filthy animals! We're going fucking skating!!”

Alice smacked Alex in his shoulder, but she was chuckling. Jack and Harley laughed, piling into the back of the black 2018 Cadillac CTS-V. Alex grinned over his shoulder at them once they were in the back seat.

“Like this little Christmas present? From one of my customers. Fucking nice, eh?” Alex nodded grinning from ear to ear.

“What'd they do?” Jack asked while admiring the interior of the car.

“Oh, he thought he could fucking cheat me. Now he thinks he can fucking buy me to let him keep his balls. Little does he know, I can't fucking be bought; which is why he is probably having his fucking balls kicked to the roof of his mouth right now. He's just lucky it's fucking Christmas!” Alex laughed and started the engine which purred to life. The speakers came to life, the sounds of Flo-Rida filled the interior singing “Low.”

Alex stepped on the gas and sped out of the parking garage as fast as the car allowed.

*

The Sky skating rink was a large building that actually contained two skating rinks, each 12,000
square feet, along with a huge parking lot, a gear shop, and a small restaurant. The Gotham City Giants played and practiced here, which was why the outside of the rink was plastered with the Gotham City Giants logo. The rink also had free skating, figure skating lessons and competitions as well as ice skating camps.

When their group arrived at the rink, the place was quiet, closed for the holiday. Jack and Harley were the first to spot Dale and Sandra waiting outside the building, cuddled together by the doors, both of them dressed in thick bubble coats, scarves around their faces and winter hats pulled down low over their ears. The snow was coming down a little heavier, the parking lot lights catching the flakes and making them sparkle in the light. Alex pulled up near the entrance and parked the car, leaving tracks in the fresh snow. Sandra waved when she saw the car. The next moment everyone pilled out into the wintery outside. “Merry Christmas everyone!” Sandra grinned, continuing to wave.

Harley hopped out of the car and waved back enthusiastically. “SANDRA!!” she yelled before racing over to throw her arms around the bigger woman. Sandra caught her lifting the much smaller woman off her feet.

Dale still didn't quite look himself; there was still a haunted look about his eyes, as if he were still struggling with the turn his life had taken. But his wrist was now out of the sling, though still in a cast and there was a certain happiness about him now that he and Sandra had moved in together over the last few days. He smiled and inclined his head.

“Hey everyone.”

Jack strolled up and wrapped his arms around the big man, giving him a sincere hug. “Nice to see you Dale. You doing okay?”

Dale shrugged. “Yeah, I'm getting there. Sandra's helping.” The big man smiled gently.

Jack gave the man another squeeze. “It's good to have a good woman to love and who loves you in return.” Jack glanced over at Harley, keeping an arm around Dale, but his eyes were soft for a moment as he stared at her before returning his attention to Dale, patting the big man on the stomach. “I'll be back on my feet soon. I know I said it before, but it bears repeating; I promise, after what you did for me Dale, I'll take care of you and Sandra.”


Dale paled for a moment before he nodded.

Alex grinned walking over to the two men. “Okay guys. Let's go make fools of ourselves on the fucking ice. Giving our ladies a good laugh is almost as good as sweeping them off their feet to guarantee we all get fucking lucky tonight!”

Alex led the way to the main doors. He knocked, doing a strange rhythm before the door was pushed open and a little elderly man opened the door and poked his head out. The elderly man had long white hair—despite his bald spot directly on top of his head—tied at the nape of his neck. He wore a janitor's navy blue uniform.

“Hey Mr. Alex, right on time. Come on in!” The man stepped aside letting everyone into the building.

Alex grinned. “Hey Clint! Thanks for opening the doors man. Everyone this is Clint the fucking janitor, but a man of class and pretty damn good with the dice.”
Clint grinned nodding to everyone before taking Alex's hand and shaking it while he spoke. “Right this way. Got the music you sent over set up Alex and everything is ready to go. Kate and Darrel showed up about half an hour ago with the popcorn cart and the cotton candy machine, and Mike came over to do the lighting; so we were all just waiting for you and your friends to arrive.”

Alex grinned when Alice made a little squeak of surprise. He turned to her. “See, I remembered what your two favorite treats are...”

“But I just said that in passing!” Alice seemed shocked, but Alex grinned at her pulling her close with his one hand going around her waist. “I remember fucking everything you say,” he said quietly before he kissed her.

Jack giggled watching Alex and Alice.

“Our little boy is in love,” he said as he put his arm around Harley's shoulders grinning from ear to ear like a proud father. Harley put her hands together against her cheek. “Oh honey, they grow up so fast.”

Alex glanced over at him. “You're a fucker, Jack Wayne.”

Jack grinned. “Yes I am.”

Both men laughed.

“All right fuckers and girls who are stupidly with us...let's go skate!” Alex led the way into the skating rink.

* 

Deadmau5’s “Slow down, Start over” played over the speakers as a rainbow of colored lights danced across the ice. The music was thumping when Jack finished tying his skates and glided onto the ice with the ease of experience, taking Harley's hand just as she stood up and pulling her along with him. He twirled around, taking her hands, grinning at her while he skated backwards, moving with ease, his hips swaying to the music. Harley giggled, unable to take her eyes off him. Jack held his fingers against hers; she trusted that he wouldn't let go of her hands or lead her astray while Jack glided her across the ice. She swayed to the music too, grinning at her husband, her hips picking up Jack's rhythm. They slowly built up speed, skating faster until Jack let go of one of her hands and, like a dancer, he flowed backwards, then twisted around until he was skating beside her. He kept hold of her one hand, then with a gentle tug, he pulled her up onto his thighs. Harley followed his lead, instinctively knowing what Jack expected her to do. She brought her left leg up, Jack caught her just under her knee and pulled her close, giving her a little lift onto his thighs. He kept hold of her one hand, then with a gentle tug, he pulled her up onto his thighs. Harley bent both knees and rested them easily against his thighs at the same moment she threw her right arm over her head in an elegant move like she had seen most dancers do, her left arm around Jack's shoulders. She arched her back like she had seen figure-skaters do while Jack easily balanced her, arching back just a little to provide counter balance.

He laughed with pleasure setting her easily back on her skates, the two of them taking a turn around the rink holding hands still and swaying along with the music.

Alex, who had seen their “fancy” skating move, yelled at them as they skated by. “Fucking showoffs!”

Jack laughed, holding Harley's hand as they skated pass Alex and Alice. They both, at the same time, gave Alex the middlefinger, laughing as they zipped pass. Alex grinned giving them the finger
Jack spun Harley around, this time holding her around the waist as he lifted her into the air, doing a slow spin and holding her above him. His eyes danced in delight, his gaze only on her. If lifting her aggravated his shoulder wound, Jack gave no indication. He spun her around one more time before he placed her back on her feet, but this time he brought her up beside him, his right hand holding her right hand in his, her arm extended across his chest. Harley placed her left hand at her hip and Jack placed his left hand over the top of Harley's hand, lacing his fingers with hers. They skated side by side, as if they had always been skating together, the two of them smiling into each others eyes.

Jack leaned in and stole a quick kiss while the two of them glided around the rink.

“How would you feel about going out tomorrow night, just the two of us Harls?” Jack asked.

They glided in a circle, flowing easily over the ice. (The music changed to “In My Mind” by M86 and Susie Q played over the speakers while the lights changed to a deep blue and purple). They skated past Sandra who was helping Dale to keep his balance on the skates, the two of them staying near the entrance to the rink. Sandra had her arm around Dale's waist, the two of them laughing, sharing an intimate moment together. On the other side of the rink, Alex was skating with Alice, doing a pretty fair job of skating while Alice skated around him smiling and laughing at whatever it was that Alex was saying to her. Harley, who had glanced over to the others, smiled back at Jack.

“What did you have in mind puddin?” she asked, quirking her brow at him.

“Well I thought it was time for some retribution my sweets. Thought we might pay a visit to good old Nurse Mallory, now that we're free,” Jack confided, releasing her left hand. He spun her out in a dancers' move.

“Oh, you know, start tying up some loose ends before our wedding and the end of the year. A little present for my sweets. First we find that bitch Mallory, find out if I left that orderly Daisy alive...maybe seek out a few others, other orderlies, nurses, guards...we do have the rest of the wee—might as well spread the holiday cheer.” Jack kissed her fingers before releasing her hand, wagging his eyebrows at her. Harley giggled with delight. “That sounds perfect puddin!! I would like to start the new year with a clean slate.”

Jack spun her around into his arms, skating up to the back wall where he pressed the length of his body up against hers. Jack's eyes swept over her face, lingering on her lips.

“That's what I thought too, my pumpkin, a clean slate for our new lives.”

She sighed wrapping her arms around his waist, sliding her hands down Jack’s back to grip his rear. “I do wish I knew for sure if Crane was alive or dead...if he's alive, I want to know where he went…”

Jack kissed her lips, nipping them gently. “No worries sweets. That can be our new year's resolution! Find and torture Crane before we kill him.”

Harley purred. “Mmm...I like the sound of that puddin.”

Jack chuckled, nipping at her chin with a light brush of his teeth. “I thought you might.”

Then he kissed her. A deep, knee-wobbling kiss that made Harley's insides turn to butterflies.

“Hey if you two are going to make out, go to the fucking back of the skating rink where the rest of us don't have to fucking see it!” Alex yelled as he and Alice skated by. Jack didn't stop kissing her,
instead he just threw his arm behind him and gave Alex the finger, which was greeted with laughter.

* 

The next morning Bruce was downstairs having tea with Alfred when Agatha came into the kitchen, bursting into the room like a rampaging buffalo.

“Well there you are Bruce. Didn't think to see you up this early after you came in so late last night.” Agatha floated over to Alfred giving him a big lipsticked kiss on the cheek.

“Oh Alfie, sweetie, can a girl get some eggs and a pot of very strong coffee?”

Alfred’s cheeks turned bright red. “There is a pot already brewing Miss Wayne.”

“Oh, you are a dream Alfred. If I ever decide to settle down, you are my first choice for a husband!” Agatha grinned hurrying over to the pot of coffee, pulling a mug down from one of the cabinets and pouring herself a cup of black coffee.

Bruce watched her as she chugged the coffee down without adding any additional flavor to it.

“Going out today?” he asked taking a sip of his tea.

She smiled. “Yes I am actually. Going to do a little shopping. You know, after-Christmas sales.” She smiled taking a seat while she waited for her eggs which Alfred had begun cooking, sunny side up just as she liked them with some crisp toast.

“What are your plans today nephew? Searching for your brother?” She said this with a tone of voice Bruce wasn’t sure he understood. He detected a slight hostility under the words, but something else he couldn’t quite put his finger on.

“I'm going to the police to file a missing persons report on Jack and Dr. Harleen Quinzel.” Bruce sipped his tea again. Agatha frowned, but nodded. “Oh, already? Well, good luck with that, I hope the Gotham police prove better in finding your brother and his fiancee than they are with solving any other crimes in Gotham.”

She gathered up her mug of coffee after refilling it, and her plate of eggs giving Bruce a smile and blowing a kiss to Alfred before she left the kitchen.

Bruce watched her go with a frown. “That wasn't the reaction I was expecting,” he said glancing at Alfred.

“Your aunt is a very...unique individual,” Alfred said sagely with a smile.

“I know that, but I thought she would be happy about me filing a report or at least interested, especially since she came back to Gotham just to get after me about Jack. I don't know...I just expected more of a reaction.”

“Perhaps she is distracted?” Alfred offered picking up his tea.

Bruce's brow furrowed. “Maybe.”

* 

Jack was lying on the bed, on his stomach, his chin in his hands, dressed only in his black pajama pants watching Harley as she dressed. He was upset that she was going without him, partly because he wanted to help her shop for a dress, but mostly because he didn't want her out of his sight. He
thought he would be all right with it, but he was feeling anxious about her being out there without him, unprotected. It was enough to drive him mad, but he kept his fear under control. He didn't want to spoil this outing for her because he could tell she was excited. Still, he didn't want to let her out of his sight after everything that had happened to them. He didn't trust anyone else to watch out for her, protect her but him...

Which was why Alex had hired someone to shadow them at Jack's request, a bodyguard named Slade Wilson who was an acquaintance of Alex's and someone Alex had hired in the past. Jack was just impressed that Alex was able to find someone on such short notice. Slade was to stay close, but not to let any of them know he was trailing them, which was why Alex had slipped Wilson in to be the ladies' driver. Jack knew his Aunt wouldn't be driving herself around Gotham, so with a little work from Alex and his connections, Wilson would be the ladies' driver and invisible bodyguard. This was the only reason Jack was willing to let Harley out of his sight. Alex had assured him that Wilson was one of the best, he could be trusted as long as he was paid, and if he was paid well, the man was a perfectionist. Jack still didn't like it, but it would do...it was the only way he was letting her out of his sight.

Harley smiled softly, finishing up braiding her hair into two braided tails that rested on her shoulders before she pulled the grey beanie down over her head and put on the fake heavy black framed glasses that she had requested from Alex. Jack watched her, amazed at how such a little accessory as a pair of glasses could so dramatically change her appearance. She was also wearing a pair of skinny jeans, a white collared shirt with a large shapeless beige sweater over that and a pair of high-top tennis shoes. She looked cute Jack thought, though no one would mistake her for the Harley Quinn that had been running around Gotham with Jack Wayne.

She turned around with a big grin. “How do I look?”

“Like you should be taking my coffee order,” Jack said with an amused grin. “Mm...I'll take my coffee in bed thank you very much,” Jack playfully growled at her.

Harley giggled and stuck her tongue out at him before she stood up and came over to flop down on the bed next to him.

“You all right?” she asked reaching out to stroke her fingers through his shaggy hair. Jack closed his eyes and leaned into her touch. “I'm fine. Just makes me uncomfortable to have you out of my sight right now.”

“I'll be with your aunt,” Harley said gently.

“I know sugar bear, but...no one can protect you like I can,” Jack said soft taking her hand in his, kissing the inside of her palm. The press of his lips sent a warm tickle up her spine and through her body. If she wasn't already dressed and it wasn't so close to time for her to go...she would jump him right now.

Instead Harley smiled. “I know Jack.”

He sighed. “I'll be fine. Just hurry back.”

“I will. Alex is coming over to hang out with you right?” Harley asked and Jack nodded. “Yeah, we have a few things to discuss...about our future. Maybe play some cards...” Harley nodded running her fingers down his spine, the tips of her fingers stroking back and forth. Her touch eased the tension in his body. She leaned down to kiss his shoulder.

“Did you find Nurse Mallory's address?”
Jack turned to look up at her beaming. “I forgot to tell you didn't I? Yes I did.”

Harley giggled. “I'm looking forward to tonight.”

Jack smiled, “Me too my sweets, me too.”

Harley leaned down to kiss the top of Jack’s head, but he surprised her, rolling over and swiftly grabbing her which caused Harley to squeal as he rolled her on top of him. He wrapped his arms around her once he had her flush with his body and kissed her passionately. Harley moaned wrapping her arms around his head, straddling his body, her hands tangling in his hair, returning his kiss with just as much passion. They only came up for air when there was a buzz at the door. Jack held her against him continuing to kiss her, his teeth brushing against her tongue and dropped his hands to her rear where he squeezed, pressing her hips against him.

They both heard the door open and Alex yelled. “I swear, you guys better have some fucking clothes on!!”

Harley pulled away from Jack’s mouth only far enough to laugh softly. “That means Alice is waiting for me. I gotta go puddin. I love you.”

Jack brushed his nose against hers licking her mouth. “I love you too Harls. Have fun and be careful. Get back early enough we can nap before we head out tonight, maybe a little something else since you're leaving me all hot and bothered now.”

She giggled and placed a kissed the tip of his nose before getting to her feet. “I'll be back before you miss me.”

Jack grinning sitting up and grabbing his t-shirt from the side of the bed with a laugh. “I'm holding you to that. Go, scoot...” He managed to reach over and smack her rear before she was out of reach. Harley squeaked and laughed heading out to the apartment's living room.

Jack heard Alex out in the living room say. “Hey Harley. Alice is waiting in the garage for you.”

“Thanks Alex, you boys have fun.” Harley waved and headed out the door.

A couple of seconds later, Jack entered the living room. Alex, who had walked into the kitchen carrying a canister of coffee he had brought with him, stopped in the middle of pulling the coffeemaker out from the wall to stare at Jack.

Jack stopped in his tracks, stared down at himself, then back at Alex. “What's up?”

“You know, except for your asylum uniform, I don't think I've actually ever seen you dressed so...basic.” Alex frowned as he turned back to the coffeemaker. “It's a little weird.”

Jack laughed while he walked over to flop onto the couch. “Sorry I offend.”

Alex laughed with a shake of his head. “No man, just weird. Hey I brought a baseball bat you asked for...do I want to know what you and Harley are going to do with it?”

“Nope,” Jack said propping his socked feet on the coffee table.

Alex finished with the coffeemaker, hit the on switch and nodded. “Okay, good enough for me. So what the fuck did you want to talk about without the ladies present?”

Jack chewed his bottom lip before he spoke. “I wanted to talk to you about the Red Hood.”
Alex turned around and stepped into the living room. “The fucking Red Hood? You mean that old Gotham gang from the ‘40’s?”

Jack smiled. “Yes. I'm thinking about bring the Hood back to Gotham.”

Alex walked over and flopped into the chair opposite Jack. “You're fucking serious aren't you?”

Jack nodded and leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, hands folded between them. “Oh, I am—deadly serious. This town needs a new class of criminal and I'm going to bring it to them. Bruce thinks I'm bad news...the bad seed in the Wayne family that needs to be locked up. Well, I'm going to show him just how bad I can be.” Jack smiled slowly, a wickedly nasty smile that spread over his face and gave Alex the shivers. “I'm going to bring Gotham something new...something deadly.”

* 

Aunt Agatha and all three of the other women were piled into a limo. Agatha was dressed in all black, black wide legged slacks, a black silk blouse and a wide brim black hat, but she wore a coat of shockingly bright purple with a large, gold flower lapel pin. She also wore a pair of almost outrageously round black sunglasses which she told Harley was to allow her to drink all day and never show it.

“So my kittens! We are going to go dress shopping at Neil Richards' wedding dress salon The Mad Mod!” Agatha giggled.

Alice sucked in a breath and Sandra gasped, but Harley looked confused.

“Neil Richards? Mad Mod?” She looked between everyone.

“Oh my sweet, sweet darling!! You don't know who Neil Richards is?” Agatha, who was sitting across from the three ladies took Harley's hand and patted it. “That's all right my dear, your Auntie will teach you the ways of fashion.” She giggled. “Though I'm sure our Jackie has been keeping you well dressed? I mean, before the unfortunate vacation at Arkham. The boy has always known how to dress!”

Harley smiled. “Actually, yes he has. Jack's been picking most of my clothing. He has such wonderful taste.” She beamed.

Agatha nodded. “Jackie always was the one with the eye for fashion and a flair for the drama that comes with it. Bruce was always the more somber of the two. I swear that boy doesn't have a stick of color in his closet! He only wears black or dark grey! Travesty! Anyway, yes I called this morning and Richard agreed to have us come in. I got the boy his start, introduced him around when he was an up and coming fashion designer, so this is the least he could do for me!”

* 

Neil Richards bridal bouquet, Mad Mod, located on west 20th was a large shop that took up nearly as much floor space as Kleinfield's, which was located on the same street. The limo pulled up and their driver, Mr. Wilson, who was well over six-foot wearing a black suit, with dark blonde hair and hard blue eyes, stepped out of the vehicle and opened the door for the ladies. Agatha exited first running her hand along Wilson's arm when she exited the vehicle. “My, my they do make drivers much better here in Gotham I must say. You wouldn't happen to be free tonight Mr. Wilson?”

Wilson grunted. “Sorry ma'am, I have another job.”

“Oh that is too bad. I would certainly like to climb your tree.” Agatha laughed especially when their
driver seemed to blush. “All right, come along ladies! Time to buy a dress!”

The inside of the shop was all white, gold and crystal; every inch of the shop was a testament to bridal elegance. Harley's eyes widened, as did Alice's and Sandra's who were standing beside her as Agatha turned throwing her arms out. “Tada!!”

A few seconds later a man wearing a 1960's British Mod-inspired suit which consisted of a slim-fitted tonic and mohair fabric suit along with narrow pants and lapels all in a mix of greens and reds, matched with a red turtleneck, (the bright colors stood out sharply against the rest of the store) came rushing toward them. He was shorter than Agatha by a good two to three inches, with flaming thick red hair that he wore shaved on the sides, and a thick, red mustache that curled on the edges accompanied by thick, black, horn-rimmed glasses.

“AGATHA!! Darling!!” His thick London accent surprised the younger women as Neil rushed toward Agatha and threw his arms around her. “OH, I was so happy to get your call this morning!! Why didn't you tell me you were in Gotham??”

Agatha hugged the shorter man in return. “Oh darling, I only arrived a few days ago. I'm here to do some shopping.”

Neil held Agatha back for a moment his hands on her shoulders his mouth hanging open. “Are you getting married??? Has the world come to a end?”

Agatha laughed. “Oh, God forbid! No, no...a...a friend of mine, her daughter is my...my God-daughter and I wanted to buy her a dress. Now we do have a little problem, she will be getting married this weekend. It's all so romantically whirlwind you know. But, Neil, darling, can you save us? Can you find us the most romantic, sexy dress for this weekend and price, my dear, is not an issue...go above and beyond!” Agatha threw her arms up dramatically.

Neil giggled. “Oh my lovely darling, I always did like shopping with you. Now...” He turned his attention to the three young women behind Agatha. “Which of you darlings is the lucky bride?”

Harley shyly put her hand up. “Ah...me.”

Neil rushed over snatching the hat and the glasses off Harley so quickly she didn't realize what had happened until they were gone. He frowned looking at her then gasped as recognition hit. “Wait a...”

Agatha rushed over grabbing the glasses and tossing them back to Harley. “Now Neil, sweetie...this has to be secret.”

Neil grinned and puffed his lips up with air for moment. “OMG...all right, come with me ladies. Let's set you up in one of our private, elite dressing rooms and get started.”

Neil motioned with his hands, ushering the ladies forward. Agatha hung back. “Now Neil...”

Neil grinned. “I know exactly who she is! I saw her picture in the paper...oh months ago, that is Jack Wayne's fiancee! But I thought they were both in Arkham?”

“It's a long story, but I really need you to be quiet about this.” Agatha frowned at him, her eyes serious.

“Oh Aggie please,” he assured her. “A word will not leave these lips!”

*
Bruce drove by watching as his Aunt and three younger women exited the limo she had left the manor in, not that Agatha being driven in a limo was all that surprising, but something about it had just rubbed Bruce wrong; he just knew something was up. He frowned not recognizing any of the young women, not that he had been able to get a very good look as he drove by and they were all bundled up against the winter chill...but why was his aunt at a bridal shop with three strangers? He had caught a glimpse of the driver and thought he recognized the man, but he couldn't be sure...

He wanted to stop and go in, but he knew he would stand out and he did not need the Gotham rumor mill talking about seeing Bruce Wayne in a bridal shop. Perhaps he was being paranoid. His aunt had a lot of friends, she could simply be buying a dress for a friend or the daughter of a friend, all of which were very plausible where his aunt was concerned. Bruce frowned and shook his head. Something just felt off though...

* 

Jack sipped his coffee watching Alex.

Alex frowned. “Well, if you want to be the fucking Red Hood—and want to start your own criminal organization—you should start small, build the brand as it were. But,” Alex shook his head. “All this to get back at your brother?”

Jack looked up at the ceiling in thought. “It's more than that Alex. I have always known I was meant for more...for bigger things. Being the youngest son of a billionaire surgeon living in the shadow of how great my father was, leaving under the tragedy of their murder and then there's Bruce...talking about living under a shadow! Bruce's perfect shadow, the billionaire playboy, man about town, always doing good deeds to balance out his playboy lifestyle, while his crazy little brother just continues to become worse, a blight on the family name. I'm just as smart as Bruce if not smarter, but I knew I could never live up to any of that. But this...I've always been cast as the “bad Wayne.” So, time to live up to the title.”

Jack's smile spread across his face making Alex uncomfortable, but he nodded. “Okay man, what do you want me to do?”

“I want you to find me a few expendable people.” Jack chuckled.

* 

The ladies had been at the bridal shop for a couple of hours, but the hundreds of dresses had finally been narrowed down to one dress, a white lace and tulle A-line with cap sleeves and a chapel train. Agatha walked around Harley as she stood in the wedding dress.

“Wow!! My dear, you are so beautiful!! This is just perfect! Do you like it honey?” Agatha stopped to stand in front of Harley who was blushing. She glanced towards Alice then Sandra, both of them looked smitten with the dress too. Harley ran her hands down it. It seemed so strange to be wearing another wedding dress...she never had the opportunity to wear the one she had purchased with Jack and the one she had actually gotten married in had been bought for her at a discount store. Agatha was right, however; her first dress wouldn't be “right,” but this dress was beautiful, fresh...unstained by any of the events that had occurred. Harley grinned. “It is perfect.”

Agatha squealed. “Oh darling, you are just gorgeous!! I know just the person to do your hair too! How do you feel about a Grecian style, with ringlets around you face, and a few around your neck and shoulders, and some simple flowers in your hair! Oh, and some diamond earrings! Mmm...we still need something borrowed, something blue...OH I know just the thing for the borrowed!! You can borrow one of my bracelets! I have the perfect one too! It's wrapped in single- and baguette-cut
diamonds!! It will look lovely on your wrist! Much better than a necklace—don't want to spoil that
gorgeous neckline. Besides, I'm sure Jackie would appreciate getting to see your long lovely
neck...hmmm...”

Aunt Agatha fluttered around Harley until Harley's neck was starting to hurt from keeping up with
Jack's aunt circling.

Alice spoke up when Agatha stopped to take a breath. “I might have an idea for something blue...”

All the women turned to Alice. Alice blushed at the sudden attention. “Well, I...I could make some
paper flowers, like forget-me-nots...in a bouquet since I know flowers are going to be hard to come
by this time of year...or at least really expensive and well...”

Agatha gasped. “That's perfect!! I LOVE IT!! What do you think Harley?”

Harley smiled. “I actually like that idea too Alice, thank you.”

Alice grinned.

Agatha clapped her hands. “Now we just have one more thing to do before we leave. I'm assuming
these two are your bridesmaids?” Agatha glanced over expectantly at Harley gesturing at Alice and
Sandra.

Harley looked startled, but nodded. “Ah...yes.”

Alice and Sandra both looked thrilled.

“Well then, you both need dresses!! And I need something to wear since I'm going to give you away
to my nephew. I mean, yes I know you're already married and all, but what's the fun of renewing
your vows if you don't get to be given away! Come ladies!! Harley, you must tell me: what colors do
you like?”

Agatha charged out of the dressing room before Harley could utter a word. Harley giggled. “I guess
whatever color you like Aunt Agatha...” she said to no one in particular.

*

Jack was pacing the apartment in a fit of rage. No...he was angry, but he had to admit he was mostly
scared, terrified, the fear of losing her again came rushing over him, the nightmares he had been
plagued with as of late washed over him as well. Every nightmare had involved him losing
Harley...every single one. He should never had let her go without him! He should have insisted, he
couldn't trust anyone, not even his aunt or a hired bodyguard to keep her safe! He couldn't lose her,
not again...It had been hours since Harley left!! Hours!! He had texted his aunt's phone once, but she
had texted back. “Keep YR breeches On have her back soon.”

It had now been nearly six hours! Alex had left four hours ago and Jack had been pacing ever since
like a caged tiger. The urge to leave was so strong that he had walked out of the door several times
only to turn around and come back...what if she returned and he wasn't here? He had received one
text, he assumed from Harley, though the number was his aunt's phone, stating she would be home
soon, but that had been over an hour ago.

In the mean time, he had done what he could to distract himself. He knew he was overreacting, but
he couldn't seem to stop the fear from bubbling up, which only made his hatred of Crane more acute.
Jack decided to occupy himself with physical activities, sit-ups, push-ups, he had even tried to jog in
place. The urge to smash things or pull the kitchen knives out and throw them at the wall had been
almost too much to resist, but he had...reluctantly. He did hit the wall with his fist a couple of times which had aggravated his shoulder wound enough that the pain calmed him down for a little while.

*

It was close to six in the evening when the door opened and Harley came rushing into the apartment, panting as she struggled with several bags.

She slammed the door shut behind her with her foot, looking around frantically, having trouble breathing. Her chest felt constricted; she needed Jack. She had almost been in tears before his aunt finally brought her back—in tears and on the verge of violence. If it wasn't for Sandra noticing how frantic she was becoming and actually requesting they take Harley home, Harley might have done something unforgivable...but she was here and Jack was nowhere to be seen.

“Jack? Jack! I'm back! I'm so sorry!! Your aunt wouldn't bring me home until we had done everything, the dresses, not just for me, but she insisted on dresses for everyone. I keep telling her I needed to get back, but then she wanted to buy shoes and see a hair dresser and a makeup person she knows...She just didn't understand...then she wanted me to see...” Harley had hot tears in her eyes. Being away this long had been unbearable and while Jack’s aunt was nice enough and nice to be helping them, and she had enjoyed picking out the wedding dress, Aunt Agatha just didn't understand. Harley needed to get back to Jack. Her heart had been gnawing at her, she had started to feel panicked and empty without him, her chest aching with her need to be with him and the fear that simmered under the surface, the fear that she would lose him, that something would take him from her. She had chided herself for ever going without him!! How had she been so stupid!

Harley walked further into the apartment her eyes darting around, but she didn't see him anywhere. She dropped off the few packages she had on the floor, which contained a variety of things that Aunt Agatha had insisted on buying for her, the shoes to go with the wedding dress, a sexy corset, garter and stockings to wear underneath and a few other things. There had been so much that Harley wasn't even sure what was all in the bags any more. Then she had insisted on lunch. Harley had tried to ask to borrow a phone but Agatha was such a whirlwind of energy that Harley had only managed to snag the phone from Agatha once to text Jack before his aunt was hauling her off again.

Harley walked into the bedroom, kicking her shoes off as she did so. Now she could hear the sounds of the shower running. She made her way to the bathroom. She could see Jack's silhouette, just barely through the steam covered shower door, one hand leaned against the back wall of the shower, his head under the current.

Harley stepped closer sliding the door open. “Jack?”

Jack's hand snapped out so quickly that Harley didn't react before he had grabbed her by the front of her shirt and hauled her into the shower shoving her up against the wall hard enough to nearly knock the air from her lungs. Harley gasped in surprise the water running down over her face. He reached up yanking the glasses off of her face and threw them out of the shower, the frames skittering across the floor.

Jack held her there, his arm trembling and glaring at her through the thin streams of water spilling out of the showerhead.

He was pressing hard against her chest, keeping her against the wall, the water soaking through her clothing. Harley wrapped her hands around his forearm staring back at him. “Jack? Jack I'm so sorry!!” Tears were now running freely down her face mixing with the shower water. Just seeing him, even though he was upset, seemed to quell the ache in her chest.
That was when she noticed he was trembling. He was angry, she could tell, but he was also scared. “Harley...you...you were gone too long...” Jack's voice was low, dangerous, but there was a quiver of fear in the tone of his voice.

Harley could see the rage in his blue eyes, but it was tempered with fear too. She reached out to cup his face with one hand. “I'm sorry Jack. It will never happen again. I will never leave without you. I swear. It...I had to get back...I just had to, but...Your aunt...she just didn't understand, she doesn't have anyone, doesn't love anyone...she doesn't understand what we have. She doesn't understand us and she wouldn't listen...”

Jack stared at her then he yanked her forward and crushed his mouth against hers.

Harley groaned, wrapping her arms around his neck as the hot water rained down on them, but neither of them cared. Jack began tearing at her clothing, struggling to pull her free of the wet cloth. He yanked her coat off her shoulders; Harley struggled out of her jacket while Jack moved his attentions to her pants. He yanked her pants down. She kicked off her socks (which was a bit of a struggle) then Jack was grabbing her shirt and shirt yanking them up over her head. Harley threw her arms up, helping him to disrobe her. The cloth hit the floor of the shower in great wet sounding plops. His tore at her panties while Harley struggled with her bra, finally kicking her pants and panties down to the floor, until she was finally naked. Jack lifted her up and Harley wrapped her legs around his waist, her hands grabbing fistfuls of his wet hair, her mouth attacking his lips. She was desperate for his attentions.

He carried her out of the shower heading toward the bed where he dropped her naked and wet on the edge of the mattress. There was no slow seduction, no teasing, he grabbed one of her legs and pushed the limb back against her body.

Jack groaned, his voice edged with pain and desperation. “You're really here, right Harls? You're here...every night I dream I lost you...”

Harley moaned back. “Feel me Jack...I'm real, I'm here...”

Harley spread her other leg wide reaching up to wrap her hand around his hand which was pressing her leg forward. Jack grabbed his erection in his other hand, directing himself into her, sliding the head of his erection against her wet opening before he pushed into her with a hard thrust. Harley cried out, her fingers over his hand dug into his skin while her other hand dug into the damp comforter. Jack laid her leg against his shoulder, leaning down, his hands on either side of her head as she shoved himself inside her as deeply as she could. He held it for a moment, their two bodies connected, the pleasure of filling her, feeling her around him; he felt complete.

Harley groaned softly sharing that feeling of completeness. She needed him inside her like she needed to breathe.

Jack began to move again, thrusting his pelvis hard and fast against her, slamming into her, his breath coming in pants, a tear slowly trailing down his cheek from the corner of one eye. Harley reached up grabbing fistfuls of his hair in her hands forcing his mouth down to hers. They kissed with desperation borne from fear, pain and need, the fear of existing without the other.

Jack pulled away from her mouth, gasping for breath. He stayed away from her mouth long enough to grab her other leg, biting her knee as he did. Harley groaned when Jack grabbed her hips, yanking for forward against him, thrusting hard and fast. Harley grabbed onto the edge of the mattress and cried out when he pressed so deeply into her that she thought she might see stars. She could feel the swift build of pleasure between them.
Harley came hard, her orgasm rippling over her causing her whole body to arch off the bed. Jack leaned in and followed her, his orgasm bursting from him in an explosion of pleasure that had him collapsing on top of her.

Jack wrapped his arms around her holding her tight, his head against her chest, both of them flowing, sinking off the bed to the floor. Harley wrapped herself around him laying her head on his shoulders, their bodies still connected. “I’m so sorry Jack.”

“Shh...” He ran his hands up and down her back holding her close to him. “You’re here now.”

Later that same night Jack was behind the wheel of a series-4 black BMW provided by Alex with no questions asked. He was drumming his black gloved fingers on the steering wheel in time to the music, holding a cigarette between his lips. Harley was next to him as Kaleida's “Think” played on the Cd player, tapping her fingers along the baseball bat that lay across her lap in time to the song blowing a bubble with her bubblegum and popping it. Jack chuckled. “Where on earth did you get that?”

Harley grinned. “Alice.”

Jack nodded. “You are adorable my sweet little cookie!”

Harley giggled then smiled at the bat before glancing over at Jack. “You have everything?”

Jack nodded. “Yep, everything was in the car like Alex promised, zip-ties and a ball gag.”

Harley giggled. “Perfect!”

They were driving toward the Gotham Heights neighborhood located in the northern part of the city. Nurse Mallory lived in a five-story walk up apartment building on a modest street in a modest neighborhood.

Jack smiled as they drove past, took the cigarette out and released a long stream of smoke. “Oh look Harls, it's one of those little places where nothing bad ever happens.” Harley giggled. “It is! It's really too bad that something bad is going to happen.” Harley put on a fake high-pitched voice. “I can't believe something like that happened here! This is such a nice neighborhood! Nothing bad ever happens here! Mallory was such a nice, quiet person...blada...blada...”

Jack snorted on a laugh. He stuck the cigarette back between his teeth holding it in place while he spun the wheel and turned down an alley next to the building, hiding the car in deeper shadows. They both stepped out of the car blending into the winter darkness themselves. Jack went around to the trunk, popping it open and pulled out a tire iron before he tugged Harley close for a kiss.

They were both dressed in black, with Harley wearing her blonde hair tucked up under a knit cap, wearing a black men's coat that was huge on her and Jack wearing his fedora and black coat from earlier flicking the cigarette butt into the darkness.

They made their way quietly up the steps at the top near the main door. There was a buzz-in system for guests. Jack reached out a gloved hand for the outer door handle, pleased to find that the lock was either broken or no one kept it locked at all. He grinned thinking that after tonight they would think better of leaving the main door unlocked. They both slipped inside without anyone seeing them.

Mallory's apartment was on the third floor. Jack took Harley's hand in his and together, doing their best not to giggle, they made their way up the stairs to the third floor. Once on the third floor Jack
and Harley made their way down the hall to where Mallory's apartment was, conveniently located at the end of the hall.

Jack winked at Harley and gave a light knock on the door. When nothing happened, Jack knocked again. This time they heard someone moving in the room then the slide of a chain lock and the door opened. In the crack was the blurry eyed gaze of Nurse Mallory, her hair pulled back in a ponytail, slightly messy indicating that she had most likely been in bed.

“What?”

Jack grinned. “Peekaboo.”

He shoved the door open, snapping the flimsy security chain and wrapping his hand around Mallory's mouth in the same instant, shoving her back into the apartment. He moved so quickly that she didn't have time to react before he had turned her around and was holding her up against him, his gloved hand covering her mouth, the tire iron held across her body. Harley came in behind him and quietly closed the door.

Jack chuckled. “Shhh...don't want to wake the neighbors now do we? Harley, the gag please.”

Harley skipped over and grinned at Mallory, who was dressed in a long t-shirt and pajama pants all in shades of baby blue. Harley wrinkled her nose as she put her hand into the pocket of Jack's coat and came up with the ball gag. Jack removed his hand from Mallory's mouth, but before she could do more than gulp, Harley jammed the gag into her mouth while Jack swiftly zip-tied her wrists behind her back.

“There! Now we can talk before you die,” Jack said pleasantly, shoving Mallory forward and into the apartment's living room. He gave a little push, directed her onto one of the chairs in her living room. There was one lamp on providing a limited amount of light, but the room had the slick style of a modern city dweller. Harley came up to stand next to Jack, held her bat over her shoulder, the two of them standing over Mallory.

Jack took his hat off as did Harley, letting her blonde hair tumble out.

“Hey Mallory, remember us?” Harley asked with a smile then blew a bubble and popped it.

Mallory's eyes went wide and Jack laughed. “Oh Harley, I think she does! “

Harley grinned at Jack. “Well puddin you do have one of those unforgettable faces. You're just so handsome.”

Jack grinned. “Aww...Harls you're gonna make me blush and in front of the nurse!”

Harley giggled.

Jack sighed and looked back at the bound nurse. “I bet you're wondering to yourself, 'Now why are Jack Wayne and Harley Quinn in my apartment? It couldn't possibly be because I was a raging thundercunt of a nurse could it?'” Jack smiled pleasantly tapping his chin in contemplation. “Well Mallory, you would be correct—it is because you're a thundercunt.”

Harley started laughing. “Thundercunt?”

Jack grinned. “I thought it was funny. She is a cock juggling thundercunt.”

Harley snorted on her giggle. “Puddin!! You're terrible.”
“That's one of the many things you love about me.” Jack grabbed her, wrapping his arm around her waist and yanking her against him for a deep passionate kiss.

Harley purred against his lips. “Mm...puddin.”

Mallory watched them in horror, not sure what to do. She couldn't seem to make herself move.

Jack gave Harley's lips a quick lick before returning his attention to Mallory. “I bet you feel pretty helpless right now, don't you? Well, now you understand how Harley and I felt trapped in that fucking asylum under the oh-so-tender care of sadistic people like you, people who are supposed to be helping the mentally ill, but instead you took pleasure in the power you have over them. And that Nurse Mallory, just isn't right, is it pumpkin?”

Harley shook her head with her bottom lips jutting out. “Nope, it isn't.”

Jack nodded. “If only you had been decent, then this might be less painful...but you were a horrible shit, so...”

Jack stepped back with a slight bow to Harley. “If you would my dear. First swing should always go to the lady.”

Harley grinned. “Sure thing puddin.”

Mallory leapt to her feet to run; Harley giggled and swung, using her entire body to swing the bat out, the very tip of the bat catching Mallory in the hip. The woman went down, skidded across the floor face first. Harley stepped over to stand over Mallory. She grabbed the woman by her head and yanked her head back looking her in the eye.

“This is for everything you did to my puddin, bitch.” Harley dropped her head and smiled, holding the bat like a golf club and swung, hitting Mallory in the head with a sickening “thawk” sound of wood hitting flesh and bone.

Harley stepped off of Mallory as Jack came over and lifted her up, pulling her to her feet by the back of her night shirt and setting the woman on her couch. Mallory wobbled, blood running down the side of her face, her eyes rolling and barely staying conscious.

Harley giggled dancing over and swinging her bat, singing.

“My baby's fit like a daydream
Walking with his head down
I'm the one he's walking to
So call it what you want, yeah, call it what you want to
My baby's fly like a jet stream
High above the whole scene
Loves me like I'm brand new
So call it what you want, yeah, call it what you want to ...”

Jack grinned watching her as she danced around the room swinging her bloody bat around with glee while she sang. He smiled gazing at her lovingly before he let out an almost swoon like sigh and
turned his attention back to Mallory.

Jack snapped his fingers in front of her face.

“Ya still with us Mallory?”

Mallory's eyes fluttered. Jack chuckled. “Well good, wouldn't want you to check out too soon now would we? This is all about retribution Mallory, debts being paid. You understand that, right?” He waved the tire iron in front of her. Mallory started to scream around her gag, tried to push herself up, but Jack snapped the tire iron up, catching her under her chin and knocking her back onto the couch. This time, she didn't move.

Jack smiled turning to Harley. “Pumpkin, wanna help me finish up here?”

“Oh sure thing puddin!” Harley came over with a smile her eyes narrowing just a little. “Head or tails?”

Jack smiled. “Ladies choice.”

Harley giggled and kissed his cheek. “You are always so sweet to me puddin.”

“Well, you know I would do anything for you Harls,” Jack said with a grin.

*

An hour later Jack held the door open for Harley. She stepped through, blood splatter on her face and clothes, followed by Jack who was just a blood splattered.

He smiled putting his arm around her shoulders.

“You know Harls. I think we should go back to the apartment, shower and order some sushi.”

“That sounds perfect puddin!” Harley giggled jumping on her toes to plant a kiss on his lips before they headed back down the stairs.
A couple of days later Gotham was under a severe weather alert. The snow that was in the forecast had started to fall and the temperature had fallen below the freezing mark and threatened to drop lower. Jack was bundled up in a black parka with a thick purple turtleneck underneath, a thick fur-lined Bomber hat with the flats down over his ears, and sat behind the wheel of a Jeep Cherokee following close behind an ambulance that was transporting Daisy Maverick, the orderly from Arkham who Jack had beaten in his escape. The medical transport was taking her to a special facility in Blüdhaven to recuperate at the request of her family. But if Jack and Harley had anything to say about it, she was never going to make it.

Harley was dressed in her own fur-lined parka, also in black with a matching Bomber hat, wearing a pair of fleece-lined, red and black argyle patterned leggings with a red sweater underneath, leaned over and put a lit cigarette in Jack's mouth while he drove. He glanced sideways holding the cigarette between his teeth as he grinned, his gloved hands on the wheel, and gave her a wink. “Thanks sweets.”

Harley grinned. “Anything for my puddin!”

She sat back in her seat and picked up her gloves from where she had tossed them onto the dash. She pulled on her pair of red leather gloves before reaching over and sliding the lighter back into his parka's inside pocket, planting a kiss on his cheek as she did so. The street lights briefly caught the hilt of one of Jack's pistols snug in its underarm holster, a Glock 17, just like the two that Harley carried under her parka. The ambulance ahead of them wasn't speeding yet, but they were unaware that they were being chased.

Jack glanced sideways at Harley, pulling out the cigarette. “You got the guns that Alex gave us? I completely forgot to grab them?” He grinned. “I would leave without my head if it wasn't attached.” Harley giggled. “Oh puddin!”

Jack grinned at her making her want to jump him right now...except—car chase. Jack grinned. “I have the pistols on, but I completely forgot the other weapons in the excitement to get moving.”

“Don't you worry puddin! I have them right here!” Harley leaned over and pulled up two sub-machine guns, MP-5s, yanking them out of a large bag she had been carrying.

Jack grinned at her and wink. “You are a doll. I got the best girl in Gotham.”

Harley giggled with a slight reddening of her cheeks. “Aw, thank you puddin.”

“When we get back, I'm going to show you just how much I love ya.”

Harley giggled, wiggling in her seat. They drove for another couple miles, maintaining a safe distance from the ambulance, but keeping within sight. The streets were fairly quiet, but they were looking for a good place to come up alongside the ambulance, a place where they could drive it off the road without being seen. While Jack drove, the radio which had been playing in the background started to play a Britney Spears song. “Oh, I love this song!” Harley giggled and leaned over to turn the radio up louder. She rolled her shoulders back and waited for the music, then sang along.

“...But mama I'm in love with a criminal

And this type of love isn't rational, it's physical
Mama please don't cry, I will be all right

All reason aside I just can't deny, I love the guy

He is a villain by the devil's law

He is a killer just for fun, fun, fun, fun...

She winked at Jack as she sang making him laugh. She continued dancing in the front seat and singing along until Jack took a pull on his cigarette, blowing out a stream of smoke holding the burning stick between his fingers. “Okay Harls, get ready; we're going under the bridge.”

Harley stopped singing and nodded setting one of the sub-machine guns back on the floor of the vehicle before picking up the one on her lap. She rolled down the window as Jack switched lanes and maneuvered the Jeep alongside the ambulance. Harley leaned out her window, pulling herself out so that she was sitting halfway out of the window, the submachine gun in hand. Jack reached over and squeezed her knee making her giggle.

“That's my girl.” Jack laughed rolling down his window and threw out his cigarette. Harley leaned back in snagging a quick kiss before she settled herself on the edge, her entire torso out of the window, flakes of snow blowing into the cab. “Ready puddin!” Harley yelled to be heard over the rushing, cold wind.

*  

The ambulance driver was a heavy-set man with a crew-cut named Martin. Martin had a wife, two young daughters and a mistress named Jill. He also had a lover named Jacob. He enjoyed his job arriving on scenes to help people in need and he liked easy transportation jobs like tonight, moving a patient from one facility to another. He wasn't clear on all the details of what happened to the woman in the back, but he gathered from her file, the woman had worked at Arkham Asylum until there was an escape. Martin frowned, sighing in thought. He had seen a segment about the escape on the news, right before Christmas. The news lady with the helmet of blonde hair had put up the pictures and names of each of the escaped patients with warnings about them being dangerous, not to approach, but to call 911; they also gave a list of other numbers. Martin hadn't bothered to write any of them down. Gotham was a big city and the chances of him running into any of them were slim to none.

But what had stuck out in Martin's mind was when the news lady reported about Jack Wayne and his fiancee, Dr. Harleen Quinzel. They had both been in Arkham at the time of the escape, but, unlike the others they didn't list Jack Wayne as an escaped patient. Rather, they had listed him as missing. Same with Dr. Quinzel, who happened to be engaged to Jack Wayne. Missing, as if they had been taken or something.

That had made Martin think, if Jack Wayne didn't have all that money he would probably be on the escapee list too. Guess money could buy all sorts of stuff. He glanced over at his partner, Felicia. She was a tiny auburn headed woman who looked no bigger than his twelve year old daughter. She was a great partner though—quick, smart. She was going to college with plans for medical school. Right now she had her headphones in and was listening to some language tape, trying to teach herself French or something. Martin shook his head looking back out onto the road when movement at his window caught his attention. Martin turned, his eyes going wide when he saw the woman from TV...Harleen Quinzel, sitting halfway out her car window with a submachine gun in her hands. She waved at him, then aimed her machine gun at him with a wide grin and opened fire.

*
Harley laughed with glee when she shot the driver in a rapid burst of bullets. Blood splattered across the wind-shield and the ambulance immediately veered to the right.

“GOT 'EM PUDDIN!!” Harley giggled, slipping back inside the cab, flakes of snow glittering on her cheeks.

Jack laughed. “That's my girl!”

Harley grinned brightly at his words, then gasped leaning over to turn the radio up. “Oh, I love this song!”

Birdy Nam Nam’s “Dance or Die” filled the cab of the Jeep. Harley started to move to the music, holding her sub-machine gun in one hand and licking her lips while grinning at Jack. Jack waggled his eyebrows at her, smiling and hitting the gas.

* * *

Inside the ambulance, Felicia screamed as Martin's blood splattered her, his body falling over in her direction. She unbuckled herself swiftly, leaning over his dead body to grab the wheel, just barely yanking the wheel to the left. The ambulance skittered against the concrete wall of the tunnel sending sparks flying. She climbed over Martin's body, shoving him out of the way before dropping herself into the driver's seat. She pulled the ambulance back under her control before hitting the gas. She had no idea who was shooting at them or why, but she figured her best bet was to outrun them and get out of the tunnel. In the back of the ambulance, Daisy groaned. “What's going on? Was that a gunshot?”

She tried to sit up, but she couldn't move. Daisy was on a stretcher, strapped down for her safety for the transfer to Blüdhaven. She had been recovering decently from the head trauma she suffered at Arkham, to the amazement of her doctors, and she was well enough to move to Blüdhaven now. Her family had wanted to have her closer, parents, brother, two sisters, and a few cousins. There she would be able start her physical therapy and live with her parents instead of being alone in Gotham.

Daisy was still weak, but her prognosis looked good.

In the back of the ambulance with her were two paramedics, a young Latina woman with short dark hair and a young man, slim with a sort of “boy scout” look to him. They had both screamed when Martin was shot, then did their best to hold on as the ambulance tipped wildly for a moment, swerving along the road, but their patient couldn't see what had happened. Without a word the two paramedics had agreed not to tell her what was going on. The woman, Selma, leaned forward over Daisy checking the straps that held her to the gurney. She glanced at her partner, Jeff, who looked terrified.

Jeff fumbled for a moment before he said, “No, no just a patch of ice on the road. Nothing to worry about. Everything is under control.”

Selma nodded glancing down at Daisy. “Yes...you just relax all right?” She pulled up Daisy's blanket around her shoulders.

* * *

The ambulance came back under the control. Whoever was driving now had hit the gas and began to pull away from them.

Jack hissed. “Damn, someone thinks fast under pressure up there. Ready for another shot sweets?”
Harley winked at him. “You got it puddin.”

Jack laughed and swung the Jeep directly behind the ambulance. He grinned, the lights on the tunnel ceiling catching his perfect white teeth as he hit the gas and slammed the Jeep's fender into the back of the ambulance and shoved the vehicle forward. At the last second, he reached over putting a hand on Harley's chest preventing her from falling forward since she wasn't strapped in. She jerked forward with the movement of the Jeep, but Jack's hand prevented her from hitting the dash. Both of them started to laugh.

*

Inside Jeff yelped. “What is going on?!”

Felicia yelled from the front. “Just hold on! They're trying to ram us!”

She hit the gas again and the awkward ambulance sprang forward.

Jeff yelled back, his voice cracking. “Who?! Why?!”

Felicia shook her head blinking back tears of fright. “I have no idea!”

Selma reached across Daisy and grabbed Jeff's arm. “Just focus on the patient.”

Jeff looked down at Daisy who was just now starting to looked scared, he nodded. “All right, all right.”

*

Jack swung the Jeep around coming up on the ambulance's left again. Harley leaned out her window and covered the side of the vehicle in a rapid spray of gunfire. She littered the entire side with bullets.

Inside the ambulance everyone screamed and ducked, though Selma threw herself over Daisy. Jeff yelped as a bullet caught him in the shoulder, dropping him to the floor of the ambulance.

The driver of the ambulance screamed and ducked, but she continued to try to pull away looking for any exit she could find.

Jack snarled when the ambulance started to put a little distance between them. “I really hate some people trying to be all heroic!” He twisted the wheel to the left then hit the gas.

He sighed. “Hold on Harley!”

She made a small “Eep!” sound grabbing a hold of her seat belt holding on to it like a life line as their vehicle accelerated. Harley squealed, her entire body started to slam toward the right, but Jack reached over grabbing a hold of her parka and yanking her toward him. She fell against him and he held on to her at the moment their vehicle slammed into the side of the ambulance. The Jeep leapt forward alongside the ambulance, then in the next second he swung the wheel violently to the right, the Jeep side swiping the ambulance with a loud crash and squeal of metal hitting metal.

*

Felicia finally saw her chance to escape the psychotics who were attacking the ambulance. An exit out of the tunnel came into view just up ahead. She smashed the gas pedal to the floor, pulling away from the Jeep.

*
Jack frowned. “They really want to make this difficult don't they.”

Harley sighed. “Well, if it was easy it wouldn't be worth doing.” She shrugged. Jack grinned reaching over to brush her chin with his fingertips.

“You're right Harls. Besides, the chase is half the fun!” Jack laughed. Harley joined him leaning over to kiss his cheek.

The ambulance, with the Jeep right behind, burst out of the tunnel onto the main streets. For a moment Felicia thought she was going to get away from whoever was after them.

* 

Harley leaned out the window again. The chill wind and the flying snowflakes stung her cheeks, but she smiled closing one eye as she aimed the sub-machine gun at the tires of the ambulance. She fired a pair of controlled bursts, blowing out both back tires.

Jack hooted and hit the roof of the Jeep with his fist. “That's my Harley!!”

* 

Felicia screamed, suddenly losing control of the ambulance. She tried to bring them back onto the road, but the ambulance was dragging and the vehicle listed hard to the right. Then, as she struggled to regain control, the front tires hitting a slick spot and she hit the wall just at the exit leaving the tunnel to slam into the concrete corner hard enough that she lost completely lost control. The ambulance flipped onto its side and skidded out of the tunnel, sparks flying as the metal scraped against the street.

Jack laughed. “Hot damn Harley, good job!”

Harley grinned. 'Why thank you puddin.”

The ambulance came to a stop just ahead of them. Several cars zipped by...no one wanting to get involved especially after the Jeep stopped, others thinking that someone was taking care of the accident (though one person made a call to 911 as they continued on by). Jack and Harley hopped out of the Jeep, both of them pulling their pistols as they walked over. Jack stopped, drew out a cigarette and his lighter, holding his hand against the snow and wind to light the cigarette. Harley waited next to him until Jack had the cigarette lit, blowing out the smoke before grabbing her, wrapping his arm around her waist to yank her against him. Harley smiled against his mouth, biting softly at his tongue before kissing him deeply. Jack growled playfully deepening the kiss and leaning her back just slightly before he let her go. Harley giggled booping his nose before she headed over to the front of the ambulance, Jack smacked her rear as she walked away. She giggled jumping a bit, glancing over her shoulder at Jack and winking at him.

The snow had begun to pick up, the flakes big, fluffy, and wet as Harley walked over to the front of the ambulance with a slight dance to her steps while Jack moved to the back of the vehicle.

When she arrived at the front of the ambulance, Harley smiled, bending over to look inside. The driver was twisted around at an unnatural angle. The windshield had spider-webbed and it looked like the little lady who was driving had smashed her face into it. Harley would guess by the weird position that the driver's back was broken. A quick inspection showed Harley that the woman's legs were definitely crushed, but surprisingly the young woman was still alive. Harley frowned as the woman looked up at her, blood leaking from her lips and nose. The young woman shuddered her lips moving as she tried to speak.
Harley sighed. “I'm sorry you got caught in the middle of this...but you know...” The blonde shrugged. “But I will do you a favor.” Harley smiled sweetly as she aimed her pistol at the young woman. Harley smiled at her one more time, then she pulled the trigger.

Strolling to the back of the ambulance, whistling Britney Spear's “Criminal,” Jack stopped at the back and tried the doors. Jack snarled in frustration. The doors were jammed. He put his gun back in the holster, flicked the remains of his cigarette out onto the road and put his foot against the bottom door, then with both hands he grabbed the handle and yanked backwards with all his strength. After a couple of seconds of yanking and kicking at it, the top door popped loose.

Jack sighed. “Finally!”

Harley came around from the front just as Jack threw the door up. Harley peeked inside. There were three people inside; Daisy who was strapped to a gurney, which was lying against the side of the ambulance and two paramedics were in the back with her. Jack frowned. One of them looked to be dead, though the other was still alive, a woman. Jack smiled at her. “Sorry about this, should have called in sick,” he uttered in a forlorn tone before he shot her in the forehead. Harley frowned.

“Should I crawl in there and unstrap her?” referring to Daisy.

“Nah, I'll do it sweets.” Jack grabbed her by the front of her parka and tugged her close, kissing her passionately.

Harley purred. “Mm...Jack.”

He rubbed his nose against hers, reaching up to tug playfully on one of the ear flaps of her hat. “Be right out.”

“And I'll be right here puddin.” Harley giggled stepping back.

Jack grabbed the side and crawled into the back of the ambulance. Harley stood watch outside. No one stopped; she watched the cars zip by, Gothamites off to wherever, counting on someone else to take care of the problem. She grinned as she watched the snow falling in slow lazy flakes, looking lovely in the streetlights she thought. They probably thought that was what she and Jack were doing, helping. She rocked on her feet humming to herself occasionally, sticking her tongue out to catch some snowflakes. She heard Jack moving around in the back of the ambulance, the sounds of banging then Jack's muffled voice. “God damn it! Fuck!” followed by the sound of more banging.

She finally turned around when Jack called. “Hey Harls, can you help me out here?”

Harley hurried over. Daisy was groaning and weakly struggling, her eyes fluttering, but she wasn't really “awake” while Jack struggled with her. The woman was a ton of dead weight and the confined space of a lopsided ambulance with an additional two dead bodies inside and with only the one door opened, made it hard to yank her out. But working together, with Jack shoving and Harley pulling, they both heaved the large woman out of the back of the ambulance, dropping her to the pavement with a meaty sounding plop. Jack hopped out, dusting himself off before he crouched down in front of their victim. He reached out to grab Daisy with both hands, hauling her by her hospital gown to move her up to a sitting position.

Jack slapped her across the face. “Hey, come on. Focus!”

He then snapped his fingers in front of the woman's face until Daisy finally opened her eyes fully to look at him. Jack smirked. “Sleeping beauty is up Harls.” Harley crouched down in front of her too. Daisy's face still had some of the signs of Jack's beating, there was a fading bruise around one eye, more fading bruises around her forehead and it looked like she had some stitches across one cheek.
Harley crouched down next to Jack and waved her hand in front of Daisy's face. “Hey there Daisy, remember me?”

Daisy frowned in confusion looking between the two of them. “You? I know you!”

Harley giggled. “Oh, I think she remembers who we are puddin!”

Daisy started to struggle, but Jack easily shoved her back against the ambulance with one arm. He smiled and drew out one of his guns.

“Daisy, Harley and I are trying to wrap up a few things before the end of the year and well, when I learned you were alive, and after what Harley had told me happened concerning you...well, I simply couldn't let you live. I mean really...I never leave a job half done! That's very unprofessional. And as my girl and I started out on our new career path as criminals...” He glanced over at Harley and winked. “I really can't start knowing I left a job half done. BUT because of how you treated my girl. I'm going to let her finish you off.”

Jack smiled at Harley who grinned. “Oh puddin! You don't have to!”

“Well Harls, I thought it might seem better coming from you than me.” Jack smiled sweetly at her.

Harley waved him off. “Nah, you started it, you go ahead and finish her puddin. I'll just watch this time.”

Jack tilted his head. “Are you sure pumpkin poo?”

“I'm sure puddin.” Harley leaned over and gave him a quick kiss. “Do it,” she urged with wide eyes.

Daisy groaned. “You're both insane!”

Jack grinned brightly at the Arkham orderly. “Why thank you Daisy! Nice of you to notice!” Then he shot her in the forehead.

They both stood up, turning at the sound of sirens in the distance.

“Oh, guess that's our signal to skedaddle!” Jack reached over and wrapped his arm around Harley's waist tugging her close to rub his cold nose against hers.

Harley sighed happily. “You know, I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders.”

Jack nodded as they both walked back to the Jeep. “Me too sweets. Though I don't think we're going to get to Arkham before new year's is past.”

“That's okay puddin. I mean except for Crane and Arkham...she was the big one to get. I mean we did take care of a few of those guards the last couple of nights. I feel pretty good about it all.” Harley said happily as she climbed into the Jeep. “Closure,” she said simply.

Jack climbed in on the other side. “You know darling, you're right. Let's go home.”

* 

Later, Batman was standing next to Gordon watching as the bodies were taken away and the tow truck for the ambulance was getting into position.

Batman frowned. “That's at least the sixth person to work at Arkham that's been killed this week.”
Gordon blew out a line of smoke. “You think it's one of the escapees from the asylum?”

Batman nodded. “Could be Barbara Kean and her girlfriend Tabitha Galavan. This isn't Zsasz's MO or Tetch's.”

Gordon nodded. “The person who called 911 only reported a black Jeep Cherokee, no license plate number. The person who called thought they were stopping to help. Saw two people, but couldn't tell us if they were men or women by the way they were dressed. Had a couple of other calls on this, one about a chase. But again, vague, nothing to really go on. By the wounds I'm guessing a 9mm, but those are easy to get.” He shrugged and took a puff of his cigar. “The bullet holes on the side seem to be from a machine gun. Whoever it is, they're wearing gloves. No finger prints.” Gordon shrugged again. “But my money is on Barbara and Tabitha.”

Batman nodded. “Let me know if you learn anything new. I'll keep you informed of anything I learn as well.”

Gordon nodded.

* 

Jack and Harley stumbled out of the elevator, their mouths practically glued to each other. They rolled across the wall stopping for a moment to attack each other. Jack grabbed her face, holding her jaw in his hands as his lips mashed against hers, his tongue exploring the feel of her teeth, the wetness of her tongue, then he ran his tongue over her chin, licking her cheek before sinking his teeth into her jaw, a firm, but gentle bite. Harley grabbed onto the sides of his parka, her hands in fists, biting at his lips and tongue. Jack smiled against her mouth reaching up to pull the zipper of her parka down before reaching in to grab her waist and balling her sweater in his hand, then shoved his pelvis against hers. Harley let go of his parka, grabbing his face between her hands growling while she kissed him trying to devour his tongue and lips.

He grinned pulling away from her mouth long enough to groan. “Watching you hang out the window and shooting that gun...sexiest damn thing I ever saw. You got me so fucking hot Harley.”

Harley giggled, her cheeks red, drops of water glistened on her lashes where the snow had melted. “Mmm...puddin, watching you kill Daisy was such a rush.” She reached around and grabbed his ass squeezing and pressing him against her. “I loved it puddin.”

Jack growled, keeping a hold of her while he turned to open the door to the apartment, both of them falling inside. He kicked the door closed with his foot while yanking her back against him again. Harley reached up to yank the hat off of him, his hair tumbling loose over his forehead as she threw the hat over her shoulder. He did the same, though he smoothed his hands under the hat to caress her hair knocking her hat to the floor while grabbing fistfuls of her hair, biting her lips while he kissed her.

Harley grinned and took a step back from him, running her tongue along her upper teeth grabbing the zipper of his parka and ripping it down before she shoved it off his shoulders. Her mouth attacked Jack’s with a playful growl. She ran her hands over his pistols in their holsters right under his arms, caressing them as if she was touching his manhood. She purred, undulating her hips to rub against his bound erection. She could almost feel the heat of him when she pressed against the mound causing Jack to hiss. He did the same with her coat, ripping it from her shoulders, then followed by yanking her gun holster off her shoulders, the weapons making a hard, heavy metal sound as they hit the floor. He pulled his gloves off with his teeth which made Harley's groin ache just watching his teeth press into the leather before he slid his hands under her sweater, craving the feel of her skin under his hands. Jack force walked her backwards, yanking her sweater up and off at
the same time until the back of her legs hit the side of the couch causing them both to fall.

Harley laughed hitting the couch cushions, her legs dangling off the arm of the couch. Harley licked her lips. “How about some mood music puddin?”

Jack laughed. “Anything for you baby. Alexa (the voice operated app. That Alex had in the apartment)—music. Nostalgia’s “Who you Talkin’ To Man?” started to play.

Harley purred. “That'll work..come here puddin.” She reached out for him.

Jack wrinkled his nose playfully putting one knee on the couch and dropping his other foot to the floor for balance before he began to work his way down her torso taking bites of her soft silky skin, rubbing his nose against her and inhaling her fragrance. Harley arched her back throwing her head back with a groan, the feel of his teeth, the mix of pain and pleasure had her wanting more.

He grabbed the middle of her bra with his teeth pulling on it, waggling his eyebrows when he looked up at her.

Harley looked down at him and laughed. “Puddin!”

Jack growled, reaching up with his hands to grab the cups of the lacy red bra she was wearing and pull them down off her breasts exposing them to the cool air of the living room. Her nipples were already hard, but watching Jack slowly extend his tongue, his eyes on her the whole while and flick each nipple with his tongue, had her dropping her head back with a deep groan. “Oh god Jack!”

He snickered playfully tracing each nipple with his tongue before taking a full lick with the flat of his tongue then catching each nipple with his lips and tugging. Harley shivered making little gasps and groans of pleasure.

Jack snaked lower, biting a little painfully, but pleasurably, his hands gliding down her sides, only his fingertips caressing her skin, until he was at her pants.

It was a little awkward, but Harley kicked off her boots just before Jack glided to a standing position between her dangling legs. He took a moment smiling down at her to slide his shoulder holsters off, dropping them to the floor with a loud thud, then he reached over his shoulders to pull his turtleneck off. Harley didn't move, she just watched, running her tongue over her lips, her eyes tracing every delicious detail of him. Her love and lust for him burned hot and passionate. She felt that if he didn't take her soon, she would combust!

Jack winked watching the way her gaze was devouring him. He reached down to unbutton his pants and kick off his boots at the same time. He slid his slacks down, boxers and all, kicking them off and to the side before he reached down to yank off his socks.

Harley watched every movement like a hungry predator. She started to reach down and undo her own pants lifting her hips up and start shoving them down. Jack kicked away the rest of his clothing with a snarl because it took too long; he reached down and grabbed her pants yanking them down her legs, panties and all, tossing them aside before he crawled on top of her.

Jack grabbed her hips, his fingers digging into her flesh pulling her toward him, her hips on the arm of the couch then at the last moment he flipped her around nearly tossing her off the couch.

Harley squealed and giggled, laughing as she grabbed a hold of the couch cushion just as Jack positioned his erection and slid inside of her. She cried out with pleasure when he plunged into her, a deep hard thrust that had her back arching as he seemed to go deeper than ever. He yanked her back a little more before he started a hard in-and-out thrust of his hips.
“JACK!!” Harley groaned. She bent her legs, crossing her ankles so that her feet weren't touching the floor, holding onto the couch cushion while Jack grabbed her hips and started to thrust harder into her. She was so wet, her vagina and ass squeezed around his erection causing Jack to jerk, a ripple running up from his erection through his entire body. It only made him want to pound into her harder. The room was filled with the musical combination of their bodies coming together which created a wet smacking sound of flesh meeting flesh, mixed with the music playing through the speakers. The entire couch bounced with their fucking. At the same time Harley’s hips were bouncing against the arm of the couch it was causing her clitoris to rub against the fabric of the couch arm making her shiver and shake.

Harley screamed with pleasure. “Puddin! Jack!”

He grinned watching the way her backside bounced with each thrust of his hips, his fingers digging in to her skin, his shaft plunging deep into her, feeling that hot wet core of her surrounding him. Jack sucked on his bottom lip as he jerked his hips up a little which was greeted with a gasp of pleasure from Harley. He brought one hand up, squeezed her buttcheek with a grin, then he surprised her with a playful smack.

Harley moaned, the smack on her rear being the catalyst to her cumming with a cry, her back curving. “YES! JACK!”

Jack grunted watching her, feeling her climax wash over him until he couldn't hold back; he came hard and fast. He grabbed her ass, his fingers digging into her, arching his back as he cried out. “HARLEY!”

*

The following early afternoon Aunt Agatha came downstairs all smiles. Bruce happened to be home, there to discuss some work be done on the one of the upstairs bathrooms. Bruce was looking to modernize it a little bit more, and he was having some plumbers coming over this afternoon to give him some estimates. He was sitting in the kitchen wearing slacks, a light blue dress shirt and a beige cable knit sweater looking the casual billionaire while he had coffee and chicken salad sandwiches with Alfred when Agatha came bursting into the kitchen with her usual bull-in-a-china shop whirl of energy, wearing a pair of thigh-high black boots, black leggings with a black turtleneck, a leopard print jacket and a set of plastic pearls around her neck that were big enough to be golf balls.

Bruce looked up from reading the paper to lift a brow at his Aunt. “Where are you off to? It's pretty cold out there. Don't know if you noticed, but it snowed.”

His aunt laughed. “Bah, a little bad weather never stopped me from doing anything. You should have seen me shopping in Sweden last winter! I just have a few little things I want to do. I...I have plans this weekend and I just have a few last minute things to do.”

She was searching through the cabinets as she spoke, finally stopping to sigh. “Alfred dear, isn't there a portable coffee mug anywhere in this vast kitchen?”

Alfred smiled. “Oh course.” He stood up and moved over to one of the cabinets she had just looked through, pulling down a travel mug. Agatha laughed. “I swear I'm going blind in my old age!”

Alfred smiled. “You will never be old Miss Agatha.”

“Oh Bruce I swear I'm going to steal him from you!” Agatha grinned while Alfred took the mug and filled it with coffee for her.
“Well, you boys enjoy your afternoon.” Agatha waved over her shoulder as she left the kitchen.

Bruce frowned, watching her vanish. “Did I tell you I saw her with three young women going into a bridal shop the other day?”

Alfred frowned. “Really, how odd.”

“Yeah, that's what I thought. Do you think you can handle the plumbers?” Bruce stood up.

“Master Bruce, you are not going to follow your aunt are you?” Alfred looked surprised.

Bruce shrugged. “I'm just...she hasn't said much at all about Jack after she flew all the way back to Gotham to lecture me on him. I find that odd. So, I'm not following her exactly. I just happen to be driving in that direction.” Bruce grinned at Alfred.

The older man sighed. “Mhm, I don't know Master Bruce, if you don't mind me saying so, I feel that this is a bad idea.”

Bruce laughed heading out to grab his coat. “It'll be fine, Alfred.”

*

The next afternoon Harley woke to the feeling of Jack nibbling on her ear. She smiled, refusing to open her eyes. Jack's fingers slid down her naked body slipping between her legs. He rubbed slowly until he found the spot that made her gasp and jerk against his hand.

“Waaakkee uupp...” Jack hissed softly in her ear. “Club meeting this afternoon. Agatha and the others are coming over to discuss our wedding, which is tomorrow by the way! We finally get to have a real wedding!!” Jack cooed excitedly against her ear.

“It's afternoon?” Harley sat up the sheet falling away to show her naked breasts. Jack grinned. “Yes...but we have a few minutes!”

Then he lunged at her, leaping on top of her and pressing her down into the pillows burying his face between her breasts. Harley squealed. Jack started to nibble on her making Harley squeals turn to moans. Jack sucked on one of her nipples curling into her, his sucking soft and sweet. Harley moaned, one arm wrapped around him, stroking her fingers through his hair, her eyes falling closed on the pleasure of his tongue and lips sending ripples and tickles of pleasure that pooled in her groin.

Jack dragged the back of his fingers along her flat stomach, his nails tickling her skin causing goosebumps to shiver into existence until he had reached his goal between her legs. He rolled off of her, but curled himself against her side, using one leg to pull her legs apart gently. He continued to suck at one breast, his long fingers sliding up and down in a slow, rhythmic caress. He bit along her breast then back to her nipple teasing with his tongue, then slowly slid his middle finger between her legs sliding it slowly into her, curving his finger, then he gradually pulled his finger out, and slid it into her again.

Harley moaned arching off the bed just a little. Jack used his leg to spread her legs wider, continuing the slow movement of his finger in and out, then sliding up to caress her clitoris then down again, sliding his finger into her and easing out, crooking his finger as he did so. Harley groaned, thrusting her hips, meeting his touch. He smiled flicking his tongue across her nipple, picking up speed with his finger when he felt she needed him to, feeling the increase in wetness as she came closer and closer, until finally her legs stiffened and her feet pointed, her fingers in his hair tightened as she came with a loud gasp.
Jack grinned, sliding his tongue around her nipple continuing the slow thrust of his finger until Harley whined. “Jack...Puddin...I need you now!! Please!”

Jack brushed his nose against her breast. “Your wish is my command.”

He rolled on top of her. She hooked her legs around him as Jack slid into her, pressing himself deep inside her. Harley groaned wrapping her arms around him, her hands sliding along his back, gliding across his shoulders and into his hair, grabbing his hair in her hands as she stared into his blue eyes.

“Jack, I love you,” she whispered.

Jack brushed his nose against hers, smiling softly. “I love you my harlequin.”

They moved together, Jack thrusting slowly, with Harley meeting his thrusts with her own.

* 

Alex was dressed in a thick brown parka and sported a heavy knit hat of orange with a big pompom on top. He and Alice, who wore a black down jacket came off the elevator with Dale and Sandra, both in thick matching thermal-lined bomber jackets, and lastly Frost, dressed in a wool top coat, all of them covered in snow. Alex started to open the apartment door when Alice put her hand on his one arm.

“Knock,” she said with a small smile.

Alex opened his mouth to protest, but Alice smiled. “Alex, just knock.”

“Ugh, fine!” Alex knocked and everyone waited.

* 

Harley wrapped her legs around Jack, yanking him down for a tender kiss, her tongue playing gently with his, nipping at his tongue. Jack moaned against her mouth thrusting his hips several more times, plunging into her as their bodies climaxed together, sharing the intensity of their pleasure, just as they both heard the sound of a knock.

Harley giggled. “And again, they catch us undressed.”

Jack laughed snuggling into her, sliding his arms under her and squeezing, pressing his nose and mouth against her neck. “Maybe we need a huge sign that we put outside the door: SEX IN PROGRESS AT ALL TIMES!”

They both started laughing.

* 

Harley put on a red sweater dress, a ribbed frock with cable-knit accents and a skirt adorned with pom-poms, paired with black leggings and some ankle boots and came back into the living room carrying a tray with mugs of hot cocoa nearly spilling over with marshmallows. Nearly everyone was sitting around the coffee table, though Frost was leaning against a corner as Aunt Agatha, who was standing up and pacing excitedly as she talked, told everyone what she had arranged for the wedding which was happening tomorrow.

Agatha took her cocoa from Harley glancing around. “So, introductions—who is everyone?”

Jack motioned to Alex. “My one handed friend here is Alex, Alice is his girlfriend who you met
dress shopping. The big bald man here is Dale, Sandra's beau... And that is my best driver and bodyguard, Frost.”

Frost waved, but Agatha was looking him over like he was a piece of new, expensive jewelry. “Frost is it? Well, hello sugar.”

Frost turned red which only made her chuckle before she diverted her attention to the topic of the wedding, though she did give Frost a lingering look.

“I rented the entirety of Gotham Hall! I know the owner—we used to date you know—before he got married! Man was a beast in bed! Anyway, the place is just gorgeous! It has a towering domed ceiling with a dramatic central chandelier, a soapstone fireplace and inlaid marble floors! Oh it's just perfect! So glamorous!! And I have the tuxedos picked out for all of you boys. Oh and Jack, I found that little place you told me about and I grabbed that slim fit tuxedo you saw online, the three piece Italian violet colored one with the peaked lapels with a matching waistcoat, the dark violet purple shirt with black pinstripes, bi-color satin tie and the final touch, the pair of black and purple leather oxfords.” She finished counting on her fingers then flapped her hands in excitement. “It's just so you honey!”

Jack laughed. “Auntie, you are perfection!”

Agatha grinned. “Of course I am honey! Now, I have made arrangements for everything. I have a baker making your cake...”

Harley sat down next to Jack with her cup of cocoa between her hands. She was in the middle of blowing on it when she looked up. “Oh the caramelized vanilla cake with salted caramel butter cream and whipped dark chocolate ganache one you told me about the other day?”

Jack turned to look at Harley. “That is extremely specific.”

Harley laughed. “Sorry, we we talked about cake a lot on the phone call.”

Agatha pointed at her with a grin. “That's the one!”

Jack rubbed his stomach. “That sounds sooo good!”

Alice giggled with a groan holding her stomach. “I can feel the pounds already!”

Alex pinched her. “Don't you worry about a fucking thing...I'll work them off of you.”

Everyone hooted.

Agatha laughed. “Don't worry dear, I also have us a DJ so we can also have some dancing.” Agatha shook her hips back and forth.

Jack laughed. “My aunt thinks of everything.”

“Oh if there is one thing I know how to do, it's throw a party.” Agatha smiled. “Well, all the clothing for everyone will be dropped off here tonight. Make-up and hair will be showing up around noon, so I expect you all to be here before then, though I will expect you boys to be going somewhere else to dress. Oh, and I'll bring a couple of bottles of the best champagne from the Wayne cellar.”

Jack snorted. “You're going to steal from my brother?”

Agatha snorted. “It's not stealing! I'm family! And besides, think of it as a gift from your brother who
simply cannot be there.” She grinned from ear to ear like a cat. “Now, I have limos ready to pick y'all up around four to get everyone to the tower and the wedding starts at six! Oh, and before I forget!!” Agatha rushed off to grab her purse, a large black pebble leather Couch purse. She dug around in it while everyone watched as she searched around talking as she did so. “I have a safe deposit box here where I keep a few things, so I stopped by the bank on the way here. I knew we were going to run out of time for rings so I thought these might be a nice substitute. They belonged to my parents, your grandparents Jackie.”

She searched around for a few more moments before she finally held up two boxes. “Bingo!”

She hurried over and handed one box to Jack and the other to Harley.

Jack opened his box. Insides was a man’s art deco wedding band, yellow gold with three diamonds set in white gold. Agatha smiled. “That belonged to your paternal grandfather. I remember it when I was a kid, always sparkling in the light while he worked.” She sighed before turning to Harley who had just opened hers. “Now, that one was my grandmother’s.”

Harley gasped softly. The ring was also art deco style, a single large diamond in the center with chevron cut diamonds on the shoulders and wooden bridge-like filigree structure all in platinum.

“Oh Aunt Agatha! I...I can't!” Harley exclaimed. “It's too much!”

“Pfftt...it's not! You guys need rings! They've been sitting in my safety deposit box gathering dust and you are family. Enough said!”

Harley hopped up to throw her arms around Agatha. “Thank you!”

Agatha laughed and hugged her in return. “Oh stop.” She embraced Harley, grinning at Jack over Harley's shoulder. “Oh I do like her Jackie!”

Jack smiled. “As do I.”

“Oh you two, that's enough, you're both going to make me smear my make-up!” Agatha fluttered her hands in front of her face.

Jack laughed taking Harley by her hand and leading her back to the couch, pulling Harley onto his lap. Agatha flopped down in one of the chairs. “Now, I have one more thing I wanted to discuss with you two. Now I know you don't need a minister or a justice of the peace since you're both already married, so how would you feel if I did your renewal?” She grinned looking between Jack and Harley.

Harley turned to Jack, her arms around his shoulders. “I love that idea.”

Jack smiled at her and rubbed his nose against hers. “So do I my sweets.”

Agatha giggled and clapped her hands. “Awesome!”

*

Bruce frowned driving past the Ashland building for the third time. His aunt still hadn't left the building. Something was definitely up, he just couldn't figure out what though. She had stopped by the Gotham National Bank on her way here. Bruce had slipped in after her, watching from a distance. She hadn't noticed him as she was led to the back where he knew the bank kept their security boxes. She was in there long enough that he could guess she removed something from her box or put something in, but what? Bruce frowned as he drove by slowly, the flakes of snow lazily
drifting downward. Something in his gut told him it was something he needed to know...

*  

“Well I'm off my darlings. I'll see you all tomorrow!” Agatha smiled. Jack stood up, wrapping his arms around his aunt and kissing her cheek. “Thank you for everything Auntie Ag. Harley and I appreciate all of it. Thank you for giving my girl the wedding she deserves.”

Harley hopped up and stepped over, throwing her arms around Jack and Agatha. “Thank you too!”

Agatha smiled. “Not a problem my darlings, not a problem.”

She kissed them both on the cheek with a laugh. “Now both of you get a good night's sleep! Tomorrow is going to be busy!”

She stopped at the door before she left, her gaze on Frost as she waved with her fingers. “See ya later big boy. Oh, I do like them young...it's so much fun to teach a younger man a few things.” She winked at him before she slipped out the door.

Alex burst out laughing. “Oh fuck Frost, she is going to eat you alive man!”

Frost looked embarrassed, but he was grinning a bit before he asked Jack. “So, ah...is your aunt off limits?”

Jack made a rude noise. “Ppfffft! Like I could stop her from doing anything she wanted. Go for it Frost, just let me warn you though, she loves to go through men.”

Frost grinned crookedly. “I'm certainly willing to be 'gone through'.”

Jack covered his ears laughing. “I didn't need to hear that!”

*  

Bruce finally saw her leave the building, the car—a limo of course, only the best for his aunt—holding her rolled away. Bruce frowned as he watched the vehicle pull away. He had parked a little ways down from the building, his hands resting idly on the steering wheel and waited for her to leave. He looked up at the apartment building. He had parked and gone in a few minutes ago, a doorman letting him in only because he had recognized him as Bruce Wayne. There were no traditional mailboxes with names on them and the staff were hush hush about who lived here, even to Bruce Wayne. He hadn't been able to glean any usable information. Nothing. The staff were clearly well paid to keep quiet. Not unusual really, especially here in Gotham, but frustrating. Bruce sighed watching her go. Perhaps she was just seeing an old beau? With his aunt there were a lot of possibilities, but his gut just kept telling him that it was something important.

*  

The next day Agatha came rushing down the stairs of Wayne Manor carrying a pair of Valentino Garavani rockstub t-strapped pumps in one hand and a Trouvé shaggy faux fur jacket and her purse (loaded down with two bottles of champagne from the Wayne Manor cellars in addition to the bottles of liquor she had sent over to the Gotham Hall yesterday) in her other hand, while wearing an Emery scoop back sequin midi dress, her hair and make-up done to perfection. She looked ready for a party.

“I'm running late!!” she yelled coming down the stairs as quickly as possible, just as Alfred looked up from where he had been dusting some of the paintings in the front room. He blinked in surprise at seeing Agatha so dressed up and barefoot.
“Oh my, where are you off to Miss Agatha?” Alfred inquired in surprise.

“Oh places! I have a party I'm attending; well actually I'm the host.” She giggled like a young woman before she hit the bottom of the stairs. “Is my car here? I didn't hear it!” Agatha slipped on her coat then hopped from one foot to the other slipping on her pumps while trying not to drop her purse.

Alfred frowned opening the door, shivering as a cold breeze came in along with a few flakes of snow. “Oh yes, Miss Agatha, your limo arrived just a few minutes ago.”

She grinned and kissed Alfred, but instead of a kiss on the cheek, she kissed him on the mouth surprising him into stunned silence. “Let Brucie know I won't be back until very late! Tata!”

She hurried out the door leaving a stunned Alfred watching her go. A couple of moments later Bruce came out of the library. “Did Agatha just leave? I thought I heard her.”

Alfred turned and said distinctly, “Ah, yes, yes sir she did.”

Bruce blinked in surprise seeing the stain of red lips on his butler's mouth. “”You all right Alfred?”

“Ah...yes sir.” Alfred seemed to shake himself coming back to himself, but he also seemed to be unaware of the lipstick on his mouth. Bruce did his best to keep a straight face as Alfred resumed his calm demeanor. “Yes sir, Master Bruce. I'm quite all right.”

Bruce patted Alfred on the back with a smile. “Well, I'm going out. I'm going to find out exactly what is going on with Agatha.”

“Sir, perhaps she is simply going to a party,” Alfred offered mildly.

“True, but my gut keeps telling me something is up Alfred. I won't be happy until I know what it is,” Bruce said, grabbing his coat from the coat stand near the door.

Alfred frowned. “Sir, did you every consider you might not want to know?”

Bruce smiled pulling out a knit cap from the pocket of his black coat. “Nope. See ya later Alfred.”

Alfred sighed.

* 

Jack stood in front of the bathroom mirror at another of Alex's many residences, looking at himself as he finished putting on his tie and sliding the tie clip that Alex had given him in place. The silver clip had a tiny jeweled joker playing card on it, a little joke and a bit symbolic from Alex.

Alex had laughed handing it to him and said, “You always remind me of the joker in a deck of cards Jack. You're fucking independent, you're own person, unique. You're the fucking trump card, the wild fucking card in a poker game. I never know what you're gonna fucking do next, which is why you're my fucking friend.”

Jack chuckled softly touching the tie clip which stood out against the dark material of the tie before he ran a hand over his hair. He had just had his hair freshly cut and was looking more like his old self. He smiled at himself before reaching for the cigarette that lay in the ash tray by the bathroom mirror. He took a long slow drag on the cigarette, holding the smoke in his lungs before he slowly let it out, the smoke drifting quietly around him giving his face one more look. He had outlined his eyes in black which made the blue of his irises look startling and his lips were painted a deep red.
smiled enjoying the contrast of his red lips against his white teeth. He turned his head side to side inspecting his hair. Alex had brought in a guy to trim all their hair before the wedding which had been great; while he didn't mind the tail, he liked his hair shorter. He smiled at himself one more time before putting out the cigarette just when he heard Alex yelling from the next room.

“You fucking assholes ready yet? And I need someone to do my fucking tie because I ain't used to wearing one!”

Jack chuckled again and walked out of the bedroom. Alex had picked Jack up early that morning while dropping Alice and Sandra off at the apartment so the women could get ready for the wedding. The men had prepared themselves at one of Alex's other places just so Jack couldn't see Harley in her dress until the renewal. As Jack strolled out of the bathroom he saw that Dale was trying to help Alex with his tie, but the man was having difficulty, his one hand still in a cast making it hard for him to use his fingers while Frost was watching with an amused expression and sipping on a diet soda. Alex looked uncomfortable in his black tux. He kept tugging at the vest while Dale struggled with the tie.

Dale's own tie lay around his neck undone. Jack walked over and motioned Dale out of the way.

“Let an expert do it, my darling. Besides, you're still on the injured list.” Jack laughed.

With an expression of relief, Dale stepped out of the way letting Jack take over. Jack's fingers moved swiftly and nimbly tying Alex's tie within a matter of seconds. Jack stepped back and patted Alex on the chest. “There you go. Still homely, but now you're homely with a tie.”

Alex snorted. “You're such a fucking loser.”

Jack motioned Dale over and started to work on his tie as he laughed. “So are we all about ready?”

Alex nodded. “Yeah, we need to get going or we're gonna be late!”

Dale added. “Sandra called a few minutes ago, said the ladies are nearly ready.”

“Dale, you have the rings?” Jack asked. Dale patted the pocket of his tux. “Sure do Jack.”

Jack grinned. “Well, what are we waiting for boys? Time for me to get married! Again!”

He walked over grabbing up his leather gloves and slid them on before grabbing the long black pea coat his aunt had sent over along with the suit and headed out the door.

*  

Back at the apartment, Harley tapped her feet nervously under her wedding dress while the make-up artist Agatha had sent over put some finishing touches on her make-up. Sandra and Alice were dressed, hair done and make-up set. They both looked lovely in bright red off-the-shoulder short dresses with red pumps. Agatha was fussing over a few minor details on the phone before she hung up and turned her attention on the ladies in the room.

“All right ladies, everyone ready?” Agatha looked around smiling brightly, her gaze landing on Harley as she stood up, her make-up finished. “Oh honey! You look gorgeous!”

Harley blushed. “Thanks.”

Agatha rushed over to inspect her hair and makeup. “Jackie is just going to die when he sees you!”
Harley smiled. “You really think so?”

“Oh hell yes! You look like you just stepped off of the pages of a magazine! All of you do! I'm just so pleased!” Agatha grinned brightly. “All right let's go!”

Harley slipped on the white, faux fur bolero jacket that Agatha had sent over with the dress. Aunt Agatha gasped. “Hold on—I must take some pictures!”

* 

Outside the Ashland building, Bruce sat in his car waiting. Agatha had arrived at the same apartment building as before. He was fairly confident she wasn't going to be staying, that she was on her way somewhere else because there was no way she was going to a party at this apartment dressed as she had been when she left. At least that was what he suspected and again he was just following his gut on this. His aunt partied a lot, traveled a great deal and knew a lot of people. She could just simply be going to a party like she said, but something just felt...off. Bruce thought that maybe he was being ridiculous, but the feeling that something was wrong just would not go away. He was also out of sorts because a call to the GCPD this morning had given him nothing—there were no new leads on his brother's whereabouts. He prayed Jack was all right, but the more time that passed, the harder it became to hold out hope.

Bruce reached down for the cup of coffee he had brought with him and took a long sip of the hot liquid. He had been sitting out in the car for over an hour, and even with the engine on it was cold. He was thinking that maybe he should just give up and go home, that he was acting stupid when he saw the limo that had brought Agatha here, drive past him and turn the corner to head in the opposite direction.

Bruce frowned. When the limo drove by, he could have sworn that he had seen the shadows of additional passengers in the back. He couldn't be sure with the tinted windows, but...

Bruce counted to fifteen before he pulled away from the curve and started to follow.

* 

Bruce stayed several cars behind the limo and parked a block away from Gotham Hall. He slipped out of the car, walking briskly the distance to the hall. Bruce pulled his knit cap down and the collar of his coat up as he hurried toward the building, grabbed the handle of the door and slipped inside unnoticed and out of the chill. He hadn't seen where the limo parked. He only followed it until he had seen that it had gone around the corner to the back parking lot of the building.

When he stepped inside, he saw that the building, while open, wasn't busy, though he did hear the sounds of classical music. He frowned slightly. He knew that tune, Bach's Cello Suite No.1 in G. Bruce followed the sound of the music.

* 

The inside of the hall had been completely decorated. Harley looked around in stunned silence. She wasn't sure what she expected, but this was not it. Surely Aunt Agatha was a miracle worker. Even though their wedding party was only made up of seven people, Agatha had gone all out as if hundreds were going to be there. The hall was afool with flowers, purple hydrangeas mixed with red roses, burgundy ranunculus and dahlias were everywhere. How Agatha had found fresh flowers this time of year...Harley thought that had to have cost thousands of dollars. There was a small round table in the center of the room, a canopy, which was attached to a silver metal circle overhead than hung from the chandelier above that, from which sheer lavender cloth hung down around the table.
and chairs. The table was decorated with crystal vases full of flowers and candles. Just behind the table and chairs was a small archway had been set up, decorated with the same flower theme of purple hydrangea, dahlia, burgundy ranunculus, red roses, along with crystal and silver accents.

Agatha came up beside Harley and grinned as she put her arm around Harley's shoulders. “So, how do you like it? I mean, I could have done more if I had more time, but...”

She shrugged. “But I did the best I could on such short notice...”

The other three women stood with their mouths hanging open.

Harley swallowed looking sideways at Agatha. “This...is...amazing!”

Alice and Sandra both nodded in agreement.

Alice, her voice breathless with awe. “I’ve never seen anything so beautiful.”

Sandra whispered. “It's like...like a magazine layout. You know like those perfect weddings you see, but never believe anyone actual does...”

Harley turned to Agatha. “You are like a fairy godmother!”

Agatha grinned. “Aw, thank you dear! Now it's almost time. Let's get you hidden away so the groom doesn't see you too soon! Knowing Jackie he'll try and sneak a peek!”

Agatha made shooing motions, herding the women toward some doors leading out of the room. “There is some champagne in the back, drink as much as you want! I'm going to go get the boys in position.”

*  

Jack and the others were sitting in what looked to be some sort of dressing room. They had arrived about twenty minutes earlier, becoming lost in the building until a young man who worked there had shown them to the room they were to wait in. The room had several beige leather couches, several wall mirrors, a dressing table and a coffee table. The walls were decorated with photographs of Gotham, the city at night, photos of Robinson Park, the bridges lit at night, etc. When they arrived at the room, they found two bottles of vodka along with five shot glasses waiting for them on the coffee table. Alex had cheered happily when he saw the bottles.

“Yes!! Just what this fucking party needs! Some hootch!” He flopped down grabbing the bottle and immediately filled the shot glasses to the brim with the vodka, grabbing one and holding it up. “To Jack and Harley! How the fuck Jack got such a damn hot chick to love him, the world will never know!”

Everyone else grabbed a glass, holding the shots up too. “To Jack and Harley.”

Jack laughed. “To Harley, my one and only. The only girl for me.” Jack smiled and said more softly so only he heard his words. “Find what you love and let it kill you.” Then he downed his drink.

Everyone else downed their shots as well. Alex was just about to pour everyone a refill when Agatha opened the door to poke her head in. “Hey boys, everyone decent? Or is Frost indecent? Because then I'm definitely coming in!” She giggled walking in and closing the door behind her looking around at everyone with a wide smile.. “Glad to see you made it in one piece boys. Oh, and you found the vodka!”
She hurried in when she saw the extra shot glass sitting on the table. She picked up the bottle of vodka and filled it immediately downing it quickly without flinching. Alex snorted. “Damn.”

Agatha grinned at the glass before filling it again. “God I needed that. Oh, you boys looks fabulous!” She grinned at Frost. “Mmm...” She gave him a seductive glance and a lifted brow (which had Frost squirming) before turning her attention to Jack. “Okay Jackie, do a spin, let your aunt see.” She motioned with her finger for Jack to spin around for her.

Jack chuckled as she asked, turning around, his arms out showing off the purple and black suit.

Agatha laughed and hooted. “Damn boy, you look fabulous! No wonder that girl married you. Wayne boys are pretty damn good looking.”

Jack stopped and struck a pose. “What can I say? I have good genes.”

Agatha laughed yanking Jack into a hug. “That you do Jackie, that you do.” She hugged him tight. “I’m so happy I get to do this for you. That you're out of that awful asylum. Just wish you and Bruce could make up. I know how much you always looked up to him, but...you know I understand. Your father and I never really got along either. Sometimes family is who you choose.”

Jack hugged her back. “Well I chose you and Harley, my friends, Alfred. Maybe...maybe I can forgive Bruce...soon though.” Jack sighed softly with real regret in his voice. “As angry as I am with him, I want to forgive him Agatha, I really do.” He frowned slightly as he spoke. “So, yeah, someday soon I think Bruce and I will be friends again.” Jack took a breath, letting it out slowly before he smiled at his aunt.

She gave him a hug. “I would like that Jackie. So would your mom and dad. They wouldn't want you boys fighting all the time.”

She hastily wiped at her eyes, banishing away any tears before they messed up her make-up and turned. “All right boys...” She clapped her hands. “The girls are secreted away now, so let's go get you all set up. Come along, follow me.”

*  

Jack grinned brightly when he stepped into the room taking in all the little details. “Wow, Aunt Agatha. You really outdid yourself!”

Agatha grinned. “Thank you honey. Just imagine what I could have done with more time! I amaze even myself sometimes.” She laughed before she started to shove Jack forward. “Okay, now get up there under the arch. I'm going to go get Harley. Be right back.”

*  

Bruce came around the corner, following the sound of the music just as he heard his aunt's voice. “Okay girls, it's show time!”

Bruce stopped and pressed himself against the wall. He could hear the sounds of laughter, voices, all female. Bruce turned to look around the corner just as the doors closed. He only caught a hint of a white dress and the sounds of women's voices and music coming from the other side of the door as it closed. Bruce frowned and walked over, placing just the tips of his fingers on the door. He could hear the sounds of music playing, the female voices were joined by male voices. He waited a heartbeat before he gently pushed the door open and stepped inside.
The soft sounds of a violin cover of “Crazy in Love” had started to play. Jack stood waiting under the arch when he turned toward the sound of the music. Then he saw Harley. She was standing there for a heartbeat before she started to walk toward him. The day they had actually married she had been more beautiful than any other time he had seen her, but this, he thought, this time took the cake. She was perfection. She smiled, walking toward him; his wife, his partner, his everything. Jack blinked feeling tears threatening. No one in all the world made him as happy as she did.

Jack put his hand out to her as she stepped closer reaching for his hand, her fingers wrapping around his own. He tugged her toward him.

“Harley, there is a madness in loving you, a lack of reason that makes it feel so flawless.” He spoke with a mixture of pain and love; the intensity of his voice washed over her.

Harley smiled her voice soft. “Oscar Wilde said that you don't love someone for their looks, or their clothes, or for their fancy car, but because they sing a song only you can hear.” She grinned at him then whispered. “My puddin, you are the one that sings my song.”

That was when Bruce's voice broke through the music. “Jack?”

Everyone turned as Bruce stepped further into the room, yanking off his knit cap. “Jack? But...where have you been?!”

Jack eyes flared. “Bruce.”

Agatha groaned. “God damn it Bruce! How the hell did you find us?”

Bruce toward to his brother, ignoring everyone in the room as he grabbed Jack in a surprisingly violent gesture, by the lapels of his jacket, which tore Jack's hands out of Harley's as he practically lifted Jack off his feet. Bruce shook him, his expression contorted with emotions he didn't seem to know what to do with, melding between angry, relief and pain.

“Where have you been?! I thought..I thought the worst had happened!! Those...those violent...insane...I've been waiting for a ransom call, or your body to show up, someone to call me and tell me you were dead...I filed a missing persons report, but you've been free and fine this whole time!! Why didn't you tell me!”

Jack snarled bringing his fists down to break his brother's hold. “Let go of me!”

He broke free of Bruce's grip and took a step back. “What the fuck Bruce? What did you expect me to do? Come running to you? You don't exactly inspire trust, you know! You put me in there in the first place!!! Do you have any idea what Harley and I've been through? DO YOU? Do you even care? Harley almost died! I almost died! You put us in hell, then expect me to come to you for help when I'm free? You're more insane than I've ever been!”

Agatha started to say something, but Bruce spoke over her, his voice steadily rising.

“I put you in there to help you Jack. Don't you understand?? You've been losing control for years. Since our parents' death I've been watching you disintegrate, turning into someone I don't know. I just wanted to protect you! Keep you safe! That is all I ever wanted to do!!” Bruce took an unsteady breath through his teeth before he continued. “But then she comes along...” Here Bruce pointed savagely at Harley. “...And you lose it completely! In front of all of Gotham practically! I had to help you! I love you Jack!” Bruce snarled. “I did it because I love you, I want to keep you safe Jack—even from yourself.”
Jack laughed and threw his head back a moment. “Love? Are you fucking serious? You love me? I needed a brother! Not a protector, not someone hovering over me, watching my every move. You hate me! In every action you have ever taken toward me Bruce, you've shown that you don't understand me and you never wanted to...I just wanted you to trust me Bruce! Believe me instead of everyone else! I wanted a brother!!” Jack snarled. “All I ever did was worship you. I loved you!! You were my hero, but you were never there for me Bruce, NEVER! I can't even trust you to love me like a brother. Instead you were always trying to be my father! Alfred isn't our real father, but unlike Thomas Wayne OR you, he was always there for me, believed me...trusted me. The only reason he isn't here is because of you!!” Jack was crying now, angry, hurt tears falling down his cheeks, black lines from Jack's eyeliner were running down his face. “I just wanted a brother Bruce. That's all I've ever wanted. But you couldn't even do that.”

Bruce sighed. “Jack...I don't hate you. I do trust you! You're my brother, my little brother. I just want what's best for you.”

( Everyone was watching silently, sharing looks since no one was sure what they should do.)

“HA!! That's a laugh! You have taken every chance you can to get rid of me! If you wanted what was best for me, then why didn't you ever fucking ASK!” Jack hissed, the tears flowing freely as he shoved Bruce. “Finally, someone comes around, someone who understands me, loves me, trusts me and you tried to get rid of her too. You tried to take her from me, but oh no! When that didn't work, you threw us both into the asylum. Yeah, you love me Bruce. I would be scared to see what you would do if you hated me.” Jack laughed.

“I didn't put Doctor Quinzel in there Jack,” Bruce objected.

“No, you gave her no choice Bruce. You just never understood what we mean to each other.” Jack said in response between clenched teeth. “What it's like to really love someone. That's something you just can't understand because you just can't bring yourself to care! That's your biggest fault brother...your constant need to be the stoic big brother, the untouchable pillar of Gotham. You know why you hate her so much? Because Harley's my family...my real family.”

Bruce reached for his brother again, but Harley threw herself between them.

“Don't you dare touch him.” She snarled.

Bruce narrowed his eyes at her. “I hired you to help and look what you've done.”

Jack growled. “Don't you dare blame her Bruce. Don't!”

Jack took a threatening step toward his brother.

Agatha groaned. “Boys please!”

Jack didn't hear her as he shoved Bruce in the chest again, forcing his brother backwards. “You don't understand anything Bruce, you never did. Harley is mine and I'm hers. Nothing and no one will stand between us, not even you. I choose my family and I choose her over you, over all of it.” Jack wiped viciously at his face smearing the black makeup.

“I choose her!!! I'll always choose her over you!”

Bruce wasn't sure why he snapped. His anger flared and he did something he would never have done if he hadn't let his emotions escape his control—something Jack seemed adept at bringing out in Bruce—he took a swing at his brother.
Harley saw the swing coming and did the first thing that came to mind, protect Jack. She stepped in the way in that split second...

Bruce's fist hit her in the face followed by the snap and crunch of bone.
Changes

Harley stumbled back, her hands automatically coming up to cover her face with a cry of pain. Bruce stared in shock as he saw blood rush down from her nose to cover her lips and chin. She made a soft sound of shock mixed with another gasp of pain. Agatha grabbed Harley, but the next sound that Bruce heard was a twisted sound of anguish mixed with rage, an almost inhuman sound. His eyes snapped to his brother, but Jack didn't look like Jack at all. The blind rage behind his brother's blue eyes sent a chill down Bruce's spine. Never had he seen a look so murderous in his brother's eyes before—or any eyes, and as Batman he had seen many killers. Bruce had no time to react before Jack had thrown himself at his brother, his hands wrapping around Bruce's neck.

Bruce went down under the sudden viciousness of Jack's attack. He didn't even have time to throw his arms up to defend himself before Jack was on him.

Jack snarled. "YOU FUCKER!! NO ONE TOUCHES HARLEY!! NO ONE!!"

Everyone made a sound of astonishment as Agatha grabbed Harley pulling her back from the two men. Alex started to go to Jack, but Frost pulled him back. "Let them fight for a bit. Might be what they need."

Alex shook his head and watched the event unfolding. "Fucking hell."

Jack hauled back his fist and struck Bruce across the face. Bruce gasped in shock, Jack's strike splitting his lip. Bruce could taste blood on his tongue.

Jack hit him again with a vicious snarl. "No one touches her EVER!! I will kill you for hurting her!!"

Bruce grabbed Jack by the front of his tux and heaved him to the side. Jack hit the floor with his shoulder, sliding a bit, but he stumbled to his feet just as Bruce pushed himself up to a standing position.

"I didn't mean to hit her GOD DAMN IT JACK!!" Bruce yelled.

Jack laughed without humor at his brother. "You talk about me being violent? Look at you Brucie!! Just look at yourself!"

Bruce charged Jack, shoving his little brother back and into the arch that had been put up for the altar. The entire thing came crashing down as Bruce landed two hits to Jack's side. Bruce grabbed Jack, one hand gripping an upper arm and another grasping his brother's coat tail, lifting him off his feet and threw him. Jack slammed to the floor and slid a few feet, but Bruce wasn't done. He threw himself after Jack jumping on top of his brother getting a few good hits in before Jack brought his legs up, kicking Bruce off of him.

Agatha yelled. "STOP THIS BOTH OF YOU!!"

But neither brother heard her or paid any attention to their aunt, both of them intent on hurting the other.

Jack staggered to his feet with a laugh, blood dripping from his nose and mouth and staining his teeth. "I bet this is what you always wanted!! A chance to beat the shit out of me isn't it? Well guess what Brucie!! You're just as fucked up as me!" Jack laughed at the situation.

"SHUT UP JACK!!" Bruce snarled swinging at his little brother, his fist connecting with Jack across
the face, but Jack only laughed.

“Come on Brucie, hit me! Hit me until your knuckles bleed, then hit me again!! You can't save me!! You never could! No one can save me!! All you can do is save yourself, isn't that right?” Jack laughed just as the bigger man threw himself at him, his shoulder connecting with Jack's chest knocking the air from him. The two brothers went down, sliding across the floor and slamming into the table where Agatha had set up the chairs and glasses for afterward the ceremony.

Harley cried out. “Jack!” But Agatha held her back.

Champagne glasses crashed to the floor, sprinkling the brothers with broken glass. The table teetered and fell over on its side as chairs were pushed aside. Alice screamed at the sudden sound and the violence between the two brother. Alex wrapped his arm around her shoulder turning her away from the fight. He looked to Dale and Sandra. “Take Alice and wait outside, make sure no one comes in here and that no one calls the police okay?”

Dale nodded firmly. “Got it. Come on ladies.”

Jack rolled over Bruce, gaining the upper hand as he straddled his brother. He punched Bruce in the face once, but Bruce's arm shot up catching Jack under his jaw and snapping his head back. Bruce bucked, knocking his brother off of him. The two men separated, staggered back from one another.

Jack snarled. “Perfect Bruce! The prefect brother! I'm the one fucking thing you couldn't fix!”

Bruce shook his head and growled out. “It was never like that Jack!! I just wanted you to be normal!”

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, Bruce realized he had made a terrible mistake.

Jack's gaze narrowed with hate. He reached over to grab one of the fallen chairs, throwing it at Bruce, but his brother ducked the chair.

“JACK! Stop this right now!!” Bruce ducked away, but then Jack threw another chair.

“All you've ever done is take from me Bruce!! All I wanted was a brother, but you took that from me! I wanted your approval and all I got was shunned...the more I tried to pull you closer the harder you fought to push me away.” Jack was crying more fully now, not trying to stop the tears which had smeared black eyeliner down his cheeks.

“Then you tried to take my freedom from me, sticking me in a hole where you can forget about me...forget me? You just want to forget me don't you?! Then...then...I forgave you everything Bruce, EVERYTHING!! Don't you understand?? I love you, I wanted to forgive you...but this.” Jack's voice dropped low, dangerous. “…hurting my Harley…” Bruce saw the crazed lunacy in his brother's eyes and Bruce felt something break in him. Jack hissed low. “I can't forgive you...I can't forgive you for hurting her...never Bruce. You understand?”

Jack smiled at his brother then, a slow smile that spread across his face never quite meeting his eyes. Jack surged forward taking a few quick swipes at Bruce. Bruce stumbled back then brought his foot up with a snap kick to Jack's gut. He followed the kick with a series of quick jabs to Jack's sides.

Jack hissed, but he held his own, grunting with each impact, but he remained standing and ready.

Bruce leapt up, kicked out again with one foot, (surprising everyone with how high Bruce jumped with such ease), his foot making a solid connection to Jack's chest. Jack stumbled back as his brother did a back flip from the attack, landing in a crouch. Jack laughed spitting blood on the floor. More
than one onlooker was surprised by the maneuver.

“Oh lookie who's been doing something besides fucking himself through all the single women in Gotham.”

Bruce hissed back at his little brother. “Shut up Jack.”

“Or what? Ya gonna hit me? Too late Brucie, your temper's showing.” Jack sneered.

Bruce let out a roar of rage, running toward his brother then doing a series of hard, sharp jabs at Jack. Jack weaved, avoiding all but the last which caught him just above his collar. Jack gasped for a moment, the sudden jab to his throat cutting off his breath for a moment. Bruce reached out and grabbed his brother's shoulder slamming Jack up against the wall.

“Stop this now Jack!” Bruce growled, but Jack sneered as he sucked in a breath. “Never,” he hissed in promise just before he slammed his fist down on the joint of Bruce's arm breaking the other man's hold on him. Jack shoved at his brother, but Bruce, larger and stronger, grabbed Jack and forced him backwards into the wall. Both of them were panting, covered in sweat by now. Jack twisted around, putting his back against Bruce's chest then used his elbow to smash his brother in the face with three quick backward jabs. Bruce gasped in pain, blood bursting from his nose and cheek. Jack spun away turning around to face his brother, but as Jack reared an arm back to hit Bruce again, his older brother swung, landing a hard right hook to Jack's cheek, a cut opening up and leaking blood down the side of Jack's face.

Jack spun with the punch. Bruce came after him for another hit, but Jack spun around and grabbed Bruce's arm with both his hands forcing Bruce back. He let go long enough to give his big brother a back handed fist to the face. Jack then brought his leg up, his knee connecting with Bruce's diaphragm. Bruce's breath rushed out with a heavy grunt, but he still shoved Jack back with a slap to his little brother across the face with his left hand. He grabbed Jack's lapels and forced the thinner man toward the wall, but Jack twisted on his foot bringing his left leg around to kick his brother in the side. Bruce tightened his muscles taking the impact, grabbed his brother's leg and shoved him into the wall. Jack's back struck against the unrelenting wall and gasped in pain. Bruce lunged forward to hold Jack up against the wall, slamming his fist into Jack's face; the back of Jack's head bounced against the wall. Jack shook his head as if to clear it and laughed.

“Good one, Bro. My turn.”

Jack's hands snapped up together and then out to loosen Bruce's hold. With a quick shift in momentum, he planted his palms against Bruce's chest and shoved, utilizing the wall with one leg to give him leverage to shove his brother back. Bruce brought his hands up to block Jack's follow up strikes, but Jack opted to go for body strikes—a right fist to the side, and then another to the shoulder. Jack's next strike caught Bruce under the chin, forcing a dazed Bruce to stumble back.

Bruce gasped as he shook his head to clear it. “Jack! You're acting crazy!! Ever since you hooked up with Harleen you've been worse!! Can't you see that?”

Jack's eyes narrowed. “Oh, I see Bruce. You're just jealous.”

Bruce coughed, spitting blood on the floor. “Jack, this isn't you!”

“How would you even know Brucie?” Jack asked with a grin and a waggle of his eyebrows. The two brothers now slowly circled each other. “You have no idea who I am anymore. Not that you ever knew. You have no idea what I've done, endured...my life was a nightmare until Harley walked into it. She completes me Bruce. She is my perfect partner, my friend, my lover...you have no idea
what that's like to have someone who you trust.”

Bruce coughed before he answered. “You're losing your mind Jack. That woman is making you lose your mind! Please Jack, let me help you.”

“Oh, it's a little late now to want to help me Bruce. All you want to do is take from me: my freedom, my love, my girl. Well you can take your pity and your help and shove it up your ass, big brother.” Jack laughed.

Bruce growled. “Just...if I could get you away from her...”

Jack let out an incoherent growl of rage, surprising his brother when he moved so rapidly, grabbing Bruce by his shoulders just before he threw him. Bruce hit the floor hard, gasping as the air was knocked from him. His body slid across the slick floor, crashing into some of the chairs that were now scattered over the floor. Bruce quickly climbed to his feet stumbling a little when Jack let out another rage-filled cry and rushed his older brother, grabbing Bruce before he had time to recover, and spinning as he threw his brother against the wall. Bruce slammed against the wall, but he seemed to bounce back reaching for Jack before his brother could get out of the way. He grabbed Jack, the two men suddenly a tangle of fists and elbows striking, slamming and damaging the other. For a moment the two of them twisted in a circle, struggling against each other, both trying to get the upper hand on the other until Bruce threw Jack off of him and punched his little brother in the stomach. Jack gasped in pain, the air in his lung rushing out in a whoosh of pain.

Agatha, who had her arms around Harley still, screamed. “STOP THIS!! Both of YOU!”

Neither man heard her or seemed inclined to listen.

They grabbed each other again doing a spin as they struggled. Bruce leaned back and smashed his forehead against Jack's. Both men were bleeding, not just from their noses and mouths, but from numerous nicks and pressure cuts they had both received; their knuckles were scraped and bloody, but neither man seemed willing to let the other go. Bruce threw Jack to the floor with a grunt, knocking the breath again from his slim brother. Jack gasped, rolling away as Bruce tried to grab him again. Jack stumbled up to his feet grinning from ear to ear as he sidestepped a grab from his older brother.

“It's so nice to see you let loose Brucie. All that pent up rage finally boiling over eh? How constipated you must have been this whole time!” Jack giggled. Bruce closed his eyes for a second, clearly trying to get himself under control when Jack punched him in the face again, then again, two quick jabs with his right fist. Bruce stumbled back, but reached out to grab his brother around the waist and force him back against the wall with enough strength that Jack left a crater in the surface of the wall.

Both men were panting, struggling, vying for control of the fight. Bruce tried to hold Jack against the wall hissing at his brother. “That's enough Jack!! Stop it!!”

Jack laughed. “It will never be enough Bruce!! And I'm never going to stop!!”

Jack balled his fists together and slammed them down on Bruce's back. They both fell, sliding down the wall to the floor, both brothers going down in a disorganized heap, both exhausted, both hurting too much to pull away from one another. They stayed locked together for a few seconds panting, sweating, bleeding together. Jack pushed Bruce off, trying to get to his feet, but he stumbled back against the wall again and fell, sliding to the floor again. Bruce shoved himself up, wobbling for a few seconds, struggling to catch his breath before he stumbled down to a knee. He shoved himself up again, getting to his feet while Jack used the wall to pull himself to a standing position.
Jack grinned at Bruce, panting as he licked the blood from his lips. “It's over Bruce.” He took several
breaths. “It's over between us.”

Bruce panted and struggled to get his breath. “Stop it Jack. Don't say that. You don't mean it.”

Jack giggled and then said with a bit of a scratch in his tone. “Oh, but I do.”

He took several swipes at his brother, but Bruce ducked and avoided them, barely. Bruce swung at
Jack, but Jack caught his arm with an open hand and drove his fist up into Bruce's under arm, right
into the arm pit. Bruce gasped in pain as the two quick, powerful upward jabs that Jack took
dislocated his brother's shoulder. Bruce twisted and despite his shoulder being out of socket, he
wrapped his arm around Jack's neck, falling back against the wall using the flat surface to support
himself while he yanked back on Jack's throat, gritting his teeth against the pain in his shoulder.
Bruce held his arm around Jack's neck while Jack struggled, but he was weakening. The fight, the
pummeling...all of it conspired to make it so Jack couldn't fight his brother's hold on him.

“Stop it, Jack! Stop resisting!” Bruce yelled struggling to hold on to his brother.

Jack clawed at Bruce's arm around his neck, choking. Speaking became difficult as Bruce cut off his
windpipe. “Never!! I'm going to make you pay Bruce!! Pay...for hurting her...”

Jack choked; Bruce pulled back on his brother's throat again, the blazing pain of his shoulder
becoming lost in the overload of other pains that Bruce felt everywhere.

Agatha screamed. “BRUCE!! You're killing him!!”

Jack's breath came in a hiccup. He had stopped struggling. Harley ripped herself out of Agatha's grip
racing to help Jack who was gasping, but only a little, his face turning pale with a slight blue tinge,
while Bruce kept yelling. ‘JACK STOP IT!! Stop struggling!!! I'm just trying to help you!”

Jack snarled, gasping for breath in the next instant, making a horrible strained sound as he struggled
to breathe, but it seemed as if Bruce couldn't hear him, hadn't noticed that his brother had stopped
fighting him. He yanked back hard on Jack again while Jack beat weakly on his brother's arm in one
last attempt to get him to let go.

Harley, her face covered in blood, large angry blotches of blood stained her wedding dress as well,
grabbed at Bruce's arm. “Let him GO!! YOU'RE KILLING HIM!”

Bruce looked up and went still, his grip on his brother relaxing as he stared into the barrel of a gun,
but it was the realization of what he was doing that actually had Bruce releasing his brother.

Frost stood there calmly with a pistol aimed at Bruce's face. “Mr. Wayne, I need to ask you to let Mr.
Wayne go now.”

Bruce's arm dropped, numb. He stared at the gun and the cold gaze of the man who held it while
Jack fell. Harley cried out grabbing for Jack and pulling him to her as she glared up at Bruce, her
voice slightly muffled from her broken nose. “You're the monster Bruce! How could you do that?!”

Agatha was shaking as she stepped forward past Frost. She glanced at Harley and Jack then back at
Bruce.

“Bruce, I think you should leave;” she said softly, but with a tone of command in her voice.

“I...I...” Bruce started, but his aunt held up her hand. “Bruce, you've said enough. Just go.”
Bruce looked down at Jack. His head was resting against Harley's chest. Harley was crying, holding him close and stroking his hair. Jack's tuxedo was stained with blood, ripped in places from their fight. Bruce was pale and shaky. He couldn't believe what he had almost done. He swallowed, then said softly.

“I'm sorry Jack. I know you don't believe me, but I love you. I always have...” Bruce turned and walked toward the door leaving without another word.

Agatha dropped down next to Jack and Harley. “We need to get you two to a hospital.”

Alex walked over. “I have a doctor who can see them. I'll call him now. He can meet us at the apartment.”

Agatha nodded then put her arms around Harley. “Come on dear, let's get you two home. Jack, can you walk?”

Jack nodded. “Yeah...” He blinked and licked a swelling, bloody lip. “I mean yes.”

He stood up slowly along with Harley. They put their arms around each other following Alex, Agatha and Frost out of the room and away from the remains of their wedding.

* 

An hour later they were all back at the apartment. Alex had picked up some Chinese on the way here, the enticing aroma of which could be smelled here in the bedroom where Harley laid back against the pillows propped up on the bed, a ice bag on her nose over the splint that Dr. Henderschott had delicately applied. She looked tired and upset, set wearing a large pink and grey jersey sleep shirt, her hair pulled back into a messy bun on the top of her head.

The doctor smiled down at her from where he stood on the side of the bed. “I'll be back here in four days to perform a closed reduction surgery, which means I'll give you a local anesthetic and manually realign it. It's a pretty clean and minor break, should be just fine Harley. Until then, alternate with the ice to get the swelling to go down and take those pain pills religiously along with the antibiotics and rest. Lots of rest.” He gave her a pat on the hand.

That was the moment that Jack came back into the bedroom from the shower with a towel draped over his head. He was rubbing both his hands across the towel walking blindly through the room tugging his towel off and draping it over his shoulder in the next moment.

Harley winced when she saw her husband. Jack looked rough; he had suffered multiple cuts and bruises along his cheeks, chin, lips, and forehead. He was wearing only his pajama pants which allowed Harley to see the angry bruises blossoming on his torso as he walked over and eased himself down onto the bed. His knuckles were along scraped and bruised with some swelling around Jack's knuckles.

Dr. Henderschott sighed. “All right young man, I need to stitch that cut on your cheek. You're lucky you didn't break a rib from the look of those bruises...or your fingers! Not sure how you did it, but congrats on not breaking a bone.”

Jack chuckled. “I think Bruce was either holding back or he's not as good as he thought he was in a fight.”

Harley frowned, her voice stuffy sounding. “Not funny puddin.”

Jack pouted at her before sitting up straight on the side of the bed so that Dr. Henderschott could start stitching up the wound. “It's a little funny,” he tossed over his shoulder at Harley before turning back to face the doctor with a grin. “You think it's a little funny right doc?”
Dr. Henderschott grunted. “As your doctor, no and as just a plain man, I can't really say since I only know your brother through the media's lens.”

Jack grunted. “Oh yes, the cool and collected Bruce Wayne, billionaire playboy, man about town, and raging narcissist.”

Henderschott didn't say anything to that; he simply went about his task of stitching Jack up.

Harley stuck her bottom lip out, but tried to let herself relax and let the pain pills do their work. Dr. Henderschott put five stitches into the wound on Jack’s cheek and another three on his forehead. The physician stepped back to examine his work. “I think there shouldn't be any scarring, or if there is, it will be very light.”

Jack grinned. “Thanks doc.”

Henderschott smiled. “No problem, though I would recommend you two try to stay out of trouble for a little while between injuries.”

Jack gave the man a salute as the doctor picked up his bag. Henderschott chuckled leaving the bedroom. They could hear him say out loud once he was in the living room, having left the bedroom door open. “Okay, patients are taking care of. I would feel better if someone stayed the night with them, just for tonight, but after that they should be fine.”

Jack could hear his voices before they dropped volume, the sounds of people speaking quietly filtered through the doorway as Jack crawled into bed next to Harley, popping his own set of pain pills from the doctor that were lying on the bedside table. Jack sighed, sinking into the pillows beside Harley before he spoke.

“I'm sorry,” he said softly.

Harley turned to frown at him. Jack smiled gazing at her. Even with her nose in a splint and the bruising, she still looked adorable to him.

“What are you sorry about?” Harley asked gently. “You didn't do anything.”

Jack closed his eyes reaching over to tug her into his arms. “I...there had to be a way I could have prevented what happened. I shouldn't have let Bruce get under my skin like that. He just...” Jack snarled without words.

Harley reached up to caress his jaw, careful of his cuts and bruises. She frowned, but looked at him softly. “Jack, it's not your fault. Your brother...your brother is a jerk, to say the least. I know he was dealing with his own grief, but he abandoned you when you needed him the most, leaving you lonely, scared, and hurt. And now...now he...he just can't see you as the person you are. Instead he is always trying to make you into someone like him. Bruce has a very black and white mentality about good and evil, right and wrong...normal or deviant. And you're his brother, so he expects you to be like him. Since you're not, he just...he just can't handle it. He could never accept you before and if he knew the real you, he would throw you back to Arkham as fast as he could. But I love you Jack, I love the real you...” she whispered softly. “You and me against the meaninglessness of the world. Right puddin?”

Jack grinned. “Right pumpkin poo.”

Jack tugged her closer still, his mouth covering hers in a gentle kiss, their tongues playing slowly against each other until there was a light knock followed by...
“Fucking shit! Can't leave you guys alone in a room for five fucking seconds and you're all over each other!”

Jack and Harley separated, giggling to see Alex in the doorway of the bedroom with Alice. Alex had a plate of food, Alice had another plate and behind them was Sandra with a couple of cans of soda.

“It ain't much of a fucking wedding feast, but thought you to might be hungry,” Alex explained with a grin while the delicious scent of Chinese food wafted toward them. A few seconds behind them came Aunt Agatha holding another couple of plates. She flowed into the room with Frost and Dale. “I had the wedding cake brought over here while that delightful doctor was working on your nose dear.” She held up the plates to show two large slices of cake.

Jack's stomach growled loudly. “Thanks Auntie,”

She smiled and sat on the side of the bed by Jack after Alex and Alice handed over the plates.

Alex stood at the foot of the bed with Alice. “Alice and I are going to hang out here tonight. That fucking couch folds out into a bed, so don’t worry about where we’re sleeping. ‘Course if you two start fucking fucking, then give a shout beforehand so I can close your fucking door,” Alex said with a grin and a wince. “Though I might close your fucking door so Alice and I can...” He didn't get to finish his sentence before Alice slugged him in the shoulder.

“Ouch, fucking hell Alice.” Alex grinned rubbing his shoulder.

Agatha laid her hand on Jack's knee. “I'm going to let you both rest and heal. I'll come back over in a few days. I have something I want to propose to you two...all right?”

Jack looked intrigued, but he nodded. “All right.”

Agatha stood and kissed Jack on the cheek and leaned over to grasp Harley's hand. “I'll see you both in a couple of days—rest well.”

She turned to leave, then stopped and smiled. “You coming Frost?”

Frost flushed bright red glancing nervously at Jack and Harley. Jack snickered. “Don't let me stop you.”

Frost grinned turning back to Agatha. “Uh...yeah.”

He hurried over to her and Agatha put her arm through his, the two of them walking out the door and a few moments later, they all heard the apartment door close.

Alex shook his head. “Man, Frost is going to be walking fucking funny for a few days.”

Jack snorted on his food nearly choking. “Hey that's my aunt!” He laughed.

Alex grinned. “Hey, I'm just fucking calling it!”

*

Alfred was fixing dinner, hoping to make Bruce eat before he went out tonight as Batman. He was busy cutting up the sweet potatoes for a bucatini with winter pesto and sweet potatoes dish he was making for dinner when he heard the front door open.

“Master Bruce?” Alfred asked setting down his knife and wiping his hands on the apron he wore as he walked from the kitchen toward the door when Bruce came stumbling into the kitchen.
“Good LORD Master Bruce, what happened?!” Alfred gasped looking at the bloody mess that was Master Bruce's face.

Bruce closed his eyes and hissed. “Jack. I found Jack...”

Alfred looked shocked, then composed himself. He asked as he grabbed Bruce and began to lead him from the kitchen to the manor's small infirmary. “Did Master Jack do this to you?”

Bruce sighed. “We...we got into it,” he said. “I...Alfred...I...I almost killed him.”

Alfred stiffened slightly, but continued to lead Bruce. When he had him in the room, he forced Bruce onto the exam table and began helping him get his shirt off.

“Tell me everything that happened Master Bruce,” Alfred said, his voice lacking emotion.

* 

Half an hour later Alfred was finishing up the last stitch on a deep wound along Bruce's forehead. Bruce was quiet after explaining what had happened, following his aunt, finding them in the middle of a wedding ceremony. Alfred finished and gently placed a bandage over the stitches.

“Well, I must say, you could have handled that much better. Did you break Miss Harleen's nose?” Alfred asked. Bruce could feel the tension emanating from Alfred though he neither said anything nor did he give any other indication that he was upset.

Bruce sighed. “I'm not sure, but from the amount of blood and swelling and the sound, yes...I think I did.”

Alfred let out an exhausted breath. His lips were set in a thin line and it was clear from his expression he was upset now. This was one of the few times Bruce had ever seen it. Alfred looked exhausted, exhausted to the point that he even leaned against the wall.

“Poor Miss Harleen...though you know Master Bruce, you are lucky. You could have done more than simply break her nose...you could possibly have killed her. She is a delicate young woman who you struck in the face with your fist Master Bruce. Do you realize what you could have done?” Alfred kept his voice calm though his words hit Bruce in the chest, the realization that Alfred was correct, that he could have easily killed her. Bruce closed his eyes as he leaned forward, his hands dangling between his knees. What was he doing?

Alfred took a breath and continued. “Master Bruce, Master Jack may be correct. I don't see how you are going to be able to mend your relationship with your brother after this...you not only ruined their wedding, but you struck the woman he loves.”

Bruce spared a look at the older man and then closed his eyes again. “What have I done Alfred?”

* 

A couple of hours later, Bruce was upstairs in his room. He had showered and changed, getting ready to head down to the cave to change for the night when he stepped out into the hall to see his aunt and the man who had pulled a weapon on him at the ceremony, carrying bags down the stairs. He tamped down on his irritation at the armed man, realizing that he had just been protecting Jack.

Bruce frowned. “Aunt Agatha?”

Agatha, who was handing the man a bag, stopped to stare down the hall at Bruce. Bruce took a
couple of steps toward her. “What are you doing?”

Agatha sighed. “I'm leaving Bruce. I've a room at The Kane Hotel. I'll be staying there for the remainder of my visit.”

Bruce rubbed the bridge of his nose. “Agatha, you don't...”

“Bruce...I'm very upset, very angry with you. You didn't just physically hurt Harley and Jack, you cut Jack to his very soul Bruce. You hurt him in a way a brother should never hurt their sibling. I'm...I'm not ready to forgive you yet and I need some space. I still love you, but right now...I think this is for the best.”

Agatha motioned Frost to go ahead down the stairs and she followed him. Bruce just watched her go, wondering what else he could screw up.

*

A few days later, Jack was dressed in black slacks and a slim fit bright purple Italian cotton dress shirt with light blue and purple circles contrast fabric at the collar and sleeves, which he had rolled up to his elbows, while he sported a pair of mint green/apple green socks with dark brown thin stripes. Jack sat with his feet up and crossed at the ankles on the coffee table next to Harley, who was dressed in a pair of brown corduroy overalls with a rib-knit pink sweater and wore a pair of pink socks with red ribbon print. Her long blonde hair was down and she wore a pink beanie on her head with little knit cat ears on it, and sat cross-legged on the couch next to Jack. The two of them were playing a video game together when they heard a knock at the door. Harley's nose looked much better, the doctor having come by yesterday. There was still some swelling and bruising, especially under her eyes, but she was healing rapidly.

Jack glanced over his shoulder at the door and yelled. “COME IN!”

Harley giggled. “HA!! Gotcha!”

Jack groaned. “No fair Harls!! I was distracted!”

“All's fair in love and war puddin! And this is war!” Harley giggled, slamming her buttons.

Jack snarled. “I'm going to get you pooh!”

Harley giggled. “Oh, you can try!”

Agatha laughed. “How are my two favorite people?”

Jack glanced over. “Hey Auntie!”

“HA!! Got you again puddin!!” Harley squealed.

Jack groaned loudly. “Yer a dirty cheat, you are!” He laughed reached up to pinch Harley's hip. She squealed, wiggling away from him. Agatha laughed coming around to sit on the couch next to Harley. “Glad to see you two are doing well.”

Jack chuckled. “Except for Harley cheating at this game, yeah we're good.”

Harley stuck her tongue out at him, pulling the skin under one eye down at the same time. Jack laughed and yanked her into his embrace, leaning down to nibble her lips causing her to giggle and snuggle into him. Agatha smiled at the two of them before she spoke.
“Well, I wanted to talk to you two about the house on the island, the wildlife refuge that's southwest of the Tricorner.”

Jack stopped playing with trying to tickle Harley and take her controller away from her to lean over and look around Harley to see his aunt more fully. “What about it?”

Harley giggled. “Oh you lost puddin.”

Jack stuck his tongue out at her.

“Well, I don't know if you knew this honey, but the house there...well...It technically doesn't belong to the “family” per se. Rather, it does belong to me. My father left it to me in his will. The house sits on the island, the majority of which belongs to the parks and services of Gotham, but there is around a five hundred yard diameter piece of land from the northern shore inwards, where the house stands, that belongs to me, divided by a stone wall and gate from the rest of the wildlife refuge. Anyway, I thought I might sign it over to you and Harley.” She smiled at her own idea.


She nodded. “I'm never here in Gotham and the house is maintained, but it needs to be lived in. I thought it might make a nice wedding present...and I won't tell Bruce. He'll never know you are there. The man I pay to maintain the grounds and the house will be paid to keep his mouth shut if you want. He's a discreet keeper.”

Jack seemed at a loss for words then smiled. “It's perfect!”

Harley leaned over and hugged Agatha. “Oh thank you!”

Agatha grinned, hugging Harley back. “Fantastic! I'll call my lawyer and we should have the papers drawn up and everything ready to sign by tomorrow.” Agatha hopped to her feet, bending over to kiss Harley then Jack on the forehead. “Okay kiddies, I'm off—got a hot date tonight!”

Jack smirked. “Please don't break my driver Auntie.”

Agatha laughed. “I'll do my best sweetie. As Mae West said, a hard man is good to find. I'll make sure to return him in one piece sweetheart! You kids have fun!” With a wave Aunt Agatha sailed out the door.

Jack pulled Harley back onto his lap. “A house of our own...a base for our gang.”

Harley grinned. “I can't wait puddin.”

Jack licked her lips just before his eyes lit up. “You know, I think we should go out, go celebrate!”

Harley frowned. “You think that's a good idea puddin? What if...I mean Bruce...”

“Pfft...He's off licking his wounds. He isn't going to bother us. Besides, we are going to go someplace Bruce never goes. We're going to go to a play! I just saw it online yesterday, there is a little theater in the upper west side called The Urban who are doing a play version of Victor Hugo's “The Man Who Laughs.” I thought we could take in the play and there is a great little diner down there that has the best hamburgers! It'll be fun!”

Harley giggled snuggling into his embrace. “That sounds fantastic puddin!”

*
Later that evening Jack was smiling behind the wheel of a modest Ford Fusion, tapping his fingers in time to the music, Daft Punk’s “Something About Us” while Harley moved her body to the slow, sensual beat of the music in the seat beside him. He glanced over at her. She looked adorable in her skinny jeans, hiking boots and a fuzzy red sweater, with a faux fur jacket on, her hair down under a red beanie and a pair of black framed glasses sitting delicately on her nose. Every time he gazed at her, he was sure he fell a little more in love with her. Harley glanced over, catching him smiling at her and winked at him. He looked dashing as always even if he was dressed down more than he would usually be when they went out, wearing a pair of jeans; a purple and black slim-cut dress shirt; a green, black and white plaid vest; and a pair of boots along with a long black coat. Jack also had a pair of square glasses on, which Harley thought made him look adorable, though they also made her want to slowly pull them off and lick his mouth…and other parts of his anatomy. She grinned brightly at him. Jack grinned in return, reaching over to squeeze her knee, but then left his hand on her leg as he drove. Harley placed her hand over his, lacing her fingers with his and squeezing gently. Jack’s smile widened as he drove and Harley thought as she gazed at him that she couldn’t be happier than she was right at this moment.

When they arrived at the theater called The Urban, Harley was thrilled. The theater had an old fashioned type of movie theater marquee over the double doors, with a ticket booth located out front which was a detached little booth just for the selling of tickets where a girl dressed in a red and gold sort of bellhop uniform with a little bellhop hat on her head and white gloves sat. The Urban was a little theater inside a grand old building. The theater itself had a large stage with a grand red velvet curtain. Even the walls were painted a shade of red, the chairs were red...everything was red of some shade. Stadium seating provided good views regardless of a person's choice in seats and even a small orchestra pit was available for some performances. When Jack and Harley arrived, she was actually surprised at the number of people coming out to see a play on a cold winter's night, but this was Gotham and Gotham never slept, Harley thought.

Harley loved the fact that even though it was a theater for live performances, the place had a concession stand like an old-fashioned movie theater. Jack bought them a large bucket of popcorn, sodas and a box of Jujubes for the two of them. Their seats where down near the front, right in the middle. Jack grinned picking up some popcorn and feeding it to Harley. “You know I love you wifey?”

Harley giggled around her bite. “I love you too puddin.”

*  

The play was fun. It was a play based on the book by Victor Hugo, but mixed in elements from the 1928 movie of the same name, about a clown named Gwynplaine who, as a child, was disfigured by an evil man named Dr. Hardquannone, so that Gwynplaine would “laugh forever at his fool of a father” who the king killed in an iron maiden; Gwynplaine's father, Lord Clancharlie was a political rival. Gwynplaine was exiled and paraded in freak shows throughout Europe, his mouth carved into a permanent nightmarish grin. Gwynplaine was billed at these shows as “The Laughing Man” in the circus. When he grew up, the clown falls in love with a blind woman named Dea who loves him too, but Gwynplaine remained silent, never speaking of his love, thinking his disfigurement made him unworthy of her love. The rest of the play revolved around Gwynplaine being recognized as his father's heir, the Queen trying to force him into a marriage with a Lady Josiana, who liked his disfigurement and tried to seduce him. Eventually Gwynplaine ran away, giving up his title and his father's lands to leave with the circus and Dea. Harley decided it was all very melodramatic and romantic. Harley sighed as they walked out of the theater together. A light snow had begun to fall, the lights from the theater causing the tiny flakes to look like diamonds drifting down from the sky. Harley slipped her arm through Jack's as they set foot out on the sidewalk and started to walk to their car.
“Oh I really adored the play Jack! It was so romantic!” Harley cooed, softly laying her cheek against his shoulder.

Jack smiled glancing down at her. “Yeah, I liked it too. I saw the movie version once when I was a kid. I was always taken with the character of Gwynplaine.”

Harley smiled. “My favorite scene was when Dea said that God closed her eyes so that she could see only the real Gwynplaine...so romantic.”

Jack chuckled, stopping under a streetlight and pulling Harley into his embrace. He smiled down at her rubbing the tip of his nose gently against hers. Harley smiled gazing up at him and whispered. “I can see only the real Jack.”

Jack tightened his arms around her and kissed her passionately.

Someone drove by rolling down their window to yell. “GET A ROOM!”

Jack chuckled. “You know Harls, that guy is so lucky I don't have my gun on me.”

They both laughed and headed back to the car.

*

The diner that Jack had told her about looked like an old diner from the movies with a large wrap around window, a center counter with padded stools and booths that lined the window. It was almost midnight by the time they had driven here and found a place to park, but the diner was still doing a brisk business. Jack grabbed them a booth at the very back. Instead of sitting across from each other Jack pulled Harley into the booth beside him.

“So burger, fries, maybe a milkshake even though it's cold out?” Jack asked as he nibbled her ear.

Harley squirmed and giggled. “Perfect!”

The waitress came over to their table, an older woman with straight brown hair and a pleasant smile. Her name tag read Jodi, she wore a pink waitress's uniform with a little white apron, and lifted her eyebrows as she asked to take their order. “So, what would you two lovebirds like?”

Jack grinned, picking up the menu long enough to confirm the number. “Two number eights with cheese and two chocolate milkshakes with double the cherries.”

Jodi nodded. “Okay, I'll get the shakes out for you right away and the burgers will be a few minutes.”

“Thank you very much Jodi!” Jack grinned giving her a salute which a giggling Harley duplicated.

After the waitress had gone to put in their order Jack sighed, keeping an arm around Harley's waist. “So, in a few days, we'll go check out the house. Make it the meeting place for the gang. It'll be a perfect place to plan our first job!” Jack said with a slight edge of excitement in his tone.

Harley dragged her teeth across her bottom lip. “You have any ideas for the Red Hood's first job?” she asked quietly.

Jack frowned in thought. “I suppose it all depends on who we have in the crew. Alex is putting together a list of potentials he wants us to meet, but...I'm thinking I want to do something a little personal as the first job.”
Harley frowned, puzzled. “Personal? Like what?”

Jack smiled slowly. “There is this art gallery...one in which a certain Mr. Bruce Wayne may have donated a great deal of priceless art and...you know...if any of this art was vandalized, a certain big brother would be a little upset.” Jack grinned mischievously.

Harley blinked. She opened her mouth to respond, but that was when Jodi returned with two large chocolate milkshakes topped with whipped cream and two cherries each. She smiled. “Your burgers will be out shortly.”

“Thanks Jodi!” Jack smiled taking one of the cherries and popping it into Harley's mouth. He grinned at her. “It'll be perfect. And I'm going to make sure old Brucie knows it was us.”

“But puddin, won't he...you know...turn us in?” Harley asked swallowing her cherry.

“I don't think so. I don't think Bruce is gonna want all of Gotham to know that not only is his little brother not missing—escaped from the crazy house and all—but also turning to crime? The shame! The horror!” Jack put his wrist to his forehead and leaned back before putting on a thick southern accent. “I just don't know if my heart can take much more of this Miss Harley!”

Harley snorted. “Jack!”

Jack giggled sitting back up. “It will be hilarious Harley! Just you wait and see my pretty little peach!” Jack grabbed her pulling her against him and tickled her sides causing Harley to squeal.

*

Two days later, Jack, Harley, Agatha, Alex, Alice and Frost were all on a boat heading across the Gotham river on their way to the house that Agatha had signed over to them. It had started to snow again, nothing heavy, just light flakes, but with the water and wind, the chill was biting. Jack and Harley sat on one of the outside benches, bundled up against the cold. Harley was snuggled up against Jack who had his arms around her. She was wearing a cute red knit cap with a large pompom on the top with her heavy parka, a thick red scarf and thick red, lined mittens. Jack smiled. She was so cute he thought. He was wearing his own knit cap with a matching pompom to Harley's, though in a deep plum color with a matching scarf. He kept one arm around her, using his other leather gloved hand to pull Harley's scarf up to cover her mouth and nose; only her blue eyes were visible between the thin line of her knit hat and the scarf. He chuckled. “My little pumpkin,” he whispered leaning in to rub his nose against her.

Harley giggled, snuggling in closer. “My puddin.”

Jack smiled happily settling down to watch the island slowly coming into view as the 13.33m Baia 43 Motor Boat rode across the water. (The boat—which unsurprisingly his aunt owned and just had waiting for her whenever she happened to be in Gotham, which wasn't often—was named The Marlo Manners after one of Mae West's character.) Jack had warned the others to say nothing of the “gang” to his aunt. He didn't see any reason to get her involved any more than she already was in the feud between him and Bruce. Once she left Gotham Jack highly doubted he would hear from her for a long time. That was just how Agatha was; she would disappear for years, then come in like a wrecking ball, swinging every which way before she swung away again. She was a delight when she was here, but the one thing you could always count on was that she would leave just as quickly.

It only took six minutes to cross over to the island, the house instantly coming into view through the lightly falling snow. Harley's eyes bugged. The place was massive, easily dwarfing Wayne Manor. There were at least three towers that she could see, maybe five floors high. She couldn't be sure, but
the place reminded her of a haunted Gothic Manor from every ghost story ever written. As the boat came closer she could see the dock come into view with a large boat house at the edge of the water. She had never seen anything like it. The boat house was made of heavy, cut stone, reminding Harley of an old Gothic-style cathedral with a pointed roof and its own tower and everything. The boat house was big enough to be its own small manor! The boat's captain pulled around and Harley could see the shore, the land around the house, covered in snow giving the whole area a silent, creepy vibe. But then in the next instant, her view was cut off as the boat turned to glide into the boat house.

Everyone hopped out of the boat with Agatha leading the way. She stepped out of the boat house to a series of stairs that led up toward the house. Harley craned her neck back. The house was even bigger up close, she realized. It was simply massive, a castle on the edge of Gotham. She had to wonder if she would ever be able to explore the whole house or would she need a map? She smiled as a slight blush lit her cheeks; christening all the rooms would be fun!

As their group made their way up the steps, Agatha smiled brightly.

“I had the caretaker—his name is William Cobb—make sure the house is ready for you to move in! He has been working for me for a few years. He has kept the house up, so the utilities are up to date. So along with the fireplaces there is an up to date heating and cooling system, electricity, water pumping...all the comforts of the modern world!! I even had a satellite dish hook-up installed when I decided to give you two the house. Oh, did you two want your things from Bruce's. I moved out and went to a hotel, but I'm sure I could have Alfred pack up your things...”

Jack shook his head. “Nah...I would...we...” He looked at Harley who nodded. “We want a clean slate...to start over.” He continued. “Time to leave that part of us behind.” Jack hugged Harley to him giving her a loud kiss on her cheek. She giggled giving Jack a kiss on the cheek in return.

Agatha grinned at the lovebirds. “Okay kiddos. I can understand that perfectly. I did much the same when I left Gotham when I was but a young thing. I left everything behind, including my wardrobe! I'm sure my old things are in a box somewhere in that house...but anyway... shopping was so much fun, reinventing myself!” Agatha said this with just a hint of longing in her voice before she continued. “All right everyone...this way! To the new Jack and Harley Wayne headquarters!” With that, the older woman jogged up the steps, the group of younger people forced to catch up.

* 

Harley sucked in her bottom lip behind her scarf when she saw the double doors to the massive mansion. The entryway reminded her of the portal into Dracula's castle. The set of doors were made from heavy walnut, each with colored stain-glass set in the middle of each door, ornate metal trim and large metal door knobs with flowers and vines decorating the metal of the knobs. Instead of a large metal key—which was what Harley was expecting—Jack's aunt pulled out a modern looking key and slipped it into a modern lock located just under the heavily Victorian door knobs. Agatha unlocked the doors, shoved them open with a smile, her arms held out wide. “Welcome to Catherine House, my children!”

Jack and Harley walked in behind Agatha. Harley's mouth fell open as the surprises just kept coming. The main hall was almost like walking into a church; the ceilings were the highest ceilings she had ever seen outside of a church, arching upward. Right in front of them was a wide staircase that hinted of a labyrinth of levels above to explore—including at least one level below in addition to the five storeys above. The stairs were covered by a thick red and gold runner that stood out gorgeously against the dark wooden stairs. Harley's eyes followed the staircase. The stairs were actually not too dissimilar to the staircase at Wayne Manor, though these stairs were not nearly as wide.
The walls of the front hall were painted a soft cream, highlighted with dark walnut woods and accented with rich deep reds and maroons. The front hall had a large ornate chandelier and Harley could see into the next room to the right, which looked to be a sitting room. She saw there was another crystal chandelier, pear shaped, hanging from the ceiling in there and to her left there was another large crystal chandelier and a grand piano in that room. There were bronze statues of women in Greek clothing on either side of the entrance to the study, who were holding large round globes of light that acted as lamps, and there were paintings running down the halls, decorating the walls as well as other pieces of art which Harley was sure were all worth a small fortune, but there looked to be old photographs as well. It was just so much “stuff” that Harley doubted she would ever see all of it no matter how much time she spent in this house. Their house, she realized with a slight shake of her head and a glance at Jack.

Agatha grinned gazing around. “I don’t remember how many rooms there are...the kitchen is down that way...all modern appliances. Even though I’ve never lived here, I always like to have a place ready in case I decided to drop in. Anyway, the living room is down that way, there is a conservatory, music room, a game room where there is an antique pool table. I had the lastest TV’s installed in the living room and all the bedrooms. AND there is wifi!” She grinned. “You may look like you stepped into the 19th century, but I made damn sure over the years that this place had all the comforts of the 21st century.”

Alex let out a low whistle. “This place is like the fucking House of Usher, but with wifi.”

Jack snorted. “Oh listen to you Alex...making Edgar Allen Poe references.”

Alex laughed. “No man, I was referring to the fucking movie. Scared the shit out of me when I was a fucking kid. I was fucking worried I was going to get buried alive by Vincent Price!”

Jack chuckled remembering watching old Vincent Price movies with Alfred, just the two of them sharing popcorn while Bruce was at a party, or on a date...or something else that always managed to keep Bruce away. Jack smiled slightly at the memory before he said softly. “I always loved the way Vincent Price dressed.” He glanced at Harley giving her a wink before he gazed around the house. “...and the deep and dank tarn closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the House of Usher,” he uttered softly.

*

Later that evening, Harley and Jack were alone in the massive house. Everyone had stayed for dinner, though they had yet to meet Mr. Cobb. Agatha promised to phone him and make sure the man introduced himself soon.

The wind was blowing outside, making the windows rattled. Jack and Harley were upstairs in one of the bedrooms, clearly the master bedroom based on the size alone, but the room had not just the biggest TV and the largest bed, but the room also had its own private bathroom with modern features (made to look period to the house) containing a large sauna-like bathtub and a multiheaded shower.

The bed was a queen-size, Queen Anne chestnut bed with the large and heavy ornate headboard and foot board with an antique gold, woven leaf damask on black comforter and gold sheets. The pillows, comforter and sheets all purchased new for the house, for Jack and Harley. Jack was lying on the bed, propped up by pillows, dressed in only a pair of microfleece purple and green pajama bottoms, no shirt, his bare feet crossed at the ankles. Jack had his hands behind his head, watching the flat screen TV that had been installed in the room looking completely out of place in the high Victorian interior design. The program playing on the TV was a local entertainment show. They were discussing some charity event that was coming up in the next few weeks that was being sponsored by Bruce Wayne. Jack narrowed his eyes at the mention of his brother when Jack
Harley frowned glancing at the bedroom door. Harley had gone down to the kitchen to make hot chocolate, but she still had yet to return. Jack was just wondering if maybe she had become lost when Harley appeared in the doorway.

“Hey Jack, look what I found!” Harley stood in the doorway wearing a fleece, fair isle prince red and white onesie with a pair of fuzzy pink slippers as she held up a strange looking helmet. It looked to be metal or some sort of plastic, like a motorcycle helmet, but it was completely red and lacked a visor, though there were oval slanted “goggles” where the eyes would be; the sections over the eyes were pitch black so that anyone looking at the person in the helmet couldn't see the eyes of the wearer. There were what looked to be gears along the side of the mask, along with silver and black lines that Jack couldn't decide from his position on the bed, if they were for decoration or had some sort of function.

“What do you suppose this is puddin?” Harley asked turning the helmet this way and that.

Jack sat up in interest. “What the hell? Where did you find it?”

Harley walked over to the bed and handed it to Jack. “It was in the study on a shelf. I thought maybe the caretaker had left it. I was looking at some of the books in there while I was waiting for the water to boil...OH! The hot cocoa!! I'll be right back!”

Harley took off and he smiled as he listened to her hurried footsteps down the stairs. Jack held the helmet in his hands turning it one way, then another. He smiled slowly. Maybe it was a sign...a red hood...telling him that he and Harley were on the right path...the path to their destiny maybe? Nah, he decided; Jack wasn't a big believer in destiny. This whole world was just too fucked up for that...though if there were such a thing as destiny, Harley was certainly destined to be his...

She came back a few minutes later with two mugs filled to the brim with marshmallows. She giggled. “I thought I would never make it up the stairs! We need to see if this place has a dumb waiter or something.”

Harley, who had been glancing down at the mugs in her hand as she walked in stopped in mid-stride almost spilling the chocolate when she saw Jack wearing the helmet. She frowned. “Can you see out of it?”

Jack nodded. “Yeah. Really well, actually.”

“It covers your entire face puddin. It's a little creepy.” Harley frowned, placing their mugs down to allow her to crawl onto the bed. “And your voice sounds funny...deeper.”

Jack laughed pulling the helmet off, his hair flopping over his forehead. “I think our little gang just got a mascot.” Jack leaned over to place the helmet on the bedside table. “Red Mask, meet the red mask.” Jack grinned pleased with himself. “You know Harley, red is the color of rage, of passion, but most importantly to us, rebirth. The two of us being reborn.”

Harley reached out, gently running the tips of her fingers along his forehead, brushing his hair back with a soft smile playing across her lips. “I love you Jack. I'll be reborn as many times as you need me to be, as long as I'm always with you.”

Jack grabbed her pulling her toward him. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck letting him tug her on top of him, his mouth covering hers hungrily. He only pulled away from her mouth long enough to whisper. “I love you too Harls.”

Harley giggled. “Wanna make this the first room we christen?”
Jack growled. “Mmm...Yes.”

He rolled over forcing Harley down into the mattress, pressing his body on top of hers. She giggled softly wiggling under him in a way that immediately had him wanting her more...her body was warm and enticing...even in a onesie, but somehow she managed to make the garment look more sexy than cute. Jack brushed his nose against hers, nipping at her lips gently with his own, his tongue tracing out to trace her upper lip slowly. He ran his hands over her hair, his eyes wandering her face for a moment as something dark seemed to fall over him. He had a sudden feeling of foreboding, as if they were about to take a step onto a path that Gotham would never allow them to falter from.

“Will you follow me anywhere Harls?” Jack asked, his voice full of emotion.

Harley frowned at the shift in Jack's tone. She reached up to brush his hair back, her fingers caressing the line of his jaw as she stared hard into his blue eyes, her voice soft, yet firm. “Of course Jack. I will go anywhere you go. Wherever you lead, I will be right beside you. I'll always be with you.”

Jack smiled and kissed her tenderly, his mouth moving slowly over her, his tongue gliding over hers. He reached between them, dragging his fingers down the onesie until he came to the first button. The onesie she wore had buttons instead of a zipper, a little row of white buttons starting from between her breasts and running all the way down her stomach. Jack slowly and skillfully began to unbutton her pajamas, making the unbuttoning of each button a reveal as if he were at a strip show, teasing both himself and Harley as he eased each button free. He tugged gently at the fabric to reveal a small section of creamy, pale skin. He would just barely brush the tips of his fingers across the exposed flesh before he would move down to the next button. When he had made it to the last button, which was positioned at her navel, Jack dragged his teeth over his bottom lip staring down at the button and twisting the plastic back and forth. He glanced up once at Harley to see her watching him; her breathing had become soft panting. Jack smiled wrinkling his nose playfully before he unbuttoned the last one.

Jack slid his hands under the material to touch the soft skin of her stomach. His fingers glided along her soft, warm skin, then slowly up her torso until he was at her ribs. He caressed his fingers along her ribs, back and forth, his trimmed nails raising goosebumps along her skin. He dragged his thumb under her breast, feeling the soft round mound warm and inviting. He continued to caress her skin, the tip of his thumb rubbing back and forth under her breast. He leaned closer, his kiss deepening, hotter, but he didn't move his hand to cup her breast—he just kept teasing her. His tongue swam with her own, sharing their breath. She grasped his head and pressed her mouth to Jack's as if she needed his breath, his body heat.

Harley's breath quickened. Jack's tongue was gentle, but her reaction was intense. Her body was burning, singing to his, her need causing her to moan against his lips. Jack kissed the side of her mouth moving down to caress his lips along her jaw with deliberate and tantalizing slowness—not just to tease her but to tease himself—before dragging his lips down her throat. He stopped long enough to feel the jump of her pulse against his tongue, grinning with pleasure at her reactions, his harlequin's reactions. He peeled back her pajamas to expose her bare breast while he pressed his perfect white teeth against her throat. Jack lowered his mouth to her breast, the tip of his tongue caressing her nipple. Harley groaned softly, the fingers of one hand grasping his hair. She made little moaning sounds, tiny almost breathless gasps of pleasure when his hand slipped lower, under her pajamas, his fingers sliding between her legs. He rubbed slowly, taking time to feel her, the warmth of her, the slick dampness of her on his fingers while sucking on her breast at the same time grinning each time Harley groaned or gasped. He slid his middle finger into her, feeling her warm wet pool between her legs, thrusting his finger deeper inside her, thrusting harder before he switched his mouth's attention to her other breast. The onesie still covered her other breast, but he just dragged his
teeth over the material feeling her hard nipple through the fabric. Harley moaned, Jack's finger moving in and out of her, hard, but slow.

“Jack...uuhh...let me...let me out of this...” she moaned reaching down to stop his hand. Jack chuckled; he loved it when she was so flustered.

“All right my little cupcake.” He rolled off of her to let her sit up. Harley giggled then, standing up on the bed and causing the mattress and box springs to creak and wobble. She giggled sliding her arms out of top part of her onesie. Jack licked his lips with a broad grin on his lips, watching her as she stripped out of the onesie, turning around so her backside was to him when she pushed it down over her hips, twisting her hips back and forth and glancing back behind her to grin at him and wink. She shoved the garment the rest of the way down her body with another wiggle.

Jack grabbed his own pajama bottoms and slid them down his hips, then brought his slim legs up to yank them off his ankles, all the while watching Harley. She kicked her own pajamas off the bed with a deep chuckle. Then, just as Jack was about to reach for her, Harley dropped down on him to straddle his shoulders, causing the entire bed to bounce.

They both laughed. Harley licked her lips and smiled down at him. Jack grinned catching his bottom lip seductively as he whispered. “My queen.”

Harley giggled, but then her expression turned lustful as she hissed. “Do you want me Jack?”

Jack growled. “I want you. I want to fuck you hard Harley. I want to feel you, hot and wet around me while I slam my hips against you, shoving inside you.”

Harley reached up and squeezed her breasts. “Mm...I like it when you talk like that puddin.”

He chuckled appreciatively and reached up to settle his hands on hips before he tugged her further up to his mouth. Harley gasped, dropping forward to put her hands against the headboard while Jack wrapped his hands around her, grabbing her rear and squeezing, pushing her up enough so he could press his mouth against her clitoris, sucking and licking while his fingers pressed into her hips. Harley groaned, her pelvis, her head hanging down. She tossed her hair back, looking down at him. She could feel his smiled against her sex, and his blue eyes danced as he looked up at her and waggled his eyebrows. Harley giggled which turned into a gasp when he flicked his tongue side to side. She began to thrust her hips more aggressively, while Jack groaned loudly. Jack pressed his fingers into her hips harder, holding on until she yelped in pleasure, arching her back, her climax rippled through her and up her spine.

She pushed back off of him, sliding down until she was at his hips. Jack grinned at her showing of his perfect smile as he whispered. “Hey baby.”

Harley grinned with a heavy breath. “Hey puddin.”

She reached down, grabbed his shaft, holding him steady while she lowered herself down on him with a groan of pleasure. Jack gasped, his hands moving up to grab her thighs. He wanted to watch her, just experience her. He didn’t really care about his own pleasure because there was her, and her pleasure was his pleasure. He squeezed her legs watching Harley grind down on him before she leaned back, grabbing his knees and thrusting forward. Jack groaned reaching up to run his hands over her stomach and down her hips, spreading the fingers of his hands wide. He slid both hands down, using his finger to spread her intimate lips further apart while he started to rub his thumb over her slick wet clitoris. Harley groaned loudly, jerking her hips into his touch, her muscles squeezing around him until Jack grunted with pleasure. She started to bounce a little, allowing his penis to glide in deep and then almost completely out again. Jack shuddered watching her, almost forgetting to roll
his thumb over her clitoris; her bouncing not only felt good, but watching her move was amazing he decided. She was the most gorgeous creature and she was his girl...

He swallowed keeping his concentration on not just admiring her, but rubbing her until he felt her fingers digging into his knees, her muscles squeezing at the same moment that she cried out. “Oh JACK!! Ah!!”

Jack purred. “Mm...Harls...my Harley girl...”

She pushed herself up and smiled down at him then surprised him when she put her hands on his chest, pushing herself up on her feet, but remained squatted on him. She pressed her hands on his stomach and started to bounce, the strength in her legs making the bouncing more intense as she kept nearly perfect control. Jack hissed throwing his head back for a moment as a wave of intense pleasure rolled over him. He thought he might orgasm right then within seconds of her beginning to bounce on him. He dug his fingers into the sheets biting his lip trying to stave off the climax for a while, but she felt so good. He groaned getting himself back under control when Harley slowed her movements, not bouncing as intensely, taking him deep into her and instead rolling her hips in a circle. Jack slid his hands under her rear and helped to lift her up. He held her there and thrust his hips upward, thrusting deep inside her. Harley's eyes rolled as she sucked in her bottom lip. “Mmmm...puddin...” she groaned as Jack grinned. “Mm...yes Harley...”

He held her up a little, thrust his hips up one more time before Harley giggled and started to bounce again before she shifted her legs forward, her knees up and leaned back, her hands on his knees again and started to thrust forward, sliding her body up and down on him. Jack pushed himself up on his elbows hissing with pleasure watching the way he slid in an out of her, the heat of her body washing over him. He leaned on one elbow and reach forward to rub his thumb over her clitoris again, shuddering and watching the way her breasts bounced, his erection piercing her body. Harley's breath became ragged, she could feel him swelling inside her, coming closer to his orgasm. She thrust faster. “Uuhh...Jack...!” She squeezed him, her fingernails digging into his knees, cumming hard; the intensity of Harley's orgasm yanked Jack's from him, causing him to drop back down to the bed again as he came hard, thrusting up to empty into her. “Uhh...darlin...Harley...”

Harley rolled off of him with a groan of both happiness and exhaustion. Jack grabbed her swiftly pulling her into the circle of his arms. She giggled snuggling close feeling him wet and semi-hard still pressing against her stomach. She whispered. “I'm going to need another shower.”

Jack chuckled and wiggled his hips against her which made her squeal. “JACK!”

“Haha!” He smirked and held her refusing to let her go. “Mm...I love ya Harley.”

She settled down reaching up to stroke his face. “I love you puddin.”

Harley suddenly sat up. “Oh shoot! The hot cocoa's cold!”

* 

Later that night Jack sat up in bed and picked up the helmet again. He had to wonder what something like this was doing in the house. Did his aunt know about it? What did it mean or was it simply some sort of strange motorcycle helmet left here by that caretaker his aunt had mentioned? He turned it back and forth in his hands. It fit what he planned to do and it didn't really matter, he supposed, but he was going to use it...the Red Hood was going to make a statement in Gotham and slowly, but surely they were going to start fearing the name.

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Two weeks later, late at night, after Agatha had left Gotham, heading to Rio, two black SUVs pulled up in front of The Gotham Gallery, formally known as the Flugelheim Gallery, a medium size art gallery in Gotham's fashion district. The gallery was located in one of the older buildings occupying two floors while a restaurant that was part of the gallery occupied the third floor. Jack, wearing the red helmet, dressed all in black—black jeans, black motorcycle boots, a black dress shirt with a red tie and a calf-length black leather coat—hopped out of the back of the SUV followed by Harley who was wearing a black mask over her eyes that covered the whole upper portion of her face, a black turtleneck, red waist length jacket, black leather pants, motorcycle boots and red leather gloves. Her blonde hair was pulled back in pigtails which she had streaked with temporary colors of red and black through just the pigtails.

Everyone else, Alex, Alice, Dale, and Sandra were joined by the newest members of their “family” as Jack called them. (Dale had been reluctant to join, but Sandra had convinced him...partly because she was tired. She had told him she had been playing by the rules for so long and look what it had gotten them...nothing. Maybe it was time to try living on the other side of the law and she trusted Jack and Harley. Dale had agreed though part of him still felt...strange about it. Alex and Alice had agreed to be part of the gang just because it would be fun. Alex just had a feeling that Jack was on the verge of something, something new and exciting, something that was going to change Gotham and he wanted to be in on it when it happened.) Danny, their hopeful explosives expert liked to wear a beanie, one of which he wore over his red mask. Trope was a little tiny slip of a girl and was good with computers. Haskins, Duela, Rolf, and lastly Jason, all just minor criminals, all of them with criminal records, and all people that Alex knew in some fashion or other, whether they had done some odd jobs for him or had participated in Alex's many gambling ventures (not just poker) and probably owed him money. Now, they were all members of Jack's new gang. Each one wore a red hood of some sort over their faces. (Only the core of the gang had seen Jack's face. Their newest members had no idea who they were really working for...so far, they had yet to see either Harley or Jack unmasked and that was just how Jack wanted it. They also had no idea of the base of operations...they were on a need to know basis and Jack didn't feel that any of them needed to know. Instead they all would meet at a different location each time the got together, coordinated by phone calls filtered through Alex. )

Jack clapped his hands. “Okay boys and girls. This is just a sabotage mission. We don't need to worry about security...there was a strange mix up and no one is on duty.” (Which was all do to their computer girl Trope getting into their system and altering the schedule.) “We aren't taking anything because everything here would just be too much of a hassle to sell, but we are here to make a point...and just because it will be fun.”

Duela raised her hand. “Ah...so we are just going in there to destroy the place?”

Jack turned to face her. “Yes my dear, that is it. We are just going to bloody Bruce Wayne's nose.”

“Why?” Duela inquired.

Behind his mask, Jack rolled his eyes. He had already explained this to her twice. “Because my darling, Bruce Wayne pisses me off and this will piss him off—and because I want to.”

“But...it's a little...I don't know...” Duela started waving her hands about and she tried to explain herself, but Haskins dropped his hand on Duela's shoulder. “Don't worry Mr. Hood, Duela is just...confused, but I'll keep her on task.”

Jack grinned behind his mask. “Good. I would really hate to have to find someone to fill her position already. This is our first official act as the Red Hood Gang, it's one small step toward a much bigger future.” Jack smiled brightly behind his mask. “Now darlings, let's go broaden our minds!”
Jack waltzed up to the code pad by the door. He seriously doubted Bruce had changed the code and within seconds, he was rewarded as the alarm and door beeped in the clear. Jack pushed the door open. “In we go!” Jack put his arm around Harley's waist and waltzed in, grinning behind his mask. Harley chuckled leaning against Jack. Each member was armed with spray paint, knives and Harley had a red twelve pound mallet. The gallery was what Jack would call a typical high end art gallery with pure white walls. Jack didn't care what was destroyed, but he was specially after the works of art he knew that Bruce had donated to the gallery just in the last month. It was childish, it was stupid, but it would piss off his brother. And this was only the beginning. Jack didn't only plan on slowly building himself and Harley up as a criminal gang to be recognized; he planned on being a thorn in his brother's side, using his knowledge of his brother to steal, destroy and basically hurt Bruce at every turn. This was just a test run to see how his new gang followed orders...and it was going to be fun.

Jack grinned. “All right boys and girls! Have fun!”

Jack turned Harley to face him. She smiled, her face reflected in the mask he wore. “So my darling, ready to be destructive for the sake of it?”

Harley giggled. “Of course puddin!”

Jack grinned behind the mask. “Bruce donated all the Henri Matisse, Georgia O'Keefe and the Van Gogh's along with the Rodin and the couple of Henri Laurens...all priceless pieces of art...until we are done with them. Then they'll be worth nothing, sort of like my brother.” Jack chuckled darkly.

Harley hefted her mallet over her shoulder. “I always wanted to just smash something expensive for the hell of it!”

Jack laughed out loud. “Damn, I wish I had thought to bring some music!” He laughed, watching as Harley swung her mallet, performing a full body swing. The head of her mallet struck Henri Lauren's “Man with Clarinet” and sent the sculpture flying across the room to smash against the wall. That seemed to be the catalyst for the others of their group to start into the wanton destruction of artwork.

Harley jumped up and down. “Score one for the team!!”

Jack laughed with a clap of his hands. “That's my girl!”

* 

It was well after three in the morning by the time Harley and Jack drove the boat back into the boat house to dock it and climb the steps to the mansion. Harley giggled pulling off her mask once they were inside. “That was so much fun!!”

Jack grinned brightly, tugging off his helmet and tucking it under his arm. “It was a small step, but it was fun. And while it was childish, it does give me a great deal of pleasure to do something stupid that will annoy my brother and be a complete waste...something that can never be replaced. The meaningless of something that was supposedly meaningful.”

They both laughed. Harley tucked her mask into the back pocket of her pants. “How about I make us a couple of sandwiches, you grab that grape soda out of the fridge, we take a shower and then eat naked in bed?”

Jack chuckled. “That sounds perfect, my pumpkin pie!”

Together the two of them went into the kitchen. The kitchen, unlike most of the rest of the house, was modern. The walls and cabinets were a soft eggshell white while the counter tops and the middle
island all had that Victorian feel to them in design with dark wood accents that complemented the dark marble counter-tops. The center island also had a set of four leather covered stools surrounding it. The appliances were all ultra modern, probably having been replaced within the last year Jack guessed, and the light fixtures overhead were a series of pendant hanging kitchen lights with an oil bronze finish that gave the room an old fashioned feel despite the modern touches. Harley was humming softly to herself as she walked over to the refrigerator when she accidentally kicked the side of the throw rug that laid in front of the fridge. She didn’t think much of it until the light caused something to glint and shine, catching her eye just as she was turning away. She stopped, frowning, slowly placing the cold cuts she had just pulled out of the refrigerator on the island counter, and crouched down, running her fingers over the floor. Jack, who had been pulling glasses down for their drinks, glanced over noticing she had disappeared.

“Harley?” Jack frowned setting the glasses down and walking around the island to see her crouched on the balls of her feet and running her fingers along the floor.

“Darling? You all right?” Jack stepped over nearer to his wife.

Harley glanced up. “Come down here. I saw the light catch them and reached down to pick it up, but it's attached.”

Jack crouched down across from her. He couldn't see what she was talking about because she was casting a shadow over whatever it was, but when Harley took his hand and placed his fingers where hers had been, he felt it too. A small round disc, but with something carved into it by the feel of it. Jack stood. “Hold on a second Harls. There's a flashlight in the desk in the study.”

A few seconds later Jack had returned with the flashlight. He clicked it on and shone it down on the spot they had both felt. There in the floor, just barely visible, the size of maybe a dime was what looked like a round object. Jack leaned in close frowning then he made a soft, “Huh?”

Harley looked up. “What is it?”

“It looks like...an owl. You ever see the original Clash of the Titans?” Jack glanced up at her.

Harley shook her head. “No.”

Jack gasped. “Harls!! I'm shocked,..well...anyway there's a mechanical owl named Bubo...” Harley frowned at him. Jack shook his head. “Anyway, it was the owl of Athena...this sort of looks like that...like a button...”

Jack ran his fingers over it, then pushed down on the the symbol. They both jumped slightly when they heard the sound of a click. There was another sound and suddenly a small section of the floor beneath them started to move.

Jack and Harley jumped back as a section of the floor slid away to reveal a set of winding stairs going down below. Jack glanced over at Harley and whispered,

“Beware the Court of Owls, that watches all the time,
Ruling Gotham from a shadowed perch, behind granite and lime.
They watch you at your hearth, they watch you in your bed.
Speak not a whispered word about them, or they'll send the Talon for your head.”
Harley looked up at Jack in confusion. “What was that?”

“You never heard that before?” Jack asked with clear surprise.

“No, never.” Harley stood up and walked over to one of the kitchen drawers. She searched around for a bit before she pulled out a flashlight. She flicked the switch back and forth a couple of times to make sure the light was working. She turned around and turned the light on Jack. He grinned at her and stuck his tongue out making her laugh lightly.

“What does it mean?” she asked as she walked back over and shone the light down at the opening in the floor.

Jack shrugged. “Not really sure sweets, just that every kid growing up in Gotham has heard that rhyme at one time or another. It was always a threat used on the playground too. You know...the Talon was going to come and get you.”

Harley shook her head staring at him and Jack shrugged. “Boy toots, you really missed out not growing up in Gotham.”

Harley chuckled. “I can see that.”

She shined the light down the trapdoor and leaned over looking down into the darkness; the light showed only stairs. “What do you suppose is down there?”

Jack’s grin was wide as he came to stand beside her. “Ghosts! Maybe some sexual torture devices! I always knew my aunt was kinky.”

“JACK!” Harley laughed but Jack grabbed her around the waist and yanked her close nibbling on her neck. “I don't know...tying you up might be fun, maybe spank you a little, eh?” He waggled his eyebrows at her.

Harley smiled wickedly. “Who said anything about tying me up...what about you puddin? Maybe you need a good spanking.”

Jack waggled his eyebrows even more ridiculously. “You can tie me up anytime you want sweets...anytime.” He pulled her close, his lips against her ear and purred, his voice like warm honey. “I've been so bad Miss Harley. I think I need a spanking.”

Harley giggled turning bright red. “JACK!”

He laughed grabbing the flashlight from her. “Come on my creamy cupcake! Let's go see what secrets my auntie is hiding in the basement!”

Jack hurried down the stairs with Harley yelling after him. “Jack be careful!”

She made a sound of irritation and quickly ran over to the oven. She pulled out the bottom drawer and grabbed the heaviest pan she could find, a cast iron skillet. She carried it over and placed it in such a way that if the door decided to snap shut on them, it would be forced to stay open because of the pan...or at least she hoped it would stay open. Once she was happy with its placement, she hurried down the dark stairs after Jack.
Jack chuckled hurrying down the steps, then stopped on the last stair, letting his flashlight move lazily over the room in front of him.

As Jack took the stairs leading down into the hidden room, it was clear from the amount of dust caked on the stairs, that this room hadn't been opened in a long while. The beam of light from Jack's flashlight movement silently over room. He could see that there were cobwebs hanging from the ceiling and draped across the room. He stopped on the last step of the stairs and from where Jack was standing, the light beam showed that the air was filled with little drifting motes of dust that danced in the air. Jack waited until he felt Harley behind him before he stepped off the last step, slowly shining the flashlight around the room again. (Harley had run her hand over the wall looking for a light switch, but found nothing. She muttered under her breath. “Creepy basement, no lights...I've seen this horror movie...”)

The walls were decorated with a variety of weapons, mostly blades, but mixed with the knives...and swords? (Jack grinned at those.) He saw a few guns...a Smith & Wesson model 29 .44 magnum, HK54...there were a few more, but he couldn't quite make out their make and model. The small flashlight beam didn't extend that far into the room.

Jack continued to let his beam move over the walls. He could see a couple of old framed photos covered in a layer of dust, though from where he stood he couldn't tell what they photos were of, all he saw were the vague shadowy impression of figures. He felt Harley step right behind him, her hand resting on his shoulder. His beam fell across the large bronze image of an owl's head on the far left wall, hanging directly in the middle, in a place of honor.

Jack stepped away from the stairs, taking Harley's hand in his free hand. Harley's mouth was open slightly as she hissed. “What is all this?”

They walked further into the room and realized that this wasn't just the one room; it was clear that this “basement” reached further, at least another three or four rooms. Jack couldn't be sure since the beam of light was relatively weak, but he thought that the basement might stretch the length of the entire house. The two of them walked slowly and stopped when they came to a painting hanging against one wall. The image was large, taking up nearly the entire wall. The painting was well done, in a style that was reminiscent of Rembrandt. Jack turned the flashlight on the painting. It was an image of seven people; men and women, all richly dressed and all wearing what he thought were creepy owl-like masks. The masks were all white, smooth ovals with the oval-shape eye slots that resembled the shape of an owl's eyes. Each mask came to a point, with just the hint of an owl's beak. The masks displayed no other features, looked alien, and yet there was something hauntingly familiar about the image the masks projected. No sooner had Jack thought the word creepy than Harley whispered at his shoulder. “Okay, those masks are creepy puddin.”

Jack chuckled in agreement. “Yep, those are creepy. Harley, am I seeing things or do those look like owl masks to you?” Jack glanced over at Harley.

She stared hard at the painting. She leaned in close and then nodded. “They do...like simplified owls.”

Jack was quiet, staring at the painting. Harley frowned examining his face; he was clearly lost in thought. “Jack?”

“Right after our parents were murdered, I remember Bruce talking to me late at night about how it hadn't been a random act...that they were targeted.”

Harley put her arm around Jack's waist. “Targeted?”
Jack nodded still staring at the painting. “Yes, he thought...well, he was sure that they had been targeted. He became obsessed with owls...the nursery rhyme, the whole court of owls thing. Started seeing owls everywhere. He was sure the court of owls had ordered our parents’ death. I was too young to really understand what was going on with Bruce...it wasn't too long after that Bruce started to pull away—from me...from everything.”

Harley leaned her head on his shoulder. “Did he actually find out anything about them? Or about your parents?”

Jack stared at the painting for a couple of more seconds before he turned away. “I remember—when Bruce's obsession was at its height—he was sure he had found something. He had been watching our parents' friends, business partners...compiling notes and observations on them, sure that one of them had ordered our parents' murders. He would share all of it with me. I didn't understand everything, but I was scared. Scared that what Bruce was saying was true...scared I would lose my brother when the Court realized he was on to them.” Harley watched Jack's face. His expression was sad as he spoke, but his eyes had shifted back to stare at the painting.

“Then one day, Bruce was sure he had found the place, the hideout for the Court of Owls. We took a taxi, sneaking away in the night. Bruce had us taken to an old abandoned house in Old Gotham. A huge old Victorian period building with boarded up windows. I remember how the wind sounded through that house...like voices of the dead. I clung to Bruce, begged him to leave, but he refused. Said he knew this was the place. He was going to find our parents' murderers.” Jack laughed softly, but it was a sound that lacked humor. “He actually found a secret door! Not unlike the one we found...the door into a secret basement room. Bruce was so excited! I don't think I had ever seen my brother so determined, so...happy, so sure he was on the right path. You should have seen his face Harley. He efforts were about to be verified.” Jack shook his head slightly before he continued. “We went down into the room and found nothing. Just dirt. But the worst part was that the trap door we found, it closed on us. I don't know if it was designed to close and not be opened, or if time and age had broken it, but Bruce and I were trapped...for over a week in the room with no way out.”

Harley made a little gasp. She wrapped her arms around him and buried her head against his chest. She felt Jack wrap his arms around her and hold her against him. He leaned his cheek against the top of her head and his voice moved her hair when he spoke.

“I don't remember much after that. I remember Alfred finding us...being in the hospital...I had nightmares about owls for months, mixed with the dreams about the murder of my parents...” Jack's voice trailed off.

Harley looked up at Jack. He was still staring at the painting. She gently reached up to place her fingers against his cheek. Jack's eyes rolled down to hers. His blue eyes looked haunted. She could only imagine what it was Jack dreamed about on those nights when he had nightmares. He still had nightmares and she would hold him until he fell back asleep in her arms.

She asked softly, “Did Bruce ever find out if that place was the Court of Owls, or did he ever find out if they killed your parents?”

Jack's voice was just a whisper. “No idea. He stopped sharing things with me not long after that. I think he knew it scared me, the idea of our parents being murdered by this frightening unseen force. He never spoke about what happened. But, I always thought the Court of Owls was something made up...or maybe I simply hoped that it was a story to scare kids into behaving. Not that it ever worked on me.” He grinned down at her. “It wasn't too long after that incident that my behavior became more...antisocial and I was sent to Willowood for the first time...the first of our separations, the first time Bruce and I started on our separate paths.” He grinned down at her and Harley hopped up a
little to kiss his mouth. Jack chuckled and pulled her up to give her a full deep kiss. When he released her mouth he said softly. “But this—this room...the owls....this is all rather strange.” Jack gigged. “Bruce would be wetting himself about now if he knew about this.” He giggled again. “What do you want to bet this whole thing is just like the Hellfire Club, an elaborate masquerade for a bunch of rich fucks to get together and drink and have lots of sex.”

Harley giggled. “In old dusty basements?”

Jack shrugged turning her away from the painting. “Maybe dust is a kink?” He grinned and chuckled softly. “ Let's look around some more.” He smiled at his wife, as he took her hand in his, and started to walk around the room holding the flashlight out ahead of them.

They continued to look around the first room. There were other smaller images of people in the strange owl masks. Some were actually small paintings, others photographs, but every person in them wore one of the odd masks. They turned around a wall where there sat an old desk, covered in dust. Together they stepped closer. The desk had an old lamp resting on it along with what looked to be some sort of old CB equipment and rolls of yellowed paper. Lying in the center of the desk was a blade, an old rusted dirk knife. Jack picked up the rusted, dust covered blade. There was something dark on the edge...Jack would hazard a guess that it was blood, but it really could be anything he thought as he placed the blade back on the desk. In the corner was an old metal filing cabinet, rusted with age. Harley tried one of the drawers, but besides making a horrid metal warping sound, the drawer was rusted shut.

The room extended to the left where there was sort of a hallway. Jack reached out, took Harley's hand again, his fingers weaving with hers. They walked to the end of the hall when suddenly a light clicked on revealing a figure at the end of the hall. Harley jumped letting out a startled gasp. Jack pulled her protectively against him, but the figure at the end of the hall didn't move. Jack frowned, then slowly stepped closer. The figure never moved. Once they were close enough, Jack reached out and knocked the flashlight against the armored head. Nothing happened. Jack chuckled. “Just a suit.”

The whole outfit seemed a strange cross between a steam-punk metal suit and slick modern attire. The outfit was black, with a goggled owl cover for the face along with a medieval armor influence in the shoulder guards and gauntlets mixed with something worn by a ninja. The entire suit created a feeling of deadly stealth to the entire ensemble. The “owl” motif was clear in every line of the suit with the metal parts being cut and molded to resemble feathers, to the swept back parts along the helmet that looked like the feathers around an owl's eyes. There was even a small beak like cover over the mouth and the suit appeared to also have claws designed into the tips of the fingers of each glove. When Jack reached out and touched the finger of one, the claw caused him to hiss and snatch his hand back, a small cut on the tip of his finger.

Jack stuck his finger in his mouth glaring at the suit with a frown.

Harley stared her voice a whisper. “What on earth?”

Jack held the flashlight steady staring at the amour. “I think I should call Aunt Agatha.”

Harley reached up, her fingertips on both of his cheeks forcing him to turn around from the suit and face her. “Not tonight Jack.”

“But...” Jack started, but Harley stared at him hard while speaking softly. “This stuff has been in here a long time. You can tell from the dust Jack—it isn't going anywhere. Leave it until morning all right?” Harley leaned in to press her lips against his, her arms slipping around his neck. Jack chuckled softly against her lips and wrapped his arms around her waist while returning her kiss.
He pulled back slightly with a smile. “All right, I'll call in the morning.”

Harley smiled and took his hand. “Come on, we can do more exploring later.”

Jack let her take his hand and pull him away from the suit and its secrets, though he turned one last time to look at the outfit with a strange expression on his face. Harley hurried from the secret basement, her insides twirling with a cold mix of fear and unease. She didn't know what any of this meant...but she was scared to find out. They had almost made it to the stairs when Jack's flashlight danced across something on the floor behind the stairs, an object that reflected the light back for a moment. Jack frowned bringing the light back around to see an object wedged in a corner by the stairs. It was hard to see except that the flashlight danced across the white surface. Harley had been leading Jack back to the stairs when she was stopped abruptly by Jack who halted, shining his flashlight into the corner.

Harley turned around. “Jack! Wha...”

She stopped in mid-sentence, her eyes catching the object that the light had caught in its beam. She let go of Jack's hand and stepped closer, dropping down to a crouch to pick it up. She turned on the balls of her feet and showed Jack. She held two halves of a broken owl mask that looked those they had seen in the painting.

* * *

Then next morning, Jack was sitting up in bed. Harley was only partly asleep, her arm around his waist as Jack waited for his aunt to pick up the phone. It wasn't until the fifth ring that his aunt picked up.

“Hey! Jackie!! How is my favorite nephew? You guys enjoying that house? Working on making me a great aunt?” She laughed. Jack could hear voices in the background and then the sound of his aunt calling. “Oh and grab me a Painkiller? No, no the drink silly! Thanks honey! Now, how are you and Harley doing sweetheart?”

“Oh Harley and I are fine, auntie dear, but I did call you about something we found in the house.”

“Ah” Agatha sounded a little distracted.

“Jack smiled watching Harley as she hopped out of bed naked. He licked his lips watching her every movement as she walked over and picked up her robe which was lying on the floor. She slipped it on before turning around and making some comical hand motions which he interpreted as meaning that she was going to make coffee. He blew her a kiss and winked at her as she walked out of the room.

“Oh, what is it honey? Something wrong?” Agatha sounded a little distracted.

“Well, Harley and I found a room last night,” Jack began.

“Oh? I mean that house has dozens of rooms. Did you find something interesting...no dear, over there. Yes...oh did you get the oil...perfect just let me roll over....” Jack heard his aunt shift position then giggle. “Sorry Jackie dear, don't want to get burned. I have a very attractive young man named Aleixo offer to put some sunblock on my back. Isn't that nice?” She giggled again. “Now, what was this about a room?”

“Yes, Harley and I found a room...in the basement. Well, actually it's not part of the house's official basement. Regardless, this room opened with a button that had an owl picture engraved on it.” Jack reached over and picked up his pack of cigarettes, gently knocking one loose by patting it against his palm. Jack waited, but his aunt didn't say anything. He could hear her breathing, but she was silent for a few heartbeats while Jack picked up his lighter and lit the cigarette.
“Did you go down there?” she asked, her tone subdued.

“Yes we did and besides dust and cobwebs we found a lot of very interesting things.” Jack took a long pull on the cigarette, holding the smoke in his lungs for a half beat before blowing it out. “We found a lot of old weapons, a suit...”

Agatha spoke up, stopping Jack. “Does William Cobb know you both found that room?”

Jack frowned holding his cigarette out from the phone. “Who?”

“The caretaker—does he know you found that room?” Agatha asked again, her voice tight.

“No, no one does. Just Harley,” Jack replied his brow furrowed.

“Jack, listen to me. You and Harley need to forget that you ever found that room.” His aunt sounded serious. Jack frowned, not just serious, but deadly serious.

“Why? What is it? There was that painting of people wearing owl masks...we found a strange suit and a broken owl mask...” Jack said questioningly, but his aunt cut him off.

“Jack, there are a lot of things you and Bruce don't know about the Wayne family and I would prefer it stayed that way. Don't tell anyone else what you found...I'm assuming you haven't?” Her tone was sharp.

“No...no I haven't.” Jack replied. “Auntie, what's going on?”

“All right, I won't tell a soul and neither will Harley, but Agatha, you can't keep us in the dark forever. If whatever it is, if it's a deadly secret, you are going to have to tell us eventually because no matter what happens, we know and that won't stay a secret forever, especially with us living here,” Jack said softly.

Agatha sighed. “I know Jackie, I know...I knew when I gave you the house. I just hoped I had more time. I promise, soon I will tell you everything, but for now...you never saw any of it. All right?”

“All right.” Jack sighed.

He could hear the smile in Agatha's voice. “Good boy. Give Harley a kiss for me. Talk to you later Jackie.” She hung up. Jack frowned tossing the phone back onto the bedside table just as Harley came up with two steaming cups of coffee.

“So, what did she say?” Harley asked handing Jack his mug. Jack took it, leaning over to put his cigarette out in the ashtray. “She told us to pretend that we never found it and to tell no one.”

Harley sat on the bed cross legged blowing on her coffee. She frowned in confusion. “What?”

Jack shrugged. “She made me promise. She sounded scared Harls.”

Harley blinked. “That's so...you don't suppose this Court of Owls thing is real do you?”

Jack shrugged. “All I know is that I promised we would tell no one. I guess at this point it doesn't
really matter. Might as well keep it to ourselves.”

Harley nodded sipping her coffee as Jack said, “Oh and she was especially concerned about whether the caretaker knew that we had found that room.”

Harley sipped her coffee before answering. “The caretaker?”

“Yeah. She was really concerned about him.” Jack sipped his own coffee.

“ Weird,” Harley muttered.

Jack smiled. “You know though, she didn’t say we couldn’t do a little research on the Court of Owls...and maybe we need to take a look at old Mr. Cobb too.”

Harley smiled. “I think you may be right puddin.”

“Well, anyway, we’ll put that on the back burner for now...what I really want to talk about is the next job for the Red Hood gang.” Jack grinned brightly.

Harley giggled. “What did you have in mind puddin?”

“How would you feel about us breaking into one of WayneTechs labs and stealing one of their prototypes, from a WayneTech lab in the upper east side?” Jack grinned.

Harley giggled. “Oh Jack, that sounds fun! What are you thinking about?”

Jack's smile was devilish. “The tech portion of the company has been working on these special materials, one that supposedly can make you invisible, though the last time I heard anything about it they were still having issues with the material overheating so the invisibility doesn’t last long. The other is bullet-proof material...so you could have a bullet-proof tuxedo if you wanted. Anyway, Alex has a buyer lined up from LexCorp...ready to deal in some high tech corporate espionage.”

Harley giggled. “Oh Bruce is going to be so pissed!”

Jack chuckled. “Exactly.”

Agatha looked pale. She couldn't believe they had found that room. She closed her eyes. She supposed she shouldn't be surprised. Jack was a smart boy, always had been—too smart. It was only a matter of time. She had been so stupid to set them up there, but she simply hadn't thought about it...it had been so long since she had even spoken to anyone in the Court. Now...

She knew that the Court had to already know he had found it. Which meant, like it or not, she needed to get back to Gotham ASAP. Even if the Court wasn't going to move in on him, she needed to be there; Jack and Harley were going to need her help. She had done everything she could over the years to protect those boys from knowing...especially Jack...but...she cursed to herself.

Agatha stood up from the lounge chair and snapped her fingers. A man with finely chiseled features, dark skin and even darker, piercing eyes quickly came at her call. “Yes Miss Agatha?”

“Call Joseph, tell him I'm coming back and that we need to talk,” Agatha snarled walking swiftly from the beach and heading toward the house.

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Bruce groaned, hanging up his phone and putting his head in his hands while staring out at his office. Hundreds of thousands of dollars—perhaps millions when the damage was assessed—irreplaceable pieces of art...destroyed, vandalized. Some of the paintings might be able to be restored, but it would cost...Bruce sighed again. There was no evidence to say who had done it. Surveillance cameras hadn't picked up anything because whoever had broken in knew the code to disable them. Technically whoever had broken in, hadn't broken in at all. They had known the code not just for the security, but to enter the gallery as well...there had been some strange mix-up with the security guards too, some sort of computer error that had made it so that no guard was on duty that night...either way Bruce was out a lot of money and the world had lost irreplaceable works of art.

Bruce brooded over who it could be, but he soon decided he was fairly sure he knew who it was...Jack. It seemed like just the sort of thing Jack would do to get back at him, part childish, part nihilist and partly just...rude. Bruce sighed and the worst of it was that Bruce thought maybe he deserved it. Yes...he knew he deserved it and more for what he had almost done to Jack...for what he had done to Harley. Bruce closed his eyes. He could see himself as he was that night...he almost killed his little brother—his brother, the one person he should have been protecting.

He was also still deeply upset over Alfred as well. The older man had been withdrawn, not acting at all like himself. He was sure that what had happened between him and Jack had cut deep into the old man's heart. He and Jack were practically his sons. Bruce chewed his bottom lip. He had no idea how to make this right again, didn't know if it was even possible, but he promised himself he would try. Whatever it took he would try to make amends with Jack.

He stood up to pace his office, trying to work off some of the irritation he was feeling when his cellphone rang. He picked it up but the number was unlisted. Bruce frowned, thought about letting it go to voice mail, but opted to hit the button.

“Bruce Wayne,” he said.

“Hello, my love,” a sultry voice said over the line.

Bruce stopped moving. “Talia?”

“Yes my love, it's me. It's been a while hasn't it?” Her voice was soft, the slight accent she had never been able to fully abandon came through causing a shiver to run up Bruce's spine.

“What are you doing in Gotham?” Bruce asked, taking a chance in assuming that she was here in the city. His heart was beating quickly. He hadn't seen Talia since college. They had had a torrid love affair all through college. Bruce had even asked her to marry him, but she had refused, telling him that she had family obligations that prevented her from seeking her own happiness. She had left that day; that was almost ten years ago.

“I'm here on some family business, but I hoped...maybe we could have dinner?” He could hear and see the smile on her face when she spoke.

Bruce smiled, his blood running hot and fast. She was intoxicating, among other things. “I would love that Talia.”

* 

Later that same night at one of Gotham's nightclubs, “Amoureus Perdus” was crowded. Dancers were packed on the dance floor, the lights a kaleidoscope of blues, purples and greens skipped across the dancers as the sounds of Faster Kill Pussycat permeated throughout the club. The Red Hood gang sat at one of the large round booths, the thirteen of them sitting with their drinks, a large map of
Gotham on the table between them. Jack and Harley both had their disguises with masks on, both dressed in all black. Harley had the red and black dye streaked through her blonde hair which was up in pigtails again. (No one at the club gave them a second look as there were other people in masks, paint, and some costumes.) Sandra and Dale were sharing a fish bowl, Alex and Alice a rum bucket, while each of the other members all had their own drinks. Frost sat coolly on Jack's right looking like he would drop his drink and pull a gun at any second.

Jack lifted his mask just enough to take a sip of his rum and cola, only exposing his chin and lips, though the members of his gang paid little attention, before he stood up. Harley smiled watching him sipping from her Blowjob licking the whipped cream from her lips. Jack shared a glance with her, grinning when Harley gave him a wink, her tongue rolling along her bottom lip. He spoke loudly to be heard over the music, though their little booth was set in the back and a little distance from the dance floor so that he didn't have been yell too loudly.

“All right boys and girls...” Jack grinned at everyone around the table then pointed at the map, his finger landing on a space between the corner of Dillon Avenue and Murphy Avenue. “Right there my lovelies is one of WayneTech's many labs located throughout Gotham! And this, this my darlings is where we are hitting next.” Haskins, looking like he had slept in the t-shirt and jeans he was wearing under the heavy red duffel coat he hadn't removed since they came into the club, took a large swallow of his beer, letting out a loud belch. “So, we gonna do a real job this time? But like, ain't there going to be any money there?”

Jack narrowed his eyes. (Though Haskins couldn't see the expression on Jack's face through the helmet, the way Jack held his head and how his shoulders were set communicated his unhappiness with Haskins.) His helmeted head whipped around to glare at Haskins. Alex punched Haskins with his fist, hard in the other man's shoulder.

“Shut up, you fucking numbnut.”

Haskins gave Alex a disgruntled look, but shut up and slouched down in the booth. Jack smiled.

“Yes, Haskins, as you so elegantly put it, we are going to do a 'real' job. Our goal is to steal some precious and expensive Waynetech, and Alex here is going to be our seller. He already has a buyer lined up. All we have to do is walk in there and get the goods. Then we will have some 'real' money.”

Danny clapped her hands. “This is going to be great! I always wanted to get a look inside one of those WayneTech labs! See what's what!”

Jack grinned behind his mask and sat down again. Duela frowned, leaning over to study the map. She was a little wobbly, already on her third Jameson and ginger ale when she pointed in the rough location that Jack had just been pointing.

“Hey...ah...that's the upper east side right?” Duela glanced up to see if anyone was listening. Jack turned his helmeted head toward her, the light playing across it hypnotically. “Yes,” he said simply.

Duela frowned. “Ain't that were that new vigilante has been showing up?”

Jack glanced at Harley, the two exchanging a glance. Jack turned back to Duela. “New vigilante? Whatever are you talking about, my darling girl?”

Duela snapped her fingers trying to remember when Jason, who had so far been a fairly quiet kid, spoke up. “Black Spider.”

“Black Spider.”
Duela pointed at him with a big grin. “That's it!”

Jack chuckled. “Ooo, what names!”

Harley almost snorted into her drink with giggles. “Oh no!! Poor Batman, does he know about this?” she asked. “He's gonna hafta share!”

Duela shrugged taking the question seriously. “I don't know. I think so. I mean these two have only been popping up once and a while over the last month, but it’s getting to be more frequent from what I heard. They've been in the news at least once every week. I think I heard something about the Black Spider dude almost killing someone...not sure, I wasn't really paying that much attention.” She picked up her drink and took a sip clearly done with the subject.

Jack tilted his head which Harley found comical in the helmet. “I guess we need to pay a little more attention to the news, sweets,” he said to Harley.

Jack turned back to Duela. “I'm not too worried about this Huntress my dear. We will be in and out before her or even a Batman knows we're there.”

Alex smiled. “And another punch in the arm to Bruce Wayne.”

Jack chuckled as did the others, but Haskins frowned. “What's up your ass about Wayne? First the gallery, now this? I mean, yeah he's a fucking billionaire and all, but ain't he sorta like one of the good guys or something?”

Jack went still. Harley turned to stare at Haskins, her straw held against her bottom lip, and lifted an eyebrow behind her mask.

Alex shook his head and muttered. “Haskins, you're a fucking idiot.”

Jack smiled behind the mask and said with venom. “Do yourself a favor and ignore anyone who tells you to be yourself. Bad idea in your case.”

Haskins crossed his arms across his chest. “What the fuck? I can't be the only one thinking it.”

“Maybe darling, but you're the only one stupid enough to say something out loud.” Jack sighed. “All right meeting over, everyone go home, or go somewhere else, but go. You know the drill. We'll be meeting at The Pony Bar on First Avenue at midnight.”

Jack grabbed the map and rolled it up watching with narrow eyes as everyone but the core group left. Jack snarled. “Your friend Haskins is going to be a problem, isn't he?”

Alex sighed. “Fucking idiot. I thought he knew enough to shut his trap and follow orders.”

Jack sighed. “We'll have to see how he does tomorrow. So...” He turned to Harley. “Shall we go change and do a little dancing my sweets?”

Harley squealed. “I thought you would never ask!!”

She hopped up picking up the large purse she had brought in with her. Alex called out. “Don't forget to drop that off with Dez.” Harley giggled giving Alex a two finger salute.

Sandra and Alice stood as well. “We're going to go help Harley dress!”

Jack chuckled watching all the women head off to the restrooms. “Guess I should go change too. I promised my girl some dancing.”
Alex snickered. “I think I'll wait here.”

Dale chuckled. “Me too.”

Frost stood up picking up a duffel bag from under the seat and followed Jack to the back. Alex watched him go with a smile, picking up the drink he had been sharing with Alice and finished it off thinking to himself that hanging with Jack had always been interesting. Alex had not been one to become involved with the business outside of information gathering and selling, but with Jack Wayne, he opted to step out from behind his computer screens; he suspected that now they were heading into a whole new arena of fun.

* 

Harley changed into the outfit she had brought with her, shedding the mask and brushing out the spray dye from her hair. With Sandra's help, she piled her hair up giving the thick blonde locks a kind of 1950's Rockabilly feel to match the sexy dress she had slipped into, a red and black mini dress with a diamond tulle crinoline underskirt under the red over skirt that was littered with black diamonds like a playing card. The middle of the dress was black mesh showing off her stomach as was the collar and sleeves. She pulled on a garter belt and a pair of black fishnet stockings, and to finish her look, a pair of black and red stiletto saddle shoes. She stuffed her other clothing into the purse before she turned around doing a spin for her friends.

“So, what do you think? You think Jack will like it? He hasn't see it yet.” Harley stopped and did a couple of poses. “I found it in one of the closets with a note attached to it from Aunt Agatha saying she found this and knew I had to have it.” Harley giggled. “She is so funny.”

Sandra smiled. “Jack is going to die, but I think you could wear a sack and he would have the same reaction.”

Alice laughed. “I agree with Sandra, Jack thinks everything you wear is gorgeous on you.”

Harley giggled as her cheeks turned red.

* 

In the mens rest room, Jack quickly stripped out of the red hood helmet, black slacks, turtleneck and jacket he had been wearing, then pulled out a pair of slacks that were a shade of blue so dark they looked almost black. He pull out a folded dark green dress shirt, slid his arms through and buttoned up the shirt swiftly. Jack then threw on a deep purple pinstriped vest which he also buttoned all the way. He pulled out some eyeliner from the bag—all while Frost waited patiently—leaning forward to trace his eyes slowly. When he was done, he ran his fingers through his hair before turning. “How do I look Frost?”

Frost grinned with a nod. “You look good Boss.”

Jack chuckled. “Think she'll fall for me?”

Frost smiled. “Yes Boss, I think she will.”

Jack smiled with excitement. He walked over to Frost and elbowed the other man in the side lightly. “Then let's go get her shall we?”

* 

Harley was already on the dance floor swaying and weaving her hips to the music, the lights flashing
over her body, catching the little bits of glitter in her outfit. She bounced her hips to the rhythm, her arms over her head as she let the song carry her. “I Need You” by Armin van Buuren and Garibay played loudly while Harley twisted in the middle of the dance floor, clearly unaware of anyone around her. She had her eyes closed, her body moving to the music, her torso weaving when Jack saw her. He stopped in his tracks to stare at her. It was like he was seeing her for the first time again as all the other dancers just fell away leaving Harley alone on the dance floor. She turned in a circle with a soft smile on her face; the skirt of the little dress she was wearing bounced around her as she turned.

She opened her eyes, her smile blossoming across her face when she saw Jack standing there watching her. She grinned and pressed her teeth into her bottom lip while she motioned to him with her finger. Jack grinned in return, dancing toward her until he was close enough to place his hands against her hips, pulling her against him. Jack smiled down at her, brushing his fingers along her jaw and leaned close to her ear to be heard over the music. Jack hissed. “Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight, For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.”

Harley giggled softly gazing into his eyes as she draped her arms around his shoulders swaying, her hips pressed against his, moving to the music as she covered his mouth with her own. They swayed and bounced to the music while they kissed until Harley broke away with a laugh, leaning back, trusting Jack to hold on to her. Sandra and Alice had returned to the booth. Frost was standing at the edge of the dance floor, his hands crossed in front of him watching. Alice sat down and Alex pulled her close watching Jack and Harley dancing. Alice leaned close to his ear. “They are something else, aren't they? I don't think I have ever seen anyone so much in love with each other. I'm a little envious.”

Alex chuckled. “Yeah, they are something.” Alex kissed Alice on the top of her head. “I love you, but their kind of love...”

* 

Bruce drove home after his date with Talia. It had been nice—more than nice. Seeing her again had stirred up many old feelings that he had thought he was over long ago. They had been inseparable in college. He had thought she would be the one. After they graduated he was going to ask her to marry him. He had been training intently for...well, for revenge maybe. At that time Batman hadn't fully formed as a reality in his mind, but Talia made him almost forget all of it, the murder of his parents, his little brother slowly diving into insanity...the money, the family name. He would have given it all up for her then. But, she had left; their last year of college Talia had to go back home. She never told him why and even tonight, he had wanted to ask, but he didn't and Talia never offered to tell him why she had left him. But he supposed it didn't matter. The years apart had melted away...

Bruce smiled. Talia was going to be in Gotham for the next several weeks working on some business for her father. She told him tonight that she would like to spend her free time with him.

Bruce smiled, despite everything that had happened in the last several weeks, maybe things were beginning to look up.

* 

Harley finished pulling her hair up into ponytails and carefully lined her eyes before she slipped on her mask. Jack was behind her doing a series of push up, counting out loud, clapping between each push up, the muscles of his back slick with sweat. They were getting ready to leave on the boat to meet up with the rest of the gang. Harley watched him as she put on her eyeliner, her mouth watering and groin tightening with lust. She smiled at herself.
“You better get dressed puddin.” She finished outlining one eye.

Jack counted out ten more before he hopped up. “Right you are pumpkin!”

Harley giggled. “If you hurry I'll outline your eyes for you.”

Jack laughed. “You can't see them under the helmet.”

Harley grinned and looked at his reflection in the mirror. “Yes, but I'll know...” She winked at him. Jack chuckled dashing into the bathroom. She heard the water come on just before she walked over leaning in. “I'm going to go down to the kitchen and grab a drink, you want anything?”

“No I'm good pooh!” Jack called back over the sound of the running water.

Harley smiled and headed downstairs. She was dressed in all black again except this time she had added a thick red belt around her waist to match the black and red in her hair. She smiled, her boots clicking on the stairs when she heard a knock at the door. Harley stopped and stared at the door for a moment. She frowned quickly removing her mask and stuffing it into her front pocket as the knock came again.

She narrowed her eyes going to the front door and opening it just a crack. One hand remained on the door latch while her other hand rested on the hilt of a knife strapped to her hip. The snow had melted outside leaving everything wet and soggy, though the air still contained a significant chill. Outside on the porch she saw two people, one of them she knew, at least a little, the caretaker William Cobb.

William wasn't a bad looking man; there just wasn't anything special about him that Harley could see except for his eyes. The man had creepy eyes Harley thought, black...like an owl's. Otherwise he had an above average handsome face, brown hair that seemed to lack any “life” to it and he was of medium build...forgettable really, she thought. He had another man with him. Where Cobb looked to be in his late forties, the man with him was younger, maybe in his thirties. The other man had long black hair that he had pulled into a tail at the back of his neck and soft brown eyes.

Cobb smiled. “Sorry to disturb you Miss Harley, I just wanted to come by and let you and your husband know that I will be having my...cousin staying with me for a little while and to let you both know that he knows the rules.” Cobb smiled.

But Harley noticed that Benjamin's eyes were glued to Jack and immediately her blood started to boil because she had seen that look plenty of times in some women...Meg...Lisa...

Then to Harley's complete annoyance, Benjamin stepped past her into the house, holding his hand out to Jack as he walked briskly forward. “It's a pleasure to meet you! Jack is it? I believe that's what my cousin said your name was...” Benjamin grabbed Jack's hand, his eyes roaming over Harley's shirtless husband with a look of clear lust that had Harley wanting to rip his eyes out.
Jack frowned taking the other man's hand. “Ah...yes, it's Jack.”

William hissed. “Ben, get back here.”

Benjamin smiled at Jack then said with the air of a love-sick girl. “You have the most incredible eyes.”

Jack smiled. “Well, thank you Benjamin, but ah...if you both will excuse us, Harley and I have plans tonight.”

William nodded. “Of course, I just wanted to let you both know about my cousin, just in case you happen to see him on the island.”

“Thank you Mr. Cobb,” Harley said, her voice cold as she glared at Benjamin who didn't notice at all, his attention on Jack.

Benjamin waved. “Ah goodbye. I hope we run into each other again Jack.”

Jack nodded, but his attention had already shifted. As the two men left, Harley slammed the door shut with a growl on their backs.

“I don't like that Benjamin,” she hissed, glaring daggers at the closed door.

Jack laughed. “Oh pumpkin, come here.” Jack reached out and grabbed her around the waist pulling her up against him.

Harley pouted. “Did you see the way he was looking at you? Like he wanted to eat you.”

Jack chuckled. “You are so adorable when you're jealous.” He rubbed his nose against hers, his hands sliding down to grip her rear. “I only have eyes for you Harley...only you. Forever and always, my pumpkin, my wife,” he whispered, his voice heavy with want. “And when we get home, I'm going to show you.”

Harley was still pouting. “Can I kill him?”

Jack laughed. “Benjamin?”

Harley nodded, her lip still out in a pout. Jack kissed her bottom lip, rubbing the tip of her nose with his own

Jack laughed. “Okay, if he tries anything, you can defend my honor.”

Harley smiled wrapping a hand around the back of Jack's neck pulling his mouth down to hers. “Good,” she whispered, then she kissed him in a way that had Jack considering strongly about taking her right there in the front hall.

*

Cobb and Orchard made their way down from the main house and headed around the corner along a stone path that led to the far side of the grounds near where the stone fence that separated the wildlife refuge from the house sat. Nestled near the fence sat a small stone house, Cobb's house. Orchard smiled as the two men walked beside each other.

“So, are you sure they found the room?” Orchard asked.

Cobb nodded. “Yes, the silent alarm on the door went off.”
Orchard smiled. “I think extending our offer to Jack Wayne will be a very good idea.”

Cobb narrowed his eyes. “A good idea for the whole or because you fancy him?”

Orchard grinned. “Why can't they go hand in hand?”

“What about his woman?” Cobb asked.

“What about her? Getting rid of her should be easy. I'm sure after that I can easily sway Jack to our side,” Orchard cooed.

Cobb shook his head. “I think you overestimate your charms and underestimate hers.”

“We'll see.” The younger man smiled as they two of them entered the cottage.

* *

Jack wore all black except for the red helmet, and Harley was also all in black except for her red belt and a pair of red leather gloves and mask. They hopped out of an SUV along with the others of their group. Each member of the group was dressed in black with at least one piece of red on them, whether it was their mask, a shirt, belt...as long as there was one piece to show they were part of the gang. Unlike the last time, everyone was armed; Harley with a baseball bat that Jack had just recently purchased for her. The others were armed with knives or guns depending on their preference, Jack had a gun and a knife—he liked to have options. Everyone also wore an ear-bud with a throat microphone, (though Jack's was under his helmet) that kept them in communication with everyone else in the group. Not all the gang was with them for this; Alice had to work. Alex was their contact and information guy, so he wasn't with them. Rolf and Jason actually were not needed for tonight. Haskins had insisted on coming and wherever he went, Duela followed. Dale and Sandra remained with the second SUV and Trope, who sat in the back seat, her high power custom built computer on her lap. Which meant that the infiltration team consisted in Jack, Harley, Frost, Haskins, Duela and Danny.

The WayneTech lab that they were going to break into wasn't a large lab, located in a one-story building that stretched along a full block. Jack had always assumed it was a sort of in your face cover. They weren't actually hiding as the lab was clearly visible, which he supposed was to make anyone looking for anything of value assume that nothing important went on in this particular lab.

Jack was grinning behind his mask as he grabbed Harley around the waist and yanked her up against him. “Okay boys and girls!! Now on this job, we need to be quick, in and out! Grab anything you can that looks expensive...and break it if you can't carry it out. BUT do not forget, we have one goal and that is the materials they are working on, the invisibility and the bullet-proof material samples. Obtaining those is my job. Once I have those and Trope has downloaded the data from the computers, then we are out of here. Frost my sweet, your job is to make sure no one sees us or comes in the door here.”

Frost nodded with a grunt. “On it Boss,” he said with a last check of his weapon and extra magazines.

Haskins grumbled at Duela. “So there ain't any money actually here?”

Danny had opened her mouth to tell Haskins to shut up, but then Jack pulled his Glock and spun on Haskins so quickly that no one had realized what was happening until Jack had the barrel pressed up against the other man's forehead.

“Did you say something Haskins? Did you have a question about the job or were you just talking to
yourself?” Jack asked, his voice sweet and calm though he had the barrel pressed against the other man's head hard enough that Harley was sure it would leave a bruise.

Haskins stared at the barrel, his eyes crossing. “No man.”

Though no one could see the smile, Harley could hear it in her lover's voice. “Oh good. Now, if you wish to discuss seeking employment elsewhere...well you can talk about that with me or my lady...or maybe if I'm feeling generous...Alex, but for now. Close your mouth and do what you're told. Okay? Jack tilted his helmeted head, the streetlights reflecting eerily off the eyes of his helmet.

“Oh my darlings! Let's go!” Jack turned and motioned for everyone to follow him.

Their small group made their way down an alley that ran alongside the building heading toward the back entrance, an employee entrance which opened up into the main floor of the lab. Once they arrived at the back, Jack leaned against the wall. Next to the door was an electronic touch pad. It didn't look like any touch pad he had ever seen at a Wayne facility, however. Very high tech, Jack thought. He smiled to himself thinking he might have to have Trope teach him and Harley a few things about computer hacking.

Jack spoke softly. “Trope my dear, you have the door?”

Trope, sitting in the back of the SUV with her red knit cap pulled down low over her strawberry blonde hair, her voice making her sound like she was twelve instead of twenty-three murmured back. Jack could hear the tap of her fingers against the keyboard. “Just a moment, almost have it...” Jack heard a final hard click then Trope's voice returned. “Now try it.”

Jack reached out, wrapping his gloved fingers around the handle, then turned it. There was a click and the door popped open easily. Jack smiled behind his mask. “Good job Trope, you get a cookie.”

Trope had a smile in her voice. “Thanks Boss. I like chocolate!”

Jack laughed softly. “Then chocolate cookies you shall have! Our treat.”

He could hear the sounds of Trope giggling as Jack turned and motioned to the others. “Come along kiddies!”

Entering the building all they saw at first was a dull grey corridor leading toward the mail rooms. On their left was a door leading to a small lounge-like room with vending machines, a table and chairs, a couch and even an ancient TV and tiny workspace refrigerator. There were a few photos hanging on the wall of the corridors while they made their way down to the main rooms showing employees in lab coats smiling in front of computers or lab equipment. Nothing unusual. As soon as they were inside the building, Jack grabbed Harley pulling her aside, but at the same time pressing her up against him as if he couldn't stand going very long without her touching him in some way. “You have the stick Trope gave you?”

Harley nodded. “Yes, I just stick it in and she said it should automatically start to download everything from the computer's memory, then it would automatically erase everything on the computer. I just wait until the light turns from red to green..”

Jack snickered. “That is horrible! I love it.” He reached up caressing the back of her neck with his gloved fingers. “Get as many computers as you can sweets. I would kiss you if I could.”

She giggled. “I would lick you all over...maybe later?”

Jack chuckled. “Oh, definitely.”
Harley asked softly. “Are you sure you can open the safe?”

Jack snickered. “Yes. I actually know the combination. It’ll be a piece of cake. Just have to take care of the security guards... the little robot sentries.” Jack tilted his head. “Okay darling, you ready?”

Harley heard Trope’s reply. “Yes, sure Boss. Just get me in the room and set the device down that I gave you. I’ll trigger the pulse and all those little pesky Wayne roomba robots will be fried.”

Jack laughed. “Roombas! This is such fun!” He caressed Harley’s cheek with one hand. Harley looked up at him, her face reflected in his red helmet, before he stepped away waggling his fingers at her. Harley smirked and hurried into the computer room before Danny, Duela and Haskins decided to trash any of the main desktop computers she needed.

Harley stopped in the doorway of the computer room and looked around swiftly trying to find a clue to tell her which computer would be the best one to use the little stick Trope had given her. The other three gang members were already in here with Duela and Haskins doing a desk by desk search of the drawers, searching for anything of value while Danny, someone’s laptop under her arm, searched a couple of filing cabinets.

The room contained a series of desks, all lined up in two perfect rows, each with a high end desktop computer resting on the clean desk surface. She thought at first that maybe she should just take any of the computers in the room, but her eyes wandered down the hall toward the end of the room where she spied another desk on the other side of a clear glass wall. This one was much bigger, the room clearly some uppity-up boss’s office. Harley grinned. That was the one.

* Jack moved carefully down the hall heading to where he knew the large safe was located. It was not just a simply safe in a wall, however. This WayneTech safe was an entire room where they kept any of the important discoveries, the samples, the prototypes... he had been in here once just a year ago when he, Bruce and some other members of the board were given a tour to show them exactly what they were working on in this particular WayneTech lab. Most of the tour had been a complete snoozefest until their guide had started talking about the chemistry involved with what they were attempting to make. Jack always loved chemistry, so much fun!!

He stopped when he entered the hall that actually led to the safe. He narrowed his eyes. He joked about the robots being roombas, and they did resembled the little cleaning robots, but these things were actually a type of laser defense grid. The robots moved, constantly casting a laser beam over the floor that led to the safe. What made them dangerous was that the laser grid didn't stay the same; there was no way one could learn the layout because it changed every twenty minutes. But Trope had given Jack an EMP machine of her own design. She had showed him how she had made it, a really ingenious piece of work that now that Jack had seen how it worked, he knew he could easily duplicate.

Jack waited, counting until he saw the little machine move, shifting the laser grid. He smiled and eased the tiny EMP machine into the hall, pressing it against the side of the wall and with a flick of his thumb the machine came on. It made no sound at all, the only indication that he had actually turned it on was the light on the side, a tiny red bulb coming on.

Jack heard Trope’s voice in his ear. “Count to ten Boss and then step out. You won’t notice anything, but I promise, it worked.”

Jack chuckled. “I’m going to hold you to that Trope.”
Jack silently counted then, with a wide and devilishly amused grinned, he started to walk swiftly down the hall, passing the now dead security “roombas”—as Trope had promised—and headed straight to the vault.

*

Harley reached for the doorknob grinning when the office door popped right open for her. She slipped into the office and plopped down in the comfortable office chair with a big grin. She did a little spin giggling to herself before she stopped and turned the computer on. She grinned. It had been left on sleep mode and did not require a password. She shoved the stick in and waited.

*

Outside it had begun to rain causing a deep chill to settle on Gotham. Two figures were crouched on top of a building that faced toward the WayneTech labs. One was a woman dressed in a purple and black bodysuit, her long black hair was worn loose, held back only by a purple mask. The Huntress, pulled her cloak around her shoulders a little tighter and glared up at the sky. “I swear, the rain is worse than the snow.”

The man beside her was dressed in a completely purple-grey suit that covered every inch of him, including his face, adorned with large black spider on the forehead, chuckled “You always complain about the weather.”

The woman in purple laughed softly. “Shut up spider.”

The man chuckled in response to his partner.

They were both quiet, the only sounds being the falling rain and the occasional car driving along a street nearby. With the rain, tonight had been pretty quiet which was all right with Huntress. Black Spider kept hoping something big would happen which would draw Batman to them. He really wanted to test himself up against Batman, but they had only been doing their vigilante gig for the last couple of months and clearly either Batman was ignoring them or they hadn't busted any criminals to make them worth Batman's time. Ultimately the goal for Huntress and Black Spider was a chance to work alongside Batman, to be out there cleaning up the streets of Gotham. Hell, Batman couldn't be everywhere all the time...Gotham was big enough for more than one vigilante...at least that was Huntress's theory. Spider was mostly here for the fun of getting to beat the shit out of some people. Though in recent weeks, Spider and Huntress were wondering if Batman wasn't tough enough on crime Gotham...sending them to jail was fine, but what about when they were back on the streets. Huntress still seemed to have some reservations, but Black Spider thought it was time to start thinking in terms of more permanent solutions.

They had only been on patrol for a few hours when they both decided to take a break from the rain, finding shelter under a patio set up that someone had on the roof of their apartment building. The two of them were crouched under a large, faded patio umbrella when Black Spider thought he saw something in the WayneTech labs window.

“Hey, Huntress, do they work late nights at the lab?” He pointed down and across the street to the WayneTech's lab.

Huntress stood up to get a better look. “Not usually. Why?”

“I...thought I saw a light coming from the lab.” Spider frowned then shrugged. “Though it could have been anything.”
Huntress stretched, putting her hands on her lower back and bending backward to crack it. “Well, it's probably nothing, maybe custodians, but it wouldn't hurt to drop down there and check it out.”

Spider stood stretching his arms over his head. “What I wouldn't do for a good bank robbery or a home invasion right now...warm up my muscles, feel like I'm getting stiff with the cold and rain.”

Huntress chuckled. “You're terrible. Aren't we supposed to be happy it's a quiet night?”

“Pffft! I suppose,” Spider mumbled, jumping up onto the building's ledge then, without another word, he leapt, throwing himself out into space with the confidence and grace of someone who didn't fear death or failure. Huntress watched him as he made it, landing on the roof at least fifteen feet below. She shook her head at her sidekick before she herself jumped down.

* *

Jack grinned, hurrying out of the safe room with the prototype materials in the large bag attached to his waist. He came running out, grabbing the EMP device at the last moment. “All right kiddies! Time to skedaddle!”

Harley came skipping out of seemingly nowhere to throw herself into his arms and kiss the front of his red helmet. “Ready!!”

Danny came next along with Duela and Haskins bringing up the rear. Danny grinned holding up her prizes, two laptops. “You think Trope will like these Boss?”

Jack laughed. “I do indeed.”

Duela smiled. “I found some money in a swear jar in the break room.”

Jack laughed. “That's good darling.”

Haskins muttered. “This was stupid.”

Harley felt Jack's arms tense around her; she was pretty sure Haskins wasn't going to make it with the Red Hood gang for much longer. Instead of saying anything to Haskins, Jack simply sighed.

“All right boys and girls, your tour of the WayneTech lab is officially over. You can stop by the gift shop on your way out!” He laughed. “Let's go!! Everyone back on the bus!”

They had just turned as a group to head out the way they had come when a female voice said:

“Oh, I don't think so. You guys get the honor of going to jail instead.”

Harley laughed and pointed at the woman and man standing in their way. “Oh my gosh puddin!! Costumers!! Like Batman!”

Jack laughed. “Oh I think I'm insulted pumpkin—we don't rate the Batman? Instead we get...” He waved his hand vaguely at them. “Whatever the fuck you two think you are...Hey, where's my guy?”

Jack could just barely make out the slumped figure of Frost just outside the doorway.

Huntress started to open her mouth to reply, but Jack talked over her in a tone that said he was both insulted and clearly annoyed.

“First, terrible entrance...where is the flash? The showmanship? I mean Batman knows how to make
an entrance from what I've heard...this...it's pitiful really. Second, who the fuck are you? Purple girl
and her sidekick The Bruise? And third, get the fuck out of my way.” Jack pulled his gun and fired.

Huntress yelped, but she moved out of the way, the bullet zipping pass her head and out the door.
Everything turned to chaos in the next second. Harley ran past Jack and swung her bat, her aim for
Huntress. The woman threw herself forward in a gymnastics move that Harley actually knew how to
do herself, a simple forward somersault. The woman landed on her hands and rolled, coming up in
front of Jack. “I'm guessing by the red helmet you're the boss.”

Jack grinned behind the mask. “Oh, you are smart!”

Jack holstered his weapon so quickly that Huntress didn't see him move at first until that same hand
snapped back, his fist striking her just under the hollow of her throat. She stumbled back a few steps
coughing hard, which allowed Jack the second he needed to bring his right foot up and thrust kick
her in the stomach. When Harley's swing missed, she dropped to her knees just as the Spider
launched himself at her, the now empty space where Harley had been sent him flying over her.
Showing his training, he rolled in a somersault coming up on his feet just as Haskins pulled his own
weapon. He was too close to Spider, however, who grabbed the barrel of the gun, whipped Haskins'
arm to the side, chopping his fist down into the soft part of Haskins arm, the hollow space of his
elbow. Spider's fist collided with the inside of Haskins' elbow breaking it and forcing the other man
to drop his weapon and stumble backwards.

Duela let out a scream and ran making it down the hall and out of the building.

Danny hissed. “Get away from him!” She pulled her own gun, but Spider took three rapid steps
toward her dropping down on his knees just as she fired her weapon. He slid toward her at the last
second coming up on his feet and performing a full body flip. He brought his left leg up and
slammed his heel down, catching Danny in the arm. She cried out and stumbled back still keeping a
hold on her weapon, but Spider was quick; he moved forward, his fist flying out lightning fast. She
shot her gun blindly at him, the shot passing just past his torso as his fist hit her in the shoulder.
Harley let out a yelp and threw herself to the floor, the bullet just barely missing her when she came
back into the room. Haskins, who had fallen when Spider broke his arm, got up to his feet, but
dropped down again trying to find his gun with his good hand cursing loudly. “YOU FUCKERS!!
Fucking fuckers!!”

* 

Trope was yelling into their earbuds. “What's happening??!”

Dale hearing the fighting and the sounds of gunfire and hissed. “Oh fuck!” He started the engine
yelling at Sandra. “Get ready to move on my call!”

“Okay got it!” She called back, her knuckles turning white on the wheel.

*

Danny gasped when the man in the spider suit came in right under her guard. She dropped her
weapon throwing her hands up backing up until the back of her legs hit a desk. “Okay, okay you
win!!”

But Black Spider didn't stop. He moved with such speed that Danny didn't have time to do anything
as his fist struck her three times in quick succession in her throat. Danny fell to the floor, a dribble of
blood rolling down her chin from her mouth. Spider smiled behind his mask and turned his attention
to the other man whose arm he had broken, but when he turned Haskins had his gun pointed at him.
He was shaking and there was sweat rolling down his face as he held his broken arm to his chest. “Don't move motherfucker or I'm going to blow your head right off!”

*

Huntress took a few quick jabs at Jack, but Jack weaved swiftly surprising her with his speed and skill. She missed striking him, but just barely. She snarled in frustration, which made Jack laugh. “You know you really shouldn't be flirting with me like this, you're going to make my girl mad and you really wouldn't like her when she's mad.” He laughed.

Huntress snarled. “Can't believe a criminal like you has a girlfriend.”

“I ain't his girlfriend ya bitch! I'm his wife!!” Harley snarled and swung her bat. Huntress turned at the sound of Harley's voice, ducking, but not quite fast enough as Harley's bat caught her in the shoulder, the end cap of the bat hit the edge of Huntress's shoulder bone with a nasty sounding crack.

Huntress gasped in pain. Harley grinned viciously. “I'm getting really tired of people flirting with my PUDDIN!!”

She brought her weapon down in an over the head swing, but Huntress snapped out with a kick to Harley's knee, knocking her right leg out from under her. Harley yelped and stumbled to the side, the head of her bat slamming into the floor.

Jack hissed. “No one touches my GIRL!”

He came at the woman just as Huntress spun on her knee whipping her leg out, but Jack jumped, her leg catching only air. The man in the red helmet surprised her when he spun in the air in a half circle and slammed his heel into her face, knocking her back. She went with the kick, rolling away and coming back up on her feet just as another shot was fired. Everyone's attention was drawn to the sound of a gunshot only to see Spider lunge, his fist out, hitting Haskins in the chest with an impact that sent the man stumbling backwards and crashing into several desks.

Spider sprang forward with the intention of helping Huntress, but he moved too quickly without realizing just where his opponents were as he did a forward flip. Harley had turned at the same time, seeing him just as she did a full pivot with her hips, her hands tight around her bat, her arms close to her body as she snapped the bat up, catching Spider under the chin, knocking the vigilante's head up with the sharp impact. As the end of the bat smashed into his chin, several of his teeth cracked when his bottom jaw snapped into his upper jaw from the impact. Harley finished her spin, then twisted back around, the bat flowing with her as she smashed Spider again, this time in the side, cracking several ribs and then twisted the bat around for another back swing, which lacked the power of her first two, but was still damaging. Her third swing was shorter and more compact, hitting Spider more with the knob of her bat. The man went down in a heap and a groan. Harley squealed. “SCORE ONE FOR THE RED HOOD TEAM!! The CROWD GOES WILD!!”

She jumped up and down.

Meanwhile Huntress spun back around to face Jack, but he was ready for her and did a quick and sharp snap kick, his leg raise, snapping out from the knee, the side of his foot catching her in the face, knocking her to the ground.

Jack giggled, then raced over to grab Harley's hand. “Come on sweets! We need to get out of here!”

Haskins gasped getting to his feet. “Where's Duella?”

Jack shrugged. “No idea, she ran out of here screaming! Get Danny!”
Haskins stumbled over to Danny then stopped looking at her funny. He reached down and touched her throat. “Boss, I think she's dead.”

Jack hurried over and checked her, then hissed. “Fuck.”

That was when they all heard the sounds of sirens. Jack growled and hissed again. “Grab her body Haskins! Fuck, come on!”

Haskins cursed grabbing Danny up and tossing her body over his shoulder. They raced out of the building, stopping long enough to pull the unconscious Frost to his feet. Jack slapped him once across the face. “Come on buddy up and at 'em; time to run!”

Frost groaned as he blinked and staggered. “Okay, okay Boss.”

Then the four of them headed back to the SUVs...

*

Harley was limping a little by the time they returned to the house. They had dropped Haskins off at a place recommended by Alex where he could get treatment, no questions asked. They were all upset about Danny, but there wasn't much that could be done for her except to mourn her in their own way. Jack kicked the door open, carrying Harley, who was cradling her bat against her chest as he pushed the door open.

She giggled. “You can put me down. It's not as swollen now, I can feel it.”

Jack walked her over to the stairs sitting her down on the fifth stair up before he pulled his helmet off dropping it to the floor with a “clunk” before he walked over to the front door and closed it. Harley tossed her bat down for it to land with a thud next to his helmet.

“I can't believe our first job and we lost someone...who wasn't Haskins? Why couldn't it have been him?” Jack moved over to sit on the stairs next to her.

Harley laughed leaning back on the stairs and let out a sigh of exhaustion. “But we got the prototypes so...win!” She gave him a big smile. He grinned, giving her a kiss on the cheek before he leaned back to smile at her. “True my sweets, true.”

He sat back up and picked up one of her legs, laying her limb across his thigh and pulled her boot off. He tossed it to the floor, then her sock, tossing it down the stairs too, but the sock caught on the third step and stayed there. He continued, leaning over to pull off her other boot off, tossing it down the stairs to land next to the other one, then her other sock. He kicked off his own boots which tumbled down the stairs to land next to hers.

“I have to say pumpkin, you were beautiful with your bat.”

He grinned standing up to lean over her, grabbing her pants and started to yank them down her hips. She giggled lifting up her hips to make it easier for him. “Thank you puddin, and what are you doing?”

“I'm going to inspect your knee,” he explained as he pulled her pants and panties down her legs. She giggled. “That requires you to take my panties?” she asked with a grin and lifted eyebrows.

“It does. Call me thorough,” he said with all seriousness.

She giggled softly reaching up to pull off her mask before yanking her top over her head, tossing
everything down the stairs and lastly her bra and gloves, though she slowly pulled her gloves off with her teeth before tossing them and her bra into the pile at the bottom of the stairs. She laid back against the stairs, her heels resting on the stairs just below her, her legs spread. Jack smiled reaching out to run one gloved finger down between her breasts.

“Mmm... so soft and biteable,” Jack cooed then he chuckled, his blue eyes roaming over her body. “You chilly Harley?” He looked pointedly at her breasts, her nipples hard before he very gradually circled the nipple of one breast with his gloved finger, grinning from ear to ear, watching the way her skin goosebumped again, her nipples hard. He licked his lips and gently cupped her breast with one gloved hand and brushed his leather clad thumb over her nipple, making her gasp. She arched her back into his touch, watching him through her lowered lashes.

He leaned close to her other breast to trace her nipple with the tip of his tongue, lowering himself down to his knees on the step between her legs and very slowly continued to circle her nipple until she was arching into his attentions with a deep moan of pleasure, her groin tightening, heat rushing through her body, making her feel tight and needy.

“Mm...” Jack smiled and brushed the tip of his nose against her nipple. “You are chilled. Look at that... look at how hard your nipples are...” He smiled kissing each nipple tenderly.

Harley grinned at him, looking coy. “Maybe puddin... maybe you just need to come over here and warm me up?”

Jack stood up and ran his fingers down her stomach, his gaze traveling the line of her body, pressing his lips together with a clear expression of want when his eyes traveled down between her legs, the pink wetness of her begging him to take her.

He tore his eyes away to glance at her knee. He winced, looking at her knee. She was right; the swelling did seem to have gone down some, but there was a deep purple and blue bruise forming. “Oh... Harley...” he said softly before he leaned in dropping back down to his knees on the stair between her legs and pressed a kiss tenderly to her knee. “My poor girl.” He slowly caressed her leg, running his fingertips up and down the inside of each of her thighs.

She watched him with a soft smile. “You're so sweet puddin.”

Jack caressed her legs gently, his fingers teasing as he dragged his nails down low, caressing the tender skin of her inner thighs. “I don't like my girl getting hurt.”

She leaned back against the stairs, grabbing the front of his shirt and tugged him toward her.

“Come here and warm me up Jack, please.” She rubbed her nose against his with a playful pout.

Jack leaned down, placing his hands on the stairs just at her shoulders, holding himself up as he leaned in to kiss her, a deep and tender kiss. He caught her tongue with his teeth, just enough to tease before diving his tongue into her mouth. Harley moaned softly wrapping her arms around his neck, sliding the foot of her unbruised leg down the back of his calf. Jack’s mouth moved down along her chin, sinking his teeth in tenderly then moved further down, biting at her throat sinking his teeth against her skin until she gasped.

Harley reached down between them working to pull open his slacks yanking the zipper down and shoving. She growled. “Naked, now Jack... now!”

Jack chuckled pushing off from the stairs and stood up. He grinned down at her running his fingers over the buttons of his shirt before he slid a few buttons free. He mimed licking her, then reached
over his shoulder and yanked the shirt over his head. Then he slowly pushed his pants down his legs, swaying his hips for her before kicking off his pants, then his socks. He grinned down at her and very seductively pulled his gloves off with his teeth, just as she had.

Harley giggled watching him. “That deserves some dollar bills in your G-string puddin.”

Jack laughed. “Well I'll have to remember that and give you a real strip show sometime! Oh and buy myself a G-string. Ha!”

Harley laughed. “Oh I'm going to hold you to that! I want my strip show!”

Jack laughed tossing his gloves over his shoulder before he grabbed her, lifted her up and twisted around, sitting on the stairs with her. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck, kissing him passionately, placing her feet against the stair that ran just above Jack's waist, her fingers sliding through his hair before grabbing handfuls of his hair and tugging his head back slightly as she kissed him. She tugged herself forward, rubbing against his erection.

Jack groaned. “Harley...”

He ran his hands up her bare back, kissing her with fervor, reaching up to grab her hair. He pressed her hard against him feeling the teasing, wetness of her rubbing against him. Jack reached down between them, sliding his erection down just as Harley lifted up her hips, pressing himself past her barriers and deep into her; Harley immediately thrust herself down on him with a loud moan.

“Uh...Jack...my Jack...”

Jack grinned against her mouth yanking her hair to tug her head back and expose her throat to him, his teeth skimmed along her tender skin, biting down once or twice his way down her throat.

Harley moaned dropping her feet to the flat of the stair behind Jack's hips putting her in a squatting position. She used the stairs to give herself a firmer, more powerful thrust, dropping her hands to Jack's shoulders and squeezing. She held onto him while using the stairs to thrust herself up and down, rocking her hips forward at the same time.

Jack groaned dropping his hands to her hips looking down to watch the way his shaft disappeared into her body while she thrust and slid along his thighs. Harley groaned, her breath coming in gasps while she jerked her hips forward. Jack wrapped his arms around her, standing up just long enough to flip her around an press her up against the stairs. Harley gasped with a laugh, Jack's face buried against her neck, his teeth and tongue playing against her skin while he thrust hard and fast into her. Harley held on, her hands grabbing handfuls of his hair.

Jack grunted then groaned thrusting upward hard, burying himself deep inside her press her up the stairs. He shifted her while he kneeled on the stair, fucking hard and fast in a series of jerks that had Harley bouncing, the edges of the stairs rolling along her back. She hissed, wrapping her legs tight around him. She grabbed his hair again, attacking Jack's mouth, making him groan, thrusting up hard and deep again which made her orgasm in a loud cry that echoed through the large house. Jack hissed continuing to thrust and groaned against her ear. “You're so wet Harley...uuh...you feel so good..”

Harley groaned softly. “Make me cum again puddin...do it.”

Jack smiled. “Mmm...yes Harls.”

Jack held her close and let himself go, thrusting harder, faster into her, her whole body bouncing. He lowered his head to her breasts, catching a nipple for just a moment. Harley gasped, both of them
panting and sweating. Jack's thrusts were hard, deep to the point she didn't think she could take
more; it felt so good she couldn't think coherently, but then she arched, crying out, her second
orgasm ripping through her in a way that shocked another loud cry from her.

Jack hissed. "Fuck!! Harley!!" Just as he burst inside her.

He couldn't stop moving, he had to thrust into her draining his entire being into the woman he loved.
Jack wrapped his arms tightly around her, holding her against him as if afraid she would vanish.
Harley held tightly to Jack covering his face with kisses. Jack returned her kisses, both of them
slowing down, holding each other tightly. Finally Jack stopped moving, rubbing his nose against her
ear, then gently along her throat. "Did I hurt your knee?" he asked with a hint of worry in his voice.

Harley chuckled. "I'm fine, I promise puddin."

Jack glanced up the stairs pursing his lips. "Think I can carry you up the stairs like this?"

Harley giggled. "No, don't you dare."

Jack's smile spread across his face, his eyes dancing with mischief. "What did you just say?"

"Jack...no! Don't you do it!" Harley squealed as Jack lifted her up, keeping himself inside her. She
yelped and wrapped her limbs tight around his torso as Jack adjusted his grip, his hands grasping her
rear. He laughed as he yelled. "HOLD ON!" just before he raced up the stairs with Harley laughing
and squealing. "PUDDIN!!"

* 

Back in the small house where Cobb lived, Benjamin Orchard watched the hidden camera with
narrowed eyes. He wasn't suppose to be monitoring them...not yet. The Court had expressly
forbidden it, but Orchard was focused. He wanted Jack Wayne...not for the Court...but for himself.
He reached over and shut the monitor down breaking the feed before Cobb could catch him at it.
Jealously burned in him, he wanted Jack for himself, but that woman he was with...he would have to
figure out a way to dispose of her, but not just yet. He had to think of what he was going to do and
how to do it, carefully...

When she was gone, he wanted Jack to be his...to be at the point that her death would mean nothing
to him. He just had to figure out how...

* 

It was early the next morning. Alfred was up having already put on a pot of coffee. He hadn't been
able to sleep last night...not that it had been any different than the last several nights. Alfred thought
that maybe part of it was heartbreak. He was heartbroken over what had happened between Jack and
Bruce. Even more so because he knew exactly how much each of those young men really cared for
one another. He was happy that Jack had Harleen, but Bruce was alone.

Alfred sighed. He had had such hopes when Jack fell in love, that maybe there would be children in
the manor...life...love. He smiled as he pulled out some green onions from the fridge. Jack would
make a wonderful father. The way he loved Miss Harleen, the two of them could be so happy
together. But now this strain between the brothers, Bruce's obsession with his persona
Batman...trying to right all the wrongs in Gotham. He just wasn't sure letting Bruce do this had been
the best idea. He had thought...Alfred sighed with a slight shake of his head. He didn't know what he
had thought...

He reached up pulling down a coffee cup when suddenly felt lightheaded. Alfred frowned, closing
his eyes and grabbed hold of the counter. He grimaced and rolled his neck, reaching his fingers to his breastbone and rubbed the tightness that he felt there...

*

Bruce came down the stairs with a slight skip in his step. He had just received a message from Talia asking him to meet her for lunch. He tried not to be excited by the prospect, but he was...maybe after Selina things in his personal life might be looking up.

Bruce made his way into the kitchen. “Alfred? I think I might…”

He came around the corner to find Alfred on the floor, unconscious.
Jack heard the phone ring next to the bed. He muttered and rolled over, snuggling up against Harley's bare backside; the warm softness of his wife against him allowed him to relax. He smiled sleepily and wrapped his arm around her, pulled her tighter against him, enjoying the way her soft rear end fit up against his groin. The little noises she made, wiggling against him made him want to lift her leg and thrust into her always inviting body, burying himself inside her. Just thinking about sex with her made his erection hardened. He growled sleepily and started to reach down between her legs, his fingers seeking her, wanting to make her squirm, when the phone rang again, vibrating across the smooth wooden surface of the bedside table. Jack groaned in irritation and squeezed Harley's hip before he reluctantly rolled over to grab the phone. He didn't bother to see who was calling when he hit the button and snarled.

“This had better be good.”

“Fucking good morning to you too,” Alex's voice came over the line.

Jack flopped back on the pillows with a sigh. “Hey Alex. Everything all right, you take care of our associate?”

“Yeah, Danny's been taken care of— just another missing person in Gotham. Real shame about her though.”

“Yea...I know Batman doesn't kill, at least not according to that man's press, but I guess it's not the same for all of Gotham's vigilantes. Though leaving her there might have put a crimp in the tights of all those flying fucks,” Jack muttered in thought.

Harley rolled over and shifted closer to Jack. She laid her head against his chest and wrapped her arm around his waist. She pressed her lips to his chest, smiling softly as her cheek pressed against him and listened to the beat of his heart.

“So why are you calling at...”Jack pulled the phone away from his ear to look at the time. “Shit Alex it's nearly one in the afternoon! Why are you even up?” Jack chuckled before reaching over one handed for his cigarettes. He pulled one out with his teeth before setting the pack aside and picked up his lighter. He flicked the wheel twice before the flame sprang to life. Harley opened her eyes and glanced up at Jack as he set his lighter aside; she smiled again and closed her eyes, listening to her husband's heartbeat, his breathing, and felt his voice lightly vibrate against her cheek and ear.

“I got a call from one of my sources at the Gotham City Hospital. Jack...” Alex was silent for a moment as if he was searching for the best way to say something before he spoke again.

“Alfred's in the hospital. Looks like he had a heart attack,” Alex said softly. Alex knew how important Alfred was to Jack. Jack had not discussed much of his personal, home life over the years they had known each other, not even the tension in his relationship with his older brother. It had taken a long time before Jack had mentioned Alfred to his one-armed friend. Then, over time Jack had let things slip about growing up and Alfred being his only companion. Alex didn't know the extent of Jack and Alfred's relationship, but he knew it was close; that if Jack had a father, it was Alfred.

Jack sat up in bed knocking Harley askew. “WHAT?”

She sat up blinking back her doziness, frowning at her husband as she pushed her hair out of her
“Puddin?”

Jack reached over and put his arm around her shoulders, kissing the top of her head in apology for knocking her off of him. He swallowed and focused back on the phone, his other hand shaking slightly as he brought the cigarette back to his lips. “Did I hear you correctly? Alfred is in the hospital?”

Harley gasped, her hands flying to her mouth.

“Yeah, I got a couple of fucking people on the inside. Anyway one of them told me Alfred Pennyworth, the Wayne family butler, was brought in. He was found unconscious on the fucking floor by Bruce Wayne. My source didn't have more details, just that Pennyworth had a heart attack, but I called you right away.” Alex sounded upset. “I'm sorry man. Right now he's in the coronary care unit and your brother is there with him.”

Jack threw the covers off and stood. Harley watched him walk across the floor naked and throw open the closet. “When do visiting hours end?”

“Usually around eight p.m.,” Alex replied.

Harley stood up quickly, hurried over to Jack, and kissed his shoulder, whispering, “I'm going to run downstairs and make us some coffee.”

Jack smiled faintly at her and nodded, kissed her on the forehead. She smiled, grabbed her robe, and headed out of their bedroom. Jack pulled out some slacks. “I don't want to wait that long,” Jack muttered and inhaled sharply. “Think your friend can get us in unseen by Bruce?”

Alex sighed. “Probably, yeah, but...Bruce isn't leaving his side. How you going to get in to see Alfred without running into your brother?”

Jack smiled. “I'll think of something.”

*  

They arrived at the hospital around six p.m. Jack was dressed in a long black cashmere overcoat, black leather gloves, and had donned a black slim-fitted suit with a grey vest, plum colored shirt, and a black tie underneath the coat. On his feet, he wore black wingtips with plum and green polka-dotted socks, a black fedora tugged low over his brow and a pair of sunglasses (his eyes were lined in black eyeliner behind the glasses). He had even brought along a black and gold walking stick. Harley, her arm tight around Jack's arm, had her hair pulled back from her face, the rest falling down her back in a golden wave, with her own black fedora on her head. She wore a pair of over-sized sunglasses, along with a pair of slim-fitted black tuxedo pants with a matching double-breasted black tuxedo jacket and a blood red blouse underneath. She had chosen a pair of red pointed-toe leather pumps, and a long black overcoat of her own. All eyes turned toward the couple when they stepped into the hospital. Jack grinned while showing off his perfectly straight white teeth against the red of his lipstick adorned lips, which matched the color Harley wore on her own.

“God, I love making an entrance,” he observed softly to Harley. She giggled and leaned into him, gazing up at Jack through her glasses. “You always make an entrance puddin.”

Jack snickered. “Was there a double meaning behind that Harley?”

Harley giggled. She wrapped her arm around his waist as they made their way down the hall, heading toward the elevators. All the eyes of nurses, doctors and visitors watched as the two of them walked to the elevator. Alex had given them the name of his contact, a young nurse named Bobby.
Duncan. Bobby was to meet them on the cardiac floor.

When they arrived on the fifth floor, they both saw a young man with shoulder length brown hair, a very slim build in a pair of light blue nursing scrubs and thick soled white nursing shoes, pacing back and forth in front of the elevator while chewing on one of his nails. When they stepped off the elevator, he turned to look at them. No Harley thought, he whipped around to stare at them.

“Are you Mr. and Mrs. Wayne?” he asked in a rapid, clipped fashion.

Jack smiled. “That’s us my darling boy.”

Bobby nodded and motioned. “Come on this way—I have a place where we can talk.”

Their tiny group moved down the hall taking a left turn and stopped in front of a door marked “Supplies” labeled in black across the front. Bobby opened the door, stuck his head inside. He turned to glance over his shoulder at them with an embarrassed look.

“Sorry, sometimes some of the staff likes to use this closet for, um...meetings.” He blushed. Jack and Harley both chuckled in understanding, but said nothing. After Bobby turned the light on he motioned them both inside. “He's still in there,” Bobby said quickly. “I mean Mr. Wayne...I mean your brother.” The nurse shook his head, as if to clear it and continued. “Alex said Bruce Wayne is your brother, that you're Jack Wayne...aren’t you suppose to be missing or something? Oh God...and you came in here looking like that?!” Bobby went from calm to worried in a heartbeat, the nail of one finger instantly going back between his teeth.

Jack chuckled. “Don’t worry my dear. So a few people saw us. All they saw were two well-dressed people in a hospital. We could be anybody!” Jack reached up to remove his sunglasses. “This is Gotham; that isn’t that unusual. No one is going to know it was us. Besides, I couldn't sneak in to see Alfred and not look my best.” Jack’s voice trailed off a bit, the humor dying on his tongue, taking on a serious tone. For all the smiles and chuckles, it was clear he was upset. “And I won't let my feud with Bruce keep me away from seeing Alfred.”

Harley took off her sunglasses and ran her hand up and down his arm in what she hoped would be a comforting gesture. Jack smiled at her, wrapping his hand around hers where she had settled it against his arm and squeezed softly.

Bobby nodded. “Yeah...yeah you're right, no one would care. Sorry Mr. Wayne, just...I get nervous. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to sneak you two in to see Mr. Pennyworth. Mr. Wayne hasn't left his side all day. And there's another problem—Mr. Wayne has a woman with him.”

Jack smiled, reached over, and patted Bobby on the cheek. “What's there to be nervous about?”

Bobby nodded. “Thanks.”

“So, this woman is with my brother? Do you know who it is?” Jack asked with genuine curiosity.

“No, but he called her Talia,” Bobby answered, glancing at the door as if he expected the Spanish Inquisition to burst through at any moment.


“Who's Talia?” Harley asked trying to keep the irritation out of her voice as she pulled her hat off and held the brim a little tighter than necessary. She tried not to be jealous at the smile on Jack’s face and his tone, but failed miserably as jealousy spiked in her chest hard and fast.
Jack laughed, leaned over to kiss her on the cheek as if he sensed she was slightly jealous. “Talia was a girlfriend of Bruce's from college. They were crazy in love. Never saw Bruce act the way he did with Talia any time before or since. Even brought her home a couple of times. She spent the summer at the manor once or twice, and a couple of holidays.” Jack smiled fondly at the memory.

“I have to say, I was surprised they didn't get engaged.” Jack frowned in thought as he continued. “Her father, Ra's al Ghul, runs all kinds of various biotech companies around the world. I think he's nearly as rich as the Wayne family, if not richer. Anyway, Bruce and Talia were inseparable during college. They met their freshmen year and stayed a couple until their last year in college, when Talia had to go home to help run her family business with her father.” Jack paused tapping his chin with his forefinger in thought. “I don't know all the gory details,” Jack explained softly. “Alfred had mentioned that Bruce had bought her a ring. Anyway, by then Bruce and I rarely talked and Bruce isn't one to open up about his private life or his feelings, as you know by now, my love.”

Jack frowned in thought. “He's always been aloof, but it was clear that he was pretty devastated. I do remember that for several months after he graduated, instead of coming home, he traveled. Like he was running away from something.” Jack glanced at Harley. “Talia and I had a pretty good relationship though.” Jack smiled. “She was like the big sister I never had. She actually taught me how to use a sword and a lot of hand-to-hand fighting. She used to tell me that there was nothing wrong with me, that I just saw the world differently. That I was destined to be as special as Bruce.” Jack chuckled softly. “I actually believed her.”

(Harley sighed mentally in relief. She couldn't help the jealousy that flared at the tone of voice Jack had used in discussing the other woman.)

Harley turned Jack's face to hers and pressed her lips to his. Jack smiled, reaching around to cup the back of her head and returned her kiss. Harley pulled away and whispered. “I like her already. She was right—you are special, all of Gotham is going to see that.”

Jack chuckled at her assessment. “Mm...my pumpkin, always in my corner.”

“Always puddin,” Harley purred.

Bobby cleared his throat nervously. “So, ah...do you have an idea how I can get Mr. Wayne out of the room?”

Jack grinned. “Go and tell Talia that there is a message for her at the desk. Tell her it's from her младший брат.”

Bobby blinked. “What?”

Jack grinned. “Go and tell Talia that there is a message for her at the desk. Tell her it's from her младший брат.”

Bobby blinked. “What?”

Jack sighed. “Fine, let me write it down.”

Jack pulled a pen out from the inside of his suit coat and looked around the supply closet. He grabbed a roll of paper towels, ripped it open to pull off a sheet and write down the Russian word he had just spoken. “Just give her this, all right?” Jack handed Bobby the towel. Bobby looked down at it and nodded. “Yes sir, Mr. Wayne.”

The three of them stepped outside of the closet. Bobby turned. “Just wait right here and I'll get her Mr. Wayne okay?”

Jack sighed. “Fine, but don't call me Mr. Wayne—that's my brother, just call me Jack.”

“Yes, ah...Jack.” Bobby smiled and hurried off.
Harley frowned. “What was that you said?”

Jack smiled. “Talia use to call me her младший брат; it mean's “little brother” in Russian. I hope she knows it's from me.”

Harley, her arms wrapped around his and squeezed tightly. “I'm sure Alfred is all right, Jack. He's tough.”

Jack nodded his agreement. “You're right. I just...I never thought about anything every happening to Alfred. He...he has always been the one constant, steady presence in my life. Even when things were bad, Alfred has always been there Harls. He...he loved me even at my worst.” His voice lowered. Harley could see the pain and worry in his expression.

Harley turned Jack to face her, wrapped her arms around his neck. She stood on the tips of her toes, her eyes locked onto his with confidence. “He's going to be all right puddin. I just know it.” She smiled softly at him, then leaned in to brush her lips against his in a sweet kiss.

Jack smiled softly, returning her kiss. He held her tightly against him, and then pressed his lips to her hair. “Thank you Harls.”

She smiled leaning against him. “I love you puddin.”

Jack brushed his lips across her hair again. “I love you too.”

*  

Bobby hurried down corridor to Mr. Pennyworth's room, the piece of paper towel shoved in the pocket of his scrubs and his heart pounding inside his chest. He took a deep, steadying breath when he arrived at the room before he gave a quick rap on the door with his knuckles, then pushed it open to step inside.

Mr. Pennyworth was in the bed, hooked up to heart monitors and with a nasal cannula on providing a steady flow of fresh oxygen. The older man looked frail and pale, but he was definitely looking better than when Bobby had first come on duty. Sitting in a chair beside him was Bruce Wayne in an expensive black suit, and standing behind Mr. Wayne was the woman Jack Wayne had sent him to get, Talia al Ghul. She was a beautiful woman; tall and slim, but with the build of an athlete, long, straight brown hair, and facial features were conducive to Bobby's assessment that she was 'exotic.' She wore a dark gold double-breasted blazer over a black mock-neck bow-detail jumpsuit with a pair of Jimmy Choo Shar suede sling-back pumps, and a black Prada impunture cahir small quilted handbag hanging from her arm, the very essence of elegance. Bobby was sure if he got close enough, she smelled good and expensive, just like Jack Wayne's wife did.

Bobby took another breath. Rich people made him nervous, famous rich people made him even more nervous, as everyone in the room turned to look right at him. He swallowed then cleared his throat. “Ah, there's a phone call for a Miss Talia al Ghul.” He smiled slightly.

Talia frowned reaching down to open her purse and pull out her cellphone. “That's odd.”

Bruce smiled. “Maybe they were having trouble with cell reception?”

“Maybe. I'll be right back.” She leaned over and kissed Bruce on the cheek and smiled at Mr. Pennyworth who returned her smiled before she followed Bobby out the door. When they were a few steps away from the door that had just swung shut, Bobby stopped and turned to her. “Miss al Ghul, I was told to give you this.” He handed the paper towel to her. Talia's nose wrinkled in disgust as she unfolded the paper and stared down at the Russian written there.
Talia frowned for a moment as she stared down at the paper, then she looked up at Bobby. “Jack? Is Jack Wayne here?” She spoke in a shocked whisper.

Bobby nodded putting his finger to his lips and motioned for her to follow him.

* 

When Talia came around the corner with Bobby and saw Jack, her heart leapt in her chest. She dashed over and threw her arms around the youngest Wayne brother. “JACK!”

Jack laughed and returned the hug. “It's been forever Talia!”

Talia hugged him tight surprising everyone when she lifted Jack off his feet and swung him around even though she was a good head shorter than him. Harley pressed her lips together to stop herself from laughing out loud to see her husband being picked up by the shorter woman.

“Jack Wayne!! What...” Talia set him down, reaching up to grab Jack by the face and stare hard at him. “Are you all right?” She let go of his face, laying her hands on his chest. “I don't understand...Bruce said...well he told me a little about what had happened, the asylum and that...that you were missing. It was all so horrible, but...but you're here...and...” Her eyes finally took in Harley standing a little to the side. Talia smiled at the other woman. “And who is this?”

Jack laughed after Talia put him down, placed his hands over hers and squeezed before he let go. “It's really nice to see you again Talia.” He turned to put his arm out to Harley, who stepped forward taking Jack's hand as he pulled her up beside him and wrapped his arm around her waist. “Well Talia, this is my wife, Harley—Harley Quinn, this is Talia.

Talia's eyes lit up. “Wife? You...you're married? Bruce never said...”

Jack's smile lit up his face. “I am! And Bruce...well...never mind, that's a story for another day. But yes, Harley and I are married.”

Talia stepped over to Harley and looked her up and down before she reached forward quickly, grabbing Harley by her shoulders and pulling her in for a tight hug. “It's so nice to meet you.” She stepped back, her hands still on Harley's shoulders. “You are simply divine! So beautiful!” Harley blushed with a murmured, “Thank you.”

Talia slid her hands down Harley's arms and held her hands for a moment as she turned her head to Jack. “I have to say, I'm surprised Jack...” Talia released Harley's hands. “I didn't really think you were interested in...well,” she chuckled softly. “Anyone at all.”

Jack grinned pulling Harley back to him. “I wasn't, until Bruce hired her as my private shrink. It was love at first sight.”

Talia frowned, puzzled. “Shrink?”

“It's a long story Talia.” Jack smirked. “I don't suppose Bruce has told you everything that's happened over the last year, has he?”

Talia shook her head. “No. He told me about a party where you attacked a guest and committed you to Arkham. He seemed very upset to be discussing it.”

Jack muttered with a curl of his lip. “I'm surprised.”

Talia continued. “Though I see that he left out an important component.” Talia looked pointedly at
Jack snorted. “Not surprising since Bruce hasn't approved of our relationship from the beginning.”

Talia frowned. “He claimed you were missing. I was struck by the fact that Bruce didn't seem more bothered by it.”

“Bruce knows I'm not missing, he just doesn't want Gotham to know that his crazy brother is loose. We had a falling out Talia—a bad one. One that I don't think will be fixed anytime soon,” Jack said sadly with a little flare of his nostrils. “I'm not ready to see him, not sure when or if I ever will be. Which is why I need your help. We're here to see Alfred, but I don't want to see Bruce. I don't want him knowing we're here. Could you...maybe get him out of the way for us?” Jack smiled at her.

Talia was brimming with questions, but instead she hugged Jack again quickly. “Of course.” She turned and motioned. “Come on, just give me a couple of minutes.”

They followed Talia to the corridor where Alfred's room was located. Bobby found them an empty room nearby where Jack and Harley could wait until they could go see Alfred.

Talia frowned. “I'm not sure how long I can keep him out, but I'll do my best. You think your friend here can play look out?” She glanced at Bobby.

Bobby nodded. “Yeah, yeah, it's fine.”

Talia smiled. “All right, be ready.”

* * *

They watched her disappear into Alfred's room. They leaned close to the door of the room they were hiding in, spying through the crack in the door to watch for when Talia and Bruce left the room.

“She seems nice,” Harley whispered.

Jack smiled. “She is. She's also smart and probably one of the most dangerous women around next to you. Don't understand what she sees in my brother though.” Jack chuckled. Harley elbowed him in the side, which only made Jack giggle more. She was about to make a reply when they both saw Talia and Bruce step out of Alfred's hospital room. Talia had her arm around Bruce's. Even from where they were hidden, Jack could see how pale and tired Bruce looked. For a moment his heart went out to his brother. It must have been hard to find Alfred like he did...But Jack also remembered what his brother had done, how Bruce had hurt Harley.

As soon as Talia and Bruce were out of sight, Jack and Harley raced across the corridor to Alfred's room and slipped inside.

The room was one of the nicest hospital rooms that Harley had ever seen. The walls were painted a soft baby blue and there was a large picture window that looked out onto the Gotham skyline. The room also had a couch and a table with a couple of chairs. In the middle was a hospital bed where Alfred lay, hooked up to monitors and oxygen. When Jack and Harley came into the room, Jack slowly took off his hat, leaning on his cane, staring at Alfred.

Alfred, who had been looking out the window rolled his head back with a smile. “Master Bruce, I must really insist that...” His voice trailed off when he saw Jack and Harley, his eyes going wide with shock.

“Jack? Harleen?” Alfred had left off the Master and Miss from their names in shock at seeing them.
both. His voice was weak, but his eyes lit up when he saw them. “Is that really you two?”

Jack smiled, then a little shyly waved with his hat. “Hey Alfred.”

Harley smiled too, tears immediately pricking at the corners of her eyes. “Oh Alfred.”

They both hurried over when Alfred put his hands out to them.

“It’s so wonderful to see you both!” the old man said softly. “I’ve been so worried about the two of you.”

Harley went to one side of the bed taking his hand, while Jack leaned his cane against the side of the bed and took Alfred’s other hand. Jack and Harley both sat on the edge of the hospital bed framing the older man. Alfred smiled brightly, blinking back tears as he squeezed their hands weakly. “Oh Master Jack, Miss Harleen, it is so nice to see you both! You both look so well.”

Jack leaned forward and wrapped his arms as best he could around Alfred while being careful of the oxygen tubes and other bits and pieces of equipment taped to Alfred. Jack pressed his cheek to Alfred's and whispered. “I’m so happy to see you Alfie.”

Alfred returned Jack’s embrace with one arm, while pulling Harley against him with the other. He started crying silently, tears rolling down his cheeks. “Please forgive an old man for being sentimental, but I didn’t think I would see you both again...I just...”

Jack sat up, but not before giving Alfred a kiss on the cheek, his red lips leaving a kiss mark on the older man's pale skin.

“What do you think you're doing trying to scare us, eh?” Jack laughed softly though he wiped at his eyes with one gloved hand, smearing his eyeliner just a little. “Like I wasn’t going to come see you!” He smiled affectionately at Alfred. “You know, I'm sure if you asked Bruce would have given you some time off. Didn't have to try and have a heart attack you know.” Jack smiled brightly at Alfred. “Being a little dramatic.”

The older man smiled at Jack lovingly. “Well, I do miss my time on the stage Master Jack, and you know how I am; I don't like to take time off without a good reason.”

They both laughed.

Harley was still holding Alfred's hand as she smile softly. “You had us both worried.”

Alfred smiled. “The doctor says it was mild, that I was 'lucky.'”

Harley frowned. “I don't care if it was 'mild,” it was a heart attack Alfred.” She swallowed, tears started to run down her cheeks again. She wiped at them and smiled through them at the same time. Alfred removed his hand from hers to reached up and wipe away her tears as well.

“Please don't cry Miss Harleen,” he said softly. “I don't wish to be the cause of tears.”

She laughed softly and smiled at him.

Jack took Alfred’s hand between his own. He looked down rubbing his thumb across the older man’s knuckles, and said softly. “I'm sorry Alfred, this is all my fault.”

“Your fault Master Jack? Now how on earth is this your fault?” Alfred looked perplexed. “I'm simply not a young man anymore Master Jack. These things can happen at my age.”
“Just...all the stress. I...I feel responsible,” Jack confessed softly. “I never wanted to hurt you Alfred.”

Alfred smiled softly. “Oh Master Jack, it is not your fault.”

Jack frowned then, staring down at Alfred's hand cradled between his own. “I...I am sorry about what happened between me and Bruce...”

“I know Master Jack. Your brother is sorry too. Maybe if you spoke with him?” Alfred asked gently.

Jack shook his head. “Did he tell you what happened when he found us? About breaking Harley's nose or almost choking me? Or did he tell you anything about what happened to Harley and me at the asylum? You saw what it was like...I just...” Jack shook his head. He didn't want to put more on Alfred right now, but he felt that the old butler needed to know. “I just don't think there is any repairing what's happened Alfred.”

Alfred nodded. “I just wish there had been more I could have done Master Jack—for you and Miss Harleen.”

Then he looked between the couple sadly. “Master Bruce cares for you, for you both. He just isn't good...”

Jack squeezed Alfred's hand. “I don't want to talk about Bruce or about what happened.” Jack smiled. “I just wanted to tell you that Harley and I are married, officially and all.” Jack grinned and Alfred's expression brightened. “Really Master Jack?”

“Yup, really.” Jack smiled. “She is officially a Wayne now.” Jack winked at Harley.

Alfred smiled. “Oh, that is wonderful news.” Alfred brought Harley's hand up and kissed her knuckles. “Congratulations Miss...I mean, Mrs. Wayne,” Alfred said with a smile.

Harley giggled. “Oh thank you, Alfred.”

Alfred looked between them with concern then. “Where are you staying? Are you being fed all right? Are you safe?”

Jack laughed. “You need to stop worrying about us and focusing on getting yourself better, old man.”

Alfred started to say something when Bobby stuck his head in the door. “They're coming back! And they're moving fast!”

Jack sighed. “I wish we could stay longer.”

Alfred frowned. “Are you sure you won't reconsider speaking with your brother?”

Jack stood up, reaching for his cane. He glanced toward Harley as she leaned over to plant a kiss on Alfred's cheek and reached up to push back his thinning hair with a loving smile. Her kiss left a perfect lipstick mark on the old man's cheek to match the one Jack had left on the other cheek, before she hurried around to take Jack's hand.

“I don't think that's a good idea Alfred...not for a long while. As They Might be Giants said, “No one in the world gets what they want, and that is beautiful.”” Jack grinned. “You get better all right, promise me?” Jack smiled lovingly at the butler. “I'm really sorry Alfred, maybe someday.” Jack shrugged helplessly then he grinned brightly. “Remember Alfred, whatever doesn't kill you simply makes you stranger.” Jack giggled and winked at Alfred.
Alfred smiled in return, his eyes sad. “Yes Master Jack. I hope I will see you both again soon. The manor has become rather quiet without the two of you. I do so miss our little get-togethers in the kitchen.”

Jack swallowed his pain and smiled while Harley wiped away a few more tears. Jack's voice was heavy with sadness. “Me too Alfie, me too.”

Jack and Harley smiled at him, Harley blew a kiss to Alfred before they hurried to the door. Bobby held the door open motioning for them to go. They hurried through heading down the corridor toward the elevators. When they were perhaps halfway between Alfred's room and the elevator, they heard the sound of footsteps and voices. Jack turned, placed his fedora on his head, and looked over his shoulder just as Bruce glanced in their direction. He stumbled in his stride when he saw Jack.

“Jack?!” Bruce called out.

Jack grabbed Harley's hand with a grin. “Come on sweets!”

They both took off at a run. They could hear Bruce giving chase. “JACK! WAIT!!”

Talia was right behind Bruce. “Bruce, stop! Let them go!”

Jack slid across the slick hospital floor just as they arrived at the elevator holding Harley's hand in his (She slid across the floor, as well though not nearly as gracefully as Jack had—she blamed her heels.) Jack reached up to hold his hat on with the hand that held the cane. He pushed the button on the elevator and was rewarded when the doors opened instantly. He hopped in yanking Harley with him and slapped a button on the inside. Bruce raced towards them, yelling, “JACK PLEASE!”

Jack grinned at his brother and flipped him the middle finger just as the elevator doors closed on him and Harley.

*

The following evening Alex, Alice, Dale, Frost and Sandra were over Catherine House for dinner, a few drinks and games. Jack had been overjoyed to find a pool table in the mansion's game room. Dinner had been Alex and Alice bringing over some pizza, Dale and Sandra picking up some cupcakes for dessert and Jack and Harley providing the alcohol. The soft sounds of Kim Waters “Love Like This” played in the background.

The core group of the Red Hood gang were together to discuss their next move. Frost threw a dart before picking up his beer. “Hey, ah...when do you think your aunt might come back to Gotham?”

Jack looked up from studying his shot. “No idea.” He grinned. “Ah, do you miss her?”

Frost blushed. “She's an interesting woman,” he said simply.

Harley giggled and Jack sighed. “Oh Frosty, she is going to break your heart.”

Frost grinned. “I know, but it's going to be a fun ride.”

Jack groaned. “AH!! Things I don't want to know!! My aunt's sex life with my henchman!”

Frost laughed taking a sip of his beer then he smiled. “But seriously, when's she coming back?”

Alex took a sip of his bottle of Blue Moon beer, watching Jack and Harley play pool while Dale, Sandra and Alice threw darts.
“Well LexCorp got back to me. They're really interested in those prototypes you stole—uh, acquired. They're already offering me big bucks for them, just like they hinted at before the job.” Alex grinned.

“Well, I'm almost done making copies,” Jack, dressed casually in a pair of dark slacks, a button down purple shirt and a pair of his favorite new purple and black oxfords with green and orange striped socks, murmured as he leaned toward the table with his eye on the ball. Harley, her blonde hair falling loose around her shoulders, smiled and leaned on the pool table with her elbows, holding herself in such a way that her cleavage was nearly falling out of the sexy little red dress she was wearing just for Jack. Alex thought it was hilarious the way Jack and Harley continued to seduce and flirt with each other as if every night was their first night. He was also a little jealous, but he and Alice were getting along fine.

Alex said nothing, watching the little scene unfold between Jack and Harley as she leaned forward, threatening to come out of her dress while Jack glanced between his shot and her breasts. Alex had never met anyone so in love that they continued to lust after each other the way Jack lusted after Harley and vice versa. Harley smiled bat[...]

Harley was watching Jack with steamy eyes. She licked her lips gazing at Jack while she reached over and picked up her drink, a white Russian, then took a sip before she set it down and licked her lips again. She then reached up under her dress, pulling her short dress up just enough to grab her red lace panties and slip them down her legs.

Jack blinked, staring while Alex yelled. “Hey, there are fucking children here!”

Alice laughed. “Oh my god, you're right! This is a porno!”

Harley giggled tossing her panties at Jack just as he hit the ball completely messing up his shot. He grinned, picked them up, holding them to his nose and mouth, waggling his eyebrows at Harley before slipping them into the pocket of his slacks. “Totally worth missing the shot,” Jack purred.

Harley giggled picking up her cue stick and walking around the table in front of Jack. She leaned over, the dress riding up. (Alex thought it was lucky that Harley was actually facing everyone in the room except Jack...a jealous Jack was very dangerous thing.)

She shifted her hips, Jack's full attention on her backside. Then she took her shot. It was a decent shot, though Jack wasn't paying any attention. He had one hand on her backside, running his hand down the back of her thigh then up again.

Alex snickered to Alice. “Better bring them back to business or they'll start fucking doing it on the pool table in front of everyone.”
She snickered. “I can guess what's gonna happen when we leave.”

Alex chuckled in agreement, then spoke up loudly.

“So Jack—our next job. I was thinking we need to do something a bit more...instantly lucrative. Like a fucking bank job or something. Haskins is getting antsy, which mean Duela is getting antsy. We need something to pay them with and who doesn't like a good bank robbery?”

Jack brought his attention back to Alex, though he found that it was incredibly difficult with Harley's dress inching up; the thought of dropping to his knees and burying his face between her...he shook himself to focus his attention on the present and the fact that they had company.

“All right...a bank job. What did you have in mind? I thought all bank robbery was done through computers now. I mean Trope could probably do a job by herself.” Jack leaned on his cue stick, his eyes wandering toward the ceiling in thought, but then in the next instant his eyes lit up. “Oh...I know what we could rob!”

Dale had stopped throwing darts and stepped over to where he had set his beer on the counter top of the room's bar (it was a little bar area with a couple of stools, a raised counter and several bottles of expensive alcohol lining four shelves along the back wall.) He hopped up on a stool before he pulled Sandra onto his lap. “Like what?” he asked.

“We should definitely have Trope rob a bank for us...you...” He pointed at Alex. “You can have Trope set that up, she can just do it with her handy computer. No, we are going to do your classic smash and grap.” Jack grinned wide with delight rubbing his hands together.

Alex sat up straighter. “A fucking smash and grab?”

Jack nodded while Harley walked around and wrapped her arms around his waist from behind and set her chin on his shoulder. “Yup, we can hit one of Gotham's premiere jewelry stores, Brixman Family Jewelers located in the diamond district.”

Alex grinned. “Wow, be just like in the fucking movies.”

Frost frowned from where he leaned against the wall. “So what are you proposing, Boss?” It was part of Frost's task to look at any job they had planned with the eye of a cop and point out weaknesses and strengths in their plans.

Jack smiled. “It's simple really. We use one of the cars to smash straight through the front doors. Four or five of us enter, smash the cases and take as much as we can in under a minute, then we're out.”

Dale rubbed his chin. “You think it'll work?”

Jack nodded. “You ever hear of the biggest jewelry thief ever?” He looked around at everyone then looked offended with a little shake of his head. “I...I just can't call you guys criminals.”

Sandra chuckled. “We are all new to this.”

Jack smiled. “True, true,” he allowed. “Anyway, the biggest thief of jewels was done by one man in 2013. There was a jewelry exhibit at the Carlton International Hotel in Cannes, France. He stole white, pink and yellow diamonds along with some emeralds and rubies, after slipping past three guards. He stole 136 million dollars in under a minute, and he was never caught. There are twelve of us...granted we aren't going to take twelve, but the point is, if one man can do that, why can't we smash through the doors of Brixman and steal of few hundred thousand dollars worth of jewels in a minute? Talk about putting us on the tongues of Gotham.” Jack smiled brightly. “Besides boys and
girls, I know all about the Brixman, been there several times. I can tell you exactly the right cases to hit. But just to be sure, Harley and I can do a reconnaissance! See what they have and report back.”

Alex smiled. “I think that sounds good, actually.” He glanced at Alice who grinned. “Jewel thieves! Who'd have thunk!”

Frost raise his bottle of beer. “To the Boss!”

Everyone followed. “To the Boss!”

Jack giggled. “Oh this is going to be grand.”

Harley came around unwilling to release her grip on him and forcing Jack to raise his arms as she circled around. “You are brilliant puddin.”

Jack smiled brightly. “Why thank you, Harley.”

He pulled her close and kissed her. He looked up, smiling at everyone else. “Harley and I will check out the jewelry store tomorrow and we can meet up tomorrow night for the heist.”

Alex nodded as he finished off his drink. “We can meet up by the old clocktower. I'll let the rest of our ragtag gang know.”

Jack nodded and asserted, “I want to keep this small. We can do more with a smaller group actually breaking in than all of us, but I think several getaway cars might be a good idea...split us up just in case, then all meet up again later. I don't want any of the new kids alone with the jewels either. Make sure our disgruntled employee Haskins is there and I'm assuming Duela resurfaced after the other night?”

Frost took a sip of his beer then nodded. “Yeah, she called, said she was sorry.”

Jack shrugged. “Whatever. I really think we might want to consider a better class of henchmen...but until...Mmm...We'll leave Trope out of this one, she has other things to do.” Jack looked at the information broker. “Alex, you might want to sit this one out too...no offense, but you can only grab half the stuff.”

Alex snorted on a laugh. “You're a fuck head Jack. How about Alice and I be in one of the getaway cars?”

Jack grinned. “That sounds good. All right, so it will be me, Harley, Frost, Haskins, Duela and Jason breaking into the store. Getaway cars are Alice and Alex, Dale and Sandra and let's have Rolf standing by with one as well. Sound good?”

Alex nodded, but a frown crossed his features. There was something about the way that Jack said Haskins' name that made him wonder if old Haskins was going to make it out of the heist alive. It probably wouldn't take much at this point for Jack to put a bullet—or a knife—in Haskins and be done with him.

* 

Later that evening after their visitors had gone home, Harley was walking around the room picking up beer bottles while Jack picked up the glasses and cleaned up the food. He smiled watching her while she bent over, the dress sliding up just enough that he couldn't quite see under it, which was a damn shame he thought as he picked up a pizza box. Music continued to play while they picked up, Dua Lipa’s “Scared to be Lonely”.
His eyes traveled down the back of her legs to the red heels she wore, every inch the sex kitten he thought. Harley stopped at the bar picking up one of the beer bottles which was still half full and took a long swig of it. Jack watched her, his eyes roaming over her figure. Harley turned to smile at him. “Jewel thieves,” she said with a quick lift of her eyebrows and widened her eyes. “Sounds fun puddin.”

Jack chuckled. “And lucrative. We don't really need the money since I moved all my assets well before Bruce threw me in Arkham...but it will be lots of fun.” Harley finished off the beer, set the bottle down and turned to lean against the bar with her elbows, stretching out her legs, crossing them at the ankles as she smiled at him. Jack's eyes roamed over her, the way the dress tugged in just the right places, the way her cleavage was almost spilling out of the front of the dress.

“You know, we haven't finished our game,” Jack said as he walked over to where the trash bag they had brought into the room lay, picked it up and shoved their trash into it. Harley smiled walking over holding several beer bottles by their necks with her fingers. “No, I guess we didn't,” she said with a coy smile. Jack reached into his pocket and pulled out her panties holding them under his nose smiling at her. Harley giggled. “It was your turn, wasn't it?” Jack grinned. “It was.”

He walked over to the pool table and picked up the cue stick, he gracefully flipped the stick around before he hooked her panties over the stick while he watched Harley walk toward him, her hips moving in a smooth, enticing manner as the fabric of the dress clung to her, the heels of her shoes clicking on the hard wood floor of the game room. She stared at him with a hungry look, her hands caressing her hips and thighs as she moved toward him. He caught his bottom lip between his teeth watching her, groaning softly with a whispered. “Damn Harley.”

She grinned. “Puddin.”

Jack purred. “Come to Daddy.”

(In the background, the music had changed to 30 Seconds to Mars “Dangerous Night.”)

Harley giggled walking to him, her steps in time to the music. She reached out and took the cue stick from him. “Maybe I should go...hmm?” She lifted brow at him as she turned around on the toe of her shoe and bent over the table, her back to him and the cue stick held in her hands. The red panties slid down the stick. Jack grinned and stepped up behind her. He ran his fingertips up the back of her thighs then he pushed the dress up and over her backside.

Jack growled. “Mm..now that's beautiful.”

He rubbed his hands up and down her backside as Harley arched her back into his touch. “Mmm...puddin.”

Jack pressed against her, rubbed against her, swaying a little against her to the rhythm of the music which caused Harley to moan softly; the soft fabric of his slacks tickled deliciously against her backside. Jack grinned teasing them both with his rubbing until he dropped down to his knees. He spread her legs wide, running his hands up her shapely legs and leaned in to run his tongue up her, completely covering every inch of her with his tongue. Harley dropped the pool cue against the table and moaned.

“Oh Jack!” She arched her back and tilted her head upwards toward the ceiling while Jack's tongue licked every sensitive spot he could reach, his hands cupping her rear and squeezing as he buried his face and tongue against her.

Jack leaned away just long enough to slide two fingers into her, licking his lips while he slid his
fingers in and out of his wife, smiling at every little sound she made. He bit down on the soft plum flesh of her rear end and started to suck, intent to mark her skin, to see his mark on her smooth flesh; his girl, his wife. Jack slid his fingers in and only stopped to roll the pad of his thumb against her rectum in a slow, gentle circle before resuming the teasingly slow thrusting of his fingers.

Harley dug her fingers into the pool table as she arched her back further, her heels lifting up so that she balanced on her toes as Jack moved from sucking on her backside to letting his tongue do a slow circling tease around her rectum. He licked her, taking his time to enjoy her little shivers of pleasure before removing his fingers to be replaced by his tongue. He placed both hands on her ass, spreading her while his tongue probed in an extensive exploration. Harley groaned loudly, arching into his oral attentions. “Uhh...puddin...”

She shuddered when Jack stood up, removing his fingers which was followed by the sound of his slacks being unzipped. She hissed with excitement when she felt the soft velvet skin of his erection, sliding up and down spreading her fluids against her.

Jack groaned. “Mm...god you're beautiful Harley.”

Harley giggled, glancing over her shoulder at Jack, the sleeve of her dress sliding off her shoulder as she wiggled her rear at him. “Want me puddin?”

Jack chuckled. “Always my sweets.”

With that he slid into her. He didn't thrust hard, but took his time, gradually pressing himself deep inside her.

Harley moaned long and deep, the side of the pool table pressing into her hip bones when Jack pressed her up against the table. He reached forward to caress her hair as he slid in and out slowly, then thrust hard just to watch her backside bounce. He grabbed her hips, digging is fingers into her, thrusting hard and fast, then slow and deep.

He pulled completely out, surprising Harley as he grabbed her and turned her around, lifted her up, and set her on the edge of the pool table. “I want to see your face,” Jack explained in a heavy whisper, rubbing his nose against hers. “I want to watch you cum Harley.”

(The song had moved on to something else, Madonna's “I Want You.”)

Jack caught her bottom lip with his teeth, tugging gently before he kissed her. He kept his hands wrapped around her waist, balancing her on the edge of the pool table before he pulled back. He grabbed her dress, pulling the fabric down off her breasts then tugged her bra down so that he could have access to her naked breasts. He held her with one hand, bending down to run the flat of his tongue over her nipples, sucking one into his mouth then the other, the cooling dampness on her hard nipples when he switched breasts sent pleasant shivers down her spine. Harley put her hands on the pool table behind her, holding herself up while Jack attacked her breasts, his mouth moving over each one hungrily, sucking and biting at her hard nipples, holding one with his lips to use the tip of his tongue, flicking over the surface of the sensitive skin before doing the same to the other.

Harley groaned his name, then gasped as he twirled his tongue around one nipple with more vigor. “Ah...puddin...oh my Jack.”

He stopped and Harley thought he was going to take her, but instead he dropped to a crouch pressing her legs up and wide, kissing the inside of each of her thighs before he began sucking and licking her clitoris with slow and deliciously deliberate strokes on his tongue. Harley moaned as she laid back against the table, reaching down between her legs to grab his hair, the heels of her shoes against his
shoulders.

Jack moved his mouth over her in slow licks, sucks and kisses, burying his face against her and wanting to taste every inch of her when she came. He flicked his tongue over her clitoris, then slid two of his fingers into her again, keeping his movements deliberately slow and tantalizing. He grinned wide, his eyes dancing with her fluids covering his fingers and face.

Harley tossed her head back and forth, the shivering primal pleasure of his mouth bringing her closer to climax, until finally she screamed, her feet pointing which dug her heels into his shoulders as she gasped out. “JACK! Uhh!” Her hips rose up off the table for a moment as the orgasm rippled through her entire body, making every nerve ending scream in ecstasy.

Jack smiled wider still. Harley could feel it against her sex when he pressed a kiss to her sex. He kissed the soft skin along the inside of her thighs, pressing her legs against his cheeks, biting gently as he stood up, bringing her closer to the edge of the table and slid into her again, moving to drop her legs over his shoulders. He dragged her over the edge of the table wrapping his arms around her thighs and thrust hard and fast. Harley threw her arms over her head with a cry. “Oh puddin!”

Jack smiled, his eyes never leaving her, watching the way her mouth was open slightly, her breasts bouncing with each of his thrusts. Jack pulled one of her legs to his cheek and kissed her knee before lightly biting her. He reached down to rub her clitoris with his thumb at the same time thrusting into her, burying himself in his wife with all the passionate, mad love he felt for her. He growled with the effort. It was as if he just couldn't get deep enough. She was so wet, so slick, her muscles tightening around him in the most erotic way that Jack was almost breathless.

Harley tightened her muscles around him, trying to focus her will while at the same time enjoying the hard pounding he was giving her. She grinned up at him, her blue eyes taking on a glowing shimmer as she groaned. “I love you Jack...uh...I love you.” She reached up and dragged her fingers down his stomach.

Jack dropped her legs and reached down to pull her up into a sitting position. Harley wrapped her arms tight around his neck and her legs around his body at the moment that Jack covered her mouth with an intense kiss, stopping only long enough to whisper heatedly, “I love you Harls. I love you...uuh...” He dug his fingers into the flesh of her hips, holding her steady while pounding into her with a few hard thrusts accompanied by grunts of pleasure before he came. Jack came hard, thrusting uncontrollably until he thought his knees would give out.

Harley gasped, tightening her hold on him, his thrusting abandon, the smart smack of flesh on flesh, plus the new position set her rolling down the path of another orgasm. Harley cried out burying her face against his neck, sinking her teeth into him when she came; for a moment she was sure she was going to just pass out. He held her against him reaching up to stroke her hair while continuing to kiss her until they were both giggling. Jack brushed his nose against hers while scooting her a little more firmly onto the pool table.

“Who do you think won?” Jack asked playfully.

“Oh, I won. I always win.” Harley grinned with a touch of mischief in her eyes.

Jack caught her lips with a hissed. “I can live with that.”

*

Ben narrowed his eyes at the screen, jealousy raging through him. He balled his hands into fists as he watched them, holding each other, the way Jack kissed her just now. It just made him savagely angry
that that...woman had Jack's attention. Of course, Jack Wayne hadn't met the real him yet, but Benjamin was sure he could seduce him away from that witch if only given the chance.

He had watched their entire party, though he had no idea what was going on having kept the volume off so that Cobb wouldn't catch him in the observation room. He could have taken the time to read their lips, but he wasn't really interested in what was going on; he had only wanted to watch Jack, the way he moved, held himself...he was simply divine.

Ben frowned, a slight snarl on his lips watching Jack and that blonde fuck like animals. He had never seen two people go at it like the two of them. This only made Ben realize that he needed to start his seduction sooner before he couldn't get that woman's claws out of him! Benjamin simply couldn't think straight until he had Jack all to himself.

Maybe tomorrow when they left the house—assuming they did—he would follow them. Maybe the fates would put something in his path that would help him get rid of that woman. Ben smiled to himself, he had to get rid of her and soon. He couldn't stand to keep watching her fucking him when Jack Wayne should be his...Ben closed his eyes, his jealousy burning him up inside. He had to have him NOW.

Ben took a deep breath. Yes. Tomorrow. If he did this just right, the Court would never know he broke orders until he brought Jack into them, after Jack was all his, that was...He grinned. Ben would get his cake and eat it too!

Ben flipped off the cameras, now smiling. He hadn't wanted anyone as much as he wanted Jack since Felix and that hadn't ended well, especially after Felix tried to leave him. Ben didn't take rejection well, but Jack would be different. Ben was positive he had finally found a soulmate...just had to murder that person that was keeping Ben from his happiness.

Harleen Quinzel.

That afternoon Jack and Harley set out for the jewelry store. Harley was dressed in a pair of blue denim “boyfriend” jeans, a cream colored cable-knit dolman-sleeve cashmere sweater, a pair of fanny-leather fur trim combat boots, a leather jacket with a fur collar, her large round sunglasses, her blonde hair braided and twisted onto the top of her head and mostly hidden underneath a black faux fur aviator hat. Jack, with can in hand, was dressed in a pair of slim fit grey jeans, a black cashmere ribbed turtleneck, a pair of black saffiano leather double-monk shoes with a pair of bright purple socks, a leather bomber jacket, a black cashmere knit beanie and sunglasses.

They both had their makeup on, lips done in a matching shade of iconic red. Harley's hand was in Jack's as she walked down the street in the diamond district of Gotham, smiling ear to ear. It felt wonderful to be out with her puddin and she could tell Jack felt the same way. He walked beside her with a spring in his step. The weather was chilly, a frost in the air, but there was no snow or rain yet. The skies were a steely metal grey, threatening to either snow, rain or both, pouring down more winter misery on Gotham, which was why Harley was carrying a bright red umbrella over her arm. They had decided to make a day of it, shopping, lunch and of course, robbery tonight. They both figured if they went to out of the way places and kept their sunglasses on, no one would pick up on the fact that he was Jack Wayne, the missing little brother of Bruce Wayne. Who would even be looking for the missing brother to be just walking about Gotham?

As Jack and Harley made their way down the sidewalk, the electrical hum of the streetcars that traveled the rails rolled past everyone on the street. The Gotham streetcars were a dark burgundy and brown color, trying to capture a little bit of the old feel of the streetcars that first ran through Gotham
back in the late 1870's, and currently only ran through Old Gotham, through the Diamond district and into the Fashion district, right now, before turning around and doing the circuit over again. There were plans, headed by the Wayne Transportation and Urban Development, to extend the streetcars into the less exclusive areas of Gotham to provide easy and cheap public transportation.

Harley enjoyed riding on the streetcar. It was one of the first things she did when she moved to Gotham, ride the streetcar. It had been such a fun experience for her. Jack had promised her after they checked out the jewelry store they would take the streetcar to the Fashion district to buy her some new lingerie and to grab lunch together. She smiled, swinging his hand as she walked.

Only a few steps behind them, Ben was following. He was dressed in a long brown overcoat over his suit, light beige with a golden toned shirt. He wore a wood drivers cap over his head, his hands shoved deep into his pockets. He had a knife with him, but he didn't know what he was going to do, only that he had felt compelled to follow them, if for no other reason than for him to see Jack. He knew he was obsessed and he liked it.

He watched them, just a few steps ahead, holding hands. Ben pressed his lips together in an angry line. The streets were fairly crowded, probably the reprieve in the weather bringing out shoppers on a Saturday afternoon. He thought about coming up behind her and burying his blade in her back, just a few quick stabs would be all it would take for her to bleed out and poof, his problem was solved. But, there was no way he could get away with it. No, he needed to do something that looked more like an accident...that was when the hum of one of the streetcars rolled by. Ben followed the streetcar with his eyes, watching it zip by with an introspective frown on his face. He sighed turning back just as Jack pulled Harley against him and kissed her.

Ben felt a jealous rage swell up in his chest. God he hated her!

* *

Jack smiled reaching over to rub his thumb at the corner of her mouth. “I messed up your lipstick sweets.”

Harley giggled gazing up at him. “How come I never mess yours up?”

Jack rubbed the tip of his nose against hers. “Because my sweet thing, I just happened to be better at kissing.”

Harley laughed and smacked him on the shoulder. “Poo!”

Jack grinned and hooked her arm through his chuckling when they both saw a food cart up ahead. The smells that wafted from the cart were divine. Jack turned to Harley. “I've heard of them! They sell Bulgarian cuisine! Want to have lunch now?”

Harley started to answer when her stomach made a rather loud, embarrassingly vocal growl. Harley blushed. “I think that might be a yes.”

Jack laughed and kissed her cheek. “You wait right here, my pumpkin, and I'll grab us something from the vendor.”

Harley smiled. “I'll be right here!”

Jack hurried over getting into the line that was forming while Harley stood on the sidewalk. She gazed at the display of evening dresses in the closest department store window before walking over to the edge of the sidewalk to watch the streetcar that was moving up the street quickly.
Ben simply reacted. His jealousy blinded him to the consequences of his actions as he saw a chance that he couldn't afford not to take.

As the streetcar was zipping up the rails, Ben raced up behind Harley, no one paying any attention to him among the heavy crowds. He glanced toward Jack, who was talking to the man in the food cart, his attention at the moment, not on Harley. He knew he was acting rashly, that he was letting his jealousy dictate his moves, something the Court would find shameful, but he was just so angry. He wanted Jack all to himself, but this bitch was in his way.

Ben grinned a vicious, toothy grin turning to face Harley's back, the stupid blonde leaning out to watch the streetcar come racing up the tracks, then, at the last second, he shoved her. In the next instant Ben blended into the crowd, no one noticing him.

Harley let out a startled yelp as her whole body was propelled forward. She stumbled off the side of the sidewalk, her arms out for a moment at her side, almost pinwheeling to catch her balance, at the same time she turned to see the streetcar coming right at her.

Just as quickly, someone grabbed Harley by her coat and yanked her hard backwards, which had her stumbling and slamming into someone. Harley gasped out loud, her breath leaving her in a whoosh as she looked up and behind her to see Jack holding her. All of it happened so quickly that she had barely had time to process what might have happened at the moment that the streetcar zipped past them.

“Damn it Harls!” her husband hissed, straightening her up, spinning her around, and yanking her into his arms.

Harley looked up at Jack startled. “I...I don't know what happened. It...I felt like someone pushed me!”

Jack frowned as he stared down at her, then his eyes searched the crowd around them. A few people stared at them, but no one stopped to say anything to them or acted as if they had seen anyone push her into the way of the streetcar.

Jack's lips were pressed together in a frown as he searched around a moment longer, but he didn't see anyone or anything suspicious. He turned back to Harley and stroked her face with both hands, stopping to hold his hands against her cheeks, staring at her, his blue eyes filled with emotion.

“Be more careful sweets. I couldn't live if something happened to you,” he said softly, his voice barely above a whisper.

Harley smiled and reached up to cover her hands with his own. “I will puddin. I promise.”

*

Standing in an alcove of one of the buildings watching them, Ben quietly voiced a harsh epithet and vowed to himself that next time he would succeed. He thought about returning to the island, maybe setting up something in the house to take care of her, but he couldn't risk harming Jack. Ben sighed with longing as he gazed at Jack; every move he made sent Ben's nerve-endings tinkling.

*

Jack grabbed their lunch a few minutes later and found the two of them a bench not too far from the jewelry shop. They sat close together. Jack had ordered them both Pile Na Gril which Harley discovered was a meal of grilled chicken with sides of two Bulgarian salads in adorable cardboard boxes, was hot in the cool weather. Harley took a bite then rolled her eyes. “Oh puddin, this is so
good!"

Jack smiled. “Glad you like it sweets. I worked hard on ordering it.”

She giggled elbowing him in the side. Jack chuckled leaning over to feed her a bite of chicken laughing when he shoved it so hard at her that he smeared her lipstick.

Harley playfully growled.

“I'm going to get you for that later.”

“Oh promises, promises!” Jack laughed until Harley elbowed him in the side again. She had all but forgotten the close call with the streetcar.

* 

After they finished lunch, they headed into the jewelry store. The place was over the top with light beige walls, an enormous center crystal chandelier along with so much light that Harley supposed was to make certain everything glittered. It reminded her of how a child might think a rich person decorated. Harley made a face, looking over the top of her sunglasses at the place, which Jack caught from the corner of his eye. He snorted.

Harley giggled elbowing him again. Jack jerked to the side. “Ow! Woman you have sharp elbows!”

“Stop laughing at me,” she hissed back, though with a grin on her red lips.

Jack leaned close. “Sorry sweets, you're just too cute.”

Harley smiled, then whispered. “This place reminds me of the inside of a bowl of glitter.”

Jack matched her grin, then whispered back. “Just imagine how much better it'll look once we smash everything.”

Harley giggled as Jack grabbed her arm. “Come on, let's do some shopping for tonight.”

They walked around—keeping their sunglasses in place—to the glass cases looking inside at the diamond rings, emerald necklaces and ruby and pearl brooches, thousands and thousands of dollars worth of precious and semi-precious stones.

Jack's smile widened. “Oh, this is going to be fun Harls.”

Harley giggled. She wasn't sure what she was looking forward to most—the actual crime or the destruction. After a moment of thought, she knew the answer.

The destruction.

* 

Early that same evening Agatha arrived back in Gotham, this time on a private jet. It had just begun to rain as she pulled her plaid raincoat around her before she started to head down the stairs from the plane reaching down to struggle with her umbrella when someone raced up the steps with an umbrella already open. Agatha looked up to see Lincoln March smiling and holding an umbrella up for her. “Hello Agatha.”

Agatha smiled. Lincoln was younger than her by a couple of decades, but they had had a wonderful affair, until the Court had stepped between them...and other things. Agatha continued down the stairs
with Lincoln ahead of her holding the umbrella. “I didn't expect to see you here,” she said softly.

Lincoln smiled. “Well, it is my jet.”

“You know what I mean.” Agatha smiled. “If they find out that you're with me...”

Lincoln smiled. “The Court may seem like they know everything and see everything, but they don't Agatha, if you know how to move between their lines of sight. I'm glad you came back to Gotham. I hate that I missed you on your last visit.”

Agatha shrugged. “It was short, family business. Well within the time I'm allowed in Gotham.”

They came to the bottom of the stairs and headed toward the hangar where just outside of the hangar entrance sat a silver Aston Martin Vulcan. Lincoln walked over to the car next to Agatha, careful with the umbrella, to open the door for her. Agatha slipped inside waiting while Lincoln rushed around to the driver seat.

He smiled after he dropped into the seat. “So, how about you come to my place for drinks and we can discuss your nephews.”


He reached out laying his hand on her knee. “We'll work this out Agatha.”

She nodded. “I just hoped they would never have to know. And if they have their eyes on Jack...”

She shook her head. “I just—he's married Lincoln, he's happy. I don't want that ruined.”

Lincoln started the car. “I will help in any way I can Agatha, you know that right?”

Agatha smiled sadly. “Thank you Lincoln. It's nice to know I still have one friend among the owls.”
Bruce arrived at the hospital shortly after Alfred finished his breakfast. The older man was sitting up reading a copy of “Monty Python and Philosophy: Nudge, Nudge, Think! Think!” that had arrived for him earlier this morning. The elderly butler had far more color returned to his cheeks and he didn't look quite as fragile. Bruce smiled and then frowned when he saw that several vases of flowers had been delivered.

Alfred glanced up from his book when Bruce stepped in. He placed his finger in the book and smiled. “Ah, Master Bruce—good morning.”

Bruce smiled. “Good morning, Alfred. I brought you some of your favorite tea.” Bruce held up a tin of Earl Grey. “I asked the head nurse; she said it would be fine for you to have some tea brought in.”

Alfred chuckled. “Thank you so much Master Bruce. They do try here in the hospital, but it just isn't quite the same.”

Bruce walked over to the bedside, pulling out a chair from the wall on the way and set it closer to Alfred. He glanced again at the flowers, then at the book in Alfred's hand with a quizzical lift of his brow. There were bouquets of lilies, carnations, and freesia filling nearly every space of the room

“Admirers?” Bruce chuckled gesturing at the flowers.

Alfred frowned slightly before he answered. “They are actually all from Master Jack and Miss Harleen, as is the book. They both signed it.”

Bruce paled.

Alfred sighed, marking his book and set it on his hospital table that still contained the remains of his breakfast. “Master Bruce, I just wish...”

Bruce nodded and interrupted gently. “I know...Alfred...let's not discuss this, not now. Maybe when you're stronger.”

Alfred frowned. He knew Bruce was using his health as an excuse, but he said nothing more. Bruce set the tea container down and smiled. “I've missed your voice in my ear at night,” he said softly.

Alfred nodded, a soft smile on his lips. “I had hoped that perhaps you would stay off the streets without me there to “back you up,” as they say Master Bruce.”

Bruce leaned forward, his elbows on his knees. “I couldn't, Alfred. Gotham needs me...but I have been thinking...”

Alfred frowned at the tone of Bruce's voice.

“What if I had a partner?” Bruce ventured, his deep voice soft with the question.

Alfred frowned in surprise. “A partner sir?”

Bruce nodded. “Someone to watch my back when you're not there.”

Alfred frowned in thought. “Jack perhaps?”

“No,” Bruce said flatly.
Alfred sighed. “Master Bruce, may I speak plainly?”

“Please do.” Bruce nodded.

“You should make up with your brother sir. He is your only brother. And this secret you hold...you should tell him—perhaps then Jack would understand you more? And I think telling Jack, including him on your secret, could be just what the two of you need.” Alfred looked at Bruce pleadingly. “Your brother loves you more than you realize. You've hurt him deeply, but I know he would rush back Master Bruce, if only you would extend him your hand.”

Bruce sighed. “Alfred, he would want to tell Dr. Quinzel.”

“And that would be so wrong sir? Say what you will, Miss Harleen loves him. I have never seen any two people love each other the way those two do. She would never betray a secret Master Jack asked her to keep. And you could use more allies Master Bruce. I think a partner is a wonderful idea, but I believe it should be your brother. And with the addition of Miss Harleen, just imagine how much good the three of you could do for Gotham.”

Bruce looked uncomfortable, sliding one shoe against the polished hospital floor. “I just...I don't know.”

“Were you considering Miss Talia?” Alfred asked softly.

Bruce shook his head. “I...I don't have anyone in mind at the moment Alfred. I've been thinking more and more about the idea after...” He looked up at Alfred who nodded his understanding. After his heart attack.

“Well, I think it would not be a bad idea Master Bruce, but, I beg you to consider telling Jack.” Alfred said softly.”He is your brother. The one person in all of Gotham who would understand.”

Bruce murmured noncommittally. “I'll think about it.”

*

A wintry mix of rain and snow lashed down to create a chill in the Gotham night air. Jack reached over and squeezed Harley's knee affectionately as he drove. She didn't need to see his smile to know her lover was smiling at her from behind the red helmet he wore. She had a red mask too, though hers was worn over the upper portion of her face, covering her eyes, top of her nose, and forehead while leaving the bottom portion of her face exposed. The red helmet marked Jack as the head of their gang while also completely concealing his identity to anyone who might catch a glimpse of the Red Hood.

They were driving one of the two black SUV's their gang was using for this little heist. The night before, Alex and Jack had equipped the front of each SUV with steel EURO grill guards just for tonight's job. Riding with Jack and Harley were Haskins, Duela, and Jason. (Jason was a young, angry man with a lot of pent up rage. He hadn't told any of them much about his past, but he did let slip once to Alex—while he was drunk—that his father had been killed by one of the mob families in Gotham and his mother was a drug addict, probably dead now, and that Jason was a runaway.) Frost and Alex were in the other SUV with Rolf and a new hire, a young brunette named Roxy who was a friend of Rolf's.

Each of their gang wore a red mask similar to the one that Harley was wearing. Everyone in the vehicle was also dressed in black, from the tips of their shoes to the ends of the black gloves they each wore, which caused the red masks to stand out more sharply. Alex had joked that they all
looked like stunt doubles for George Harrison from the movie “Zorro the Gay Blade.”

While he drove, Jack hummed to the music on the vehicle's stereo, tapping his black gloved fingers against the steering wheel in time to the song, “Him & I “by G-Easy and Hasley, which played over the vehicle's speakers while he drove. He grinned, glancing sideways when Harley started to sing along. She swayed her head and shoulders, her eyes closed while she sang, her voice pure and pleasant to his ears.

“Cross my heart, hope to die
To my lover, I'd never lie
He said "be true", I swear I'll try
In the end, it's him and I
He's out his head, I'm out my mind
We got that love, the crazy kind
I am his and he is mine
In the end, it's him and I, him and I...”

Harley opened her eyes and glanced at Jack who was turning to watch her for a moment. Harley winked at him, swaying her body side to side in the passenger seat. Jack smiled behind his mask and reached over again, this time to squeeze her thigh. “I do love your singing voice,” he said with affection when Haskins muttered from the back. “I could really do without the music.”

Jack narrowed his eyes behind the mask, his fingers wrapping around the wheel of the SUV tightly, making the leather of his gloved creak. Harley could feel as well as see the tension in Jack's shoulders. Haskins was getting on Jack's nerves. She reached over and laid one of her gloved hands over her husband's on the steering wheel accompanied by a reassuring squeeze. Even though they were both wearing gloves, her touch seemed to calm him down. Jack smiled behind the helmet and asserted firmly,

“Driver gets to decide if there is music, and the driver, who I might add is also the head of our little gang, gets to pick the music. So Haskins darling, shut up or you can get out now.”

Haskins snorted. “Whatever.”

Harley heard, rather than saw Duela smack Haskins in the shoulder and hiss in a whisper. “Don't fuck this up for us Hask!”

“Fine, whatever Duela,” Haskins hissed back.

Harley sighed. Yeah, it was time to get rid of Haskins, she thought. He had too big of a mouth and an even bigger attitude. He had been trouble from the start and she could tell, he was just going to get worse.

Jason piped up then from further in the back. “I like the song.”

Jack glanced in the rear view at Jason, who was sitting in the seat behind Haskins and Duela. Harley knew Jack liked the young man, though he had mentioned that the boy reminded him of Bruce when he was younger; thick black hair, blue eyes, a bad attitude at times, but Jason was smart, loyal, and
knew to stay on Jack’s good side, a trick that Haskins clearly hadn’t picked up.

“Good boy Jason. You get a gold star tonight.” Jack's voice was filled with genuine praise and the young man nodded with a smile.

They drove for another twenty minutes with Jack reaching over and purposely turning the music up to a nearly painfully loud volume which had Harley giggling. She glanced over her shoulder to see the sour look on Haskins' face while Goldfrapp's song “Everything is Never Enough” drowned out all other sounds in the vehicle, making it impossible for anyone to be heard without yelling. Harley glanced at Jack. She couldn't see his face, but she could just tell by the way he was holding himself and tapping his fingers on the steering wheel that he was enjoying the look of annoyance on Haskins' face.

When they neared their destination, Jack slowed down just enough to check the road ahead of him. The streetlights and traffic lights reflected off the wet street, creating a glittering jewel-like effect. A few vehicles were passing by, but the traffic was light tonight. Their gang was supposed to approach the jewelry store from both sides. Frost should be coming down the road from the other direction, then together, they would smash both SUVs through the front of the store.

A minute passed and Jack didn't see the other SUV.

Though little traffic moved at this time in the morning in Gotham, with the wintry mix, fewer than usual were out. A few random vehicles zipped past going who knew where; speeding past the SUV without paying any attention to the coasting vehicle.

Before they left that night, Frost had checked the police scanner to determine Batman's location. If Batman was anywhere too close, they were going to call off the smash and grab and try the following day, but according to the police scanner (which Frost had liberated from work when he quit), the Bat was nowhere near the Diamond district tonight. Apparently there was another job by this new criminal calling himself The Riddler which had Batman's attention in The Bowery at the moment, perfect for their little gang. This left only the regular Gotham police force. By Frost's calculations, it would take the police perhaps five to six minutes to respond to the alarms. That gave them plenty of time if they stuck to the plan—two minutes to smash, grab, then leave.

It was just approaching three a.m. Jack turned the music down, muttering to Harley. “Where is Frost? He's going to throw off our timing....”

Haskins muttered. “Maybe he ditched us?”

Jack snarled. “Frost would never “ditch” us, as you so eloquently put it Haskins.”

“Well how do you...” Haskins started to say, but it was Harley, surprising even Jack when she turned around to face the back seat while yanking out her gun from the holster under her arm, a Chiappa Rhino 60DS that Alex had just acquired for her yesterday, and pointed it at Haskins' forehead.

“Look here, ya hipster criminal wannabe. My puddin says Frost wouldn't ditch us and what he says goes. You got it?” Harley smiled, her voice light and cheerful. Duela looked ready to wet herself while Haskins, his eyes wide, stared at the barrel of Harley's gun and simply nodded. “Yeah, okay.”

Harley smiled and holstered her weapon. “Good. Oh, look puddin—there he is!”

Harley pointed out the windshield. Jack saw the SUV approaching from the opposite direction. Jack grinned wide behind his mask. “All right kiddies, let's get ready to get in there and get out in record time. Smash the cases and grab what you can. Don't be choosie, we're going for quantity over
quality."

The two SUV's where converging on the jewelry store when Frost flashed his headlights. Jack grinned and did the same.

“Get ready!” he laughed out.

Harley giggled reaching down for her baseball bat, the others grabbed whatever “smashing” weapons they had brought with them. Just as both vehicles came up on the store, flashing their lights in a particular pattern at each other, they both made sudden and extreme turns toward the store. Laughing loudly, Jack reached out and placed his arm over Harley protectively, (even though she was wearing her seat belt), just as the SUV smashed through the front of the store, with the other SUV crashing through at the same time right beside it in a spectacular burst of glass, and light metal window framing, shattering in an almost beautiful explosion of sprinkling shards.

The vehicles both traveled forward, running side by side, crashing through the front of the jewelry store and into the main room of the store within seconds, taking out several displays as the two SUV’s stopped in the middle of the jewelry store showroom. Alarms immediately began to sound.

Jack yelled motioning with his hand.“All right, we have less than two minutes! LET’S GO!”

Everyone spilled out of both vehicles and without another word, the nine people started to smash cases and dump jewelry into the sacks they were all carrying.

Harley grinned brightly as she swung her bat at a case of diamond necklaces along the wall, clamping her teeth together in a vicious smile when she took a full body swing at the case; the sound of shattering glass made her smile even bigger. She swung her bat under her arm, holding it there while she used her hand and arm to make a large sweep of the wall cases, taking glass and jewelry with her into the bag she was holding. Some of the jewels were swept onto the floor mixed with the glass, but it didn't matter to her as most of the jewelry ended up in her sack.

She glanced over, watching Jack as he moved swiftly, his long legs taking him toward the back room where he knew there was a safe full of loose diamonds, emeralds and others precious stones. She smiled, for just a moment her eyes lingered on her husband's ass before he disappeared into the back of the shop. Harley giggled and turned back to her work when she nearly stopped moving, her breath coming out in a rush when she saw something gorgeous she just had to have for Jack.

In a display case, elevated above the other items in the case, was a lighter. Not just any lighter, a Dupont ST Prestige Collection Rain lighter covered in a combination of diamonds and purple musgravite, worth well over seventy-five thousand dollars. Harley stared at it for a moment. It was simply beautiful and Jack had to have it she thought. She turned to see exactly what the others were doing; they were all busy smashing cases and sweeping the contents into their bags, no one paying any attention to her.

Harley grinned, and swung her bat, carefully, just hard enough to smash the glass, but not so hard that she hit the lighter. Then, with a wide grin, she reached in, grabbed the lighter and slipped it into the front pocket of her black jeans.

That was when they all hear the sound of sirens echoing in the distance. It was hard to judge exactly where they were coming from or how far away they were by the sound, but it was clear the alarms had alerted the police. Frost frowned from where he had been grabbing handfuls of rings and stuffing them into his bag. He tilted his head listening to the sirens then frowned.

“Quick tonight...” he muttered, then, “Sounds like they might be here in the next couple of minutes,
“Boss!” Frost yelled into the back where Jack was supposed to be opening the safe.

Everyone heard a extremely loudly uttered curse. “Fuck!” before Jack came rushing in from the back with his sack over his shoulder.

“Oh kiddies, the ride is over! Everyone back into the cars—we're going home!” Jack raced over to the SUV and slipped into the driver's seat. He glanced over at the other vehicle where Alex had moved behind the wheel while Frost was filling up his sack. Jack waved at Alex who smiled and gave him the finger back with his one hand causing Jack to burst out laughing as he hit the reverse. When Jack had started the SUV, the stereo had come to life, a new song playing through the speakers that had Jack grinning. He glanced at his wife as Harley had jumped into the seat slamming her door shut. “There's my pretty little peach!” Jack said with a clear smile in the tone of his voice. Alex slammed his vehicle in reverse too, and the two vehicles backed up at high speed at the same time. They both burst out onto the road, and swung around so that the SUVs were driving side by side.

Jack laughed as he thumped the wheel with his fingers to the music blasting from the SUV’s stereo. He looked in the rear view mirror at his passengers. “Perfect! You'll love this one Haskins!”

Without needing to tell her, Harley leaned over and turned up the stereo to a level that would make their ears numb as Henry Rollins' rough voice came through the speakers singing “Laughing Man” while they raced away from the store. Haskins put his hands over his ears looking annoyed at first and pissed within seconds.

The two SUV's drove side by side for only a couple of minutes before they broke off from each another, going off in two separate directions; Alex taking a turn to the north while Jack continued going west. The plan was to meet up within the hour (if they were not being followed) at the agreed upon spot to see what they had managed to grab.

Jack was just a little disappointed when they arrived at the warehouse on the Dixon docks without once being chased by the Gotham PD. He had really been hoping for a high speed chase; it would have been fun he thought.

The warehouse where they were meeting was an old brick building, erected around 1848 when Gotham was an up-and-coming city. The place was probably considered a historic landmark if anyone had the money to put into restoring the old place, but the large brick warehouse was abandoned and time was slowly doing its best to wear away the ancient building.

This close to the water, the air outside—mixed with the rain and snow—was even colder. Jack pulled the SUV up to one of the folding metal doors that had been installed in the last century. He glanced toward Harley before he jumped out and walked over to the gate, grabbed it from the bottom and threw it up. The metal made the sound of old rust grinding against resistant metal, but it went up without giving him too much issue. Jack walked back to the car and hopped in, driving the SUV into the building. Once inside, everyone exited the SUV. Jason came around to the back of the vehicle and began to help Jack with pulling out a small generator, courtesy of WayneTech, that Jack had liberated from an old storage unit in Gotham. (It was an old storage unit that Bruce paid for to hold a few bits and pieces of equipment from the manor. It was filled with stuff they weren't using at the manor, but items that were too valuable to toss out.)

With Jack on one side and Jason on the other, they carried the generator to the middle of the room where an old fold-out table sat. Harley came over with a flashlight from the glove compartment, holding the light steady once the two men had sat the generator down, so that Jack could get the
thing started. Harley wasn't sure exactly how it worked, only that Jack said it didn't require any gas
to run and would give them enough power for around eight hours at maximum output, longer if they
didn't run much from it.

After a few seconds of Jack fiddling with the it, the generator hummed to life with a deep rumble.
The low sound filled the empty space, and within minutes the small group of criminals had a few
stands of lights glowing, lighting up the dark space. Duela and Harley stretched out a string of lights
they had pulled from the back of the SUV, wrapping them around the table. There were also some
additional campground lights that were battery powered, which Jason and Duela had grabbed from
the back of the SUV as well. (Both Jack and Harley noticed that Haskins didn't help. Instead he
leaned against the SUV looking disgruntled. They shared a look and then continued to set up.) The
light illuminated a small section of the interior around the table, showing that enough dust and debris
was scattered along the floor to create the illusion of a dirty floor instead of showing the old concrete
that was actually the flooring. The brick walls that were visible were covered in a variety of colorful
graffiti from the more traditional: 'Mark was here' to 'Alison is a slut,' to a variety of gang tags. The
sounds of a few bats could be heard and the occasional scurrying sound of a rat. The entire place
smelled of old water, dirt, and wet, musty stone.

No sooner had they set up the lights, than the small group heard the sounds of another metal gate,
followed by the sounds of an engine. A few seconds later Alex appeared, driving in from the other
direction.

Jack laughed and smacked his hands together, the leather gloves gave off a distinctive sound. “Now
it's a party! Someone turn some music up. Haskins here loves his music!”

Harley, who had gone back over to the SUV to grab her bat, snickered. Duela chuckled lightly too,
but Haskins muttered under his breath, “Prick.”

Jack smiled behind his mask and put his hand up to his unseen ear. “Did you say something
Haskins?”

“Nuthin’,” Haskins muttered as Duela yanked on his arm.

Jack chuckled walking over to the other car as Alex and Frost hopped out followed by Rolf, Dale
and the new girl, Roxy.

Alex grinned. “Sorry man, we stopped and grabbed from beer and pizza!”

Frost held up the four pizza boxes, two balanced in each hand, while Rolf came forward with two
six packs of beer.

Jack laughed. “Damn, feeling confident there?”

Alex shrugged. “No one was following us, didn’t see any reason not to celebrate...Boss.” Alex
emphasized the word “Boss” with a smirk that only he could get away with in front of Jack.

Jack snickered at Alex calling him Boss, tossing him the middle finger with an added, “That was for
earlier,” which had Alex chuckling. Then Jack motioned everyone over to the table. “All right boys
and girls, let's take a look at the haul for our first jewel theft shall we?”

The sacks were brought over to the table along with the pizza and beer. Jack, of course, didn't
indulge because of his mask, but everyone else dug in while carefully dumping the contents of their
sacks onto the table. Frost glanced over the haul of necklaces, rings, bracelets and watches as well as
the pile of loose stones that Jack had taken from the safe, before he glanced at Jack and Harley—
who was leaning on her bat, slowly swaying her hips back and forth while watching Alex and Frost mentally going over the loot.

Frost looked over at Jack. “I think we have at least $800,000 here with just these case pieces, though that will depend on a few factors when it comes to selling them. We’ll have to break down most of the pieces, but the loose stones should be easy and catch a high price.” Frost glanced at Alex who nodded.

Alex chewed on his bite of pizza, holding the slice up on a particularly long, gooey string of cheese. He motioned with his head toward a diamond lace necklace that had an emerald at the end, at least as big as a silver dollar. “Well, I know a few buyers who work through Gotham, we should be able to get fucking top dollar for a few of these pieces. I mean, they like to buy the diamonds and shit in their fucking settings and deal with breaking them loose themselves, but the rest we'll have to sell the stones separately. I know a couple of fuckers who we can work with, who are fucking reasonable in what they charge. One goes by Magpie—she really knows her stuff when it comes to moving jewels and then this other chick named Catwoman.”

Jack chuckled along with Harley as he murmured. “God I love these names! Magpie, Catwoman...just perfection!”

Alex chuckled and continued. “Catwoman is in and out of Gotham, but I think she's back in town. Anyway, they are both fucking jewel thieves themselves, but they both know their fucking business and they both have a network of buyers. Offloading this stuff and getting us top dollars should only take a few weeks at the most...some of the smaller shit like the watches I can get rid of in a few days myself.” Alex took another bite of pizza talking around it. “I'm thinking maybe 1.5 million...with your cut being around $200,000 for you Boss and the rest divided evenly among the rest of us. That's over a hundred grand apiece for the rest of the gang.” Alex grinned at Jack and Harley. Jack grinned behind his mask. “Perfect, don't you think sweets?” He turned toward Harley who giggled gazng up at his red helmet face. “I sure do puddin.”

Haskins, who had been steaming over against the SUV and doing his own calculations, pushed himself away from the vehicle and spoke up after taking a long swallow from his beer. “So we like gotta wait a few days to get paid? And you get that big of a cut? What the fuck for? And why does anyone not here tonight get a cut?”

Jack frowned behind his mask and turned toward Haskins. “Because this was my fucking idea Haskins. I picked the fucking job, this is my fucking gang and I'm the fucking Red Hood. You have a problem with that?”

Haskins ripped off his mask, glaring at Jack, his face reflected in the red of Jack's helmet face. “Yeah, I have a fucking problem.”

Jack frowned behind his mask and turned toward Haskins. “Because this was my fucking idea Haskins. I picked the fucking job, this is my fucking gang and I'm the fucking Red Hood. You have a problem with that?”

Haskins ripped off his mask, glaring at Jack, his face reflected in the red of Jack's helmet face. “Yeah, I have a fucking problem.”

“You know Haskins, we've only had this gang for a very short time and you have been a thorn in my side that entire time,” Jack muttered. “I mean really, how are we going to build ourselves a reputation when I have a weaselly little cocksucker like you stirring up trouble and questioning me?” Jack sighed dramatically. “Oh and before you say anything Haskins, my darling, I'm not insulting you by calling you a cocksucker, I'm just describing you.” Jack turned to each of the members of the gang. “Anyone else having an issue with how the loot is going to be divided or how long it'll take to get your cut? Be honest now—management is taking suggestions right now.” Jack folded his arms over his chest as his helmeted head took in everyone. (Alex shook his head thinking to himself that recruiting Haskins was one of his worse decisions.) No spoke up, though Jason and Rolf gave Haskins a dirty look. Duela looked upset and nervous and Roxy frowned. but she put her hand up like she was in school.
Jack nodded his head toward her. “You're the new girl right...ah...Roxy correct?” Jack asked.

“Yep, Roxy.” She smiled, her eyes dancing behind her mask. “Rolf recruited me.” Jack nodded. “Yes, I remember. What would you like to say, dearie?”

Roxy glanced at everyone before she spoke. “I'm just fine with how things are Mr. Red Hood. I mean I know I just joined thanks to Rolf here, but it all seems fair to me. You're the Boss, Boss always gets a bigger cut, just how it works...anyone knows that.” Roxy looked pointedly at Haskins.

Jack laughed putting his arm around Harley's waist and glancing down at her. “Oh, I like her.”

Harley giggled, placing a kiss against the side of Jack's helmet. “Agreed,” she said with a smile.

Roxy blushed under their praise, but Haskins wasn't finished. He snarled throwing his arms up and started to gesticulate wildly, his voice raising in volume.

“Who the fuck cares what you have to say Roxy? Yer new and you're just kissing ass.” He stalked closer to Jack and Harley, sneering as he ground out. “I don't see why we're following some pussy-whipped fucktard in a red helmet,” Haskins snarled.

After Haskins' comment, the only sound in the warehouse was the hum of the generator. Duela stared at Haskins as if he had grown another head and took a step back from him. Haskins glared at everyone in turn. “What? You're all thinking it, the way he goes on over her...” Haskins motioned with one hand at Harley. “What kind of leader asks the opinion of his fuck buddy, huh?”

Jack's voice was low and there seemed to be humor there, but it was flat, deadly sounding as he chuckled just a little, his voice ever so slightly sing-songy.

“Pussy-whipped? Well, that is definitely a new one. Haha...” Jack laughed without humor.

Alex was about to make a comment when suddenly Harley stepped past Jack without a word and swung her bat, the solid sound of thick heavy wood connecting with the side of Haskins head echoed off the walls of the abandoned warehouse. Harkins went down with the first hit, not making a sound, not even a whimper, but Harley wasn't done. She stood over her, her teeth bared as she raised the bat over her shoulder with both hands she snarled. “NO ONE TALKS TO MY PUDDIN THAT WAY!!”

She swung the bat down, striking Haskins over and over again. Duella started to cry and covered her face. Roxy grabbed her and turned her back on Harley, though Roxy was doing her best not to grin about the whole situation. Rolf and Jason watched dispassionately as did Frost. Alex lifted a brow quizzically at the viciousness and suddenness of the attack while Dale turned and vomited.

Jack let Harley beat on Haskins a few more times, watching with a smile the bright flashes of blood caught in the light flying into the air when she brought her bat down hard on Haskins' head. Flecks of red came up to splatter against her face, but his wife smiled in satisfaction the entire time. Jack licked his lips behind his helmet, watching her; the crazed look in her eyes, the way the blood showed bright against her pale skin, splattering up along her jaw, right under her red mask. She was sexy in her savagery, which made him want to fuck her badly. He waited, letting her have a solid minute to beat the man to death, before he stepped over and gently put his arms around her from behind, wrapping his gloved hands around her delicate looking—but clearly strong—wrists. “Okay pumpkin, I think you taught the stupid man a lesson...beat it into him actually.” Jack chuckled.

Jack pulled her back, though Harley was still panting and seething, blood dripping from her bat, flecked across her chin and lips.
“All right everyone. I think that is all for tonight. We do have a job opening, so if anyone has any less asinine friends, please feel free to call HR which is the one-armed masturbator here, though that was his right arm and he only has his left now...” Jack chuckled pointing at Alex and giving him a mock sad face. “But you can tell by how muscled his left arm has become that he’s learned to put it to good use.”

Alex laughed giving Jack the middle finger again as Jack grinned at everyone. “So, who needs dropped off at home? Daddy's driving!”

*

They left Haskins body at the warehouse, taking his red mask with them. Haskins was a low-life petty criminal and the chances of there being any connection between the thief and Jack and Harley were small, the only weak link being Duela. They had dropped her off with Roxy and Rolf who had promised to look after her.

Jack drove, having removed the helmet after Harley and he were alone. The rain had picked up again, lashing the windshield in heavy drops. The wipers flipped back and forth accompanied by the sounds of Lana del Ray singing “White Mustang” played low in the background. Jack frowned glancing at Harley who was staring out the window with a small frown on her face. She hadn't said much since she had killed Haskins.

“You all right pumpkin?” Jack asked softly.

Harley sighed. “Yeah...I'm...well I'm not really sorry, but I feel like I should say I'm sorry to you for killing Haskins.”

Jack chuckled. “Why? Haskins was an ass. He's been an ass since he joined us. Pretty much figured he was going to get himself killed after we hit that WayneTech lab, it was just a matter of when— though I thought I would be the one to do it.” Jack smiled glancing sideways at her. “You attacking him was a bit of a surprise, but...” Jack rubbed her thigh. “Damn sexy Harley.” Jack chuckled and squeezed her thigh again.

Harley folded her arms over her chest. “I didn't like him calling you pussy-whipped. It implied...well you know what it implied.” She grumped glaring out the window.

Jack smiled and slid his hand to squeeze her knee. He worked his fingers into the spot on her knee that he knew was ticklish. He squeezed until Harley squealed. “PUDDIN!”

He laughed. “There's my girl! You know sweets, some people cannot handle seeing someone happily in love. Burns their ass, makes them jealous because they don't have that in their life. Part of Bruce's problem if you ask me. My brother needs someone in his life, which is why he doesn't understand us at all.” He smiled at her which earned him a small smile from Harley. Jack looked back to the road. “Plus, as Arthur Miller once said, 'The two of the most common elements in the world are hydrogen and stupidity.' Haskins was pretty stupid. Saying all that shit in front of you?” Jack chuckled. “You just rid the world of one more stupid criminal. Which simply makes way for more intelligent criminals...like us.” He grinned brightly at her.

Harley smiled. “You're right puddin.”

Jack grinned. “'Course I am sweets.”

Harley leaned over and kissed his cheek.

*
Half an hour later they were making their way into the house. Ben had been waiting eagerly for their return. (Cobb was out tonight which had left Ben alone with the cameras. He had nearly gone ballistic when he realized Jack was out with that woman tonight, but he had stayed close, waiting for the moment they returned.) Ben frowned watching them. There was something odd on the woman's face, smeared in places. Not a lot of whatever it was, but it looked like something he had seen before... As Ben stared he began to wonder...was that blood on her face? He had noticed Jack taking the red hood with him when they left earlier that night...something that had been with the Owls for many generations...but not used in many many years either. Very odd he thought. But he wondered...was it something he could use to get closer to Jack.

Ben smiled licking his lips.

* 

Jack kicked the door closed. “I think a bubble bath is in order what do you think my cupcake?”

He pulled his coat off and tossed it toward the coat rack in the corner and missed. He laughed, tossed the red hood on top of his coat before reaching to peel Harley's coat off of her.

She groaned, dropped her bat in the corner and let Jack take her coat off of her. “That sounds heavenly.” She shrugged out of her holster and dropped the guns on top of their coats. Jack smiled doing the same with his weapons then pulled his gloves off. Harley tossed her own gloves on the ever growing pile.

Jack yawned, but he quickly grabbed Harley and spun her around, catching her chin with his forefinger and thumb. Jack held her face, gazing down into her eyes, his blue eyes catching the light coming from the chandelier over head and sparkling like crystals. His voice was low, seductive when he spoke. “You know what I like Harley? I like that you killed a man for me. That you defended my honor.” Jack purred with a smile, gently rubbing his nose against hers, his lips a breath away from touching hers. She shivered when his warm breath brushed over her mouth. “Watching you beat him to death was beautiful Harley...just beautiful.” Jack cooed then slowly ran his tongue over her lips, licking her mouth before he released her chin and pulled her into his arms, wrapping one arm around her waist, taking her hand in his, swaying to music that only they could hear.

Harley smiled up at him, pressing her body against his sway in rhythm with him. “I would do anything for you Jack, anything at all.”

Jack brushed his nose against hers. “I know baby. I would do anything for you too.”

Jack dipped her, kissed her. Harley felt the warmth of his kiss rush through her body as she returned his kiss with a passion she never knew existed before meeting Jack Wayne. Jack continued the kiss even as he brought her back up to her feet, releasing her hand to wrap his other arm around her. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck, her mouth moving over his ravenously, opening her mouth wide against his, her lips begging for more, her teeth brushing against his mouth in her need. Jack growled as he wrapped his arms under her rear and lifted her up off her feet. He continued to kiss her, carrying her into the study where there was an ivory chaise lounge among the furniture in the room, all of it Victorian replicas.

He carried her to the chaise and laid her down. Just enough light filtered in from the hall to illuminate them. “The bath can wait,” he growled reaching down the pull off her boots. She giggled helping by unbuttoning her jeans. Jack yanked her socks off, tossing them over his shoulder before reaching down her pants, yanking them down her legs and tossing them. When he did, her jeans hit the floor with a loud “thunk.”
Jack turned around to glance down at her jeans. “What the hell?”

Harley sat up. “OH, I almost forgot!”

She rushed over and picked up her pants while Jack removed his boots, watching the way her rear stuck up in the air; the pink panties she was wearing had just a little lace around the edges which he found fascinating to gaze at while she searched for something, her rear wiggling just a little. Jack grinned a little lopsidedly, his eyes traveling down the back of her thighs while he pulled his shirt off. A moment later Harley hurried excitedly back over to the chaise, something hidden in her hands, pressed up against her chest and sat down next to Jack. “Put your hands out and close your eyes.”

Jack quirked a brow at her, but did as she instructed, closing his eyes while resting his hands together, palms facing upward on his lap. Harley grinned and placed the lighter she has stolen in his hands.

“Okay, you can open now.” Harley said, pressing her teeth into her bottom lip in her excitement to see his reaction.

Jack opened his eyes and looked down at the lighter glittering in his hands, the diamonds catching the light and sparkling gently.

Jack gasped softly. “Harley.”

“Do you like it?” she asked, worry coloring her voice. “I...I saw it and just had to grab it for you.”

Jack held it up turning it back and forth watching the way the light danced on the gems. “Oh Harls, it's beautiful. I love it.”

Jack looked at her. “Thank you my sweets.” He cupped her face with one hand and pulled her close, his kiss tender and heartfelt. Harley made a soft whimper of pleasure, and her hands slid up his bare chest caressing her fingers along the card tattoos, then along his neck, her fingers slipping into his hair. Jack pulled her closer, opening his mouth wider, his tongue pressing against hers, playing softly in a sweet, wet caress.

Jack pulled back, his lips still close enough that they brushed against hers when he spoke. “I love you my darling Harley Quinn...my harlequin...my precious girl.”

Harley moaned softly. “Jack...I love you. I love you.”

Jack reached down to set the lighter onto the floor and leaned back in the chaise tugging Harley with him. He kept his right leg off the lounge, pressing Harley against the length of his body, his hands sliding under her top, needing to feel the silky softness of her skin under his hands. He traced the arch of her spine to her hips, sliding his fingers under her panties and squeezing, pressing his fingers into her flesh. Harley groaned, nipped at his lips in playful bites, her tongue tracing his lower lip then his chin, her teeth biting gently and pressing into his chin before she traveled down to his neck.

Jack groaned when Harley ran her tongue up the side of his neck, tasting the salt of his skin, the unique smell that was Jack Wayne filled her nostrils driving her mad with desire. She ground against him feeling the bulge of him trapped by his pants, pressed against her. Harley slid one hand down his chest to his nipple and pinched as she pressed her teeth into his neck, at the tender spot just above his clavicle. Jack jumped slightly with a grunt while sliding his hands under her top to find the strap of her bra.

With nimble fingers Jack unhooked her bra, rubbing his fingers in a gentle caress knocking the now loose straps away from her skin.
Harley stopped and sat up. Jack stuck his bottom lip out. “Hey, why'd you stop?”

Harley laughed at his expression reaching out to trace his bottom lip with the tip of a finger. “I stopped because I want you to take your pants off silly.”

Jack grinned crookedly. “Oh.”

Harley laughed, standing up to pull her top off, followed by her bra seconds later. Jack watched distracted as she pulled her panties down, wiggling a little in the most distracting and enticing way, sliding the cloth down her legs then coming over to help him finish undressing.

Jack smiled at her, his gaze heated. “You are just so gorgeous Harley. Love is blindness...I don't wanna see...Won't you wrap the night around me...Oh my heart...Love is drowning in a deep well...”

“What's that?” she asked as Harley crouched down in front of him and tugged on his pants.

Jack chuckled reaching out to brush a finger along her cheek. “Just a song...but the lyrics are so true.” Jack purred softly. “I love you.”

“Even after all this time?” She looked up at him. Her blue eyes were big and bright, her fingertips brushed against the skin of his thighs when she had pulled his pants down to his knees.

Jack reached out to brush her cheek. “Oh yes Harley. You are the only girl for me. Ever.”

He gently caressed her cheek then along her jaw. She smiled kissing the tip of his fingers when he brushed her lips. She finished tugging his pants past his feet then grabbed the boxers he wore, a pair of light cotton briefs in a dark red, and pulled them down his legs and off until they were both naked.

Jack reached to her. “Come here sweets.”

Harley was still crouched in front of him, her hands resting on his knees, her eyes roaming down his torso to settle on his erection then up again, clearly admiring him.

“Oh, in a bit puddin,” she assured him.

Jack grinned, but there was a hint of a blush on his cheeks while he watched her. Harley squeezed his knees gently before she forced his legs wider, her hands gently sliding along the inside of his thighs. She leaned over, pressing her lips to the soft skin along his inner thigh, followed by a gentle press of her teeth against his skin. She followed the inside of one thigh to the middle before she switched legs, repeating the same tender gestures.

Jack hissed, a tickle running up from her touch, like an electrical shock from her fingers accompanied by the delicious heat from her mouth shooting straight to his groin. His shaft ached for a moment, blood rushing hot and fast through him as he watched the way Harley seemed to worship her way down closer to his shaft. Her tongue followed her teeth in slow licks with the flat of her tongue, rolling down the inside of each thigh as she inched closer.

Harley smiled seductively at him when she was nearly touching his erection, her thumbs stroking tenderly against his scrotum, just the very tips of her thumbs while keeping her gaze focused on his face.

Jack leaned back against the chaise, his legs wide watching Harley through half-lidded eyes, the clear blue of his eyes just a sliver that glowed behind his lashes. Harley pushed his legs far to the side, scooting herself closer, her thumbs continuing their slowly caress. She leaned close and started at his scrotum, sticking her tongue out as far as she could before she used the flat of her tongue to
lick a trail up, licking her way slowly to the very tip of his shaft with the enthusiasm of licking a melting ice cream cone. Jack grabbed the cushions of the chaise lounge on either side of him with a loud groan, dropping his head back, his eyes screwing closed. Harley smiled at his reaction before she wrapped her right hand around his shaft and she lowered her lips to the tip of him, kissing the satin soft tip of his shaft with a coy grin just as Jack looked down at her again.

Harley released him, then gently dragged her lips down his erection, the very tip of her tongue skirting along the hard satin, then up again taking a firm grip and slowly thrusting her hand up and down slowly while her tongue circled the tip of him before pressing her lips down on him. She was rewarded by deep moans coming from Jack. With a smile Harley released him only to lower her mouth down, taking him deep into her mouth, her tongue snaking back and forth along the back of his erection before she sucked long and hard.

Jack gasped, his hands finally coming around to grip her hair. He didn't shove, or hold her hair painfully in his hands; he simply held on, occasionally stroking back her blonde locks to watch her sucking and licking until the sight of her ministrations was too much for him.

Jack groaned his head dropping back once more. “Ah fuck, Harley!”

Harley grinned, then wrapped one hand around him once more, her other hand cupping him while she began to use her teeth teasingly.

Jack was panting, almost gasping as he watched her again, the way his shaft disappeared into her mouth, the feel of her tongue playing against him, the tight feel of her lips...“Harley...Uh...” Jack shuddered arching back against the chaise lounge, his hips nearly coming off the lounge as he struggled not to cum, hissing through his teeth.

Harley stopped for a moment, grinning ear to ear at him. Jack chuckled. “You are so bad.”

Harley stood up. “Am?”

Jack shifted until he was lying on his back, one leg still on the floor. Harley crawled onto him, positioning one knee on the lounge beside him, her other on the floor, her torso hovering above his erection which she held ready, waiting to plunge down onto him. She rubbed the head of his shaft back and forth against her. He could feel how dripping, wet she was for him. Jack reached up to drag just the tip of his fingers along her hips and down the top of her thighs before he pressed his thumb against her clitoris to rub in a slow circle.

Harley closed her eyes for a moment releasing a soft moan. “Jack...uh...puddin,” followed by a deep groaning growl, her hips thrusting just a little into his thumb.

Jack grinned then whispered. “I want you Harls. I need you.”

Harley opened her eyes with a smile dancing on her lips. “I need you too puddin.”

She lowered herself down, both of them groaning together as their bodies became one. Harley dropped her hands to his chest, her muscles tightening around him. She ground her hips into him, her foot on the floor giving her more control, more power over her movements.

Jack smiled as he lay beneath her, almost helpless, just gazing up at her, watching the light from the hall filtering into the room and shining on her. His harlequin. Her eyes were closed, her back arched just a little as she ran her hands over his chest slowly, gently.

Jack continued to rub her clitoris watching the minute changes in her expression until she started to move. Harley rocked slowly at first, her hips just moving back and forth, riding him steadily. Jack
reached up with his free hand to squeeze one of her breasts, grinning with pleasure at how soft her breasts felt in his hand, warm silken skin, her hard nipple against his palm. He rolled his thumb over her nipple which earned him a hiss of pleasure from Harley. He increased the pressure on her clitoris watching her as Harley's eyes opened slowly, her grinding picking up speed. She looked down on him, her gaze filled with lust and love. And then she smiled, that perfect white-toothed beautiful smile that Jack loved so much. Then she tossed her head back with a cry, her back arching like a bow as she came on top of him.

Jack's breath hitched. She was warm, wet, and yet tight, her body tugging on his in a way that he simply couldn't describe, then her smile mixed with the cry of her orgasm. He groaned thrusting up into her, needing to be deep inside her.

Harley gasped. She leaned down wrapping her arms around his head, pressing her mouth to his, her tongue colliding with his in a warm liquid dance as she thrust and ground against him with abandon.

Jack wrapped his arms around her. He slid one hand down her back, grabbing her rear, the tips of his fingers brushing against where his erection entered her body, feeling himself moving in and out of her, the slickness of their lovemaking slipping and sliding against his finger. Jack growled. “Harley...uuh...Harley...” Harley pulled back from his mouth, her nose against his, the movement of her lips brushing against his own like butterfly kisses. She stared into his blue eyes and whispered, “I love you.”

Jack smiled thrusting up with a grunt. “I love you too.”

Harley groaned, closing her eyes for a movement as she hissed. “Nothing and no one will ever come between us.”

Jack smiled in agreement. “Nothing my sweets, nothing.”

Harley used her foot on the floor to give her more power, more control as she pushed up again and started to fuck, not just sex, not love making, just full, heated fucking, grinding into her man until Jack was sure he was going to blackout if he didn't orgasm soon.

Harley growled. “Aahhggrr...” peaking hard, the ripple more like a crashing wave. She dug her nails into his chest arching back hard enough that he felt the tickle of her long hair against him.

Jack groaned loudly, holding on to her hips like an anchor in a storm. He thrust up hard, his body slamming into her and came, finally releasing with a long drawn out cry.

Harley collapsed back against Jack with a giggle moments later. “Ugh...now, I don't feel like moving.”

Jack chuckled running his fingers up and down her spine. “Me either.”

They were both quiet just enjoying the feel of each other when Harley pouted. “We're gonna get cold though.”

Jack kissed the top of her head. “Nah, I have a lighter, remember?”

Harley snorted.

* 

Ben stood up, glaring with hatred at the cameras, his eyes focused on Jack and Harley lying naked
together after sex...again...he swore she rutted like a fucking animal!! Using her body to ensnare him! To twist that beautiful man to her!!

Ben screamed in rage. “AHHH!!!” His voice echoed loudly, bouncing off the walls of the small room. His whole body vibrated with his rage as he screamed again at the cameras just as Jack was cupping her face, kissing that woman passionately again, their naked bodies still connected.

Ben's hands were held so tightly into fists that all the color had drained from his knuckles, his nails digging half moon shapes into his palm, his arms shaking. He knew he was doing this to himself with his constant watching, constant spying, wanting, yearning...his need... his inability to look away when they were fucking...his need to watch Jack's every move...to memorize his beauty. Ben wanted to reach through and touch him...Ben closed his eyes. He should have followed them tonight, maybe he could have found a chance to kill her...a chance to take Jack, but he couldn't risk Cobb returning to find him gone.

Ben screamed again letting all his rage out. “This isn't right! AHHGRR!!” Ben snarled. “He...he should be mine...why can't anyone but me see that? I'm worthy of him!!”

Ben slammed his fists down on the desk in front of him, causing the monitors to shake.

He had tried contacting the Court again, begging to be allowed to bring Jack Wayne in, but they refused to budge. Not yet, not the time, not ready....other considerations, more knowledge needed...

The only thing on Ben's side in this whole thing was the rift between the Wayne brothers, the fact that the public still thought Jack Wayne was missing...but the Court wasn't ready, wanted to wait. And until they changed their collective mind, Ben was to follow orders, which would be given to him through Cobb. He was not to contact the Court himself again or attempt to recruit Wayne or there would be consequences. Only Cobb could contact them and only when he saw fit to do so.

Ben closed his eyes, remembering the conversation with Sensei (which he supposed said much about how the Court viewed him that someone as powerful of Sensei spoke to him) with a snarl on his lips. Why wouldn't they trust him? Why would they not listen to him? Couldn't they see that this was much more than an obsession? There was something so very special about Jack...something terrifying, lurking just under the surface...Ben just knew he could bring the “real” Jack Wayne out...make him a valued member of the Court...that Jack Wayne could be the one to bring about the Gotham they sought...if they would just listen!

Ben fumed. If he was already a Talon, they would listen to him.

Ben glanced back at the screens watching with venom the way Jack Wayne caressed that woman's cheek, the way he looked at her. God, if he could only get Jack away from that viper! Ben feared he was losing his chance, that since those old fools refused to listen to him, refused to help, he was losing his chance to take Jack!! Ben started to pace the small room, his thoughts moving rapidly like rabbits, first here, then there as he tried to think of a plan, a way to get his way in this matter.

But the worst part was that the Court said he was clearly beginning to show obsessive behavior, that they had given him many chances because of his father, covered his mistakes, cleaned his messes, but Ben was starting to wear his privileges thin....that he was overstepping his limits and his assignment, by asking yet again about Wayne... And so, the Court had decided that they were sending Calvin Rose to remove him! They were sending him back for more training and replacing him with Rose, that weak... Ben snarled and kicked his chair across the room. The office chair spun and slammed up against the wall leaving a gouge in the drywall. Ben hissed to himself. How could they?! He was faster! Smarter. He was simply better all-around than Calvin Rose!! He didn't need any more training!
Ben didn't care that Rose was a full Talon where Ben was still in training. Ben knew he was better, smarter, faster...Ben repeated it to himself...and he didn't see any reason he should be denied what he wanted...

Ben took several breaths. He needed to do something quickly, something extreme to kill that woman and once she was dead, sweeping in to take Jack would be easy.

The Court would forgive him, they always did.

Now...what could he do right now...how would he kill in a way that would be more effective than trying to push her in front of a street car. That had just been foolish, a gut reaction...he could do better.

He was smarter, after all.

*

The following day Jack and Harley were downstairs in their kitchen filled with the smell of coffee and cooking eggs, the soft sizzle of melting butter filled the kitchen along with Jack's singing. Harley was dressed in a pair of black leggings and a tight fitting red and black striped sweater that stopped just above the band of her leggings, displaying a tantalizing slip of skin. She wore a pair of baggy red socks, her hair was down and loose, though she had a black beanie pulled low over her ears, and sipped her coffee leaning against the counter watching Jack, particularly watching the way his hips moved as he danced in place to the song his lovely voice caressed. Jack was dressed in slim cut grey slacks; Harley was currently admiring the way in which the slacks held and accentuated his rear end in a way that made her want to bite his ass. He had chosen dark purple and green striped socks, a dark purple dress shirt, no tie, the sleeves of which he had rolled up to his elbows...which was also making her want to throw him down to the floor and have her way with him...and an apron they had found hanging on the back of the pantry door that read “Lick the Cook” instead of “Kiss the Cook.”

Jack grinned, weaving his hips to music that only he heard and singing while he cooked, much to Harley's delight.

Jack reached over picking up his cigarette where it balanced on the edge of an ashtray, the lighter Harley had given him sat next to the ashtray and the pack of cigarettes. Jack moved his shoulders and tapped his foot, setting the cigarette down and singing, smoke drifting from between his lips.

“Babe, the night it swallowed my soul
Could it be, that I fell apart, it shows
The lines on the face ate away my smile
Could it be that I, fell apart
Fall, in me
I'll let you breathe
'Cause you were fallin', I'm sorry, I may be
Fall, in me
I'll let you breathe
'Cause you were fallin'...”
He glanced over his shoulder while he sang and waggled his eyebrows at Harley, which sent her giggling. Jack reached over to grab a plate and slid the omelet onto the plate when they heard a knock at their door.

Harley and Jack shared a look of confusion. Harley set her mug down.

“I’ll go check it out puddin.”

Jack frowned. “Be careful.”

Harley grinned. “My bat’s by the door puddin, don’t worry.”

Jack’s laughter followed her out of the kitchen.

*

Ben walked slowly up to the door of the main house. He glanced around just to be sure that Cobb hadn’t decided to come back early. He figured he had maybe an hour to do what he came to do and get back to the other house before Cobb came back bringing with him Calvin Rose...an hour to take care of the woman and get away, to disappear into Gotham. Then it would only be a matter of time before he could come back and collect Jack. Ben smiled happily. For a plan he came up with only last night he was fairly pleased with himself.

He walked up to the door with a little more confidence and knocked.

*

Harley could see a shadow behind the stained glass in the door. She frowned reaching over and grabbing her bat, keeping that arm behind the door as she opened it.

“Hello? Oh! It's you.”

Ben smiled. “Morning. I hope it isn’t too early. I just came back from the city and well...I brought muffins.” He smiled holding up a large bag. “I thought I might bring you both some since my cousin told me that Miss Agatha Wayne had said that you two had just been marred.”

“Oh.” Harley looked startled, but she released her hold on the bat and set it aside. “Come on in. Jack and I were just about to have breakfast. Can I get you some coffee?”

Harley smiled and Ben stepped inside. He schooled his features into a pleasant grin.

“Coffee sounds divine, Mrs. Wayne,” Ben said softly.

Harley laughed. “Please, just call me Harley, everyone does.”

Ben smiled behind her back. “Of course, Harley.”

Harley led Ben through the front hall, then past the stairs to the back of the house. She came into the kitchen where Ben saw Jack at the oven humming to himself, weaving his hips back and forth. Ben’s hearthammered hard inside his chest. There he was...right there...his Jack.

Harley moved over and wrapped her arms around Jack's waist from behind and kissed his ear. Bean felt a spike of rage, seeing red for just a moment before he calmed himself. He just had a few steps to take and his goal would be achieved.

Harley smiled against Jack's ear. “Jack, you remember Mr. Cobb's cousin, Ben?”
Ben did his best not to rush over to Jack. He wanted to grab her off of him, but he managed to maintain his calm and walked slowly over, his hand extended. “Hello.”

Jack took the offered hand. “Nice to meet you again Ben.”

Ben felt a shiver run up his arm from touching Jack's hand. He wanted to hold on, but he let Jack take his hand back.

Jack frowned ever so slightly; something immediately felt off to him, though he couldn't put his finger on what it was that bothered him. He decided to play the friendly host, though he kept an arm around Harley's waist protectively.

Jack smiled, a smile that didn't reach his eyes. “Would you like an omelet, Ben?”

“No, no thank you. I already ate, but as I was telling your wife, I just arrived back from the city and I had bought some extra muffins from a little bakery by the docks and I thought you both might like some.” Ben smiled innocently motioning toward the paper bag he had placed on the counter.

Jack frowned slightly, but nodded. “Well thank you.”

Harley stepped away from Jack which made Jack stiffen. He could just tell that something was off, a feeling in the air, a “vibe” he was getting, but he had no way of telling what exactly it was that was making his skin crawl. There was just something about this man's presence that made Jack uncomfortable, something that made Jack want to strangle the man. Jack preferred going with his instincts, but held off.

Jack took a deep breath through his nose. “So, how are you liking Gotham Ben?” Jack reached over picking up his pack of cigarettes and the lighter Harley had given to him. He pulled a cigarette out and offered one to Ben, who eagerly took it. Jack lit his cigarette then leaned forward to light Ben's. Ben looked at Jack, with a small smile as he lit the cigarette. Jack stepped back, his eyes narrowed just slightly.

Ben smiled breathing deep on the cigarette. “Thank you Jack. I can call you Jack, can I?”

Jack leaned back against the counter and nodded. “Sure.”

It took a great effort of will for Jack not to reach out and throttle the man. He just couldn't see to shake the feeling that something was off about the man. Dangerously off.

Ben's features were too...sharp, eyes too far apart, lips too thin...his nose too sharp...every part of the man made Jack's skin crawl with the urge to murder him...something about him made Jack angry. And then there was the way his eyes followed Harley...not with want..no, Jack would understand and recognize that...hell it would be normal for any man to look at Harley with want. But there was something else...something that made Jack's blood run cold. Ben didn't like Harley, it was clear to him.

Harley poured the coffee and handed Ben his cup of coffee. “Can I get you cream or sugar?” she asked with a smile.

“Oh no, black is fine.” Turning his attention back to Jack, he answered, “I like Gotham quite a bit. I was even thinking of moving here. So how are you both liking the house?” Ben asked with a smile.

Harley started to say something, but Jack reached out tugging her close to him again, his arm once more going around her waist protectively. She frowned a little, but didn't move away from him as Jack said softly blowing out a stream of smoke.
“We're enjoying our house. Where are you from?” Jack asked flicking ash into the ashtray behind him.

Harley frowned watching the two men. There was clearly something going on between them that she didn't understand. She could feel the tension in Jack's body, the way he was holding on to her, the tone of his voice; the vein under Jack left eye stood out which told her clearly he was angry and tense.

Ben smiled, his eyes only on Jack. He took a sip of the coffee. “Oh, I'm from all over. The last place I stayed was Central City...too much sun for me. Before that Star City, but I much prefer Gotham.”

Jack nodded. “Gotham is unique. If you're not careful, though, Gotham will eat you alive.”

Ben smiled, his eyes tracing down Jack's body; he couldn't help himself. He looked so good leaning against the counter, the cigarette dangling between his fingers, one ankle crossed over his foot. If he just didn't have that—woman next to him.

“I can see that. But there are things in Gotham that you can't find anywhere else.” Ben's voice was almost a purr. Harley jerked slightly when she felt Jack's fingers dig possessively into her side.

Ben set his coffee mug down. “Might I ask to use your bathroom?”

Harley glanced at Jack before she spoke. “Ah yeah, it's just past the stairs and through the study. It will be the first door on the left. The door will be open, so you should see it easily.”

Ben smiled flatly at her. “Thank you.”

He hurried off. After he was out of ear shot, Jack hissed. “I don't like him.”

“He's a bit...weird, but...Jack what is wrong? You seem really upset?” Harley gently took Jack's face between her hands.

Jack frowned. “I just...something is wrong with him. I can't put my finger on it, but I don't trust him.”

“You aunt said we could trust Cobb and...” Harley began, but Jack cut her off. “No...it's not that...there is something...” Jack sighed. “Just promise me, never be alone with him all right?”

Harley searched Jack's eyes, then nodded. “Never puddin.”

Jack smiled relaxing a little and wrapping his arms tight around her, holding her against him as if afraid to let her go. He rubbed his nose against hers, brushing his lips tenderly along her own. “I couldn't live without you Harley. I would burn everything to the ground if I lost you.”

Harley frowned in concern, but she kissed him tenderly, her breath warm against his lips, her thumbs stroking softly along his cheeks. “I'm not going anywhere Jack, don't you worry.”

*

Ben waited to make sure neither one of them were following him before he raced up the stairs. His training allowed him to move without a sound, heading to the master bedroom.

The door was partly opened and he slipped inside. The room was dark, but there was a sliver of light peaking through a break in the curtains allowing him to see his way. He slipped inside and hurried across the room toward the master the bath. Here is where his plan would take effect.

Once inside the bathroom, Ben looked around for something to use and smiled when he saw the
toothbrushes. He was taking a chance he knew. One of the brushes was purple, the other red...he had noticed that they each favored a certain color...that woman tended to like black and red, but Jack...purple was definitely his color Ben thought with a grin, though he was sure that Jack would look good in any color. For a moment Ben let his mind wander to the thought of having Jack at his side...to finally have that partner he had been hoping for, searching for...

He picked up the red toothbrush, then pulled out the small glass vial from his jacket pocket. Inside the vial was a clear liquid. Ben opened the cap, careful not to let the liquid touch his bare skin. He poured some over the brush's bristles, then blew on the brush until he was sure the liquid had dried on the bristles before he replaced the toothbrush in its holder. The poison he had chosen was one of his own invention. It used a combination of naturally occurring poisons with a few tweaks of his own. Granted, if caught early enough, the poison could be countered with a mustard emetic—just in case he had chosen the wrong brush. Ben wanted to be able to save the object of his affection, but if not caught swiftly, the poison was deadly.

Ben glanced up catching a look at himself in the mirror. He chuckled lightly and blew himself a kiss. This time, everything he wanted would come to pass...and the Court would see that he was right.

Ben hurriedly left the bathroom, racing down the stairs silently, then stopping at the foot of the staircase to take a few deep breaths and steady himself. When he was sure his breathing was fine and he had run a hand over his hair, he walked back into the kitchen. He stopped short when he saw the two of them kissing. He pressed his lips together in anger, but he plastered a smile on his face and stepped in.

“I wish I could stay longer, but I just realized I need to go. Please enjoy the muffins and thank you for the coffee.” Ben smiled flatly.

Jack returned Ben's smile with just as much enthusiasm as his guest. “Let me walk you to the door.”

He gave Harley a kiss on the cheek. “Be right back pumpkin.”

Harley nodded with a slight frown as Jack went to see Ben out.

*

Jack walked beside Ben, which had Ben as giddy as a girl with her crush. He smiled at Jack, a genuine smile that reached to his eyes. “It was really nice to see you.”

Jack stopped and glared at Ben. “You don't need to come calling here again.”

Ben looked stunned and blinked. “But...what did I do?”

Jack grinned. “Nothing, not a thing. But I don't like you. I don't like the way you look at Harley and I don't want you coming around here and bothering us again.”

Ben narrowed his eyes. “Fine. But you are going to want me to come back. You are going to need me.”

Jack grabbed Ben, shoved the shorter man up against the wall hard enough that he knocked the air out of his lungs. Jack's fingers dug painfully into Ben's shoulders. The smile that Jack gave the younger man was feral, flat and sinister. “Now Ben dear, please shut your mouth. As I said, I don't like you. I don't want you coming around here again. I will not want you. I will not need you. And if you know what is good for you, you will tell your uncle adios, and go crawl back under whatever rock you crawled out from under. And if you try to make things difficult for Harley and me, I will take great pleasure in the opportunity to teach you a lesson on manners. Now, I'm being polite here.”
Jack leaned in close, his blue eyes boring into Ben's. “You haven't done anything wrong, you haven't done anything to actually bother either of us. You just rub me wrong, which is why I am being so kind as to warn you to go away. Okay?”

Ben stared at Jack finding that Jack handling him roughly was a turn on. For a moment he couldn’t reply because the urge to kiss Jack was so strong he didn't trust himself. After a moment Ben took a breath. “Fine. But I promise, soon, you will be happy to see me again.”

Jack dug his fingers into Ben's shoulders, he pulled the man back just enough to slam him up against the wall one more time before he stepped back with a smile and with an elegant gesture of his hand, pointed to the front door. “As they say, don't let the door hit you on the way out.”

Ben smiled at Jack with a lick of his bottom lip before he pulled the door open and left.

* 

A little later Harley leaned back in her chair and rubbed her stomach. “Oh. My. GOD! Jack that was so good!”

Jack chuckled. They were sitting at the kitchen table together (having tossed the muffins after Jack had said he didn't want anything from that little weasel of a man). He took the last bite of omelet and rubbed it around the plate with the fork, scooping up some of the melted cheese. “One more bite.” He grinned holding the fork out.

Harley groaned. “I can't!”

Jack looked at her seductively, fluttering his lashes. “What if I promise to work it off of you, hmmm?”

Harley giggled. “Are you trying to seduce me Mr. Wayne?”

“Maybe Mrs. Wayne.” Jack ran the tip of his tongue under his upper teeth until Harley was giggling. “You are such a joker.”

Jack's grin increased. “Oh...I like that...say it again.”

“What?” Harley asked smiling at him.

“Call me joker again.” Jack giggled while he leaned closer with the bite of omelet on the end of his fork.

Harley smiled. “Joker.”

Jack laughed and shoved the last bite between her lips. Harley squealed. “Ack! Jack!”

“Ah! Now you have to eat it!” Jack grabbed her plate and stood up kissing her cheek. Harley chewed picking up their now empty mugs of coffee to put in the sink and swallowed.

“You get to do all the cooking.” She smiled.

“Ha!” Jack laughed and smacked her on the rear. Harley giggled. “I'm going to go brush my teeth.”

Jack nodded. “I'll be up in a minute...you know...to work that egg and cheese off of you.” He waggled his eyebrows at her.

Harley giggled. “I don't know why I bother getting dressed.”
Jack yelled after her. “I don't either!”

Harley giggled making her way up the stairs two at a time, then walking down the hall to their bedroom. She didn't bother with the light as there was light coming through the part in the curtains. Since she and Jack had no plans together, she figured they would be in bed together all day...she sighed happily as she walked into the bathroom.

She looked at herself in the mirror for a moment, smiling. She was happy, happier than she had ever been. With a sigh, she picked up her toothbrush and the tube of toothpaste, put on a generous amount of paste and brushed her teeth.

She winced rinsing her mouth and leaned forward to look in the mirror pulling her upper lip back. She had a tiny cut on her gum from Jack and the fork. She ran her tongue over the tiny wound then walked back into the bedroom while pulling her shirt over her head and tossed it into a corner. She hopped up on the edge of the bed to pull her socks off when she felt a wave of nausea wash over her. Harley frowned and put her hand to her stomach.

“That's weird,” Harley murmured to herself. No sooner had the words left her mouth than she groaned in pain as her insides felt as if they had suddenly twisted in on themselves. She fell to the side, the pain increasing steadily.

Harley gasped in pain drawing her legs up. “Ahh!”

*

Jack came up the stairs grinning and yelled. “You better be in bed naked!”

He hurried down the hall and pushed open their bedroom door, then stopped in the doorway his brow furrowed in question. There was no sign of Harley. Jack stepped further into the room then grinned.

“Okay, where are you hiding? Didn't know we were going to play a game? So what do I get if I find you...Hmm? Or do I get to choose?” Jack chuckled coming around the side of the bed heading toward the bathroom and stopped dead.

Harley was lying on the floor, unconscious and with a small dribble of blood on the floor around her mouth.
You're My Kind

Time seemed to stop. The air in the room stilled and the only sound that Jack heard was the sound of his heartbeat in his ears and the strange raggedness of his own breathing. He couldn't move; Jack stood there and stared down at Harley. She just laid there, unmoving, his Harley...unmoving...blood...it was as if each thing had to slowly register in his mind...

It took three quick panicked breaths before he was moving again. His mind raced over the scene: the only blood was from her mouth, only a small amount; no wounds were visible. She could have possibly had a seizure, but he would have heard her fall violently he thought, and then the subsequent convulsions. His next guess was poison. He had seen the effects of poison before in his experiments. He registered that she had clearly started to undress, which meant whatever it was had hit her suddenly before she could do anything and that she hadn't noticed anything strange, like an odd taste or smell.

Jack stepped over to her side quickly, dropped down on his knees, and leaned over to press his fingers to her neck. Her heart was beating, but it was irregular. He rolled her over gently, saw blood on her lips, felt that her skin pale and clammy. He lifted her up tenderly and set her back on the bed. “Harley, Harley can you hear me? Come on sweets, I need you to wake up.” Jack kept his voice calm though he was in turmoil, a cross between rage and terror. He propped her up against some pillows, her head lolled to the side, but she groaned in pain. Good, he thought clinically, she was semi-conscious.

“Harley!” Jack grabbed her face forcefully with one hand, his fingers pressed hard into her skin as he struggled to control his raising panic. He forced her to face him. Her eyes fluttered and she groaned again, then gagged like she was about to vomit. Another trickle of blood spilled from the side of her mouth.

Jack hissed. Poison—that's what it had to be...there was no question of it now; he thought back on his own experiences...the victims with the smiles. That had been a form of poison mixed with a variety of chemicals. He smiled for just a moment, he loved working with poisons and chemicals...Harley had definitely been a distraction from that...maybe he should pick it up again? He shook himself as a small giggle escaped his lips, he was letting his mind wander in his panic, as if his mind wanted to race away from the situation, the raw terror. He giggled again and covered his mouth with a hand though his blue eyes were clear stricken with fear, his brows knitted together. No...no, no, he needed to focus. He knew poisons, he knew more about poisons than most people. He grabbed her face and pulled back each of her eyelids. Her pupils were dilated...he frowned thinking to himself, he couldn't be sure. Whatever this was, it was fast acting, probably through skin to skin contact...though if she ingested that would do it too. Jack's look of panic began to shift to determination. What could she had ingested up here? Jack's mind raced...she had said she was going to brush her teeth...

He stood up and raced into the bathroom. He saw her toothbrush in its place in the holder. He reached out and grabbed her toothbrush quickly, knocking over the toothbrush holder which sent it tumbling loudly into the sink. He sniffed the brush. He could smell the mint of the toothpaste, but there was a cloying scent underneath, maybe plant-based...Jack closed his eyes running through his mind the list of easily obtained plant-base poisons, then a list of plants that he knew were poisonous, how quickly they acted, symptoms, antidotes. He couldn't be absolutely sure, of course, but he would take a guess that the poison was plant based, anything else might have given off a chemical smell or taste that would have alerted Harley. There were a lot of plants, flowers that could be used
for poison that were tasteless and odorless.

Jack didn’t have time to waste, he followed his gut and his own knowledge of poisons and chemicals. He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to Harley’s forehead.

“Hold on for me sweets,” he whispered, reaching out to caress her cheek and jaw before he stood up. He dashed out of their bedroom and down the stairs, taking them in long, dangerous hops, barely holding onto the bannister as he flew down the stairs, hitting the bottom where he turned and rushed to the kitchen.

He stopped in the middle of the kitchen, for a moment overwhelmed by the scent of eggs and coffee...how just moments before everything had been perfect. Jack shook himself again. He raced over to the cabinet where the spices were kept. He did a swift search, coming up with powdered mustard, vinegar and some lemon juice. He grabbed a glass and raced up the stairs.

Harley hadn’t moved, though she had slipped back into unconsciousness. Jack set everything down and started with the mustard. He opened the bottle of mustard and using just his eye to measure, he dumped approximately a teaspoon into the glass. He then hurried into the bathroom and turned the water on until it ran warm. He put the glass under the water, then hurried back, rolling the glass, mixing the mustard powder and grabbing the bathroom trashcan as he walked past it.

He sat back down on the bed and shook Harley. “Harley, come on baby—I need you to wake up.”

She groaned, moving only slightly, but her eyes didn't open. He yanked her up, but she began to slide back down again.

Jack hissed. “Harley. Wake up, NOW!”

Jack did something he hated to do, something that made him recoil, but he needed her awake enough to drink this or he was going to lose her. Jack set the glass down and slapped her across the face.

It wasn’t a gentle slap; it was brutal, a smack so hard that her head whipped to the side. The sound of his hand striking her seemed to fill the room. She didn't react, so Jack slapped her again, harder. Harley’s head whipped around hard enough that he would have thought he had given her whiplash, but this time she reacted.

Harley groaned, her eyes fluttering. Jack grabbed her by her shoulders and shook her. “Harley, God damn it, wake up!”

She turned her head to look at him, he could already see that he had hit her hard enough that he had bloodied her lip. For a moment he felt odd...which caused him to giggle before he was able to get himself under control again. Jack ignored the injury he had caused her and instead grabbed her by her upper arms and shook her hard enough that her head flopped back and forth. “HARLEY!”

Her eyes fluttered and she groaned weakly, her skin was pale enough that she looked almost milky, and a line of sweat had formed on her brow and upper lip.

Harley's head wobbled for a moment. Jack was ready to strike her again when she moaned. “Jack?”

He pulled her forward and shoved the glass to her lips. “Drink this sweets, do it now!”

He pressed the glass to her mouth, not waiting to see if she understood or if she could even swallow. He didn't care, this was taking too long and he would be damned if he was going to lose her.

Jack growled. “Drink it, Harley!”
She didn’t fight him exactly, but she was having difficulty. He grabbed her head, yanked her head back by her hair, and poured the foul concoction down her throat. Harley gasped and sputtered, swallowed, but in the next instant she gagged.

Jack grabbed her and shoved the bathroom trash can under her mouth just as she vomited.

She did it again, four times in quick succession, throwing up her breakfast mixed with flecks of blood. Jack stood up, hurrying around to the other side of the bed, crawling across to position himself to hold her hair back. She vomited violently again, but this time there was less blood in the mix. When it didn't seem that she was going to vomit again,

Jack eased her head back, resting her head against the pillows. Jack took the trash can, setting it aside before he sat down next to her and pulled her into his arms laying her head against his shoulder.

“What happened?” she asked in a whispered.

Jack closed his eyes, squeezing them tightly shut for a moment; now that the worst had passed, a couple of tears escaped his eyes and ran down his cheeks. He angrily wiped them away before he stroked his fingers through her hair holding her close against him. “I...I think you were poisoned Harls.”

Harley frowned in confusion. “What?”

“I need to call Alex. I want you to rest, stay right here.” Jack said softly, kissing the top of her head.

Harley nodded still looking confused, but feeling too weak to really do much about it. She sank back against the pillows with Jack’s help, easing her down to the bed. He took the trash can with him as he stood up and pulled his phone out, quickly dialing Alex while he made his way down the stairs. On the second ring Alex answered. “Hey bro, what the fuck is up?”

“I need you to bring the doctor,” Jack said simply.

* 

After seeing Jack and Harley, Ben took a boat back to Gotham. He knew, no matter the outcome with that woman, he needed to put some distance between himself, Jack, William Cobb and the Court. At least until he could bring Jack into the fold. Ben smiled to himself. He would get his treat and the praise of the Court once he had a Wayne involved again. After Agatha was released...he shook his head. Agatha Wayne was before his time, but he had heard the stories, about what she had sacrificed to pull the Waynes out of the Court. Ancient history. The Court would be so pleased with him when he brought Jack in, that all his sins would be forgiven.

Ben wasn’t really worried about being caught by the Court or Jack. He had a few friends in the city who were not affiliated with the Court. A few friends who were minor mobsters, still struggling to pull themselves through the levels of the Five Families, none of whom were associated with the Court; they were lowly gangsters, trash as far as the Court was concerned. As along at their petty squabbles didn’t interfere with the real running of Gotham, the Court pretty much left the families and the other gangs alone. The Panessa family was the lowest of the Five, but Tomaso was an old friend —and occasional lover—who still owed Ben a great many favors; hiding out with him in Gotham would be easy. He could disappear for a little while, vanishing enough that neither the Court nor Jack would find him until he was ready. A grin crossed his lips in satisfaction. He could send Jack gifts, letting him know that he was out there and waiting for him...Ben sighed. It would be so romantic. This time, he was sure he wouldn't become bored with his plaything. Jack was the one...he was positive. Jack wouldn't end up like a few of his other obsessions.
Ben was happy.

*

A couple of hours later, Harley was resting in bed, sleeping soundly. She had an IV inserted, slowly dripping fluids and Jack had tenderly removed her clothing, putting one of her large sleeping shirts on her and tucked her into the bed. Henderschott had checked her over, telling Jack how he had probably saved her life. The doctor gave him a list of things to watch out for, but that he was confident she would recover just fine.

Jack sat on the edge of the bed. Harley was curled on her side, almost around him, her hands tucked under her cheek as she slept. She still looked pale, but the color was slowly returning to her cheeks. Jack smiled at his wife and gently stroked her hair back from her face, tucking the gold strands behind her ear as he gazed at her. He leaned over and kissed her cheek softly, rubbing the tip of his nose along her cheekbone. She murmured in her sleep, a whispered: “Puddin...”

He smiled while continuing to caress her face. “I'll be back in a little bit sweets.”

Jack stood and turned. He stopped in the doorway to look at her, his chest hurting before he stepped out, leaving the door open a crack before he made his way down the stairs to where Alice and Alex were in the kitchen. He could hear their voices and the smell of fresh coffee. Alice looked up as Jack entered, her expression anxious. “How is she?” Jack sat down at the kitchen island. Alice set a cup of coffee down in front of him along with his pack of cigarettes and the lighter Harley had stolen for him. There was a bottle of bourbon on the counter which Alex picked up and poured directly into Jack's coffee cup without a word. Jack smiled at him, picked up the drink and took a long sip before he spoke. “Henderschott says she'll be fine. Gave me a list of things to watch out for, but he confirmed my thoughts...poison. That little fucking prick Ben did it. I just know it was him.” Jack squeezed the coffee mug tightly enough that the ceramic made a slight squeak of protest.

Alex frowned, taking a sip of his own spiked coffee. “Ben? Who the fuck is Ben?”

Jack took another long drink before he set his mug down and withdrew a cigarette from the pack, lit it, and took a long drag, slowly blowing out a line of smoke. “Little weasel of a cousin to this place's groundskeeper.”

Alex frowned. “So what makes you think it's this fucking Ben?”

“He was here earlier this morning. I can't put my finger on what it is exactly, but that fuck rubs me wrong.” Jack narrowed his eyes. The expression on his face made Alex's blood run cold. Whoever this Ben was, he was going to die and die horribly.

Jack ran his fingertip along the edge of his coffee mug as he continued. “From the moment I saw him, I didn't like him and today...I threatened him, told him not to come back here.” Jack frowned remembering, then shook his head. “He was the only person in this house who didn't belong...he is the only one who had an opportunity...I know it's him. I'm going to go over there and rip his balls off and make him eat them.”

Alex shuddered. “Geez, thanks for the fucking visual Jack.”

Jack laughed as he took a sip of his coffee. Alex sighed. “I'll put the word out about this Ben...just say I'm looking for him. Gotta be careful though, can't let anyone know my neutrality has slipped.”

Jack smiled. “I'd appreciate that Alex. I hope you know that I appreciate all of it, you choosing Harley and me...”
Alex shrugged. “Ah man, I could only play the Switzerland game for so long. I fucking knew that, but if I'm careful, I can still play the fucking game for a while longer.” Alex grinned and winked.

Alice snorted. “Knowing you Alex, you're going to be playing this game for a long while yet.”

Alex grinned broadly. “Nice when your girl's got your back.”

Alice chuckled.

Alex took a sip of his spiked coffee. “So, have you thought about our next job yet? I mean, we seem to be on a fucking roll with those last two...Haskins aside.”

Jack frowned. “No, not really. Any ideas?”

Alex shrugged. “No, not yet.”

Alice spoke up, her voice soft. “Ah, I might actually have an idea...”

Both men turned to look at her. Alice blushed a little. “Well, I don't know if either one of you heard, but fashion week in Gotham starts on Friday. There are a lot of rich people and celebrities who like to go to those things. Anyway, fashion week is being held at the Wayne and Elliot Skyline Square, but they are all going to be staying at the fancy hotels. I bet if we hit one of the hotel safes...”

Her voice trailed off when Jack grinned, sitting up straighter. “No...no...something...bigger! That's a good start, Alice, but...” He spread his fingers out, his hands fanned as if he was showing off something spectacular. “I want the Red Hood Gang to be the next big thing in Gotham, right? Well, how about we make our debut?”

Alex narrowed his eyes suspiciously at Jack. “What the fuck do you mean by debut?”

Jack smiled. “Instead of doing something safe like robbing a safe or two, why don't we rob fashion week itself?!”

Alex and Alice shared a look of confusion. Jack smiled at them, using his hands to demonstrate in wide flamboyant gestures. “We make this big! Instead, we walk out on the runway and rob everyone at gun point right there. And you know...Ben actually gave me an idea. I've been neglecting my experiments with poisons and chemicals...” Alex gave him a quizzical look, which Jack answered. “I'll tell you later—it was before Harley. Anyway, why don't I revive that...how hard would it be to set up a few chemical gas explosive in a room full of fashion aficionados. I have a great idea for a laughing gas...not deadly mind you, but can't you see a room full of tight asses laughing themselves literally sick while we rob them? The press coverage alone will make it worth the risk!” Jack grinned brightly.

Alex chuckled. “Okay, Mr. Showman, what if one of those fuckhead vigilantes decides to show up? All we need is Hawkgirl...”

Alice interrupted. “I heard her name is Huntress.”

Alex lifted a brow. “Huntress, eh? Anyway, what if her and her fucking bloated Black spot sidekick...”

Alice offered quietly. “Black Spider, he's called Black Spider.”

Alex turned to fully face his girlfriend. “Are you serious?”
She shrugged. “Read it online.”

Alex frowned. “That's really their fucking names? Huntress and Black Spider?”

She shrugged. “Not any worse than that Batman guy.”

Jack chuckled. “Oh I don't know, Batman seems to have a bit more class.”

Alex nodded. “Nicer fucking suit. I mean I've only seen a few “bigfoot” like photos online, but...”

Jack nodded. “When he appeared at that Gala, yeah, nice expensive suit. He isn't playing at being a vigilante—he takes his career choice very seriously.”

Alice grinned wide. “Nice suit, lots of muscles.”

Alex shot her a dirty look, which only made her laugh. “Oh honey you know I love you. You have something Batman will never have.”

Alex frowned. “I'm fucking scared to ask, what?”

“One very clever and skilled hand.” She leaned on the table putting her chin in her hand and grinned like a cat at him. Alex blinked at her and actually blushed, which had Jack laughing hard enough he had to lay his head on his hands to catch his breath.

“Haha, very fucking funny,” Alex muttered still embarrassed as he reached over and smacked Jack on the shoulder. Jack chortled. “Give me a minute, one-handed master!”

Alex snarled, but there was a laugh in his voice. “Shut the fuck up Jack.”

Jack giggled. “I seriously cannot wait to tell Harley.”

“Don't you fucking dare!” Alex laughed. Alice giggled. “All right boys, so...holding up fashion week. I really like this plan. Maybe Harley, Sandra and I can snag some dresses.” Jack grinned brightly. “I don't see why not! I figure we could put some gas bombs throughout the venue, then I could set some duds for any would-be vigilantes that decide to make an appearance...give them something else to worry about besides stopping us...OOo must save the citizens!” Jack chuckled. “But yes, we will be an unknown element. They'll have no idea if we would really blow the place up or not. We can make them choose between pursuing us or disarming bombs.”

Alex frowned. “Duds?”

Jack shrugged. “I don't see any reason to blow up a bunch of fashion models and besides, I appreciate fashion just as much as any of them. I mean to say, I LOVE fashion! There is nothing more divine that a well cut suit. So why destroy all those lovely outfits?” Jack giggled. “Harley is going to love this...now, I just need to pick up a few things for making gas bombs.”

Alex sipped his cooling coffee. “What about us? I mean if we breathe this gas in that you're trying to make, won't we be fucking affected too?”

Jack smiled flicking his ashes into his now empty coffee cup. “Do you think you could get a hold of some gas masks and some red spray paint?”

Alex grinned slowly. “Oh...I see, sure can.”

“Fashion week doesn't begin until Friday you said, right?” Jack glanced over at Alice who nodded. “Yep, Friday.”
“That gives us a handful of days for me to develop the gas, prepare the bombs, the gas masks and check out the place. Not a problem.” Jack smiled with confidence.

Alex shrugged. “I'm in.”

Alice grinned. “Me too.”

Jack laughed. That was when they all heard the sound of a boat outside. Jack turned toward the front door, his expression going stony. He stood up slowly, putting out his cigarette with the tips of his fingers and dropping the butt into the coffee cup.

“If you guys will excuse me, I'll be right back.”

Alex frowned watching Jack walk out of the kitchen. He shook his head. “Someone is going to get a fucking beat down.”

* 

Cobb returned home later that afternoon. It had started to rain again, but his hands were full so he just walked through the rain without the comfort of an umbrella. It was a cold rain that seeped into his bones, seeming to find every corner that wasn't completely covered and chilling his skin. He would start a fire in the fireplace when he returned home, maybe have a glass of brandy or something else equally as warming. He had been in Gotham doing a little shopping, food and supplies. Working on the property of Catherine House required constant maintenance. Despite that fact that his real job was working for the Court, his second job sometimes seemed to be his actual vocation...being a caretaker at Catherine House was a twenty-four hour, seven days a week job. He had gone into Gotham to purchase some paint, to put in an order for a new riding lawn mower and to hire a crew to remove a couple of dead trees on the property. The trees he could have done himself, but it was a big project, two large oaks that had succumbed to bacterial wetwood and needed to be removed. Concern for his own safety prompted the hiring of a crew.

He had left Ben at the house, alone. Not something he liked to do, but he hadn't had a choice. He had needed to go into Gotham and Ben refused to go with him. Cobb didn't like Ben. Spoiled rich kid, father was a member of the inner circle of the Court which was why they had put up with Ben's behavior for as long as they had; Cobb had heard all the stories about Ben and his obsessive/compulsive behavior that seemed to be escalating steadily. Cobb was pretty sure that Ben was finally at the end of the line of what the Court would tolerate. One more screw up and Ben would find himself on the end of a Talon's blade. He had noticed that Ben's behavior had radically changed after meeting the Waynes up at the main house. The Court had told Cobb to keep his distance from them, just to watch, to observe; Ben was to do the same, but Cobb had seen it almost immediately, a flicker of (madness maybe?) in Ben's eyes, a particular twitch in his facial muscles and hands. Then, over the last few days, all Ben had seemed interested in was Jack Wayne. He had caught Ben doing internet searches, writing down notes, asking too many questions about Jack Wayne to the point that Cobb had reported the behavior, but the Court had left Ben with him despite Cobb's concerns.

Cobb arrived back at the house, giving Catherine House a glance, but without any real concern as he walked down the path leading around the house, carrying two gallons of paint and a couple of plastic bags of groceries. When he arrived at his own significantly smaller home and entered, he was immediately struck by the feeling that something was off, felt a shift in the air. He could feel the silence of the place. He knew without looking that Ben was gone.

Cobb cursed. He set the bags and paint down and was about to perform a thorough search when there was a knock at his door. Cobb actually jumped, the knock was so startling. He had been
caretaker here for years and the only knocks he ever received were the ones he had known were coming.

Cobb made his way over to the door. The front door had one small square window in it. Cobb glanced out the window and saw Jack Wayne waiting on the stoop. The man wasn't wearing a jacket, his clothing and his hair damp from the rain, but it was the look in Jack Wayne's eyes that had Cobb on edge.

He frowned and opened the door. “Hello Mr. Wayne, how can I...”

Cobb didn't finish his sentence before Jack punched him. The strike hit Cobb square in the nose and upper lip, knocking the big man backwards into the house. The punch was surprisingly strong, Cobb thought only for a moment before Jack's other fist hit him in the stomach, a direct hit to the diaphragm to knock his wind from his lungs. Jack's next strike was a backhand to Cobb's face again that slammed the man to the left. Jack grabbed Cobb by the back of his jacket and threw him against the wall, hard enough that the impact left a small crater in the plaster. Jack spun Cobb around to face him and hit the man again, not a punch this time, but a hard slap to the face.

Cobb was caught completely by surprise, not just by the viciousness of Jack's attack, but with the power behind it. The man was deceptively strong and there was a deadliness to him that if Cobb wasn't getting his ass handed to him, he might respect.

Jack grabbed Cobb from the wall and tossed him head first into the other side of the front room, Cobb's head and shoulder hitting the plaster surface. Cobb slipped and fell to the floor. Jack snarled and kicked the bigger man in the side.

"Where is he?!! Where the fuck is Ben Orchard!!"

Cobb threw his arms up to protect his head while at the same time bringing his legs up to try and protect his side.

“I don't know!! I don't know, I just got home!”

Jack hissed, his anger—his rage—almost consuming him. Jack dropped to a crouch, grabbing Cobb by the front of his jacket and lifting him off the floor.

“Tell me where that little piece of shit is Cobb! TELL ME!” Jack hit Cobb hard enough in the face with his fist that blood flew from the other man's mouth, staining the floor red.

Cobb groaned in pain. “I'm serious!! I don't know!! I just got home and he was gone!”

Jack held the man by his jacket staring down at him. Cobb looked up at Jack, one eye already starting to swell closed. “What...why are you looking for him? What'd he do?” Cobb's voice was laced with genuine curiosity and confusion.

Jack was breathing hard through his teeth. “He hurt my girl...he tried to poison my wife.”

Cobb frowned in confusion and Jack let go of him. Cobb slowly pushed himself up to a sitting position, Jack stepped back, allowed the man sit up. He leaned against the wall looking up at Jack.

“You...are you sure?” Cobb asked, his words slurring slightly against his swelling bottom lip.

Jack was trembling with rage, his hands fisted at his side now. Cobb glanced at the man's bloody knuckles and smiled. He didn't like getting beaten anymore than anyone else, but he could respect a man who knew out to dish out a beating. Jack glared at him, his voice flat. (Cobb smiled inwardly,
the voice of a man not affected by violence, he realized.) “Oh, I'm sure.”

Cobb frowned leaning his head back against the wall. His entire face and side hurt. He ran a tongue along his bottom lip, tasting the coppery blood from a split lip. “Well, if he did what you said, I'm betting he's somewhere in Gotham by now, hidden away in a little rats hole.”

Jack took a handful of breaths through his nose working to calm himself. “You know why he would try to hurt her?”

Cobb looked up at Jack. “My guess, because of you.”

“Me?” Jack frowned in surprise.

“Ben's been fixated on you since he met you. My guess, he wants you and sees her—your wife—as a barrier in his way.” Cobb pulled his legs up and rested his arms on his knees. “Boy's got an issue with obsessing.”

Jack frowned. “Why didn't you say anything?”

Cobb shrugged. “Didn't know he was going down the murder route.”

Jack chewed his bottom lip in thought then snarled, his blue eyes cold. He pointed one long finger at Cobb. “You hear anything, you tell me. I find out you know where he is and didn't tell me...I will kill you and I won't make it fast,” he promised in a cold tone.

Jack turned and stormed out of the house. Cobb watched him go, strolling purposefully down the path, unaffected by the rain. Cobb smiled, ignoring the sharp sting of his split lip. He believed Jack Wayne would kill him if given the chance. He had to agree with Ben on one account, Jack would be a great addition to the Owls...some day. He stood up slowly, wincing and reaching up to hold his jaw and move it around, the taste of blood still strong in his mouth. Guess he needed to contact the Court and let them know Ben had finally crossed the line in a way that he wasn't coming back. Cobb grinned. He really couldn't say he would be sorry to see that kid go. Maybe Wayne would find him...it was the least Ben deserved.

The fool.

*

Across Gotham in a fancy apartment on the west side of the Diamond District, Agatha poured a liberal amount of whiskey into her own coffee. The drink was more whiskey with coffee than coffee with whiskey. She was waiting for Lincoln to call and give her the all clear, to let her know that the Court had no idea she was back in Gotham or to get out if it looked like they might know of her presence....or warn Jack and Bruce if she thought the Court was about the make a move on them. There were just so many possibilities. Too many, she thought in irritation. She took another long swallow of her drink. Ugh, why had she been so foolish as to give them that house?

She sighed, holding her drink and walking to the large picture window that occupied one whole wall of the apartment. The rain had started again and she could feel the chill reaching through the glass to settle into her bones, reminding her of exactly hold old she really was...She stared out the window sipping her drink. She could look out at Gotham from here, see all its beauty and none of its ugliness that liked to stay well hidden in the shadows, but she suspected it wouldn't be long before that rot would seep into the open and the Court wouldn't be able to stop it. She suspected they might be the cause of Gotham's decline more than its help as they tried to twist Gotham and its people into a vision they saw fit as they had been doing for so many years. Agatha wrinkled her nose and
muttered. “Stupid Owls.”

That was when her phone rang. Agatha scurried over, set her mug down and picked up her phone. The number was unlisted. “Hello?” she answered with a quick press of the button.

“Agatha, it's me.” Lincoln's cool yet melodic voice answered her. “Well, you are in luck—the Court doesn't know you're here, but we do have a problem.”

Agatha frowned turning to look back out the window again. Of course. “Problem?”

“It seems Ben Orchard attempted to kill your nephew's wife,” Lincoln explained softly. “Cobb just contacted me. Jack Wayne showed up and beat the shit out of Cobb, told him that Ben had poisoned his wife. I'm assuming she's alive, but Ben has gone missing.”

Agatha groaned. “Damn. But she's okay?”

She could almost hear the shrug in Lincoln's voice. “Not sure.”

“Well, maybe it's time I go back to Catherine House. Will Cobb keep quiet?” she asked wishing she had a cigarette. She walked over to her purse, flipping the clutch open and dumping the contents onto the bed.

She could hear the frown in Lincoln's voice. “I think so. He has no love for Orchard and he seemed impressed with Wayne. Not sure, but I'm willing to bet that Cobb will alert the Court to Orchard, but not about you.”

Agatha smiled as she found her pack of cigarettes, an expensive import brand from Dubai. “Thank you Lincoln.”

“Always de tout beauté.”

*

Harley woke slowly to the sound of Jack singing softly, the smell of cigarette smoke and the light bouncing of the bed as he tapped one foot, his ankles crossed. His voice was low and rich as he sang softly to himself.

“Let's grab our gold switchblade
And make us a blood pact, babe
To love and to fuck and to only see ourselves
And remember this...
Would you kill, kill, kill for me?
I love you enough to ask you again
Would you kill, kill, kill for me?
You won't be kissing me unless you kill for me
Kill, kill, kill for me...”

Harley rolled over and smiled to see Jack sitting up on the bed smoking a cigarette, his eyes closed,
dressed in his slacks and dress shirt, now untucked, the sleeves rolled up, his feet bare as he sang and
continued to bounce one foot to the rhythm of the song. She watched him quietly as the smoke
created a haze around his features.

She whispered softly. “You know I would kill for you.”

Jack opened his eyes and smiled. “There you are—how you feeling sweets?”

Harley took a deep breath. “Better.” She frowned, holding her arm up with the IV. “Though I could
do without this.”

Jack took a long pull on his cigarette, blew the smoke toward the ceiling before he grinned like a cat
at her. “Nope, you have to keep it in until morning.”

Jack smiled and leaned over to put the cigarette out in the ashtray on his side of the bed. He picked
up a glass of water that was sitting there and helped Harley sit up just enough to take several sips of
water. He set the glass back before he slid down to lay on his side to face her.

She pouted, which caused Jack to laugh gently. She sighed happily then and reached out to stroke
his face. “So what happened exactly?”

Jack reached out and laid his hand against her cheek, his thumb caressed the side of her mouth. “You
were poisoned.”

“Poisoned?” Harley asked, clearly confused.

Jack nodded, his expression serious. “Yes. Ben.”

Harley frowned. “But...how? Why?”

Jack leaned closer to press his mouth to hers in a gentle kiss before he spoke. “I went to confront
Cobb. He seems to think Ben wants me.”

Harley's expression became murderous. “What?”

She started to push herself up, but Jack laughed and yanked her gently back down to him. “He's
gone sweets, don't know where yet, but we'll find him. I promise. He isn't going to get away with
this.”

Harley snarled. “I'll kill him myself. No one gets you but me.”

Jack chuckled. “Mm...I like that. Can I watch?”

Harley sighed softly and brushed the back of her fingers along his cheek with a smile. “Yes you can,
but I get to kill him okay?”

Jack grinned. “All right, your kill sweets. I'll just watch.”

They both shared a smile then Harley added sullenly. “Sorry he ruined our morning. What time is
it?”

Jack brought his right arm up to look at his watch. “Hmm...looks to be almost six p.m.”

“Oh my god, I've been asleep all day?” Harley gasped, but Jack only laughed softly. “Poisoned
remember? Don't worry. Alex and Alice kept me entertained. Came up with our next job, this Friday
actually.”
Harley's blue eyes sparkled with excitement. “OH tell!”

Jack grinned before he went over the plan. He watched how Harley's expression changed. She become increasingly excited. When he was done explaining Harley squealed.

“That's perfect puddin!! Soon, The Red Hood gang will be causing terror throughout Gotham.” She giggled. “Bruce would be livid if he knew it was us.”

“You know pumpkin, at some point I just might have to make sure he does.” Jack grinned at the thought. “I'll just burn his righteous ass.”

They both laughed. Jack stroked some of her hair back from her face. “Can I get you anything? The doctor said you could eat, but to keep it light.”

Harley wiggled. “Later. I want to pick up where we left off before I was so rudely poisoned.”

Jack frowned. “I don't know Harley. You need rest...”

Harley stuck her lip out and batted her eyes at him. Jack chuckled. He pulled her close and kissed her softly, his lips brushed across her mouth. “I love you Harley,” he whispered against her lips, and traced her lips with his tongue before he kissed her again.

Harley moaned softly and wrapped her arms around him, though the IV made it difficult. Jack chuckled again. “Roll onto your back, that way you won't keep pulling on that. I don't want you to pull it out.”

Harley smiled and rolled onto her back with a bright smile. “Okay I was good—do I get a treat now?”

Jack chuckled. “Oh, you get a treat!” He pulled her sleep shirt up and surprised her by blowing raspberries on her stomach.

Harley squealed in surprise. “PUDDIN!”

Jack grinned. “Yes?” Then he did it again. Harley squealed loudly kicking her feet. “JACK!! Stop it!!”

Jack giggled nibbling on her stomach. “Never!! You can't make me!”

Harley groaned. “You are such a cheat!! I'm hooked up to an IV!!”

Jack grinned and laid his cheek against her stomach. “Have I told you that I love you Mrs. Wayne?”

Harley smiled. “You can say it again.”

He giggled with a quick kiss to the soft skin of her stomach. “I love you.”

Jack sat up and started to remove his shirt. Harley watched him while she ran her tongue over her lips. She reached down to shove her panties down her legs, arching her back before she brought her legs up and tossed them aside. Jack gave her a devastatingly handsome grin just before he crawled over her to slide off the bed and started to unzip his slacks removing them and his boxers in one convenient motion.

Harley started to pull her shirt over her head, but instantly became tangled with her IV drip. Jack laughed and reached over to gently push her hands down. “Leave it sweets.”

Harley dropped the shirt. “Okay puddin.”
Jack eased her shirt up over her breasts (having removed her bra earlier when he dressed her) and crawled back onto the bed, and hovered over her. Harley spread her legs, then she hooked them around the back of his thighs. Jack wiggled down a bit so that he could place a kiss between her breasts, then slowly worked his way up to her throat, pressing his mouth to the hollow of her throat, then her chin before he finally pressed his mouth to hers. Harley stroked her fingers through his hair, watching him kiss her. She smiled tenderly stroking the thick strands of hair back from his face. He raised his head and pressed his lips to hers, then whispered. “My girl.”

Harley answered him with a whispered. “My puddin.”

He chuckled then kissed her passionately. Not with a desperate passion, but with a slow steady burn that seemed to build from deep within; it rose up to flow down through her. She moaned against his mouth, wrapped her arms tightly around him. She could feel his erection pressed against her, but he refrained from entering her yet. Jack just pushed himself up on his elbows, his hands cradled her head while he brushed back her hair tenderly, his mouth gently exploring hers. He paid close attention to his kisses, each press of his lips to hers, each stroke of his tongue was soft, tantalizing, inviting, erotic in the slowest most delicious way that sent shivers up Harley's spine.

Jack dragged his lips slowly down her jaw, then to her throat, following the pulse of her heart, then made his way down again to her chest. He slid down her body, wrapped his hands around her shoulders and stopped at her breasts where he pressed his lips lovingly to her nipples. He stopped at each one to kiss with the fullness of his mouth and tongue. Harley moaned and arched into his kisses, the warmth of his lips and tongue, which caused tickles of erotic, delightful warmth to rush through her.

She moaned again, caressing his hair. “Oh Jack...”

She felt his smile against her skin. He rose back to her mouth where he licked her lips before he reached down between them. He shifted his weight to the side so he could slide his fingers between her legs and stroke over her clitoris, the movements of his fingers slow and sweet.

Harley groaned, arching her hips into his touch while Jack kissed her chin and along her jaw, stroking up and down delicately against her clitoris with his finger. Harley's breathing slowly became pants of pleasure, the warmth and his caresses matching the rhythm of her breath. When Jack knew he was bringing her closer, he increased the rate of his stroking fingers, slick with her fluids and building her up to let her orgasm, yet continuing to keep his touch gentle. He groaned. “Cum for me Harley...yes...my wife...”

Harley came with a loud, low moan as her body arched like a bow under his administrations. “Aahh...Jack!!” the fingers of one hand dug into Jack's skin, her other hand grabbed a fistful of sheet when she rose partly off the bed.

Jack pressed a kiss to the middle of her chest before rolling back on top of her, pressed between her legs, he shifted his hips. He reached down between them, sliding himself against her wet entrance, before he slowly plunged into her, settling deep into her warmth, slipping deeper into her depths with a low groan of pleasure, and pressed his forehead against hers.

Harley held onto him with a groan, bringing her legs up to wrap around his waist, pressing her hips up to meet him. Jack started to move slowly. He would pull back then slid deep into her in a slow thrust, a rolling in and out, wanting to feel each inch of himself as he moved in and out of her, pressing himself fully inside her, with her muscles contracting around him, and then holding him inside her.

Jack shuddered, pressing his forehead to hers. “Harley...uuhh...Harley...I love you...”
Harley held on tightly. She hooked her ankles around him, then slid her legs down again, her feet caressing the back of his legs while she thrust up. “Oh Jack, I love you...love you...”

He kissed her, cradled her head between his hands. He rolled his hips, thrusting deep and slow again, grinding against her gently, yet firmly. Harley groaned while Jack continued to bring her closer and closer again. They moved together, bodies perfectly in sync with one another, until she tensed, her body tightening around him, building until she gasped first, then cried out. Her body arched again, fingers dug into his shoulder as she cried out his name.

Jack tensed when she came, feeling the warm tightness of her orgasm which caused his own to follow quickly behind her. He came with a gasping groan, then covered her mouth with his, his tongue caressing hers while they both rode their orgasms together.

Later that evening, Harley was sitting up in bed with a bowl of soup dressed once more in the large t-shirt, her blonde hair spilling around her shoulders. Jack would occasionally look over to make sure she was eating it and giving her a stern look when she wasn't eating. Then he grinned as he murmured. “Eat your soup or Daddy spank.”

Harley giggled. “That is not incentive to eat puddin. In fact, it's the exact opposite.”


Jack sat on the bed next to her, wearing a pair of pajama pants and a purple t-shirt that read “I love Gotham” across the chest, with a notebook laying on his bent knees and a No. 2 pencil that he had been chewing on, the length of the thing covered in bite marks. He was scribbling quickly. Harley was watching TV, occasionally glancing over at her husband while he worked. He was designing a formula for the gas bombs, occasionally giggling to himself as he worked swiftly, the pencil flying across the page. Harley had glanced over at the notebook, but she could make neither heads nor tails of what Jack was writing, though he seemed pleased with himself.

Jack scribbled frantically then chuckled, sounding for a moment like a villain from a 1950's B-movie. “I think I have it Harls! The perfect blend of laughing gas and my own little chemical twists! This will definitely leave them laughing until they puke! Ha!”

Harley grinned and clapped her hands. “I'm so proud of you puddin!”

Jack laughed with lifted brows. “Oh, save the praise pumpkin until after testing! I'm going to call Alex and have him get me what I need and tomorrow we shall set up a lab...Hehehe!”

Jack tapped his chin with his pencil as he grinned at her. “You can be my lab assistant...but I must insist that you wear a little white lab coat that's unbuttoned all the way down to your breastbone, no bra of course, some fishnets, garters belt, black stilettos and nothing else.” Jack waggled his eyebrows at her. “Oh! Maybe do a lot of bending over.”

He grinned wickedly at her.

Harley laughed. “Are you going to wear a lab coat and nothing else?”

“If that's what you want...” Jack gave her a cat-like grin.

Harley squealed, clapping her hands then stopped with a thoughtful expression. “We won't get nuthin’ done puddin.’”
Jack sighed. “True—okay, after the job...when we get home...Dress up!!”

Harley giggled with glee and anticipation.

*

Later the following day, Alex arrived with all the equipment and chemicals Jack had requested. It was cloudy and chilly out, but no precipitation fell. Jack came down to the docks to help drag up the boxes of lab supplies while Harley put on a fresh cup of coffee for everyone. Alice wouldn't be able to make it because of work and there was no reason to drag Dale and Sandra out here to the island for this part of the plan.

“Man, Jack, this is a lot of fucking stuff and it's all fucking heavy!” Alex muttered, carrying a box under his one arm.

Jack chuckled. “What are you complaining about, you only have to carry half as much an Frost and me.”

Alex made a face at Jack. “Oh haha.”

Jack grinned. “But it is true.”

Frost chuckled walking past both of them his arms loaded with two heavy boxes.. “Even with two arms Boss, he couldn't carry as much as us.”

Jack winced and giggled. “Ouch.”

Alex narrowed his eyes with a smile. “You're both fucking lucky my one arm is carrying a box right now or I would give you both the finger.”

Jack chuckled walking past Alex and up to the house. “Follow me boys, we're setting everything up in the scullery. Harley and I found the old brick room this morning and spent all this time yanking things out of it except for a long wood table, but it came with a couple sinks built right into the wall. It's perfect, the color scheme done in greys and whites—secret lab aesthetic!”

The room was a small room, about the size of an apartment living room where a few wooden racks sat up against the wall and there was a marble and brick deep, double sink set that was attached to the wall.

It took the three men over an hour to get the lab equipment (which did include lab coats, goggles and the gas masks for the gang) set up. Harley mostly leaned against the door watching from the safety of the doorway where she could retreat at any moment. But after much cursing, the lab equipment was ready to go.

Jack slipped on a lab coat, snapped his goggles into place, and turned up the music. (He had a speaker set up for his phone in the corner.) The sounds of “Another One Bites the Dust” beat out of the speakers.

Jack smacked his hands together, which were clad in rubber gloves “All right, time to get this puppy together! Haha!!” Jack laughed and his eyes sparkled with anticipation.

* 

The actual work took Jack a few hours. Harley, Alex and Frost stayed out of his way, playing games with Harley; pool, cards and a game of Scrabble which ended up with the three of them spelling out
as many dirty words as they could, when they finally heard Jack's voice echo down the halls to them.

“All right—I think I have it!”

Soon the three of them were in the lab where Jack was standing at the table that held all the lab equipment. Harley giggled at her husband who looked like Dr. Frankenstein, dressed in his white lab coat over his dress shirt and slacks, goggles over his eyes, his hair hanging loose around the goggles and a wicked little grin on his lips. On a small plastic stand sitting on the table in front of him, Jack had a small device on display, about the size and shape of an egg. Jack grinned like a little boy, clearly pleased with himself as he picked up the device and held it up for them to see. He glanced up at the three of them and giggled.

“This is going to be great! These little devices are perfect Alex, thank you!”

Alex grinned with a shrug. “It's nice to have an arms dealer who owes you several favors.”

Jack grinned brightly. “All right. I have a timer system set up for these little devices, all it will take is for me or Harley...” He glanced over at her, and his blue eyes sparkled behind the lenses of his goggles.

“To hit an app on our phones and that will discharge these little beauties. The gas spreads swiftly from the time of denotation to only a matter of seconds before the gas will fill all the available space in the room. So we are all just going to have to show up in the gas masks, there just won't be enough time to throw them on once the canisters are triggered. But I think the effect will be absolutely stunning, all of us in gas masks...except me of course.” Jack giggled.

Harley frowned with concern. “But puddin...”

He smiled holding up a hand. “No worries sweets. I'm going to rig myself a gas filter for the helmet. Trust me.” He winked at her. “The only thing...it would be nice to test the effects of the gas...didn't think to have you bring me any test subjects. I know for a fact it won't kill, but I'm not exactly sure of how long the laughing will last...” Jack glanced at Alex with a frown.

Harley started to say something, but it was Frost who spoke up first. “Test it on me Boss.”

Jack turned to Frost in surprise pulling the goggles up to rest them on his forehead. “Are you sure about that, big guy?”

Frost nodded. “I trust you Boss, and we need to make sure this gas is going to do what you want...if it don't, we're screwed.”

Jack's grin was radiant. “All right then. I could just kiss you...you know...I think I will. “ Jack strolled over quickly and kissed Frost on both cheeks. “Okay everyone, get your gas masks and let's go to the guest bathroom!” Jack threw his arm up in the air before he picked up the gas bomb and headed out of the room with everyone else following. They stopped and grabbed the gas masks which were the Israeli civilian gas mask design with a more arrowed front reminding Harley of a snout. Everyone but Frost slipped on and adjusted their gas masks. Jack grinned behind his, Harley could see it in the wrinkles around his eyes behind the lenses just before they headed downstairs to the guest bathroom.

The bathroom was large enough for all of them to fit inside, with a claw foot tub, white tiled walls and blue tiled floors. There was one window in the room, not large, but it would be big enough to clear the gas.

“Are you ready Frost?” Jack asked.
Frost was sitting in the bathtub (Jack's suggestion. He didn't want Frost to fall and hit his head on the tiled floor. He thought laying back in the empty tub would be better all around.)

Frost gave Jack a thumbs up. Jack smiled and pushed a button on the egg shaped device before tossing it into the sink.

The gas that started to spew thickly from the canister was a bright, almost cheerful green. It filled the small room swiftly in a heavy green fog. Frost lay in the tub and glanced at everyone with a smile. The smile seemed to stretch wider after a few seconds and then he started to giggle. Frost's giggles started out small. Harley pressed her lips together, trying not to respond, but Frost's giggles started her giggling. Then Jack giggled followed by a snort from Alex. That was when Frost's giggles escalated and he started to laugh...this in turn started everyone else laughing...Frost laughed harder, then harder yet. Frost clutched his sides as a strange laugh and groan combination issued from his mouth.

Jack hurried over dropping to a crouch by the tub. He grabbed the sides of the tub with his hands which were still encased in rubber gloves. His voice was muffled as he asked with genuine concern. “How are you feeling Frost?”

Frost's laughter had turned into painful sounding giggles and tears started to stream down his eyes. “My...my...my sides hurt like...like hell! HeheheHAHA!”

Frost burst out into a hard bark of laughter. “Oh my GOD EVERYTHING hurts!!! Hehehehee!!” Frost kicked his feet, the sound of his shoes smacking against the back of the tub made Harley stop giggling. Frost laughed without let up his eyes were streaming so much that they were bloodshot, then Frost rolled onto his side and vomited, but he just kept laughing.

Alex stood still by the door looking slightly horrified. “Jack, I think we should open the windows.”

By now Frost's laughter was horrible; it was clear he was in a lot of pain, but he simply couldn't stop laughing.

Jack giggled. “It's perfect!”

He didn't seem to hear Alex as he watched Frost suffering. Harley walked over to Jack, and gently putting her hand on his shoulder. “Puddin, we should open a window.”

Jack turned to look at her then he nodded. “Of course, of course. Harley open the window.”

Harley rushed over to throw the window open while Jack dropped down to help Frost to stand. “Come on ya' big lug, on your feet.”

Frost laughed. “I...I don't think I can Boss. Hahahahaahahaha!!”

Jack stepped into the tub, wrapping his arm around Frost and held the other man up as he reached over and turned on the water. The blast hit them both just as the gas started to dissipate with cold air drifting into the room. Jack held Frost under the water, reaching up to help Frost clean out his eyes until finally the room was clear. Harley shut the window. Frost was shaking like a leaf from the cold, but Harley hurried to grab a few towels handing one to Jack while she helped with the other towel to dry off Frost. Frost was gulping air, his entire body going slack.

Jack helped him out of the tub, pulling his gas mask off at the same time. “That was BRILLIANT! It'll be perfect for the heist!”

Alex nodded. “Damn Jack, that was...wow.”
Jack grinned in pleasure.

* 

It was a cold and rainy Friday night in Gotham, but the downtown area of the Gotham Fashion District around the Wayne and Elliot Skyline Square was filled with cars, lights and cameras. The opening ceremony to kick off fashion week was tonight and the who's who of Gotham had come out despite the foul weather to enjoy the glamor and theater of the opening ceremonies.

Bruce Wayne smiled as he stepped out of the limo with Talia, who was dressed in a long, shimmering blue and silver sleeveless dress. She held onto his arm smiling beautifully for the press.

Bruce stopped and smiled for the cameras, giving the press his playboy smile and nodding at questions that flew at him without answering them or even acknowledging that anything had been asked of him. Talia heard some shouted questions about his missing brother and fiancee, but Bruce acted as if he heard nothing. Talia had to admire the stoic way Bruce handled the press. If she didn't know him better, she would see him as Gotham did, a little bit of an empty headed playboy with a sexy smile and not much else. It made her wonder what Gotham had said about the disappearance of Jack after his stay in Arkham. She shook the thoughts away, focusing once more on smiling and posing beside Bruce.

After giving the press a few moments to photograph the two of them, Bruce headed down the red carpet toward the entrance with Talia holding onto his arm.

Talia smiled leaning close to Bruce. “Thank you for bringing me, Bruce”

Bruce smiled. “You are very welcome. It's nice to attend something like this with someone I enjoy spending time with. Besides, Alfred insisted I go. Even in the hospital, that man is very stubborn.”

Bruce hid the frown that wanted to creep into his features as the thought of Selina washed over him. He realized, with a sharp spike, how much he still missed her. For a moment he wondered where she was...back in Gotham?

Talia smiled again, but said softly, “Alfred is such a dear. It's too bad Jack couldn't be here. I do remember how much he loves fashion. Your little brother always was one about looking well-dressed and he did so love costumes. He would very much enjoy this wouldn't he?”

Almost immediately Talia realized her mistake. She hadn't meant to bring up Jack, but it was true; this would have been something that Jack would have loved. Bruce did frown then, his lips forming a thin line for a moment. Talia noticed the change in his expression and demeanor and mentally kicked herself. Regardless, she decided to push, just a little. “Bruce, you really need to deal with your brother issues.”

Bruce grunted, then sighed. “Can we not talk about this tonight? I would just like to enjoy this evening with you.”

“Of course beloved. Let us enjoy the evening.” She kissed his cheek, letting Bruce lead her into the main room to where a long runway had been set up in the center of the room. The room itself was wide to provide a great deal of space for patrons and the lighting was low. There were hundreds of velvet black chairs set in rows along a broad stretch of black carpet. The back wall at the end of the room from where the models would emerge was lit in a soft, liquid blue that shone out gently into the room. Above the room were large globe shaped lights that glowed dimly, with neon lights twisted along the ceiling glowing dully in the shadows. The theme for the opening ceremony was “The Future in Gotham” and as such, the lighting in the main room had a dark cyberpunk feel to it with the long twists of dim, dulled neon lights and the heavy atmospheric quality to the room. Light piano music played in the background.
The show wouldn't start for a few minutes, so waiters and waitresses wandered about with trays of champagne for the guests. Bruce snagged a couple of glasses, handing one to Talia as he looked around. He saw many political figures in attendance: the mayor, Cobblepot (which surprised him), Cassandra Kane, Tommy Elliot and Bruno Crowne and even Jean-Paul Valley. There were also the mix of reporters such as Vicki Vale (who shot Bruce a look like a hungry hawk. He knew she was dying to swoop in and interrogate him about Jack.) He saw Lana Lang from Metropolis and there were a few of his old flames wandering about, such as Silver St. Cloud and Jezebel Jet, just to name a few. Bruce inwardly cringed, hoping none of them decided to make a scene here. The woman on his arm might not be the jealous type, precisely, but she could be dangerous.

After a few minutes, a voice came over the loudspeaker. “Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats as the Opening Ceremony for Fashion Week Gotham: The Future of Gotham, is about to begin.”

Bruce smiled at Talia and led her over to their seats. Since he was Bruce Wayne, Bruce and Talia occupied seats in the front. Next to Bruce sat Silver St. Cloud. She smiled at him lifting a well defined and artistically arched eyebrow. “Well, hello Bruce.”

Bruce smiled. “Silver.”

She laughed. “Don't worry. I won't ruin your date. Just...” She smiled and patted his knee. “I heard about Jack and I'm really very sorry. If you need to talk to someone, I like to think we might still be friends.”

Bruce's smile was genuine. “Thank you Silver.”

She smiled turning her attention back to her friend, a dark haired young woman with rather exotic eyes. Next to Talia sat Oswald Cobblepot. He smirked as he looked her up and down. Talia lifted a brow at him and he chuckled. “Just admiring the latest Wayne catch.”

Talia opened her mouth about to say something when the sound of “Feel It” by The Tamperer started loud enough to drown out any conversation. Everyone's focus was on the runway as the lights strobed for a moment, then settled down as the first model hit the runway.

The tall thin woman came stomping down the runway in a long black dress, her hair styled stiffly to her head, looking more like a shiny helmet than hair. She made her way down the runway, did her turn and started back. The next model was a tall, gorgeous woman with brown skin wearing a large black coat that hung below her knees and thigh high black boots with a black sheet dress followed the first model down the runway, and she was followed by another model.

Cameras and camera phones started to flash, taking pictures of the young women and their stoney unsmiling faces. Bruce tuned out most of it, letting his mind drift and relax, crossed his legs and mostly just watched the audience rather than the models. Unless a designer had a particularly novel idea, most of these shows ran together...and Bruce had seen many of these fashion shows.

There was a sudden clip in the music, like a track being skipped, but then the music changed. Bruce chuckled to himself. Clearly someone backstage had messed up there switching the music or something. David Bowie's voice started to play through the room singing the song, “Fashion.”

For almost two minutes nothing happened. No models came out, but then, just as the audience was beginning to become restless, a young woman stepped out onto the catwalk, walking with the beat of the music. She was wearing a black leather body suit with cap sleeves and a zipper front. She was also wearing a pair of black thigh high boots, and a long black leather trenchcoat that came to her knees. The woman had a killer figure Bruce thought as he watched her, really stomping her way
down the runway, though she was a bit shorter than most runway models he had seen. She was also wearing a gas mask that had been painted bright red, obscuring her features. Her long hair was a shiny blonde and hung down her back.

She stomped her way down the runway, stopping at the spot at the front and did the little model half turns. Bruce frowned. For a split second there, he could have swore he saw that she was wearing twin pistol holsters under her coat and red leather gloves. He narrowed his eyes thinking that it had to be a trick of the light, but just as the thought had drifted through his mind, the young woman pulled out two Chiappa Rhino 60DS revolvers. The audience didn't react. Bruce frowned with a quick look around, no one was reacting as if anything strange was happening. Maybe it was just part of the show.

The model stayed where she was just as four other women dressed similarly to her came out (Trope was manning one of the getaway vehicles), each holding a gun. The women were followed by three men, similarly dressed and armed. (Alex remained out of sight and doing the most important job according to Jack...handling the music. Dale also stayed behind in one of the SUVs waiting for the others.)

Now everyone was reacting, a murmur rumbled over the crowd and the music changed again. The sounds of ZZ Top's "Sharp Dressed Man" began to play over the speakers and the crowd started to look around, talking louder, but the music became louder still, drowning them out. Then the lights switched, a spotlight twisted around the walls and then focused on the back of the room where the models had emerged onto the catwalk. A tall man stepped out.

He wore a deep, blood red slick styled helmet. He was dressed in a black leather duster, black leather pants, motorcycles boots and an armored black chest piece. He was holding a gun in each of his hands; Bruce could see that each weapon was a Chiappa Rhino 60DS revolver, matching the blonde's weapon choices at the front of the runway. The man walked to the front of the floor where the blonde was standing, using his weapons to sweep the crowd. He did a model style walk, cocky and confident. He walked over to the blonde and bumped her with his hips. She giggled and bumped him back, the two of them taking the time to do a quick dance around each other. There was no doubt to anyone watching, those two were a couple. The man laughed. Bruce immediately realized the man was using some sort of voice modulator and his frown deepened.

The man in the red helmet motioned with one gun and the music died down, then his voice echoed out to the audience. "Ladies and Gentleman!! Welcome to Gotham's Fashion Week!! We are The Red Hood!!" Here, all of them on stage performed a theatrical bow before the man in the helmet spoke again.

"I hope you're all having a good time! Let me hear if you're having a good time?" The man in the helmet put his gun to his "ear," but no one made a sound.

"Ah, now come on boys and girls!! You have to be having a little fun!!" The man started to walk the stage. Bruce frowned. There was something about the way he moved, the way he walked, the way he was strutting, a twist to his hips...It was...familiar. The man reminded Bruce of someone...

The helmeted man continued, slipping one of his guns back into a holster under his arm, then pulled out his phone. He held the phone up. "Well, I guess I'm just going to have to help you all find a little happiness."

The man hit a button on the phone. A moment later, everyone looked around as a thick green gas started to flow upward from under the seats. Someone in the crowd screamed.

The man in the red helmet started to laugh. "Hahaha!! You're welcome Gotham!!"
Bruce cursed. He grabbed Talia. “Come on!” He took a breath and held it. But it was already too late. Talia giggled, then she laughed. Then harder before she collapsed to the floor laughing hysterically. Bruce looked around, everyone was laughing, falling to the floor, some of them in tears, others holding their sides. Some had started to vomit while others were gasping for air while laughing too hard.

Bruce turned, struggling to hold his breath while the Red Hood gang started to spread out from the walkway. Now Bruce understood why they were wearing the gas masks. Bruce ducked down behind one of the chairs; the heavy green smoke obscured him from the view of the gang. They were pulling jewelry off of people, taking money out of their wallets and purses...a robbery.

Bruce turned, remained low, and hurried looking to find a way out.

* 

Harley ran up to Jack, giggling (Jack was emptying the wallet of the mayor who was laughing so hard that he had wet himself) as she held up her hand to show him the ring she had slid over her gloved finger.

“Puddin! Look what I got!”

Her voice sounded funny behind the mask. The ring she held up in front of his face was a 2.02 carat oval cut pave engagement ring made with 14K rose gold. She wiggled her fingers giggling happily.

Jack chuckled. “That is very pretty, sweets.”

“Yeah I thought so.” She giggled prettily. Jack smiled and grabbed Harley by her waist, dropping his gloved hands to her hips and squeezed as he yanked her up against him and hissed from behind his mask. “I want to kiss you so badly right now. I want to fuck you and lick you....” Jack growled softly. He slid his hands around to her rear, grabbing her ass in his hands and pressed against her, swaying slowly back and forth while the other members of their gang filled their bags, surrounded by the sounds of choking, coughing and high-pitched pain-filled laughter while the green clouds of gas surrounded them. Harley couldn't see his face, but she knew how he was looking at her. She smiled up at him.

He giggled and sang softly.

“So slide over here
And give me a moment
Your moves are so raw
I've got to let you know
I've got to let you know
You're one of my kind...”

Harley giggled staring lovingly at him through the lenses of her gas mask.

A loud crash drew the eyes of the gang members; they turned to see Batman land in a crouch in the middle of the runway. He looked up at the masked robbers.

“Turn yourselves in Red Hood!” Batman snarled.
Jack turned with his arm around Harley's waist and laughed

“Perfect!! We ranked a Batman!”
The eerie sound of hysterical laughter mixed with the sounds of people vomiting or groaning in a strange combination that filled the air of what had started out as the opening for Fashion Week in Gotham. Now it sounded like a room in Arkham Asylum.

“This can go one of two ways,” Batman said in a low growl, his eyes darting back and forth trying to keep each member of the gang in sight. “You can turn yourselves in, or I can do it for you.”

Jack, his arms still around Harley's waist, burst out laughing. Laughing hard enough that he slapped his knee. “Oh my GOD, is that how you actually talk? You are a riot! Let me guess, you never curse along with not using a gun?” Jack giggled. “Let me ask you big guy, are you a virgin because this really seems like the sort of thing a virgin would do...you know...because your time isn't being used in other areas...you might want to talk to a therapist.” Jack giggled again giving Harley a squeeze before he turned to his wife.

“I'm not sure if I should take him seriously? What do you think sweets?”

Harley giggled. “Nah. But I think he should take us seriously.”

Batman's eyes moved swiftly between the two of them trying to decide the best course of action. The other members of the gang hadn't stopped what they were doing, which was simply and quickly relieving the guests of their money and jewels; just hired thugs, gang members simply doing their jobs. These two were clearly the ones in charge...the talkative ones.

They were both unknown elements. He didn't know if either of them could fight, but he wasn't too worried about the others. Experience had taught him thus far that henchmen were usually not anyone he should worry too much about. They usually lacked any significant fighting skills, a few hits, a good scare and they were down for the fight. But Batman suspected that these two were the truly dangerous ones, the ones that wouldn't back down or scare easily. Batman decided he needed another advantage and grabbed one of his smoke pellets from his utility belt, tossing the pill shaped capsule to down to the floor. The pellet burst on impact, adding additional smoke to the already green haze that filled the room. This smoke, a white color that reminded Harley of one of Jack's cigarettes, mixed with the thick green-tinted air, hiding the vigilante in seconds and spreading outward to cover a broad area. Batman reached up and hit a device embedded on the side of his cowl which switched his vision to thermal. He could see the fashion week victims and the henchmen moving around, but he could also see the Red Hood and the woman he had been hanging on, but their view of him was now obscured.

Batman smiled and murmured to himself. “Time to get to work.”

Batman felt the grin on his lips as he thought over his actions quickly—take the woman out first, use her to get the man to cooperate since they seemed to be a couple. He couldn't help the smile on his face and it wasn't from the gas. Bruce liked what he did. He liked beating up criminals, liked feeling as if he was doing his little part of help Gotham

He leaped through the smoke, easily moving towards the woman with his vision guiding his way.

Jack frowned in confusion as he looked around, taking a step backwards and tugging Harley with him, his arm still protectively around her middle. “What?”
Harley hissed, her voice low as she twisted around to look for the Bat. “Puddin?”

That was the moment a shadow formed out of the smoke heading straight toward them. Harley saw the shadow first. She let out a little high-pitched sound of surprise and aimed her guns at the shadow, knocking her husband back behind her with her sudden movement. Batman loomed out at her through the smoke, the cape of his costume forming wings...a giant man-size bat!

Harley pulled away from Jack and fired off two quick shots, thinking she had him in her sights; there was no way she could miss that bat! She hadn't really considered whether she wanted to kill him or not but she would be damned if she was going to let a man in a batsuit touch her puddin!

Batman came in under her arms, her shots missing him, and used the elbow of his right arm to knock her chin up forcing her head backwards, almost loosening her gas mask; the blow sent Harley stumbling. The gas mask she wore did little to protect her from the force of his blow and caused a scrape along the tender skin of her chin. She bit down on her tongue, her teeth clattering together with the impact. Harley gasped in pain and surprise.

Next, the Bat twisted around and slammed his booted foot into her diaphragm hard enough that the blow forced an explosion of air to exit her lungs painfully. He followed that move, dashing toward her as she stumbled backward, with another strike of his hand. This time the Batman lunged forward using the heel of his palm in an attempt to her strike in the face, thinking he might do damage despite the gas mask. Harley saw exactly what he was about to do, registering his move only a second before his hand struck out at her. Harley retreated a step and leaned back as Batman struck out. Her flexibility allowed her to contort her torso back far enough to avoid most of the impact, though his palm still clipped the mouth of the gas mask hard enough that her teeth cut against the back of her lips.

Harley gasped in pain and tasted blood in her mouth at the same time that her fingers jerked on the triggers of her pistols. She fired two more rounds out randomly into the crowd that she now couldn't see at all with the additional smoke. Her wild bullets caught one laughing suited man in the shoulder, but missed Batman completely.

* 

Jack snarled. The extra smoke made it thick enough that he could barely see anything. He had seen the shadow of the Bat burst through the smoke at Harley, followed by gunshots, before the two of them disappeared into the smoke. He would have shot his weapons, but the thought of accidentally hitting Harley stopped him from shooting at all. Jack hissed as he slid his guns back into their holsters and pulled a knife he had brought with him before he dashed into the smoke following their moving shadows. He would kill the Bat if that vigilante hurt his wife!

* 

Batman did a twist and duck, her bullets flying harmlessly over him, which told him she wasn't that good of a shot or at least not any good under pressure. He rushed at her, planting his left foot before he did a hard, powerful half spin, his booted right foot connecting with one of her hands; the impact nocked the revolver from her hand. The weapon hit the floor with a loud clatter before it skittered across the slick surface to disappear into the smoke filled room.

Batman snarled when the woman shot at him again. This time, her aim was better as the bullet hit him and zinged off the body armor on his chest. The impact still hurt and would leave a bruise, but Bruce sent up a silent prayer of thanks to Lucius Fox and his body armor modification to the Batsuit.

Harley squeaked in surprise when her bullet didn't stop the Batman. Then she squeaked again when
he grabbed her wrist, his gauntleted grip like iron and squeezed painfully, forcing her fingers to open while at the same time lifting her off her feet. She dropped her gun with a gasp of pain.

Jack rushed out of the smoke and halted in shock when he saw that the Batman had his girl! Batman yanked Harley toward him and punched her across the face, hard enough that his armored knuckles left a dent in the gas mask and snapped her head back and to the side (blooding her nose and her lip on the inside of the mask.) It was a hard, tight jab of his knuckles that caught her in the mouth, nearly shattering the front of the mask which caused her lips to cut against her teeth again as well as bits of hard plastic to slice against her lips. Inside the mask, the taste of blood mixed with blood from her nose as the vigilante's strike smashed the mask against her nose, making it bleed.

Harley let out a small grunt of pain before she went limp.

Batman dropped her, turning to look for her boyfriend when the man in the red helmet came out of the smoke like a demon straight for him with an incoherent roar of rage. Batman barely had enough time to react, throwing his forearm up to protect his face as the man in the red helmet slashed with a blade at hit his forearm and struck, cutting deeply. The blade somehow sliced between the tightly woven metal fibers in the Batsuit's gauntlets. Luckily the damage was minor, but another cut like that and Bruce would have a knife in his forearm. Batman yanked his arm to the side, the fist of that hand catching the helmeted man in the "face" and knocked his head to the side accompanied by the sound of an armor clad fist striking the heavy material of the helmet. The blow caused the leader of the Red Hood to stumble back, but he left the blade in Batman's forearm.

Jack winced with the hit, but it wasn't enough to put him down. Batman didn't let up, didn't give Jack a moment to catch his breath or think of his strategy before Batman's fists snapped out. He hit Jack in the face of his helmet, knocking his head first left, then right at the same time trying to drive Jack backwards away from Harley. Jack took several of the blows to his face, unable to block the first few hits. It took him a couple of seconds to pick up the Batman's rhythm of fighting; he ducked one swing and punched out, his fist connecting with Batman's side feeling the give of the armor. Batman hissed and took a step back, which was all Jack needed. So, the armor was better against bullets than heavy blunt damage...worth noting for future encounters, which Jack was certain would occur.

Jack laughed using his forearms to block Batman's next several blows. There was something about the way Batman threw his swings that reminded Jack of the way Bruce would fight. Bruce tended to fight like a bull, all power and forcefulness with little to no finesse. Bruce liked to use his strength and power to wear his opponent down...or at least that was how he used to fight when they were younger and in their most recent brawls. Bruce knew he had a larger, more muscular frame which he would use to dominate his little brother; he would always try to use his superior strength to overpower Jack, thinking that Jack's much thinner frame equaled weakness, but what Jack lacked in "power" he made up for in intelligence and quickness.

Jack grinned. It looked like Batman fought much the same way, relying on his power. Well, as the saying went, the bigger they are... Just to prove his point, Batman rushed forward and slammed his fists at Jack, the body armor that Jack was wearing wasn't as good as Batman's, but it was good enough to absorb most of the impact combined with Jack's own threshold for pain. The double-fisted strike only pushed Jack two steps backwards. Batman then twisted slightly to the side, his fist slamming against Jack's helmet, the impact created a hard sounding thunk inside the helmet, snapping Jack's head to the left with the strike. Jack smiled behind his mask, brought his forearms up to block Batman's next two strikes; the Bat's fists slammed into Jack's forearms, the impact of which vibrated up his arms, but Jack took the pain with a grin.

Red Hood chuckled. “Let me guess, you're a top? No?”
Batman didn't reply, he simply kept trying to beat Jack down.

Jack kicked at Batman, his boot connecting with Batman's knee. The kick didn't cause the man to fall, but it did force Batman to take a step backward. Jack took a couple of swings at Batman, but the Bat blocked, then took his own swing at Jack. Jack weaved away from the attack and swung his fist for a backhanded attack that struck Batman across the face which rewarded Jack by seeing Batman bleed. Jack giggled. Who wore body armor, mask, gauntlets, and left his mouth and chin unprotected?

“Oh Batsy!! You got a little blood there on your upper lip!”

Batman frowned. There was something just so...familiar about this Red Hood. It was eating at him that he couldn't place what it was about him that seemed to familiar. Something about the way he moved, the way he fought...Even his laugh, though changed through the voice modulator, still “felt” familiar. Bruce couldn't place what it was, but it was bothering him and that it threw him off enough that the criminal hit him across the face again.

“Oh Batsy! Pay attention!” Red Hood laughed, giving Batman another backhand fist strike to the face followed by a graceful roundhouse kick that caught the vigilante in the side. Batman stumbled back a step or two.

Batman snarled. “Your woman is down Red Hood. Just give yourself up before this becomes more serious.”

Red Hood laughed. “Oh, you are funnier than the TV news makes you out to be!”

Jack moved swiftly, coming in close and lashed out with an upward swipe, his fist connecting to Batman's chin and snapping the man's head backward.

Batman's hand snapped out to grasp Red Hood around the back of his neck, his fist connecting with his opponent's chest in a few rapid, hard strikes that knocked the air from Jack's lungs. Gasping, Jack reached forward and grabbed Batman's shoulders before he gasped in air and choked out a laugh.

“Oh, hit me again! Come on, do it!” Jack laughed. “HIT ME!”

Batman faltered for a moment. This...this seemed so...familiar. For a moment, the brief image of his little brother Jack, crying, bloody nose and a bloody lip looking up at his big brother with a look of betrayal hissing at Bruce in his little boy's voice. “Hit me again Bruce! Go on! That's the only way you ever pay attention to me!” The vigilante's hesitation allowed the Red Hood to lash out, bringing both arms up to slam them down into the crook of the Batman's elbow with enough force that Bat's grip faltered. Batman lost his hold on the back of Red Hood's neck, but before Jack could use this to his advantage, the Bat's hand shot out once more. He grabbed Jack around the neck again and rushed him backwards until Jack's back slammed up against a wall with bone jarring force.

“ENOUGH!” Batman snarled. He slammed his opponent against the wall again, trying to get him to stop fighting him. The man behind the mask only laughed at the vigilante's efforts.

Jack chuckled and before Batman realized his movement was no attack, Jack pulled out his cellphone, which confused the vigilante for a moment. The Red Hood giggled behind the mask holding up the phone, a thumb poised over a button. “Better let me go Batman.”

Batman snarled. “Why would I do that?”

The Red Hood's thumb touched the phone. The room was rocked by the sound and tremor of an explosion. It wasn't huge...but it wasn't small either. Batman kept a hold of the Red Hood's neck, his
head pivoting to the side while his gauntleted fingers tightened around the other man's throat. The explosion came from the back where the models were set to change clothing and makeup. Batman exhaled heavily in anger...how many people were back there?

Batman reached for the phone, but the Red Hood held it up out of his reach with a laugh. “Oh now come on Batman! You think I'm the only one with the killer app? Didn't you count my gang? And do you know where each of them are at this very moment? No? Well guess what tall dark and gruesome? They each have phones and they each have apps connected...oh I don't remember...to a bomb or was it..bombs?” He laughed. “I have no idea. But if you don't let me go, those bombs will all go off. Now...if you release me and let me and my gang go, I will be nice enough to give you a five minute head start to find them all before we set them off. If not...well...I'm eager and willing to see what happens—are you?”

The Red Hood giggled again.

Batman stared at him. He had no idea how dangerous this man was...was he willing to blow himself up and his gang...all these people? No...the real question was whether he, Batman, was willing to take that risk. And his opponent had proven that he had explosives at his disposal.

Batman let him go, letting the man in the Red Hood back on his feet.

The gang leader chuckled, reaching up to touch his throat. “You have quite a grip there Bats. Little kinky aren't you?”

Batman snarled. “Where are the bombs?”

Jack laughed. “Oh please, like I'm going to tell you? I mean where is the fun in that big boy! No, no I think I'll let you find them for yourself.”

Jack started to move slowly, heading toward where he knew Harley was lying. His first steps were hesitant, waiting for Batman to grab him again, but when it was clear that he wasn't going to, Jack's moved with a little cocky dance step as he moved towards his lover. “I have to say this has been fun! I really hope we can do it again soon Batsy. Or do you prefer Batman? Hahaha!! I don't know Batsy, I think we might have something special here.”

That was when both men heard a woman's voice snarl in a strange muffled sound from behind a gas mask. “That fucking HURT BATS!”

Harley came rushing out of the smoke and gas, but Jack hurriedly put himself between her and Batman grabbing the snarling woman around the waist.

Harley hissed at Jack. “What're you doing?”

“Batsy here is letting us go...or else boom.” He held his phone up and wiggled it.

Harley giggled. “Oh yeah. Hehe.”

Jack took Harley's hand. “Well Bats. It's been a blast...literally, but the Red Hood gang needs to go and you need to find those little bombs of mine before my thumb slips. Have fun!”

He turned yanking Harley with him. She waved. “Bye bye Bats!!! Have fun finding the bombs!”

Batman cursed under his breath.

*
When Jack had hit the explosion, that had been the sign for everyone to go. It had been part of the plan from the beginning, a distraction to get them all out of the hall so when Jack and Harley ran out the back, the SUVs were waiting for them. Alex was at the wheel of the one that Jack and Harley hopped into, his eyes dancing behind his gas mask as he hit the gas and pulled the SUV out, with Trope following in the other. They could hear the sounds of sirens from both police and fire trucks.

The SUVs disappeared into Gotham without anyone noting anything out of the ordinary.

* 

The group drove to an abandoned church on the upper west side where Alex knew a rave was taking place tonight. The outside was a typical brick buildings with Gothic accents, but the inside was something else entirely. The inside of the church was in good shape, with marble floors and large arched ceilings. All the stain glass windows were still intact, which made the place perfect for the party that was going on tonight; the place was filled with purple and blue lights that were in constant motion, while the beat of the music threatened to crack the very walls of the church if the crowd didn’t do it first. The sounds of DVBBS & MOTI “This is Dirty” was playing loud enough that it could easily be heard outside the walls of the church and for some distance beyond.

Their group had parked the two SUV’s in two different areas away from one another, meeting up inside the church at a back corner where some private booths had been set up for drugs, sex and anything else. Alex was friends with one of the DJs that was playing tonight and had been able to have a booth waiting for them when they arrived.

When their group entered the party, no one gave them much attention, their black outfits with the red gas masks fit right in to a party where everyone was wearing a wild and wide variety of costumes from fairy wings, to animals masks, to nothing but painted on clothing. There was a bubble machine somewhere up above that was releasing bubbles onto the crowd below which moved like one large living creature, jumping and grinding to the music.

Alex led the way to their booth, which consisted of a wrap around couch, a table and a shower curtain rod with a heavy curtain to provide some privacy put up between the arches of the aisle.

Everyone took a seat. A handful of their gang, Trope, Rolf, Roxy, Duela and Jason all removed their gas masks, but the rest of the group opted the keep their masks on while a few of the gang noticed with a little cringe the state of Harley’s mask. Jack and Harley sat in the middle. Trope and Rolf ran off to get some drinks and soon their group settled down to business.

Jack grinned behind his mask. “You all did fantastic work tonight! Followed the plan perfectly! I’m just so proud!” He put his arm around Harley’s shoulders. “Aren’t you sweetie?”

Harley clapped her hands. “Oh yes puddin!! I’m so proud of you all!”

Jack continued giving Harley's shoulders a squeeze. “And I'm just so proud that all of you kept your cool, stuck to the plan even with Batman showing up!!”

Jason snickered. “Wow, I've never seen Batman in person before and you handled him great boss.”

Jack laughed behind his mask. “Thank you darling! All right, down to the business of money. Jewelry and watches are to be given to “A” here who will get us a good price, cash...we did really well my little birds, everyone will get a nice 10K tonight to start off.”

Everyone cheered. Jack grinned brightly behind his mask. “Now, you all go out there, have some fun, don't spend it all in one place and please, don't do anything I wouldn't do. Or do.” Jack giggled.
“‘A’ will contact everyone with our next job...and with your next paycheck.”

Jack leaned back on the couch, his arm around Harley's shoulders watching while Frost counted out money and handed it to each of their gang; everyone was in good spirits. Jack watched contented as the gang slowly disappeared, some melding into the crowd, others leaving to find their own way home or for other destinations. After a bit Alex stood with Alice, both of them still masked.

“I'll give you a call tomorrow, Red Hood.” Alex snickered as he tossed a set of keys to Jack. Jack easily caught them out of the air. “I had one of my people bring a car around for you. An '86 white Porsche, should be parked over in the front of the church.”

Jack laughed. “Thanks ‘A’. Talk to you tomorrow. Have a good night you two.”

Alex grinned, his one arm around Alice's shoulders. “Going home my good man, going home.” Alex waved his fingers and disappeared into the crowd with Alice.

Frost stood as well. “See ya later Boss.”


Frost chuckled and took off. Dale and Sandra left as well with Dale waving. “Night boss!”

Jack nodded. “Night my friend.”

Before long it was just Jack and Harley sitting on the couch together, the sounds of Black Tiger Sex Machine played around them causing the walls to vibrate with the beat like a living thing.

Jack smiled at Harley. Even though she couldn't see his smile, she knew he was smiling at her as his fingers brushed against her neck. “Shall we my dear?”

Harley turned to look at him through the lenses of her gas mask. “Wanna dance?”

Jack chuckled. “Meet me on the floor in ten minutes.”

Harley giggled, a muffled sound from behind her gas mask and hopped up. “Last one there is a rotten egg.”

Jack laughed watching her as she hurried off, pushing her way through the crowd and vanishing. For a moment he felt a pang of...fear...desperation to go after her, to make sure she was safe, at his side...but he took a deep breath through his nose to calm himself. She would be fine, he had to tell himself that...she would be fine. He stood, glancing around once, but the crowd was too involved in the music and their own little worlds to be worried about a man in a red helmet. Jack made his way out toward the front of the church, gently pushing people out of his way. People were coming and going in and out of the church without really paying attention to the man in the red helmet; drinking, dancing, drugs were all that mattered to this crowd. He could see some of them doing drugs in the dark corners, a few having sex, others just partying and drinking. All of them were oblivious. Jack smiled. Such fun...for a moment the thought of blowing this place up...of the chaos it would cause, the needless destruction to a handful of pointless lives...flashed through his mind. He frowned only slightly at the thought, thinking about how much Batman...oh hell, how much something like that would piss off Bruce! Jack chuckled to himself thinking about something even more fun than an explosion—his gas...this crowd would probably get off on his type of laughing gas. He grinned at the thought. There might actually be a market out there for it. Something to consider he thought.

He stepped outside, looking around. The night air was cool, crisp, but the sky was clear. It took him a few minutes to find the Porsche, parked just a short distance down the street from the church. Jack
made his way down the sidewalk to the car and unlocked the door on the driver's side, slipping inside. The interior was a soft brown leather, well maintained. The windows were tinted making the inside quite dark, but that darkness served to make the car feel like a tiny sanctuary from the outside. Jack pulled the helmet off with a groan of relief, and ran his hands through his hair, his fingers aggressively rubbing his scalp. With a little work, he removed the chest protection dropping it in the back along with the helmet. Soon he was just a handsome man dressed all in black, at a party.

He rolled his neck, touching it gingerly and wondering if Batman left any bruises. He grinned at the thought of the vigilante. The fighter for justice had a temper...nice to know. Jack pulled the rear view mirror around to see himself, turning on the little overhead light in the car. He frowned. The eyeliner he had put on before leaving was a little smudged from sweating in the helmet, but there wasn't much he could do about it since he didn't have any with him, nor did he have any lipstick...which was really a shame he thought but the smudged black around his eyes still made his eyes pop. A grin curled the corners of his lips upward. Harley would like it,. With a sigh Jack exited the car and headed back inside to find Harley.

The music that was playing had the entire place jumping up and down to the beat. La Roux's “In For The Kill (Le Castle Vania mix)” was playing at a deafening level. Jack walked in looking around for Harley, his eyes scanning the dance floor in the middle of the church, but with the lights blinking on and off, or the additional laser light sweeping over the crowd, mixed with the bubbles floating down from above, it was hard to see much of anything. Jack stood there looking for her, waving off the attentions of a few passing men and women who stopped to try and get him to dance with them (or something else) when he saw Harley in the middle of the dance floor.

Her blond hair was loose and she was wearing only a black lace bra, her jeans and the jacket she had been wearing earlier over the top. Even with the purple and blue lights dancing over her, he could see the slight swelling to the side of her mouth from where Batman had hit her in the face, her lips just slightly puffy, but it didn't seem to affect her smile. She was dancing with a couple of other young women, the three of them doing a sort of shuffle dance. Harley was smiling brightly the light dancing off her perfect white teeth.

Jack smirked while he pushed his way through the crowd that was circling the three women as they danced. Harley, along with the other two scantily clad young women, were doing a series of complicated foot and leg moves that involved jumping and hopping back and forth, balancing for seconds on their toes or heels and even doing a little bit of a moonwalk as they twisted and bounced on their feet together.

Jack was laughing, clapping his hands along with everyone else watching his wife tearing up the dance floor with the other women, whipping her head around, her blond hair catching the colored lights while she danced with all her heart.

At one point Harley saw Jack standing on the edge of the crowd watching her and clapping his hands. She grinned and winked at him. When the music stopped everyone in the church not otherwise engaged applauded and shouted at the women, but Harley hurried over and threw herself into Jack's arms. “Puddin!!”

Jack wrapped his arms around her, lifting her off her feet and covered her mouth with his own in a deep kiss. Harley giggled against his mouth, cradling the back of his head softly. Jack pulled away just a enough to lick her lips and tug on her bottom lip with his teeth (Harley enjoyed the brief spike of pain) before he asked. “And where did you learn to dance like that?”

Harley giggled. “Those two taught me.”

Jack smiled. “And you picked it up just like that, eh?”
She shrugged. “What can I say? I'm good at dancing.”

Jack chuckled lowering her to her feet. “Mm. Could I steal a dance?”

Harley purred. “You sure could puddin.”

Jack kept his arms around her waist, feeling the warmth of her bare skin against his palms. He slid his fingers under the band of her pants squeezing just slightly while Harley draped her arms around his shoulders, her fingers playing with the small hairs at the back of his neck. The two of them moved together, swaying against the music as if whatever song was playing had nothing to do with them. Harley smiled up at Jack, her fingers caressing the back of his neck. “Tonight was good wasn't it?”

Jack laughed softly rubbing his nose against hers. “Oh yes, tonight was very good. You should have seen the look on Batman's face! At least what was visible of his face. I think I could get used to doing that...over and over again putting that great big boob on the spot where he has to choose, get the bad guy, or save some citizens.” Jack laughed. “He was so angry it was funny! I bet he was even angrier when he found the bombs and realized they were all duds.”

Harley giggled laying her head against his shoulder both of them continuing to dance as if a slow song was playing instead of the thumping beat of a dance mix.

Jack kissed the top of her head. “Though I think I need to think of a proper punishment for him hitting you in the face.”

Harley laughed. “Oh Jack.”

“No one hits my girl.” Jack hissed.

He kissed her hair again before he reached up a hand to stroke her hair behind her ear. Harley shifted to look at him. She smiled watching the way the lights danced across his face, casting his skin in shades of blues and purples while the sounds of Eiffel 65 filled the air around them, though they didn't seem to notice the sound of the music at all. Jack's complete focus was on his girl. Jack smiled down into her soft blue eyes and carefully pressed his lips to hers, not wanting to hurt her swollen lips. His hands moved up from her waist to cradle her face, deepening the kiss very slowly. He could taste blood on her lips which sent a thrill through his core; he kissed her harder.

Harley made a slightly muffled sound of pleasure lifting up on her toes to press her mouth more hungrily against Jack's, her desperation for him steadily building. She wrapped her arms tighter around his neck, her tongue sliding across his, which only made Jack growl deep in his throat, his fingers tightening where he held her face, resisting the urge to rip her clothes off and take her up against one of these walls right at this moment.

She drove him so crazy!

Jack glided his mouth and tongue over her neck, tasting that sweet combination of flavors that made him want more of her. His mouth wandered from her throat back to her mouth in a slow and passionate kiss while his fingers slid along her scalp buried in her thick hair and holding her to him. He grinned against her lips grinding his hips against her as he leaned into the kiss.

Jack traced her lips, tenderly caressing the cuts in and around her mouth with the tip of his tongue. Harley growled softly, her hands rolling down his shoulders as the music played across them. She slid her hands along his chest, then along his waist, reaching around him; her hands snaked down to grab his ass and yanked him closer.
Jack chuckled tracing the cut on her lip with his tongue. “Committing a crime and getting hit by Batman turn you on Harley?”

Harley giggled. “Mm...Maybe..” She gave him coy grin.

Jack's smile was all teeth when Harley pressed against him rubbing herself against his pelvis to punctuate her statement. Jack laughed swaying against her. “I'll take that as a yes, you little minx.”

Harley's answer was a purr followed by licking his chin as she hissed seductively. “You know...I was giving this some thought while I was cleaning up earlier—maybe we should go home and practice something like...mmm...I don't know...what if Batman were to catch us and tie us up? What would you do?” Harley gave Jack an over the top series of innocent blinks of her lashes.

Jack laughed. “I have no idea what I would do. I think Batman is a freak, my dear. Certainly liked to play the choking game.” Jack frowned, her actual words sinking in. “Tie me up?”

Harley snickered. “Batman a freak. You're funny and yes puddin...tie you up.”

Jack chuckled. “What have you been doing online while you were recovering this week?”

Harley giggled in response.

They swayed a bit to the music, then Harley grinned devilishly. “I think you should get me home so I can tie you up and practice getting loose...you know...just in case.” she giggled mischievously.

Jack smirked. “Oh, of course...just in case.”

* 

Across town Batman had finally returned to the batcave in a foul mood. Alfred was waiting for him with a pot of tea and a bottle of gin.

Alfred smiled just a little when Bruce jumped out of the car. “It's nice to see that new remote you installed in the Batmobile worked well.”

Bruce grunted, stomping to the computer. “Do you know anything about the Red Hood gang?”

Alfred frowned, setting the tray down near the computer and began to pour tea into one of the two cups on the tray. He then added a liberal amout of gin to one of the cups before he handed the unenhanced cup of tea to Bruce. “Well I do recall stories of the gang from the late '30's and '40's; I believed they formed around the time of Prohibition. Though I do believe in later years the gang was all about spreading chaos.” Alfred quirked a brow. “Don't quote me on that sir, since that was well before my time. May I ask sir, why the sudden interest in Gotham's ancient gang history?”

“I ran into the “new” Red Hood gang tonight at the opening of fashion week. They set off some sort of gas bomb...laughing gas that incapacitated everyone.”

“Except you sir,” Alfred pointed out and added, “And what of Miss Talia?”

Bruce pulled his cowl off, tossed it to the side of the long desk that made up part of his computer system with a grim smile. “Yes, except for me. I made sure afterwards to get Talia outside. She had been affected...I did what I could for her. I expect to hear from her soon, wondering what happened to Bruce. But I had to let the gang...I had to let them go.”

Alfred frowned slightly at the way Bruce referred to himself as if Batman and Bruce Wayne were two separate people...and that Bruce was not the dominant of the two.
“May I ask why Master Bruce?” Alfred sipped his spiked tea, watching Bruce's expression. Losing did not set well with Bruce.

“Their leader said they had planted more deadly bombs throughout the building, blew one up to prove his point. I had to make a decision...let them go and get to the bombs or risk him or another member of his gang setting them off, killing...” Bruce trailed off and shook his head. “Except for the one bomb, the rest were all duds, all fakes.” Bruce growled out the last bit and slammed his fists against the computer console.

Alfred frowned. “Sir, you could not have known that. You saved lives—that is the Batman's first priority.”

Bruce pinched the bridge of his nose. “I know...I mean, yes...but...I hate being made a fool of and to top it all off, I'm almost sure I've met the leader of that gang before...somewhere...”

“Sir?” Alfred asked quizzically.

“There was something about the way he moved...it was familiar. Even his fighting style...” Bruce's voice was low. “It was...so familiar...the way he spoke...his voice was altered, like mine in the cowl, but there was something about the way...” Bruce shook his head. “I know him Alfred, I'm sure of it.” Bruce sighed. “I need to find out all I can about the old Red Hood gang. Maybe this new version of the gang has some connection to the old...family members...something. I know this can't be the last we'll have heard of them. They were successful and success will make them cocky. They will try for another big and public score, I know it. Next time, I need to be ready.” Bruce frowned and glared at his computer screen before he murmured. “This incident also showed me that a partner is a good idea...if there had been two of us we might have been able to stop them.”

“Sir, but how will you find a partner you can trust with your secret since you won't trust your own brother?” Alfred asked mildly though there was a slight inflection on the word “brother.”

Bruce sighed with a hint of a sad smile on his lips. “No idea Alfred, no idea.”

* 

Later that evening, back at Catherine house, Jack found himself naked and tied to a chair in their bedroom. Harley had dug through his clothing and took four of his leather belts out almost as soon as they had returned home, both of them still riding the high from their “outing.” After demanding that he carry a chair from the dining room upstairs, and then demanding that he strip, all of which he had done, she had then strapped him down to the chair. She had used the belts to tie his arms behind the back of the chair with a belt across his biceps, another binding his wrists. She had then hooked his ankles around a leg of the chair, and bound them to the chair legs with the additional belts. She had done a pretty damn good job of it too, Jack realized. He struggled just a little, enjoying the game until she had left him in their bedroom and not come back.

She had been gone at least a couple of minutes.

“Harley!! This isn't funny anymore!” Jack yelled. He had been sitting here for a while now. Where on earth had she gone off to! Jack frowned and wiggled the chair. She had done a good job of tying him down. He might be able to get his wrists loose, but she had his arms tied up, it would take a while and he would probably scrape the skin off his wrists in the process.

He was just starting to get a little more annoyed when he heard music start to play. Rihanna's singing drifted into the bedroom accompanied by Harley's voice singing along sweetly.
“No heels, no shirt, no skirt, all I'm in is just skin

No jeans, take em off wanna feel your skin

You a beast, oh, you know that I like that your skin

Come here baby, all I wanna see you in is just skin...”

Jack looked toward the door to see Harley standing in the doorway, her long blond hair loose around her shoulders, naked except for a pair of black thigh socks and a pair of red heels...and nothing else.

Jack smiled slowly, his eyes roaming over her body. He could see a few bruises on her pale skin, the redness around her mouth from Batman's fist, but she looked gorgeous.

She walked over to him. No Jack thought, no she strutted across the room in a way that put all those models to shame, her heels hitting the floor in a way that made his groin tighten.

Harley smiled, catching the tip of her tongue between her teeth, smiling coyly at him. Jack watched Harley move her body in a slow sway to the music, her hands running over her bare breasts slowly. She squeezed her breasts once then snaked her hands down her stomach to her groin. She slipped her hands lower spreading her legs slightly before dragging her hands back up to cup her breasts again, weaving her hips as she did a little spin only to stop with her back to him. Harley weaved her body to the music, stretching her arms over her head, swaying her hips back and forth before bending over and rolling herself back up, arching her back seductively, spreading her legs and swaying her hips again, only to glance over her shoulder and give Jack a saucy wink.

Jack knew his mouth was probably hanging open, but damn...he couldn't help it. His eyes continued to wander over her body while Harley moved, taking in every sway, every bump, every touch. She twisted around to face him again licking her lips. Harley walked closer before she slid to the floor onto her hands and knees and started wiggle her hips to the music, rolling her back in a seductive arch, the whole time with her eyes on his face.

Jack shaft was hard enough that it almost hurt. Wanting her to touch him, or to touch himself watching her, but he was tied up and could only watch her move.

Harley smiled like she knew exactly what he was thinking as she rolled onto her back spreading her legs and arching her back, her hands sliding down between her legs and brushing her groin. Jack groaned loudly watching her, wanting to be between those soft, yet powerful legs.

Harley grinned and Jack heard her giggle over the music as she rolled back to her hands and knees, moving in a wave to her knees, rolling her body sensually as the dim lights of the bedroom caught in her gold hair and glowed across her soft silky skin. Jack's mouth was practically watering. If this was the reaction he was going to get from her every time they did a job...he was definitely on his way to being a career criminal, he thought with a wide gleeful smile.

Harley turned to face him again and slowly began to crawl the rest of the way toward him where he sat bound to the chair unable to do anything except watch her.

Harley smiled, stalking him until she was at his legs. Her eyes roamed over his body. The heat in her gaze felt as if it brushed over him setting his nerves on fire with the need for her touch. Jack opened his mouth to say something, but Harley simply put her finger to his lips.

“Shhh...” she hissed softly.

Jack snapped his mouth shut. For a moment he thought about the really old joke about the mother
finding the S & M magazine in her son's room and later showing it to the boy's father who simply told his wife..."You probably should stop spanking him." But he stopped himself from saying the joke out loud...just barely keeping his mouth shut on the terrible joke when Harley ran her tongue up the length of his erection, licking him like he was a melting ice cream cone...which in a way he was because Jack thought he was definitely melting under the heat and strain of watching her and not being able to touch her. It physically hurt, but in the best possible way.

Harley grinned like a cat wrapping her hands around him and slowly moved her hands up and down on his shaft. He was hard, hot in her hands. Harley smiled running her tongue in a circle along the smooth satin head of his erection, her blue eyes watching him, making sure he was paying attention to every move of her tongue, every press of her lips.

Jack jerked against his restraints when Harley wrapped her lips around the head of his penis and sucked, pressing her lips down and pulling up with just the right amount of pressure that he shuddered and groaned. “Harley...”

Jack's entire body tightened while the pull in his groin was agonizing and thrilling. Harley smiled holding him steady with one hand while she used the flat of her tongue to lick the underside of his shaft.

Jack moaned. “Uh...damn Harley...uh...”

She giggled. “Like that?”

Jack chuckled. “Oh...oh yeah.”

She wrapped one hand tight around him then, bobbing her head, aggressively sucking him into her mouth, deeply, her tongue twirling to coat him in her saliva while her free hand roasted up his stomach and over his chest in soft tickling caresses, stopping at his nipples which she pinched causing Jack to grunt and jump, not in pain but in surprise. Jack's breathing became ragged. He couldn't stop watching her head bob up and down on him, the feel of her lips pressed against his sensitive flesh or the warm wetness of her tongue. Her blonde hair brushed his groin and thighs with a tickling caress while the grip of her hand on him would tighten and relax on and off driving him crazy...his hips jerked a little, but his restraints limited his movements. Harley let go of him after a few minute of sucking him deeply into her mouth. She firmly held him in place while she rubbed her clitoris against him in slow, wet slides of her body against his hard erection.

“Tell me you love me Jack.” Harley hissed sweetly, her voice breathy. “Tell me you want me.”
Jack grinned. “I love you Harls and I want you...I want you badly.” He watched her expression, the way she licked her bottom lip, her eyes hooded with passion while she thrust and slid against him. Harley did this for a few more moments before she leaned forward to capture his mouth.

She smiled against his lips continuing to rub him slowly, gently against her. The head of his shaft pressed tight against her clitoris, her hips moving in a sensual snake-like roll while her tongue played across his lips. Her hot breath caressed his mouth.

“I love you puddin...oh...Jack.” Harley groaned and rubbed a little harder.

“Oh...puddin,” Harley growled stroking herself more vigorously against him until Jack whimpered with the effort of holding back, his arms jerking against his restraints.

“Harls...uh pumpkin!” He grinned. She felt so good, so wet and hot...he wanted to pull free and press his fingers into her flesh, to squeeze her against him or bury his mouth against her hot wet clitoris, but she was in charge and he had to let her do what she wanted, which apparently was to drive him to the edge of madness with desire.

Harley kissed him more deeply, her lips pressing against his gently yet firmly, her tongue flicking against the surface of his lips before pushing past to lick his tongue. He answered her kiss with a stroke of his tongue. Harley's breath was hot as she panted against him, her movements becoming more frantic as she came closer to climax.

She groaned deeply. “Puddin...”

Jack growled in response. “Yes Harley...yes...cum for me...”

He jerked against his restraints, his legs bouncing her for a moment, but she didn't seem to notice as she kept sliding against him. Jack was breathing heavily, he glanced down watching the way she pressed herself against his penis, rubbing herself, wetter...hotter...sicker...Jack's eyes rolled back with the effort of holding back his own climax. Harley made a soft squeak of pleasure as if her orgasm surprised her. He could feel the increase of wetness from her, his erection becoming slick with her fluids as her rubbing built and she threw her head back with a loud cry.

“UH! Puddin!”

Jack groaned. “Harley...you're killing me.”

Harley giggled as she pushed herself up, holding him steady before she lowered herself down on him, feeling that wonderful pleasure of his erection pushing inside her body.

Jack groaned loudly, his head dropping back again as his body became one with hers.

She moved slowly at first, easing up and down on him, her muscles contracting and tugging on him until she found her balance and rhythm, then Jack was forced to let her fuck him without holding onto her, without being able to do anything but enjoy what Harley was doing.

She kept one hand on his knee behind her, her fingers squeezing into his flesh while her other hand dug into his shoulder. She rolled and bounced her hips up and down, grinding into him before pulling almost off of Jack, then dropped down again. Jack gasped, tugging on his restraints. She was killing him!! He would swear in a court of law this was a form of murder...a delicious, fantastic murder, but still murder! Being restrained was driving him mad!

He thrust up a little, the urge to pound into her was too strong not to give into it, though his movements were limited by the way she had tied him to the chair. The limited movement of his
thrusts still had Harley gasping and groaning and her fucking became more vigorous.

Jack groaned, his whole body jerked upward, pulled toward her body. Harley's movements brought him closer and closer. “Uh...fuck...Harley...” Jack hissed.

She reached forward grasping his face between her hands and covered his mouth with hers, their grunts and moans mixed together. Harley rolled and thrust harder, until Jack felt he might implode as well as explode...murder was all he could think...the most wonderful kind of murder... just as the thought drifted through his lust-addled brain, Jack climaxed with a loud exhale. “Harls...”

Jack groaned biting her bottom lip as his hips thrust up as much as he could against the restraints. Harley ground down, riding Jack hard until she gasped, cumming the instant his teeth grabbed onto her wounded bottom lip. The pain mixed with the pleasure had her reaching forward to grab his hair in both hands, yanking his head forward while her body continued to ride him.

Harley wrapped one hand around his jaw, keeping the other in his hair as she came with a cry. “PUDDIN!”

Jack groaned, jerking as she rode him to oblivion. All he could do was feel her; nothing else was possible. His orgasm had not only short circuited any thoughts, but her continued thrusting and bouncing was enough to reduce him to a gasping mess.

When she finally stopped moving, Harley wrapped her arms around him burying her head against his neck.

She giggled.

Jack frowned. “What are you laughing about?”

“You're still tied up.” Harley giggled. “You were supposed to escape.”

Jack chuckled. “Shut up.”

*  

The next day, late morning, Jack and Harley were downstairs eating breakfast planning on a lazy day at home, (though Jack was planning on spending a little bit of time in his new lab working on refining his laughing gas and maybe getting Harley in the lab coat and heels...) Harley had her hair pulled up on top of her head in a messy bun held in place with a couple of pencils wearing some bright red leggings and large, oversize pull over black sweater with a pair of Jack's purple and black striped socks on. Jack was sitting next to her wearing a pair of dark grey slacks, red and green socks with a dark, emerald green dress shirt, the sleeves of which he had rolled up to his elbows, the collar unbuttoned. They were both watching TV, sitting at the kitchen island, and eating some scrambled eggs and toast sandwiches that Jack had put together with some bacon and cheese. Harley took a huge bite then spoke around it.

“HAHA!! Look someone got a few “bigfoot” like pics of us!” Harley pointed at the TV.

Jack frowned. The picture was obscured by the laughing gas, but Jack could see himself on the stage, his arm around Harley's waist.

Jack grinned as the morning news anchorwoman went on. “This new gang is calling themselves The Red Hood gang and if you have lived in Gotham for any length of time, you know that the Red Hood was a gang that operated in Gotham during the '30's and '40's. So what does this new gang mean to the underworld power structure? Batman was also on the scene last night...” Here the picture
switched to an equally, if not more obscured photo of Batman. “Our sources say that after the explosion, Batman let the gang go, though it is unclear why. Sources have given two accounts, one stating that Batman let the Red Hood gang go because of the possibility of more bombs, though all bombs found turned out to be harmless; while another source claims that Batman was in fact working with the Red Hood Gang. Gotham PD had issued a statement in support of the Batman.”

Jack snorted, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it with the lighter Harley had given him. “Someone clearly has a bone to pick with Batman if they are trying to line him up with us.”

Harley sipped her orange juice. “Well, not everyone likes him. I mean, of course the gangs don't like him, but some of the uppity ups in Gotham, who I bet have underworld connections, don't like him swooping in to save the day all the time.”

Jack took a long drag on his cigarette holding the smoke for a while before he let it out in a long steady steam of white smoke, his eyes narrowed slightly. “I'm betting the mayor is the one who claimed Batman was with us. I'm fairly confident the man has some ties to one of the five crime families in Gotham.”

Harley frowned. “You think so?”

Jack nodded. “Bruce always suspected that the mayor did...” Jack was about to say something else when there was a knock at the front door, and then the doorbell echoed through the house. Jack frowned and shared a look with Harley. He stood up. The look on his face a cross between annoyed and angry. Harley started to come with him, but he motioned her back.

“Stay here, just in case. Is your bat still by the door?” Jack asked.

Harley nodded. “Yeah, in the corner.”

He nodded and made his way toward the front door.

At the front door Jack could see the shadow of someone on the other side of the glass. He frowned for a moment wondering if it could be Ben...was the man that stupid? He walked over to the door, reaching for the bat with one hand, opening the door with his other hand, only to see a young man in a flower delivery uniform. The young man was brunette with an easy smile. “Hi, I'm looking for a Jack?”

Jack frowned. “That's me.”

The young man grinned again. “I got a delivery for you! I had to come here on a water taxi boat which was totally cool! It was waiting for me, like in the movies! I didn't even know there was a house out here!” The young man turned around and picked up a large bouquet of a dozen long stem red roses.

The kid grinned. “Someone really likes you. Anyway, have a great day!” He waved and made his way back to the docks.

Jack frowned in confusion, staring at the roses as he shut the front door and headed back to the kitchen. Harley looked up and frowned. “Flowers?”

Jack nodded. “For me.”

Harley's eyes narrowed. “What?”

Jack laid the flowers down on a small table by the door and looked for a card. He saw a small
envelope stuck in among the roses. Jack picked it up, opened it and pulled out the card which he read out loud.

“...There is never a time or place for true love. It happens accidentally, in a heartbeat, in a single flashing, throbbing moment. All my love, we will be together soon...Ben.”

Jack stared at the note, but it was Harley who reacted first. She stood up fast enough that she caused her dishes on the counter to clatter. She stomped over and grabbed the roses with one hand then with the other she grabbed Jack's lighter. Jack glanced up following Harley with his eyes as she marched out of the kitchen, her face set in a scowl, her blue eyes deadly glittering.

He hurried to catch up with her. “Harley?”

She marched through the house heading toward the back patio, her silent anger almost palpable. She yanked the door open to the back of the house and headed outside into the cold, still just in her socks. Jack followed her outside, not stopping to put on shoes himself, deciding that silence was probably the best thing for him to be at the moment as he watched his wife.

The back patio had a stone porch with a built in curved bench, a stone built-in fire pit along with a large built-in grill and stone bar. It was lovely and would be even nicer during the summer when the flower boxes were filled with blooming flowers.

Harley stomped across the porch to the fire pit and threw the roses violently into the pit. Then, without a word, she marched back into the house slamming the door hard enough that Jack was surprised that the house itself didn't shake.

Jack stood there waiting...and waiting...the chill in the air started to settle in. For a moment he wondered if she was going to come back out again...he had just decided to go in after her or at least to get a coat, when Harley came stomping out again, this time carrying a plastic bottle of lighter fluid. She stomped over to the pit, dosed the roses in the fluid until the smell was quite strong, then she walked over to Jack and snatched the note out of his hand. She glared at him as she held Jack's lighter up, and with a couple of tries she had a flame. She held the note to the fire until it was burning before she savagely threw the burning paper onto the pit on top of the fluid soaked roses which burst into a bright brilliant flame.

Harley crossed her arms over her chest and glared into the flames, her face set in a vicious scowl. Jack smirked stepping over to put his arm around her shoulders. Harley was stiff next to him as she glared hatefully at the burning flowers. He rubbed his hand along her upper arm, leaned in and kissed her ear. She didn't respond at first, simply glared at the flames. After a couple of seconds Harley relaxed and leaned into him.

“I am going to find him puddin and I am going to kill him slowly,” she said softly.

Jack smiled. The fact that his wife would hunt down a rival and tear them apart made his heart swell with love. “I know you will cupcake, I know,” he said with a smile.

*  

In an decent apartment building in The Bowery, Ben sat in the living room of the apartment which reminded him of how an old Italian Grandmother—or any grandmother for that matter—might decorate her apartment, with wallpaper that came out of the last century, the walls bearing the color of many smoked cigars and burned dinners. A bottle of Bellone sat on the table in front of him with two glasses, both only half empty.
Sitting in one chair was Tomaso Panessa, a handsome young man with dark wavy hair, dark brown, nearly black eyes and sensually curved lips. He was young to be in charge of a crime family, and no matter how small the family was compared to the others in Gotham, the Panessa Family still had a seat at the table. And Tomaso was the one occupying that seat. He was closer to thirty than forty in age with a wife and two young sons to carry on his family name. But right now he was sitting alone in his living room with Ben, a past lover and a friend in need.

Tomasco was smoking on a thin Toscano Antico cigar, wearing a tailored brown suit, his legs crossed, bouncing his one foot. He seemed perfectly at ease as he watched the smoke drift to the ceiling.

Ben sat in the chair next to him, a small wooden table with a plastic ashtray the only thing between them. Ben didn't smoke, but he did enjoy watching Tomaso.

After a few moments of silence, almost extending into uncomfortableness, Tomaso spoke.

“So, you broke with the Court of Owls did you?”

Ben nodded. “I did.”

“Over a man who isn't even involved with you.” Tomaso continued. “A man you wish to pursue for your own pleasure even though the Court told you only to observe and to leave the man be...”

Ben shrugged which caused Tomaso to shakes his head. “I always knew your appetites were going to get you into trouble Benjamin. You never were any good at separating business and pleasure. So who is your latest obsession that was worth having the Owls pissed at you?”

Ben smiled and said, “Jack Wayne.”

Tomaso frowned. “Jack Wayne...I thought he was missing?”

“Nope, he is in hiding with his...his wife.” Ben said wife with clear disgust. Tomaso laughed. “Oh he's married too! Hmpf, never could pick an easy target could you? Okay, so Jack Wayne. Handsome...strange, heard little about him until he ended up in Arkham. But the Owls have an interest?”

Ben shrugged. “Honestly I don't know. I was to watch...that was all. Part of my training. I guess they stuck me with Cobb to train me, but...” Ben sighed. “He is just so divine! You should see him Tomaso...he has this crazed look in his eyes...”

“What about the wife, Ben?” Tomaso picked up his glass of wine taking a sip.

“Well, there is the problem,” the younger man admitted slowly. “I...I tried to poison her. I tried to push her into traffic first, but that didn't work so I...poisoned her.” Ben smiled sheepishly, clearly not the least bit upset or ashamed of his actions.

Tomaso groaned. “Ben. Damn. Did you at least succeed in killing her?”

“No idea.” Ben smiled. “I left Cobb and the island as soon as I did it. I knew Jack would know it was me...so...so I came to you.”

Tomaso sighed. “Damn it Ben. You are in deep shit this time. Not only going after a target that the Owls told you specifically to leave alone, but to try and kill his wife! Fuck.”

Tomaso put out the cigar and leaned back to stare at his friend. “So now you are here looking for
sanctuary? Why not leave Gotham? Go someplace the Owls can't find you?"

Ben frowned. “Because I want him Tomaso...I need to have him.”

Tomaso frowned. He remembered being on the receiving end of Ben's obsession...it was both glorious and terrifying. He was one of the few to survive Ben.

“Fine, but only if you are willing to give up a few secrets of the Court to me.” Tomaso smiled.

Ben paled...he already had a target on his back with the Court...but then he smiled. If they were going to kill him anyway...

“You have a deal Tomaso.” Ben smiled with a nod.

*

It was early evening just before dinner.

Harley was giggling.

Jack blinked at her, his expression a cross between surprise, amusement and just a little annoyance. He was standing on the other side of the room. (Harley wasn't sure what the room was for, but they had cleaned it out for a work-out room) wearing only a pair of sweatpants, barefoot and bare-chested, in a fighting stance, watching as the bottle of water rolled across the floor only to stop when it hit his foot.

“I can't believe you threw a bottle of water at me,” Jack muttered.

Harley giggled again. She was dressed in red sweatpants and a black sports bra, also barefoot, her hair pulled up in a high ponytail.

She smiled brightly. “You said anything can be used as a weapon.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “Just throwing it doesn't count Harley. Especially if you don't bother to aim it.”

Harley grinned and blew at an imaginary strand of hair. “Fine.”

Jack shook his head, then grinned at her. “Okay. Let's go again and just...just forget about throwing things okay?”

Harley gave him a smirk, then surprised him again when she came at him hard. She took a step, throwing her arms up, and flung herself into the air doing a serious of three tight back flips along with a mid-air cart wheel, coming to land right in front of him. Harley held nothing back; her fists few out, just as he had taught in her, tight compact jabs, anyone of which would have hurt if she had connected.

Jack blinked in surprise at her swiftness and the sexiness of the flips taking a couple of quick steps backwards in complete surprise when she came to land in front of him, followed with the attacks.

Jack dodged, weaving back and forth while Harley did her best to land a hit, her smart jabs missing him as he seemed to easily dodge her. Harley grit her teeth together in a snarl. She was doing exactly like he had told her, putting a great deal of power behind each of her jabs, committing to them completely without over reaching. He may have thought she wasn't listening, but clearly Harley had been paying close attention.

She threw a punch then that over extended so that when Jack moved out of the way, (Harley
invested her whole body with the punch), she accidentally sent herself a half-step past Jack. Jack grinned and smacked her hard on the rear with his hand as she stumbled and tried to recover.

Harley let out a startled and indignant shout, while grabbing her backside. “OWF!! JACK!!”

Jack laughed. “Sorry sweets, but you have a very smackable backside.” He waggled his eyebrows at her. Harley turned on him, her pretty face screwed up in annoyance as she came right back at him, her fists flying, but with a little less accuracy as she was letting her emotions take over.

Jack threw his arms up to block her strikes, letting her blows land on his forearms. Again he was surprised with her strikes—she wasn’t holding back at all, her punches and jabs that struck his forearms were strong enough that if she had hit his face, throat or stomach, they would have definitely hurt. As it was, he was going to have bruised forearms. Jack smirked watching the way his wife’s face was set in a look of frustration and anger...she could make anger look so damn adorable the thought. He might have said something about how cute she was, but he didn’t think she would appreciate the compliment at the moment. They exchanged a series of punches, Jack blocking each of Harley’s easily while Harley was only able to block one or two of his strikes, his fists connecting with her shoulders, upper arms or her sides leaving painful welts.

Harley snarled, but Jack’s hand shot out, his fist connected with her shoulder which knocked her back a step. Harley did a back flip, throwing herself backwards quick enough that her feet almost came up to catch him under the chin, but Jack stumbled backwards just in time before her legs came up over her head to nearly hit him under the chin. Harley landed on her feet and with a hiss she came at him again, her fists flying as she tried to drive Jack into a corner where she could hit him easier.

Jack laughed. He weaved and dodged or blocked, then ducked, his fist coming up under her guard to connect with her diaphragm Harley gasped in pain as the air left her in a rush. He then grabbed her, and flipped her over his shoulder. Harley yelped in surprise with the rest of her breath. She rolled with Jack’s toss, just barely keeping her feet under her.

“Ow, Jack!” Harley coughed.

He smiled backing away from her, his fists up. “You already know the Bat isn’t going to be easy on you Harls, so why should I?”

Harley narrowed her eyes at him surging up and growling as she moved, getting in Jack’s face quickly. He leaned back feeling the breeze from her fist, her knuckles grazing his lips. Jack grinned wide. He came up doing another series of quick jabs. Harley was dodging them better, paying more attention to reading his movies as he had told her to do when she slipped up, over extended her thrust again, but this time Jack swung out of the way and grabbed her ponytail giving the long blond hair a painful tug.

“OWCH!” Harley yelped grabbing her head and turning around to glare at him. “JACK!”

He grinned innocently. “What?”

“You. Are. A. JERK!” Harley snarled, breathing heavily through her teeth as she came back at him moving slightly faster and with a little more fury behind her punches. She loved him, but right now she would be immensely happy if she was able to strike her lover in the face just once! Harley did hit him a few times, her fists landing strikes on his shoulder and one beat past his guard to make a glancing blow across his chin. Jack laughed, enjoying himself. He was breathing hard with the exercise, but mostly from watching her which was a delight. That angry little wrinkle to her nose...the sweat covering her body...was becoming distracting, and that murderous glint in her eyes...
They traded a series of quick strikes and jabs, neither of them able to land a good solid hit, when Harley ducked under Jack's guard. Harley came in low, leading with her shoulder to slam into Jack's diaphragm. The blow knocked the air out of him and bent Jack forward just a little, but it was enough for Harley to flip him over her shoulder and onto his back.

Jack slammed against the hard wooden surface, the air bursting from his lungs at the sudden impact in a painful whoosh.

“Ack!” Jack coughed, but before he could move to get back on his feet, Harley leapt on top of him, straddling him. She grabbed his arms by the wrists and yanked his arms up over his head where she pinned them with a wicked grin.

“Gotcha.” She smiled wide, panting from their exertion, stray hairs sticking to her sweaty face as her blue eyes took in her downed opponent.

Jack chuckled, breathing heavily as well. “You did...or did you?”

He was just about to break her hold, thinking to flip her over and see if he could get her out of her clothing...his desire for her skyrocketing. Just seeing the lights in the room gleaming off her sweat covered body...her heavy breathing...he wanted to fuck her silly right now on the floor like animals, but that was when his phone started to ring. He had recently changed his ring tone for Alex, the sound of the chorus from Skrillex's “Call Him the Devil” echoed through the room telling him that Alex was calling. Jack lifted his head to glance in the direction of his phone, then dropped back with a thunk against the polished wood floor and a groan. “It's Alex sweets, I better take it.”

Harley pouted grinding her hips against him. “Fine. Saved by the bell.”

Jack chuckled. “Oh was I...”

He grinned at her in a way that made Harley shiver. Jack easily knocked her off of him causing Harley to yelp and roll to the side as he jumped to his feet with a flip and padded across the floor to where his phone lay on a table beside an old leather chair. Harley sat cross-legged on the floor for a moment just watching his ass, the sweat rolling down his back from their workout. Her eyes followed the roll of one bead of liquid as it traveled down his spine to his lower back simply begging for her to lick.

She smiled...shower sex was immediately where her mind went...shower sex against the wall...Jack holding her up, her legs over his shoulders. Yep, she decided, then she smiled brightly getting to her feet.

Shower sex...

Jack picked up his phone where he had left it on an armchair table and flopped into the chair that was next to it. He was sweaty, wiping a hand across his face as he hit the button on the phone. “Hey Alex, what's up?”

Jack watched Harley as she walked across the room to where they had a couple of hand towels and a couple of bottles of water. She picked up one of the towels, rubbed it over her face before running the towel over her glistening body.

Jack watched every move that she made...the way she shifted her hips or lifted her arms...the towel dragging across her skin...

Alex sighed. “Hey, ah, Jack...can Alice and I come by? I need to ask a favor.”

Jack's attention was pulled away from Harley back to the phone; something in Alex's voice gave Jack pause. His friend didn't sound like himself. “Sure Alex, everything all right?”
“I’d rather just tell you when I get there.” Alex sounded upset, an uncommon tone for him.

Jack nodded standing up. “Sure, sure you two come on over.”

He could hear the relief in Alex’s voice. “Thanks man. We’ll bring some pizza and some beer.”

Jack glanced at Harley with a frown. “Sure thing Alex, see you in a bit.”

Harley tossed the other towel to Jack frowning as her husband ended the call. “What’s up puddin?”

“I don’t know, but Alex didn’t say fuck once...” Jack seemed stunned.

Harley blinked. “Oh shit.”

*

It was over an hour later before they heard the knock at the door. Jack had showered and changed into a pair of black slacks, a green dress shirt (minus tie) and tossed on a dark purple blazer and a pair of oxfords. He looked casual and comfortable, but stylish as always with his hair slicked back. Harley was wearing black leggings and a pair of knee-high boots with a white knitted turtle-neck, cold-shoulder long-sleeved top. Her hair, which was still slightly damp, was slicked back and braided, falling down her back. Jack answered the door when the knock came to see Alex and Alice standing at the door, both of them wet from the rain that had begun to fall again. Alex held up the two six-packs of beer he had brought while Alice held two boxes of pizza.

“I brought the most important part,” Alex offered with a smile that didn’t reach his eyes.

Jack chuckled and took the beer. “Come on in you two, we're in the main room. We have the fireplace going, so it's nice and toasty in there.”

Alice smiled. “Sounds perfect.”

*

Soon the four of them were sitting across from each other in the main room, the boxes of pizza open, everyone haven eaten, and each of them nursing a beer. Jack had a cigarette lit and Alex was smoking a large, fat cigar. Jack took a deep drag on his cigarette, his arm around Harley’s shoulders. She was nestled in the crook of his arm, her head against his chest. Alice had her legs across Alex’s lap, her head against the shoulder of the arm he was missing.

After a few minutes of companionable quiet, Jack blew out a ring of smoke as he looked over at Alex. “All right, Alex. What's up? And I know it has to be serious because you have never gone this long without saying the word fuck.” Jack inhaled on his cigarette watching his friend.

Alex’s expression was a little sour, but he sighed. “It's my Pop Jack.”

“Your Pop? As in your father?” Jack asked with genuine surprise.

Alex made another sour face. “Yeah my Dad. Fuck Jack, you think I just sprang into existence?”

Jack chuckled. “Yeah, I sorta did.”

Alex chuckled leaning forward to put out his cigar and lean it against the ash tray on the table. “My Dad, he is in the same business as me, except he works out of Philadelphia. Anyway, my Dad...he's good at what he does, damn good, better than me, but...he's got a problem...he likes to gamble.”
Jack nodded leaning over to put out his cigarette and took a sip of his beer letting his friend continue.

“His gambling brought him to Gotham. Now...I didn't even know he was here until today.” Alex shook his head. “You remember Penguin's fight club?” Alex asked picking up his beer.

Jack glanced down at Harley and they both nodded, sharing a small smile. “It rings a bell.”

“Well, seems my fucking father was backing this fighter, a man name Val Armorr. The guy had been winning at underground fights for weeks now back in Philly and my Pop was raking in the dough. I guess Val was moving here to Gotham where the big money in underground fighting is to be made. My Pop started backing him, paying for everything and was making really good money in return. This Val guy was...the one I guess...like his Rocky or something until they got to Gotham. Then suddenly old Val can't seem to win one fight...my Pop suspects that Armorr started to throw the fights because he was being paid by one of the big mob families, someone who might be trying to get my Pop under their thumb.” Alex took a breath before he continued. “Having someone like my Pop owing you...it's big Jack, real big and dangerous not just for him, but for me too. I didn't know who else to go to, you and Harley, well, you two are like the only friends I have...I just...”

Jack sat up and leaned forward. Harley sat up with him smiling. “We are friends. So what do we do about dear old Alex senior?”

Alex laughed. “I knew I could fucking count on you man. Well, Penguin's little fight club has turned into a full-fledged underground fighting ring. It now costs to get in and those “Fight Club” rules, out the door. Patrons are paying a thousand bucks just to get in. The only rules now are no biting. I heard that just last week one of the fighters walked away with forty K and the pot keeps growing depending on the fighters.”

Jack smiled. “Mm...forty grand, you say? Interesting. So when is the next fight?”

“Tomorrow night,” Alex said.

Jack grinned down at Harley who had nestled back against him when he leaned back again. “Guess we have plans for tomorrow sweets.”

“If part of those plans are you topless and sweaty beating up someone, I am definitely in.” Harley giggled.

Jack gave her a wide grin. “You are just a little perv. I love it.” He wrinkled his nose at her, leaning down to kiss the top of her head.

* *

The fight was taking place in an abandoned theater in the heart of the section of Gotham called Crime Alley. Jack and Harley rode with Alex part way, then the four of them took the train to the Newtown station. From there the small group walked the rest of the way to the fight.

It had begun to rain again by the time they arrived at the building. The surrounding area was packed with cars with a line of people going around the building waiting to pay to get in. Jack was surprised the Gotham PD didn't come and shut the place down...until he saw a couple of officers working at the front door and a few more in line...

Jack frowned, worried for a moment that one of them might recognize him, but then he smiled thinking that no one here would say a word considering they were all participating in an illegal activity. Besides, some hundred dollar bills spread to the right palms would keep anyone questionable from blathering, he surmised, if that became necessary.
Jack was looking stylish in black slacks, a purple collar-less shirt and black blazer with Harley on his arm dressed in a rather short pleated mini skirt in black and a red mock turtleneck, walking on red heels. Her hair was swept to the side and loosely braided.

Alex was dressed as he always was, jeans, t-shirt, though he had opted for a very loud red and blue Hawaiian shirt while Alice looked the picture of sweetness in a pair of jeans, tennis shoes and a pink v-neck polo shirt with long sleeves.

Alex didn’t bother with the line. He led Jack, Harley and Alice straight up to a large man with dark, almost midnight black skin who grinned brightly at seeing Alex, his teeth standing out in sharp contrast to his dark skin. “Hey Alex! My man!”

Alex laughed. “Hey Bert!”

The two men engaged in a complicated handshake which ended with Bert bumping his fist into the shoulder of Alex’s missing arm. “So what you doing here Alex? Come to bet or fight?”

“No, I brought some friends with me, just thought we might have some fun.”

Bert looked over the three of them smiling at Alice. “Hey Alice, you still with this asshole?”

Alice grinned. “Yep.”

Bert’s eyes landed on Jack and Harley. It was clear he recognized them, but didn’t know how. Then a few seconds later the light dawned in his eyes as they widened. “You're Jack Wayne.”

Jack gave Bert his most charming smile. “That I am, though don't spread it around.”

Bert laughed. “Man Alex, you know everyone. Okay, well you guys have fun!”

Bert stepped aside and let them enter.

The inside of the theater had been gutted. In the middle was a makeshift ring where two men were beating the living hell out of each other, though unlike the fight club that Jack had participated in, these two were wearing boxing gloves. Jack watched with interest while the men fought. Alex moved closer to his friend and said, “They have a couple of different fights here, usually something different for everyone; some fights are good old-fashioned boxing, some are bare-knuckled and some do the mixed martial arts.” Alex was yelling to be heard over the crowd of people. “I haven't seen anyone try to fight bare-knuckled against an MMA, but I'm sure someone is going to do it eventually.”

Jack nodded, then shouted back. “I'm surprised at the crowd, thought this was supposed to be a secret? How hasn't the PD arrested everyone?”

The place was filled to the brim with spectators, music was pumping nearly as loud as it had during the rave, the air heavy with smoke and there was a lot of shouting, hissing, booing and cheers as the two men laid into one another with their gloved fists.

Alex shrugged in response. “Some of the cops not only participate by betting and stuff, but we got a few who also participate in the fighting. There ain't one clean cop within miles of here.”

Jack nodded his understanding. Alex led them around the ring and closer to the stage where Jack
could see, in all his glory, sat Penguin.

Tonight Penguin was dressed in black and grey striped pants and a black tuxedo jacket, a grey vest and white shirt. He had his favorites surrounding him as he sipped from a glass of champagne, but even from his position on the floor Jack could see the tension around Penguin's eyes. The man wasn't completely happy; something was bothering him.

Though he was moving slowly, Jack stumbled into someone surprising himself. Harley let out a startled yelp then a hiss of, “He grabbed my ass!”

Jack reacted swiftly grabbing the man—who ended up being quite short, a couple of inches under five feet—by the scruff of his neck and lifting him off his feet. “Did you...”

The man was short, pudgy and bald with a wild ring of hair around the sides of his head. He wore large oversized glasses with thick black frames and was dressed in jeans and a dark blue polo that looked as if he had spilled something on it.

Jack snarled. “You touch my girl?”

The little man grinned, there was a slight manic quality to his smile. “She's got a great ass! I couldn't help myself!!” he said in a gravelly voice.

Jack snarled, drawing his fist back while still holding the man by the back of his neck when Alex sighed.

“I see you met my father.”
One Step

Jack blinked in astonishment. “Are you serious?”

Jack looked between Alex and the diminutive—if pudgy—man he was holding off his feet. The little man grinned and pushed his glasses up trying to turn around to look at Alex who stood just slightly behind him. Jack frowned dropping the little man, who landed on his feet with a casual grin and turned to his son, threw his arms out wide. “ALEX!!”

The tiny man threw his arms around Alex who seemed to change from a foul-mouth information broker to a little boy with his dad in the blink of an eye. For a moment Jack felt a sharp stab of jealousy. While Jack had always been closer to his mother, he still missed his father a great deal. That feeling of loss twisted around to his feelings about his brother. He missed Bruce even though his brother was the world's largest asshole he thought, but an asshole that was still his brother. Jack glanced down and Harley, sensing something was bothering her husband, put her arm around his waist and kissed his cheek. Jack glanced toward her with a look of deep and unrelenting love in his eyes.

Alex hugged his father before he turned to Jack and Harley. “Dad this is Jack and Harley, two of my best friends. Jack, Harley this is my dad, Fr...”

The little man threw his hand up stopping his son. “Nope...nope, no names call me...” Here the older man threw his hands up like his name was about to be displayed in lights. “The Broker.”

“Dad, makes you sound like a pro-wrestler,” Alex muttered.

The man sighed with a small shrug of his shoulders. “Fine, my name is Frank—nice to meet you both.” He put his hand out

Jack grinned taking the shorter man's hand. “Frank, nice to meet you.”

Harley smiled taking his hand after Jack. “Hi.”

Frank grinned at her before he made a big show of kissing the back of her hand. “Now you, you ever decide that you're tired of pretty boy here, I'm always available to a beautiful lady like yourself. I told Alice there the same, but she seems to be in love with my one-armed son.”

Harley laughed. “Well I'm in love with my husband too, so...”

Frank threw his hands in the air. “Why are all the hot chicks taken? No love for the old man!”

Jack chuckled. “So, Alex tells me you have a problem.”

The little man nodded. “I do. Come on—I need a drink.”

Frank motioned to the group of younger people to follow him. He led them through the crowd, shoving people three times his size out of his way as he led their group over to a makeshift bar that had been set up against the wall near the back of the theater. Someone had brought in some old wooden and plastic shipping crates, setting them up to serve as a bar counter. Behind the counter there was a long fold out table that was covered in a wide variety of liquor bottles, drinking glasses and some plastic cups. Under the table were a few coolers, filled with ice and beer in bottles of all shapes and colors, and standing guard over all of it was the bartender.
The bartender was a large woman with muscled arms that would have put Evander Holyfield to shame. Despite the cold outside, it was warm inside the theater with the press of people all around, the lights, the excitement, all of it combining to make the place downright hot, which was probably why the bartender was wearing a black sleeveless top that read “Penguin's Girls” and a pair of short-shorts that showed off heavily muscled legs. Jack mused that she could probably break Frank with her thighs, which judging by the look on Frank's face when he walked up to the bar, was a death the man would be happy to have written on his tombstone...death by thighs. The bartender, her platinum blonde hair piled on top of her head while she made drinks and passed out beers glanced in their direction and winked at Frank.

Frank grinned at her as he stepped over to the bar and turned to face his entourage. “So what's your poison? Drinks are on me.”

“Beer for Alice and me.” Alex glanced at Alice who nodded.

Jack whispered something to Harley and she nodded with a smile.

“Two Cuba Libres for us.” Jack held up two fingers.

Frank grinned up at the tall woman. “Hey Marsha babe, need three beers and two Cuba Libres.”

Marsha smiled and Jack was surprised to see her actually blushing at Frank. “I'll have those right up for you, Frank honey.”

They waited the couple of seconds it took Marsha to mix the two drinks and pull out the beers before walking to a little corner where few people were as the next fight had started drawing a crowd to the center of the ring.

Frank took a long drink from his beer before he spoke. “So I'm guessing my boy filled you in on what is happening?”

Jack nodded. “A little bit.”

Frank took a long swig from his bottle then pointed with it. “See that little prick right there?”

All eyes followed Frank's stubby pointing finger to a figure getting ready to get into the fighter's ring. The man couldn't have been more than twenty-five, maybe twenty-eight, short brown hair, brown eyes but there was a cast to his features that spoke of a mixed background. He was well built with that compact lightness of muscle look that guaranteed that he was agile and swift on his feet. The guy did not look like the type of to go down easily.

“Just...you know, you guys watch him fight, tell me what you think. I mean I know ain't none of your experts, but Alex has been in more than one scrap, even with one hand my boy has won more fights than lost and Alex mentioned you have done your fair share of fighting...” Frank looked up at Jack who nodded. “So I'm hoping you can tell me if I just backed a bad horse or if I'm really being screwed.”

Jack sipped his drink. “Why don't we get closer, get a better look at this fighter of yours.”

Frank nodded and led their group closer, snaking along the wall until they were able to cut through the crowd to the ring. Since Frank was one of Val's sponsors, they were able to get almost right up on the ring where Val and another man were getting ready to start their match.

Jack kept one arm around Harley while he studied the fighter. Jack narrowed his gaze in concentration. The man had the moves, that was easy to see...but as Jack watched, it was clear he
was avoiding openings he should have known to take and walking into punches he could have easily avoided. He might be a good fighter, but he was not such a good actor that he could keep others from seeing his intentional ineptitude. Jack glanced over to the stage where Penguin sat and, as if sensing he was being watched, the other man's gaze immediately turned and locked with Jack. Penguin smiled before he leaned over to his dark-skinned female companion, whispering something to her before the woman walked...no, wrong word he silently corrected himself, before she prowled off the stage toward Jack.

Jack whispered to Harley, his lips brushing her ear which created a delightful tickle she thought causing her to lean closer to him. “I have a sneaking suspicion that the favor I owe Penguin in about to be called in.”

Harley followed his gaze to see the woman moving toward him moving through the crowd like a stalking panther. “I think you might be correct puddin.”

Jack squeezed his arm around her. “Stay close.”

The woman pushed her way easily to Jack and Harley, the crowd parting for her like water until she stopped right in front of them. She was easily a head taller than Jack. “Mr. Cobblepot wishes to speak with you both.”

Jack grinned sharing a glance with Harley before he replied and motioned with his drink. “Lead the way.” He then downed his drink in one swallow, pressing the empty glass into someone's chest as he walked past, the patron taking the glass with a look of confusion.

Jack turned to face Alex, Alice and Frank, indicating the woman with his head. “I guess we'll be back in a jiff.”

Frank watched them go before glancing up at his son. “You keep some strange company buddy.”

Alex smirked. “You have no idea Pops.”

*

Jack and Harley were led onto the stage where Penguin sat on his “throne” surveying the fight, the crowds, the money. He didn't look at Jack or Harley for a good few seconds, the little despot showing off how much more important he was by ignoring them. Jack took a breath through his nostrils to calm himself down. He owed Oswald for helping Harley...which was the only reason Jack didn't walk over and put his fist through the little geek's nose. Oswald was simply playing a game of dominance, control, but clearly something was slipping or he wouldn't have Jack brought to him.

The fight in the ring was going strong, the crowds were cheering or booing depending on their fighter when Oswald finally motioned Jack and Harley over.

Oswald looked up at Jack. “You look well.”

Jack smiled. He didn't answer at first. Instead he pulled out his cigarettes, taking his time to knock one out of the package, placed it between his lips before he pulled out his lighter, then slowly lit it with his expensive Zippo, making sure the light in the theater caught it for no other reason than to show off the expensive gift. Oswald glanced at the lighter and in spite himself was impressed.

“Beautiful lighter Jack.”

Jack grinned. “Wife got it for me.”

Oswald smiled at Harley. “Nice to see you looking so well dear...except for...” He touched his own
lip to indicate where Harley had a light bruise. She shrugged. “I'm good thank you Ossie.”

Oswald didn't say a word to Harley calling him Ossie which impressed Jack. It clearly meant the little bird must be developing a soft spot for his wife. Interesting.

“I've decided that it's time for me to call in that favor you owe me Jack.” Oswald turned back to the fight, watching the two men with a critical eye.

“As you can see, my little side venture has turned into something much, much larger...a real money making industry now. But it seems that someone is trying to...destroy what I've built or they are simply trying to work it in order for them to come out on top. I really cannot have that.” Oswald motioned with one hand. A pretty young man quickly came over with a cigarette. Jack could tell from where he stood that it was a Fantasia cigarette, expensive with a gold filter tip. The young man held the cigarette between his lips to light it before putting it in the end of a long, black cigarette holder. Oswald took the cigarette without a glance at the young man.

“I want you to find out who it is,” Oswald explained simply taking a drag off his cigarette. “And I want you to kill them. Send a message—no one messes with Cobblepot.”

Jack frowned, his eyes on the fighters. “All right, let's say I agree, how do you propose I do that?”

Cobblepot grinned. “You forget, I've seen you fight. I also know how charming you can be when you want to be. I have no doubt that you can find out who is paying these fighters to throw certain fights and if you can't, your wife has her own ways I'm sure.”

Jack snarled. “Penguin, you leave my wife out of this...I owe you for helping her, but don't think I won't hurt you...” Jack knew he probably shouldn't have reacted the way he had...his reaction gave Cobblepot information against him...that Jack would do anything to protect Harley—which wasn't a stretch to imagine—but the damage was done, he would just have to make sure Cobblepot never got to use that information against him.

Oswald chuckled. “Sorry Jack, just kidding. I would never...anyway...sorry, bad taste on my part. Look, you both are smart, clever. Find out who is messing with my fights and I'll consider us even.”

Jack blew out a stream of smoke, then growled. “Fine.”

Oswald chuckled. “Perfect. The next fight will be two nights from now. I'll make sure you're on the board. You'll need a backer.”

Jack nodded. “A backer won't be an issue.” He was just about to turn away and leave Cobblepot when Jack glanced out on the crowd, the fighters in the ring, but he saw someone that caused his blood to turn to ice.

Standing in the crowd watching the fight next to a man with wavy black hair in a finely tailored suit, stood Ben Orchard.

Ben was sipping from a beer, his eyes intent on the fighters. He would occasionally say something to the man next to him. It was clear to Jack by the way the men held themselves, the way they leaned toward each other, that they were more than friends. Jack had no idea who the other man was, but he was going to fucking find out because he would bet his life, that man was providing Ben with a safe haven in Gotham.

Penguin could almost feel the cold coming off of Jack. There was something...a slight shift in Jack's posture, the tilt of his head, a dilation of the eyes, like a predator having spotted its prey. Oswald studied the crowd, his sharp eyed gaze searching for a clue as to what had sent the other man off. As
he looked out onto the crowd he didn't notice anything strange, just the usual groups of the wealthy, the violent and the bored. He did see Tomaso Panessa; now that annoyed him. He knew there were representatives from each of the main mob families here; nothing that made as much money as Oswald was making wouldn't attract their attention and they all probably wanted to stick their hands in the cookie jar, but only Panessa would try to make a power move. The man was hungry for a better seat at the table. He was also dangerous because, as far as Oswald was concerned, the man was overly greedy and had poor taste in friends. Penguin noticed the young man with Panessa, attractive, but there was something simply “off” about the man, something that Oswald instantly didn't like. He took a drag on his cigarette in contemplation, his eyes narrowed slightly. He needed to find out what had upset Jack...

*  

Jack grabbed Harley by the hand and hurried her off the stage, his hand tight around hers. “Puddin? What is it?” Harley asked as Jack made his way to the wall and moved along it. He hissed over his shoulder. “Ben is here.”

“WHAT?!” Harley stopped dead, pulling her hand out of Jack's grasp.

Jack spun around and wrapped his hand around hers again before she had a chance to dive into the crowd. “Harley!!! Not now!” Jack grabbed her hand and yanked her back.

She pulled on her arm trying to break loose of Jack’s hold, but he wouldn't let go.

“Let me go!” Harley snarled, but Jack simply yanked her into his arms causing her to stumble forward and slam against his chest. To calm her down, he covered her mouth with his. Harley struggled for only a second before her shoulders sagged in defeat and she returned Jack’s kiss.

He let her go slowly. “Not now, not here—all right?” he asked with concern.

Harley made a face, her bottom lip sticking out slightly, which drew a grin from her husband. He flopped her bottom lip with his forefinger. “Not now Harley, promise me.” Jack kissed her pouty lip.

“Fine, I promise you, but if he comes anywhere near you I can't promise I won't punch him...or worse,” Harley said gloomily.

Jack laughed. “Fair enough sweets. Come on. Let's fine Alex and his father.”

*  

They found the three of them back over at the bar where Frank seemed to be talking up the bartender who was flirting and giggling with the short man like the two of them were in high school. Alex was leaning against the wall, Alice leaning against him watching the fight.

When he saw Jack and Harley he grinned holding his beer up. “He wants you to fucking find out who is paying boxers to throw?” Alex said once Jack was close enough that he didn't have to yell and share all his information.

Jack nodded. “Yeah, he's calling in his favor. Wants me to figure out who's scamming him by having fighters throw fights, making money behind the bird's back. So, yeah, I'm going to do it, figure it helps your father and takes care of my favor to Penguin all in one stroke. Think your father will back me? I guess I need a backer for the fight.”

Alex nodded. “Fuck yeah he will, don't worry about that. Thanks man.”
Jack smiled. “And I'm never opposed to a little violence. Speaking of favors and violence, I have one for you.”

Alex looked intrigued. “Oh? A favor, violence or both.”


Alex frowned and pushed off the wall. “Show me.”

Jack kissed Harley. “Stay right here, I'll be right back.”

Harley nodded, moving to stand with Alice.

Alex grinned. “Okay buddy, show me this fucking chucklefuck.”

Jack and Alex made their way through the crowd to where Jack had seen Ben and the other man. The fight was becoming more violent and people were becoming more enthusiastically vocal along with the fight. The two friends pushed their way to the other side of the ring when Jack stopped, catching sight of Ben.

“There, that's him.” He pointed for Alex.

Alex saw the young man named Ben, but it was the man with him, the man who had his arm around Ben's waist that made Alex hiss in a breath. “You didn't tell me he was friends with fucking Tomaso Panessa!”

“What?” Jack frowned, but he shook his head in irritation when he realized Ben had seen him. Jack narrowed his eyes when he saw Ben smiling at him, giving him a flirty smile, even touching his tongue to his top lip in a suggestive lick of his upper teeth. The young man then kissed his fingers and blew a kiss at Jack. Jack clenched his hands in fists, his knuckles turning white, started to push his way toward the man, but Alex grabbed him by the shoulder with his one hand and pulled Jack back. “Don't—he's with fucking Panessa!”

Jack turned on Alex causing his friend to take a step back when he saw the murderous look in Jack's blue eyes. “Who the hell is Panessa?!” Jack ground out between clenched teeth.

Alex glanced in Ben's direction. The man was staring at Jack like a starving man, his eyes roaming over Jack with clear desire, but Tomaso was standing behind Ben with a slight frown on his face. He watched Jack and Alex for a moment before returning his attention to the fight. Alex steered Jack back toward their ladies while hissing in Jack's ear.

“Panessa is that man in the fancy suit with Ben. He is the head of one of the five fucking mob families in Gotham. They're small potatoes right now, compared to the rest, but fuck Jack, if he's friends with the head of the Panessa family, getting to him is going to be not just hard, but pretty close to impossible. Right now I can fucking guaranteeee you that while that fuckhead Panessa looks like he is just on a fucking date there with that chucklefuck Ben, there are at least twelve or more bodyguards around the room watching out for Tomaso's fucking ass.”

His lips thin with anger, Jack glanced around the crowded theater. He couldn't be sure, but he trusted that Alex was probably right.

“Fine...but I want us to do something to him...to Panessa. He's decided to stick his head into our business, then I say we are going to do the same to him.” Jack hissed low.
Alex paled slightly, but nodded.

They made their way back over to Alice and Harley. The two women were deep in conversation leaning against the wall their heads practically together. Jack could see that Frank was still heavily involved in his flirtation with Marsha Muscles, who laughed and leaned over to kiss Frank on the cheek.

Alex snickered elbowing Jack. “I think my Dad might have a fucking date. Look at that shrimp go! See that Jack? I inherited the moves.”

Jack laughed. “Well, you inherited something.”

Alex snorted before he spoke. “By the way, thanks for helping man. I knew I could fucking count on you.”

Jack smiled. “What are friends for?”

Jack then put his arm around Alex's shoulders, glancing at his wife as he smiled. “I want you to find out anything and everything you can about this Tomaso Panessa. I've decided that the Red Hood gang needs to move up even more in the world...in Gotham. Tomaso is head of one of the five families; I say it's time we show them that we are gunning for them.” Jack grinned with delight. “I want to put a kink in Panessa's business...a little kick to the crotch.” Jack chuckled.

Alex frowned. “I can do that, but Jack, man, that's getting into some fucking big stuff—organized crime? The Gotham mob...I mean, I can get the fucking information just...”

Alex blew out a breath. “You sure you want to start messing with Panessa?”

Jack chuckled again, but there was a slightly sinister ring to his laugh. “Panesa put a target on his back by being friends with Ben. Besides, Gotham has already had a taste of us...let's inform the mob that we are looking to expand and see how they react...I have a tickling feeling in my gut that tells me Panessa isn't well liked...”

Alex shrugged. “Well, you're fucking right. I know he isn't liked. The families see him as greedy and power hungry, and disrespectful to his elders...actually they might be fucking fine with seeing him dropped a notch or two.” Alex grinned.

Jack smiled. “Good.”

*  

Bruce was down in the cave suiting up for his evening excursions—as Alfred had called it earlier—when his phone rang. He glanced over at it sitting on the computer desk in the cave. He thought about ignoring it, but he had already ignored several calls today because of work, or his meeting with Lucius. He knew who it probably was...Talia. She would have a lot of questions, not all of which he wanted or could answer, but he couldn't just keep ignoring her.

Bruce walked over and picked up the phone after glancing at the number. It was indeed her. “Hello Talia.”

“Finally Bruce. I was beginning to worry.” Her voice came over the phone sounding soft, creamy, like spun honey.

“I'm sorry, Talia. I've just been busy,” Bruce explained as he dropped down into the computers seat.
“Too busy to check on me after the robbery? Really Bruce? I'm not stupid, You're avoiding me...what happened? I remember the gas, the Red Hood gang and Batman, but I have no idea what happened to you—where did you go?” Talia's tone was sharp now, but he could tell she was trying not to be accusing, albeit with difficulty.

“I...I ran outside...” Bruce grimaced as he stumbled. “It was confusing after that with the gas...and Batman showing up...”

Talia was quiet for a moment before she spoke, but her voice held clear doubt. “Bruce, don't lie to me. Have enough respect for me to give me the truth.” Her voice cut him deeply. He had to lie...he felt as if he had no choice, to protect his family, to protect...then he wondered. Who did he really want to protect?

Talia continued, her voice strained. “ You know what? I'm going to let it go...for now. Regardless, I need to talk to you before I leave Gotham.”

“You're leaving?” Bruce couldn't keep the disappointment out of his voice. Part of him felt a sharp stab of pain...first Selina, now Talia. He had to admit, that was the one thing that Jack had over him...the one thing that Jack had been able to obtain that kept slipping through Bruce's fingers...love. His brother, despite everything, had managed to find love and hold onto it, desperately, passionately...like nothing he had ever seen. Bruce blamed the Batman; that was why he couldn't have anyone important in his life. He continued to tell himself that he had a mission, a duty and that because of that there was no time for love, no time for a family, for someone to come home to...anything outside of the mission was simply a distraction; but he knew that was partly a lie. Maybe he didn't want to be vulnerable like that? Having someone important in his life, someone to love, left him exposed; without love, he was safe...he would never have to experience that pain again, the pain of losing someone he loved.

For a moment the image of his parents' murder came to mind...his little brother crying...Bruce frowned...

He let the image go, pushing aside the dark thoughts, but then he thought of Jack again and smirked. He had to wonder if Jack wasn't the braver of the two of them. While Batman was putting his life on the line every night, when he came home he didn't have to worry about losing someone he loved. There was no one but Alfred and while Bruce loved the old man like a father, it wasn't the same as having someone to share his heart with. Conversely, Jack had laid himself bare for love, had devoted himself fully...maybe to an extreme, but Bruce knew there was no doubt that Jack loved Harley and while he hated to admit it, and would probably only admit it to himself in a moment such as this...Harley...Harleen loved Jack.

Bruce sighed. Maybe he needed to change that...he frowned slightly thinking about the idea of a partner again...someone to help him with his mission. Perhaps, instead of a significant other, maybe he needed to be a father...to nurture someone...it was worth thinking about. That may have been where he went wrong with Jack...he had tried too hard to be Jack's father figure instead of his brother.

Talia's voice broke through his thoughts bringing Bruce back to the here and now.

Talia asked more softly. “Bruce, what is going on with you?”

“Nothing Talia, nothing.” Bruce answered.

Talia sighed, clearly not believing him. “Look Bruce, we need to talk all right. When would be a good time? I'll be in Gotham for at least another week.”
“How about lunch tomorrow then?” Bruce suggested.

“That sounds perfect. How does one p.m. sound?” Talia asked softly.

“I'll send a car around.”

*

The next day Jack was in his lab. He had been there most of the morning...had woken up with an idea about something or other. He had told Harley where he would be, but she had been only half awake when he excitedly exited their bedroom and rushed down the stairs. Harley had ended up eating breakfast alone.

She had brought him some coffee, poking her head in on him to see he had at some point decided to get dressed, wearing a pair of light grey slacks and a white shirt, unbuttoned at the collar, the sleeves rolled up and a pair of oxfords. He was intently engaged in something at one of the tables; she knew the basics about chemistry from college and med-school, but she had no idea what he was doing right now. The liquid he was messing around with glowed a soft green as it worked its way through the many twist and curves of the tubing to drip into a large glass beaker.

He was working so intently that she decided to leave him alone for a little while.

Now it was lunch time and he still hadn't ventured out of his lab.

Harley decided the man needed a break and as his wife, it was her job to make sure he had said break.

*

Jack was sitting down on a stool, music playing lightly in the background, Ruelle's warm voice sang in the background,

“Feel the fury closing in
All resistance wearing thin
Nowhere to run from all of this havoc
Nowhere to hide from all of this madness, madness, madness...”

He was humming along softly, sitting under the dull light. He kept the lights dim, but not so muted that he couldn't see the notebook opened in one hand, his pencil moving speedily across the page taking notes on some of the things he wanted to add to the laughing gas to change its composition some when the door to the lab opened up and he glanced over to see his wife standing in the doorway. He couldn't quite see all of her from where he was sitting, but he leaned over slightly. “Harley?”

She had her hair up in a bun, an old pair of glasses on her nose (he had no idea where she had gotten those from, he hadn't seen her in glasses since they first met) and she was wearing a white lab coat which he noticed hit just at the top of her thighs. The coat was only buttoned once at her belly, the rest hung open giving him a great view of her cleavage and a hint of her groin. Jack grinned slowly watching her as she moved, her hips swaying as she walked toward him, carrying a notebook and a pen in one hand. She walked in and he heard the click of high heels against the floor as she walked over to him...no that was wrong. She sauntered over to him.
She stopped, cocking her hip to the side and reached up to lower her glasses and pierce him with her blue eyed gaze over the top of the frames.

“Mr. Wayne? I'm your therapist...your sex therapist, and it has come to my attention that you have a problem.” Harley purred walking closer. Jack's eyes wandered down over her. She was wearing a pair of black, pointed toe stilettos, black fishnet stockings, a garter belt that ran up her thighs...he licked his lips his eyes traveling up her body.

Harley looked at the notebook, flipping a page. “It has come to my attention Mr. Wayne, that you have an erection that just won't go away! Oh my, tsk tsk! I see that I'm going to have to examine you, test out your techniques, see if we can assess the problem...”

Harley looked up from her notebook with what Jack thought was a cute, yet seductive smile, her blue eyes twinkling with mischief. “I'm afraid Mr. Wayne, I'm going to have to ask you to drop your pants.”

Jack smiled, but then tried to school his features into something a little more serious. “Oh, well, of course Dr. Quinzel, whatever you say.”

Harley grinned then dropped her smile into a firm line. “Mm...good, but first we need to make sure your techniques are up to par.”

Jack looked at her innocently. “My techniques?”

Harley walked over to one of the tables in the room that was relatively clear of equipment, the edge of which hit her about mid hip. She set her notebook and pen down off to the side before she turned around, her glasses sliding to the end of her nose. Jack was watching her every move, his experiments and gases all forgotten as he watched his wife turn, doing a little hop up onto the table. She crossed her legs and smiled at him. His eyes traveled down the length of her legs, then back up again. He swallowed.

Harley crooked her finger at him. “Come over here Mr. Wayne, and bring the stool with you.”

Jack tossed his notebook down and swiftly stepped over to his 'therapist's' table with the stool, setting it down in front of her. Harley grinned. “Now sit down Mr. Wayne and show me exactly how you would perform cunnilingus. This is very important.”

“Really? You think this will help, Dr. Quinzel?” Jack was struggling not to smirk.

“Oh, well that will all depend on how well you perform this action Mr. Wayne. As your therapist I have to tell you, practice in these things does make perfect and if you perform well enough I might be able to help you with that erection problem.” Harley smiled and push up her glasses with a single finger.

Jack scooted the stool closer in front of her and Harley uncrossed her legs. She slid one heeled shoe against his leg before she slowly raised her leg, resting her ankle on his shoulder. His eyes raked over her, spread out before him. Harley leaned back on her hands rubbing the point of her shoe gently along his shoulder.

Jack growled softly, scooting his stool yet closer to her, caught her leg with one hand and pressed a kiss to her calf, his hand traveling down her calf feeling the soft fabric of her fishnets under his fingers. He bit at her leg, pressing his teeth against the inside of her thigh, just hard enough to make her jump. He wanted to bite her, suck on her; his need for her was so strong that it was difficult to be delicate with her, but he was going to play the game...playing with Harley was always fun.
He settled her leg over his shoulder, feeling the press of her heel against his back, the stiletto poking into his back, though the slight discomfort just sent a thrill down his spine. Harley spread her other leg out, settling the leg up on the table.

He reached up to unfasten the one button that held the lab coat closed, letting it fall away to reveal her naked body except for the garter belt that rode around her leg, the black lace pressing into her skin, the garters holding her stockings up, standing out starkly against the pale, peach color of her skin.

Jack growled again wrapping his right arm around her leg that was settled on his shoulder reaching out and pressing her other leg back just before he pressed his mouth to her clitoris. He slowly kissed her, twirling his tongue against her in a curl, then a slow lick. Harley responded with a deep moan.

“Oh Mr. Wayne...uh...”

Jack grinned whispering against her. “Tell me if I'm doing anything wrong doctor.”

She giggled. “Oh, I will.”

Jack chuckled, rolling his tongue in a circle against her clitoris before pressing his lips against her more firmly and sucking, alternating between gentle sucks to long licks, then quick flicks with the tip of his tongue. Harley groaned, shuddering. “Oh...oh that's a very good start Mr. Wayne.”

Jack grinned against her and whispered. “Mm...I really should practice more Dr. Quinzel.”

He opened his mouth wide against her sex, encompassing as much of her as he could with his mouth moving his jaw up and down, pressing his lips to her catching her with his lips and tugging gently before repeating the process again. He reached up to slide his free hand up her stomach, feeling the silk of her skin under his hand, warm, soft. She made him want to wrap himself around her, safe in her arms, her body pressed against his. He reached up to cup to one of her exposed breasts marveling at the soft fullness of her breast in his hand, warm, biteable, the nipple hard and tight against his palm. He cupped her breast, squeezing just a little before he grasped her tight, hard nipple between his forefinger and thumb. He slowly rolled her nipple and was rewarded with goosebumps racing over her flesh while he licked her with the flat of his tongue. He switched breasts, repeating the same stroke and twist that had Harley writhing while the pad of his thumb stroked over her nipple until her groin was tight, heat pooling at her clitoris.

Harley groaned loudly, her foot against his back jerked digging the heel of the stiletto into his lean, muscled back, but he didn't care—he just kissed her with more vigor, flicking the pad of his thumb over her nipple which caused Harley to gasp. “Jack...” Then she quickly remembered the game and giggle- moaned. “I mean Mr. Wayne...just...just keep doing that, you're doing...oh...fine!”

He smiled whispering against her wet clitoris. “Whatever you say Dr. Quinzel.”

He snaked his hand down her body, pressing his fingers into her soft, inviting flesh, caressing along the garter belt as he did so until he was at her groin. Jack stroked the tender skin at the joint of her thigh causing Harley to jerk then shiver, goosebumps racing across her skin again. He pressed his mouth more firmly to her just before he slid two fingers into her. Jack inhaled softly, feeling how wet she was as his fingers slid into her. He kissed her again, twirling his tongue in a passionate press of tongue and lips, curving his fingers just slightly to catch her g-spot with the pads of his fingers while he continued to roll his tongue over her, using the very tip of his tongue to find just the right spot to flick that had her shuddering with pleasure.

“Uh Jack! Yes...like that Mr. Wayne...” Harley moaned loudly, leaning back heavily on her hands,
her back arching off the cool surface of the table as she came with a cry, reaching around with one hand to grab Jack's hair, her fingers coiling in his hair and pulling. “YES!”

She rolled her hips, that warm delicious tickle of his tongue against her clitoris had Harley whimpering as her orgasm rocked through her, followed quickly by another orgasm.

He felt her body respond to him, cumming, her muscles tightened around his fingers, which prompted him to thrust with more vigor into her. Harley arched her back crying out. “UH! Mr. Wayne!”

Harley moaned, the feeling of his tongue moving against her, the firm teases with the tip, to the full on flat of his tongue lick had her writhing. Jack was hitting every sensitive spot to the point that she wanted to dig her fingers into his hair and ride his mouth with abandon.

Jack didn't stop; he continued to focus his attention on her clitoris, his tongue playing over the sensitive surface, making her whimper in delight, her body jerking in response as her orgasm rolled over her then ebbed before crashing around her again when Jack sucked on her clitoris. His lips tugged lightly before he rolled and twisted his tongue against her, his fingers thrusting slowly in and out of her.

Jack pulled away from her and slowly stood up, keeping her one leg stretched up on his shoulder, and kicked the stool away. He quickly unbuttoned his slacks, letting them drop below his hips. He shifted Harley nearly off the edge of the table, holding his shaft ready to enter her, but he waited, sliding the head of his erection against her, coating himself in her fluid with a deep groan, his teeth clenched together on almost a snarl. “Dr. Quinzel...” He drew her title out on his growl, caressing her name, dragging the “Z” and the “L” of her name which sent a thrill up her spine. He pressed a kiss to her leg over his shoulder, feeling the soft yet still rough texture of her fishnets against his lips.

“You...you, ah did a very good job Mr. Wayne...very good. Now...let's see if we can't take care of that erection you have.” Harley giggled gazing heatedly at him over the rim of her glasses. Jack chuckled. “Thank you Dr. Quinzel.” He made a show of licking his damp lips, his blue eyes gave her a heated gaze, raking over her with a look that made Harley feel as if her husband wanted to dig his teeth into her. She smiled pressing her teeth into her bottom lip in delight.

Harley giggled her cheeks flushed. “Now Mr. Wayne...why don't you show me your other...techniques?”

Jack purred. “Mm...I live for these moments with your Dr. Quinzel.” He rolled his tongue over the “L”

Harley giggled feeling that delightful shiver run up her spine from the way Jack said her name, but then her giggle quickly turned into a soft, deep groan when Jack yanked her hips nearly off the edge of the table and slid into her pressing himself deep inside her. She groaned laying back against the table. Her inner muscles tightened around every inch of him buried all the way inside her. She moaned again loudly as she arched her hips.

Jack slowly caressed one hand along her calf. Harley brought her other leg up, resting her heel against his other shoulder. He grinned grasping her knees and tickled her.

Harley giggled. “NO! Not the knees!!”

Jack snickered, though he stopped. “But Dr. Quinzel,” he interjected. “This is part of my technique.”

Harley squealed wiggling and Jack found the way her muscles clenched him to feel heavenly. “No
Jack sighed theatrically and stopped. “Fine Dr. Quinzel, how about this then?”

He dropped his hand to her thighs, spreading his fingers to dig into her flesh and started to slide in and out of her using his hips. Harley gasped with pleasure, pushing herself up on her hands. He penetrated with a deep and steady flow of his hips while Harley rocked against him using her hands for support.

“Oh...yes...that works...Mr....Mr. Wayne” Harley smiled at him, making his groin tighten. He loved her smile.

Jack chuckled. “Mm...good. I like to succeed in all things.” His hands moved to grasp her torso, his hands at the sides of her breasts. He rolled his hips, careful not to pull her more over the edge. He dropped his hands to reach under her, grabbing her ass and lifting her up forcing Harley onto her elbows.

“How about this Dr. Quinzel?” Jack purred as he moved slow and steady watching her expression.

Harley hissed. “Oh...Mr. Wayne.”

Jack laughed then groaned. “Mm...I love you Dr. Quinzel.”

Harley moaned in response. “I love you puddin.”

He started to move his hips harder, faster, digging his fingers into her soft skin, watching her expression as he penetrated inside of her as deeply as he could. The sensation of being buried in her rolled up his spine and through his groin eliciting a deep groan of pleasure from him.

Harley cried out his name, her body once more tightening around him, her back bowing with her orgasm. The sensation of Jack buried in her, piercing her with his erection, made her want to scream in delight. She felt on fire, every nerve ending sending ripples of pleasure through her.

Jack couldn't hold back any longer, watching the way she writhed under him. He released himself with a cry thrusting forward hard and spilling into Harley.

He continued to move more slowly, a few more shuddering thrusts before he scooted her more firmly onto the table and eased her rear down making sure she wasn't going to fall. Harley was panting for breath. Her hair had started to come down from her bun, the lab coat spread around her. He smiled laying his cheek against one of her legs brushing his cheek against the fishnets gazing down at her, his eyes filled with intense love.

“So how did I do Dr. Quinzel?” Jack asked as he pressed a kiss to her calf.

Harley giggled. “Oh you passed with flying colors Mr. Wayne. You now have a clean bill of health.”

Jack laughed. “Thank you doctor.”

*  

Jack sighed relaxing back against the pillows and blew out a stream of smoke, watching the white smoke drift up to the ceiling of their bedroom, the tobacco relaxing him further. Harley had convinced him after his “exam” in the lab that he needed to take a break from his work and relax. He had found it hard to argue with her looking so deliciously unkempt from their fucking in the lab. So
here he was in bed. He was completely naked, lying on top of the bed, his ankles crossed and watching Harley as she walked across the room carrying a tray with some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, some ice tea and chips on it. She was still wearing only the lab coat, garter belt, fishnets and heels...

She grinned. “Lunch!” She held up the tray. He grinned, his eyes traveling up her legs already becoming hard again at the sight of his wife when his phone rang. Jack reached over for it without taking his eyes off of Harley while she kicked off the heels and crawled onto the bed next to him.

“Hello?” Jack answered the phone grinning when he saw that Harley had cut the sandwiches into triangles, just how he liked them.

He was answered by Alex. “Hey man, I found out about a fucking deal going down tonight with the Panessa family. It will be on going down near Sheldon Park. There is a large factory building over that way; my sources say that is where it will be going down, inside the factory.”

Jack sat up. “Really...a good old fashion drug deal. Think they’ll have cocaine?”

He could almost see Alex nod. “Yeah man, some fucking cocaine and maybe some meth. My sources say its a pretty fucking big deal. Lots of money being exchanged and a lot of money to be made off the stuff. Supposedly, this is a deal that is going to help Panessa buy a bit more clout with the families. That fucking dude is always trying to make himself more important than he is...the chucklefuck. Anyway, it's going down around one in the morning.”

Jack chuckled. “Sounds perfect. Think we can get everyone for tonight?”

Alex snorted. “Fuck yeah. Everyone has just been sitting on their hands waiting. I mean I would rather have a day or two to fucking plan, but...yeah I think we can fucking do it.”

Jack grinned. “Then let everyone know...tell everyone I want them in some sort of red mask, I don't care what, just red; if they still have their gas masks that would be perfect.”

Alex interrupted him. “You going to use some of your laughing gas?”

Jack chuckled. “I have been working on it, made some changes that hopefully will be interesting. I have no idea what it’s going to do really, but I am so looking forward to finding out!”

Alex said quickly. “Hey, I can get some more gas masks. I'll even have them spray painted red for tonight.”

Jack purred. “Perfect. Oh, and I want everyone to meet outside Robinson Park around midnight. I'll call Frost myself.”

Alex nodded on the other end of the line even though Jack couldn't have seen him. “All right man. Will do. You mind if I keep Alice the fuck away from this one?”

Jack snorted. “Course not. See you tonight.”

“Tonight.” Alex hung up.

Jack turned to Harley. “Guess what we're doing tonight sweets!”

Harley giggled. “Killing some people?”

Jack laughed. “Oh let's hope so!”
Jack sat in the back seat with Harley in Frost's car. Frost drove a Mercedes C300 black sedan with tinted windows, not the most perfect getaway car, but it was comfortable and Jack appreciated comfort. Frost was dressed in a black suit and tie with a solid red bandana tied around the bottom half of his face looking like a gentleman thief. Harley was wearing a red mask that covered her eyes, forehead and cheeks (they had stopped off at a party store where she ran in and bought the mask) along with tight black leggings—that Jack found charmingly distracting—black boots and a black pullover that did little to take away from how sexy she was...at least as far as Jack was concerned. Jack wore the red helmet, his chest plate, leather jacket, black jeans and combat boots. Harley smiled at her husband; he looked sexy and dangerous, an intoxicating combination. They were both armed with their pistols and Jack had a special treat tonight; strapped into a bandolier across his torso, Jack had several of his new laughing gas grenades. Unlike the “bombs” from last time, these each had a pin that could be pulled out to activate the gas. He had no idea how they were going to work after his “tweeking,” and adjustments, but he was planning on using them just to see what would happen. Regardless, he was sure it was going to be fun!

Jack glanced down at his watch, the streetlight providing the only light through the tinted windows. He frowned narrowing his eyes slightly behind the mask, with the dim light and the red cast to everything from the helmet, it was hard for him to read his watch.

Harley squeezed his knee when she saw him looking at his wrist. “No worries puddin, they’ll be here—we have a loyal group.”

Jack grunted and started to respond when two SUV's pulled up and parked. Dale jumped out of one, wearing a red surgical mask over the lower half of his face, followed by the others who had ridden with him, all of them wearing red surgical masks over the lower half of their faces. Alex dropped out of the other vehicle wearing a red hockey mask making him look like the one-armed Valentine version of Jason from the Friday the 13th movies. The only reason Jack knew it was Alex was his missing arm. He was followed by the rest of the gang, all of them in a variety of red-themed masks Jack grinned opening the door and stepping out. “Ah, so glad to see the gang is all here!”

Alex nodded. “Dale has Sandra, Duela and Trope, I have Jason, Rolf and Roxy. Everyone is armed and ready and I have some more gas masks in the back.” Alex motioned at the back of the SUV.

Jack nodded. “Good, good. Frost, why don't you go and help “A” distribute those.”

Frost nodded and walked over to Alex, the two men heading to the back of the SUV. Everyone turned toward Jack.

Jack grinned behind his mask and rubbed his hands together. “Ooh, time for the pep talk!”

He turned to his gang, looking over the eager faces. He assumed they were eager since everyone was wearing a mask. Frost leaned on the roof of the car listening while Harley walked over to put her arm around Jack's waist. She couldn't see the smile, but she could just feel it as Jack put his arm around her shoulders. While Jack spoke, Frost and Alex began to distribute the new gas masks. These were a little different from the last time (which Jack loved! Never wear the same thing twice if you can help it was something he truly believed in). These masks were much more “bug” like with larger lenses over the eyes, and a flatter filter over the mouth, much more industrial looking than before...which completely changed the look of the gang from last time. The red on them was darker as well. Jack grinned quite pleased with the effect of the gas masks.

“All right gang, Daddy has a new gas he has been working on and I want to try it out tonight, so
make sure your new gas masks are in place, nice and snug!"

Jack looked at everyone to make sure they understood before he continued. “Now, here is the deal for tonight. Tomaso Panessa has a huge drug deal going down tonight. He is the head of one of the Five Families of the Gotham mob, the least of the five I might add, but still a member. We are going to go in there, take the drugs and the money. Oh, and kill everyone.” Jack waited to see if anyone said anything. No one said a word. Jack smiled—he loved loyalty.

“Tonight we are going to let the Panessa family know we are gunning for their territory. This boys and girls is our next step in becoming a gang that Gotham is going to be talking about ages to come!” He chuckled. “Tonight you do whatever you have to...there are no civilians in tonight's little romp, so don't worry about using your weapons. I don't want anyone of these mob types walking away tonight.” He looked around. He could see by Dale's eyes that he was a little upset with the impending killing, but he said nothing. Sandra on the other hand didn't flinch at all. The rest seemed perfectly fine with the boss telling them to kill...Jack smiled musing at the eager young faces before him that he was molding into the perfect little gang...it made him proud.

“All right guys, let's go! Time to make some money!” Jack laughed. Harley joined him squeezing him around the waist with a wide gleeful grin.

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The factory was a typical bland brick and metal building with no particularly distinguishing features, nothing to set the building apart from all the other industrial buildings that lined this area of Gotham near Sheldon park and the Gotham river.

Unlike the other buildings, however, which only had their outside lights on, this building had lights glowing from inside. The lights inside the old brick building were dim and yellow giving the place a washed out, jaundiced look and leaving vast parts of the interior in shadow. The plain grey floors were covered in debris from years of disuse; piles of dust had settled in the corners and along the edges. Anyone stepping into the building would be greeted with abandoned palletes, ancient rusting machinery, and other odds and ends littered throughout the abandoned building.

Inside under the glow of one of the large cone-shaped lights stood five people. They were all standing in front of a deep red Cadillac XTS that reflected the dull yellow light off its smooth, waxed surface. The group was comprised of a variety nationalities and genders, yet they were all dressed in matching suits looking like a chorus line from “Guys and Dolls.” The one who was clearly in charge as he stood just a little in front of the rest of the group was a tall, elderly white man of around sixty with a bald head ringed with a fringe of white hair. He wore an expensive black suit with a grey tie; he was the only one that didn't seem to be armed; on either side of him were two people both in similar suits, holding their arms in front of them, one hand around the wrist of the other hand that held a pistol. One was a brown-skinned woman of undetermined age with an eye-patch, the other was a Latino man with long hair and a full-beard. Behind them were two more people, one a white female with hard masculine features and long blonde hair; next to her was a man with dusky skin, bald and built like a football player, who each held large, military style messenger bag briefcases. They were all waiting patiently for the car that had just pulled into the factory through one of the wide delivery doorways at the end.

The car, a BMW grande coupe, drove slowly down the wide lane toward the waiting group at the other end, where it stopped just a dozen feet away. The doors opened and five people exited the car. One was a man in a brown tailor's suit, wearing a black trench coat over the top with neatly combed thick, brown hair. Next came a woman in a pencil skirt, red head (clearly dyed a color of red that didn't appear in nature on any primate) wearing a revealing blouse; she moved to stand next to the
man in brown, threading her arm through his and leaning against him. Next came three men, all tall, wide, muscled, each one looked as if he could have played professional football. Two of the men were holding phones, filming the entire exchange.

The elder man smiled. “Frankie. Nice to see you, though I was under the impression that Tomaso was going to be meeting me.”

Frankie smiled. “Sorry, but Tomaso lets me handle these sorts of deals Rex.”

Rex frowned slightly. “No offense Frankie, but we're talking a lot of money here—I would think Tomaso would come in person instead of sending his cousin.”

Frankie shrugged. “Look, we can call this off right now...no drugs, no money. No skin off my nose.” Frankie motioned and started to turn and leave, but Rex called him back. “No, no it's fine. You got the money?”

Frankie turned with a grin. “You got the drugs?”

Rex motioned and the two people with the briefcases came forward. They both crouched near Rex and unzipped the cases to reveal that each was filled to the brim with packages, several small clear plastic baggies with white crystals inside, and several large, brown paper packages shaped almost like bricks. The man named Frankie, just by a quick glance could see that there was almost a quarter million dollars worth in each of the two bags.

Frankie smiled, pulling out his cigarettes from the pocket of his coat. The red head quickly pulled out a light from somewhere on her person and flicked it open, a small orange flame appeared. She leaned close, Frankie's arm going around her waist as she lit his cigarette. Frankie took a few quick puffs to get the Dunhill cigarette, an expensive smoke (Frankie was purposely showing off a bit, letting Rex know that the family and he, personally, were well off) started before he inhaled deeply taking the cigarette out to blow out a long stream of white smoke. He grinned. “Perfect. Now, lets get this done.”

That was when they all heard a laugh echoing off the factory walls followed by a cheerful, yet clearly modified voice. “Hey fellas!! What's the secret to good comedy??”

All of the gangsters pulled their weapons aiming their guns up into the rafters and shadows of the factory, turning around trying to find the source of the voice, but clearly seeing nothing.

A man wearing a red helmet, armored chest plate, and black stepped out into the light, standing on the landing of a staircase up above them as he laughed. “Timing!”

He dropped several of his “grenades” down on the mobsters below. Frankie, Rex and the rest the group below immediately opened fire. Jack laughed ducking out of the way just as members of the Red Hood gang seemed to spill out of the darkness like red-masked ghosts, firing their weapons.

They had split themselves into two groups: Dale, Sandra, Roxy, Duela and Rolf were to go after the money, while Jack, Harley Frost, Jason and Trope went after the drugs. Divide and conquer Jack had said.

* 

Harley giggled behind her gas mask having raced down the stairs with Jack as soon as the mobsters had started to fire their weapons. She came off the last step turning with a dancer's grace and let go with two quick shots, hitting one of the two drug briefcase holding mobsters in the chest. The man fell to the dusty floor, but he rolled pulling out a weapon and firing back, but he had already started
to giggle; the strange laughter that he couldn't control threw off his aim.

The blonde woman who had the other briefcase had dropped into a crouch and returned fire, having pulled a Glock 22 from under her jacket while she tried to move backwards looking for cover. Harley yelped as the woman opened fire at her, throwing herself to the side to avoid being hit as three rounds blasted into a support, sending out bits of concrete, one small piece of which struck her in the shoulder, but failed to penetrate her clothing. Harley did a one handed cartwheel out of the line of fire, more bits of broken concrete hitting her as the woman fired three more rapid shots, but doing no damage as she surprised both herself and the gunner with her dexterous dodge.

The green gas was quickly filling the room, making visibility difficult while the eerie sound of giggles started to drift among the mobsters.

Jack fired his weapon at the man called Rex. Rex pulled his own weapon, a Smith and Wesson M&P 9, firing at Jack as he ran toward the car. One bullet hit Jack in the chest, sending a vibration of pain through him, but the chest piece he wore absorbed the bullet, if not the impact. Jack stumbled from the hit, but he didn't go down, firing his weapon off. A fair trade, he thought as he hit Rex with a bullet to the chest, the next one taking the older man in the head.

Jack muttered. “Well shit. That hurt and it's going to leave one bitch of a bruise.”

He gingerly touched the place were the bullet had impacted with the chest piece, leaving a nasty little dent, the bullet still in the hole it had created. Jack muttered. “Harley is going to be pissed.” He sighed walking over to look down at the now dead mobster Rex and gave him a little kick. “I wanted to let the gas get you, see what it does with my fine tuning, but...Oh well. Now where is that Tomaso's cousin?” Jack chuckled softly, heading over to the other side of the room. Harley came running up to him. “Puddin!! Did you see the cartwheel I did?!”

Jack laughed. “I did sweets! Very impressive and very nice shooting by the way.”

She giggled happily. “Thanks puddin.”

* 

While Jack was tangling with Rex and Harley was doing cartwheels, Frost came rushing around the corner from where he had been hiding waiting for the Boss to drop the gas grenades, and fired at the Latino man who had dived behind the car, while Jason—who had been waiting in the shadows nearby—fired his weapon at the other bodyguard. A bullet from Jason's gun caught her in the leg, but she was already having trouble, the gas causing her to laugh so hard that she couldn't hold her weapon steady. She went down from the gunshot, but fired her own weapon wildly. The young man yelped and went down, his opponent's wild shot having cut right through the meat of his calf, but Frost put himself between Jason and the two shooters firing his weapon. One round hit the woman in the stomach, and the man just under his left eye.

* 

On the other side of the room, things were not going as smoothly. Dale didn't feel good at all about killing anyone, even mobsters. He was trying to go for wounding shots. One of the two bald men who had been filming the exchange with his phone pulled out a weapon despite his giggling and fired, his bullet hitting Rolf and ripping through the young man's chest before the kid had even gotten a shot off.

Roxy, who had been beside him, screamed. “NO!”
She started to fire her weapon without much aim, but she did hit the red head in the back who was trying to run to the vehicle. The woman went down, a pool of blood forming under her. Another of Roxy's bullet's nicked Frankie, who had also been running for the car, in the thigh. The wound caused him to drop to his knees holding his sides as he started to laugh. He was frantically trying to pull his weapon out at the same time he was laughing hard enough that he was in excruciating pain holding his sides.

Duela was firing her weapon wildly, not really aiming at anyone, her goal to get to the car and find the money; but one bullet somehow found a mark, hitting one of the three big men that had come with Frankie, in the shoulder, another bullet catching him in the throat...but his face was already distorted into a wide and horrible grin. He didn't react to the bullets except to giggle crazily and sink to the floor, laughing as he bled out from the wound to his throat.

Dale, with Sandra beside him, ran up to the man who had shot Rolf. Dale held the gun on him trying not to shake.

“Where's the money?!” Dale hissed at the man.

The large man was laughing, but he took a swipe at Dale, catching the big man by surprise. The man's pistol hit Dale in the face hard enough that he knocked Dale's gas mask loose, surprising the former orderly. Sandra cried out. “DALE!”

She fired her weapon as she grabbed Dale, but instead of striking the man who had pistol whipped Dale her bullet hit his companion. The man who had hit Dale staggered, laughing and leaning against the car. He held up his phone taking film of Dale and Sandra before he yanked the car door open.

Dale had started to laugh, the gas seeping in now that his mask had been knocked askew. Sandra was quickly trying to get his mask back in place, hopefully reducing the effects of the gas on him.

The bald man had hit the car into reverse, bashing his companions on his way out as he struggled to contain his laughter and control the vehicle while taking the drug money with him.

*

Frankie glanced at his dead girlfriend and started laughing even harder; he just couldn't stop. He started to laugh and gag at the same time even as he heard his car being driven away. He saw a figure walk up to him through the green smoke, the man in the weird red helmet, a woman was beside him. Though it was hard to tell with the gas mask, the figure was definitely female. For a moment, in Frankie's mind, despite everything going on, he thought she was probably a looker underneath that mask.

The man in the red helmet dropped down to a crouch watching Frankie, dangling his weapon between his legs as he tilted his head to examine Frankie.

Frankie tried to aim his weapon, but he was laughing too hard. His face, his mouth felt like they were splitting in half, that the smile was tearing at his face. The man in the red helmet reached forward and took Frankie's gun, tossing it causally over his shoulder.

Jack turned when he heard the car pulling out and frowned glancing at Harley. She hissed through her mask. “Sounds like someone got away puddin.”

He shrugged. “Well maybe that's a good things sweets. A survivor to spread the word to Panessa...you know how it is, if no one gets out to tell the story, how is he going to know it was us?
This way Tomaso will know we are after him.” He chuckled. “Should have thought of that before...”

Frankie giggled uncontrollably. His face hurt so much that tears were running down his cheek and he thought he tasted blood in his mouth. “Tomaso is going to kill you. Hehehe. I...I'm...hehe...his...haha...cousin!”

The man in the red helmet laughed. “Oh good, then maybe me killing you will let him know I'm very serious.”

Jack held the gun to Frankie's head. He turned toward Harley. “I like the touch with this gas. It's a lot like my old one—see what it's doing to his face sweets?”

Harley nodded, her eyes wide behind her gas mask. “It's stretching his smile...painfully, by the looks of it.” She giggled. “That is just brilliant puddin!”

He laughed. “I know. But, I suppose we need to take the drugs and go before the cops or Bats shows up.”

Frankie giggled. “Tomaso is...ehehhahahahHAHAH...going HAHA! To kill you!!”

Jack stood. “To quote George Bernard Shaw: Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh.” Then he shot Frankie in the face.

* 

The bald man who escaped, Ronnie Conti, drove erratically through Gotham. He couldn't stop laughing. He vomited and wet himself, but he hadn't been able to stop laughing. He was laughing so hard that he simply couldn't catch his breath, which was causing him to wheeze, a rattle in his chest; and then there was the smiling. He had caught a glimpse of himself in the rear view, his eyes were wide, hysterical looking, bloodshot, but it was the smile...he was starting to clench his teeth, his mouth spread so wide across his face that the flesh at the corner of his lips had torn and he was bleeding...and the pain. Ronnie had never felt anything like it and he had been shot more times than he could count in service to the Panessa family.

Ronnie struggled to drive, heading to Tomaso's apartment. He knew Tomaso was holding business there, which he usually didn't, but he had recently sent his wife and kids out of town for an unknown period...and was shacked up with some pretty boy. Not that Ronnie cared, but if a man had a wife and kids, those should come first. Still, Ronnie never said a word to no one, weren't none of his business and as long as it didn't affect business, Ronnie kept quiet.

He turned when he came to the correct street, nearly driving up onto the sidewalk as he tried to make the turn, his vision so distorted by tears he almost couldn't see where he was going. He drove down into the parking gargare heading to the private elevator, nearly slamming the front of the car into the metal door.

He fell out of the car, weaving and stumbled to the door, but soon, he had fallen inside and hit the button to Panessa's floor.

* 

Tomaso laughed walking into the bedroom with two glasses of champagne. He was wearing a thick white robe, barefoot as he made his way across the room to where Ben was lying on his side, naked watching him.

Tomaso handed him the glass. “There, some of the best money can buy.”
Ben laughed. “Nothing but the best for you Tommy, eh?”

Tomaso grinned, sitting on the edge of the bed. “Of course!”

That was when he heard the buzz signaling someone had arrived on his floor. Tomaso frowned standing up. “I’m not expecting anyone.”

Ben sat up. “Should I?”

“No...it's fine.” Tomaso set his glass down as he walked by a dresser and headed to the door. He looked through the peephole of his front door when he arrived...he recognized the top of Ronnie's head. Tomaso scowled. Ronnie, Frankie and the others were suppose to be buying those drugs from Rex Costa, not bothering him with pointless details.

Ready to rip Ronnie a new one, Tomaso opened the door only to have Ronnie fall inside, hitting the floor with a hard, meaty thud.

“Ronnie?” Tomaso looked shocked. He rolled the big man over just as Ben, wearing his own white fluffy robe, came dashing in from the bedroom. “Tommy?”

Tomaso looked up. “It's Ronnie, one of my men—he's suppose to be guarding my cousin.”

As Tomaso rolled Ronnie over they both jumped back from the wide-eyes and bloody smile on Ronnie's face. The man was alive, but judging by his strained breathing, his clenched and broken teeth and the constant shaking of his body...he wouldn't be much longer.

Tomaso grabbing Ronnie by the shoulders. “Ronnie, who did this?! Tell me!”

The big man struggled, he reached into his jacket pocket and with uncontrollable shaking he pulled out a phone that slipped from his fingers.

Tomaso reached for it; the phone was paused on a recording. He hit rewind, then play and watched the events of the night unfold as Ben came around to stand behind him. They both watched the video which didn't show much at first. It recorded Frankie and Rex talking, then the laughter, the dropped grenades, only briefly catching a glimpse of the man in the red helmet disappearing. The rest of the video was gun shots, shouting, green gas until the point that Ronnie pistol whipped one of the attackers, knocking off his gas mask and revealing the man's face briefly.

As Tomaso watched, his grip on the phone tightened until the plastic was creaking softly in protest.

Ben hissed. “That's Jack...Jack Wayne. I know it, I've seen him with that helmet.”

Tomaso turned to glare at his lover. “What?”

Ben smiled. “That is so romantic!! He's jealous! Attacking you because of me.”

Tomaso snarled, glaring at Ben. “Do you know how much that deal was going to make me? And what the fuck did he do to my men?!!”

Ben grabbed Tomaso by the shoulders. “Shh...shh. Calm down. You just need to let him know that you don't appreciate his...extreme measures to get at you. Show him that you'll fight for me. That will make him even more jealous.” Ben grinned happily.

Tomaso snarled. “Ben, you are costing me business. Whatever is going on between you and Wayne...it just crossed a line. No one costs me money...and that deal was more than simply drugs
and money—that was earning good will with one of the Latin gangs and your current obsession just fucked that up for me.”

Ben smiled. “Oh come on, you are Tomaso Panessa, you can fix this...and you can let Jack know you mean business too. That man on the video...that is clearly one of his gang. Find that man, and use him to send a message.”

Tomaso narrowed his eyes, breathing heavily in his anger.

Ben smiled. “I still have friends in the Court. I can get you that information—for free Tommy. It'll cost you nothing, then you can teach Jack a lesson in how business is done in Gotham. Even better...let me do it for you. I can use this as an opportunity to leave a love note behind, to let Jack know I understand what he is doing for me.”

Tomaso’s left eye twitched before he took a deep breath through his nose and slowly let it out through his mouth. “Find out who that is in the video Ben and you can take care of the message.”

Ben grinned. “I won't disappoint you Tommy, I promise.”
One day later.

* 

Alex was doing some research for Jack, trying to find some information about another “deal” that Panessa was going to be involved in, something else that the Red Hood gang could destroy and take from Panessa. Jack was determined to not only lash out at Tomaso, but each “raid” they made would be another step into taking over Panessa territory, leading to the utter destruction of Tomaso. Jack was looking forward to it. This time he hoped that Alex would get them the information with a little more time to prepare themselves, a bigger heist than before. But also Jack didn't want to lose another gang member to poor planning. (Roxy seemed to be doing well enough, considering her loss, but she was clearly devastated by Rolf’s death. They had taken Rolf's body with them and Jack had slipped a little money here and there to get the young man buried quietly. No one but the gang would know what happened to Rolf.).

In the mean time, Jack had decided that he was going to focus on the fight club, finding out who was paying off the fighters, who was screwing over both Alex's father and Penguin. Which was why Alex, Alice, Frank, and Frost were coming over tonight, to help him spar, prepare himself to step into the ring. Even though Jack had prevailed in the ring during his previous fight club foray, Jack felt that he was a better fighter now, but he wanted to be better still.

Right now though, he and Harley were killing a little bit of time while they waited for the others to show up.

Jack leaned his elbows on the card table they had set up in what was the study, a cigarette hanging from his mouth as he played with the cards. They had moved the furniture out of the way for Jack's practice fight later when the others arrived. He was dressed causally in a pair of lounge pants, his feet bare, wearing only a simple t-shirt of dark green while he held a deck of cards up for Harley, who was dressed much the same, wearing black lounge pants and a black sports bra, her hair done up in pigtails to keep her blonde locks out of her face. Jack carefully showed her how he was holding the cards in his hands. He fanned the cards in his hand with the brush of his other hand, then using the fingers of both hands, he separated the cards into two stacks. He smiled at Harley who was sitting across from him, watching him intently, a little furrow between her brows, her bottom lip sticking out slightly as she concentrated on watching him and the cards. He shuffled the cards, performing a series of different shuffles, naming each type as he performed them.

“Now this one is called the Riffle in the hand instead of a riffle performed on the table.” Jack smiled at her. With an elegant move of his fingers, her showed her out to riffle a deck that was on the table, fanning them out so their corners touched before he rather theatrically shuffled them together.

He put his cigarette out in the ashtray next to him as he picked the cards up, divided them again, but this time with one hand, then shuffled them before he held the the cards between his hands arching the cards; this time the shuffle had the cards falling in an arch together. The sound of the cards quickly falling together reminded Harley of the sound of a waterfall, strangely satisfying, which was the only word that Harley could come up with and it was just as visually appealing too. The other bonus was watching the way Jack's hands moved. His fingers were long and dexterous. The way he manipulated the cards was beautiful she thought, graceful. She put her chin in her hand leaning forward on the table, giving her husband a happy, dopey look of love...which also made her look like a teenager with a schoolgirl crush.
Jack glanced over at Harley as he idly twisted the cards in his hands and smiled. Cards were something he had been playing with forever, since he was young and he liked showing off for Harley. “Okay, now this one is called a Hindu shuffle.” Jack held the cards in one hand loosely, with just enough pressure so that he wouldn't drop them, while with his right hand he whipped sections of cards out, then replaced them onto the desk with a quickly movement of his free hand. This move wasn't particularly fancy, but there was something about the way that Jack gave the move a slight flourish with his wrist that made the shuffling fascinating to watch.

Harley grinned, her eyes on his hands. Jack's movements were almost too quick for her to follow. She was suspicious that the only reason she was able to follow his movements was that Jack was purposely slowing his gestures down for her to see.

Jack settled the cards back into a desk with a grin. “Now this one is call the Faro; it's a shuffle based on an old game that isn't generally played anymore...”

Here Jack divided half the cards. He held the cards, in his right hand he held his forefinger against the back of the stack, his other fingers circling the edges of the cards, the cards in his left he held with all his fingers on the edges. He then held the packet of cards in his right hand over the cards in his left and, so that Harley could see how it was done, he slowly weaved the cards together before he quickly bent the cards slightly and they rained down together in the center of his hand. It seemed so easy, but when Jack handed Harley the cards and she did her best to duplicate what he had just shown her, the cards all ended up on the floor.

“Darn it!” Harley snarled reaching down to pick up the cards.

Jack laughed. “Don't worry pumpkin, it takes a lot of practice. And that is a little difficult shuffle. There are at least another four I could show you. We'll find the one that is easiest for you.”

Harley wrinkled her nose at the cards before handing them back to Jack. “How did you get so good with cards anyway?”

Jack started to idly shuffle the cards, his hands moving seamlessly from one type of shuffling to the next. “Mm...I remember seeing this clown at the circus once, The Haly Circus. My parents took Bruce and me. Haly's Circus, they come through Gotham every so often.” Jack was staring at the cards in memory while he shuffled effortlessly, the cards moving through his fingers like magic as he continued. “It was amazing.” Jack's smile was gentle with nostalgia. He shrugged. “It was...I just loved it. Bruce did too, actually. I remember the two of us holding hands watching the acrobats, the elephants. They have this family of trapeze artists, the Flying Graysons...just amazing.” Jack chuckled. “Anyway, we both loved the circus so much that my parents arranged for Bruce and me to go back stage, so to speak, after taking us to nearly every show, to meet the ringmaster, to see the clowns, and the animals.” Jack watched the cards, letting himself be transported to that moment in time. “Anyway, this clown, he had some really crazy make-up, white face, red lips, dark blue hair in this sort of a blue suit, like a clown undertaker.” Jack chuckled. “He was standing in a corner doing all sorts of card tricks, really amazing stuff.” Jack shrugged. “I couldn't stop watching him. He showed us all sorts of card tricks. When I asked him to teach me, he told me the best teacher I could have would be my determination and my own imagination. So I went home and taught myself.”

Harley smiled. “How long did it take you? I mean to learn all the card tricks?”

Jack shrugged with a wink at her. “Still learning. Every time you think you know a trick, you learn something new about it.” He smiled, and then they both heard a knock at the door. Jack grinned. “Our guests have arrived!”

Harley jumped up leaning across the table to plant a kiss on Jack's nose. “I'll get it!”
Jack dropped his cards. “Oh no you won’t!”

Harley squealed and took off at a run, her bare feet smacking hard on the polished floors. Jack sprang up grabbing her around her waist with both arms. He lifted her off her feet which had Harley squealing and kicking. He unceremoniously turned and dumped her on her feet behind him taking off for the door.

“CHEATER!!” Harley yelled spinning around to come after him.

Jack was laughing but he didn’t see Harley running after him, finding a perfect spot on the floor to slide, which she did, her arms flailing for just a moment before she smacked into him, both of them sliding and stumbling to the front door where they both landed hard against the frame. Jack laughed wrapping his arms around Harley, his back against the door where he kissed her soundly on the mouth, his tongue playing with hers as he reached behind him with one hand to open the door stumbling out of the way while keeping his mouth on his wife's lips.

Frank was standing at the front of the little group, (Frost and Alice were holding several take-out Chinese bags) as Frank chirped up cheerfully. “Hey. What's the action?!?” Alex frowned seeing Jack and Harley kissing; Harley had even wrapped a leg around Jack's waist and groaned. “God you two are worse than a couple of fucking dogs in heat!” Frank snorted. “Hey, they're young—let 'em go! I remember this one time with your late mother, we were having make-up sex in a dumpster outside of Wendy's...that woman incorporated a bun into the love-making, turned it into a ball...” Here Frank demonstrated with his hands as he walked into the house, Alex and the others trailing behind him.

“Anyway...well she loved that kind of shit...so do I, but anyway....”

Alex nearly screamed. “DAD!! I don't want to hear this!! No one wants to hear this!!”

Jack, still holding Harley stopped kissing her to giggle. “Oh I don't know Alex, I think I want to hear this...”

Alex glared at Jack, pointing at him with one finger. “Don't you even fucking start.”

Everyone started to laugh. Jack snorted. “Fine, fine,” he relented. “Come on in, we have a room cleared out for practicing. Anyone want a drink?”

Frank grinned. “I'll take a drink!”

Alex groaned. “I think I'm going to need several to get through this evening.”

*

Soon their little group was sitting at the card table together, plates of Chinese food and food boxes littered the table along with a few beer bottles. Jack cracked open a fortune cookie glancing at the paper strip inside with a grin. “A smile is a passport into the hearts of others.” Then he added with a wicked grin. “…in bed.”

Harley giggled.

Jack tossed the fortune down onto the table with a smile. “All right, so how are we going to go about finding out who is screwing you?” He glanced at Frank. “And Penguin?”

Alex picked up his own fortune cookie, breaking it open and read. “He who laughs at himself never runs out of things to laugh at. Well that's fucking accurate.”
Jack grinned. “You forgot to add...“in bed.””

Alice grinned. “In bed!”

Alex tossed his fortune down onto the table as well, giving his girl a sour look that ended with him laughing before he turned his attention to Jack's question. “Well, I'm betting if you beat the fucking hell out of Val Armorrr, whoever is fixing matches will approach you. At some point, for their plan to work, they will have Val Armorrr explode with what he can really do—if they bet big on him while everyone else is betting against him...you see how it works?” Alex nodded at the affirming nods of the others around the table. “Anyway, you can agree to work with whoever approaches you, then find out exactly how big this fucking operation is: are they just after my dad and Penguin or is it something else altogether? My bet: this is some fuck head who is thinking he can make a dime off Penguin and my Dad, get the two of them in a spot where they have to fucking work for them or lose everything. I mean, that's what I would fucking do, get two big leagues like Frank the Broker here and Cobblepot, an up and coming crime boss beholden to you...gives you a certain level of power.”

Jack nodded before he glanced over at Frost, who grunted. “Alex is correct. Someone is doing some moving and shaking in Gotham. Some of my buddies on the police force think it might be some out of town mobster trying to move into Gotham, starting small like with this illegal boxing, fixing matches to set himself for a bigger payoff later, then working their way up. I'm not sure if you can actually stop it, but getting Frank here and Cobblepot out from under their thumb will put a serious dent in their plans, whoever they are.”

Frank muttered. “Might not even be a new crime boss trying to make waves. I have a lot of enemies. You tend to make them in this business. No matter that yer neutral, a lot of people don't like it.” He glanced over at his son. “Might actually be a good idea to start to pick sides son—you are going to need friends in the long run. Anyway...when life gives you lemons, you gotta take those lemons and stuff them down somebody's throat until they see yella!” Frank clapped his hands. “Now, you need to punch your fist so far up his ass, hard...not in a sexual way, but in an I'm pissed at you way...”

Alex yelped. “Whoa, whoa!! What the fuck DAD!!”

Frank took a breath. “Sorry. I mean, we need to worry about you punching the living shit out of Val first.” He grinned at Alex and Jack, turning back to his son. “Better?”

Alex groaned. “Barely.”

“If Jack kills him, we could feed Val to some pigs...” Frank mused.

“DAD, shut the fuck up already!” Alex groaned loudly.

Jack snorted in laughter as he pushed away from the table and glanced at Harley and Frost. “You two ready?”

Harley nodded and Frost stood up. “Anything you say, Boss.”

*

Soon Alex, Alice and Frank, nursing a beer, were sitting on the sidelines while Jack faced off between Harley and Frost. Frost was still wearing his slacks, but he stripped down to his bare chest and socks, stood in one corner. Harley was smiling which was distracting as she bounced on the balls of her feet in another corner, Jack facing them both.
Alex frowned. “So, why are you fighting them both at once?”

Jack smiled. “If I can take on Harley and Frost, Val is going to be a piece of cake. I don't want to just beat him—I want to eliminate him. I want to make him suffer...for fun of course, but also to make sure whoever was paying him to throw fights, drops him for me.”

Alex shrugged. “Okay then.”

Jack smiled. “All right, Harley, I'm not going to hurt you sweets. Frost—I can't promise anything.”


Harley giggled. “Okay puddin, you ready?”

Jack brought his hands up in loose, ready fists. “Ready sweets.”

Harley surprised Jack as she did a front aerial flip, a complete forward rotation of her body without touching the floor with her hands. The flip put her right in front of Jack.

She attacked him as her feet hit the floor, her arms snapping out in a series of swift punches. She was aiming for his face, but she was keeping her punches from completely connecting, stopping just short of his face or chest, not that her pulling her punches really mattered. Jack easily blocked her using his forearms to catch her punches, or he would simply knock her hands away with a slap of his hand.

Harley snarled in frustration just as Frost came rushing up from Jack's other side. Where Jack was slimmer and quick, Frost fought like a bull, counting on his strength in addition to skill. He swung his fist at Jack who didn’t duck in time. Frost's knuckles hit Jack across the jaw snapping his head to the side, bloodying Jack's bottom lip and sent him stumbling into Harley. Harley attempted to grapple Jack, both of them stumbling from a moment, but Jack grabbed her forearms and tossed her. Harley let out a yelp, but she went with the throw, rolling into a somersault and hopping back to her feet easily. She frowned slightly. While the throw was good, Jack's not wanting to hit her wasn't really helping him. He needed to know when he could throw a punch and then actually do it...She twisted her lips in annoyance. His focusing on not hurting her was hampering him. While Harley was somersaulting across the floor, Frost came at Jack, not holding back, but Jack grabbed Frost, shoving the bigger man backwards with a surprising amount of strength, followed by a punch that landed with a hard smack of fist against flesh, catching Frost across the chin.

* 

Frank yelled. “Holy SHIT! Did you see that hit?” He glanced at his son.

Alice hissed. “Damn, that looked like it hurt.”

Frank squinted one eye behind his glasses. “You're sure your pal here can really take on a professional fighter and win, Alex?”

Alex frowned watching the fight with real concern. He could see the slow smile starting to spread across Jack's face. It was a dangerous smile that Alex was starting to recognize more and more. He said nothing as he watched the three of them fight.

* 

Jack pushed Frost against the wall, knocking some of the air from Frost's lungs. He then brought his leg up, his knee slamming Frost in the diaphragm forcing the rest of the air out of Frost in a painful whoosh. Frost shoved Jack back, but before Jack could stumble out of his way, Frost grabbed Jack's
left wrist, keeping Jack close as he punched at him. Jack threw up his right arm while he struggled to
break Frost's hold on his left wrist. Harley in the mean time came rushing back over, taking just a
couple of steps before she did an aerial cartwheel. She stopped next to Jack and Frost, then with her
momentum from her cartwheel, she leapt onto Jack's back wrapping her arms and legs around him.

“I got him!!” she yelled.

Frost pulled back, finally gasping in a breath of air and letting Jack go as he stumbled under the
sudden weight of Harley.

“Harley!! Damn it! Get off!” Jack was caught between being annoyed and laughing. She giggled
and kissed his ear. “You lose puddin,” she giggled.

The group watching started to laugh with Frank yelling. “Woohoo!! Get 'im girl!”

Alex laughed. “Okay, I think you should just fucking fight Frost because Harley is just being a
distraction.”

Jack reached around and with Harley's helps spun her around until she was facing him, her arms and
legs still around him. Jack grabbed her rear hefting her up a little as Frost laughed walking over to
take a drink while wiping the sweat that had started to form on his brow.

Jack smiled at his wife giving her a quick kiss. “What are you doing? Come on you little minx, take
this seriously.'”

Harley sighed. “Fine, but Jack you are going to have to really hit me. It's pointless if you are willing
to hit Frost, but not me. Besides, pulling your punches is distracting you because you're too worried
about hurting me. I can take it—you know I can.” Harley gave him a serious look. Jack frowned, but
Harley rubbed her nose against his, planting little butterfly kisses against his lips. “Come on
puddin...you can do it.”

Jack smiled. “Fine. I'm not going to hold back, but that means you don't hold back either.”

Harley nodded. “No holding back.”

He set her down on her feet, reaching out to grab her around her neck. He grinned. “Gimme some
sugar baby.” He pulled her close for a passionate kiss that had Frank wolf whistling. Jack released
her, pressing his forehead against hers. “I love ya sweets.”

Harley giggled, her eyes bright for her husband. “I love you too puddin.”

She stepped back and gave him a hard shove. Jack stumbled back taking up a fighting pose just as
Frost walked back out onto the floor, Frost on one side, Harley on the other. Frost came out and
rushed Jack throwing out his leg and kicked Jack in the chest which sent him stumbling across the
slick floor. Jack spun around, putting his back to Frost for a second as he struggled to keep from
falling. He kept his feet under him and spun around completely as Jack spun around, he threw out his left
leg and caught Frost in the side with his shin, knocking the other man out of the way as Jack came
around to face him.

Harley did another cartwheel, twisting in the air for a moment to land on her feet next to Jack. Jack
barely avoided Harley's jabs, she used the heels of her palms to strike out swiftly at her husband,
intent upon leaving some damage. Jack twisted his body to the left, taking Harley's strikes, one under
the arm, the other against his side. He hissed, then kicked backward, his foot catching her on her
knee. Harley yelped and stumbled back from him.
Frost hadn't relented. Jack was beginning to perspire, fighting to block the punches. He twisted to the right, taking another kick from Frost on his left side. Jack hunched his shoulders while Frost swung, his strike landing on Jack's shoulder as Jack brought his arms up to protect his face. Frost let out a little sound of frustration; even a hard punch to the shoulder was not enough to take down an opponent, especially not one like Jack Wayne. Jack replied with a series of rapid strikes, his fists hitting Frost in the stomach and chest. Frost took two small steps back, created a little space and tried to kick Jack in the left side where he had already struck him, but when Frost's leg came up, Jack took a half-step forward, caught Frost's leg and punched him in the face with his right fist; a direct hit to Frost's nose.

Frost let out a curse. Jack released Frost's leg before he snapped out his foot and kicked Frost in the chest which sent the man stumble. Frost lost his footing and fell on his rear. Just as Jack was coming in to “finish” him, Harley let out a little yell. She came in low, hard, and fast, her teeth bared, grabbed her husband by the back of his pants and swung him around with a surprising show of strength. She straightened up, then relentlessly struck Jack in the head. He yelped and hunkered down to reduce the damage and protect his face from his wife's hard hits. Jack snapped a forearm out and swept it to the side, throwing one of Harley's striking arms out wide. In the moment she was open, he came up under her next strike and hit Harley with all his might in the middle of her chest.

* 

Frank whistled. “Now this is a fight!! Maybe I could start my own club when this is over...like one man against two hot women?”

Alex groaned loudly while Alice laughed, but Frank continued. “I can just see it...ooh...maybe add some baby oil! Oiled women fighting against one man...”

“Dad!!” Alex hissed.

Frank frowned pushing his glasses up. “What? I don't know how long I have left in this life, I wanna get real weird with it.”

Alice put her arm around Alex who leaned into her. “There, there Alex.”

Frank shook his head laughing. “You're so easy Alex.”

* 

The breath left her in a loud and painful rush as Jack's fist connected with her chest. Harley stumbled backwards away from Jack. He followed his punch with a kick in her stomach. Harley yelped with what air she had left and flew backward landing on her ass against the floor, sliding just a little.

Frost was back up and came at Jack's now exposed back. Jack turned just in time to catch one of Frost's hits in the shoulder. He smacked Frost's next punch away, landing hit own punch to his friend's chest. The two men exchanged a quick, almost blinding series of punches. Frost grabbed Jack by the shoulders and Jack grabbed him, the two men grappling for a few tense moments, both of them sweating and snarling until Jack swung himself under Frost's right arm coming up behind his friend. He grabbed Frost around the waist and lifted the big man off his feet twisting slightly as he plunged Frost back down to the floor.

Frost gasped painfully when he hit the slick hard wood floor. Jack wasted no time as he struggled to keep Frost down with a few quick jabs, but Frost broke free, surging to his feet and breaking Jack's hold on him. He turned to face Jack only to receive another punch to the face, followed by two quick punches, one on either side to his head. Jack then wrapped his hands around Frost's head, his teeth
bared as he brought his knee up, thrusting his knee into Frost's diaphragm again. Frost struggled to break Jack's hold, but Jack's assault on him was relentless. Finally, just when Frost thought his abdomen couldn't take any more, Jack released his hold on Frost's head, ending the fight with a quick side punch to Frost's cheek that whipped the large man's head around and dropped Frost to the floor.

Jack didn't have time to enjoy his win before he heard the sound of Harley doing several flips behind him, her hands and feet striking the floor clearly and hard. He turned just as she landed in front of him as snarl on her pretty face, her fists snapped out swiftly, forcing Jack to lean out of the way just barely avoiding her fists. Jack couldn't stop himself from smiling. Harley wasn't holding back. She was sweaty, a little drop of blood at the corner of her mouth, her teeth bared. And she was gorgeous.

Jack leaned to the side avoiding Harley's broad swipe, but when he came back up, he realized she had baited him; she caught him in the cheek with her other fist, snapping his head to the side.

While the two of them were fighting, Frank rushed over with Alice to help Frost stand up, walking the big man over to the side. Alice examined his face then smiled. “You're still pretty there Frost.”

Frost grinned at her and Alex muttered. “Hey!”

Alice laughed reaching out to squeeze Alex's knee. She stood. “I'll be right back—going to get a damp rag and maybe some band-aids.”

Alex nodded watching Jack and Harley fighting.

* Jack rolled in a somersault with the throw, starting to get to his feet just as Harley came at him. She dropped to her knees, the cloth of her pants allowed her to slide on the polished wood floor to slam into him. The both went down in a roll, with Harley coming over on top. She grinned down at Jack with just a little bit of blood on her teeth and a little bit of a smirk on her lips as she lashed out with her fists now that she had him in a prone position.

Jack laughed, enjoying himself as he blocked her fists, grabbed one of her arms and surged upward, flipped her to the side, rolling to get on top of her and pin her to the floor. He grinned. He had a nasty cut on his cheek that was bleeding, some blood on his lips, his hair falling in thick strands around his face, some sticking to his sweaty brow.

“God, you're beautiful,” he hissed.

Harley, a little cut on her cheek that matched Jack's, was bleeding. Loose blonde hairs stuck to her sweaty face, her own lips bloody as she giggled. “Flirt.”

She bucked at the same time that she slammed the flat of her hands into his stomach. Jack gasped in pain almost failing to roll when she flipped him. He somersaulted, coming up on his feet and turning just as Harley rushed him. Jack grinned putting his fists up, licking his bloody bottom lip. “Come on baby—come to Daddy.” He motioned with his hands at her in a come hither gesture.

Harley grinned mischievously and rushed him. They exchanged a series of quick punches both of them grinning at each other, their eyes sparkling. She lashed out hitting Jack in the face with four quick, solid strikes to his face. Jack took a moment to get his arms up to block. He swung once, a blow that struck Harley right in the mouth. She shook that hit off, blocked his next punch with a giggle.

*
Alex grimaced. “Mm...I think we should move to the fucking kitchen.”

Frank frowned. “Why? They ain't done fighting?”

Alex shared a glance with Alice who giggled and nodded. “Yeah...yeah they are, they're flirting.”

Alex muttered. “They're not fucking fighting anymore.”

Frank frowned at his son and turned back to watch Jack and Harley. Jack had grabbed Harley and threw her. She slammed her back into the wall. He rushed up and flipped her to face the wall, using his body to pin her there against the flat surface. They were both struggling. Jack to keep her pinned, Harley trying to break free of him.

Alex abruptly stood up. Frost and Alice did as well. Alex muttered. “Come on. I'll...we should...I don't know...let's go...find some...some more fucking beer!”

Alice smiled. “I'll bake a cake!”

Frank frowned. “I don't see why you guys are acting so weird.”

When he looked back over Jack had grabbed Harley's arms and had pinned them behind her back as he pressed her against the wall. They were both panting, sweating with flecks of blood on their faces...then Jack pressed his teeth into Harley's shoulder. Harley arched her head back with a moan.

Frank blinked. “Oh.”

Alex shook his head. “Man, I knew having them fight each other was a bad idea. Come on.”

Frank grinned. “God to be young again. But hey...your friend can fight!”

Alex smirked. “Yeah...Jack is a natural born killer.”

The little group hurried to the kitchen leaving Jack and Harley alone.

Jack growled softly. “Harls...my sweets.”

He pressed her arms against her lower back holding her immobile. If anyone else was in the room he had completely forgotten about them in his need to have her. He pressed his hardening erection against her backside, rubbing against the round slope of her ass. He moaned. “Harley,” he said through clenched teeth, rubbing harder against her while pressing her against the wall.

She groaned as he ran his tongue along her sweaty shoulders and up her neck catching her ear in his teeth. She closed her eyes giving herself over to just feeling, to her animal lust for her husband. She hissed, “Jack.”

He growled deep his throat. “I want you Harley.”

Harley groaned with need; her body ached for him. “Oh puddin...Jack...I need you, now.”

He released one of her arms though he held the other in a vice-like grip painfully against her back. She slammed her other palm against the wall, her fingers digging at the plaster as she arched her back and pressed her backside against him which elicited a hiss of need from her lover. Jack reached around her with his free hand; his fingers worked at the ties of her pants, desperate to have them gone. His long nimble fingers worked quickly. When he finally loosened her pants, he shoved them and her panties down, the cloth falling to her ankles. Jack quickly yanked at his own pants, pulling
on the ties, shoving both his boxers and his pants down, freeing himself with a groan of temporary release. He pressed his shaft against her, grinning at the feel of her silken skin backside against him. He slid between her cheeks rubbing against her softness which only made his erection ache more for her.

Harley groaned feeling the heat and the hardness of his erection between her cheeks, rubbing pressing. She shoved back, arching her hips with a hiss. “Jack...”

Still holding her one arm pressed against the small of her back, (Harley hissed with a mix of pain and pleasure when Jack pulled on her captured arm) Jack slid his hand between her legs and rubbed her clitoris while he continued to bite and suck against her shoulder; she was already wet which made Jack's fingers glide easily against her, rubbing, caressing...he pinched her clitoris once, gently, but it caused Harley to cry out thrusting her hips against his touch for more.

He smiled against her shoulder continuing to rub, enjoying the way she thrust her hips against his touch, until Harley was panting loudly and the fingers of her free hand convulsed against the wall. Jack's grip on her other wrist was tight, pressing that arm painfully, forcing her back to arch. Harley was sure he was going to leave bruises, but she didn't care. She just wanted him to fuck her hard, and fuck her fast, to feel him pounding against her backside, filling her with himself.

He kept rubbing his fingers against her, creating a delicious friction across her clitoris while she thrust her hips against his touch. His fingers rolled, moving in a circle, making Harley gasp and pant, grinding against his touch until she felt that warm tickle run up through her from his touch, causing her body to tense for a moment. She came with a cry, her back arcing, pressing her backside against Jack's pulsing need...

Jack hissed, pressing his lips against Harley's ear. “Yes Harls, yes...”

He stopped touching her when she was reduced to little jerks of pleasure. He grabbed the front of her sports bra, yanking it down to expose her breast, cupping one in his hand, squeezing, pinching her nipple between his thumb and fingers before squeezing again. He let go, reaching back to hold himself, rubbing the head of his penis against her, coating himself with her before he shoved into her welcoming opening.

Harley gasped when he entered her, her muscles squeezing tight around him.

Jack pressed her up against the wall, his free hand reaching up to cover her hand on the wall, their fingers threading together. He thrust into her hard and fast, forcing Harley's body up against the wall, her hard nipples brushed against the plaster, eliciting another hiss of pleasure from her.

Jack and Harley squeezed their fingers together painfully against the wall as he thrust hard enough into her that the room was filled with the sounds of their flesh smacking flesh. Jack groaned, panting, struggling for breath, his pelvis moving hard and fast, plunging himself deeply into her over and over again.

Harley tightened her grip on his fingers as her nails dug tiny grooves into the wall, stripping a little bit of the paint. She squeezed his fingers that were weaved with hers tight enough that it might leaves bruises, but Jack just squeezed back. He panted heavily. “Harls...Harley...you...you are...are so...good...God you...feel so good.”

Harley whimpered. “Oh puddin...yes...harder...”

Jack grinned, his eyes heavy with lust and love. He tightened his grip on her and thrust hard enough that he was sending vibrations along her skin. She squeezed his hand, her other hand, pinned against
her back was clenched in a fist as she came with a cry. “JACK!”

Jack’s eyes rolled. “Fuck...fu...Harley!”

They cried out together...

*

Frank chuckled. “Man, this house certainly can carry sound.”

*

The following night at Wayne Manor, Bruce walked around the bed in the small, simply decorated bedroom and tucked the blanket around Alfred who lay on the bed in a pair of striped flannel pajamas while sporting a plainly annoyed expression. Bruce's tucking him in caused the older man to groan and roll his eyes slightly. “Master Bruce, you really need to stop fussing so much. You're making me feel feeble.”

Bruce chuckled as he finished tucking in the blankets. “You are feeble. You're recovering from a heart attack.”

Alfred crossed his arms over his chest in protest. “I am not feeble Master Bruce.”

Bruce chuckled, sitting on the side of the bed and patted the older man's knee through the covers. “Just let me take care of you for once, all right? You just got home. The doctor said for you to relax, recover.”

Alfred sighed. “Fine. It does help me relax to know that you will not be going out this evening Master Bruce.”

Bruce looked a little upset about it, but he nodded. “Well, I missed going to lunch with Talia and she says she needs to talk to me. I thought a homemade meal crafted by me would be nice and I know she wanted to see you.”

Alfred smiled. “Try not to burn anything Master Bruce.”

Bruce laughed. “My cooking is not that bad!”

Alfred raised a brow. “You have many talents Master Bruce; cooking is not on that list.”

Bruce laughed. “Fine. How about I call and have something delivered?”

Alfred chuckled. “That might be for the best Master Bruce.”

Bruce chuckled. “Let's see if The Ocelot can send something over.”

“Very good Master Bruce.” Alfred nodded with a smile.

*

That same night, Ben's phone rang.

Ben was looking at himself in the mirror, combing his hair and spritzing himself with fragrance as he prepared to go out tonight. He reached over and picked up his phone on the second ring, glancing from the mirror to the phone, smiling as he recognized the number just before he hit the button. “Louis, glad you called me back.”
Louis, a tall, elegant blond man with a slight Russian accent snarled on the other end of the line. “After this, we're even. The Owls get a whiff of the fact that I helped you and I'm dead. I don't want to hear from you again after this.”

Ben chuckled while buttoning up his shirt as he continued to look at his reflection in the mirror. “Don't worry, we're even. So, you have the name and address of the man in the video?”

Louis hissed. “I do. You're lucky Ben, the man used to work at Arkham. They keep photos of all the employees in their computer files. Didn't take as long as I thought it was going to, a quick online search to match the picture found him.”

Ben frowned tilting his head slightly as he gazed at his reflection. “Used to work at Arkham? Really? How queer.”

Louis continued. “His name is Dale...”

“Look Louis, I don't really care about his name, just tell me where he is.” Ben finished buttoning his shirt, tucked it into his slacks as he turned and reached for his jacket.

Louis sounded annoyed. “You know Ben, these are real people you're messing with, with lives, families...”

Ben sighed. “Look. This Dale person isn't going to live through the night Louis...so I don't care. You have the address or not?”

“I do. He lives with his girlfriend. She had an apartment in Otisburg. I texted you the address.” Louis hissed. “Don't call me again.” With that the line went dead.

Ben smiled looking at the address on his phone before he called out. “Oh Tomaso! I think I just made your evening!”

*That same night in Otisburg, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt with a apron over the top of her outfit, Sandra was in her apartment's tiny kitchen putting together a homemade spaghetti. She was humming to herself while she cooked, happier than she had ever been in her entire life. Even with the two of them now part of an up and coming gang—criminals, she thought with a shake of her head and a smile—she was happy. She would never in a million years have guessed that she would go from being an orderly at an insane asylum to a criminal, but it was a surprisingly good fit.*

Across town, Jack climbed out of the car with Harley right behind him. Frost got out and locked up, coming to stand behind Jack and Harley, his eyes narrowed. The fight was just as crowded tonight as it had been the first night they were here. It still surprised Jack that the Gotham PD hadn't shut them down, which he supposed only showed how corrupt the police department was...participating in illegal boxing, gambling...made him wonder what else they dabbled in. He smiled thinking that Batman should perhaps stop fighting crime in the streets and just head on over to the police department instead. Harley leaned in close to Jack putting her arm around his waist. She had been tense all evening. She frowned as she asked, “Are you sure about this Jack?”

Jack wrapped his arm around her waist. “It'll be fine sweets, my little poo.” He chuckled kissing her cheek. “Help Alex's father out, take care of Penguin's favor and I get to bash a few heads. It'll be fun.”

Harley nodded, though something was bothering her still. She had confidence in Jack's abilities, but something felt off. She wasn't sure what it was but she kept having this feeling...something wasn't
right. She sighed and let Jack lead her inside.

The man at the door, Bert, saw the two of them and waved. “Hey, you two are Alex's friends right? He's inside. You go on in—he already paid for the two of you. Alex also said you're fighting tonight...that right?” The man grinned with his brows raised in question.

Jack shrugged. “I am.”

Bert nodded. “Alex said I should put some money on you. Also heard his dad was backing you...though his other fighter ain't been doing so well...but Alex vouched for you. I always trust Alex, the man knows what he's doing. Just, you better win buddy, I put a lot down.” Bert's expression was friendly, but it was clear by his eyes he wouldn't be too happy if he lost.

Jack smiled his stunning grin and patted Bert on the back. “Don't worry, your money is safe.”

Bert nodded. “Okay man, I'm trusting you. Go on in.”

Jack gave Bert a little salute and headed inside. The entire place was crowded, as they had suspected. This time music playing in the background. A fight was taking place in the center ring already; from the looks of it, just a couple of lightweights, maybe amateurs or simply new fighters. As Jack and Harley walked past the ring, one of the men, a short man with red hair, slugged the larger man he was fighting in the face, knocking the man flat out, to the wild cheering of the crowd. Jack smiled, stepped nearer to his friend and put his arms around Alex. “Hey Alex. You okay buddy!!”

Harley hugged Alice. “How are you guys?”

Alice giggled. “We have some news.”

Harley frowned at Alice, but her friend was all smiles. “What's going on?”

Alex giggled, a little snort in his laughter. “I'm gonna be a fucking Dad!!” Jack and Harley both gasped at the same time. “What?” they said together in surprise.

Alex grinned. “Alice just found out today. We are pregnant!” Alex threw his arm around Jack while leaning against Alice and Harley. “You are Harley are going to be honorary Aunt and Uncle!”

Frost, laughed. “That's fantastic. Do I get to be an honorary uncle too?”

Alex snorted. “Fuck yeah!”

A second later Frank came over grinning. “Hey, I guess you two heard the news? Grandpa Frank. Hehe!”

Harley gushed, hugging her friend tightly. “Oh Alice! Alex! That's wonderful news!”

Harley blinked back tears rapidly. She didn't want anyone to see her cry, not now, not here. She really was happy for them, but it hurt, more than she wanted to think about. She was immediately reminded of the baby she lost...her and Jack's baby. The pain, something she had put aside, twisted in her gut, in her chest, as if it had just happened. The revenge they had taken had helped...but it didn't replace the pain of their loss. That pain was mixed up with the horrors that Crane had forced on her...the sounds of crying children...a baby...wailing for her from the darkness...the eerie sound of shattered dreams, of dead possibilities.

Harley bit down hard on her bottom lip, letting the physical pain replace the mental pain that her memories were forcing on her. Suddenly the crowd of people around her was suffocating. She could
feel a well of panic developing...fear, pain, loss, depression...it all began to mixed together in an incoherent torrent of emotion....

Jack responded to his wife's distress immediately, put his arm around Harley pulling her close against his body. He wrapped his arms around her, directing her into his embrace, not making it obvious that he was comforting her as he held her tight against him. Harley's arm went around his waist. Their friends didn't notice anything unusual about the way the two of them were holding each other; but Jack's embrace was protective, holding her tight. He knew exactly what was happening with her, what she was thinking without either of them saying a word. He felt it himself. Jack knew exactly what Harley was thinking, because similar thoughts had sprung to his mind as well. He held her tightly, letting her know he understood, that they shared the same grief.

Jack thought grimly that the loss of their child; it was just another blow in a list of deaths. First his parents, then the death of his relationship with Bruce...the baby...and he had almost lost Harley. Arkham Asylum had tried to take his mind and Harley from him. But he had won. Jack pressed a kiss to Harley's forehead. He didn't need to be psychic to know what she was feeling, that loss of what could have been...what they might have had together, and how different everything could have been for them.

Neither of them said a word. They simply smiled and offered their congratulations, their arms tight around each other.

Jack took a moment to turn Harley's face toward him, his fingers on her cheek were tender. He rubbed his nose against hers and pressed his lips to her mouth. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck. The sounds of their friends and the crowd faded to the background as she returned her husband's kiss. It was them against the world. Harley and Jack against everything.

Frank clapped his hands, startling everyone. “Okay, Jack—you ready? Ready to get into the ring and show them assholes who's boss...get that little pissant who is trying to fuck up my life and fuck him back? Not in the sexual way, in the 'your pissed and I'm pissed at you' way.” Frank grinned.

Jack laughed. “I'm ready.”

* 

They had to wait for the current fight to end, which it did with the red haired man winning, though he left the ring with a broken nose and several broken teeth. Frank went up to a young woman in a tight black leather body suit and a blond bobbed hair-style who was acting as referee, at least marginally so...if the fight got too violent it was her job to step in and stop it. They exchanged words for a bit then she smiled and nodded as Frank passed her some money.

Frank was grinning when he waved Jack and the others over. With Harley at his side, Jack pushed his way toward the ring, Alex, Alice and Frost following, Jack saw Penguin on his little “throne” looking out over the proceedings. Oswald smiled at Jack when he saw him in the crowd. The two men nodded at each other then Jack turned his attention toward Frank.

Frank smiled. “Okay guys, talked to Velma there. You're up next Jack! Beat the shit out of Val...I mean I know that's the plan so whoever was paying him to throw contacts you...but beat him real good for me okay? Just like...really, really bad beating...like really bad. Like pound his ass, but not in the fun way, like in the “I really hate your ass” way.”

Frank chuckled imitating with his fists.

Alex made a face. “Is there a good way?”
Jack laughed. “Got it: beat him real bad.”

Harley grabbed Jack, her hands on either side of his face turning him to face her. She pressed her mouth to his in a kiss, then slowly opened her lips, her tongue caressing his as Jack responded grabbing her hips. They kissed passionately, sweetly for half a minute before Harley pulled back from him and pressed her forehead to his. “Be careful.”

Jack reached up to caress the sides of her throat. “I promise poo, I'll be careful.”

She smiled giving him one more kiss before she whispered. “Kick his ass, Jack.”

The crowd grew a little restless waiting for the next fight until a young man, dressed in tight skinny jeans and an equally tight t-shirt, hurried into the ring with a bull horn.

“Okay everyone, up next we have Val Armorr.” (This was accompanied by boos. Val had been fighting, only winning the fights he was told to win by whoever was paying him and losing the fights he was told to lose by whoever was paying him. The crowd didn't know this, of course, but what they could see was that Val was not a consistent fighter, yet somehow he stayed in the ring despite this.) The young man walked the makeshift ring with his bullhorn. “And fighting Val tonight is a newcomer Jack!” The young man threw his arm out flamboyantly toward Jack.

Jack had stripped away his shirt, kicked off his shoes and walked into the ring bare chested. When the crowd saw him enter the ring, a murmur reverberated through the crowd; several people recognized him as the missing brother of Bruce Wayne. Jack really didn't care...word might get back to Bruce that he had been seen, someone might even tell the gossip rags...maybe. But no one was going to want to be linked to illegal fighting and gambling so the chances were in his favor that everyone here would simply sit on the information that Bruce Wayne's baby brother was safe, sound (relatively speaking), and participating in illegal fights. No one was even using a phone...no one wanted their faces to be seen at such an illegal activity.

As Jack walked into the ring followed by cheers, wolf-whistles and yelled propositions, next came Val, dressed a bit more like a boxer in a pair of shorts, shirtless and bare foot as well. Val looked confident, though it was clear from his expression he hadn't expected this fight. Jack grinned. Good, an unknown element would throw Val off his game. Jack was confident that beating Val would be easy—and satisfying.

* 

Across from the ring near the main entrance, Ben walked in with Tomaso, the two men dressed elegantly for a night at the fights. Ben was telling Tomaso something as the don leaned in close listening intently to Ben while his eyes scanned the place, his bodyguards not too far behind him. He glanced sideways at his companion when Ben's words faltered.

Ben's eyes widened when he saw Jack in the fighting ring, naked from the waist up...Ben's mouth fell open, his heart sped up, his body responding lustfully to the sight of Jack's bared torso. Ben tugged hard on Tomaso's arm and pointed toward the ring. “Look, look, it's him!”

Tomaso looked, following Ben's outstretched hand, his eye narrowed dangerously when he saw Jack, but Ben was paying little attention to Tomaso's reaction, his gaze only on Jack, his mouth nearly watering with lust for him.

“Why's he fighting?” Ben said out loud, more musing to himself than seriously asking a question.

Tomaso shrugged. “Who cares?”
Ben giggled. “Oh, I must put a bet down on him Tomaso! I simply must!! This is going to be fantastic!”

Tomaso shrugged. “Fine my dear. Let's go place your bet if you must.”

Ben, all smiles, hurried off to place a bet. Tomaso scowled as he watched Jack, and he saw the woman with him, the blonde that Ben hated so much. Tomaso smiled thinking about what he had sent his men to do...and now thinking about the woman. Now that would get under Jack Wayne's skin...if something happened to that blonde...Tomaso licked his lips letting his mind wander to the horrible, yet satisfying things he could do to her. He may have to convince Ben to leave her be...for him.

*

Sandra opened the door without checking the apartment door peephole. As long as she had lived here in her little, quaint apartment she had never really had need to check to see who was coming to visit. She didn't usually engage the slide lock either. Sandra opened the door, a smile on her face without a second thought. She only had a moment, a beat of her heart to acknowledge that the group of men in front of her were wearing the most unsettling, creepiest masks she had ever seen, all white, nearly featureless...but with a strangely familiar oval face. For someone like her, who had lived in the city all her life, Sandra recognized the face. It was something similar to the face of a barn owl she thought...that being the only thought she had before one of the men hit her across the face with a baseball bat, instantly breaking Sandra's nose and causing her to stumble backwards into the apartment. The next strike of the bat caught her in the stomach, hitting her squarely in the diaphragm which sent Sandra stumbling. She was disoriented, her feet going out from under her. She fell to the floor, the breath knocked from her lungs in a groan of pain. The owl masked men surged into the small apartment, four of them, closing the door behind them. One of the men turned and engaged all the locks.

Dale, who was still at the sink washing the last of the dishes, had looked over just as Sandra had opened the door. He saw her being struck and his blood turned to ice. His lover, the woman he would do anything for was being hurt. He didn't have time to think, Dale simply reacted. He didn't yell, he didn't call Sandra's name; he went into action. These last few weeks with Jack and Harley had taught Dale one thing...actions do speak louder than words. He reached for the first weapon he could find, a sharp bread knife he had just cleaned. When the men hurried into the apartment, Dale rushed the first one he could, slicing at the man with the bread knife. Dale held the blade facing down to the floor the blade facing out from his body. He swung it in a diagonal slash, catching one of the masked men.

They hadn't seen him right away when they entered the apartment, which allowed Dale to get the first cut in, slicing the assailant across the shoulder and into the man's neck. The blade was sharp, but it wasn't sharp enough to cut a deep enough wound to kill. The man Dale cut let out a yelp of surprise, instinct causing him to stumble away from whatever it was that hurt him, but his comrade turned to face Dale.

Two men had grabbed Sandra forcing the big woman onto her stomach. The one with the bat hit her again, this time across her shoulders causing her to cry out in pain. She screamed, but her shout for help was cut short when one of the men holding her down punched her in the side of the face while his friend yanked her arms around to her back pulling out a pair of plastic zip ties and secured her hands. The other owl-masked man stuffed a gag into Sandra's mouth then duct taped it around her head to secure it. They were efficient in their violence, clearly practiced.

One of the other masked men rushed Dale. He tried to slice at him to keep the man away, but he
wasn't trained with a blade and the bread knife just wasn't the best weapon. Dale sliced at the man, but the owl-masked man weaved out of the way and hit Dale in the chest hard, pushing him backwards. Dale's socked feet slipped on the linoleum, going out from under him. He fell, knocking his head against the floor hard enough to daze him.

Dale groaned as two of the men rushed him and rolled him over onto his stomach. He started to fight when the man with the bat walked over and swung, striking and bloodying the side of Dale's head.

Dale blinked in shock as his hands were cuffed behind his back. He was lifted and carried into the living room where he was dropped onto the couch beside Sandra.

The masked man with the bat walked over, the other three taking a step back.

Dale blinked and groaned. “Who are you, what do you want?”

One of the masked men pulled out his phone and started to record.

The man with the bat dropped into a crouch in front of Dale. “I'm afraid we are here to send a message to Jack Wayne and his little Red Hood gang. Tomaso Panessa doesn't appreciate your little group interfering in his business.”

Dale frowned. “What are you doing to do?”

The Owl laughed softly.

* 

Jack worked his fingers back and forth, stretching them out, then cracked his knuckles before he formed his hands into fists. He then stretched his arms over his head to a chorus of whistles and leers, the fight about to begin in the next few seconds. Harley was standing on the edge of the ring watching him, Frank next to her on one side with Frost on the other, a small bandaid across his cheek. Alex and Alice were nearby, but staying back from the main action. She watched her husband warm up, doing a few quick punches at the air. She frowned in concern. When Jack turned toward her, a smile on his face, she reached out for him, leaning over the line that marked the ring motioning with her hands toward him. Jack grinned, walked over to her and took her hands in his.

“You okay Harls? ” he asked, but he had barely gotten the words about before Harley pulled him closer, kissed him hard on the mouth to additional cheers and some boos. Harley grabbed Jack, dropping his hands to wrap her hands along the the sides of his throat, her fingers spreading across his cheeks as she kissed him passionately. She just couldn't seem to shake the feeling that something was wrong tonight; there was this ball of dread in her stomach, a knot that just wouldn't go away.

Jack grabbed her, wrapped his arms around her body and pulled her up against him, lifting her off her feet while they kissed. The crowd apparently enjoyed the passionate display as their kissing was accompanied by a great deal of cheering and shouts of encouragement that drowned out those who had booed the couple.

Harley pulled away from his mouth to lay her forehead against his as she whispered. “You beat the shit out of him all right?”

Jack laughed. “I promise, just for you.”

The crowd cheered a bit as Val Armorr took up his position on the other side of the ring. He also threw a few practice punches at the air too, clearly showing that he was powerful, a strong fighter, muscles rippling. He grinned, throwing his arms up and walked his side the ring. The crowd was a
mix of cheers and boos. Jack and Harley watched the man with narrowed eyes.

That was when they both heard a voice they knew and hated call out loudly and cheerfully. “Oh come on baby, no kisses for me?”

They both turned to see Ben standing nearby with Tomaso in a position right behind the younger man, his hands on Ben's shoulders, smiling at the two of them. Jack's eyes narrowed. He glanced around the crowd, at once picking out Tomaso's bodyguards. Jack narrowed his eyes as Ben smiled.

“I put a lot of money on you baby. Make me proud.” Ben blew Jack a kiss, but it was Harley who started to go toward the smaller man with a snarl, her hands balled into fists and murder in her eyes. Jack grabbed her, wrapping his arms around her and pinning her arms to her sides before he lifted her off her feet.

Harley yelled. “LET ME GO!!!”

Frank looked confused. Harley kicked helplessly at the air, the crowd yelling and laughing having no idea what was going on. Jack hissed against her ear. “Baby...pumpkin...come on poo...stop...you can't do anything to him here, you know that. Let it go...for now. Come on, settle down.” He kissed her ear, pressing his cheek against hers. “Come on sweets, calm down baby.”

Harley spat as Ben and Tomaso turned and walked away, heading toward the bar. Harley watched them go with a rage-filled glare before she finally relaxed in Jack's embrace.

“I fucking HATE him Jack. I hate him with every fiber of my being!” she hissed.

Jack set her back on her feet turning her around to face him. “I hate him too sweets. He's tried to take you from me.” He laid a hand on her cheek. “We will kill him. I promise.” Harley nodded then kissed the palm of his hand taking a deep breath. Frank hurried over. “You two okay?”

Frost looked concerned. “Boss...you want me to...” He motioned with his head in the direction that Ben and Tomaso had gone off. Jack shook his head. “No...no it's fine. Not the right time, my friend, but Frost, keep an eye on Harley.” He turned to see Val looking slightly annoyed. Jack sneered and then said loudly, “Let's get this fight started.”

* 

Jack and Val walked to the center of the ring. A bell somewhere rang and the man with the bull horn yelled through it. “FIGHT!”

Jack and Val faced each other. Jack smiled, bouncing on his bare feet a little. Val narrowed his eyes. He motioned with his head toward Frank. “He sponsoring you too?”

Jack smiled. “Yep.”

Val frowned. “You know...he ain't doing too well. Man's going to crash and burn, you should find another sponsor.”

Jack grinned wide. “Don't you worry you pretty little head about a thing—except me.” (Penguin was leaning forward as he watched the fight, wondering briefly if he could convince Jack to fight for him beyond just finding out who was trying to screw him...to really fight. Jack looked good out there. He was handsome, which was a draw, and Cobblepot knew he could fight...he would just have to see what he could entice him with...)
Val made a few faux moves of his own. It was clear that Val had some real boxing training based on the way he weaved and dodged, the way he was following Jack's moves, but he still didn't strike out at Jack. They danced around each other, then Val took two quick jabs at Jack. Jack leaned out of the way.

Jack finally took a swing at Val, but instead of a punch he simply slapped the man across the face. Jack laughed at the shocked expression on Val's face. “Come on Val. Fight, stop dancing around, boy. You're not sure what you're suppose to do are you? Whoever is paying you didn't give you any directions did they?”

Val hissed, his mood immediately changed. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

Jack just smiled and lashed out slapping the other man across the face again. Val snarled and rushed Jack, the two men becoming entangled for a moment. Val punched Jack in the side twice as Jack held his opponent's head down, but Jack tensed his muscles, taking the hits as he struggled to hold Val, to make it hard from him to get any punches to Jack's face. Val snarled and pushed Jack away, giving himself a couple of steps space.

The crowd was cheering. Harley was watching intently, that feeling in her gut growing.

* 

Wearing one of his nice black suits, Bruce smiled at Talia as he placed a plate in front of her. She looked lovely, elegant tonight wearing a long, figure hugging grey dress, her long hair styled just perfectly. He had dated many beautiful women, but Talia still took his breath away. She smiled with amusement glancing over toward Alfred who sat on her right then down at her plate. There was a recording of light violin music playing in the background. The three of them were eating in the dining room of Wayne Manor. Bruce had brought out the good silver, some of the fine china and wine glasses. He had candles lit, as well as the crystal chandelier overhead providing light.

“What is it exactly?” she asked in her slightly accented voice, picking up her fork and poking the meat on her plate as if she were afraid it would jump up at any moment.

Bruce grinned as he set his own plate down before taking his seat, reaching for the bottle of wine that sat on the table. “Well, I'm hoping it's Chicken Scaloppini.”

Alfred chuckled. “As are we all Master Bruce.”

Bruce laughed pouring wine for Talia. “Sorry you can't have any wine Alfred.”

“Tea is perfectly acceptable Master Bruce,” Alfred said as he picked up his fork and knife. “Though I would be perfectly happy eating in my room sir.”

Bruce made a noise. “Alfred...”

Talia interrupted with a smile. “Alfred, it is a pleasure to have you here with us. Please. I would love for you to stay.”

Alfred blushed with a charitable smile. “Thank you Miss Talia.”

Bruce nodded with a smile before he spoke. “So, you are returning home soon?” Bruce asked Talia.

She smiled and nodded. “Yes, my business here in Gotham is concluded, mostly. I..I wanted to discuss something with you...about our...future.” She cut into the chicken, clearly distracted. “But...” she frowned letting her sentence drift off. Bruce took a bite glancing across the table at Alfred. Bruce
fumbled a little as he spoke. “I...maybe...”

Talia smiled. “It’s all right Bruce. After being here for a few weeks, I’ve decided that maybe this is not the time for this discussion.”

Bruce frowned staring down at his food. “Is it the food?”

Talia laughed. “No Bruce, I just feel that...you have several things here in Gotham you need to resolve, particularly your brother. You need to come to a resolution with him Bruce...it will tear you both apart far more than you think...” Bruce started to reply, but she held up her hand to stop him as she continued. “And there are your...other activities which I feel are taking precedent in your life right now.”

Bruce exchanged a glance with Alfred who shrugged almost imperceptibly cutting into his chicken. Talia continued. “What I have to discuss with you has waited this long...it can wait longer.”

Bruce reached over to her, laying his hand against her arm. “Talia, whatever you need to...”

She laid her hand over his and squeezed softly. “Bruce, I promise this can wait. When you are ready...when I am ready, I promise you will hear from me.” She leveled a small smile at him. “Now. I would like to enjoy this delicious dinner in the company of two very handsome and very fine gentlemen.”

Bruce laughed. “Well, one of us is.” He glanced over at Alfred with an amused smile.

“Well it is definitely not you Master Bruce. Despite my best efforts you still have the manners of a young rascal.”

Talia laughed. “I believe that is a quality you will be passing down.”

Bruce frowned. “What?”

She smiled. “Nothing Bruce. You know, this chicken is quite palatable.”

Alfred chuckled and agreed. “Yes, it's quite surprising.”

Bruce frowned. “You both are mean—you know that right?”

The three of them shared laughter.

*

The owl-masked man with the bat smiled while he tapped the bloody bat in his open palm. He looked over their work. The two people they had been sent to kill had been taken care of. There was blood all over the apartment, on the walls, the floor, splattered across the table, staining the couch...nearly every surface was marked in red. The couple had been beaten and mutilated such that dental records would be needed to truly identify them.

He glanced over at the man who had been filming the whole thing. “You got that? Every detail?”

The other masked man nodded. The bat-wielding man laughed. “Good, set it up here on the coffee table. I'll write the note.”

He turned to one of the other masked men. “You know the location?”

That man nodded.
The leader nodded in return. “Good. I have Mr. Panessa's note right here for you to leave at Catherine House.” He pulled out an envelope, clearly expensive paper, with a name written on the front in a flourish.

“To Jack Wayne”

*

Jack licked the blood from his lips, grinning at Val. The other man narrowed his eyes at Jack taking a swipe at him, but Jack weaved out of the way. Val hissed in annoyance, ready to follow up with another quick strike, but Jack swung, landing a hard punch to Val's left cheek, then another hit on his right, snapping the man's head one way then the other. Jack let out a roar and slammed his shoulder into Val's chest, lifting the man off his feet and threw him to the floor.

The crowd yelled, a roar of cheering went up. Harley was biting her knuckle, watching the fight, Ben temporarily forgotten. Ben was watching too, keeping himself a safe distance from Harley, secure in the arms of Tomaso while he devoured Jack with his eyes.

The two men hit the floor hard. Jack pinned Val under him, getting on top of the man, straddling him as he brought his fists down in a quick series of hard hits that struck Val in the mouth. Val's teeth cut into Jack's knuckles, but Jack didn't feel any pain. Val threw his arms up struggling to block Jack's vicious strikes. Val struck out blindly, his fist catching Jack in the chin, snapping his head back. Harley gasped biting into her knuckle as Jack fell off Val when the other man took that opportunity to buck him free. Val rose to his feet, thinking he would get Jack down on the floor, but Jack had regained his feet quickly and had his fists up.

Val tried to kick Jack, one kick landing on Jack's right side. Jack tensed his muscles taking the hit, but the second kick that Val tried to land, missed its target as Jack pivoted; Val's foot caught Jack in the thigh. Val threw another hit as his foot landed, catching Jack in the chin again and across his bottom lip snapping his head to the side painfully. Jack hopped backwards from Val with a grin that was bloody; the crimson blood dribbled down Jack's lips and off his chin. He responded with a quick series of punches to Val's face, his fists moving quickly enough that it was hard to see how many times he actually hit Val before the man stumbled away, his nose bloody, a pressure wound having opened across his left cheek and his lips bleeding badly.

The crowd was cheering wildly...calling Jack's name. Penguin grinned, taking a drag on his cigarette. He really was going to have to see if he could talk Jack into doing a little more fighting. The crowd loved him.

Harley was screaming at the top of her lungs, hopping up and down and waving her arms, garnering her own attention as she hopped, wiggled and yelled cheering her husband on. “KILL 'IM JACK!! POUND HIM PUDDIN!!”

Ben was watching with baited breath. He had wanted Jack badly before, but now...watching him sweating, bloody and beating the shit out of another man just had Ben about ready to explode! The temptation to kill Harley right now and take Jack for himself this very moment was almost too strong to ignore. If it weren't for the fact that Tomaso was with him and that he would most likely not make it out of this place alive if he killed the woman were the only things holding him back.

Jack grinned, his own teeth blood stained. Val rushed in again taking a wild, wide swing at Jack. Jack ducked under the swing and landed a brutal punch to Val's abdomen, hard enough that Val took two involuntary steps backwards. Torso shots usually didn't hurt so much, but Jack Wayne had a strength that was surprising, Val had discovered. Jack rushed him, ramming his shoulder into Val's
stomach, lifting him up off his feet before slamming the man back down to the floor again. Val gasped in pain as Jack dropped on top of him again straddling the man as he had before, but Jack was finished playing. He rained strikes down with fury.

Val brought his forearms up to block, but Jack was hitting him too quickly, and too hard until all Val could do was lie there and take Jack's attack. Velma came rushing out while the young man in the skinny jeans was yelling into the bullhorn. “We have a winner!!”

Frank started to jump around in a circle. Harley ran out onto the ring (with Frost close behind her), getting to Jack before the other woman, and hooked her arms under her husband's arms. She started to pull Jack off of Val, struggling for a moment as Jack fought her.

“Puddin!! Puddin you won!! You can stop!” Harley yelled trying to be heard over the sounds of the yelling, the cheering crowd, along with the man using the bull horn. She pulled hard on him losing her footing which caused her to land on her ass, taking Jack with her. They fell to the floor, while other people went to help the senseless Val up. Jack struggled, breaking free of Harley. He turned around, for a moment his teeth were bared in a sinister grin, she could see drops of blood on his face from his pounding on Val. His eyes were unfocused and he laughed, raising his fist...for a moment Harley stared at him a little coil of fear in her gut, but in the next second Jack blinked, seeing his wife.

“Jack?” she asked, her voice timid.

Jack laughed. “Harley!!” He wrapped his arms around her falling top of her and driving her back to the floor covering her mouth in a kiss. Harley giggled against his lips wrapping her arms around his sweating, bloody torso, kissing him in return.

* 

Ben grinned happily. “I knew he would win. I'm happy I put all that money down on him.”

Tomaso grunted in response.

Ben only laughed as he playfully patted Tomaso's arm.

* 

Later that evening, they were heading home. Frank had kissed Jack on both cheeks thanking him for his help. He said that this fight was the start of getting his ass out of the hole he was in. Even if the shadowy forces who were trying to get him under their thumb never tried to get Jack on their side, if Jack kept winning, Frank would be out of the hole in no time. Jack said nothing, but shared a look with Alex. Frank's gambling problem, one way or another, was going to have to be addressed because Jack was not simply going to become Frank's new fighter.

Jack was lying down in the back of the car, his head on Harley's lap as Frost drove them to the docks. Harley smiled down at him, stroking his hair back from his face while Jack smoked a cigarette, careful not to blow smoke in her face as he relaxed, his eyes closed enjoying the caress of her fingers along his scalp and face. He winced as the cigarette butt stuck to a cut on his lip.

Frost glanced in the rear view mirror. “That was a pretty great fight Boss.”

Jack laughed. “Thanks Frost. Did you put any money down?”

Frost chuckled. “Sure did Boss, sure did.”
Jack and Harley both laughed.

*

Later, Jack and Harley made their way up the steps of their mansion, their arms around each other. Jack grinned. “How about a bubble bath? I could really use a bubble bath.”

He chuckled. “Maybe a little...play time too...”

Harley giggled then stopped in her tracks, her eyes staring forward.

Jack frowned. “Harls?”

He followed her gaze. Taped to the door was a bloodstained envelope with Jack's name written across the front. Jack frowned, his eyes narrowing. He let go of Harley and stepped over to the envelope. He looked around with narrowed eyes, saw nothing and no one else, then pulled it off the door and opened it.

Dear Jack,

I see you have decided to take your little group of misfits and interfere in my business.

You should head to Otisburg. You have a friend there name Dale? I left you and your woman a little message, a message that should convey to you loud and clear what I do to people who interfere with my business.

You are a little fish in Gotham and you have chosen to swim in the ocean with the sharks..Well my friend, the sharks bite back.

There is blood in the water my friend.

You've been warned. You try to mess with the Panessa family again, the next message will be written in your pretty blonde companion.

Tomaso Panessa

*

Harley, who had been reading over Jack's shoulder gasped, her hand going to her mouth. “Jack...Dale and Sandra?”

Jack, his face a mask of rage, pulled out his cell phone and called Frost who answered on the first ring.

“Boss?”

Jack growled.

“I'm going to need the car.”
Face Jobs

Jack didn’t bother calling Alex. He and Alice had too much to celebrate tonight; he wasn’t going to ruin it...until he had to, which he knew would be all too soon.

Jack, Harley and Frost drove straight to Dale and Sandra’s apartment in Otisburg. Harley was quiet during the drive over, simply holding Jack’s hand in her lap. Jack’s expression was one of stone silence laced with rage that seemed to burn in his back of his eyes. He held Harley’s hand tightly in his own. Frost’s expression in the rearview mirror, after Jack had explained about the note over the phone, was grim. The set of his lips was a thin, colorless line and his brow was knitted into a scowl. When he had picked up Jack and Harley, Frost was clearly upset.

“Boss, I...I’ve heard of Panessa and all, but when I was working on the police force I had heard some rumors about Tomaso Panessa--nothing that would have pointed to this sort of behavior though.”

Jack had only muttered. “Frost, don’t worry, whatever has happened has nothing to do with you. This is all on Panessa and Ben.” He folded his arms over his chest. Harley put her arm around Jack’s shoulders. He could feel her trembling just slightly. He opened his arms to her and Harley leaned in wrapping her arms around his waist, her head against his chest as Frost drove.

The three of them arrived the apartment in Otisburg only to find the apartment building quiet. The place was mostly dark, only a few beacons of light shining out a small handful of windows. There was no doorman, the only security being a lock on the door that seperated the outside and the inside and it wasn't usually locked, not because of some misplaced trust in Gotham, but more likely due to pure laziness.

Jack, Harley and Frost went inside. The apartment building wasn't anything special, but neither was it horrible or run-down. It was just a normal apartment building like any other average apartment building in Gotham, sharing a similar look and build. The three of them headed inside and took the elevators to the floor where Sandra and Dale's apartment building was located without encountering anyone. They arrived on the correct floor and walked down to Dale and Sandra's apartment.

Frost drew his sidearm as Jack and Harley stood in front of the apartment door. Jack exchanged a look with Harley before he knocked on the door. There was no answer. He knocked a couple of more times, but still received no answer. Jack, who had brought a pair of gloves with him (he had also insisted that Harley grab a pair before they left the house), slipped on his gloves and opened the door.

Without a word, Frost walked between the two of them and entered the apartment first, his gun held ready. Jack and Harley waited outside until Frost, his voice sounding strained, hissed.

“All clear Boss.”

Jack and Harley slipped inside closing the door behind them. The room was dark when they entered, only a little light coming through the open windows at the other end of the apartment’s main room. But the smell hit them as soon as they entered the room, a thick pungent smell laced with an undertone of the metallic. The scent was thick and heavy enough that Harley could almost taste it on her tongue.

Jack reached over, found a light switch and flipped on the light. Harley let out a loud gasp, her gloved hands coming up to cover her face, her voice cracking on a sob. “Oh my God...”
The room was covered in blood splatters. Blood stained nearly every surface of the room and the furniture. The red was bright in places were the blood was still damp and tacky, but most of the blood was dry, having turned a dark brown. The apartment looked like a slaughter house--there was nowhere that Harley could look that wasn't stained in blood. Harley let out a sob and Jack pulled her into his embrace, yanking her away from the image and held her head against his chest, one hand cradling the back of her head, the other around her waist as he took in the scene before him.

Frost was pale, swallowed, and said, “Boss...”

Jack lifted Harley's head so that he could look her in the eyes. “Baby, I want you to wait outside.”

“Jack...” Harley's face was tear stained. Jack kissed her on the forehead. “Just...go outside all right? Don't look in here again.”

Harley nodded. Jack pressed his mouth against hers before he let her go. He motioned to Frost with his head and Frost headed out to stand guard over Harley. Jack walked further into the room, taking in and memorizing every detail of the murder of his friends. As he stepped closer to the bodies, he saw the phone sitting on the coffee table, a piece of paper taped to it that read only: “Play.”

Jack carefully picked up the blood covered phone and tapped the play button. On the phone, he saw the owl-masked men...watched the beating death of his friends without reaction. When the video had run its course, his hands shook in rage. Jack set the phone down. He knew exactly what the mask meant--Ben. Ben had a hand in what had happened to Dale and Sandra...Jack didn't know how, but the owl masks were clearly a silent way of telling Jack that Ben was involved.

Jack closed his eyes to center himself, his rage threatening to boil over and make him act rashly. Not only had Panessa tried to use Dale and Sandra to send a message of fear, the fucker had threatened Harley and now he knew Ben had helped.

Jack pressed his lips together in a thin white line as he pulled his gloves off and took his phone out from his coat pocket. He pushed speed dial and waited only a couple of rings before Alex answered the phone.

“Hey Jack what's up? I thought you and Harley would be celebrating or something?” Alex sounded slightly tipsy.

Jack hissed. “We have a problem.”

* 

It only took Alex, minus Alice, to show up at the apartment. Accompanying him was an an older woman, roughly around sixty or so years old. She had her blonde hair cut in a short no-nonsense style, with piercing light blue eyes, firm mouth, a pleasant face really; she looked like someone’s mother. She was dressed in a pair of black button up overalls with a black henley underneath and a blue bandana around her head.

Jack had stayed in the apartment waiting and smoking a cigarette unwilling to leave Dale and Sandra alone. (He didn’t know why, but it felt wrong for him to leave them. Maybe it was guilt he thought...he needed to work on that he thought to himself.) He heard Alex stop to speak to Harley and Frost before he entered the apartment. Jack could tell by the tone of Harley's voice that she had been crying. Jack felt a twist in his chest, but he didn't budge from his position by Dale and Sandra. He couldn’t. He had to stay where he was. He didn't know why, but it was important to him to stay by their side until the last moment.
As Alex entered, he paled visibly looking around the apartment with his mouth hanging open. When his eyes landed on the remains of Dale and Sandra, Alex put his hand to his mouth, clearly trying to stop himself from vomiting. He looked away. The woman didn't react at all to the carnage. She simply walked into the apartment carrying a couple of heavy duty white buckets filled with supplies: rubber gloves, towels and an assortment of other things. Behind the two of them followed three young men. All three of them were dressed similarly to the other woman, all blonde and judging by the looks of them, they were all related to the woman. Each of them were also carrying more supplies, and one had two body bags thrown over his shoulder.

As the group entered, the three men spread out and started to unload their supplies, setting to work without a word.

Alex glanced over at Jack. Jack nodded and the two men stepped out. The older woman put her buckets down and motioned at the young men. “Just wait to start, but get everything set up.”

She turned and followed Jack and Alex out of the apartment.

Alex leaned on his one hand against the wall breathing harshly through his mouth before he spoke. “What the fuck?”

Jack hissed. “There was a note on the door of our home, from Tomaso Panessa. He did this as a warning.”

Alex closed his eyes. “Hell of a warning.”

The woman cleared her throat, her sharp blue eyes looking between the three men and Harley with an air of irritation of someone impatient to get to work. Alex looked over at her and nodded taking another couple of deep breaths before he pushed himself upright. “Jack, this is Belinda Hook and those guys inside are her sons, Emmit, Otto, and Ross. Belinda here is a professional cleaner--she makes problems go away. Belinda, this is Jack, Harley and Frost, friends of mine.”

Belinda put her hand out to Jack. Her hand shake was firm and strong.

“Pleased to meet you,” Belinda said. “Alex has already paid me. I'll have this cleaned up in a few hours. When we're done, no one will even know what happened. It will look as if the occupants had simply stepped out. No one will ever find the bodies. We will treat your friends with respect, though.”

Harley made a sound like a little whimper. Jack frowned and pulled her close against him. She wrapped her arms around his waist and buried her face against his chest. Jack nodded to the woman. “Thank you.”

She looked between them. “If you don't need me, I'll get to work.” She eyed each of them a moment longer and added, “I suggest you all go get a stiff drink.” With that the older woman went inside and shut the door.

Jack dropped the butt of his cigarette on the floor of the hall and put it out with the heel of his shoe. “Come on. I saw a bar not too far from here.”

* 

The bar the four of them ended up at was a seedy little place called The Cooler. The inside of the bar was dark with dim yellow lights and red neon, the walls a mix of brick and fake wood panelling. There were a handful of people in the bar, a mix of old and young, men and women. There was a pool table with a few patrons having a game and a dartboard where a couple of young men were
playing darts. There were a few people sitting along the bar, a couple at a table or two and a few sitting in a couple of booths. When the four of them walked in, a few of the patrons turned to look at them, a couple of them scowled, but no one said or did anything, dismissing the small group immediately. Jack, his arm around Harley's waist, led the group over to a booth, Harley and Jack on one side, Alex and Frost on the other. Frost didn't sit. “Just tell me what everyone wants. I'll go order drinks.”

Jack muttered. “Just a bottle of whiskey and two glasses.”

Alex frowned. He had been slightly drunk when Jack called, though he was now stone-cold sober. “I'll take three--three wisemen shots.”

Frost lifted his brows in surprise at Alex, but nodded. “Be right back.”

Jack pulled out his cigarettes, lit one. Alex indicated with his head the pack. “Can I bum one?”

“Course.” Jack pulled one out for Alex and handed it to him even leaning over to light it for him.

They were all quiet while they waited for their drinks. As soon as Frost came back with the drinks, Jack took the bottle, pouring shots for him and Harley. Frost had a bottle of beer and Alex had three shots lined up in front of him, each shot was a mix of Tennessee Whiskey, Scotch Whiskey, and Tequila. Alex picked one up right away and downed it in one swallow without flinching.

Jack downed a shot, then poured another. Harley sipped at hers, letting the burn flow down her throat. Everyone was quiet for a long time, just smoking, drinking, listening to the music that was playing in the bar, The Scorpions “Winds of Change.”

Jack took a long drag on his cigarette before he finally spoke. “There was a cellphone left for me to find. It was a video of Dale and Sandra's murder.”

Harley made a small sound of exclamation, her hands going to her mouth again. Jack reached over with one hand and rubbed her back as he continued. “The men in it, the men who killed them, were wearing owl masks. Not too dissimilar to a mask we found in the basement of our house.”

Alex sat up straighter. “What the fuck? The Court of Owls?” Jack shook his head. “I'm not sure, but Ben--Ben was part of the Owls.” Jack's expression darkened with the promise of what Alex thought would be terrible retribution.

Alex started to ask how he knew, but Jack just held up a hand for him to hold his question. “Look, I know. Cobb, the caretaker at Catherine House, is part of it too. I'm going to go talk to him, then I'm going to kill him. I don't fucking care if the Owls are directly involved or not at this point; Ben is their fucking creation, their responsibility and they fucking dropped the ball. Now he is out there, hooked up with Tomaso Panessa. Both of them have gotten in my way for the last time and both of them have threatened Harley for different reasons. I won't...no, I can't let that stand. Killing Cobb will be my message to the Owls. Killing Tomaso will be my message to the rest of the mob families here in Gotham--no one messes with the Red Hood. No one.”

Alex downed his third shot and muttered. “I need another.”

Frost stood up. “I'll get it. I need another beer.”

Alex nodded to Frost, then looked at Jack from across the table. The one-armed man still looked pale. “You know killing this Cobb guy might just put the Owls on your fucking ass Jack. If they aren't now, they will be.”
Jack smiled. “I somehow don't think so and if I'm wrong, I'll just wipe them out too.” Jack chuckled. Alex didn't look as sure, but then didn't say anything else about the Owls. Instead he focused on Tomaso Panessa. “You know, to kill Panessa you are going to have to go through his fucking family. I don't think the other mob families will get involved. Panessa is low on the pole. If he is too weak to keep his territory they might just let you fucking have it and deal with you instead. OR they could swoop in and try and take it. You might be looking at a gang war Jack, you know that right? And our gang was small even before…” He blew out a breath.

Frost returned with the drinks, setting three more shots in front of Alex and two more beers down for himself. Frost, having only caught the end of the conversation, said matter-of-factly as he sipped his beer. “You talking about destroying Panessa? I'm in. That little shit isn't well-liked among the other families. I remember hearing a few things while I was a cop. The other families won't be happy, but I don't think you will get too much trouble from them unless you try to move in on their territory. Of course, you ain't going to get a seat at the table either. Alex is right though. They may let you take Panessa's territory, then come in later to try and take you down. They let you do the work, come after you--us--then they can justify to the ‘mob community’ that they look out for their own. It's all about the money and pride with them.”

Jack poured himself another shot. He picked up the glass, studying the amber liquid for a moment. “Let them. I think they'll find we won't be an easy target.” He downed the shot without expression. “I want to hire us some mercenaries. We need an armed force if we are going to wipe out Panessa. And I want to blow something up.”

Harley giggled, the first sign of anything other than sorrow since they found the note on their front door. “I like that. I want to destroy everything Tomaso loves puddin--everything.”

Jack put his arm around Harley as he put his cigarette out in the small plastic ashtray on the table. “Exactly sweets.”

Alex downed another shot. It was clear by the way he blinked slowly he was quickly on his way to becoming drunk again. “Okay Jack. I'll...I'll see what I can find out.”

Jack grinned leaning back. “Tomaso isn't going to live to regret this.”

* *

Jack called a cab for Alex, who was so drunk he could barely stand. Alex grinned up at Jack. “You know man, you’re like my fucking best friend in the world. You know that? I’ll like...ride by your fucking side to the end bro.”

Alex grinned goofily and kissed Jack on the cheek. A big wet kiss. Harley burst out laughing. “Hey!! Jack is mine!”

Alex leaned around Jack to grin at Harley. “Hey man, just sharing the love. You wanna kiss too?”

Harley giggled nearly taking Jack and Alex down as she stumbled. “Sure!!”

Alex tried to lean around to kiss her, but Jack pulled him back. “All right that’s enough you two.”

Jack leaned Harley against the wall just as the cab drove up. He struggled with Alex who kept weaving and wobbling, nearly taking Jack down with him. Jack got the door of the cab open and poured Alex in. Alex laughed. “Aw man, Alice is gonna be fucking pissed with me!”

Jack smiled. “No she won’t buddy. You just get home and get some sleep all right?”
Alex grinned with an unsteady nod. “Sure thing man, sure thing.”

Jack closed the door of the cab after giving the man money and the directions. He called Alice next.

“Hey Alice, Jack. Just wanted to let you know I just put Alex in a cab. He’s drunk. We...we found Dale and Sandra murdered.”

Alice gasped. “Oh my God. I knew something was seriously wrong when Alex left...damn.” She sighed softly. “You know who did it?”

“Yeah, yeah I do. I want you to stay safe, all right? Alex will tell you everything when he is sober. Right now you just might want to be out there to help him out of the cab.”

Alice answered softly. “No problem. Thanks Jack. You and Harley be careful.”

“Will do.” Jack hung up and walked over to pick up his wife just as Frost pulled up in the car. Jack balanced Harley as Frost jumped out of the car hurrying around to open the door for him.

Jack couldn't keep the smile off his face as he guided his very drunk wife into the back of the car. She was giggling and singing at the top of her lungs, dancing as Jack tried to put her into the car. Her antics helped him laugh as he finally got her inside and slid her into the backseat. Harley was singing the most annoying song, and somehow, despite her drunkenness, staying in tune while she sang.

“Hey, I just met you and this is crazy
But here's my number, so call me maybe
It's hard to look right at you baby
But here's my number, so call me maybe
Hey I just met you and this is crazy
But here's my number, so call me maybe
And all the other boys try to chase me
But here's my number, so call me maybe!!!!”

*

She sat up and reached forward, grabbing her husband by the front of his shirt and hauled him into the car with her, almost knocking his head against the frame of the car in her enthusiasm. Jack laughed pulling himself the rest of the way into the vehicle and brought the door closed.

Frost slipped back into the driver’s seat, chuckling as he settled in behind the wheel.

Jack sat up, lifting Harley’s legs in order to do so as he sat beside Harley. She rolled around, almost falling to the floor of the car, then reached out for the door handle. Jack grabbed her, pulling her back. “Nope, come on Harls--we're going home.”

She giggled grabbing Jack by his face and sang to him while rubbing her nose against his. Jack laughed softly, his hands going around her waist as she straddled his lap.

“Your stare was holding
Ripped jeans, skin was showin'
Hot night, wind was blowin'
Where you think you're going baby?"

Jack laughed as Frost turned leaning an arm over the seat to look at the two of them. “She going to be okay Boss?”

Jack pulled Harley against him holding her close. She snuggled and started to nibble on his ear, her teeth tugging on his ear lobe before she ran the tip of her tongue along his ear lobe.

Jack chuckled. “Yeah I think she'll be fine. You okay to drive?”

“Takes more than a few beers to get me drunk Boss. Don't worry, I'll have you two at the dock safe and sound.” Frost put the car in gear.

Jack sighed, relaxing in the back of the car as Harley's singing quieted a little and she turned her attentions to nibbling on his neck, yanking his shirt open to expose more of his skin for her teeth, tongue and lips to play with; he closed his eyes enjoying the feel of her attentions which were punctuated by little sounds of desire she made while her tongue slid across his skin. She brushed her mouth across his, her tongue tracing his lip, asking for entry. Jack lifted one hand up to cradle the back of her head. She smelled like whiskey, cigarette smoke and a twist of vanilla that was all her. The scent of her, the feel of her, made his groin tighten with need. Her body was warm and the way she kept rubbing herself against his quickly hardening erection made him hiss before plunging his tongue into her waiting mouth. After seeing the remains of Dale and Sandra, it was nice to be reminded of the good things, like his adorable drunk wife. Harley pulled away from his lips, her fingers working at the buttons of his shirt while Jack leaned his arms along the back of the seat while Harley continued to explore his neck, her fingers working at the buttons of his shirt.

* 

Jack balanced Harley while he worked to open the front door of the house. There was a chill in the air that he was keenly aware of since Harley had unbuttoned his shirt in the car all the way past his navel where only one button remained in place holding the shirt together. A fog was rolling in from the water, creating an eerie effect as they stood under the porchlight of the house. Harley had one arm wrapped around his middle, her other hand caressing his chest and down his stomach.

Jack chuckled. “All right, let’s get you inside sweets, and in bed. Daddy still has some work to do.”

Harley pouted. “You're not going over to take care of Cobb now are you?”

Jack glanced down at Harley to see her bottom lip sticking out. He sighed, getting the door open and picked her up into a bridal style carry. He stepped through the door, kicking it closed with his foot and hitting the lightswitch by the door with his elbow.

“Harley, I want…” Jack started, but she interrupted him.

“Puddin, don’t leave me alone tonight...please…” She licked his ear. “Please Jack...not tonight.”

Jack frowned as he started up the stairs. “I...I suppose it could wait 'til morning pumpkin.”

Harley smiled. “Thank you puddin...I need you tonight...I need to make love to you. I need to feel alive puddin…” Her voice broke a little. Clearly the alcohol was beginning to wear off. Harley leaned against his shoulder. “Thank you puddin.”
Jack carried her up the stairs to their bedroom, walking inside the dark room and taking her over to the bed where he gently laid her down. Harley giggled softly reaching up to grab him by the front of his shirt yanking him down with her before he could get away. Jack let himself be dragged down to the bed without fighting her, knowing she needed him to comfort her. He would enjoy the company of his wife, too. Harley rolled him over her, flipping him easily onto his back and jumping up to straddle him. She ran her hands along his chest, sliding her fingers wide as she ran her hands down to his stomach, stopping only long enough to undo the last button holding his shirt in place. She gazed down at him, her blonde hair framing her face as her blue eyes flashed in the dim light shining in from the hall.

“Promise me Jack...promise me we are going to kill every one of them,” Harley demanded softly. Her voice cracked only a little on a sob as she pressed down on him rolling her hips against his hardness she felt between her legs, her fingers pressing painfully into his chest. “Promise me we’ll make them pay for what they did.”

Jack ran his hands up her thighs, staring intently back at her. His blue eyes almost glowed with a vicious gleam. “I promise you sweets, when we’re done there won’t be a Panessa or an Owl left in Gotham. We are going to take over everything we can. They are going to be scared of us. They will tell stories about the Red Hood gang again.” Jack smiled, his fingers working on the buttons of her pants, pulling the zipper down as he spoke. “They are all going to die,” he whispered.

“They are going to suffer for what they did Harley. I swear it.” He grinned viciously, running his hands along the soft skin of her hips. The room was mostly dark, but light spilled in from the hall, a triangle of yellow light from the doorway that only reached so far into the room. The glow flowed over her skin, highlighting the soft pale hue of her flesh. Jack watched with rapt attention as she pulled off her shirt, then expertly slipped out of her bra. He reached up, sliding his hands along her hips, up to her waist, then to her breasts. He cupped her breasts in his hands, squeezing their softness, loving the weight of them in the palms of his hands.

Harley closed her eyes throwing her head back, rubbing against him, her hands spread wide across his flesh.

Harley groaned softly. “Yes puddin...kill them all...every one of them. Ahh...I’m going to make Ben suffer puddin…” Harley ground against him while Jack squeezed her breasts, pinching her nipples between his finger and thumb.

“Mm...that’s my girl...that’s my Harley-girl.” Jack purred softly. “I wanna watch you kill him.”

Harley grinned and giggled looking down on him before she slid her body down, pressing against his erection which was hurting, trapped in his pants and needing her touch. She laid down along his legs, working at the button and zipper of his slacks. She pulled the fabric back, pressing her mouth against the cotton of his boxers. Jack groaned closing his eyes, the heat of her breath transferring through the fabric and sending erotic ripples through his entire body.

She slid off the back of the bed and started to finish pulling her clothes off and kicking her shoes somewhere into the room.

“Get undressed puddin,” Harley commanded with a soft smile at him.

Jack sat up, doing what she told him, pulling off his shirt and yanking his shoes off while he watched her pull the bedding back and crawl under the sheets and blankets, the yellow light dancing across her skin. He hurriedly joined her under the covers, scooping her into his arms as soon as he was
close enough to grab her. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck, covering his mouth fully with her own and sinking down into the pillows, tugging his warm body with her. She wrapped her legs around his, rubbing against him, feeling the firmness of his muscles, the satin feel of his skin. She needed him close, needed to feel every inch of his body pressed against hers. She dragged her hands down his shoulders, grasping, squeezing, pressing the length of her body against him. Harley ran her fingers through his hair, grabbing handfuls gently in her fingers, her mouth moving over his in her need to feel his mouth, his tongue, his lips. Her kisses were desperate, pressing her mouth hard against his with no regard to his split lip or any bruises he might have; she was simply needy for his touch. Her desire to feel his hands on her, to rub her body against his and feel that soft friction was overpowering. Harley needed him to banish away the image of Dale and Sandra.

Jack kissed her with tender attention, one hand moved into her hair, holding the back of her neck, sliding into her thick gold hair. Her body flowed against his like silk on satin; he could feel every soft inch of her on his skin. Her kisses became more demanding, more needy. He obliged his wife, rolling onto his back and tugging her with him. His hands ran down her sides, over her back, traveling the curve of her spine to her ass which he grabbed, spreading his hands wide to hold as much of her soft, warm skin as possible. Jack pressed her down against his groin, taking pleasure in the feel of her skin under his hands, her breasts pressed against his chest, the taste of her tongue in his mouth. He held her tight, finding that he needed to feel her just as much as she needed him.

Harley pulled her lips away from his mouth and sat up. Jack smiled looking up at her watching her toss her hair back, the light dancing over her skin. She reached between them, holding him steady, sliding her hand up and down the length of him, her grip firm. She rubbed the head of his shaft against her, closing her eyes for a moment before she opened them again with a smile. Jack dragged his upper teeth across his bottom lip. She was so gorgeous he thought.

Harley, with her eyes glued to his, slowly, deliberately, lowered herself down on him, piercing herself with his erection. They both gasped together. Harley hissed with pleasure, the feeling of him inside her, the fullness of him. She fought the urge to start moving, to ride him hard. She took her time, lowering herself down, luxuriating in the way it felt to have him inside her. She grabbed Jack’s hands, threading her fingers with his, arching her back with a low moan.

Jack grabbed her hands in turn; reaching for her. He held on as Harley slowly took her time sliding down on him, enveloping him in her warmth. He whimpered as the slow, gradual feel of becoming surrounded by her washed over him. He squeezed her hands tightly, the expression on his face a mix of deep love and pain. She was his one flaw, his one weakness; nothing and no one could destroy him except her...his harlequin...his Achilles heel.

And he would never change that.

Harley gazed down at Jack, squeezing his hands in return, pressing down on his arms, her pelvis moving in tiny thrusts. She loved him so much. There was nothing in the world she would not do for him. Nothing. She would give her life up for his without question, she thought...anything for her puddin...

She started to roll her hips in broader motions. Jack licked his lips watching her, his face contorting in pleasure whenever she would grind a little harder. She yanked his hands up, released them to place his hands over her breasts. Jack squeezed, his eyes half-closed watching her while Harley pressed her hands down onto his flat stomach thrusting her hips forward at the same time, riding him in a slow grind, back and forth.

Harley’s hands glided up his torso. She leaned forward to run the flat of her tongue over his chin, lifting her hips up and down. Jack reached down to press his hands against the small of her back,
then slowly rolled his palms down her ass, grabbing the cheeks of her rear, wanting to keep her closer, needing to feel her pleasure while at the same time he wanted to drive himself hard and fast into her.

Jack ran his hands back up her torso, one hand grabbing the back of her neck the other around her waist again as he surprised Harley by rolling her over so that he was on top of her, yet staying inside her when he did. Harley giggled at the sudden position change.

She grasped his face between her hands, kissed him deeply. Jack cupped her face, leaning in to kiss along her neck while he rolled his hips, thrusting softly into her, making love with a deep burning passion. Harley moaned softly, dragging one foot up and down his calf, her hands caressing the skin of his shoulders. Their thrusts met each other in a slow, steady rhythm until Harley was panting, throwing her head back, her eyes closed. Jack smiled against her throat, alternating his kisses from her lips to her neck as he continued to thrust just a little harder, sliding deeply into her until Harley cried out. He hissed with pleasure as her body tightened around him, hot and wet. Her fingers dug into his shoulders, looking for a way to ground herself as her pleasure peaked; her body tensed, then broke as her orgasm washed over her, the epicenter at her groin spread out, radiating to every part of her body.

“Uhh...puddin…” Harley’s cry was a mix of pleasure and something deeper than brought tears to her eyes. Jack groaned, kissing her neck and biting her ear, then back to her mouth, demanding her attention again. His thrusting became slightly more frantic, his need to release with her, within her, building. Harley held on gasping when she came a second time, this one hard and fast, bulleting through her.

Jack moaned loudly. “Harley...uh...Harls…” He came with a heated deep gasp, his orgasm almost ripped from him. He shuddered, continuing to thrust until he was spent. Harley wrapped herself around him, kissing him sweetly, softly. Her lips covered his face then took sweet passionate kisses from his lips as her hands caressed his back. “My puddin…”

Jack smiled laying his head against her collar, stroking the side of her face with the back of his fingers. “My Harley,” he whispered in return. The next morning Jack was sitting at the table, dressed in a pair of black jeans and a white dress shirt, his hair slicked back with a pleasant smile on his face as he sipped from his cup of black coffee with Harley sitting next to him. She looked adorable in a pair of pink leggings and a white sweater, her hair piled on the top of her head in a messy bun, held in place by some hair sticks. She smiled leaning over to feed him another bite of pancake. Jack chuckled around his bite. “Harley honey, you don’t have to feed me.”

Harley giggled. “I know puddin, I want to! I need to make sure you eat a good breakfast before you go to work.” “Not this time baby. Daddy needs to do this one alone, sort of a man-to-man talk, but I would like to borrow your bat.” Jack sipped his coffee.

Harley stuck her lip out. “Come on puddin, let me watch.”

Jack smiled. She stuck her lip out further batting her eyelashes until Jack laughed. “Okay fine! You can come; just stay out of the way. I don’t want you getting blood on your cute sweater.” Jack grinned as Harley clapped her hands. “Yeah!! Okay, I’ll stand way out of the way. I promise, and yes you can use my bat!”

* Cobb relaxed at the table, sipping his coffee and watching the morning Gotham news when he heard a knock at his door. Cobb frowned wrinkling his nose. He wasn’t expecting anyone. He stood up thinking that maybe it was one of the rangers from the island’s wildlife refuge. Sometimes they came over here to let him know if there were any issues, like a weak place in the stone fencing, or once there had been a case of a rabid bat that had been found and they wanted to warn him since he
was pretty much the island’s only constant resident...until the Waynes had arrived.

Cobb was thinking that had to be it, one of the rangers, when he opened the door only to be greeted by a bat across the face. The crack of wood across his jaw sent Cobb stumbling back. As he slammed against a wall, the thought that he was getting tired of opening the door to his home to be hit in the face drifted through his mind briefly only to be replaced by searing, mind-numbing pain as he realized his jaw was broken. The side of his face swelled up almost instantly.

He slid down the wall to a crouch, forcing himself back to a standing position just as Jack walked over the threshold, holding a baseball bat that he smacked against his opposite hand. Jack smiled; a smile that was vicious, all teeth, and didn’t reach his eyes. Cobb slipped down the wall until he was sitting on the floor. The pain was excruciating.

He resisted the urge to reach up and feel his face.

Jack stood over Cobb, placing the bat nonchalantly over his shoulder. “Morning Cobb. I’m here to deliver a message to your friends in the Court of Owls. Because of their inability to keep control of their little mistake, two of my dear friends are dead. Your death is going to let them know...I’m coming for them...I’m coming for all of them.” Jack giggled. “Soon, what’s left, if I leave any of them alive, will have to deal with me...I am going to rule Gotham.” Jack laughed.

Cobb pushed himself up the wall. He could feel his jaw hanging loose, the hinge disconnected and throbbing in agony. He held a hand out trying to speak. “Stop...what…” Jack smiled. “Save your breath Cobb. There is nothing you could say that is going to stop me. Besides, I really need to get this anger out and my therapist...” Here Jack looked over his shoulder and Cobb saw Mrs. Wayne standing a little behind her husband.

She waved cheerfully at the groundskeeper. “Hi!”

Jack continued. “She says I need to find constructive ways to work out my anger. This is very constructive until I can take out my anger on the real source of my rage. I would say I’m sorry but you know, I’m not really.”

Without further comment, Jack swung the bat, the head of which caught Cobb in the shoulder. Cobb let out a gargled cry of pain. Jack started to laugh as Cobb slid down the wall. He started to crawl, trying to get away from Jack, but Jack brought the bat over his head and swung it down, breaking one of Cobb’s legs. Harley clapped her hands. “You go puddin!! Batter up!!”

Cobb rolled over kicking out with his good leg, but there wasn’t enough power behind it. As he looked up at Jack he saw madness in the younger man’s eyes—madness and a hunger for violence.

Jack laughed swinging the bat again at Cobb, hitting the man in the leg he had just tried to kick Jack with, catching him in the calf, just above the ankle and snapping the leg in two. Cobb let out a strangled cry dropping back to the floor, his calf down bent at an unnatural angle.

Jack giggled. “Now tell me if this hurts!”

* 

Jack beat on Cobb for nearly ten minutes, letting his rage run its course until the man’s body was barely recognizable. The hall of the house looked like a slaughter house with blood, brains and bits of skull decorating the walls. Harley stayed in the doorway watching the whole thing with a grim expression, her eyes slightly narrowed, and no more giggles or jokes. Her own anger was a low burn, a simmer under the surface of the smile on her face, her hatred just as black as her husband’s.
Jack was covered in blood by the time he was finished, as were the walls and floor of the hallway of the little cottage.

Jack sighed stretching his arms over his head with the bat in one hand. “Well, if that doesn’t send a message I really don’t know what will sweets.”

Harley giggled. “Oh, I think it sends a perfect message puddin. I really think it does.”

Jack turned grinning. “Well, I need to go clean up and then I need to talk to Alex about hiring some mercenaries. We have a mob family to destroy.”

Harley giggled, stepped over to Jack and put her arm through his. They walked back to their house all smiles.

* 

Later that afternoon, Jack had washed and dressed in fresh clothing; black slacks, a deep, almost black, purple shirt with a black vest that had a bright green satin inner lining thrown casually over his shirt. He was smoking a cigarette while he spoke on the phone with Alex and sipping a cup of fresh coffee. “So how much would we need to hire a gang of mercs to help us take out both groups?” Jack asked while watching Harley. She was doing a series of stretches putting her rear end in the air and slowly sliding down into the splits, a cocky seductive grin on her lips as she gazed over her shoulder at Jack.

Jack grinned at her in return and mimed a kiss. Harley giggled blowing him a kiss as she bent over backwards. Jack was distracted momentarily...contortionist fantasies, he thought with a smirk.

Alex murmured with a dark tone. “Depending on how fucking many...like a group of twenty...you’re talking about five million easy, for the work they’ll need to do. So we are going to want to get a hold of five fucking million dollars, at least. I think we would want to do another fucking job, maybe two before we would have enough to hire some fucking decent mercenaries to help take down Panessa. Plus, you need to talk to the rest of the fucking gang about this...I’m not sure everyone is going to want to get involved in this...especially after what happened with Dale and Sandra.”

Jack blew out some smoke, his eyes on Harley as she rolled her body onto her hands and gracefully brought her legs up into the air. She slowly turned herself around, grinning upside down at him before she brought her legs down and stood upright.

“Fine, we’ll have a meeting. Anyone who wants out though...Alex...I can’t let them run around loose.” Jack put his cigarette out in the ashtray while watching Harley do a series of backflips. “I don’t need one of them thinking they can go to the papers or to one of the families and sell information about who I am. If they want out, we’re just going to have to deal with a retirement program that is a little more...permanent than just letting them go with a gold watch for a job well done.”

Alex was quiet for a moment then sighed. “Fuck. Yeah, you’re right. Anyway. You know...I might have an idea for how to make a lot of money fast.”

Jack chuckled as Harley did some backwards flips. “Do tell.”

“Well, Roxy called wanting to talk to you. There is a Rodin exhibit at the Gotham art museum, it’s only going to be there for the next week. Roxy said there are a few pieces there like this one...hold on, I wrote the fucking title down...” Jack could hear papers rustling then Alex’s voice again. “Okay
here it is, it’s got this fucking stupid long name, “Eve, the Large Version.” Roxy said it was like this fucking five-foot-tall Rodin bronze of a woman with folded arms hiding her face in shame. Anyway the fucker had sold at auction for $18.9 million. The buyer is lending the fucking thing for this exhibit...Roxy says she knows a guy who is willing to pay $15 million if someone gets him that fucking thing...so...fuck, if that one piece is worth that much. I know some of my clients are art collectors. If we can get our hands on some fucking pieces of art, then we could buy ourselves several fucking groups of mercs if we wanted.”

Jack laughed. “That is a perfect idea Alex!!! Make ourselves a little nest egg! I love it! And it will be fun! How do you think Frank would feel about helping me out with this since I’m helping him?”

Alex groaned. “Are you fucking serious? He’d fucking love it.”

Harley did a few cartwheels, then landed into the splits throwing her arms in the air. Jack grinned, picking up his coffee with a wink at his wife. “Get the gang together tonight for a meeting Alex. We’re gonna discuss the future of the Red Hood gang...and talk about learning to appreciate art.”

Jack hung up smiling at Harley. “Harley dear, how do you feel about getting some culture?”
Harley woke slowly, her mind unwilling to let go of the dream she had been having. In the dream she could feel the soft, smooth, wet sensation of Jack’s tongue tracing a line along the inside of her thigh followed by the soft press of his lips, his teeth brushing against her flesh. They had gone to bed naked, snuggling close and holding each other that afternoon, to take a nap before tonight's events. Jack would be fighting in Penguin’s fight club again and hopefully he might be approached this time by whoever was trying to fix the fights. If he won that is...but Harley had no doubt that Jack was going to win his fight. The following night would be their meeting with the gang. Jack had decided it was time to let the gang know who their leader was, who was asking them to take the next step, willing to put his own life on the line as well as theirs to take down Panessa. It was an acceptable reveal, especially since if they anyone was unwilling to participate in his planned gang war, they weren’t going to be walking out anyhow...so why not?

Her dream continued to pull at her consciousness. His hands caressed her skin using just the tips of his fingers to send delicious ripples over her skin. Delicious heat burned through her body, tightening in her groin while making her breasts feel overly sensitive, the sheet against her overly sensitive nipples was almost too much for her to bear. She moaned softly, arching her back for a stretch, pointing her toes as she stretched her legs when she felt a bite, an actual bite, then the sensual caress of Jack’s hands along her thighs.

Harley let out a startled yelp, leaning over to turn on the bedside light and throw the covers back to see Jack grinning like a cat between her legs. “Morning...or rather...evening sweets!” His smile spread across his face while his blue eyes sparkled in the dull yellow light of the lamp.

She grinned at her husband. “What are you doing? You’re supposed to be resting before we hit Penguin’s fight tonight!”

Jack continued to smile at her. “I am. I’m relaxing before the fight--just not sleeping.” Jack punctuated his response by mouthing her thigh. The press of his lips and teeth tickled, made Harley giggle and squirm. “Jack!!”

Jack laughed as he edged closer to her groin. He exhaled against her, the warmth of his breath brushed over her sensitive skin, eliciting a soft moan from Harley. “Puddin. You’re supposed to be resting…”

Jack growled, scooting up closer to drag his tongue over her, pressing the flat of his tongue against her. The tip of his tongue pressed pass her inner lips to flick against her clitoris. Harley groaned, arching her hips into his attention. Jack chuckled. The vibration of his laugh rippled over her skin. “I am relaxing sweets. Are you going to deny a man his own relaxation techniques? You are just so mean…” He giggled softly, his tongue snaking over her again.

Harley pressed her teeth into her bottom lip, arching back as he licked her again before she reached down to run her fingers through his hair. Jack looked up, his eyes raking across her naked body. He lifted his head enough to smile at her again with damp, glistening lips.

Harley giggled. “I thought athletes weren’t supposed to have sex before a big game?”

Jack laughed, pressing his lips against her and making a raspberry which had Harley squealing. “PUDDIN!!”

The vibration tickled as well as feeling...incredible. Harley gasped, wiggling her hips.
Jack laughed, then dropped his voice to a purr while wrapping his arms around her thighs. “Mm...If I don’t have sex with my woman before beating the crap out of some stranger, then I will definitely perform badly tonight. You wouldn’t deny me my training, now would you?” Jack punctuated his sentence by slowly easing his tongue against her, his blue eyes glued to her own lighter blue eyes while his tongue stroked against her, warm and wet, with just the right amount of pressure that Harley tightened her grip in his hair with a loud groan.

“Oh...oh no puddin...never...you...you do whatever you need to so...oh golly...whatever you need to do puddin so you can beat the crap out of whoever...uhh...” Her breath came out in a shudder, her lips trembling as Jack dove down deeper, sucking ever so lightly against her. Harley moaned and tossed her head back as her breathing slowly became heavier and heavier. She leaned up to look down at Jack, whose entire focus was on licking her. He moved his head in a slow, sensual rhythm, lapping at her in long licks before switching to sucks and nibbles that had her gasping for breath. She leaned up, looking down on him before she threw her head back against the pillows with a cry as she came. Her fingers tightened in his hair trying not to and failing to force his head down on her. Jack only laughed, sucking and licking while her orgasm spiked then ebbed. He buried his mouth against his wife, sucking her, coating his lips and tongue in her taste before he finally came up for air.

Jack made his way back up her body. “How was that?”

Harley grinned at him and reached out to stroke his cheek. “You are so bad.”

Jack laughed. “That’s why you love me sweets.”

“Mm...among other reasons.” Harley chuckled. “Now come here.”

She pulled him down pressing her mouth to his, tasting herself on his lips as she kissed him. Jack growled deep in his throat, lying down on his wife with his hips nestled between her legs, feeling her warm and wet, welcoming him. He pressed his erection against her, but didn’t try to enter her yet; instead he focused his attentions on kissing her, first her mouth, then her neck, exploring the tender skin with his lips and teeth.

Harley moaned softly, her hands stroking his back feeling the slight rise of skin at his neck and shoulder where his card tattoos decorated his skin...the letter along his side, before her fingers traced the slender muscles of his body.

Jack growled against her throat. “Tell me you’re mine Harley.”

Harley reached up, her fingers tracing the small hairs at the back of his neck, caressing his hair and throat. “Yes puddin, I’m always yours. No one is ever going to tear us apart. I’ll kill them.”

Jack chuckled leaning in to kiss her. “That’s my girl. That’s my Harley.”

Jack thrust into her causing Harley to gasp. No matter how many times they made love, each time felt like something new, something special. She kissed him back hard, passionately, her hands sliding down to grip his shoulders. Jack groaned in response, rolling his hips; he thrust hard, then soft with a slight rise and press that had Harley jerking with pleasure.

Harley’s gasps were soft, yet deep. She stroked her fingers down his spine to his hips where she grabbed his rear and then arched her pelvis into his thrust.

“Oh...More puddin...more...” she groaned, her voice breathy.

Jack chuckled. “Bossy.”
But he started to move with more determination, with more power and passion. He moaned in delight; she felt so incredible, beyond any words he could utter. He thrust in a hard, passion filled rhythm holding himself up on his hands while kissing her, their tongues flicking across one another until he dropped to his elbows to cradle her head in his hands. He pressed his mouth to her neck feeling the rapid beat of her pulse against his lips.

Harley gasped, jerking when her next orgasm washed over her. It came suddenly when Jack pressed on her just right, thrusting deep and rolling his hips. “Ah, oh...JACK!” Jack rose up onto his knees, grabbing Harley in the same motion and lifted her up. She laughed in happiness and surprise wrapping her arms around her husband as he wrapped one arm around her waist, his hand spread wide across her lower back, his other hand gripped her thigh firmly, Harley knew she was going to have bruises as he thrust up and shoved her down at the same time. Harley whimpered as intense pleasure raced up from her groin like the flames of a welcome fire. Jack looked in her eyes as he thrust into her, his lips brushing against her. Harley gripped his shoulder, squeezing and rolling in time to his thrusts. Jack, his eyes never faltering from hers, moaned. “Harley...my Harls…”

Harley stared back at her lover with a moaned. “Puddin…”

They thrust together, their bodies moving together in delightful friction until Harley started to shudder she began to pant harder and heavier, her fingers digging into Jack’s flesh.

“Uh...uh...Jack...puddin…” She came hard, her orgasm rippled through her then crashed like a wave spreading out through her entire body. She cried out, arching into her pleasure holding onto Jack shoulders as if she was afraid of being torn apart and she needed Jack to ground her.

Jack held on, pressing into her as she climaxed. He didn’t just need to be buried as deeply as he could into her, he needed to feel her surrounding him. His girl, his Harley, his everything. Jack’s fingers pressed possessively into her skin, his mouth against hers until he needed to breathe, to call out her name.

“Harley...uh Harley! HARLEY!” He crushed his mouth against hers again as if he needed her breath to keep him alive, holding her down against him when he came with a burst of pleasure that raced through his entire body.

They rode their orgasms together, their thrusts slowing down until they were moving in gentle, tender waves. Jack cradled her head against his shoulder, holding her tightly.

He whispered against her hair. “Now I’m ready to take on all of Gotham.”

Harley giggled. “Someday you will puddin. Someday you are going to take all of Gotham.”

Jack chuckled and shifted a little so that he could lay her back down on the bed, easing her carefully so that their bodies wouldn’t separate from one another.

Once he had her laying on her back, again he leaned on his elbows over her smiling down at her. He played gently with her hair. “As long as you’re by my side Harley, I feel like I could take on anything, even Batman again.” He chuckled rubbing his nose against hers.

Harley giggled caressing his shoulders. “Batsy doesn’t stand a chance against you puddin.”

Together they laughed before dropping back to slow sweet kisses.

* 

Harley did a turn in the mirror to examine her new suit. Alex had sent someone over with it for her
after she and Alice had done some shopping through using skype and looking at clothing at one of the shops in Gotham. The suit she had chosen was a red and black vertical striped outfit. The jacket had wide black lapels and straight-cut shoulders, a black tank underneath and black heels. Harley, with Jack’s help, had braided her hair into a French braid down her back. She had even pinned a white silk flower to her lapel after Jack had recommended it thinking it would look pretty on her.

Jack, wearing only a pair of boxers and a white tank, came out of the bathroom running his hands through his hair and stopped to wolf whistle at his wife. “Damn Harley. I’m gonna have to beat men off of you tonight.”

Harley giggled. “You like it?”

Jack walked over turning her toward him after grabbing her hips. “Mm...Daddy very much likes…” He licked his lips. “Mm...now what are you wearing underneath?”

Harley laughed. “Stop! We’re going to be late.”

Jack laughed and kissed her before walking over to where his own clothing was laid out, a pair of tailored grey slacks, a dark blue dress shirt and a pair of brown, double monk-strapped shoes. He grabbed the slacks and started to pull them on.

“Don’t worry sweets. They’ll wait for us.”

* 

The music of Filter’s “Hey man, Nice Shot” was playing loudly, but the crowd at the fight was louder.

Jack was covered in sweat and blood, felt the tearing of skin along his knuckles as he struck his opponent across the cheek. However, the tear of the flesh across his knuckles was accompanied by the rip of skin along the man’s cheeks where Jack slugged him.

Licking his bloody lips, Jack threw another punch, but his opponent, a man named Edgar, taller than Jack and heavily muscled with long black hair, swung at Jack also. His meaty fist missed Jack’s face, but he landed his punch on Jack’s shoulder. Jack spun slightly to the side and just out of Edgar’s reached as the man reached out with his other hand trying to grab Jack. Jack moved back in close, the smoothness of his movement like a dancer, but a dancer who followed the move with three hard struck to Edgar’s chest with his right hand and a swift left hook with his other.

Edgar fell back, but he didn’t lose his footing; he just shook his head, narrowed his eyes, and took a steadying breath.

Jack chuckled and said, “You are a glutton for punishment.”

Jack moved in for a swift series of hits; one, two, three, four, with both fists in quick succession followed by Jack bouncing a step back and snapping out a kick to the taller man’s chest. Edgar took a few steps back, snarling at Jack. The thickness of his Russian accent was thicker with the blood in his mouth after he spat a broken tooth out onto the floor.

“You are a good fighter--for a little man.” He smirked.

Jack lifted a brow. “Little man?”

*
Standing between Alex and his father, with Frost behind her guarding her back, Harley put her hands to the sides of her mouth and yelled over the sounds of the crowd. “CAVE HIS FACE IN PUDDIN!!”

Frank blinked glancing around Harley’s front to share a look with his son. It was clear from Frank’s expression he was asking if Harley was always this vicious. Alex chuckled and shrugged putting his one hand up helplessly. Frank then shared a look with Frost who only grinned from ear to ear. Frank shook his head chuckling.

(Before the fight, Jack had again had to hold Harley back when they saw them, though Jack had wanted to let her go, let Harley rip their eyes out...it would have been a beautiful sight he had mused at the time, when they had seen Ben and Panessa on the other side of the ring. Panessa was speaking to the man who was Edgar’s coach, a large-bellied man with an equally large nose, and red from alcohol. Jack and Harley watched the three men with murder in their eyes. Harley was practically writhing in Jack’s grip. But Jack had been expecting them to be there. As much as he wanted to slowly brutalize and kill both men, he knew now was neither the time nor the place. Too many witnesses. It was one thing for these patrons to keep quiet about Jack Wayne participating in an illegal underground fight club, but it was something completely different to watch him commit a murder. Though the whole idea of letting those two just...exist had made his blood boil almost uncontrollably. Especially when Tomaso had smirked at him and Harley...that man hadn’t just murdered their friends--he had tortured them, all to send a message that he was superior, that he was the one in control. Jack grinned back at the man, even blowing Tomaso a kiss which had clearly irritated both men for different reasons, just before he leaned close to his wife and had whispered to Harley. “Just picture what we are going to do to Panessa and imagine what you are going to do to Ben...all in good time sweets.” He had kissed her ear, then another kiss just at the pulse in her neck. Harley had seethed, but she leaned into his kiss had nodded. “You’re right puddin…all in good time.”)

On the other side of the ring Ben stood watching the fight, dressed in brown slacks, a white shirt with a light, baby blue jacket. He was watching with rapt attention, unable to take his eyes off of Jack. Ben felt his body respond to watching Jack, the roll of sweat down his back, the viciousness of his punches, the way Jack licked the blood off his lips...Ben groaned with want. Tomaso narrowed his eyes at Ben, irritated by his occasional lover’s obsession, but his attention was divided. He was watching Jack with a smug expression and a critical eye. He had to admit, he would not want to go into a one-on-one fight with Jack Wayne; the man was skilled and savage. He held nothing back in his fight with Edgar. Tomaso was glad he had followed Ben’s advice and bet on Jack instead of Edgar.

Ben grabbed Tomaso’s hand, cooed with unbridled lust. “Oh Tomaso, I really need to have him soon. I’m not sure how much longer I can wait.” Ben grinned looking over at Tomaso. “Maybe we could share?”

Tomaso sighed. “Maybe Ben.”

Tomaso’s eyes wandered across the ring to where the blond woman, Harley--Ben had said her name was Harley--was watching Jack. Her eyes were glued to her man. Tomaso frowned watching her. She was beautiful, sexy. He could definitely see the appeal. Tomaso smirked. He would bet that Jack Wayne would not be happy if anything happened to his pretty little wife. Tomaso grinned wider, licking his lips. Maybe, if Wayne decided to get out of hand again, a visit to the wife--a private visit--might be in order. And there was always Jack Wayne’s brother Bruce. Tomaso smirked again. Jack Wayne had many weaknesses he could exploit if the murder of his friends hadn’t persuaded him to step back.
Edgar blocked Jack’s spinning kick with his forearm, then blocked again when Jack brought the same leg back around, leaning out of the way when Jack tried to snap kick the Russian in the face. Edgar swung at Jack, but he surprised the big man by grabbing his wrist and twisted the arm back before he came in close to strike Edar in the mouth with the back of one fist.

Edgar struck back, his fist connecting with Jack’s chin with enough force that Jack took several steps backwards. Edgar tried to press his advantage, rapidly moving in closer and taking several swings, alternating with his left, then right fist. Jack blocked easily with his forearms then tried to take a shot at Edgar. He over extended and Edgar moved out of the way just enough that Jack’s fist shot over the other man’s shoulder.

Edgar grabbed Jack’s wrist when his arm shot past forcing his arm down. While he held Jack, Edgar tried to throw several punches at Jack’s face. Jack, unable to break the hold on his wrist right away, leaned backward and rapidly weaved to the side to avoid the punches. Jack snapped his free hand down against Edgar’s wrist while he yanked his trapped hand backwards with enough strength to break Edgar’s hold on him.

“You’re actually putting up a fight.” Jack panted as he spoke.

Edgar smirked. “You fight well for a puny man.”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “I’m getting a little tired of your insults, you know.”

Jack rushed forward with a high kick, but Edgar ducked under the kick so that when Jack’s foot came down it landed on Edgar’s shoulder--instead of his head which Jack had been aiming for. Edgar grinned.

“You’re too slow.”

He punched Jack under the jaw, at the same time grabbing him by his pants and twisted, throwing Jack to the floor in a painful slam of body against concrete.

* 

Harley yelled. “HEY YOU BIG GORILLA GET OFF MY PUDDIN!!”

Harley started to move, but Frost grabbed her by her shoulder and pulled her back. Harley hissed like a viper. “Let me go Frost!”

Frost chuckled. “Sorry Mrs. Wayne, Boss said to keep you in one place so I’m keeping you in one place.”

Harley narrowed her eyes and stuck her bottom lip out, but she stopped trying to go and help Jack. She knew she couldn’t...wasn’t suppose to but it really upset her to see him getting thrown by the big Russian.

* 

Edgar, thinking he had the advantage, leaned over Jack about to punch the slimmer man in the face when Jack laughed and wrapped his legs around Edgar, flipping the man like he weighed nothing. Edgar went sailing over his head and Jack released him to roll to his feet with the grace of a skilled martial artist.
Jack laughed as he bounced back and forth on his bare feet. “Hey Edgar, why don’t you let me hit you with my left for awhile. Your face is crooked.”

Edgar hissed as he regained his feet. “You are not funny little man.”

Jack chuckled. “Oh I don’t know, I think I’m pretty damn funny and pretty damn pretty.”

Edgar snarled and spit and another tooth flew out. “I’ll make you not pretty. Your girl, she will want real man after this...want some of my Russian pisk when this is done.”

Jack grew still. He stared hard at Edgar, all humor gone. “Don’t you dare bring Harley into this.”

Edgar grinned, clearly not recognizing the signs that he had just crossed a dangerous line. “Why not, ‘fraid you don’t measure up, little man? That she will like riding my pisk?” Edgar, licking his bloody lips, did a pelvic thrust in Harley’s direction.

Jack narrowed his eyes, his expression deadly, all humor gone from his startling blue eyes. He moved so quickly that Edgar wasn’t prepared for him. Jack rushed forward, his arms moving swiftly, punching out from his body with all the power Jack could put into them. Edgar avoided the first couple of strikes, barely, the air misplaced by Jack punches brushed against the big man’s skin, but Jack twisted his body to the left, bringing up his right elbow to smack it into Edgar’s face, followed by the sound of bone slamming into Edgar’s teeth, knocking loose yet another.

Jack then twisted fully around, his body moving with grace and speed. (Harley was holding her breath watching her husband, her heart slamming inside her chest.) Jack grabbed Edgar's right arm, one hand on the Russian’s shoulder, the other holding Edgar’s wrist down, then yanked the trapped limb up at an awkward angle. Edgar cried out at the sudden intense pain just before Jack flipped Edgar over like the man weighed virtually nothing. Edgar hit the floor hard enough that the crowd said, “Oooh!” with sympathy. Edgar rolled to his feet, staggering out of Jack’s way while Jack, grinning viciously hissed at the big man. “You’re mistake my Russian friend, was bringing my wife up. No one touches or talks about my wife that way. No one.”

Jack rushed forward. The two men exchanged a series of punches. Jack’s fist struck Edgar, his scraped knuckles brushed along Edgar’s teeth; the impact ripped through the skin on Jack’s knuckles further while his strike loosened the already loose tooth more. Edgar threw a couple of punches, but Jack seemed to easily block his opponent’s attacks. One strike hit Jack in the shoulder, but there wasn’t enough weight behind the attack to do much damage. While Edgar struggled to block, Jack kept forcing the man backwards with a barrage of rapid, strong attacks.

The big Russian wasn’t sure, but he was beginning to think that his American opponent was now playing with him, maybe had been holding back during the entire fight. Jack kept moving and swaying like a snake, avoiding the worst of Edgar’s attacks. Edgar tried for another strike to Jack’s face, but the man just leaned over out of the way (with more speed than any man ought to have, Edgar realized in irritation), grabbed Edgar’s arm and swung the big man over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. Edgar flew trying to twist in the air, but instead he only twisted to his side. Jack spun around, the lights dancing off his sweat covered body and took two steps, closing the distance with his opponent. He brought his knee up to slam Edgar in the side of the head with his kneecap. All Edgar saw was blood and then darkness; the impact of Jack’s knee against the socket was with the right amount of pressure to shattered it, bone being driven into Edgar’s left eye as he fell and rolled across the floor.

Edgar lay on the ground unmoving. The big Russian had been the favorite to win this match. The crowd went quiet until Harley screamed at the top of her lungs. “YES!!! THAT’S MY PUDDIN!!”
Jack looked over at her with a grin. He brought his bloody fingers up to his mouth and blew her a kiss. Harley laughed pretending to catch the kiss. The crowd started to shout. “JACK! JACK!!”

As Jack started to leave the ring. Just as he was about to join the others, someone bumped into him. Jack glanced over to see a tall, lean man dressed in a black suit, balding but with long white hair that hung just past his ears. The man gave Jack a slight smile, he grabbed Jack’s hand and shoved a piece of paper into his hand before quickly turning, absorbed by the crowd within moments. Jack frowned holding onto the paper, balling it in his palm while he made his way over to Harley. The random members of the crowd were patting his back as he pushed his way to Harley, who was pushing herself toward him. As soon as she was close enough Harley threw herself into his arms, heedless of the sweat and blood.

“Oh puddin!! You did fantastic!!” Harley pressed her mouth to his, her arms wrapped tight around his shoulders, one foot coming off the ground in a classic kissing pose. Jack chuckled holding her close and returned the kiss with equal passion, his arms wrapped tight around her waist.

Frank, Frost and Alex pushed their way over with Frank yelling. “Damn Jack. You need to do this professionally man. You could make me so much money! Let me take you guys out for dinner!! There is that place called Reggie’s that had this burrito called the meat tornado...killed a man last year...awesome.”

Alex was laughing. “Damn Jack...damn.”

Keeping an arm around Harley, Jack leaned down close to the others which prompted Frost and the rest to lean in like a football huddle.

Jack held up the slip of paper. “Someone just slipped me this.”

Frank grinned. “Oh, looks like you finally got the attention of, well, whoever they are.”

Jack opened the folded paper and read it before he spoke with a grin. “Someone wants to meet me, three days from now at Paddy’s Pub on NW 21st.”

Frank rubbed his hands together. “Perfect.”

Jack grinned and squeezed Harley’s shoulders. “Well, looks like we are finally going to find out who is behind trying to get to you Frank.”

The next evening was the meeting of what was left of the Red Hood gang. Alex had arranged to rent out all of a restaurant downtown, a little hole in the wall called Baby’s Lounge. The inside of the lounge reminded one of the 1950’s. The color scheme was aqua and grey with round tables with retro-style diner chairs in dark blue, beige and pale pink. The lights that hung from the ceiling resembled large bubbles on long silver tubes. There was a curved bar, a slightly raised platform where a grand piano sat and large palm trees everywhere. Only a handful of employees were working, all people that Alex had personally hired himself, just for tonight, each one a trusted employee of Gotham’s premiere information broker.

As the remainder of the Red Hood gang, Jason, Duela, Trope and Roxy entered the lounge, each one dressed in street clothes. They were greeted by Frost, wearing his usual black suit and red tie along with the sounds of “Stardust” being played on the piano by Jack. He was dressed in black and dark purple pinstripe slacks with a matching vest, all cut to fit his trim figure, a deep purple dress shirt, lacking a tie with the first three buttons undone, the sleeves of which were rolled up part way
up his forearms along with side holsters under his arms that held his weapons. Harley had done his makeup, carefully outlining his eyes in black, applying the dark red lipstick he wore around his mouth making his lips look seductive, kissable and delicious as Harley had cooed when she had finished applying the lipstick. He had a cigarette in his mouth that created a halo of smoke around him. Sitting on the edge of the piano was Harley, blond hair styled like Veronica Lake's, her legs crossed, and the long slit in her dress having fallen away to show off her legs and her high, blood red heels. She was wearing a blood red chiffon, sleeveless evening dress with a deep plunging neckline, her makeup done in dark smokey colors with her red lips matching her husband's. Harley watched Jack while he played, his long fingers moving gracefully over the piano keys.

Sitting at the bar nursing a bloody mary was Frank, dressed in jeans and a bright red polo shirt with white tennis shoes. Sitting next to him was Alex, who had his own drink, a sazerac. He was dressed in jeans and a black t-shirt under a bright green and orange Hawaiian shirt.

The group looked around trying to see where their leader was, but it was Trope who hissed in surprise at the piano player and the beautiful blond who was laying on top of the piano gazing seductively at the piano player.

“That’s Jack Wayne!” She smacked Roxy in the shoulder.

Roxy frowned looking at the piano player, her eyes widening in surprise when she realized that Trope was correct. “What's he doing here?”

Jason leaned close to the girls. “What are you two talking about?”

“The piano player! That’s Jack Wayne, younger brother to Bruce Wayne, billionaire playboy, the golden boy of Gotham,” Trope said stunned.

“What the hell is he doing here?” Jason asked with Duela nodding along. “And who is the hot chick with him?”

Roxy frowned. “I heard he had a girlfriend before his brother locked him up in Arkham.”

Jason laughed. “So he’s one of those loonies, eh?”

Jack’s fingers danced across the keys finishing the piece with a flourish before he stood up and put his hand out to Harley. Harley took it and lightly jumped down from the piano, the two of them then walking over to the small group while holding hands.

“Welcome, welcome my sweetlings!” Jack grinned at each of them throwing his free hand into the air. “I bet you are all just in shock to see me without my red helmet, but I felt that since I’m about to ask you to do something big--bigger than what we have done before--that it was time to show our faces.”

Trope asked in shock. “You really are Jack Wayne?”

“The one and only.” Jack performed a theatrical bow, still holding Harley’s hand. Harley curtsied. “And this is my lovely wife, Harley Quinn.” Jack threw his other hand out toward Harley like a game show host introducing his costar. She smiled brightly and waved. “Hi!”

Jason stepped forward frowning. “So, you’re saying that you’re the one that has been planning and leading us this whole time?”

Jack smiled. “I am.”
Jason took a swing at Jack. Jack’s hand snapped up, grabbing the younger man’s wrist in his hand easily diverting the swing, his long fingers wrapping tightly and painfully around Jason’s wrist. Jason pushed, but Jack was unmovable.

Jack grinned at the younger man, his voice a purr. “You only get one free shot at me Jason. The next one won’t end well for you.”

Jason stared at Jack, slowly pulling his hand back. Jack opened his hand letting Jason’s arm go with a smile. His blue eyes ran over everyone else. “Anyone else want to try?”

Jason mumbled. “You really are him...the Red Hood.”

“I am. Now, why don’t all of you get a drink and we can discuss what I have in mind for our merry little gang.” Jack smiled, wrapping Harley’s arm around his and led her over to the bar. The others exchanged a look before following Jack and Harley to the bar.

*

Everyone sat around one of the larger round tables, each person had a drink in front of them. Louis Armstrong singing “La Vie en Rose” played softly in the background while Jack, his drink untouched in front of him, played with a deck of cards. Everyone was quiet watching Jack shuffle the deck in a variety of ways until he finally finished with a flourish and set the cards down. Jack glanced around at everyone, meeting their gazes individually before he spoke.

“All right kiddies, the bad news first.” Jack took a deep breath. Sandra and Dale’s deaths stung like a freshly opened wound. “Dale and Sandra were murdered.”

The group started to gasp, to protest, deny, but Trope burst into tears. Jack frowned glancing at Harley. She reached out and stroked her fingers along his jaw, her touch giving him the support and strength he needed.

Jack took a breath and continued. “We know exactly who it was...Tomaso Panessa.”

Jason took a large gulp of his drink, a large tequila sunrise, before he spoke. “So, Panessa had them killed because of that drug thing we did.” It was a statement rather than a question.

Jack pulled out a cigarette offering one to Jason who took it. Jack admired how quick the kid was, knew exactly the reason for the murders. Jason was smart, which made Jack grin. He offered a cigarette to anyone else who wanted one before putting the pack away and lighting his cigarette with the lighter Harley had given him. He leaned over and lit Jason’s as well as Duela’s and Roxy’s before he sat back down and took a long drag on his cigarette, blowing out smoke slowly. “He did.”

Jack decided not to say anything about the Owls or Ben for the moment...one big thing at a time.

Duela asked quietly. “What happened to Alice? Did they get her too? Is that why she isn’t here? And who is this new guy?” She pointed at Frank. Alex smiled. “Alice is fucking great. We’re pregnant!”

Everyone around the table gasped and clapped offering congratulations, a moment of happiness in the grim atmosphere of the news of murder.

Roxy grinned. “Oh hell, we are going to have a new little member!!”

Alex chuckled, clearly happy and proud as he pointed with his one thumb over at Frank.
“This trash man here is my Dad. Frank.”

Jason grinned. “So does this mean we are becoming a family organization? We’ll be just like one of the Gotham mob families!”

Everyone laughed.

Jack watched the smoke drift to the ceiling before he spoke again, waiting for everyone to calm back down. Harley reached under the table to grab his knee. Jack grinned at his wife before he continued. “So, that is why I asked you all here and why I’m showing you who Harley and I are now. I want to hit Panessa...I want everything that the Panessa family has to be ours...I want to eliminate them and take over their territory, to make Panessa suffer and put the Red Hood gang in their place. And I want you all with me. The Red Hood gang will be coming up in the Gotham underworld if we take out Panessa. I gathered you all here because I want to give you a chance to back out.” He took a hard drag on his cigarette, holding the smoke in his lungs before he spoke, smoke flowing from between his lips and nostrils as if Jack were a dragon. “This isn’t going to be easy either.”

Jack’s eyes traveled slowly around the table…”So—are you with me or not?”

Jack’s blue gaze traveled slowly around the room. Jason glanced at Roxy, Trope and Duela. The three young women nodded. Jason took a drag on his own cigarette then spoke. “Maybe a few weeks ago, I probably would have backed out. Dealing with the mob in Gotham is some heavy shit. But, they killed our friends and even if we said we were out, don’t mean Panessa wouldn’t still come after us. I don’t know about Roxy, Trope or Duela, but I want some payback and if anyone can take down Panessa, it’s you...Boss.” Jason grinned with a simple nod.

Jack laughed. “That’s just what I wanted to hear.” (Alex let out a small breath he had been holding.) “Now...part of my plan is to flesh out our little family some more with some mercenaries to help with our little operation: Destroy Panessa. But to do that, we need money. And to solve that little problem, we are going to rob the Gotham Art Museum.”

Haley giggled with a pat of her palm on the table. “This is going to be fun!”

* Two nights later, it was a chilly night in Gotham. Rain had started falling a few minutes earlier, a slow drizzle that made the air just wet enough to be cold and uncomfortable. Bonnie, a muscular red headed woman with startling green eyes, sat at the desk that sat near the front of the museum with her lunch while watching the monitors. She took a bite of her bologna sandwich, took a sip from her bottle of Snapple and chuckled watching Dean as he stopped in front of the Jules Joseph Lefebvre called “The Cicada” painted in 1872. The painting was of a young woman standing against a wall completely nude. Dean stopped to stare at the painting around the same time every night on his rounds. The man was like clockwork. Bonnie shook her head. The man needed to get himself a girlfriend and stop staring at paintings of naked woman, the asshole. Bonnie took another bite then grinned when she saw Walter. Walter was balding, but he had a full thick beard and mustache and a friendly smile.

“Hey Bonnie baby, you got a sandwich for me?” Walter chuckled as he came closer swinging his baton.

“You know I do sweetcakes.” Bonnie chuckled. If HR ever heard the way Walter and she bantered back and forth they would both be fired for sexual harassment, but they were good friends and it was just their way of being friends. Bonnie leaned over and came up with another sack lunch that she always brought for Walter. Walter was in the middle of a divorce, living on his own in a hotel room.
Bonnie figured if she didn’t feed him, the poor man would starve. Walter grinned with a nod as he took the offered sack lunch. “Bonnie, will you marry me?”

Bonnie laughed. Walter asked Bonnie to marry him at least twice a week; it was their little running joke. Bonnie was happily married to her husband, but if she ever were going to cheat on him, Walter would be that guy. “Sorry Walt, Harry is still too good in bed to divorce.”

Walter laughed. “Damn, oh well I’ll be happy with the sandwich.”

Walter opened the bag and pulled out the sandwich with a happy grin. Bonnie smiled at Walter and in that split second she didn’t notice the bleep in the camera feed. When she turned back, Dean was still staring at his favorite painting, while Paul, the other night guard was still stuck in the toilet. (She had told him not to get tacos from that one place down on 5th, but he didn’t listen. Served him right she thought). All was as it should be. Granted, they were down two night guards because of budget cuts, but it was quiet. Walter had just taken a bite out of his sandwich when he frowned. Outside the main doors, which were a large triple set of glass doors. A young woman...a very hot blonde in a tight black mini skirt and an equally tight red sweater and heels, was looking at a map with a short older man. She was pointing at the map then looking around while the older man said something. Bonnie glanced over at Walter frowning when she saw his attention was at the front of the museum.

The two were talking frantically at one another accompanied by hand gestures when the pretty blonde turned and saw them watching. She waved and motioned for them to come here. She put her hands together praying and pleading.

Walter frowned. “Think they’re lost?”

Bonnie took a sip of her drink. “Tourist.”

“Maybe I should go help?” Walter frowned.

Bonnie shook her head. “Let them figure it out.”

Walter gave her a troubled look. “Bonnie... come on. Lost in Gotham at night. They’ll end up in the papers.”

Bonnie sighed. “Fine, go help them.” She reached over and buzzed the doors open as Walter walked over.

* 

Trope sat in an SUV, her fingers flying over her laptop as she grinned and spoke into the mic attached to her ear piece. “Okay, one guard is going to the door. The other is still at the desk, but I took over her video feed. One guard is still in the bathroom; you can gas him easy. The other is still standing in front of that painting...dude’s been there for like five minutes! Perv.”

Alex snorted from where he sat behind the wheel of the SUV.

Jack, who was outside the employee entrance along with Roxy, Jason, Frost and Duela chuckled. “How’re Harley and Frank doing?”

Trope brought up the camera located outside the museum. “Well, her buttons just popped off her sweater and I think Frank is either choking, having a heart attack or...fuck, I have no idea what he is doing, but it was enough to get the guard at the desk to move to the front. Now's your chance! Go!”

*
Wearing his red helmet, Jack glanced at the other members of the gang who all wore their red gas masks. “Remember, just yank the paintings off the wall, break the frames and cut—carefully cut—the paintings out...without destroying them please! That’s why you have the nice knives. No statues...sorry Roxy, just too heavy. Grab as much as you can, don’t worry about getting particular artists; everything is worth money. This is like the jewelry store, smash and grab. Okay, let's go!”

Jack motioned at his crew just as he pushed in the door with his shoulder, the door easily opening since Trope had disengaged the electronic locks. Jack grinned behind his helmet. He could trust Trope to have switched off the alarms without even asking her if she had--the girl was good. While Jack’s team went to gather paintings, each one carrying a tube on their back for storing the stolen works, Jack went to take care of the two guards wandering around.

The guard stuck in the bathroom was easy.

Jack opened the bathroom door which was answered with a groan. “Bonnie is that you man? I am so sorry I didn’t listen! Could you help a dude out and roll me another roll of toilet paper?”

Jack chuckled. “Hey man. You never really appreciate what you've got until it's gone. Toilet paper is a good example.” Jack laughed while the guard on the toilet frowned in confusion. “Bonnie?”

Jack rolled his gas grenade under the stall where it hit the man’s feet. The guard inside yelled. “Bonnie? What the fuck! Bonnie there’s green smoke...it’s…”

Jack grinned behind his mask as he heard the man start to laugh. “I think diarrhea is the least of your problems friend.” Jack snickered as he left the bathroom.

Jack turned once he exited the bathroom and walked swiftly to the gallery where Trope said the other guard was still staring at the same painting being a complete “creeper” as she called him.

* 

Trope was studying the camera feeds when she saw something odd. There was movement up on the roof of the museum. She might not have noticed it if she hadn’t just switched cameras and saw a shadow move swiftly out of the way from the ledge of the building. She flipped through traffic cams trying to get a better view, but because it was the roof, she couldn’t get a clear shot, only the hint of shadows moving up above. She frowned and hit the mic. “Boss...something is going on...on the roof.”

Jack stopped just outside of the room where the “creeper” was. He pressed himself against the wall, watching the other guard. The man was staring at the painting and licking his lips. Jack frowned. Trope was correct...a real creeper. In another section of the museum, Jason, Duela, Roxy and Frost were working swiftly, breaking paintings out of their frames, rolling them and depositing the works of art into their tubes at record speed. Oddly, the guard staring at the painting hadn’t reacted to any of the noise. Granted they weren’t making much sound, but it was clear something was going on...Jack shook his head. The guard might indeed be a real perv and an idiot.

“What is it?” he asked quietly.

Trope switched her view to the cameras inside, frowning when she saw a tall, rather thin man with dark hair that hung just below his shoulders wearing a black mask across his eyes...but the rest of his outfit...Trope blinked. The man was wearing what could only be described as a green catsuit covered in black question marks...the suit left nothing to the imagination as she stared. She could see...everything. She shook her head watching as he came in through the museum’s skylight that was positioned over the bronze room, a room that displayed several expensive bronze statues by a variety
of artists. The men with him were all dressed in green. They stopped for a moment, then swiftly left the bronze room, clearly deciding that, like the Red Hood gang, the statuary was just too big to lift.

Trope sounded confused when she spoke to Jack. “Ah...some guy in a mask wearing a green body suit just broke in on the floor above. I...I think they are here to rob the place.”

Jack frowned and blinked behind the face of his helmet. “What?”

“Yeah, he is wearing a mask and a green body suit. He has like, three guys with him, all dressed in green and black.” Trope explained.

Jack snarled. “Tell Harley and Frank to get in here. I don’t appreciate someone trying to muscle in on our job!”

*

Outside, Harley, her voice pitched high, her slight Brooklyn accent becoming much more distinct and just slightly annoying (to even herself), but she made herself sound like a bit of an airhead too as she clung to the guard named Walter. “Oh please help, my father he ain’t used to doing so much walking mister and we just go so lost!”

Walter, who was looking down Harley’s shirt frowned at the chubbly little man who was holding his chest. “I think I’m gonna die!” the older man wailed. “I’m too young to die!! I ain’t banged enough whores!”

Bonnie frowned. Something about all of this felt off to her, but the woman’s father certainly looked ill; he was all sweaty and pale...and disgusting. Bonnie sighed. “Look, I’m going to go in and call you an ambulance.”

Harley grimaced. “No, no...just ah...can you get him a drink of water? I’m sure that would help.”

Walter smiled at her as she clung to his arm. “I can go get you some water.”

“Oh ain’t you just the sweetest thing! Thank you.” Harley giggled and wiggled making her breasts bounce when she heard Trope’s voice in her ear. “Hey Harley, something is going on inside. We got another criminal trying to hog in on our job. The Boss wants you and Frank inside to help. This bozo in the green leotard has at least three guys with him.”

Harley rolled her eyes. Who on earth... she answered Trope back. “On my way.”

Walter frowned. “What was that?”

“You said you could get some water?” She batted her eyelashes at him.

Walter blushed. “Yeah sure just hold on a minute.”

“Oh, can’t we come inside? It’s cold and wet out here and I’m sure it ain’t good for my Dad and...ah...I could really use a restroom.” Harley gave Walter her best smile.

“Sure I...” Walter started, but Bonnie cut him off. “Walter we are not supposed to have anyone inside the museum after hours.”

Walter turned to his partner. “But Bonnie, the man is sick. You can still call an ambulance, but we can’t leave them outside like that--what if it makes him worse?” Walter pleaded with her. Bonnie frowned, grinding her teeth. Walter was right...and what could these two do--an old man and the slip
of a girl--as long as they were with them plus Dean and Paul were here…

“Fine, just..neither of you can wander the museum and one of us has to be with you when you go to the bathrooms, okay?” Bonnie sighed, holding the doors open.

The blonde woman smiled, helping her father up. “Oh thank you! I didn’t realize how kind people in Gotham were!”

Once they were inside, Bonnie locked the doors. Harley hissed low at Frank. “Jack needs us. Let me take care of these two, then we’ll join the others.”

Frank frowned. “How you gonna do that?”

Harley smiled. “Just watch.”

She let go of Frank and spun around kicking off her heels at the same time. The slick marble floor allowed Harley to spin gracefully and swiftly, her now bare feet sliding on the marble. Walter, who had been walking beside her didn’t have time to react before Harley spun around and headbutted him in the face, breaking his nose. Walter let out a startled yelp, staggering back from Harley. She moved quickly, bring one long leg up as she twisted her body and kicked Walter in the chest. Her sudden, broad movements caused her to rip the tight mini skirt she had been wearing right up both sides exposing the pair of black lace panties she was wearing underneath and turning the mini skirt into what looked like a loincloth.

Bonnie yelped in surprise as Walter fell, hitting the floor hard enough that the air was knocked from his lungs and his head bounced. He slid backwards across the floor with the impact of Harley’s kick until he hit one of the pillars that decorated the main entrance of the museum. He didn’t move after that.

Bonnie yanked her baton off her belt, moving at Harley. “You bitch!” Bonnie snarled.

Harley turned to face the other guard, her hands balled into fists. Harley lunged at the bigger woman, inside her circle of attack, and backhanded Bonnie with her fist. Then, as Bonnie gasped in pain, her body turned away from Harley, Harley grabbed Bonnie by the shoulder and gave the larger woman two hard punches to the kidneys.

Bonnie gasped in pain and stumbled again, turned to swing her baton at Harley. Harley grinned, easily leaning back and ducking out of the way before coming back up and punching Bonnie across the face.

Frank scurried out of the way going behind the desk to watch the fight, his eyes wide, a big smile on his face. “Damn girl!!” he yelled, clapping his hands.

Bonnie took another swipe at Harley, again missing her as Harley threw herself backward into a flip with a cheerful giggle.

Harley hopped to her feet turning around and shook her head. “They really should train you guys better.”

Bonnie snarled and did the stupidest thing Harley thought the female guard could have done...she tried to rush her. Harley smiled and did a spinning kick just as Bonnie reached her. As Harley’s foot connected, the guard’s head snapped to the side hard enough that the crack of her neck was audible. Bonnie fell, crumpling to the floor. Frank laughed. “Wow...you should consider getting in the ring at the fight club too Harley. The money that would fly to watch a couple of broads fight…oh in little bikinis!...in mud...or oil...yeah...”

Harley turned, her face screwed up in a frown, her hands on her hips as she narrowed her eyes at
Frank. “I’m going to forget you said that.”

“Said what?” Frank came around from the desk glancing down at Bonnie, then taking the unconscious woman’s baton.

Harley hissed quietly, but in a stern tone. “Broad. I am not a broad.”

Frank smiled swinging the baton around. “Sorry Harley. Don’t tell Jack?”

She sighed and giggled. “Okay, deal, won’t tell Jack. Come on--let’s get going.”

She giggled and took off deeper into the museum, guided by Trope’s directions.

*

Jack walked carefully and quietly into the main gallery of the museum. Here were displayed the largest paintings in the entire museum. These paintings ranged in size from about the same height as Jack, to large paintings that covered nearly the entire wall.

Jack stopped in the arched doorway watching as three men worked to pull one of the large panel alter paintings by Jan Van Eyck down. Standing in the middle of the room watching them was the man that Trope had described wearing a green onesie covered in question marks, a black mask and holding what looked like a cane with a question mark as the crook on its top. The man in the green body suit was grinning, watching his henchmen as he said out loud.

“It smells like blue paint, pours like green paint, and it looks like a red truck. What am I?”

Jack smirked, leaning against the doorway with his arms crossed over his chest, his ankles crossed like he didn’t have a care in the world as he said out loud. “The answer is red paint. It smells like blue paint, pours like green paint, and it looks like a red truck.” Jack chuckled pointedly, moving his head up and down to indicate he was looking over the man’s clothing. “You really have a theme going there, don’t you?” The even odder thing about the green body suited man was that Jack thought his voice sounded familiar and there was something about his face. The structure that looked...it was a little bit of deja vu...like he had seen this man before, but for the life of him Jack couldn’t place where. The masked man turned swiftly to glare at Jack. He whipped his neck around so fast that Jack was surprised he didn’t give himself whiplash. “Who are you?”

Jack chuckled as he stepped into the room. No sooner had he stepped in than Harley and Frank arrived behind him. Jack glanced over his shoulder, lifting his eyebrows (though Harley couldn’t see his face) taking in her torn skirt and the most inappropriate amount of buttons unbuttoned before he turned back to the green man. “I could ask you the same thing, but, I’ll be polite and introduce myself first. We,” Jack said with a hint of a bow, “are the Red Hood gang.”

The green man was frowning at the blonde woman. She looked very, very familiar to him, but he simply couldn’t place where he had seen her before...not that it mattered right now.

“I am called The Riddler.” The man bowed dramatically with his cane.

Jack chuckled “Mm...like the name. So, it seems that you and your little gang had the same brilliant idea as my little gang. Now...what oh what shall we do about this?” Jack walked further into the room. Frank hung back, but Harley wrapped her arm around Jack’s smiling brightly and walking beside him.

Jack tilted his head toward Harley. “What say you pumpkin pie?”
Harley smiled. “Well, this museum is pretty big and there are a lot of pieces of art...I guess it would only be fair if we shared puddin.”

Riddler grinned directing his riddle toward Harley. “Had by few but treasured by all, I'm on the inside and outside and I make men fall. What am I?”

Harley frowned, then answered within seconds. “Beauty?”

The Riddler laughed. “Beauty and Brains. You, Red Hood are a lucky man. I think that we can come to an understanding, a gentleman’s agreement as it were. I and my gang are mostly interested in these very large pieces.”

Jack inclined his head. “While my gang is more interested in the small works. Good, then we are agreed. The guards are dispatched...I say we each take what we want and then skedaddle!”

Harley giggled leaning against Jack’s arms. Riddler held his hand out. “Agreed.”

Jack stepped forward and shook the man’s hand. Riddler frowned looking at Harley. “Do I know you?”

Harley tilted her head as if she were giving the question some thought. “I don’t think so.”

Riddler chuckled. “What is easy to get into, but hard to get out of?”

Harley giggled. “Trouble.”

“Exactly.” Riddler smiled. “It was a pleasure to meet you both. I do hope we meet again.”

Jack waved and motioned for Frank, the three of them leaving the Riddler and his gang to their work. Jack chuckled. “Let’s go my sweet. Time to gather the children!”

* 

It was late when Jack and Harley arrived home. Jack was carrying two pizza boxes and a plastic bag containing a pair of two liters of soda. He yawned as he carefully balanced their dinner. Harley was carrying his helmet and her shoes which she had retrieved before they left. Frost had taken the paintings, having assured Jack and Alex that he had a safe, good place to store them while Alex put out the feelers for buyers.

They walked up the steps together heading to the front door from the docks.

Harley yawned, following Jack’s yawn. “That as fun tonight,” she said with a grin.

Jack laughed. “I wish I could have seen you beat the crap out of that guard. Frank must have been impressed because Alex said he wouldn’t shut up about how gorgeous you were.” Jack bumped her hips with his as they walked. “Judging by the enticing rips in your skirt, it looks like it was a good fight.”

Harley grinned at her husband when Jack stopped. He frowned. They had arrived at the front door, but there was something sitting on the stoop. Jack looked down, his eyes narrowed. On the front step sat an envelope and a small package.

Harley made a tiny noise.

“Here.” Jack set the bag down and handed the pizzas to Harley. He walked over and nudged the box with the toe of his shoe. It was a white box wrapped with a red ribbon.
The envelope next to it looked the same as the last one he had received from Tomaso. Jack picked both items up. He examined the box, then opened it. Inside was a watch, but no note. Jack recognized the make, a JeanRichard 1681 Central Second men’s watch, with rose gold case and a red Crocodile leather watch band. Jack pulled the watch out, his lips in a thin, angry line and turned the watch over. On the back of the watch, engraved in two line shelly font:

To my dearest Jack,

You and I are meant to be.

Always,

Ben

Harley was leaning against Jack’s shoulder when she read the engraving on the back of the watch. Jack felt her stiffen.

Jack shoved the expensive watch back into the box then opened the envelope. Inside was a neatly handwritten letter.

Dear Jack Wayne,

Watching you fight the other night made me think that perhaps you are not the sort of man to take a threat without thinking of a response.

You have a very pretty woman in your corner Jack, very pretty. Long blonde hair, a gorgeous figure, she is quite stunning. It would be a shame if anything were to happen to her. Women like her, running around in the wrong crowds, usually find themselves on the receiving end of unwanted attentions. Especially if their lovers are fools.

She was quite fun to watch at your fight the other night.

Then you also have a brother…

So many weak spots.

The letter was signed, Tomaso Panessa.
Falling Down

Bruce yawned as he reached down to pick up his cup of coffee, keeping one hand on the wheel and his eyes on the road. The sound of the windshield wipers, accompanied by the sound of the rain, wasn’t helping him stay awake, though his alertness was never really a problem. Bruce had trained himself to go with very little sleep and to be alert at all times, but some days it was difficult, even for him. He was a skilled enough driver to maneuver his vehicle over a hundred miles an hour one-handed, but there was no reason to be foolish this morning, especially since he was currently not dressed as the Batman. Bruce yawned again and took a sip of the coffee, wishing the caffeine would hit his system quicker. He was not a supporter of drugs and excessive drinking, but a little caffeine never hurt anyone.

Today he had taken his newest car into work, a Ferrari 488 GTB painted a shade of blue so dark that it almost looked black unless the light reflected off of its surface just right. Alfred had teased Bruce mercilessly about having a car in a shade other than black. Bruce smiled. It was nice to see Alfred recovering so well. He hated to admit it, even to himself, but he hadn’t been sure Alfred would make it for a while. Bruce’s smile turned into a frown. He couldn’t imagine his life without Alfred...though at one time he couldn’t have imagined his life without Jack in it either. That thought hurt, a sharp stab in the chest. Bruce wished he could undo what had happened between him and Jack, wished he could embrace his brother and tell him all was forgiven, and ask for forgiveness, but he knew it was too late. That realization didn’t stop him from worrying about his brother, wondering where he was and how he was doing.

With a sigh Bruce pushed those morbid thoughts aside. He reached over and turned the volume up on the car’s stereo; the sounds of Justin Timberlake came through the speakers singing “Say Something” via a local Gotham radio station. The sound wasn’t something that Bruce usually listened to. As Bruce frowned again in thought, he mused that he didn’t really listen to a lot of music. He smiled letting himself actually enjoy the song when he saw a black car with tinted windows racing up behind him, clearly speeding through the rain. The car, a black matte Audi R8 was moving too fast, zipping in and out of traffic as it raced through Gotham. Bruce narrowed his eyes, his intuition abuzz...something was definitely wrong with that car’s driver. Bruce’s eyes wandered to the license plate and he realized there wasn’t one, which was odd, he thought. Just as the thought crossed his mind, the car switched lanes to Bruce’s left and started to speed by him. Bruce began to think to himself that he was being paranoid just a few seconds before the car twisted to the right, slamming into the side of his car accompanied by the loud clash of metal against metal. Bruce was flung to the side, the seatbelt keeping him from being thrown out of his seat, though his head struck the side window painfully. He cursed grabbing the wheel tightly as the combination of wet streets and the hard slam from the other car sent the Ferrari sliding along the road. Bruce glanced at the car, but the windows were tinted so dark he couldn’t see the driver.

Bruce struggled with the wheel, trying not to hit any other cars, fishtailed for a moment before he wrestled his vehicle back under control. The black Audi swung around, turning itself completely around in a well-executed one-eighty; whoever was driving hit the gas and the car leapt forward. Bruce had just started to turn his car, trying to avoid the head-on, but at the last moment the Audi spun around, the corner of the car crashing into Bruce, forced the Ferrari to skid backwards along the wet road. Bruce snarled as the Ferrari slid. He twisted the wheel hard, but the water was heavy enough on the street that his vehicle began to hydroplane and Bruce lost control again the car crashing into the front of a small sandwich shop, which was still closed. Bruce was flung forward, his forehead slamming against the steering wheel as the Audi sped away, disappearing into Gotham.
It was early morning. The rain outside was beginning to fall heavier, bringing a chill to the air. Jack and Harley hadn’t slept for longer than a few hours. Jack was still furious over the note and the gift...it was yet another invasion of their privacy, another indication that they were no longer safe in their home. (Though watching Harley take a hammer to the watch had been fun. She was adorable when she was murderously angry Jack thought to himself.)

Jack had called Alex as soon as they had entered the house, told him about the note from Panessa and the watch from Ben. He had told Alex he wanted him to find something, some way to strike at Panessa because no one threatened his family. But now, it was just a waiting game.

Jack smiled, content at the moment at least; he was sitting on one of the brown leather wingback chairs that occupied the main living room of the house. He was sitting sideways by the fireplace which had a fire roaring cheerily behind him, one long leg hung over one of the arms of the chair which he bounced slowly in time to the music. He was wearing a pair of pointed brown leather double monk strap shoes.

Jack smoked a cigarette, slowly blowing out a stream of smoke, or letting it drift from his lips as his blue eyes were riveted to his wife. She smiled at him as she spun around slowly.

Her husband looked particularly handsome today even if he was in a bad mood, Harley thought as she did a slow turn on the ball of her foot. The note and gift they had found last night had put him in a murderous rage, but Harley had held him, held his head against her chest until he had calmed down enough to call Alex. She had found his burst of rage both frightening and exotic. She swayed her hips to the music playing through the room.

“Love
I said real love, it's like feeling no fear
When you're standing in the face of danger
’Cause you just want it so much
A touch
From your real love
It's like heaven taking the place of something evil
And letting’ it burn off from the rush
Yeah, yeah…”

Harley smiled at Jack, running her hands down her torso watching her husband. His hair was slicked back and he was wearing a pair of slim cut taupe, double windowpane slacks with a matching vest, a dark chicory green shirt underneath and a taupe colored tie. He looked deceptively casual, slick and handsome, but she could still see the rage behind his eyes, the occasional tight twitch around those vivid blue orbs.

Harley smiled at him, swaying to the mellow sounds of Lana del Rey’s voice. The song “Cherry” played through the stereo speakers, moving over them like warm honey and sex. Harley was barefoot, wearing a simple red dress, a mini with an asymmetrical hemline and a deep V neckline...completely inappropriate for the weather, and what Jack didn’t know—yet—was that she wasn’t wearing a thing under the dress. She ran her fingers through her hair which she wore down, in loose, rich curls. She pulled her fingers upward through her hair, letting the gold locks fall slowly
while she continued to dance to the music.

“Cause I love you so much, I fall to pieces

My cherries and wine, rosemary and thyme

And all of my peaches (are ruined, bitch)

Jack was watching her intently, the smoke circling his head as his eyes raked over her. His blue eyes were predatory, seemed to glow with an intensity that sent shivers up her spine. The song finished, Jack leaned over slightly behind him to put the cigarette out in the ashtray before he sat up straight. There was a cup of coffee sitting on the table next to the ashtray which Jack picked up and took a swallow from before he motioned with his hands at Harley.

“Come here Harls,” he murmured.

Harley smiled and stepped over to her husband. He sat up with his legs wide apart and pulled her between them, his hands on her hips. He smiled then and laid his chin against her stomach and looked up at her. “You always find a way to make me smile sweets,” he said softly running his hands up the back of her bare thighs. Harley returned his smile, stroking her fingers through his hair.

“I’m glad I can help puddin.”

Jack chuckled, his hands going under the skirt of the dress and stopping in surprise when his fingers stroked her bare ass. He smirked up at her. “Well, well, well.”

Harley giggled. “I thought you might like that little surprise.”

Jack purred. “Oh indeed I do Harls, indeed I do.”

Jack reached up and cupped her rear, squeezing softly, while at the same time sitting back in the chair and tugging her with him. Harley grabbed the back of the chair and eased herself up, then straddled his lap. Jack guided her down to him, his hands traveling up to her waist. “Take it off Harls.” He purred.

Harley gave him a coy smile, reached down to tug the dress over her head, and dropped it silently to the floor next to the chair. Jack sucked in a breath with pleasure; his wife was completely naked.

“Mmm...now this is nice.” Jack ran his hands up her smooth back with just the tips of his fingers gently pressing her toward him; he started to press slow, tantalizing kisses against her bare skin, flicking his tongue out to lick, to taste her, his vanilla and honey wife. Harley moaned softly, enjoying the feel of the fabric of his slacks and vest against her bare skin as well as the warmth of his tongue.

He had just begun to suck and twirl his tongue along her hard nipples when his phone rang. Jack frowned with a glance over to the table where the phone sat next to the ashtray and his coffee. He went back to biting Harley, but the phone kept ringing.

Jack sighed. “Don’t you move,” he ordered Harley with a lopsided grin before he leaned over and picked up the phone. He frowned when he saw it was Frost calling. Harley was nibbling on his ear when Jack hissed.

“Hold up Harley...don’t move, but wait a minute.”

Harley blew out a frustrated breath, but sat back as Jack answered the call. “Jack here.”
“Boss, sorry to call so early.”

Jack frowned looking at Harley as he spoke. “It’s fine Frost--what’s up?”

“I got a call from a couple of my buddies still with the Gotham PD. It’s your brother Bruce; someone ran him off the road,” Frost said calmly. “He wasn’t hurt, but witnesses said that it was deliberate. The only thing we got was the make and color of the car, a matte black Audi, but no license plate and the car seemed to simply disappear.”

Jack’s nostrils flared. “Someone drove my brother off the road…” Jack’s voice went cold. “Panessa.”

Harley gasped bringing her hands up to her mouth in shock. “They really did go after Bruce!”

Jack nodded to her. “Was there anything else?”

Frost shook his head though Jack could not see the gesture. “Nope. Bruce is now at the police station apparently filling out a report. You really think it’s Panessa?” Frost asked clearly shocked.

“Yes. There was a note waiting here when we got back last night. He threatened Bruce and Harley if I didn’t back off,” Jack said in response, with a snarl of the last few words.

Frost asked quietly. “You ain’t going to back off are you Boss?”

Jack smiled then. “No, no I’m not.”

Jack could hear the responding smile in Frost’s voice. “Good. I’ll let you go Boss, just wanted to let you know.”

“Thanks Frost. I’ll talk to you later.” Jack hung up the phone and tossed it back onto the table. Harley frowned with concern stroking his face. “You all right puddin?”

Jack nodded, but when wrapped his arms around her tugging her naked body close to him. “You are not to ever be out of my sight Harley. Got it?”

She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and hugged him tightly pressing his head to her breasts. “I won’t puddin, I promise.”

Jack closed his eyes, resting his cheek against her shoulder and held her snugly. He didn’t say anything for a few long moments before he finally spoke. “I need to call Alex.”

Harley started to slide off his lap, but Jack grabbed her. “Stay here...please.” He smiled at her and Harley nodded. “‘Course puddin.”

Keeping one arm around her waist, Jack picked up the phone again and dialed Alex’s number. A few moments later the phone was answered. “Howie fucking do!”

Jack chuckled. “Fuck to you too Alex.”

Alex snorted. “Hey man, I was just thinking about fucking calling you. I have some Panessa news you might be interested in.”

Jack reached over to grab his pack of cigarettes, but Harley stopped him by laying a hand on his arm. She then leaned over to pick up the pack of cigarettes and the lighter herself. Jack smiled watching her, sitting naked on his lap while putting the cigarette in her mouth. She held it with the edges of her lips and flicked open the lighter. For a moment he forgot everything, his attention on her, watching
her light his cigarette for him, completely naked, beautiful, sitting on his lap, the morning light coming through the window danced across her smooth pale skin while the firelight from the fireplace caressed her skin from the other side. She was his burning desire, his obsession, he would kill for her. He smirked at himself. He had killed for her.

She lit the cigarette and took a puff before placing the cigarette between his lips as smoke slowly flowed from her lips. Jack grinned at her before answering Alex. “Frost just called me. Someone ran my brother off the road.”

Alex’s voice dropped as he replied simply. “Fuck.”

“Exactly. Bruce is fine, but Tomaso said he would go after my brother…” Jack sighed, smoke flowing from between his lips. “I guess Panessa wanted to be sure I knew he was serious.”

Alex sighed. “Well then you are going to love my news. One of my informants found out that Panessa is planning on a family meeting, all the heads of the Panessa family are getting together at one of Tomaso’s buildings. He owns a handful throughout Gotham…this is a building that Panessa bought from some asshole who was building it for Queen Enterprises, in the Upper East Side. I don’t know all the fucking details at the moment, but Queen stopped paying for the fucking building, so there’s this mostly complete fucktard of a building—thing’s like ten floors or something like that—anyway, Panessa swoops in and gets it for a fucking song. I think he’s planning on turning the building into some kind of luxury apartment building, gonna make a mint off of it, but anyway this meeting is taking place tomorrow night in this building.”

Jack grinned stroking Harley’s naked side with his free hand. “A meeting, eh?”

“Yeah, no idea what the fuck it’s about; all I know is that a fuckwad of Panessa’s men are going to be there…not sure what we can do with the information…” Alex trailed off.

“Oh…I know exactly what we can do with the information.” Jack chuckled as he laid his cigarette in the ashtray, placing both hands on Harley’s waist while he held his cellphone between his shoulder and ear. “How much dynamite can you get me in twenty-fours?” Jack asked with a grin at Harley.

Alex let out a groan, but he said. “I can get a hold of a lot more than I should be able to.”

Jack laughed. “Perfect. Let’s get the gang together and the dynamite for tomorrow night. We are going to have a good time I think.”

Alex sighed. “Jack, you are one fucking dangerous motherfucker.”

Jack laughed. “You have no idea. I’ll call you later and let you know where we will meet tomorrow night. Think you can get me blueprints for the building?”

Alex laughed. “Who the fuck you think you’re talking to Jack? I’m the king of information in Gotham. I can get you some fucking blueprints.”

Jack laughed. “I love you man.”

Alex snorted. “Love ya too buddy. Talk to you soon.”

Jack hung up and tossed the phone back onto the table. “Harls my sweet. We have twenty-fours to play with until we do something VERY fun. How on earth should we spend it?” Jack grinned at her.

Harley giggled. “I have no idea puddin.”
Jack pulled her close. “Well, I do have a few ideas.” He slid his hands down her sides and around to squeeze her rear. “How would you like to go to the Gotham Science museum? They have an indoor playground for all ages, an indoor mini golf and a 3D theater...as well as an Asian Fusion restaurant within walking distance.”

Harley giggled wrapping her arms around Jack’s neck. “Oh puddin, that sounds fantastic!”

Jack nuzzled her neck. “Mm...but first...”

He wrapped his arms around her, his hands spread wide to cover her back as he leaned her down to him catching her mouth in a long, hot passionate kiss. Harley moaned softly rubbing herself against the bulge in his slacks, smiling with gratification when Jack groaned. He lifted her up when he slid his hands down to grab her ass, lifting her so that her breasts were level with his mouth. Harley giggled and used her arms to press her breasts together. Jack glanced up at her lifting his brow with an amused expression before he blew a very loud raspberry between her breasts.

Harley squealed. “JACK!”

He chuckled. “Sorry sweets, couldn’t help it!! Your breasts are soft and squishy!”

“Squishy?” Harley tried to look offended, but she couldn’t so instead she laughed. He blew between her breasts again enjoying the sound of his wife’s laugh before he started to nibble on her soft skin, working his way over to one of her nipples where he licked her, rolling his tongue over her nipple in a slow, leisurely fashion. Harley moaned softly, a warm tickle rolled over her body as Jack switched breasts, his fingers pressing against her flesh. She rolled her hips against his hard bulge. Jack twitched and groaned at her touch. She pressed her teeth into her bottom lip giving her husband a teasing look as he started to undo his tie, pulling the cloth free to work at the button of his shirt and vest. She didn’t get everything fully undone before Jack yanked her close, a hand sliding up into her hair, grabbing a fistful of her golden mane and forcing her mouth on his while he pressed a hand against her lower back. Harley hissed with pleasure, her rolling movements against his bound shaft were steadily becoming more aggressive. Jack growled and slid his hands to her hips again and forced her down on him while he jerked up against her thrusting movements. The material of his slacks brushed against her sensitive clitoris, making Harley groan loudly. She grabbed his shoulders and started to thrust against him. Jack pulled on one of her nipples with his lips, chuckled as he whispered, his hot breath brushing over her skin, another caress. “I’m going to have to change slacks before we go out you naughty girl.”

Harley giggled around her moan as she kept rolling her hips against his bound erection. “Shut up puddin.”

Jack laughed. “Yes ma’am.”

Jack smiled running his hands up her sides, pressing her breasts together and up where he sucked on her nipples while she rubbed against him. He groaned with frustration, feeling her coming closer and closer to climax as her breathing quickened, her movements becoming more and more aggressive. Her fingers dug into his shoulders, tugged on his clothing as she moaned, panting, and moving quicker and quicker.

He groaned. “Cum for me Harley, let me hear you scream.”

Harley moaned. “Puddin...oh puddin yes!”

Jack gasped, holding her down against him and watching her. Her eyes were closed, her mouth slightly open, her face relaxed and blissful as she orgasmed. Jack just stared at her, his entire body
aching for her. She was magnificent, his harlequin...the most beautiful woman in all of Gotham...in all the world as far as he was concerned. And best of all, she was his, his girl, his wife, his partner in crime...his everything. He pressed his lips together watching her rock her hips, her movements slowing, her body shuddering with each stroke. She jerked and hissed with pleasure until she finally groaned and dropped forward, resting her forehead against his, wrapping her arms tight around his neck.

Jack whispered. “You are so beautiful.”

Harley giggled softly. “Flatterer.”

He chuckled then moved suddenly, making her squeal in surprise. Jack hefted her up, wrapping his hands under her rear and started to walk purposefully from the room.

Harley grinned. “Where are we going?”

Jack chuckled. “To the guest bedroom.”

“The guest bedroom? Not our room?” Harley frowned in confusion, but Jack only grinned. He chuckled again, carrying her to the other bedroom. “The guest bedroom has something that our room doesn’t have.”

Harley frowned trying to think of what that might be as Jack carried her down the hall to the back of the house.

The guest bedroom was decorated in shades of blue, mostly baby blue, with hardwood floors, and the sort of country chic bedding that made Harley’s stomach turn. It was the kind of room a grandmother would like. It was the most hideous room in the house as far as Harley was concerned. The two of them hadn’t been in here except for the first day when they went around inspecting every room they could find. Harley frowned, thinking the bed was going to be dusty, but that wasn’t where they went. Instead, Jack set her on her feet and closed the door revealing the full-length mirror on the back. He then walked into the bathroom and came out with a wooden stool, he set it down and proceeded to turn Harley around. “Put your hands on that. And stand on your toes.”

Harley gave him a quizzical look, but she didn’t argue; she did as her puddin requested, but she looked over her shoulder at him with a raised brow.

Jack grinned and started to undo his slacks. Harley watched with hungry eyes as Jack unfastened his pants, sliding them down past his hips and to the floor. He kicked off the slacks until he was wearing just his boxers, his dress shoes with the suspenders around his calves that kept the socks from sliding down his legs, along with his vest and disheveled dress shirt. Jack used his foot to spread her legs wider before he shoved the boxers to his knees.

Jack held his member with one hand and rubbed the head of it against her. Harley made a whimper of want at the feel of his satin warmth against her.

He whispered softly to her. “Watch me Harley.”

Harley looked into the mirror where they were perfectly framed, her bent over with her hands on the stool, golden blonde hair framing her face, standing on her tiptoes with her backside up. She groaned feeling him rubbing against her, teasing her. It was delicious, the slow rubbing, the smooth satin skin that was the head of his erection, teasing as he pressed, starting to push past her labia, teasing that he would press further, but then stopping, which caused the ache in her groin to intensify.

Jack started to push into her again, then stopped, hovering at her entrance watching with amusement
at her expression changing from sweet anticipation to cute annoyance.

She could feel the hardness, the warmth of him, hear the wet sound of his teasing as he continued to rub up and down covering the head of his penis in her fluids from her previous orgasm.

Harley looked up at his face, in the reflection of the mirror to see his blue eye watching her, watching for her reactions. Their eyes met, blue to blue which only seemed to make her body want Jack more.

Jack grasped her hip with one hand, guiding himself with the other; she could tell by his expression he was about to take her fully. Her heartbeat increased as her anticipation increased, waiting for the fulfillment of having her puddin inside her. Jack smiled at her in the mirror just as he started to slowly thrust into her. Harley groaned feeling him push into her, his erection slowly filling that void, filling the aching want in her groin. She gasped starting to close her eyes, but Jack hissed. Giving her rear a tiny smack which she found surprisingly erotic.

“Look at me Harley.”

She moaned, a breathy sigh, opening her eyes to see her husband watching her in the mirror. His face slightly contorted with pleasure, his eyes half closed but the blue, the intense blue of his eyes gazed at her through his thick black lashes. Jack grasped her hips and pulled her back. Harley arched her back in response, raising her hips higher. Jack thrust slowly, making each inch count as he buried himself deeply into her, his mouth slightly open, his brows furrowed watching her in the mirror while he fucked her. He ran a hand up her back, feeling the curve of her spine under his fingers, the silk of her skin. He dragged his hand back down to her hips glancing down, enjoying the way his fingers pressed into her soft skin, the way her flesh gave under his touch, the way her body wrapped around his member so perfectly. Jack smiled at her in the mirror. Harley shuddered, her entire body tightening at the pleasurable response that raced up her body from him. She sucked on her lips, squeezing him back, thrusting her backside at him while she watched his expression in the mirror. Jack’s fingers squeezed tighter, pressing into her hips. He yanked her back against him.

Harley moaned, each of his thrusts hitting just the right spots to send her senses into overdrive. She sucked on her bottom lip, squeezing her muscles around him feeling the way he hardened more inside her. She wanted him to pound into her; she wanted him hard, fast. She wanted him to make her cum. “Harder puddin...please!”

Jack grinned at her in the mirror.

He reached around with one hand. “As my pumpkin wishes.”

Jack slid his hand forward to grab her breast, squeezing gently before pinching and twisting his fingertips around her nipple. Harley whimpered at the intensity of the sensation. She thrust back against him again, trying to urge him to move faster, but he ignored her hints for the moment, sliding his hand down her stomach, then further to find her clitoris. With her legs spread wide, she was easily exposed to his fingers and Jack grinned at her in the mirror as he began to rub, stroking his fingers in a circular motion over her highly sensitive clitoris. Harley cried out at his touch and arched her back. Jack grinned squeezing her hip with one hand while he continued to roll her clitoris with the tips of his fingers, alternating between fast circles and slow figure eights.

Harley writhed, her fingers wrapped around the stool tightly, but her movements were causing the wooden stool to clattered against the hardwood floor until she tightened, her entire body going still for a split second, her orgasm building until the burst of release. Harley climaxed with a loud cry.

The instant she came, Jack removed his fingers, grabbed her hips with both hands and proceeded to fuck her hard and fast, just like she wanted. Harley’s cries became higher in pitch as she looked in
the mirror, watching Jack fuck her, pounding into her, his expression one of complete abandon to the pleasure of fucking his wife. The room was filled with the sounds of their heavy breathing and Harley’s frantic high-pitched moans woven together with Jack’s grunts and groans of his own. For a moment, she was sure she was going to blackout because he was going to make her cum again and it felt so good to have him inside her that she could do nothing but feel the intensity of having him in her, having her husband pound mercilessly into her, every nerve ending on blissful fire. It was heaven, she thought as her light blue eyes once again met his intense blue ones in the mirror.

Jack’s eyes focused on Harley, watching the way her expression shifted each time he thrust into her, watched the way her breasts bounced each time his hips met her backside, the flow and sway of her hair as he thrust her forward with each of his own thrusts. He released her hip to spread his hand along her skin, stroking her smooth curving back. He pressed his nails into her skin, drawing faint red lines down her back.

Jack groaned loudly. The sound made Harley shudder, feeling the quick approach of another orgasm.

“Puddin…” she moaned.

Jack’s hiss was accompanied by a groan of release with her name on his lips. His climax was sudden; it had built quickly, then burst like a bubble and washed over him. He couldn’t seem to stop himself as he thrust hard, flesh smacking against flesh as he rode out his orgasm.

Harley followed almost immediately, her over stimulated body shuddered, her back arching as she came again with a loud moan.

Jack’s thrusts slowed, easing to a series of lazy, sensual thrusts against her, just for the pleasure of moving inside her. Harley’s arms were shaking, as were her legs. She wanted to collapse in bed and sleep for like...a couple of days she thought with a grin. Jack pulled out of her slowly, reluctantly, but as she stood he grabbed her hand and twirled her around to face him, wrapping his arms lovingly around her. Harley giggled draping her arms across his shoulders. “Mm...now you really need to change clothes.”

Jack chuckled. “Yep, my naughty girl.”

He kissed her, sliding a hand up the back of her neck and into her hair, his fingers spread to hold the back of her skull in his hands, feeling the warm soft silk of her hair, his other hand caressed her spine dragging the sides of his fingers along the curve. They kissed for a long time, just enjoying the sweet aftermath of their lovemaking.

Jack sighed, reluctantly pulling away from her lips. “All right pumpkin, let’s go have some fun.”

Harley grinned. “Whatever we do is fun as long as I’m with you.”

Jack chuckled. “That’s my girl.”

* 

Before they left to meet Frost at the docks, Jack decided to do something he was sure he was going to regret.

He called Bruce.

Sitting on the edge of the bed he shared with Harley, Jack wasn’t sure that Bruce would actually pick up since Jack’s number was unlisted, but on the third ring Bruce’s voice came over the phone. “Who
is this?” he demanded.

“Bruce? It’s me, Jack,” Jack answered softly. He made a face at himself for sounding so timid. Harley, who was lying on her back on the bed behind him and playing a game on her phone glanced over at Jack, concern written on her face. He turned around, knowing that she would have understood by the tone of his voice, and waved her off letting her know he was all right, but he reached for his cigarettes.

“I heard about what happened,” Jack said, tapping one out and sticking the cigarette between his lips. He lit it waiting to see if Bruce would say anything.

“You mean that I was run off the road. How do you know about that?” Bruce asked, suspicion clear in his voice.

Jack took a long drag on the cigarette before continued. “It wasn’t me, but...I know who it was and why.”

Bruce growled. “Jack, what have you been doing? What is going on with you? Where are you?”

Jack chuckled. “That’s a lot of questions I won’t answer Bruce. I just called to see if you were really all right and to let you know that I’ll be taking care of who did that to you.”

“Who was it Jack, and why? Please Jack, tell me where you are.” Bruce pleaded over the phone. Jack frowned. “Just trust me Bruce. It’s going to be taken care of. I just called to make sure you were really fine.”

Bruce’s voice softened then. “Jack, can’t...can’t we start over? I’m sorry. Come home.”

“Sorry Bruce, I have a new home now with Harley.” Jack blew some smoke out slowly. “How is Alfred doing?”

“He is recovering. He is doing well, tired of resting, in fact,” Bruce answered. “I know he would like to see you.”

Jack smiled sadly. “I would like to see him too--we both would.”

Bruce answered gently. “You could you know, come see him. I won’t stop you...I won’t force you to stay either.”

Jack’s voice broke slightly. “I can’t trust you Bruce. You broke that, you broke my trust in you, big brother.”

Bruce sighed. “Jack, I was only doing what I thought was the best for you...I…”

Jack sighed as well. “I love you Bruce, you’re my brother...I will always love you, but...I can’t...I can’t come back.”

“Jack I…I never meant to hurt you Jack. I…” Bruce started.

Jack hissed back, his voice laced with pain. “I don’t care what you meant to do Bruce. I only care what you did do.”

Then, before his older brother could say anything else, Jack hung up. Harley had stopped playing her game, watching Jack with concern. As soon as he hung up the phone she rolled over, sat up, and wrapped her arms around him from behind. Jack wrapped his arms around her tugging her around
until she was straddling his lap, then buried his face against her breasts. He didn’t say a word; he
didn’t need to, Harley could feel how much pain he was in. She simply held him and quietly stroked
his hair.

They arrived a couple of hours later in front of the Gotham Science Museum. Frost pulled up front
turning to look at the front of the building. The front was a large round building that sort of stuck out
from the rest of the main building, which was a typical white concrete “museum” that always
reminded Jack of white marble. The front entrance, which had been added on in the last decade or
two was a large round building of mostly glass windows with a rather modern flair in design that
made it stick out like a sore thumb from the rest of the museum that it was attached to, which was
traditional Roman style with the arches, Doric pillars and a few freestanding statues of great
scientists. Frost turned, draping his right arm over the seat as he glanced out the window.

The rain that had been falling was turning to snow once again. Frost grinned at Jack and Harley who
were snuggled together in the back seat wearing matching black wool trench coats, though Harley
had her hair down and was wearing a cute red beret. hey were both dressed like a wealthy young
couple with Jack dressed in a slim cut three piece suit with a two-tone long jacket with black sleeves
and a grey pattern that hung below his hips, paired with grey slacks, a double breasted black vest,
white dress shirt, black tie, and a pair of glossy black pointy toed shoes with a polka dot pattern
across the black leather. He wore a pair of RayBan aviator shades to cover his blue eyes which were
outlined with black eyeliner. Harley looked stunning, Jack thought, wearing a pair of black leggings
(his loved her in leggings, they showed off her legs wonderfully he thought) a simple, short scooped
neck red sweater with a black and white plaid shirt underneath, and a pair of thick heeled brown
leather ankle boots. He particularly liked the boots...Jack grinned, imagining his wife wearing
nothing but the boots while he made love to her against a wall...he had almost made Frost turn the
car around at one point during the ride to the museum when Harley had crossed her legs, her booted
foot stroking his calf.

"Just give me a call when you two are ready to be picked up,” Frost said with a smile.

“Thank you Frost,” Jack replied with a smile of his own.

Frost shrugged. “No need to thank me Boss.”

Jack nodded, then hopped out of the car, hurrying around to open the door for Harley. He leaned
into the car after she was out, reaching into the back pocket of his slacks to grab his wallet. He
opened it and pulled out several hundred dollar bills which he handed to Frost. “Go have some fun
while we’re busy.”

Frost looked at Jack with a frown. “You don’t need to…”

Jack interrupted him with a red lipped grin. “Don’t argue.”

Frost chuckled. “All right Boss. You two have fun.”

Harley waved. “Love ya!! Thanks again Frosty!”

Frost grinned and waved back.

Jack wrapped his arm around Harley’s waist and turned her around. “Please don’t tell him you love
him,” Jack muttered.

Harley frowned looking over at her husband. She could see a slight frown on his face. “Why?”
“Because it makes me jealous sweets.” Jack growled softly, but playfully. “I want you to love only me.” Jack grinned and rubbed his nose against hers.

Harley grinned. “Sorry puddin. Never again. Besides, you know I only love you. And I do love you.”

“Good. Now, let's go have fun!” Jack chuckled sliding his sunglasses down to waggle his brows at her, his blue eyes sparkling.

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It was a weekday and while the museum was still fairly busy, it wasn’t as busy as it could have been. Despite the poor weather, there were tourists wandering around and a few locals as Jack and Harley walked in through the glass doors. The stylish couple garnered a few stares, which Jack and Harley both ignored.

Jack grinned. “I haven’t been here in forever! Come on,” he said with wide eyes and a skip in his step. “I know just the place to start!”

Jack and Harley walked toward the museum planetarium. The entrance was nothing special, Harley thought, but once they bought their tickets, they were treated to long winding tunnels that highlighted the first mission to the moon. Jack led Harley along, holding her hand tightly until they came to a display of the ship, Apollo 11. Jack giggled.

“See here Harls.” Jack pointed and Harley leaned forward. There was a tiny postscript under the photograph of the Apollo 11 lunar module that said that the ship was designed with the help of technicians at Wayne Aerospace.

Jack grinned. “Wayne Aerospace had a hand in designing these lunar modules, though I don’t think that is widely known outside of Gotham. That division of Wayne Enterprises has been working with NASA since the beginning. It also works with the military in designing jets and stealth fighters like the W-4 Wraith and the Kestrel attack helicopter.” He snickered. “And the board of directors didn’t think I knew anything about Wayne Enterprises.” He winked at Harley before he continued. “I used to hope I could get them to design me a spaceship when I was a kid.” Jack grinned at Harley and explained, “I wanted to go explore space when I was thirteen.”

Harley smiled, impressed with Jack’s knowledge of Wayne’s Aerospace division. For some reason she was under the impression that Jack knew little about what went on in the family business too, and that made her angry at herself. She should have known better. Jack was smart, and deceptive. Of course he didn’t want the board knowing exactly how much he knew. She frowned momentarily. It was a shame that all that was lost to Jack now...because of Bruce she thought, Bruce and his stubbornness, his refusal to see that there was nothing truly wrong with Jack. Well, maybe there was something a little wrong with him, but it was part of what made Jack Wayne so vibrant, fun...handsome. Harley smiled. She was just so much in love with Jack. She reached down between them to take his hand. Jack smiled at her and kissed her cheek. They enjoyed the space show, which took them through a tour of the Milky Way galaxy and beyond. Harley had watched the entire thing with her head resting on Jack’s shoulder. He had put his arm around her holding her close as they traveled through outer space together.

Next they headed up to the second floor where there was an entire floor dedicated to hands-on science exhibits. Jack hurried over and the two of them slipped inside the hurricane simulator. The exhibit, about the size of a telephone booth, was almost entirely made of glass so that other guests
could watch what happened to anyone inside. Harley squealed when the wind came on, her beret blowing right off her head to where it was being whipped around in the air above her—along with all her hair blowing upwards. Jack had removed his sunglasses before they stepped inside, and their bright blue eyes danced together as he laughed at Harley while she tried to reach her hat, her hair flying wildly around her face. Jack wrapped his arms around her. “Don’t worry, it’ll come back!”

Harley laughed. “Ahh!! It’s so windy!!”

They were both laughing as Jack yelled. “What did the hurricane say to the coconut palm tree?”

Harley snickered just knowing this was going to be bad. “What?”

“Hold onto your nuts! This is no ordinary blowjob!” Jack laughed and Harley smacked him on the shoulder. “JACK!”

Jack laughed and kissed her while the high winds blew around them.

Next they headed to where a highwire bicycle was strung across the open air connecting two balconies. Harley leaned on the rail watching as Jack rode the bike across without the least bit of fear, even stopping in the middle to look down at the two floors below him before he turned and waved at her. They both tried the Aerotrim, the large metal circle that spun them around a full three hundred and sixty degrees, which had them both laughing especially when Harley wobbled off the contraption. They played with a magnet exhibit, enjoyed the flight simulator, wandered through a funhouse mirror maze, and played with building foam skyscrapers, creating their own bridge and walked the clear walkway that extended over one of Gotham’s many busy streets, using radar guns installed on the bridge that clocked the speeds of the cars passing under them.

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Next they headed to the Ecosystem exhibit.

Together, holding tightly onto each others hand, they walked through a twenty-four foot tunnel that had them surrounded by fish and bat rays swimming all around them. They stopped to watch some of the colorful fish swim past them. Jack smiled watching a few that swam over their heads. “This makes me want to take you on a cruise someday. Go to a tropical island, just the two of us. You in a very tiny bikini.” Jack glanced sideways at Harley.

Harley smiled. “How about one better? A nude beach.”

Jack’s red lipsticked smile spread even further across his face. “I do so like the way your mind works Harley.”

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Next they headed over to the insect exhibit where they could walk through a large butterfly house. Jack pulled his camera out, taking pictures of Harley as butterflies swarmed around her. Harley laughed holding out her hands and three butterflies landed on her.

Jack smiled at his wife, his heart swelling with love for her. “Even they know you’re sweet, sweets.”

Harley blushed. “Puddin…”

For a moment, everything was perfect in their world, no horrible brothers, no obsessive stalkers, no mob bosses, just the two of them together and surrounded by butterflies.
By the time they left the museum, the snow was falling heavier; large fluffy flakes were littering the sky like fragile glittering diamonds. Jack had decided that walking down to the restaurant for lunch wasn’t a good idea in the current weather, and this close to the museum it would probably be crowded too, so they decided to look for someplace else to eat. Frost, whom Jack had called only moments before, was waiting for them in front of the museum. Jack opened the door to the car for Harley ushering her inside then climbed in after her.

Frost smiled turning around. “Have fun?”

Harley grinned. “Oh, very much!”

Frost grinned. “So where do you guys want to eat?”

Jack was looking at his phone, scrolling through lists of places when he found something that made his smile light up brighter. “Oh I think I just found the perfect place. It’s called “The Classical Fantôme,” located near New Town. It's a musical themed restaurant with...wait for it...haunted tables!” Jack giggled. “And they have live classical music every day. How does that sound, Harley my sweet?”

Harley grinned. “Perfect puddin, just perfect.”

The restaurant was located in a Victorian house that had been converted into a restaurant. The house was painted a burgundy that leaned more toward the purple. Frost dropped them off up front and moments later, Jack led Harley up the stairs to the front door that was decorated with cheerful fairy lights. Jack opened the door and stuck his head inside. The air that came out was warm and smelled of delicious food accompanied by the sounds of live music; from the sounds of it, a violin, cello and flute. Jack turned to look at Harley giving her a smile. “Shall we?”

Harley nodded to her husband with a grin as Jack held the door open for her.

The inside of the restaurant was dimly lit with more fairy lights hung along the wall and ceiling. The walls themselves had a definite 1970’s vibe with the wallpaper being a strange lemon yellow color. There were antique mirrors everywhere that reflected the fairy-lights, bouncing the twinkling lights back into the room. The walls were also lined with shelves containing numerous kitsch knickknacks alongside strange and eccentric pieces of art. There was so much to take in that it was almost too much for the eye to absorb.

They hadn’t been standing in the threshold for long when a woman dressed in a long black skirt that brushed the floor, a long, bell sleeved blouse of lavender and long curling dark hair came up to them with two plastic menus in hand.

“Two?” She asked.

Jack, grinning nodded. “Yes please.”

She smiled back and escorted them into what would have been the living room of the house but had been turned into a dining room with large round tables covered in a variety of table cloths. In the dining area, they could see the musicians in a corner of the room, all wearing skull masks as they played Beethoven.

Harley giggled while Jack helped her off with her coat. “This is definitely different.”
Jack nodded in agreement. “Yes it is!” He hung her coat on the back of her seat and removed his own. “I think I like this place already.”

They were seated at a table out of the way where they had a great deal of privacy. Jack reached across the table taking Harley’s hands. They gazed at each other while Jack stroked his thumbs across her knuckles.

“This is nice.” His tone was soft, betraying no anger, worry, or anxiety.

Harley nodded. “It is Jack. We haven’t done this in a while.”

“No we haven’t, just the two of us.” Jack purred softly, brought her hands up to kiss her knuckles. “I love you my wife.”

Harley blushed. She didn’t know why she was blushing; it wasn’t like they hadn’t been together through so much already, and it wasn’t as if they hadn’t had intense sex just this morning, but hearing Jack say those three little words made every part of her tingle. Her emotions swelled to the surface. She didn’t just love him. That was such a small word to describe what she felt for him. She was more than simply devoted to him; he was part of her, part of her very soul, her very being.

The waitress came over to them smiling. “I’m your waitress, Molly, and can I just say, you are both so lovely! I’m...sorry, but I just never see couples in love like you two. You both just...ooze...I don’t know...like this intensity of emotion and just...you are both so elegant!”

Jack grinned, sparing the waitress a glance, but then brought his gaze back to his wife. “Thank you. I am a very lucky man.” He kissed Harley knuckles.

Molly sighed longingly. “I wish my boyfriend did things like that...I mean...kiss my hand and stuff. Anyway--enough about me. What can I get the two of you?”

Jack kept a hold of one of Harley’s hands while he looked over the menu. “Mm…” He glanced at Harley. “Wanna split a hot fudge sundae and some coffee?”

Harley laughed with a vigorous nod. “That sounds divine puddin.”

Molly’s eyes widened. “Oh gosh! Is that your pet name for him? Puddin?”

Harley giggled. “Yes it is.”

“Oh wow, that is so cute! You guys are the cutest! Well, let me put your order in.” Molly grinned, but Jack stopped her. “Do you allow dancing in your establishment?”

Molly smiled brightly. “If you two want to dance, you go right ahead. The musicians take requests.”

Jack smiled brightly with a slight dip of his head. “Thank you, my dear Molly.”

She giggled and hurried off. Jack stood up and took Harley’s hand. “Will you dance with me, my dear?”

Harley took his hand. “I will dance with you anywhere puddin.”

Jack’s smile was radiant as he took her hand and led her over to the musicians. “Would you mind playing Canon de Pachelbel?”

One of the masked violinists said in a soft, feminine voice. “Of course.”
Jack smiled taking Harley’s hand and walked into the center of the room where there was enough space for them to dance. He pulled her gently against him, his left arm around her waist, his right hand taking her hand in his and he started to waltz with her in a slow circle, both of them moving gracefully in time to the music.

“We never had a first dance at any of our weddings,” he said softly. “That will always be one of my regrets.”

Harley whispered. “As long as I have the rest of my life to dance with you Jack, I will gladly give up our first dance as husband and wife.”

He grinned wider. “You, my little harlequin, are my most precious angel.” He spun her around, then dropped her hand to wrap both arms around her, dipping her slightly and kissed her. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck returning the kiss with every ounce of passion she felt for her husband to the sound of the few patrons clapping.

* 

They had a wonderful time together at the restaurant. Their table moved just as promised, which had startled Harley enough that she had yelped and knocked her chair over which had Jack almost in tears with laughter. When she had gone to the restroom to freshen up she had been startled again by a mannequin in one of the stalls and a foot coming out of the ceiling that was painted to look like the bottom of a pond.

After sharing the sundae and some of what Harley called “very excellent coffee,” they made their way outside. The snow, which had been thicker than earlier in the day, but still light, was even heavier now. Frost was waiting, parked out in front of the restaurant with the car idling for them. When the two of them climbed into the back, Frost turned around and smiled. “You two have a nice time here too?”

Harley giggled with a lift of her shoulders. “Oh, it was so much fun!”

Jack wrapped his arm around her shoulders pulling her close after he sat and brought the door closed on the increasing snowflakes. “Yes it was. You should have seen Harley jump when the table moved.” Jack started to laugh at the memory. Harley lightly smacked him on the knee giving him an amused and simultaneously annoyed look. Jack, through his giggles and another smack on his knee, mumbled. “The look on her face was priceless!!” He snickered which earned him an amused, but dirty look from his wife.

Frost chuckled at the two of them. “We are going to have to take a roundabout way back to the docks. There was an accident up that way.” He pointed the way they had originally traveled to find the restaurant.

“Leave it to Gothamites to drive crazy stupid in bad weather. Oh it snowed? Let’s see how fast I can drive in that!” Jack dropped his voice and made himself sound stupid as he imitated some nameless Gothamite. Jack leaned back comfortably in the seat. “That’s fine. We’ll just snuggle back here.”

Jack grinned at Harley, ducking his head to steal a kiss.

Frost smiled as he turned the car around and started to travel down the street toward New Town.

* 

They had been driving for about twenty minutes. Jack was idly stroking his hand down Harley’s arm while she was curled against his side, her eyes closed when Jack sat up, knocking Harley from her
doze when he leaned to looked more closely out his window. Harley frowned with curiosity. “What is is puddin?”

Jack motioned her closer while he yelled at Frost. “Stop the car!”

Frost jumped a little at the suddenness of Jack’s yell, but still pulled the car over onto the right, slamming the brakes which only caused them to slide a little and parked alongside the old crumbling sidewalk.

He turned in confusion, fearing that something was wrong. “Boss?”

But Jack’s focus was fully on what had grabbed his attention. Across from the car was an abandoned amusement park. It wasn’t very big, especially when compared to the Amusement Mile, but behind the main entrance against the grey sky and falling snow, Harley could see the dark silhouette of a roller coaster along with a ferris wheel and several other rides, ghosts of better days. There was a “for sale” sign in front of the entrance.

Jack’s voice was full of wonder. “What is that? I don’t remember there ever being another amusement park besides The Amusement Mile.”

Frost frowned studying the place in the dim lights from the streetlights, then seemed to brighten. “I remember this place. It was only around for a handful of years. Tried to compete with Amusement Mile...held its own for a while but a couple of kids died on the roller coaster and it was shut down...maybe...ten, fifteen years ago. If I recall, it was called The Kaleidoscope Park. They had a lot of rides and attractions that messed with your senses, like mirror mazes, weird roller coasters, spinning rides...that sort of thing. It was like the poor man’s Amusement Mile with more dangerous rides.” Frost grinned. “When I was a younger cop, this is where you came to bust druggies. They liked to get high and try to get the rides going or just mess around. This is where you came when you wanted to get your arrest record up. Anyway, I don’t think the potheads hang around here anymore because one of them fell from the ferris wheel and died.”

Jack was staring at it like a child, a delighted smile on his face. “Harley...I think I just found our new home.”


Jack nodded. “Just imagine it Harls...our own amusement park!”

He sat back and turned to look at her, his eyes twinkling. “I have the money--it wouldn’t take much, buy the place and choose one of the buildings to refurbish...” Jack chuckled. “It would be fabulous Harley! Besides, we just can’t stay where we are. Ben knows we’re there...Cobb knew...the Owls know and Panessa knows too. I don’t like that...I don’t like it at all.” His voice dropped to a dangerous whisper. “We need a new place, a place all our own. Besides, what’s more fun than an amusement park?” He turned his radiant smile on her.

Harley giggled softly. “If that is what you want puddin, then that is what we’ll do.”

Jack turned back to gaze at the place. “I think it's a terrific idea.”

Harley leaned close to her husband and whispered. “What’s more fun than an amusement park? Sex in an amusement park!”

Jack’s wide eyes and grin matched hers as he said, “Yes, I definitely like the way you think, my harlequin.”
The following night’s weather was quickly turning into a full on blizzard.

Alceu Panessa’s car pulled up in front of the building where the family meeting was taking place. He yawned, reaching over to grab his hat, plopping the fedora on his dair hair before getting out of the car. He was in love with his new car, a brand new pink and grey 2018 Lamborghini Huracan. Alceu ran his hands over the car’s hood as he walked by. He hated driving it out in this weather, but he had driven it in order to show off. Tomaso was the head of the family, but Alceu was the one with the style. He had just started to walk up to the main entrance when he heard an engine being revved up. Alceu turned around, his hand going under his coat for his weapon when he saw a light blue 2018 Bugatti Chiron pull up and park behind his Lamborghini. Alceu narrowed his eyes then chuckled when he saw Liuni Panessa get out of the car. Alceu laughed. Liuni was Tomaso’s younger brother, but he was also the shortest of the male family members. The guy only reached maybe five foot even. Everyone called him Shorty instead of his proper name. Liuni had finally accepted the nickname, but he was still constantly compensating with bigger guns, more expensive suits and in this case, Alceu thought, a better car. Maybe.

“Hey Shorty!” Alceu called waving at the other man.

Liuni grinned. “Hey Alceu, like the car.”

Alceu snorted. “Yeah I like yours too. You compensating for that small dick of yours?”

Liuni laughed. “That’s not what your wife said when I left her.”

Alceu made a face at the bad joke, but didn’t take the bait. “Come on, ya little shit.”

Alceu waited for Liuni to catch up. The shorter man hurried through the snow. “So you know what this is all about?” Liuni asked.

“Fuck if I know. I thought you would since he’s your brother,” Alceu answered pulling open the door and holding it for the other man.

Liuni shrugged. “No idea...I mean he was pissed about some drug deal that went wrong. He said something about the Red Hood gang, but I don’t know.”

Alceu frowned. “I saw them on the news. They hit the fashion week. Some pretty bold shit if you ask me. Whoever the leader of the gang is, the man’s got balls on him.”

“Yeah he does. Plus did you get a look at the footage, see that blonde with him?” Liuni said as the two men headed over to the elevator. The building might not be complete, but the elevator was in good working order as Liuni hit the button and the doors closed and took the two men up to the third floor. Inside the elevator the two of them discussed what the meeting might be about, how their families were doing and any other Gotham mob business as the elevator made its slow ascent to the upper floors. Just as their discussion turned to business, the doors opened onto a stylish office space.

The room was huge, big enough to hold at least a few hundred people. One whole wall of the room was one long window that ran the length of the building and looked out onto Gotham. The lights of the city could be seen in the distance. A large crystal chandelier hung from the center of the ceiling providing a soft white light in the large room. The room was dominated by a long, walnut table that could seat up to sixteen people. Several bottles of wine sat on the table along with glasses, and a few dishes that some of the men had brought themselves: cannoli, some potato zeppoline, and someone had even brought some rice fritters, a specialty of Piu Panessa’s wife. Alceu’s stomach rumbled as
soon as the smell of food hit him when the elevator doors opened. As Alceu looked around, many of
the seats were already taken by members of the Panessa family.

As soon as Alceu and Liuni stepped off the elevator, they were greeted by the other men already
here. Miceli Panessa, another cousin, approached them. “Hey nice to see you two. Where the fuck is
Tomaso?”

Both men shrugged. “No idea, thought he would be there by now.” Liuni frowned. “You know how
Tomaso is--he likes to make an entrance. Probably running late on purpose.”

* 

Several blocks away, Jack stood on the roof of a building, snow falling around him in soft fluffy
flakes, his eyes glued to a pair of binoculars. He was smiling brightly. The Red Hood gang had just
finished placing dynamite throughout the building, paying special attention to the building’s concrete
support columns, with a little extra dynamite placed willy nilly--as Jack had said--just to make the
explosion a little more spectacular. Now, standing on the roof of the building they had chosen to
watch the show from, the gang had made a little shrine to Dale and Sandra. It wasn’t much, some
flowers, a couple of candles, a bottle of wine, but the sentiment made the little shrine that much more
meaningful.

Jack was wearing his black trench coat, dressed in a slim cut three-piece dark, almost black purple
suit, with a blood red dress shirt, red tie and a pair of pointed toe black and white oxfords. Harley
was standing next to him in her matching black trench coat, a red knit cap with a large pom pom on
the top, her long blonde hair spilling across and down her shoulders. She was wearing her own
three-piece suit, a vermilion with black pinstripes and a pair of black heeled boots and both of them
were wearing black leather gloves. Jack grinned, lowering his binoculars and reaching over to pinch
Harley’s tush through her coat. She jumped and giggled at him. “Stop!” Jack chuckled. “Sorry
sweets, in too good a mood to stop. Besides, you have a pinchable ass even in that coat.”

Harley blushed and went back to watching the building. She murmured softly, her eyes glued to the
binoculars. “Think the cars are going to survive the blast?”

Jack frowned as he raised his binoculars again. “Mm...doubt it...too bad too. That Bugatti Chiron is
pretty nice.”

Each member of the gang had their own set of binoculars, all of them standing in a row along the top
of the building, waiting for the grand finale of the evening. After which Jack was taking everyone to
a karaoke bar.

Jason, who was standing on the other side of Jack, wearing black jeans and a red turtleneck under his
black leather jacket. (Alex was with Alice, but Trope was recording a live feed for him and Alice to
watch together. Jack had already spoken to Alex about purchasing the abandoned amusement park.
Alex was getting the wheels moving on it, working through a third party to keep both his name and
Jack’s name out of the purchase, but Alex assured him, the place would be his in no time.)

Jason grinned. “I could go boost the car if you want Boss.”

Jack smiled without looking over at Jason. “That’s sweet, but nah...it's got mobster cooties.”

Jason chuckled before he said. “This is really cool Boss. I always loved explosions when I was a kid.
I bet Dale and Sandra would have liked it too.”

Jack grinned glancing sideways at Jason. “A man after my own heart.”
Jason blushed, clearly pleased with Jack’s praise.

Frank, who was there representing his son, grinned through his own set of binoculars. “This is so fuckingtastic! I always wanted to blow up some of those fucktard mobsters.”

Jack chuckled. “Glad to provide some entertainment.”

Harley frowned, still watching the building. “I still haven’t seen Tomaso enter the building. You think he’ll have Ben with him?” It was clear from her tone that she hoped not.

Jack frowned as Harley lowered her binoculars.

“Maybe he entered the building from another entrance?” Jack said softly. “But I doubt Ben will be with him. Taking your boy toy around with you to illegal fights and such is one thing; taking him with you on family business is another.”

Harley nodded. “You’re probably right puddin.”

Jack frowned at the building. “I don’t want to wait much longer…”

Harley smiled at Jack. “Then don’t. Let’s do it.”

Jack grinned and pulled out the detonator from his pocket. The device that he had put together himself was a wireless long distance remote detonator. Each of the bundles of dynamite had a receiver attached to them so that all Jack had to do was turn the device in his hand on and push the button.

Jack grinned looking down the row of his gang lined up along the building’s edge ready for the fireworks. “Everyone ready?”

Their small group nodded. Jack grinned. “Duela dear, you want to break out the wine?”

She nodded and swiftly ran over to pick up the bottle and, with a little help from Roxy, they popped the bottle open. She hurried over and handed the bottle to Jack.

Jack smiled holding the bottle up. “For Dale and Sandra.”

At the same time that Jack took a swig from the bottle of wine, he hit the button on the detonator and handed the bottle to Harley. She took a sip and passed it along to Frost and so on.

Just as Trope took a drink, they heard the first explosion.

* Inside the building the men were milling about eating, drinking and talking, waiting for the head of their family to show up. Alceu was sitting on the edge of the long table, a cannoli in hand when he felt the vibration in the floor. Everything in the room started to shake. He stood up and turned, his eyes wide as Linui, who was standing near the long window frowned and turned around. Then everyone heard the loud sound of an explosion. Then another explosion and yet another. The entire building was shaking violently as explosions seemed to start from the bottom of the building and work their way up, floor by floor, all of it happening in a matter of seconds. Alceu realized what was happening while the other men seemed momentarily confused.

Alceu yelled. “EVERYONE…” but he didn’t finish as a blast emanated from one corner of the room and engulf the interior in a fireball. Alceu was thrown forward, the explosion tossing him clear across
the room. He briefly caught a glimpse of Linui as the windows burst outward in a bright sprinkle of glass, while some of the glass came bursting inward at the same time, shredding Linui, but then Alceu hit the wall, shattering his back. He didn’t have to endure the pain long before the ball of fire rolled over him, killing him instantly. *

Jack whooped, jumping up when the building exploded. First, there had been a series of loud, deep bursts of sounds, bangs that ripped off with one explosion of sound after another which were followed by flashes of light. The building didn’t fall over so much as it seemed to begin shrinking, collapsing in on itself before another explosion ripped through it and generating a burst of flame. As the building came down, a cloud of smoke rolled out from it

Everyone watched in awe as the building then started to lean as more explosions went off. Jack was laughing as he held his binoculars up to watch the show. “This is fantastic!”

Harley giggled. “Wow.”

*  

Tomaso was running late to his own fucking meeting. Ben was beginning to get on his nerves to the point that he was considering, very seriously, of contacting the Owls himself to come and take the little bastard away. Tomaso was becoming increasingly annoyed as Ben talked incessantly about Jack Wayne. It wasn’t that he was jealous, he told himself, but one man could only take so much fawning over another man! He pulled up near the building, parking a little ways down the street when the first explosion went off. The shock wave from the explosion hit his car, a Lexus LF-LC, causing the windshield to burst inward flinging glass at Tomaso who barely had time to bring his arms up and protect his face. He raised his eyes from over the top of his arm only to have a wave of smoke and dust roll over him obscuring everything from view. Tomaso stumbled out of his car, unaware of the bloody cuts all over his face and hands as he stood beside his car, which was damaged from the shockwave and the flying debris that had crashed into the front of the vehicle. He watched, his mouth hanging open as his building came down, taking every male leader of the family with it.

*  

Harley frowned. She had seen the car drive up near the building from the corner of her binoculars. Harley turned her binoculars toward the car; the explosion threw bricks and other debris at the car, blasting the windows and pretty much crushing the front of the car. Harley chuckled at the damage, but then hissed in surprise when she saw Tomaso Panessa stumble out, from the car, stunned but alive.

“Puddin!!” Harley smacked Jack in the shoulder. “Puddin!”

Jack frowned. “What?”

She pointed. Jack brought up his binoculars and turned toward the direction his wife had indicated only to see a shaken Tomaso Panessa leaning against his car.

Jack snarled. “Fuck.”
Jack snarled as he stared into the distance, his blue eyes flashing with murder as the explosions he had set off continued their chain reaction. The bright flashes that lit up the Gotham night reflected in his eyes, red laced with the blue reflecting Jack’s building rage. More explosions occurred, bright flashes of violence filling the night and then the building to began to lean even more precariously threatening to take the buildings beside it down as well.

His eyes took in the scene of the crumbling building and the object of his current hatred. Jack threw a hand behind him as he snarled. “Does anyone have a rifle?”

He was greeted by silence.

Jack hissed snapping his arm back, at the same time throwing his coat open.

“Fine!” he said as in one smooth movement he yanked the pistol free and started to fire. All the gang members shared a look before each of them pulled out their own pistols and started to fire in Panessa’s general direction. Harley hadn’t pulled out her pistol, but was instead holding her binoculars up to watch as the smoke and debris from the fallen building washed over Panessa hiding him from view before Jack and the others started to fire.

“Jack! Everyone! Stop! We can’t hit him from here and I lost sight of him. We need to go before the cops get here or worse--Batman. Someone is going to report gunfire along with the explosion!”

Harley brought her binoculars down, turning to her husband as she laid her hand on Jack’s shoulder. “Puddin? Jack? We need to go. Now.” Jack snarled again, but lowered his weapon still staring at the spot where he had last seen Tomaso. For a moment Harley wasn’t sure he was going to move before he said.

"Fine...fine, you’re right Harley. Come on everyone, let's get out of here. I need a drink."

Jack, clearly annoyed, holstered his weapon and turned grabbing Harley’s hand in his, motioned for the rest of the gang to follow as he stormed over to the roof entrance. He yanked the door open with enough force that Harley would not have been surprised if the door had come off its hinges and stomped through, practically pulling his wife along with him. He let the door slam shut behind him without looking to see if the gang were following him.

Jason frowned glancing at everyone with him. “I think he’s pissed.”

Frank chuckled. “That was fun. I don’t see so well...I’m guessing we didn’t get him?"

Jason shrugged. “Got everyone else, but yeah, Boss is pissed ‘cause we didn’t get the big guy.”

Frank frowned. “We should go to a strip club.”

Jason laughed. “Dude, you and me later...Boss...nah, he has his girl. He’s too good for a strip club anyway.”

Frank chuckled as he and Jason walked to the door Jason putting an arm across Frank’s shoulders. “Yeah, my son’s too good for a strip club too. Glad we ain’t!”

The two men laughed as the Frost shook his head and the three women groaned. Roxy muttered. “Pigs.”
The karaoke bar, The Gotham Voicebox, was a nice, clean bar located in downtown Gotham just outside the Diamond district. Their group had a private room that was decorated with wallpaper that mimicked the cityscape of Gotham, with three televisions hanging on the walls around the room. A white couch ran the entire length of the room, wrapping around the walls with a couple of black and white stools, and a “U” shaped shiny black table in the middle. There were glasses of alcohol on the table, two pitchers of soda with some snacks, a bowl of hummus, the remains of a caramelized onion, a bowl of popcorn and three pizzas that only had a few slices left. Jack was nursing a glass of whiskey, a cigarette between his lips, with his arm around Harley, who was sipping from a colorful Aqua Blue Cruise drink. Jack was still glaring angrily while Jason and Trope sang “I Got You Babe” together in the middle of the room with the screen behind them showing the words scrolling past when Alex and Alice arrived. Alex grinned, his one arm around Alice’s shoulders and holding a beer.

The others yelled a greeting when the two stepped in. Alex and Alice grinned and waved while Alice nearly swooped down on the pizza. Alex laughed and sat down next to Jack while Alice sat on Harley’s other side so the two women could talk.

Alex leaned back against the seat and took a long swig from his beer, sighing. “So, missed fucking Tomaso, eh?”

Jack hissed low and deadly, still annoyed as he leaned forward and flicked ashes into the ashtray on the table. “Yes. He arrived at the building just as I set off the explosion.”

“Lucky fucking bastard,” Alex muttered. He took another drink before he leaned forward and placed his bottle on the table. Alex reached into the front pocket of the Hawaiian shirt he was wearing, a green, blue, and red monstrosity Jack thought, with parrots flying across it, and pulled out a cigar. Jack grabbed his lighter from his pocket as Alex pulled out the cheap cigar cutter from the same breast pocket and held the cigar, (having turned it around to hold with his teeth), cutting off the tip before turning it back around and leaning forward for Jack to light it. Alex took a couple of quick puffs until the end was burning nicely, the rich smell of the cigar floating through the room. He leaned back and pulled the cigar from his mouth. “Well, at least I come bearing good fucking news.”

Jack turned to face his friend with a brow raised, quizzical. He had just reached over to pick up his drink, and lifted the bottle to refill his glass just as Duela started to sing “Havana” by Camila Cabello. Alex grinned. “That abandoned amusement park you wanted--it’s yours. You and Harley can start the fucking renovations whenever you want.”

Jack sighed with a grin and leaned back to take a sip of his drink. “Well, at least something went right. That didn’t take long.”

Alex shrugged. “They were motivated to sell and a fucking cash offer? They were fucking happy to take your money and unload the place. I know you said Frost told you about a fucking death there, seems there was a lot fucking more than one. I don’t know if you were planning on doing anything with the fucking rides, but those things have caused the fucking death of quite a few park patrons.”

Alex chuckled with a little shrug. “Anyway, a little cash here and there and it fucking closed without issue, papers filed. You, Mr. Joe Kerr, are the proud fucking owner of a defunct amusement park. I can have someone there tomorrow to start making the place--or at least a fucking part of the place--livable.”

Jack grinned. “Let’s go take a look tomorrow.”

Alex nodded. “Cool. You two could move in soon.”
Jack shook his head. “I want us to move in no later than forty eight hours from now. Tomaso knows where we live. Not sure how long it will take him to try something stupid. I want all of Gotham’s seedy underworld to know it was us that blew his little family to kingdom come, but I don’t want Tomaso deciding he can take Harley and me out on his own. I don’t want him coming after Harley.”

Alex nodded. “I don’t know if you could move in that fucking soon Jack. The place has been abandoned for years, but I can set you both up in another one of my fucking places throughout Gotham.”

Jack nodded to Alex and smiled. “You’re a good friend.”

Alex smiled then grimaced as Frank started to sing Katy Perry’s “Roar” completely off key and rather drunkenly. Alex sighed. “Guess Pops is going the fuck home with me.” He took a heavy puff on his cigar before he asked. “So, what now?”

Jack took a heavy drag on his cigarette, leaned back as smoke drifted from his lips and nostrils. “I want Panessa dead and I want everything he has. You think that will be difficult?”

“Depends on the other families. But my opinion from what I know—especially after tonight—I don’t think so. You made a hard move Jack, they are going to respect that. Or at least will think Panessa’s incompetent. You want Panessa’s territory, I think you’re going to get it man.” Alex nodded.

Jack grinned. “Once that is done, I want the Owls.”

Alex choked on his smoke and sat up coughing. “What?”

Jack grinned with no sign of fear. “I’m going to take out the Owls.”

“Jack, I...I don’t think that’s fucking possible man. I mean...I don’t know that much about them—no one does—but I don’t think you can just fucking take them out like Panessa.” Alex looked at Jack like he had lost his head.

Jack chuckled. “Watch me.”

Alex frowned flicking ashes from his cigar into the ashtray on the table. “Jack...I mean, you need to think about this dude. The Owls are old. Fuck, they’ve been part of Gotham from the beginning if the stories are to be believed...I don’t...” He trailed off with a shake of his head.

Jack put out his cigarette and reached for his drink. “Alex, they fucked with me by letting that little fucker Ben loose and Ben has tried twice to hurt Harley. No one touches Harley.” Jack took a drink narrowing his eyes, looking at nothing. “She’s my anchor Alex, my safety...no one tries to take her from me.”

Alex nodded his understanding. “Well, maybe we can come back to this after, you know...taking care of Panessa for good...that fucking Ben character and you know, the fight club shit?”

Jack sighed. “Yeah, fine. You’re right.”

Alex sighed in relief.

* 

Panessa made it home. He wasn't sure how. His car’s front was crushed; he was surprised he got it out of there at all. The engine struggled to get him home, but when he arrived he found Ben lying on the couch. The young man looked up, his mouth opened to say something, but stopped dead when
he saw Panessa, covered in grey dust, bleeding from several cuts, bruised, and shaking. Ben sat up. “What happened? I thought you were having a meeting with the family.”

Tomaso stumbled the rest of the way in, slamming the door behind him as he made his way over to the kitchen. Ben heard him opening and slamming cabinets before he came stumbling out again drinking straight from a bottle of mirto as he staggered into the living room. Ben was watching him, his eyes narrowed and brow furrowed.

“They’re all gone,” Tomaso said taking a breath before he drank again from the bottle. “Every fucking one of them is dead.” He started to laugh. “The building is fucking gone Ben...gone...all of them, the building…”

Ben stared at him before he grabbed the tv remote and turned on the set. It took him a minute or so to find a news station where the news reporter, a handsome young man, his tone just this side of frantic. “A building in the Upper East Side came down this evening due to a mysterious explosion. At this time it is unknown if there are any casualties The explosion was powerful enough that the entire unfinished building was brought down. We will keep you informed as we receive reports. Again, there was an explosion in the Upper East Side of Gotham…” The scene shifted from the reporter to a helicopter camera that showed the remains of the building. From Ben’s perspective, anyone inside that when it came down would be dead.

Ben blinked. “Wh...who do you think is responsible?”

Tomaso finished off the last of the mirto and stumbled back into the kitchen, coming out again a few seconds later with a bottle of marsala. Like the mirto, he was drinking straight from the bottle. Ben wrinkled his nose at him. “Did you hear me? Who do you think is responsible?”

Tomaso flopped down next to him, remained silent for a few heartbeats as he drank greedily from the bottle. When he had downed half of it he finally turned to Ben. “Who do you fucking think, genius? Your boy Jack Wayne...that fucking Red Hood gang of his.”

“You can’t be serious?!” Ben said, but at the same time he knew Tomaso was right. It had to be Jack. He tried not to smile, he was impressed with Jack’s response to Tomaso’s threats.

Ben took a breath before he spoke again. “So, what are you going to do?”

“I need to speak with The Roman. I need them to help me wipe Jack Wayne out of existence!” Tomaso finished the bottle before he threw it across the room where it shattered against the wall. “I...I’m going to call him…” Tomaso started to drunkenly reached for his cellphone, but Ben stopped him.

“Don’t call him like this Tommy...wait until morning, you’re drunk.” Ben grabbed his hand. Tomaso stared at him then seemed to collapse, his voice taking on a pained and weepy tone. “He killed them all Ben...my family…”

Ben gathered Tomaso into his arms and held him while the other man cried.

*

The next morning Jack and Harley, with Frost driving, met Alex at the abandoned amusement park. It had begun to snow again, tiny flakes falling down swiftly in a slight breeze. Alex was waiting in front of the gates, no car in sight, wearing a black trench coat and a black fedora, his hat and shoulders sprinkled with snow. Frost pulled up in front of the gate. Jack and Harley in the backseat both leaned forward to giggle at Alex.
“Does he think he looks...inconspicuous?” Harley asked with a wide grin and a sideways glance at her husband.

Jack grinned looking sideways at his wife. She looked gorgeous today (she looked gorgeous everyday to him), she had her hair down, thick gold curls cascading down her shoulders from under a white knit cap with white fur trim. Under her red puffy parka that she was wearing today, Harley wore a blue and white checkered collar shirt with a red sweater over the top that hung down almost like a dress with black leggings and some thick white snow boots with little red diamonds on the heels. Jack leaned over and kissed her cheek. “I think he does. He looks like a Humphrey Bogart cosplayer.”

Harley laughed giving him a quick peck on the cheek thinking to herself that her husband looked dashing this morning in a slim-cut navy and green tartan printed suit with a dark brown vest, grey shirt and blue tie under his trench coat with a pair of dark purple oxford style ankle boots. Alex came walking over to the car and knocked on the passenger side window. Frost leaned over and opened the door. Alex slipped inside turning around.

“Hey guys, ready to see the place?”

Jack grinned. “Yep, I’m ready.”

Alex grinned holding a ring of keys up. “I’ll go unlock the gate then Frost can drive on through. See you guys on the other side.”

With that Alex hopped out and hurried over to the gate. After a couple of seconds he pushed the large iron gate open with a little bit of difficulty, then stepped aside. Frost drove on through, turning the car around once he was on the other side of the gate as Alex was pushing the gate closed again and walked over to the car.

Jack slipped out, then reached inside to take his wife’s red gloved hand in his dark purple one and helped her out. Where they stood was an open area that led to a line of gates that patrons would have walked through into the main park grounds. From here Harley could see the roller coaster, the ferris wheel, a pendulum ride called the Ali Baba. In the back there seemed to be a Balloon Race ride; there was what looked like a old fashioned street sign post with colorful arrows pointing in different directions with names painted across them. They saw a tunnel of love, a mini-train ride, a haunted house, a hall of mirrors, a place called a madhouse, a swinging boat, a carousel, bumper cars, flying scooters, a Hurricane, a water ride called a log flume and a wipe-out ride. Harley was impressed with the number of rides the place had. There were other signs that pointed to refreshment stands, animal shows, and a magician. Jack was grinning from ear to ear, his blue eyes dancing.

He grinned at Harley. “This is fantastic!”

Alex called over to them. “There is a fucking two story building over this way that used to be the home for the owner. I think it was a fucking tavern or bar or something before that, then a speakeasy after that...anyway, he lived on the site. The realtor said it was actually really fucking nice at one time. I guess it used to be a tavern, then as some point, during Prohibition, it was a speakeasy and now...well, this fucking mess.”

The three of them followed along behind Alex as he stepped onto an overgrown white stone path that ran around behind the ticket stands and the carnival rides. Jack pulled out his cigarettes while gazing around. Harley reached into his inner coat pocket, startling him slightly as she retrieved his lighter. She grinned at him and flicked the lighter to life. Jack grinned holding his cigarette to his mouth as his wife lit it for him, their eyes glued to each other as they walked.
“This place used to have a lot of fucking old brick buildings along this block, but when the guy who owned this place bought it he had all the fucking buildings torn down, though the one he used as his base of operations.” Alex continued talking as their small group navigated the overgrown path that ran along behind several attractions until they came to another gate.

There were several trees along this part of the park which Harley could guess that in summer, when the trees were covered in leaves, would act as a sort of natural screen to the building that Alex said was back here.

Alex, holding the ring of keys, inserted one into the lock of the gate and flung it open. They walked down the path toward the building.

The building itself was indeed a two story brick building that looked to date back to the turn of the twentieth century. Alex fumbled with the keys for a moment until he found the one he wanted, opened the door, stepped inside, and flipped a switch. He glanced around as the others joined them. “Took the liberty of having the fucking electricity turned back on,” he said as they all stood in the doorway and looked around.

Jack smiled, smoke drifting from between his lips as he flicked his dying cigarette to the ground, putting it out with the toe of his shoe and patted Alex on the shoulder. “Good man.”

Alex grinned leading the way into the house, now dimly lit by a weak cascade of yellow light.

Their small group stepped into the main room of the building which at one time had been the main tap room of the bar, but had been turned into a living room of sorts. As their eyes adjusted to the weak light, they all realized it was much more than simply a living room.

The place was completely furnished, but what had them all looking around in shock, mouths hanging open and eyes wide, was the fact that the place was filled to the brim with stuff. And not just any “stuff” Harley thought, but the damn place reminded her of museum. The placed looked as if a curiosity cabinet and an old lady who collected weird stuff had a baby together...that would be this house, Harley realized. It was freaky, weird and just absolutely amazing she thought with a wide grin spreading across her face.

Alex muttered, his eyes wide in disbelief. “Fuck me.”

Jack muttered in return, but with a wide grin on his face, his eyes dancing with delight. “Exactly.”

Frost frowned wrinkling his nose at the smell of dust and possibly mildew. “This place is a fire hazard and a freak show.”

While Harley giggled and clapped her hands. “Look at all this neat stuff!!”

The room had some your typical thrift store finds in regards to the couch and chairs, each looking as if they may have been fashionable furniture in the 1970’s, but those two pieces were the only “normal” items in the room.

There was one wall, where the remains of the bar counter was located, the surface littered with a wide variety of what looked like wind-up toys, ancient looking automatons, and little dime store slot machines. On the wall behind the counter, where at one time bottles of alcohol had been kept, the shelves were now covered in a collection of specimen cases contains butterflies and other insects, jars with cloudy liquid and things that Harley couldn’t quite see, alongside skeletons and skulls, both human and animal. Not all of these were “normal” either, Harley noted. She saw a Fiji mermaid, a couple of pairs of conjoined twins and other natural occurring (or perhaps unnaturally occurring)
abnormalities. Another wall contained dolls, porcelain dolls from the looks of them. They also had the distinction of being mostly creepy looking clown dolls Harley noted.

Tugging Harley along with him, Jack headed over to the shelves of bones and specimen jars in order to get a closer look. They were both standing there grinning at the display before them when Harley glanced down, noticing what looked to be a trap door. She frowned then glanced over her shoulder toward Alex who was holding up one of the porcelain clown dolls.

“Alex, does this place have a basement?” Harley asked.

Jack glanced down after Harley spoke, also noticed the outline of the trap door. Alex didn’t bother looking over as he set the doll down and picked up another. “Yeah it does, a full basement. I think that’s where they kept the beer and shit when this place was a bar.”

Harley let out a sigh of relief. She glanced at her husband and whispered. “No secret Owl stuff.”

* 

As their small group made their way through the room and into other parts of the house, they found vintage circus posters on the walls, posters advertising sideshow freaks, girly shows, clowns and acrobats. They discovered rooms filled with shrunken heads and taxidermy animals, and another room that contained an old, small, mule drawn calliope. The kitchen had the typical appliances, all dating from several decades back it seemed, but the collection even spilled into this room with little figures of circus bears balanced on balls, and parades of gaily colored circus elephant salt and pepper shakers and a clown cookie jar.

Jack and Harley strolled hand in hand through the place, their eyes dancing with delight.

Harley giggled. “This place is amazing!”

Jack nodded. “I mean, I know we can’t keep all of this, but...this is perfect sweets! Our own little circus!”

Harley grinned at him when the both heard Alex yell. “Hey guys! I found the fucking stairs.”

Jack grinned at Harley. She giggled and together they dashed off in the direction of Alex’s voice.

Alex was standing by a set of stairs that led upward into darkness. Alex was just leaning over to flip the light switch then Jack and Harley showed up from the kitchen. Frost was standing nearby, holding a figure that looked to Harley like a tiny naked lady with a snake wrapped around her naughty bits. When Harley giggled, Frost’s head snapped up and he nearly dropped the figurine to the floor, but at the last second he caught it out of the air and placed it back on the tiny table beside the stairs where the figure had been sitting, judging by the clear ring surrounded by dust on the table’s surface.

Alex was frowning looking up, one foot on the bottom stair as he flipped the light switch on which brought the stairs into view more clearly.

The stairs were relatively clear of knickknacks though they were painted in a strange combination of greens, purples and reds. Jack chuckled taking Harley’s hand. “Shall we sweets?”

“Oh we shall!” Harley giggled and the two of the danced up the stairs. Jack laughed as they danced up the stairs then back down again, stomping out a rhythm together.

Alex shook his head watching the two of them. Frost clapped to the beat realizing they were
stomping out a song together, especially when Harley surprised them as she started to sing while using her natural grace to dance up and down the stairs in a beat to match the song she was singing. Jack stopped dancing with her to press himself against the wall to watch her, a grin on his face, but his eyes were filled with love as Harley, her voice pitched high almost mimicking Betty Boop started to sing while fluttering her eyes at

Jack, winking and twisting to dance up the stairs turning around to blow a kiss at him.

“I wanna be loved by you, just you
And nobody else but you
I wanna be loved by you, alone!
Boop-boop-a-doop!
I wanna kissed by you, just you
Nobody else but you
I wanna be kissed by you, alone!”

She giggled and ended her song with a loud playful “Boop-Boop-a-doop!” before she ran up the stairs and disappeared. Jack laughed running after her. “HEY!”

Alex shook his head following up the stairs. “Never a dull moment with those two.”

Frost nodded. “Yep. Best job I ever took deciding to work for Mr. Wayne.”

The two men shared a laugh and headed up the stairs.

* *

The four of them went up to the second floor where they found several bedrooms. Unlike the ground floor, this floor was not crammed with as many knick knacks and collectibles, but there was still a large collection of circus and carnival memorabilia littered through the five rooms and bathroom located on the second floor.

Their small group split up on the landing, moving away from one another as they explored the house. Harley grabbed Jack’s hand when he caught up with her, pressing a quick kiss to his mouth before she hauled him into one of the bedrooms, slamming the door behind her.

The room that Harley dragged Jack into contained an old canopy bed in what once were bright circus colors of blue, red and yellow, now faded and worn and covered in a fine layer of dust. The walls in here, Jack noticed, like some of the walls downstairs, were decorated with old circus posters, mostly from the between the early twentieth century to around the 1950’s judging by the style of the posters.

Harley was wandering around the room picking up objects, mostly strange little figures of clowns and acrobats. Harley giggled holding up a clown figure. “This guy had a clown fetish.”

Jack chuckled. “Sure seems that way.”

He frowned as he walked over to what he thought was a closet door and opened it. His frown changed to a grin in surprise. “Harley, come here!”
Harley, who had been examining a large carousel horse that was actually a hippocampus carved of what felt like wood to her, glanced over her shoulder to see Jack standing in the doorway with stairs leading up. She could feel the cold Gotham air coming through the door. “What’s that?” she asked hurrying over to her husband’s side. Jack put his arm around her waist and the two of them looked up.

“I think it leads to the roof,” Jack said. “Wanna go look?”

Harley giggled. “Sure puddin.”

Jack took her hand and together they raced up the stairs bursting out onto the flat roof of the brick building laughing. Together, the two of them walked to the edge of the building looking out onto the amusement park. The snow was coming down thicker, giving the old abandoned amusement park a fairytale quality as it began to stick to the ground and on the rides like a coating of fairy dust.

Jack pulled Harley into his arms, pressing her back up against his chest as he wrapped his arms around her waist. “So, what do you think? Think this will make a good home for us?”

Harley leaned back against him smiling as she watched the snow falling, coating the rides and turning them into frozen ghosts. “I like it Jack. I think it will be perfect.”

Jack grinned and turned her around in his arms. He looked down at her as the snow stuck to her hat and melted on her cheeks. He smiled as he cupped Harley’s face between his hands and stared down at her, his blue eyes roaming her face while his gloved thumbs caressed her cheeks.

“I love you Harls. You rescued me, you’ve been by my side through so much. I couldn’t survive without you.” He whispered and rubbed his nose against hers. Harley giggled having slid her arms under his coat and around his waist smiling up at him. “I love you too puddin. You are part me Jack...where you go, I go, forever.”

Jack leaned in and kissed her, a soft passionate kiss that quickly and easily turned into something deeper. Harley stood up on her toes kissing him harder, her hands sliding down and inside the back of his slacks. She stopped kissing him when she realized all she was finding was bare skin. Even through her gloves she could feel the heat of his skin and realized that he wasn’t wearing any boxers. Harley giggled mischievously. “Jack Wayne, where are your boxers?”

Jack chuckled in response. “I have no idea Mrs. Wayne.”

Harley laughed as Jack reached up between them grabbing the zipper of her parka and pulled it down until the coat fell open on its own. He pulled her tighter into his embrace, shifting his arms from outside her coat to wrap around her waist under the coat. “You ever have a quickie on a roof Mrs. Wayne? In the snow?”

Harley giggled. “I don’t believe I have Mr. Wayne. Are you going to take advantage of me on a roof?”

Jack laughed. “Oh indeedie I am sweets.”

He kissed her again, his gloved hands sliding up under her sweater and shirt. His hands glided up her back only realizing after a moment that he still hadn’t found her bra strap. Jack pulled back with a grin. “You’re not wearing a bra.”

Harley grinned impishly. “No, I’m not.”

“What else aren't you wearing Mrs. Wayne?” Jack asked with a smirk on his red lips.
“Why don’t you find out?” Harley giggled.

Jack gave her another smirk, moving his hands from her back to the waist of her leggings, ready to pull them down, but Harley grabbed his wrists stopping him. “In a minute puddin.”

She dropped to her knees and looked up at him, her hands momentarily on his hips. Snow decorated the fur trim of her hat and landed lightly on her eyelashes, the grey light catching them and making her lashes sparkle. Harley caught her bottom lip with her teeth as she worked to unfasten the button of his pants while Jack held his coat out of her way. She hissed in annoyance, and Jack laughed lightly at her cute annoyed face. Apparently her gloves were making it slightly difficult, Jack noticed with an amused smirk. Harley snarled and pulled her gloves off with her teeth, spitting them onto the snowy rooftop before reaching back for the button and zipper of his slacks, her nose scrunched up as she worked to get them open.

Jack watched her, unmoving, his eyes glued to his wife. She was so pretty he thought, so dazzlingly gorgeous. She glanced up, her eyes looking like pieces of blue crystal framed by her dark lashes and her stunning smile. Each look, each moment he thought, let him fall more in love with her, more obsessed, more in need of her. She was the only thing in all the world keeping him from losing complete control.

She grinned at him, sharing that beautiful smile he loved so much with him before she directed her attention back to her work of getting his slacks open. Within seconds she had pulled the cloth aside to reveal his erection to the cool Gotham air. And he really wasn’t wearing any boxer she saw with delight.

Harley giggled with pleasure. “Oh puddin!”

Then, before Jack could form a response, Harley looked up at him, playful mischief dancing in her blue eyes before she wrapped her lips around him and sucked him into her mouth, her hands caressing up his thighs and over his hips. Harley ran the pads of her thumbs along the space between his groin and stomach, splaying her fingers wide over his skin, touching as much of his warm flesh that she could.

Jack groaned as the shift from the crisp, cold air, to the warmth of her mouth and tongue caused his knees to wobble for a moment. Jack dropped his hands from his waist to reach out and cradle her head gently in his hands. Harley grabbed his hips, then reached around to cup his ass as she began to press her lips down on him, sliding her lips down his member before pressing her mouth around him, her tongue weaving back and forth along the base of his erection, her fingers pressing into his skin as she took all of him into her mouth. She could feel the cold of the roof transferring up her legs from where her knees were in the accumulating snow, but she didn’t care. Jack’s skin was warm and smooth; she only cared about what she was doing to her puddin, the way he felt in her mouth, the moans and twitches of his body as she sucked and licked, rolling her tongue around his erection in her mouth. When she took him deep into her mouth, her forehead touching his stomach was warm. Her hand squeezed his ass, tugging him closer.

Jack groaned. “Harley...uh...mm...Harls...”

He closed his eyes arching his back giving in to just feeling the wetness of her mouth, the warm press of her lips and the gently brush of her teeth against his sensitive member.

Harley smiled taking him deep into her mouth, feeling him nearly touching the back of her throat. She relaxed, enjoying not just the pleasure she was giving her lover, but the power of it. She loved the power to make him moan, to make her man, her husband, her lover, her puddin, weak. She bobbed her head slowly, her tongue moving over him, feeling the satin of his erection in her mouth.
From his reactions, his moaning and the shuddering she detected in his legs, she was pleasing him as much as she ever had...and that was what made her ecstatic, her ability to fulfill his desire and deepen their connection. She sucked down on him, moving her mouth up and down, coating him in her saliva and enjoying the way his fingers twitched against her head. She could feel him struggling to resist the urge to dig his fingers into her hat and hair.

Harley wrapped her tongue around the head of his erection, flicking her tongue back and forth before rolling it around him once more just before she stood up. She grinned like a cheshire cat when she stood back up.

Jack growled playfully at her. “You are a dirty little minx Harley. I love it.”

Harley giggled. “Mm...that’s one of the things you like about me puddin.”

Jack grinned backing her up against the roof’s brick edge that hit her around the middle of her thighs. She dropped down on her rear as Jack yanked her sweater and shirt up, exposing her bare breasts to the cold. The chill air felt erotic against her bare skin, the pleasure intensifying when Jack leaned in to brush his hot, wet tongue over her erect nipples, flicking over one before switching to the other. The cold, combined with the chilling of his saliva against her nipples made Harley groan. Jack wrapped a hand around her back to keep her balanced on the edge while he leaned down only a little awkwardly where he positioned himself between her legs to grant himself better access to her breasts. Harley moaned, her hands grasping the brick edge behind her, and glanced down at Jack. She couldn’t see him, his face against her breasts was covered by her bunched up sweater and shirt, but she could feel the intense pleasure of his lips and tongue playing slowly across her nipples. His nose pressed against her skin was cold, but his lips, which had started cold were quickly turning warm against her skin, his breath warm, brushing the fine hairs of her skin. The leather of his gloves felt tantalizing as he squeezed and lifted her breast, his other hand beside her, pressing down against the brick as he held himself over her tugging on her nipples with his lips.

Harley whimpered; the pleasure was almost too much. His licks and sucks sent ripples of warmth to her groin that made her squirm.

Jack pulled back, startling her as he lifted her to her feet and spun her around. In the next motion he grabbed the sides of her leggings and pulled them down, exposing her to the brisk air and snow.

Harley let out a startled yelp as Jack bent her over, pushed her down. She grabbed the cold brick with her bare hands while at the same moment that he slid her snow booted feet further apart, placing one hand against her lower back while with the other he guided himself into her.

Harley groaned went he pushed into her. She was so wet and the sensation of Jack thrusting into her was warm and welcome. She groaned when she felt his groin and pelvis against her backside, the press of his skin against hers.

Jack grabbed her hips with both gloved hands, his feet set apart and started to thrust hard and fast, their cool flesh meeting each other as he smacked into her, the sound of their flesh slapping against each other seemed to echo across the abandoned park while they both looked out onto their new home, savoring being one with each other.

Alex frowned. So far he had found a bedroom that had a tiny twin size bed with a balloon theme. The walls had been painted with balloons and clowns...the previous owner really had a fucking clown fetish Alex thought as he walked back out into the hall only to meet Frost.
He grinned at the taller man. “Anything interesting?”

Frost shrugged. “That room back there has a lot of photos of circus sideshow people, and shelves full of fiestaware like my gram used to own.”

Alex frowned. “Fiestaware?”

Frost chuckled. “It’s these dishes that come in bright solid colors like reds, blues, and yellows. Real popular in the late ‘30’s, ‘40’s and ‘50s then saw a resurgence in the late 1980’s.”

Alex stared at the big man who shrugged. “Like I said, my gram use to collect it.”

Alex chuckled. “You are a fucking strange man Frost.”

Frost smiled and shrugged again heading toward the last room, the one in which Jack and Harley had disappeared.

“They’re awful quiet in there,” Frost said with concern.

The two men headed into the room looking around, but they saw no sign of Jack or Harley. Frost pulled his gun, looking around frantically. So much had occurred in the last couple of months, and they had enough enemies, he wasn’t taking any chances.

Alex frowned in confusion. “Now where the hell…”

He opened the closet door and let out a sigh of relief. “Hey Frost, I bet they’re up there on the roof.”

He held the door open showing Frost a set of stairs leading up. Frost started to walk toward the door and stairs when both men heard the sound of Harley, groaning and crying out loudly.

“Uhhh…uhh…puddin…oh!”

Alex paled and took a step back letting the door close. “Ah…you know, I think they’re riding one of the fucking rides. Let’s go look at freaky shit downstairs.”

Frost blinked and holstered his gun. “Yeah, that sounds like a good idea.”

*

Later, the four of them were sitting in the car; Alex was turned around to talk to Jack and Harley.

“I can have some people here tonight to get that house cleaned up for you guys. I can send a few guys out to Catherine House to get whatever you want to take with you to the apartment I picked out for you guys, if you want. How much of that stuff at the clown house you want taken out?” Alex glanced between them two of them with his brows lifted.

Jack and Harley shared a look, both of them smiling at the other and at the same time they both said.

“None of it.”

Alex frowned. “You two fucking serious?”

They both nodded.

Alex rolled his eyes. “You two are a couple of fucking freaks. Okay, well I think my guys can have it livable in a couple of days, maybe four at the most, depends on what they find. That sound good?”
Jack leaned back pulling Harley with him and holding her close. “That sounds fine Alex, just fine.”

Frost started the car, pulling out of the gate that Alex had opened. Alex turned back again once they were outside the gate. “So, you meeting with the mysterious fucking douchebag tonight that’s been fixing fights and messing with my dad?”


Alex frowned. “I don’t feel right about you going alone.”

“I won’t be alone, Harley and Frost will be with me. I would be stupid to walk in there on my own. I’m not stupid Alex.”

“I know man. It’s just...you’re taking a big fucking risk for me and my dad. I...I appreciate it.” Alex’s frown deepened.

Jack reached up and laid a hand on Alex’s shoulder. “I know Alex. It’s just a little payback for all that I owe you. We’re friends right?”

Alex nodded. “Thanks man.”

* 

Evening in Gotham brought with it heavier snowfall and bitter winds.

Frost drove the car around the corner and slowed down carefully. Paddy’s Pub was located on the corner inside an old two story brick building. The name of the place was painted across a dark green decorative wood trim over a large glass window which had a large neon shamrock in the window that also carried the pub’s glowing name in the middle of the shamrock. The sound of music could be heard even outside of the building, what sounded like a live band doing a cover of Flogging Molly’s “Drunken Lullabies.” Frost parked the car a little ways down the street, parallel parking along the curb. The tall man got out of the car and walked around to open the door for Jack.

Jack stepped out dressed in his black trench coat, his pair of black and white pointed oxfords hitting the pavement with a sharp sound as he exited the car. Tonight Jack was dressed all in black, a black suit, black dress shirt and black tie; the only color was the purple and black checked waistcoat he wore underneath his jacket with a silver chain hanging across the front.

He turned around and handed Harley out of the car to stand next to him. She was dressed in her own three piece suit, also all in black, no tie, just the first four buttons showing off the simple gold chain around her neck. The waistcoat she wore was red along with a pair of pointed toe red oxfords with a thick two inch heel. She wore her golden blonde hair loose and soft around her shoulders. Jack grinned, taking her arm in his before the three of them crossed the street and headed into the pub.

The inside of Paddy’s Pub was fairly crowded. The warm amber light showed a bar that ran the entire length of the back wall of the room, the wall behind it covered from floor to ceiling with shelves of booze, bottles and bottles of alcohol to cater to as many of the pub’s patrons as possible. On a stage at the far right, a live band was playing with bagpipes, banjo, guitars, violin and drums; small round wooden tables and stools with patrons at them were scattered around the stage. On the left were a few small booths and a large one that circled the wall at the far left.

Jack and Harley stood at the entrance with Frost behind them looking around when a tall, skinny man with a narrow face and large ears hurried over to them.

“You Jack?” the man asked with a smile.
Jack glanced at Harley and nodded. “You who I’m supposed to meet?”

The skinny man laughed. “Oh no. I’m Jay. If you’ll follow me...”

Jay turned and hurried over to the left, moving over to the booth. Jack frowned and followed, keeping Harley on his arm.

Sitting in the middle of the booth was a heavy set man, balding, with a large crooked nose that looked to have been broken more than once, and a pot belly wearing a tailored brown suit. In front of him was a plate and while Jack had never eaten it, he recognized the dish; haggis, clapshot and whiskey sauce with a bottle of irish whiskey and a glass sitting next to the plate. The music had changed to an ear splitting version of “Going Out in Style” by the Dropkick Murphys. Jack frowned, glancing back as the cover band as Jay motioned for them to take the stools that sat across from the table booth. Jack took Harley’s coat for her, sliding it down her shoulders (and stealing a kiss on her ear) before removing his own coat. Jay smiled and offered to take their coats for them.

Jack sat after pulling out the stool for Harley, opening his jacket before taking his seat. Frost stood behind Jack and Harley, a silent shadow. The man in the booth glanced at Frost, but if he found the bodyguard unusual, he said nothing.

Jay grinned. “What can I get you to drink?”

Jack smiled glancing at Harley. “You trust me poo?”

Harley’s smile widened. “With my heart and my life puddin.”

His eyes twinkled at that response and he grabbed her hand kissing her knuckles before he turned to Jay. “Two black velvet.”

Jay nodded, looked at Frost who gave a slight shake of his head, and took off to prepare their drinks. Jack turned his attention to the man eating in front of him. He waited, not asking any questions, not offering any information. The man continued to eat as if they weren't there while Jay returned with the two drinks, both in tall, finely crafted wine glasses.

Finally, after what seemed forever to Harley, the band’s lead singer yelled into the mic the name of the song just finished. “All right everyone!! Ready for another?!” The crowd yelled back. The singer, a young skinny man with a shock of red hair grinned at the crowd. “Time for some Barrels of Whiskey!”

The singer jumped back and launched hard and heavy into the song.

Jack sipped his drink, then set it down on the table across from the man they were here to see. The man glanced up, the fork he was holding, halfway to his mouth, his mud brown eyes watching as Jack calmly crossed his legs and pulled his cigarettes from his inside jacket pocket. He pulled out his lighter and spun the wheel, each movement slow and calculated. Once his cigarette was lit, Jack rested his elbow on his folded knee holding his cigarette between his two fingers, smoke trailing lazily from between his lips, his blue eyes seeming that much brighter between the hazy smoke and the dark amber light.

Harley did her best not the stare longingly at Jack, but she found it difficult to resist looking at her husband; swooning would look pretty silly in front of this man, because Jack was her husband Harley thought...or would it be silly? Swooning over her husband was good! Not many women could say that their significant other made them swoon. Harley smiled and gazed at Jack, her eyes
full of love and utter devotion while she sipped her drink with her left hand, she reached over to lay her free hand on Jack’s thigh. She was sitting close enough to Jack that she could easily caress his thigh.

The man across from them finished his meal, wiped his mouth with a paper napkin, and tossed it onto the plate as he pushed it away before he spoke.

“Let me introduce myself. My name is Nardo Galante. I’m here in this...interesting city of yours instead of my hometown of Chicago, doing a little business in Gotham. I like to gamble on the fights. Much like anyone else, I suppose, but unlike some people, I like to win.”

He looked up and studied Jack with his brown eyes narrowing marginally. “I was told you’re the little brother of Bruce Wayne. I know what it’s like to be on the low end of the family. Not as good as your brother, your brother holds all the power, that sort of shit. But I’m here to make you a deal based on your set of skills Mr. Wayne.” Galante picked up his drink, swallowing the contents in one gulp before he filled the glass again, taking another quick swallow before he continued. “You, my friend, beat two of my best fighters. I’m impressed and…” The man paused to belch loudly before he continued. “I don’t impress easily. So, Jack Wayne, I’m here to make you an offer. You’re a good fighter, lots of people are going to start betting on you, especially at tomorrow night’s fight. I want you to be in my pocket...Jack. I’ll pay you and don’t worry; I’ll make it worth your while. You do what I say, throw a fight when I tell you, win a fight when I tell you...then I’ll make sure you’re paid well, very well. Better than you would otherwise make. Understand?”

Jack glanced at Harley. She smiled and shrugged giving his thigh a squeeze at the same time. Jack could tell she was nervous, worried; her anxiety transferred through her touch. He held his cigarette between his lips, covering her hand and squeezing, transferring comfort to her before he spoke.

Jack took his cigarette out, flicking it to the floor of the pub and picked up his drink. “So, how much are we talking about?”

Nardo grinned. “How does fifty thousand sound to you?”

Jack frowned slightly as if he were thinking over the sum. “Do I get that much every time I follow a fight on your instructions, win or lose?”

Nardo nodded. “You follow orders, I make you richer than you already are Mr. Wayne. There is no such thing as too much money. Besides, you do what I want, you won’t have to worry about getting that pretty face of yours too fucked up.” Nardo grinned.

Jack finished off his drink and set his glass down before he spoke. “I think we have a deal Mr. Galante.”

*  

Jack pulled out his cell phone as soon as they were back in the car, Frost driving them to the apartment that Alex had arranged for them.

Alex answered on the second ring. “How did it go?”

Jack smiled. “I agreed to help him. His name is Nardo Galante.”

Alex asked quizzically. “Nardo Galante? Seriously?”

Jack nodded. “Balding big guy in a brown suit from Chicago, likes Irish whiskey.”
Alex hissed. “Fuck. Galante...he’s someone’s fucking cousin or some shit. I had heard some of the families up in Chicago were trying to get a fucking foothold in Gotham. Guess they’re fucking tired of the shitshow there and are trying to branch out. Fuck, leave it to my dad to have some big time bozo going after him.”

Jack could hear Alex cursing under his breath before he spoke again. “Just be fucking careful Jack. This guy, Galante, has some mob ties too.”

Jack laughed putting his arm around Harley’s shoulders. “Alex, this is me--careful is my middle name.”

“Ha ha, you’re fucking funny,” Alex muttered.

Jack chuckled. “Look, I pass this information to Penguin. He’s the one who is going to take care of it. Instead of throwing the fight tomorrow like that fat bastard wants, I win. And I win big. After that, my part is done. You tell Frank to bet large on me, I’m going to make it worth his while.” Jack smiled sideways at Harley who had laid her head against his chest, wrapping her arms around his waist. “Besides, I have my own turf war to worry about; Penguin can clean up his own backyard. I agreed to get him the information, that’s as far as I’m going.”

Alex sighed. Jack could almost visualize his friend nodding. “Okay, just...be careful.”

Jack smiled and repeated. “I’m always careful.”

* 

Across town in Gotham’s Diamond district, Tomaso Panessa stepped out of the taxi in front of The Gates apartment building. The building seemed to be reaching toward the heavens as Tomaso took a moment to look upward. Ben was standing beside him.

Ben frowned following Tomaso’s gaze. “You really think Falcone will help you?”

Tomaso’s expression turned murderous. “That old bitch better help me. I’m part of the Organization. Wayne’s attack on me is an attack on all of us.”

Ben frowned. He knew in the Court, it might be that way depending on your family’s lineage or your past service to the Court, but he wasn’t so sure that was how the mob worked. He elected to say nothing.

Tomaso turned to Ben. “How to I look?”

Tomaso had a bandage across his forehead, a dark purple bruise under one eye. He was wearing a black pinstripe suit, with white shirt and red tie, his thick hair styled. He looked every inch the crime boss, even with the injury.

Ben smiled. “You look good.”

Tomaso nodded walking to the door. They stopped at the doorman who stepped forward. “Names, who you are here to see?”

Tomaso frowned, but answered. “Tomaso Panessa and Ben Orchard.”

The doorman consulted his cell phone then nodded holding the door open for them. “Enjoy your visit.”
Tomaso sighed walking by the man hurriedly, his stride long and quick. Ben rushed to catch up.
“You still want to go with me to see Jack fight tomorrow?”

Tomaso didn’t spare a glance at Ben. “I want to go shoot him tomorrow.”

Ben pouted. “Tommy you promised. I mean, I know you're pissed, but you said…”

Tomaso waved off his whining. “Yes.”

Ben frowned, his brow furrowed, and then he smiled brightly. “I have an idea.”

As the two men walked onto the elevator, the man inside in uniform pressed a button without asking them which floor. Tomaso frowned looking over at Ben. “Idea?” he asked.

Ben grinned. “I’ll tell you later.”

*

The two men rode the elevator to the penthouse, the doors opening to a private hallway. Here there were two other men, both armed, waiting for them. Tomaso held his arms out, legs spread. Ben followed and the two men were quickly searched before the door to the penthouse was opened.

Walking inside, the men were greeted by white.

The penthouse apartment was huge, taking up the entire upper floor of The Gates apartment building. They were met on the inside by a young blond woman in a tight black pen skirt and white blouse, her hair pulled up into a neat, high ponytail. She smiled pleasantly at the two men.

“If you will follow me.”

Her black heels made a crisp click against the white tiled floor as she led them deeper into the living space. The main room had a window that comprised one entire wall showing Gotham spread out in a beautiful display of multicolored lights. Everything in the room, the couches, the chairs, the lamps, except the floors here and the few tables, were white. The wood was all a light polished shade of blonde. Lounging in one of the chairs sat Carmine “The Roman” Falcone.

Falcone was pushing close to sixty, but his white hair was still thick and wavy as it had been when he was a young man. He was dressed in black slacks, white shirt, the tie hanging loose around his neck, his black dress shoes polished until they reflected the light. He held a champagne glass in one hand, and a Gurkha Black Dragon cigar in the other hand, the rich, sweet smell of the tobacco filled the room as Carmine looked out onto the Gotham night.

The two men were shown to two white chairs across from Falcone. They sat and waited silently until The Roman acknowledge their presence.

Carmine sipped his drink before setting it down on his large, heavy wooden desk and turned to face the two men. He smiled as he took a hard drag on his cigar, blowing the smoke out through his nose and took a seat in his high backed, black leather chair. When he spoke, he had a barely perceptible old world accent, only slightly coloring the sound of his words.

“So, Tomaso, I heard you had a little problem with a building.”

Tomaso leaned forward, his hands clasped between his knees. “Yes, I know who did it too.”

Carmine smiled with a nod. “I heard it was that Red Hood gang.”
Tomaso nodded. “It was, sir. I’m here to ask for your help in taking care of them. They killed all my men, they killed family.”

Carmine leaned back in his chair watching the smoke rise from the lit tip of his cigar. He didn’t say anything for a very long time. Tomaso didn’t move, watching the older man with growing trepidation.

Falcone licked the side of his mouth, studying the cigar in his hand a moment longer before he spoke. He frowned taking another drag on the cigar, slowly blowing the smoke out after a couple of seconds.

“Tomaso…” Carmine chuckled. “You were the head of one of Gotham’s five families. You are the one responsible for their deaths. You want revenge, you are on your own because in the families’ eyes, you are no longer fit to sit at the table.”

Tomaso stood up. “You can’t!! I’ll give you anything you ask! This doesn’t just affect me, he attacked one of the five. You can’t just do nothing!”

Carmine narrowed his eyes. “This is the first time you’ve come to me for help Tomaso. Until now you have never called, never invited me or my wife over even though my wife is the godmother to your children and now, now you want me to fix your problem for you? You have done nothing but take take take from the families Tomaso. You have brought shame…” Here Carmine looked pointedly at Ben with eyes that had seen much. “Your private business has been seen by others. You have tried to take more than what is yours and now...now you want help.” Falcone laughed. “Maybe, just maybe this Red Hood deserves your seat now. He didn’t just hurt you...he took out your entire clan.”

Carmine picked up his empty glass. The young woman who had escorted them into the apartment seemed to appear out of nowhere to fill the glass.

Tomaso snarled. “You know who is leading that fucking Red Hood gang? Do you? Jack fucking Wayne! Jack Wayne!!! Bruce Wayne’s little fucking crazy brother, that’s who!!! I want him dead! Dead! Dead! Dead! I want JUSTICE!”

Ben frowned at Tomaso, his hands balling into fists.

Carmine laughed. “That makes what he did even better Tomaso. A Wayne you say...then perhaps he is the one I should be talking to and not you.” Carmine took a sip of his champagne before leaning back in his seat and putting the cigar back in his mouth.

“Leave Tomaso. You get your house in order, you come back, we’ll talk. You don’t, then I will be talking to Jack Wayne instead of you.” Carmine smiled with a slight lift of his white eyebrows.

Tomaso started to take a step toward the older man, his eyes flashing with hate, but before he could move more than one step, the young woman had a barrel of a Glock 26 against his temple. Falcone smiled.

“Goodbye Tomaso.”

* 

Jack flexed his fingers, staring at the man he was to fight. The man was tall, blonde with the kind of look that would place him on a beach in California instead of on the streets of Gotham. Frank had said his name was Michael Valley. Jack was supposed to throw the fight for Galante. Jack glanced over at Penguin sitting on his little throne. He had T trope pass the message to Oswald about who was
interfering with the fights. Penguin looked at Jack giving him a slight nod of approval. Jack frowned and turned away to exchange a glance with is wife as she stood on the very edge of the ring. She looked gorgeous tonight wearing a dress that was totally inappropriate for the weather, but that worked well within the confines of the fight club. It was a tight fitting lace, sleeveless mini dress with a high collar, but see-through top. She was wearing a lacy red bra underneath, and Jack knew for a fact she wasn’t wearing any panties and a pair of black over the knee boots. She had promised him sex in the back seat of the car on the way to the apartment. Jack licked his lips, gazing at her hungrily imagining his wife on his lap, the dress pushed up to her hips, wearing those boots while they fucked in the back seat. He wanted to end this fight fast and get to the back seat as quickly as possible. Harley smiled at him and winked. Jack grinned. Yeah, he was going to beat the shit out of this guy and get out of here.

An Elvis Presley song was playing loud enough that it was almost impossible to hear anyone speak when suddenly the music jerked and stopped. A young attractive man stepped out into the middle of the fight club’s ring.

He smiled, holding a bullhorn to his mouth. “Ladies and Gentlemen! Ready for tonight’s first fight?”

The crowd cheered loudly. The young man grinned. “All right! Our first fight tonight features the new favorite, JACK!!”

Jack stepped forward. He was topless, barefoot, wearing a pair of black jeans this evening. Harley had a hold of his dress shirt.

“And his challenger tonight--Michael!”

The crowd cheered again, if not as enthusiastically as they had for Jack.

Jack grinned as much to himself as to the crowd as he sauntered out to out to the middle to meet California as Jack was already mentally calling the other man.

Michael walked out to met him with a cocky grin. “Get ready to eat pavement.”

Michael was only slightly taller than Jack. The blond man tried to use that little bit of height, leaning over Jack and giving him a smug look. Jack smirked. California clearly knew he was going to get to win this fight, so he was deciding to be as big of an ass as possible. Won’t he be surprised, Jack thought.

Jack chuckled then, looking up at Michael. “Why don’t you back off there California? I’m into the ladies.”

Michael narrowed his eyes. “It’s Michael, you dumbass.”

Jack grinned. “Sure, whatever California, whiny little bitch. You know California...it looks like your face caught on fire and someone tried to put it out with a hammer. I bet your poor mother cried when she saw you.” Jack chuckled at his own joke grinning brightly at Michael before giving him a saucy wink.

Michael's eyes bugged, which brought another chuckle to Jack’s lips, getting the result he wanted when the blond swung at him. Jack easily dodged the swing, surprising Michael by simply dropping down and letting the swing fly over his head. Jack popped back up with a grin just before his fist snapped out to hit Michael across the face hard enough that his head snapped to the right; he stumbled backwards. Jack, wanting to end this fight as swiftly as possible, took a step after Michael.

The blond kept his feet under him as Jack came after him.
Michael swung at Jack, again trying to hit Jack in the face, but Jack leaned out of the way, then struck Michael until the chin with a quick jab, snapping the man’s head back. Michael took a handful of stumbling steps backwards, but he still didn’t go down.

He glared at Jack but Jack could see the confusion in the other man’s eyes.

Jack smirked. “Thought this was going to be an easy fight, did you?”

Michael pursed his lips, furrowing his brow; his lips were split and he was dribbling blood as he hissed. “You fucking queer piece of shit!”

He stepped forward and took several hard punches at Jack, who simply danced out of the way grinning the entire time. Jack rolled his eyes. “You know, you’re impossible to underestimate.” Jack shook his head smiling. “I can’t believe Galante wanted me to throw a fight to a whimpering sexist, homophobic baby like you. Killing you would be a mercy, but...lucky for you I have a hot wife waiting to fuck my brains out in the backseat of a car and I really want to get this fight over with, so…”

Michael took another swing, Jack easily blocked the two wild swings with his forearms before he kicked Micheal hard in the stomach, dropping the blond man to the floor.

The crowd was cheering wildly and someone had started to chant. “JACK! JACK!”

Harley was jumping up and down with Frost and Frank beside her yelling. “KICK HIS ASS PUDDIN!”

Jack waltzed over to Michael as he lay on the ground groaning. Jack grinned down at him. “Sorry buddy, you heard the lady, I have to kick your ass. But since you’re facing the wrong way I’ll settle for stomping your balls.”

With that, Jack brought his foot up, then swiftly down, hard on Michael’s crotch. The man screamed, the sound high pitched enough that it could have almost broken glass.

The crowd gave a collective cringe.

Harley squealed and laughed. “That’s my puddin!!!”

Jack, smirking, waltzed over to his wife who was hopping up and down with glee. Jack grabbed her, swinging her into his arms and kissed her. The crowd was going crazy with cheers, while some of Galante’s men who were there to watch the match all looked horrified, no one wanting to tell their boss what had just happened.

Jack pulled away from her mouth and whispered to her in a soft warm voice that Harley could hear over the crowd. “Let’s go home.”

*

Frank had stayed behind to collect his winnings and to see if he could get lucky with the bartender. He had yanked Jack down into a hug with a smile. “Thanks man.”

Jack blushed hugging the much smaller man back. “It’s okay.”

Frank grinned. “You two have a good night. I’ll call Alex in a bit, let him know just how massive your win was...HA!”
Jack laughed. “Night Frank!”

Jack, his arm around Harley, walked out into the crisp Gotham air with a sigh. “Mm...now the ride home I’ve been looking forward to.”

Harley giggled.

Frost frowned then grimaced a little as he walked behind Jack and Harley knowing he was probably going to be having an interesting car trip when a group of six men swarmed out of the shadows like insects. Frost turned, tossing his coat back to pull out his weapon. A shot was fired at the same instant that the men came rushing toward their small group. Jack turned at the sound, the sharp crack of gunfire coming from behind him. Jack thrust Harley protectively behind him as they both turned just as Frost went down, hitting the pavement in a spray of blood.

Jack yelled. “FROST!”

Harley screamed. “FROST!”

Harley started to move toward their downed friend; Jack held a protective arm out to keep her from moving, but one of the attackers grabbed Harley by her hair, ripping her away from Jack. Jack’s reaction was swift as he turned, a snarl on his lips.

The man yanked Harley backwards bringing his gun around to place against her throat while his grip in her hair brought tears to her eyes, though she reacted by dropping her weight to break his hold on her hair.

Jack lunged, ignoring the weapon in the man’s hand as he slammed a fist into the man holding Harley. The vicious strike along with Harley’s simple maneuver caused the man to lose his grip on her.

The four other attackers grabbed Jack, hauling him backward by his arms, all of them struggling to secure him. Jack snarled, fighting with all his might. He freed one arm and slammed his elbow backward and up, breaking the nose of one man. One of them was yelling.

“Get the chloroform GODDAMNIT!! Get it over his face now!!”

Jack twisted, brought a foot up and slammed it down, the heel of his shoe catching one of the men in the arch and breaking his foot. Somehow that man kept a hold of Jack while another stepped back, pulling a bottle from his jacket.

Harley had turned on the man who had yanked her back by her hair; his lip and nose were bleeding from Jack’s assault, but as soon as Harley turned, her fingers bent, ready to claw his eyes out; the man brought his weapon up and shot.

Jack stopped his struggling when he saw Harley jerk backward as a bullet ripped through her in a shower of blood.

Jack stilled in a moment of shock. His heart seemed to stop beating, his eyes widening as he saw Harley go down and hit the snow dusted pavement. Her head bounced, a pool of blood forming under her...and she laid still. For a moment, the world stopped, all color drained away from everything, the only color was Harley and the deep crimson of her blood. Jack felt something slip away from him, the grasp he had on whatever it was, simply let go when he saw her fall, the lights of Gotham shining down on her still, bloody figure.

The world came rushing back, as if the bubble had popped and reality came rushing in to fill the
He screamed as tears sprang to the corners of his eyes as he cried out her name, mixed with an incoherent sound of his soul tearing. “HARLEY!”

It was enough time for the man with the chloroform to race up behind Jack, throwing an arm awkwardly over his fellow kidnappers to grab Jack by the face, covering his mouth and nose forcing him to breathe in the fumes.

Jack blinked in confusion, but he began to struggle too late. Jack fought, but he had breathed the drug in with his sobbing and rage. He stared at his wife’s figure, lying on the pavement, the image swimming for a moment until the red of her blood washed out everything, and within seconds Jack sagged and fell into unconsciousness.

The men quickly lifted him up and carried him to a car they had waiting, stopping to tie his arms behind his back and bind his ankles before putting him in the trunk of their car, a black Mazda Sedan.

In seconds they were gone, leaving two bodies in the alley.
Revenge

Jack stood at the opening to a dark alley. The only illumination was provided by a flickering street lamp near the entrance and behind him, casting his shadow, long and thin before him. The light flashed and winked; a dull electrical sound filled his ears as the light caused the shadow to dance along the pavement. His heart was slamming inside his chest, his palms were sweaty, his stomach turned, and his blood ran like ice through his veins.

He knew this place.

This was the place where his parents died, the alley where everything ended, where everything changed so terribly for him and Bruce. As soon as the memory asserted itself in his mind, Jack saw them, his parents, standing at the other end of the alley smiling at him dressed as they had been the night they died.

Jack’s mother dropped into a crouch. She was dressed liked he remembered her. Her hair done just so, the color of her dress...the red of her lips, everything as he remembered. He could see the light playing off the pearls on her neck...the bloodstained pearls, the pearls he had watched fall and dance over the pavement. She smiled at him, her red lips spreading across her face, but he could see the blood staining her lips even darker. Jack reached up and touched his own mouth remembering Harley, her smile, the press of her lips against his mouth, the way she would delicately spread the red lipstick across his lips...her light blue eyes looking up to meet his gaze and smile...the way she smiled...

“Come here Jackie, come to mama.” His mother’s voice was soft, melodic, she held her arms out to him smiling, inviting. The urge to run into her embrace was strong enough that he took a step forward. He heard the sound of his shoe scraping over the pavement when he moved. He wanted to run to her, to wrap his arms around her neck, to be enveloped in the warmth, the scent of his mother, to feel safe like he had when he was a child. He had never felt safe like that since...until he met Harley. When Harley held him, Jack felt safe...loved. Harley was his safe place...his center...Thinking of Harley hurt more than thinking about his long-dead mother...

“Come on Jackie.”

Jack’s eyes turned to his father who was smiling at him, his held hand out to him while his other hand rested on his wife’s shoulder. “Come on son; don’t keep us waiting.”

Jack took another step forward. He felt pulled toward them, compelled to move, to walk toward that need to have his parents back; to feel that innocence, that safety, that assurance that everything would be all right. But before he moved further than the first step, he heard his brother’s voice.

“Jack. Stop living in a fantasy and look...they are dead. You need to just accept it. Stop being so damn emotional.”

Jack blinked and then he saw two things. First, his brother--not the little boy that Bruce had been when their parents had been murdered--but Bruce as he was now, in an expensive dark suit, his blue eyes hard and cold, dark hair perfectly combed and styled.

He glared at his brother. “You need to toughen up Jack. No one is going to save you. All safety...love, it’s all just some dark, grimy illusion. No one will love you and even if they do...they leave or you drive them away. It’s just part of being a Wayne.”
Jack’s eyes turned from his brother, back to their parents. He saw that the blood he had glimpsed earlier wasn’t just on his mother’s pearls and teeth; her face was covered in it, blood dripping down to drip off her chin, smearing her makeup as it oozed a trail over his mother’s smile. Then Jack saw the bloody hole in her neck...

Jack turned his attention to his father, his eyes wide as the horror and fear of that night came rushing toward him. Thomas Wayne was smiling, but his teeth were covered in blood and there was a bloody, ragged hole that had ripped through his cheek, destroying part of his face. He put his arm out to his youngest son. “Come on Jack.”

“No. You’re dead. You’re both dead.” Jack covered his face with his hands, angry at himself for the hitch of pain in his voice. His parents’ phantoms started to laugh. Tears that Jack couldn’t control started to fall down his cheeks. Jack opened his fingers to stare at his parents just as their images shimmered and melted; soon they were replaced by two new figures.

Harley and Frost.

Frost just smiled. “Hey Boss.”

Harley spoke softly and her smile made his heart beat even faster. Her voice was sweet and soothing as she held out her arms to him.

“Puddin. Jack.”

“Harley!” Jack’s voice finally broke completely as the memory of watching her being shot rushed to the forefront of his mind, the image of her dropping...the blood...Jack ran down the alley to her. She was laughing, her face bloody, her body covered in thick rivulets of red, but he didn’t care. Jack rushed into her arms, but instead of being greeted by the warmth and scent of his lover, he felt a deep chill from her body...the form of deep cold that spoke of the emptiness of the grave...death...loneliness...isolation.

Jack held her tighter, his voice breaking, tears easing down his cheeks.

“Harley.” He said her name with a deep ache in his voice.

She stroked his hair, kissing his cheek. Jack moved his mouth to hers, taking the icy chill of her lips. Harley whispered when their lips parted. “I came to say goodbye.”

Jack whispered. “No...no Harley. Don’t leave me...please...don’t leave me Harley. I love you. I can’t do any of this without you.”

He pulled back to look her in the face at the moment the light drained from her eyes, the blue fading to grey, all the color left her skin leaving only the red of her blood, but it too was quickly drying into black. She stared at him, her body going weak. Jack struggled to hold her up, to keep his grip on her, but she was falling, her weight dragging him down with her.

Jack was sobbing uncontrollably. “Harley...no Harley, not you...please...I can’t do this without you. Harley...oh god Harley I love you, don’t leave me...please...” But he knew it was too late...she was gone. He looked to Frost for help, his blue eyes bloodshot with pain and grief. He opened his mouth to plead for help, something he would never do for anyone but Harley.

“Frost! You have to help me!! We have to save her! I love her...God Frost...I love her...I can’t...” But as he looked to Frost, he saw that Frost was just a rotting corpse leaning against the side of the alley. His rotted body slid down the wall leaving blood and gore in its wake.
Jack’s eyes widened in horror. He turned back to Harley only to see she was gone...dead...

Jack pulled her cold corpse against him sobbing, crying so hard that he couldn’t breathe...just like the night his parents died. No...this was worse...this was his heart he was holding, the only person in all the world who loved him as he was...who needed him just as much as he needed her.

Jack held her body close to his and let his grief consume him until there was nothing left...

* 

Panessa grinned viciously as he looked down at Jack Wayne. The man was tied up and laying on his side where Panessa’s men had dropped him when they brought him in. Panessa had them bring Wayne to one of his special “houses,” a place he would usually bring those who had displeased him. It was usually their last stop before Panessa put a bullet in their head. He stared down at Jack, his hands itching to put his hands around the unconscious man’s neck...to choke the life out of him with his bare hands, but he didn’t move. He had promised not to hurt Jack...much. Ben had only asked that Jack be left alive and Panessa had agreed. He had given Ben the requested funds to hire the men, but now that he had Jack Wayne in front of him, the urge to torture and kill him was so strong that he almost gave in...but Jack was off the board, just as Ben had promised. In exchange for that, Tomaso had promised not to kill him. Of course, Ben owed him big for this one, and Panessa had secured Ben’s assurance that he would take Jack out of Gotham.

Panessa smiled, kicked the unconscious man in the back hard enough that Jack rolled onto his face, but Jack didn’t respond. Ben had said keep him alive...he hadn’t requested any other conditions Tomaso told himself with a smile.

Tomaso kicked Jack again, but there was still no response. He frowned. “You didn’t kill him, did you?”

“No sir Mr. Panessa. We just used the chloroform like you said.”

Ben came rushing into the room. He had insisted on stopping at the apartment to change his clothing, dressing himself in his finest pair of navy blue slacks, white dress shirt and brown vest (minus tie). Tomaso could see that Ben had even taken the time to style his hair. Ben gasped when he saw Jack lying on the floor.

“Get him up! Get him in a chair!” Ben yelled frantically, his voice at least an octave higher than usual. The tone grated on Tomaso’s nerves.

The men frowned glancing at Panessa (since he was the one that was paying them). Tomaso gave a slight nod of his head and the men moved to lift up Jack, placing him in a chair that Ben had grabbed from the other side of the room, dragging it over for the men to set Jack’s unconscious body on. The hired men worked quickly to tie the unconscious Wayne up, moving his arms around the back of the chair and securing his ankles to the chair’s legs. Ben leaned over and lifted Jack’s head, examining his face. He smiled; Jack’s face was only mildly bruised.

He grinned as he caressed Jack’s features. “You’re finally mine.”

* 

Harley’s eyes fluttered and a groan escaped her lips. She could feel the wound in her shoulder...it felt like a burn, like her skin was on fire, but after a minute or two that pain was replaced with a deep achiness. She started to move, but it was so hard. She felt light headed and it was an effort of will just to shift her body. She rolled onto her side groaning in pain, a pain that shot through her entire body
starting at her shoulder, burning intensely. Her eyes started to water, but she kept trying to move. Her vision faltered as she opened her eyes; spots of black appearing in a circle around her eyes. She felt sick. She gasped, the pain taking her breath away and forcing her to lie still. As she tried to catch her breath, she heard Frost’s voice.

“Mrs. Wayne...Harley? That you?”

“Yes...I’m over here. What...what happened?” Harley groaned in pain, still lying on her side unable to move without the blackness threatening to overcome her. She laid there struggling to stay conscious when, in a flood of images, the events came rushing back to her...they took Jack! Harley gasped in pain and shock as she forced herself to her knees. Her right arm didn’t want to obey her, she couldn’t move it, and a sick coldness seemed to be creeping over her, threatening to yank her down into an abyss of black...where all the pain was gone.

“Can you move?” Harley asked. She couldn’t see Frost. She didn’t know if the street was that dark or if she was trying to pass out, but she could hear him.

“No...I...they shot me in the side...I can’t feel my legs.” Frost said softly, his voice eerily calm.

Harley ground her teeth, forcing herself to stay conscious as she struggled with finding her phone. Usually it would be in her purse if she brought one with her, but tonight she had slipped it into the pocket of her pants. She grunted with the effort, but withdrew the phone from her pocket. Every movement was like trying to pull her limb through thick, heavy molasses. Each gesture sent pain rushing through her, the wound in her shoulder seeping blood. She started to shake, tremors rapidly escalating until she was worried she would drop the phone; holding the device took on a whole new meaning as she focused all her will on holding the phone steady.

She dialed the first number she could think of, the first number that would bring them help.

*

Alex was sitting on the edge of the couch wearing a pair of worn jeans, the bottoms frayed, and an old t-shirt that read “I Paused My Game to Be Here” across the chest, his eyes glued to the huge 4k TV he had just purchased, his hand wrapped around a PS3 controller while he played a game of God of War. Alice sat on the couch next to him eating a bowl of ice cream, sitting cross legged in a pair of cupcake printed lounge pants and a pink t-shirt with two large cupcakes over where her breasts were, scooping ice cream into her mouth while she intently watched him play. Alice laughed making a face as Kratos tore the head off of Helios.

Alice winced. “Damn Alex. Tore that fuckers head right off!”

Alex grinned. “Kratos is a fucking angry man.”

That was when Alex's phone rang. Alex was smashing buttons with his one hand when he glanced over at his phone with a deep frown. “Hey hon, you mind?”

Alice smiled, set her bowl on the table next to the phone, and picked up his phone answering it on the fifth ring.

“Alex’s phone,” she answered with a grin.

“Alice?” Harley asked, her voice weak.

Alice frowned. “Harley? What’s wrong?”
“Someone took Jack…” Harley’s voice broke. “They took him…” Alice heard the sob in Harley’s voice. “Frost...Frost and me...we’ve been shot…”

“Oh my God. I’ll call an ambulance….” Alice started, but Harley cut her off. “NO...no...just...tell Alex to get the gang and get to the fight club...we need to go after them now!”

Alice frowned exchanging a glance with Alex and nodded. “All right Harley...All right.”

Alice could hear the continuing weakening of her friend’s voice which had now dropped to a whisper. “Just...make sure someone had...has a...first...first aid kit...okay?”

Harley sounded so weak, as if she were fading by the second.

“I will Harley. I promise,” Alice replied.

Harley nodded on her end and the movement drained her. On her end of the line, Alice heard Harley’s voice as just a breath, not even a whisper as she said softly. “Thank you.”

Then the line went dead.

Alex had stopped playing to stare at Alice the moment he realized something was wrong. He watched her face as she hung up.

“What’s going on?” he asked, but he already knew it was something bad.

All the color had drained from Alice’s face. “Someone took Jack. Harley and Frost have been shot.”

Alex stood. “What?”

“Oh Alex she didn’t sound good at all, but she doesn’t want an ambulance, she just wants you to get the gang and get to the fight club location,” Alice said softly.

Alex dropped his controller and turned to grab up the phone. He turned to Alice as she stood up and he started to tell her no, but she glared at him.

“I’m pregnant, not an invalid Alex. I’m coming to help. Now you go get whatever you need, I’m going to get the first aid kit out of the bathroom and I’m going to grab some of your lidocaine shots for her.” Alice glared daggers at him and Alex threw his hand in the air. “Okay, okay. Yeah, uh grab some of my Vicodin too.”

Alex hurried to the bedroom where he pulled open a drawer of the chest of drawers by the bedroom door. On top of some folded underwear sat a pair of brass knuckles.

Alex’s smile wasn’t humorous as he picked up the knuckles. Alex hadn’t gotten into a lot of fights since losing his arm, but he had gotten into a few...and he never lost a fight even if he was minus one arm. He slipped the brass knuckles into the pocket of his jeans before he dialed a number on his phone.

The phone on the other end picked up on the second ring.

“Jason.”

“Jason, Alex. Get the rest of the gang. We’re going to war.”

*
Jason, wearing a pair of tight black jeans and a red t-shirt—and looking handsome Roxy thought as she watched him—leaned over, lining up his shot on the pool table when his phone started to ring. He frowned, glancing at Roxy before he pulled the phone out of his pocket and saw that it was Alex calling. He frowned deeper still as he answered the phone. “Jason.”

Alex spoke in a grim, low tone. “Get the rest of the gang. We’re going to war.”

Jason went still, glancing across the table at Roxy who was sitting on the side sipping her beer. She was dressed in a pair of tight brown pants, knee-high boots and a top that was open down past her breastbone showing off her cleavage. Jason very much appreciated the look as did the two men they were trying to con. There were two men next to her, a blond and a brunette, both a couple of dirty looking men with too much attitude and not enough skills to backup the bravado.

Roxy hopped down, walking around the two men with a smile dragging a finger along their arms as she headed over to Jason. “What’s going on?”

Alex growled under his breath through the phone line. “Someone kidnapped Jack. Harley and Frost have been shot. I need you to get the gang and meet me on 14th street. We’ll head over to Harley and Frost from there. We need to hurry. Harley called, but Alice said she was fading fast.”

Jason hissed. “I’m on it. I know how to stitch up a bullet wound,” he said as he glanced again at Roxy.

Alex sighed. “Good, good. Get there as fast as you can.”

Jason nodded. “Will do.” He hung up and tossed his pool cue down motioning at Roxy. “Come on—we gotta go.”

The two men that Roxy and Jason had been playing against (Jason and Roxy had already won two hundred dollars off the two men and had been planning on taking the rest of their money) exchanged a look before one of them stepped forward to block them from heading to the bar’s door. “Fuck that, you ain’t going anywhere until we finish our game. We want a chance to win our money back.”

Jason growled. “Get the hell out of my way, ya fucking weak bitch.”

Roxy snorted on a laugh. The blond stepped forward and shoved Jason in the chest. “You wanna say that to my face boy?”

Jason smiled and stepped closer until his chest was touching the other man’s. He leaned in close and whispered. “You fucking weak ass bitch.”

The man snarled and shoved Jason back, cocking his arm back at the same time, clearly thinking he was going to strike Jason in the face. Jason moved swiftly, brought his left hand up to grab the man’s fist in his hand, wrapping his fingers painfully around the other man’s hand, at the same time Jason twisted his body to the side so that he could easily bring his free hand up, grabbing the blond around the back of his neck and shoving the man’s head forward and down. The man’s head slammed into the side of the pool table. Jason let go in the next second before taking a step back and letting the blond man fall to the floor.

The downed man’s friend decided to attack Roxy while his friend was messing with Jason. He rushed around her and wrapped his arms around Roxy, pinning her arms to her sides. Roxy yelled.

“Let go of me, you white trash freak!”
The man laughed and lifted her off her feet, but Roxy threw her head backwards with all her strength, the back of her head connecting with his nose with a sickening sound of crushed bone. The attack threw the man off balance which allowed Roxy to bring her weight forward. When she did, she brought the heel of the boots she was wearing down on the man’s instep with another sickening sound of bone cracking. The man yowled loudly letting her go as he hopped backwards. Roxy turned and shoved him into the pool table. His lower back hit the edge of the table and he went down, landing on the sticky barroom floor with his friend.

Jason walked over to the downed men. Roxy’s was groaning in pain while the one Jason had taken care of was lying on his side unconscious. Jason sniffed and pulled both men’s wallets out of their back pockets, took the rest of their money before throwing the wallets back onto the floor. He walked over to the bartender, tossing down some of the bills onto the counter.

“For our drinks,”

He said before he and Roxy walked out, the entire bar watching them.

*

Harley had no idea how long she and Frost lay in the alley. No one came through there but a couple of people from the fight club, who turned and walked the other way when they saw the two people in the alley, bleeding. Other than those two people, Harley and Frost were left alone in the dark. Frost had passed out at some point, and Harley, her head on his chest, was fading in and out of consciousness. She listened to Frost’s heartbeat which gave her comfort knowing he was still alive. She faded out, unable to remain conscious any longer.

She came to when she heard voices. At first they seemed far away, like they were coming from the far end of a tunnel. She frowned, the voices were pulling her back to consciousness and consciousness was full of pain...physical pain and the pain of loss. Someone had Jack...she had no idea who...but someone had taken him. She fought consciousness as the voices came closer. And then she heard a different voice. Not one of the voices outside of her, but a voice inside...her own voice. “Harley, get up. You are not going to let them win are you?”

Harley peered into the darkness to see herself. She was standing in a pool of light...dressed in her doctor’s uniform, red blouse, black skirt and tie, her white doctor’s coat with her name tag and those terrible black heels she used to wear. Her hair was pulled back in a bun and the fake glasses she liked to wear to make herself look smarter, were perched on the end of her nose.

Dr. Quinzel smiled. “Harley, come on. You’re better than this. You aren’t going to let them take our puddin are you?”

Harley sat up. She was dressed as she had been at the fight club, but her outfit was covered in blood. Harley whimpered softly. “Haven’t spoken to you in a while.”

Dr. Quinzel smiled. “No, you haven’t, but right now I’m here to help.”

“Help?” Harley asked.

“Yes help. Someone took our puddin. They took Jack and we have to get him back.” Dr. Quinzel pulled a chair out of the darkness and sat. “So you need to stop this and get out there and save him.”

Harley frowned. “I don’t know who took him.”

“Don’t you?” Dr. Quinzel asked. “You know exactly who took him.”
“Ben,” Harley said with a snarl. “And Panessa.”

Dr. Quinzel nodded. “See? Told you. Now stop this nonsense and get up. You have to go get him.”

Harley pushed herself up off the ground. “You’re right. I...I can’t live without him.”

Dr. Quinzel smiled softly. “I know. We love him.”

Harley nodded. “More than life itself.”

Dr. Quinzel nodded with her. “More than our own life...you need to find him and you need to kill Ben once and for all Harley. You need to make him suffer.”

Harley narrowed her eyes. “I’ll make him suffer.”

Dr. Quinzel smiled. “Good, now wake up.”

*

“Harley!! Harley come on wake up!”

Harley could feel someone yanking her jacket off and the sound of fabric being ripped followed by pain. Whoever was yelling at her was also being damn rough she thought as her eyes flew open.

“Ow!! Shit!!” Harley yelped, her eyes flying open to see Jason on his knees next to her, his young face etched with concern and focus.

When he saw she was awake he gave her a grin. “Hey,” he said. “Now be still, I’m going to sew this up.”

Harley hissed in pain as Jason yanked a needle through her skin after having wiped something ice cold over it. “How is Frost?” she asked through her teeth trying not to react to the pain, but it was difficult; the wound and the needle pulling through her skin burned.

She heard Frost next to her grumble. “I’m awake--which sucks.”

Harley turned. She could see Frost sitting up against the wall of the building. Someone had bandaged him up, though she could see red seeping through the bandages. His skin looked pale and he was shivering. Alex was on his phone, squatting next to Frost and talking hurriedly with expletives littered even more often through his speech than usual. Harley started to open her mouth, the concern clear on her features, but Frost smiled at her raising a hand to hold off any worry on her part.

“I’m okay. Feeling came back to my legs...sorta wish it hadn’t because it hurts like a sonofabitch.”

Alex hung up, standing up at the same time. “Okay Alice, the doc is expecting you at his house in the next hour with Frost. You two going to be alright?”

Frost nodded. “Yeah, I’m good. Let’s go.”

Alice nodded. “Just help me get him in the car.”

Alex frowned at Harley who was watching them as Jason worked on her bullet wound.

“You should go with him,” Alex muttered.

Harley shook her head. “No. I’m going with you to get Jack back.”
Alex sighed. “I know. I mean, I knew you would say that. Everyone knew you would say that. Duela brought some food and some orange juice, it won’t help much--blood loss and all that--but hopefully it will get you through the night until we get Jack back.”

Frost, who was being helped to his feet by Duela and Roxy turned to Alex. “It was a black Mazda sedan. I know it ain’t much to go on, but I did get the plates…” ACX-7718.”

Alex blinked. “Damn, really?”

Frost grinned weakly. “Was a cop, remember?”

Alex grinned looking over at Trope who was standing near the SUV Alex had picked everyone up in, parked in front of the white Chevy Malibu that Alice drove in.

Alex asked. “You think that will help?”

Trope grinned. “Hell yeah.” She hopped back into the SUV grabbing her laptop and flipped it open, her fingers racing over the keys. Alex turned back to Harley.

“Trope says she can access the traffic cams, with the car’s make and plates, we should be able to find who took him.”

Harley narrowed her eyes. “I know who has him.”

Everyone looked inquisitively at Harley. She hissed, partly in pain, but mostly in mounting anger. “It was Ben.”

Alex frowned. “You sure?”

“Yes. Who else could it have been? Ben’s been after Jack for weeks now…and we know he’s with Panessa.”

Alex frowned and nodded. “Okay, Alice you and Frost get going. I’ll call you later.”

Alice hurried over while Duela and Roxy helped get Frost into the car. She grabbed Alex’s face between her hands and kissed him hard on the mouth. Alex wrapped his arm around her waist.

“You be careful,” she said to him.

She turned and hurried over to Harley, squatting down to put an arm carefully around her and kissed Harley’s cheek. “Be careful and get him back.”

Harley smiled. “I will. Thank you.”

Alice gave her a smile before she hurried over to her car. Frost was leaning back in the front seat, his eyes closed as she climbed into the driver’s seat.

Alice gave everyone a quick wave before she was backing the car out of the alley and heading off into the night to get Frost to the doctor.

Jason had shifted position with Harley leaning forward while he worked to stitch up the exit wound. “Sorry, this isn’t going to be pretty Mrs. Wayne,” Jason said softly. “It’s going to be a pretty nasty looking scar.”

Harley had pulled her knees up, leaning forward with her eyes closed. “It’s all right, Jason. Just…just hurry.”
Jason nodded. “Going as fast as I can.”

Trope leaned her head out from the car. “Hey, I found the car, heading toward the far west side. It looks like they were headed toward the meat-packing district.”

Alex frowned in thought. “Panessa owns a fucking meat packing plant over that way and a butcher shop…”

Jason finished up by using the lidocaine shots that Alice had brought as well, trying to be careful, but Harley was clearly in pain as he gave her several shots around the wound. He then handed her one of Alex’s pain pills before he helped Harley to stand as Alex frowned in thought before asking Trope. “Any idea where in the meatpacking district?”

She frowned, her fingers working over the keys. “I lost them near Washington St.”

Alex stepped over shooing Trope over as he moved to sit down beside her. “Can you look up Weichschel’s Beef Company?”

Jason helped Harley over to the SUV, opening the passenger door and helping her inside. Once she was seated, Duela came over, going around to the other side and opened the door to rummage around until she pulled out a plastic bag. She hurried over to Harley and withdrew a plastic bottle of orange juice and a package of cookies from the bag.

“I also have some bananas, coconut water and some mixed nuts.” Duela smiled.

Harley peeled the banana carefully, wishing the pain medication would hurry up while Duela took the juice and opened it for her. Harley gave her a grateful smile. “Thank you Duela,” she said before she popped the pill in her mouth and downed it with some of the juice.

Duela blushed. “No problem.”

Harley turned, eating her banana and sipping the juice. Turning hurt; heck any movement hurt she thought, but Harley turned around to face Alex and Trope. “Anything?”

Alex grinned. “We can’t be a hundred percent sure, but Panessa owns the Weichschel Beef Company. He also own Paisanos Butcher shop that is right down the street from the fucking company. It’s only a rumor that I’ve never been able to confirm, but supposedly Panessa uses that butcher shop as a place to...talk to people who’ve displeased him. I’m betting that’s where we want to go.”

Harley nodded, her blue eyes like ice. “Let’s go. And did anyone bring me a weapon?”

Duela perked up. “When I stopped at the store I also stopped in the hardware section and grabbed you this…”

Duela went to the back of the SUV, opened the back before hurrying back to the front carrying a long handled, ten pound sledgehammer.

Alex frowned. “You think you should be lifting that?”

Harley grinned with narrowed eyes. “Yeah...I do.” Her eyes danced as she held the hammer and smiled brightly at Duela. “Thank you again.”

Duela grinned pleased with herself.
Alex hopped out, took a deep breath. “All right gang, everyone in. Let’s go take care of fucking Panessa once and for all and get Jack back.”

*

Jack came to slowly. Every part of him ached, but especially his side which, judging from the feel of it, was bruised badly. As consciousness forced him awake, Jack had to fight the urge to scream, to roar in pain...Harley...the image of Harley came rushing back to him. The image of her falling...the blood. He hadn’t been sure, didn’t know if she was dead or not. He had passed out from the drug before he had known, but he would see that image of her falling, the spray of blood as his wife was shot...Jack bit down hard on the inside of his cheek trying to prevent himself from crying out his rage and pain. He forced himself to steady his breath, to breathe. He focused on his situation. His arms were bound behind his back over the top of the wooden chair that hit him around the middle of his back, and with what felt like zip ties around his wrists, and ties around each ankle binding him to the wooden chair. He had tape over his mouth; judging by the feel it was duct tape. The next thing he focused his attention on was where he was...it was cold, but not the cold that came with the outside, there were no open windows because he couldn’t hear traffic or a breeze.

Next he was aware of the smell, blood...the raw, metallic scent (which Jack noted meant that there had to be a lot of blood present for there to even be a scent) of fresh blood combined with the scent of rot, musty old blood scent mixed with a raw meaty smell of...well...raw meat. Jack frowned...he had to been in a butcher’s place. There were other possible explanations of where he could be, but a butcher seemed to be more likely. All of these scents were combined with the scent of cigarette smoke that drifted just on the surface of the other scents. Keeping his eyes closed, Jack listened. He could hear talking...seven, maybe eight men were in the room and they were discussing money. He couldn’t quite pick up what they were saying, his head still felt heavy and his hearing was muffled like he had cotton in his ears. He thought he heard three sets of footsteps leave the room after a few minutes. As he focused on the voices, Jack picked out Panessa, that slight accent the man had that caused his words to have a slight “aw” sound to his “o’s” gave Panessa away, but then he also picked out Ben’s voice. Ben’s voice was pitched higher and there was a quality to it that made Jack’s skin crawl.

Jack ground his teeth, tensing his jaw in anger. He again had to remind himself to breathe normally.

Jack’s nose twitched; he could smell the scent of cigarette smoke becoming stronger and the sound of footsteps coming closer...Dunhill cigarettes, expensive, a luxury cigarette...he could detect the scent of the tobacco, high quality...Jack wanted to smirk, Panessa.

Tomaso smarled. “I know you’re conscious. I can tell by your breathing.”

Jack raised his head, his blue eyes looking straight at Tomaso and while the tape hid Jack’s smirk from view, his eyes were not hidden, the blue clearly communicating Jack’s amusement at Tomaso. (Jack also realized as he raised his head, that he was correct; he was in a butcher shop. There were lines of meat hooks hanging in rows above him and beside him. Most had nothing on them, but some did have sides of raw, bloody beef hanging on them. Jack could see the puffs of breath from his nostrils and there was blood...a lot of blood on the floors.)

Tomaso snarled again. “You killed my family. You killed them all.”

He moved fast, surprising Jack with his speed as he lashed out, backhanding Jack across the face with a hard, sharp smack that whipped Jack’s head to the side. Jack winced. The rings on Tomaso’s hand cut into his cheek, the slap hard enough that Jack’s nose started to bleed.

Ben made a sound of protest and came rushing over. “Tomaso!!”
Tomaso spun to face Ben, his eyes burning with hatred. “Look Ben, I said you could have him, alive and I meant it. But if you think you are going to waltz out of here with your toy without Jack Wayne paying for what he did, then you are fucking wrong. I am going to beat the living shit out of him. Then and only then can you have him.”


Panessa’s smile was vicious. “You’re lucky I’m letting you have him Ben. If he ever comes back to Gotham, he’s dead. If you come back to Gotham, you’re dead. We’re through Ben. I don’t want to see you or hear from you.”

Ben frowned, but nodded his agreement.

Tomaso turned back to Jack. He firmly put his hands on Jack’s shoulders as he leaned close enough that their noses were almost touching. “I’m going to beat you bad Jack. I’m going to hurt you. Then, I’m going to kill that brother of yours...when I’m finished with him, I’m going to hunt down every member of your gang, one by one, and I’m going to kill them. Oh, not slowly. I’m going to take my time with each of them, find something special for each of those lowlife thugs. And you know what? If that bitch wife of yours is still alive. I’m going to find her and then I’m going to have some fun...make her scream in a whole new way before I give her over to the men I hired...let them show her a good time too.” Tomaso looked thoughtful for a moment. “I might actually keep her alive...just keep her in a little room where I can come down and play with her...over and over and over again, fuck her any way I want...give her to anyone I want, until she is begging only me to come fuck her.” Tomaso’s smile widened.

Jack snarled. He jerked and struggled, the rage in his eyes was like a living thing that needed to lash out like a lightning strike, but he couldn’t move, couldn’t break free.

Tomaso laughed before he turned to Ben.

“Go give your toy a kiss Ben, before I start beating on him.”

Ben smiled as he walked over to Jack. Jack glared at him hatefully as Ben straddled Jack’s lap, wrapping his arms around his shoulders. Ben played with the fine hairs on the back of Jack’s neck, his fingers caressing slowly. Jack wanted to thrash, to explode into violence, but he forced himself to remain still. He wasn’t going to give Ben or Tomaso the satisfaction of seeing him struggle.

Ben’s touch made Jack want to break every finger on the other man’s hand, to tear Ben’s lips off with his teeth and slowly push his eyes into his skull with his thumbs until they popped like grapes. Jack’s eyes nearly glazed with the hatred he was feeling, but he smiled behind the tape as he imagined not him doing those things to Ben...but Harley. Jack imagined Harley with flecks of blood on her creamy skin, the image of her stripping out of her clothing, standing naked, waiting for him. Jack closed his eyes against the pain in his chest...maybe she was alive...No...not maybe, she had to be alive.

Ben turned Jack’s face up to his, caressing Jack’s jaw with his fingertips. “When we leave Gotham together, I promise Jack, I’ll make you so very happy. We will go someplace the Owls can’t find us.” Ben sighed happily, his eyes wandering over Jack’s face. He shifted a little, grinding his hips against Jack’s pressing himself closer, his mouth close to Jack’s taped lips.

“I’m sorry that Tomaso has to beat on you, but you have to understand, he is very angry,” Ben cooed softly. He leaned in close, his lips brushing the tape over Jack’s mouth. “But I promise, when we leave Gotham, I’ll take very good care of you. It won’t take you long to forget about that woman. I’ll make sure of it.”
Ben cupped Jack’s face between his hands his thumbs caressing Jack’s cheeks as he stared into Jack’s blue eyes. “Before you know it, you’ll be happy to be with me,” Ben murmured, his eyes wandering lustfully over Jack’s face as he dragged his fingers down Jack’s throat then to the buttons of the shirt that Jack wore. He sat back, unbuttoning a few of the buttons so he could run his fingers along Jack’s chest before he dipped down and licked Jack’s chest. He grinned coming back up to face Jack again with a wide smile.

“You really are gorgeous,” Ben whispered before he pressed his lips against the tape that covered Jack’s mouth.

Jack snarled behind the tape. He didn’t respond in any other way to Ben’s declaration and physical assault. Instead Jack shut himself down, his muscles rigid, turning himself into a marble statue. Jack wouldn’t give Ben the satisfaction of responding to his advances.

Ben frowned when he pulled back from Jack’s mouth, surprised that Jack hadn’t reciprocated his advances at all (despite being tied up). Ben hissed reaching down between them to try something else, his hand caressing Jack’s groin while he continued to press his mouth to Jack’s, his hand between them trying to elicit some sort of response from Jack. Ben started to grow frustrated when nothing happened.

Panessa rolled his eyes walking over and grabbing Ben by the collar of his shirt hauling him off of Jack. “All right Ben, that’s enough. You can play with your toy later, after I’m done beating the shit out of him.”

Ben stumbled off of Jack’s lap when Tomaso yanked him back, glaring at Jack the whole time. Ben hissed in anger. “You will want me you know? You will.”

If Jack could have spat at him...or worse, he would, but he settled for just glaring hatefully at Ben.

Panessa shoved Ben out of the way moving to stand in front of Jack.

“How, let’s get started shall we?”

Jack narrowed his eyes at Tomaso, but even with the tape over his mouth, Tomaso could see the smile on Jack’s lips.

Tomasco hissed. “I’m going to make this hurt.”

He drew his arm back punched Jack in the face.

* 

Trope was yelling out directions to Alex as they raced through Gotham’s streets to the meatpacking district. She was doing a little bit of hacking, having insinuated herself into the Gotham traffic system and was doing her best to change all the lights as their SUV came to them.

“Okay, okay, now turn left on 11th avenue!” Trope yelled as her fingers flew over the keys.

Alex swung the wheel with his one hand causing the loaded down SUV to tip slightly as he spun around the corner and yelled. “I see it! Paisanos Butcher shop!! On the left!!”

Alex slowed down, trying to drive nonchalantly. Harley leaned forward to look out the window. There was the Mazda that Frost had described with the matching license plate.

“It’s them,” she hissed.
Alex turned, driving the SUV down the alley of an empty office building next to the butcher. Everyone rolled out of the SUV, each person checking the weapons they brought with them. Alex pulled his brass knuckles out, sliding them over his one hand. Duela had her own clawed hammer which she had grabbed when she bought the sledgehammer for Harley, Jason had a pistol with him, a Glock 17 with a sound suppressor of his own design, and a set of brass knuckles, while Roxy had a taser, but she also grabbed the tire iron from the back of the SUV. Trope, who wasn’t really a fighter, also had taser, but she had also brought along several cans of pepper spray that she always kept in her bag.

Alex looked over their small group and frowned. “Not really well armed for this,” he muttered.

Harley looked better, but Alex was well aware that she was running on pure adrenaline, drugs and rage. She lifted her sledgehammer up, laying it on her undamaged shoulder as she looked at everyone.

She smiled at Jason as he pulled his pistol out. “Put that away, we need to do this quietly. Only use it as a last resort. Even with a suppressor, it makes some noise.”

Jason frowned with a slight nod. “You sure?”

She nodded. “Guns will bring the police and we don’t want the police, or Batman getting involved. Shooting will get both involved.”

Jason seemed to consider this and shrugged, re-holstering his weapon and pulling out a second set of brass knuckles from the front pocket of his jeans. Alex smirked at him and Jason shrugged.

“Always be prepared man.”

Harley took a breath. She felt unsteady, her knees were wobbly and her stomach queasy from the blood loss, the pain, and the drugs, but she was also feeling murderous and that alone was keeping her on her feet. They took her puddin—she was not going to let that stand.

She swallowed, took a breath, and closed her eyes for a moment as she put a hand on the SUV to steady herself. Alex frowned, watching her in worry. “You sure you don’t want to stay here, let us handle this?” he asked.

Harley shook her head. “No. I’m going in there to get my puddin back and nothing is going to stop me,” she said with a growl in her voice. “Just...give me a minute.”

Alex frowned with deep concern, but he nodded. Harley took a steadying breath then snarled.

“All right, let’s go get Jack. Kill everyone, but leave Ben and Panessa for me.”

The gang members nodded and headed down the sidewalk toward the butcher shop.

* 

The streets were quiet on this end of town. There was virtually no traffic as the six of them made their way down the street to the butcher shop. Any other time Harley would have found the shop quaint. An old fashioned wooden sign hung out front with the name painted across it in bold green lettering. A picture window allowed passersby and patrons to look inside the shop which had a counter and long rows of cold cases and shelves for displaying their products. The shop had a definite old fashioned “mom and pop” feel to it. A nice place to shop probably, despite its connection to the Panessa family and from there the much larger underworld of Gotham’s mob families.
Harley pressed her back against the wall and leaned over to peer into the shop’s picture window. The front room was dark, but she could see a light was on at the back of the store. She watched for a few moments until she finally saw movement. It looked to be three men there standing guard.

She turned back to the others. “Okay, there are three men just inside the shop.”

Jason frowned. “So, how are we going to do this? I mean, we could go through the front door I suppose. It’s probably got a bell…”

Harley smiled. “We are going to go in and ask politely. Trope, you stay here, I just need Roxy and Duela.”

Trope shrugged. “Sure thing Mrs. Red Hood.”

Harley chuckled and walked to the shop’s door. Duela frowned, moving briskly to catch up with Harley. “How will we know what to do?”

Harley’s smile was bright. “Just follow my lead ladies.”

*

The three hired thugs, Ron, George and Calvin, were all smoking and waiting to be paid. They all knew Tomaso Panessa was good for it, but this job was taking too long…and as Ron had been grumbling all night, stupid.

“We should never take on mob work,” he muttered for the fifth time that night.

George took a long drag on his cigarette, exhaling a breath of smoke. “Will you shut up?”

“I don’t like working mob jobs okay. All that vendetta shit…it’s bad news,” Ron muttered. “I mean…all this just to beat the shit out of one guy…” Ron shook his head.

Calvin grinned. “I heard that guy we took him for though—he killed all of Panessa’s men…like all of them. You guys heard about that building going down the other day?”

George frowned then nodded. “Oh yeah, I heard about that.”

Calvin grinned. “Yeah, well I heard it was that man in there. He is supposedly the leader of that Red Hood gang that held up fashion week on opening night.”

Ron’s eyes grew in size. “Fuck, really?”

Calvin nodded. “Really.”

“Man, no wonder Panessa wants him but what about that other guy…Ben?” George asked.

Calvin shrugged. “No idea, but he was looking at that guy like he wanted to eat him.”

Ron frowned. “Nope. I don’t like any of this. I just want to get our money and get out of here.”

That was the moment that they all heard the small bell at the front of the store chime merrily.

The three men exchanged a look, their hands going to their weapons as they turned to see three pretty women walking down the aisle toward them.

George grinned and whistled. “Wow.”
Harley, her sledgehammer over her uninjured shoulder, had taken off her bloody shirt wearing only her bra and jacket despite the cold, (both were bloody, but she was hoping the dim light of the shop would make the color look black instead of like blood...but she figured breasts out...these bozos wouldn’t notice.) Roxy, holding her pepper spray in one hand and the tire iron in the other, was dressed as she had been at the bar earlier and Duela was wearing a pair of striped leggings in purple and black with a short purple skirt and a grungy black t-shirt with an old bomber style jacket. She had ditched the jacket in the SUV and had rolled and tied her t-shirt off to show her stomach while she was carrying her hammer loosely in her hand at her side.

If the guards noticed the weapons, they didn’t seem to be worried as George and Calvin grinned watching them ladies walk toward them. Only Ron was on alert. He didn’t like anything about this job...anything at all.

Harley stepped forward. “Hey boys. We’re looking for Tomaso, is he here?”

She cocked her hip to the side smiling broadly. George grinned back at her walking closer.

“Hey pretty lady, yeah...he’s here, in the back, but...you know maybe I can help you with something. Pretty thing like you would be a waste on Tomaso...I mean...I don’t think he could appreciate someone as lovely as you.”

Harley giggled putting her fingers up to her lips, the tip of her tongue coming out slowly to lick her finger. She thickened her accent as she murmured. “Well ain’t you just sweet.”

Ron, trying to be the voice of reason stepped forward. “What’s with the hammers...and the tire iron?”

Harley giggled. “Tomaso likes it a little rough...you know.” She waggled her eyebrows suggestively which had George and Calvin chuckling as Harley continued. “You know, he’s one of those guys who likes to be...dominated.” Harley dragged her finger across her bottom lip. “He likes to have someone kick him in the balls...that sort of thing.”

George elbowed Calvin before he said. “So Tomaso likes to be submissive, eh?”

Harley stepped closer dropping her voice to a low seductive whisper. “Don’t all men?”

George and Calvin shared another chuckle. George reached out to place his fingers in the middle of Harley’s chest. “Well, we can let you go back there, but I’m afraid we’re going to have to do a little search before we can let you go on back.”

Ron was shaking his head. With what was going on in the back, he didn’t think the mob boss having his floozies show up seemed square. Then again, what did he know? It was Gotham.

Harley glanced down at George’s fingers. “Okay.”

She moved so fast that none of the men realized what was happening until she had taken a step back, the sledgehammer coming off her shoulder at the same time as she grabbed the handle with her other hand, the pain from her wound only a distant thought as she swung the hammer off her shoulder. Her hand slid up the long handle just before she shoved the metal head into George’s crotch.

The man didn’t have time to let out a cry of pain. The instant she hit him in the groin with the head of her sledgehammer, she brought the heavy weapon up, caught him under the chin with a solid sounding “thunk” accompanied by the crunching sound of breaking bone as her strike shattered George’s jaw. She grabbed the sledgehammer, one hand low on the handle, the other hand holding it just under the metal head and swung; she hit him in the shoulder, shattering the bone. George dropped to his knees in a gurgle of pain. Harley grabbed him, her rage taking over as she yanked him
by his hair forward with one hand, letting the weight of the sledgehammer slide through her hand until she was holding it a few inches under the metal head. Maintaining a grip on his hair and holding the hammer with one hand, her anger and adrenaline gave her the strength to slam the hammer’s large head into the middle of his back with three vicious strikes, breaking his spine. Only then did she drop him, releasing his hair and taking a step back. Duela and Roxy moved at the same time that Harley made her first attack, Duela going straight for Ron while Roxy brought her can of pepper spray up and unloaded a stream into Calvin’s eyes.

The man started to yell in surprise and pain, but Roxy did a complete spin (performing a nearly perfect pirouette) which brought the tire iron around, striking Calvin across the face, shattering his nose and breaking off a few of his front teeth with the force of her blow. The man stumbled with a whimpering grunt and fell onto his side. He started to try to yank his gun out, but Roxy was on him before he could move, using her tire iron to break his arm before the next two swings beat the man’s head in.

Duela stopped in front of the man named Ron just as he yanked his pistol out of its holster. She moved faster, swinging her hammer low and to the side to catch Ron in the ribs. She struck him with enough force that three of the man’s ribs broke with the impact. Duela flipped the hammer in her hand, rolling it in her grip so that the claw side was up as she continued her swing. Duela brought the hammer up, embedding the claw part into the soft underside of Ron’s jaw, the hammer ripping through the tender flesh to pop through into his mouth, tearing through his tongue at the same time. Ron dropped his gun, reaching up to his face, his fingers fluttering uselessly. Duela gave a vicious grin before she yanked the hammer down and out, tearing away more of the man’s chin and jaw. Ron dropped to his knees gurgling, blood spilling out of his mouth, his eyes wild and wide as he stared at Duela. She smiled and flipped the hammer around in an overhead strike, slamming the hammer’s head into the top of his head, over and over again until Ron was only a twitching mess.

Harley turned around and smiled brightly when she saw all three guards down. She looked at Duela and Roxy like a proud mother. “Great job girls! I’m so proud of you!”

Roxy and Duela shared a smile. “Thank you Harley,” they said in unison.

Harley giggled with delight. “I feel like a mother hen!” she sighed with a smile. “Okay. Let’s make sure they’re dead. Duela, go get the others. Let’s get Jack back.”

* Jack raised his head up and grinned behind the tape on his mouth, his blue eyes dancing with merriment. That infernal grin hidden behind the duct tape that made Tomaso want to scream. The worst part was that he could tell that Jack Wayne was laughing behind that tape. It was muffled, but clear in his eyes as well as the way his body would shake each time Tomaso struck him, even as one of his eyes was starting to swell. Purple bruises were forming under his eyes, blood ran down his face from a cut to his cheek put there by Tomaso’s rings, another cut bleeding down Jack’s forehead, the blood and sweat slowly running into Jack’s eyes. More blood seeped from under the tape where his lips must have been split from one of the numerous strikes from the frustrated Tomaso. He growled in frustration.

The man had to be hurting! Tomaso had ripped open his shirt and punched him in the gut leaving cuts and bruises to Jack’s torso. The man was slowly turning into a bloody, bruised mess, but still Tomaso could see he was laughing at him! Jack kept grinning! Kept staring at him! Tomaso wanted to rip his eyes out, cut his lips from his face, but he couldn’t, he had promised Ben and he would keep his fucking promise. Or would he? Jack Wayne had caused so much grief to Tomaso.

Ben was sitting on a stool nearby with three of the men they had hired to get Jack Wayne. The other
three were out front watching the place, not that Tomaso expected any trouble. Ben had brought a bottle of wine and some glasses with him. He was sitting on a stool by one of the metal cabinets in the freezer, his legs crossed, sipping his drink slowly and watching while Tomaso beat up his toy. Ben wasn’t happy about the beating, but he also saw it as an opportunity. The more damaged Jack Wayne was when they left together, the more he would need Ben...and then slowly Ben would get what he wanted from Jack, his devotion, his dependence and his love...until Ben became bored with him, though Ben swore to himself that this time was different, Jack Wayne was different. Ben shifted in his seat, watching Tomaso beat on Jack. It was exciting too, Ben realized...an added benefit. Ben smiled, with Jack beaten, he also couldn’t put up a fight and Ben could have his way...Jack really would like that, he just knew. Ben smiled, delighted with the path his thoughts had taken.

The other three men that had been hired for this job were watching the beating uncomfortably. The clear sexual tension in the air coming from the man sitting near them and the way the victim kept laughing...that whole situation was making them all uncomfortable. Ted, Butch and Dwayne were all frowning, watching the way that Panessa was laying into the man with a brutal beating that didn’t really seem fair.

Ted, a lean man with thinning hair, leaned over and whispered to Butch. “This job sucks man.”

Butch, who to Ted looked exactly how a man named Butch should look, overly muscled, crew cut and a square face, hissed back, his eyes rolling over to Ben. But the man didn’t seem to hear them, his full attention on the beating, a look of lust mixed with something else that made all three of them shiver uncomfortably.

“Shut the fuck up Ted. This is good money and it ain’t none of our business. Panessa says jump, we ask how high. Now keep your trap shut,” Butch muttered.

Dwayne, a tall slender man of mixed heritage, frowned and winced in sympathy each time Tomaso’s fist connected with the man tied to the chair. “So when we gonna get paid?” he asked wanting to get the hell out of there.

Their attention was on the beating in front of them, and not on the front of the store where their companions were supposedly standing guard, which was why they neither heard anything from the fight up front, nor the movement of the people coming in behind them.

A soft feminine voice whispered seductively behind them. “Hey boys.”

All three men turned just as Harley threw all her strength into her sledgehammer, using her entire body to swing it, striking the man closest to her, Dwayne. The hammer hit Dwayne in the jaw, snapping not just his head to the side, but the swing had enough power the impact twisted his entire body, made him to fall into Butch. Harley and her hammer kept going, the momentum of her swing continued. The three men had been standing too closely together so that as her hammer continued, the head of it nicked Butch across the chest just as the heavy metal head began a downward swing, continuing toward Ted. Harley’s swing brushed hard against Ted, the end of the hammer catching him along his groin as Harley and the sledgehammer were carried downward. Harley dropped the heavy head of the hammer onto the bridge of one of his feet, crushing the foot before the hammer slid off onto the floor with a resounding “thud.”

The wail and shouts that went up from the three men alerted Tomaso and Ben to trouble.

Ben yelped, getting to his feet so quickly that he sent the stool he had been sitting on flying backwards, the bottle of wine that had been sitting at his elbow was sent crashing to the floor taking the extra wine glass with it. As Ben leapt to his feet and dashed across the room toward Tomaso. He dropped his wine glass; it shattered when it hit the floor, tiny pieces burst and flew everywhere.
Harley grunted lifting the sledgehammer. Moving was becoming harder, more painful; the sledgehammer seemed to gain weight as the pain pills and shots began to wear off and the fact that she had been slinging a sledgehammer while wounded had started to take its toll on her physically. But she was angry still and that anger kept her going.

She knew they had to finish this soon, though—she only had so much left in her.

Harley yanked the hammer up, brought it over her head, her arms trembling with the effort, but she barely noticed, her eyes on the man she had first struck when she came into the room. Dwayne had turned onto his belly and was trying to crawl away. He was so consumed with pain he didn’t even think about his weapon which he had dropped to the floor. Harley stepped forward, her eyes almost mad with rage, brought the hammer down on the middle of the man’s back with a thick thud of heavy metal hitting flesh. Dwayne fell with a gasp. He turned, somehow finding the strength to turn to look at her, putting a hand up.

His voice garbled. “NO!”

Harley hissed. “Fuck you.”

She swung the hammer down on his head.

Jason had come in right beside Harley, his bronze knuckles ready as he leaped onto Butch. The man had staggered back when the sledgehammer had struck him, but Jason moved swiftly, not giving the man a chance to recover. Jason’s fist hit the man in the chest where Harley’s hammer had “nicked” him. Where the hammer had cracked the breastbone, Jason finished the job of breaking the bone with his brass knuckled right fist. Jason threw his left fist up, caught Butch under his jaw, snapping his head back. Jason rode the man down when Butch fell backward, sitting on Butch’s chest and started to pound the man’s face, breaking his nose, his teeth, his eye sockets. Jason bared his teeth, snarling as he continued, beating the man’s face it, blood, flesh and bone flying up to decorate Jason’s young face. No one hurt his friends, his family, and got away with it... Alex had come in next going after Ted who was screaming the loudest, his foot broken and Harley’s hammer having smashed his groin. Ted had doubled over which Alex took full advantage of, using his one arm, which was far stronger than one would have thought just by looking at Alex. His metal assisted punch to the back of Ted’s head flattened the man and quieted his screams instantly. Alex walked past the man (Alex had never killed anyone. It wasn’t that he had a code against it, more that he just didn’t see himself as a killer), but Roxy came up after Alex and used her tire iron to bash the man’s head in. Alex turned around, grimacing at the sight, but he didn’t say a word about Roxy killing the man.

As the gang came into the room Tomaso, who was shaking with rage, yelled. “ONE MORE STEP AND I SHOOT HIM IN THE HEAD!” He was standing with a pistol aimed at the side of Jack’s head.

Harley stalked more fully into the freezer, holding her bloody sledgehammer in her hands. “You better not lay another finger on my puddin,” Harley snarled.

Jack’s eyes lit up when he saw Harley. She looked part vengeful goddess wearing only her blood soaked bra and jacket. But Jack could also see underneath the anger, she didn’t look good either, pale, bloody, sweating, looking feverish; he noticed that there was a bandage around her shoulder that was blood soaked, but she was alive! He stared at her with something close to wonderment which quickly dissolved into a swell of pleasure and love. She was alive.

Harley, her face covered in blood, bone and flesh dripping from her sledgehammer, glared at Tomaso.
Ben made a sound. “Tomaso you promised!”

“Fuck that Ben and fuck you. The situation has changed.” Tomaso hissed loudly at Ben.

He turned his attention back to the Red Hood gang. “One more step and he’s dead.”

Jason had come over to stand by Harley, his own gun out and pointed at Tomaso.

Harley narrowed her eyes. “You shoot him, we kill you.”

Tomaso twitched, his eyes darting between all of them, his finger on the trigger was shaking slightly. “You...you are going to let us walk out of here...or I swear...I’ll kill him. We are going to drive away...or you get nothing except his brains splattered across the fucking floor you bitch.”

Ben looked panicked, his eyes darting between all of them, but ultimately landed on Harley.

Jack willed Harley to look at him.

Harley’s eyes darted to her husband. It was hard for her to see him like that, tied up, gagged, bloody and bruised. Her rage threatened to bubble over. Jack focused all his attention at her, their eyes meeting across the freezer. Jack stared hard at her before his eyes darted to the side at Tomaso and the gun. Harley frowned at her husband pressing her lips together in a thin line, adjusting her grip on the sledgehammer, but then she nodded, just the slightest movement of her head.

Tomaso snarled at Ben. “Get this fucker up. We’re leaving.”

Ben started to move, started to walk behind Tomaso toward Jack when Jack threw all his weight to the left, all his weight toward the gun and Tomaso. The chair tipped over to slam into Tomaso. Tomaso fired his weapon, his finger jerking on the gun, startled by Jack’s sudden action. The bullet ripped along skin, burning a line along Jack’s shoulder and across his chest, leaving a bleeding and burning trail behind as Jack fell over and slammed against the cement floor. Tomaso stumbled.

Jason reacted quickly. As soon as Jack moved, Jason fired his weapon, a round from his pistol slamming into the mobster’s knee cap, shattering it. Harley had started to move at the same instant that Jack flung himself sideways, her teeth bared in a semi-crazed grin as she rushed Tomaso. She shoved the head of her sledgehammer forward, catching the mobster high on his thigh with a hard thrust. He let out a yell and tried to bring his weapon around, but Harley, using both hands, thrust the head of the sledgehammer up, catching Tomaso under his jaw. The man stumbled and fell, his weapon falling and skittered across the floor disappearing into the room as he slipped and dropped to his hands and knees, in agony.

Ben yelped and started to run. Harley whipped around and screamed. “STOP HIM! DON’T KILL HIM! He’s mine…” she snarled as she turned back around to glare down at Tomaso. She looked like a vengeful angel, her hair shining in the dim light, blood slowly running in thick rivulets down from her shoulder, the bandaged turned completely red, thick drops of blood rolling down slowly over her pale, blood splattered skin as she held the sledgehammer with both hands, her blue eyes catching what little light there was and sparkling with menace.

“You took my puddin...no one takes my puddin.” Harley stepped closer to Tomaso, loomed over him. He was panting, his mouth dripping blood. He spat out a broken tooth and laughed.

“You think you can take my fucking place?! You’re nothing! Fucking Red Hood is nothing!” Tomaso screamed at her struggling to breathe, blood dripping freely from his mouth.

Roxy and Alex ran over to Jack, lifting him up. Alex removed the tape and Jack gasped for breath.
“Harley wait!” Jack growled.

She looked over at her husband just as Duella and Jason brought back a struggling Ben. “Let me go!! You can’t touch me!! The Owls will swoop down on you…” Ben was shouting as he fought to break free. Whatever training the Owls had given him had flown out the window as panic took over.

Harley hissed. “Shut him up.”

Jason grinned brightly. “Gladly,” he said and sucker punched Ben hard enough that he stunned the other man into silence.

Roxy and Alex worked swiftly to free Jack. He stood, wobbling a little as he got to his feet. Harley, seeing him bloody, beaten, but alive and standing, dropped her sledgehammer with a loud thunk and rushed to Jack.

Jack held his arms out wrapping them tight around her once she was against his chest and held her tightly.

“Harley…” Pain was laced through his whisper of her name. “I thought…” he said softly, unable to finish the statement.

Harley held on tightly, both of them ignoring the pain they were in. Harley leaned back to look into his eyes and smiled. “I love you.”

Jack reached up to gently grasp the sides of her throat before he kissed her.
Corpses and Recovery

On the other side of Gotham.

Alfred made his way to the kitchen dressed in his pajamas, housecoat and slippers—which made him feel ancient. He was moving slowly, using the stupid cane as he went. He knew he was being childish, but he still couldn’t help hating the cane. However, he was recovering quickly and knew the cane would be gone in a matter of weeks.

He slowly made his way to the kitchen thinking to make himself a cup of tea and maybe a sandwich. He should be in the batcave helping Bruce, but Bruce didn’t want the butler to stress himself and had refused to let Alfred help him except with minor things; though he had relented when Alfred had informed him that if he wasn’t given some task to at least challenge him mentally, then he would become a senile old man in a day. Bruce had given Alfred a hard look (clearly fighting with himself) before he had asked for Alfred’s help with the investigation into the destruction of that building a few days earlier, a rather spectacular collapse judging by the news broadcast Alfred had seen. The Gotham PD suspected the explosion to be mob related because the building was found to be owned by Tomaso Panessa, though Bruce was not convinced it was a mob hit. It was too outlandish, too visual, not traditional. The mobsters in Gotham were many things, but one of those was that the mob families of Gotham were a superstitious lot that were bound by tradition. No, Bruce was convinced there was a new player in town and he wanted more information.

Alfred arrived in the kitchen. He flicked on the light switch, his stomach growling loudly as he thought about what sort of sandwich he would make when his eyes landed on a white envelope placed in the middle of the main island counter. Alfred frowned, slightly confused. He reached over and picked up the envelope only to see his name written across the front in beautiful handwriting; neither Bruce’s nor Jack’s.

“Intriguing,” Alfred murmured.

He leaned his cane against the counter and pulled out one of the stools that sat around it, tucked under the metal surface. For a moment Alfred felt a tightening in his chest as his thoughts wandered to Master Jack and Harley. He missed them dearly, the sounds of their laughter, the two of them sharing breakfast at this counter while he cooked.

Alfred sighed. The manor had been so very quiet. Alfred shook himself and opened the envelope.

Inside was a folded piece of paper. He pulled it out and something fell from the inside and fluttered to the floor. Alfred frowned, easing down to pick it up. He turned it over to reveal a photograph. It was a picture of Talia and a little boy of no more than eight years of age. Alfred frowned staring at the image. The little boy had black hair and piercing blue eyes. Alfred frowned opening the note as he set the picture on the counter.

Dear Alfred,

I wanted to speak to Bruce about…the boy in the photograph, but it is clear to me that Bruce isn’t ready to hear what I have to say. I am sharing this with you Alfred because I need to tell someone and because there may come a day that Bruce will have no choice. For now, please do not share this secret with Bruce—he is not ready, nor is my son Damian. I know I ask a great deal of you, but please, hold my secret for now, for Damian’s sake as well as Bruce’s.

Sincerely,
Alfred stared at the note, then reached over and picked up the photograph again. Alfred held it up staring at the image of the young boy. Alfred pressed his lips together, his eyes burning, a single tear falling and slowly sliding down his cheek.

“Oh Master Bruce.”

Tomaso looked up from his position on the floor. He was on his knees with his arms behind his back taped at the wrists. Further binding him was more duct tape at his elbows and his ankles. He was having a difficult time staying on his knees; the leg with the bullet wound had gone numb from blood loss and the cold but a deep icy ache was moving up his torso. Putting pressure on his wounded leg by being forced to stay on his knees was excruciating.

Jack Wayne stood beside him, Tomaso’s own weapon aimed at his head. Jack glanced down at him and gave Tomaso a bloody grin.

“You know, I’ve never seen my wife this angry before...should be interesting.” Jack gave Tomaso a bright smile despite the blood and bruises on his face. It was clear he was enjoying himself.

Tomaso snarled. “You don’t scare me.”

Jack grinned and shrugged. “I’m not the one you should be scared of.”

He motioned with the gun toward Harley.

Ben was dangling from meat hooks in the cold locker. The hook had been jammed into the meat of his back, two hooks, one on each side to hold his weight. He was hanging with his arms duct taped behind him, his legs free, but his pants and underwear were gone.

Ben was shivering with shock, pain, and the cold. The adrenaline from fear wasn’t helping him to remain calm either. He looked down at Harley. She looked like a demoness, her torso covered in blood from her gunshot wound which had only just stopped bleeding freely. She was dressed only in her bra from the waist up, her skin was milk white, which made her blue eyes stand out brightly against her skin. Ben was shocked at just how beautiful she looked at this very moment.

Harley stood before him, calm and smiling. “Jason tells me that the way he hooked you is called a suicide suspension because you look like you hung yourself. Funny, eh?”

She grinned. “Did you know that people suspend themselves with hooks through their skin for fun? Interesting.”

Harley walked over to where she had laid several butcher knives. She had waited until Ben was conscious; he had passed out from being suspended. Fully awake now, Ben knew exactly what she was doing; it was a calculated, cold blooded move to terrify him...

She held up one of the knives. It was a ten inch long carbon steel blade, used for carving large sides of beef. She held the blade up, turing it this way and that, letting the light catch the blade. She glanced from the knife in her hand to Ben and smiled.
Ben glared back at her and echoed Tomaso. “You don’t scare me.”

Harley smiled sweetly. “That’s okay. It’s not like I need any information from you. I’m just going to kill you, but not before I hurt you, really, really bad.” She giggled.

Ben started to shift, glaring at her. “The Owls will kill you all!!”

Harley laughed. “Oh please. The Owls don’t scare me. My puddin…” Harley glanced over her shoulder at Jack. “My puddin is going to make sure the Owls know exactly where they stand in Gotham.” Harley blew Jack a kiss. The look he gave her in return had her blood running hot, her body fully alert despite the fact she was basically running on fumes. Alex had gone back to the SUV and brought her another vicodin. (Jack had refused a pain pill, but rather had insisted that Harley take one).

She smiled turning her full attention back to Ben. “Now…”

Her eyes met Ben’s. He stared back at her unable to look away as she stepped closer. “My puddin told me what you did to him, what you wanted from him. I’m going to show you what happens to anyone that touches him other than me.”

Ben’s eyes widened as Harley pressed to cold metal of the blade against his thigh.

* * *

Most of the Red Hood gang was still in the freezer room with Harley and Jack despite the chill that was settling into everyone’s bones. Alex was leaning against the wall near the entrance wishing he had a stiff drink, his eyebrows raised while he watched Harley talking to Ben, but then his face paled when Harley picked up one of the knives she had found and brought in here. His stomach flipped when Harley placed the knife she had picked up against Ben’s groin. He knew what was coming. He wasn’t really surprised, but the thought still made his stomach turn.

Alex was not squeamish. He had seen a lot of shit, but as the screams started and Harley pressed her knife against and into Ben’s flesh, he had to look away, especially when Ben’s blood curdling screams started to fill the room. The man jerked and thrust against the hooks in his back like a fish on the line, while Harley began to use the knife on him slowly, taking her time to make sure what she was doing was as painful as possible. But even with all his struggles, Ben was defenseless against Harley and she wasn’t being kind—not one bit.

Jason, who was standing nearby, frowned looking slightly...discomforted watching what was happening, but he didn’t look away. He studied Harley’s actions, a slow grin dancing across his lips as if, after the initial realization sunk in about what she was doing, Jason approved.

Roxy and Duela who were both leaning against the wall watching; both gagged, but then giggled. Roxy leaned over to Duela whispering in her ear. “Now that is nasty.”

Duela chuckled. “Yeah, is it me or does she seem to be going slow?”

The two women cringed and laughed.

Roxy giggled. “I was interested in Rocky Mountain oysters, but not any more.”

Both women burst out laughing.

The room continued to be filled with the sound of Ben’s screams, the sound of blood hitting the floor, followed by the juicy, wet sound of something soft falling to the floor with a “splosh” sound
that seemed to echo through the room. Ben’s screams were reduced to shuddering, gasping breaths, his skin pale and a fine sweat having broken out over his skin despite the chill in the freezer.

Alex turned around and stepped outside the room thinking he should definitely go check on Trope who was out in the SUV on her computer.

During the entire process, Jack’s face did an almost comical routine of faces. When she was finished, Jack frowned leaning down to hiss conspiratorially to Tomaso. “I guess she was a lot angrier than I thought.”

Tomaso was staring at Ben. His bloodless face couldn’t hide his shock at what Harley had done to the man who had been his lover. It was worse than anything he had ever done in the course of running his section of the Gotham mob. For a moment Tomaso realized that these people, this Red Hood gang, Jack and Harley Wayne, were a whole new breed of bad guy, working within their own set of codes.

Harley, her hands bloody, dropped the knife onto the table with the others creating a loud clatter and turned to Jason. “Jason dear, can you help me with this?”

She stooped to pick up what looked like a handful of limp, pasty colored, bloody flesh from the floor, holding it in the palm of her hand, her lip curled in disgust.

Jason hurriedly came over. “Sure thing Mrs. Wayne.”

Harley smiled glancing up at Ben whose eyes were glazed, though he was amazingly still conscious. Shivering, Ben looked down at her in confusion as shock and a strange otherworldliness was settling in around him.

She sneered. “Put this in his mouth and duct tape it closed.” She smiled at Ben. “No one touches Jack but me. No. One.”

Jason took the mound of bloody flesh. “Should I leave his nose uncovered?”

Harley smiled at the younger man. “Sure thing, let him enjoy this as long as possible.”

Jason still needed a stool, but it was much easier and quicker for him to move a stool over and hop up on it (more so than for Harley who was quite a bit shorter) to stuff the bloody flesh in Ben’s mouth. Ben only half heartedly struggled, the blood loss and pain clearly making him weak as Jason forced his mouth open and shoved the bloody mess between his lips. Ben struggled weakly, making incoherent sounds as Jason shoved the bloody flesh deep into his mouth.

Jason hissed with a grin. “Reap what you sow, asshole.”

Jason wiped his hands on his jeans (thankful that he was wearing gloves even though they were now ruined) then used the duct tape he had tossed over his wrist and started wrapping long lengths of tape over Ben’s mouth and around the back of his head several times before using the knife Harley handed him to cut off the tape and jump down.

* 

Jack was grinning watching his wife. He glanced down at Tomaso. “Still not scared?”

Tomaso looked back at him, the terror clear in his eyes.

Jack grinned and shuddered theatrically. “That was visceral wasn’t it? Gave me the willies.”
Jack chuckled and shivered, winking at Panessa.

Then suddenly everyone jumped as a gun shot rang out, the sharp sound echoing off the walls followed by the sharp scent of gunsmoke. Tomaso’s body fell over, a gunshot hole in the back of his head.

Jason blinked. “I thought you were going to...I don’t know...torture him.”

Jack shrugged. “I’m tired.” Jack smiled, handing Jason back his gun and walked over to Harley who was smiling up at Ben.

“You about ready poo?” he asked softly.

Harley didn’t answer him right away as she glared at Ben, but then she nodded. “Yeah. I’m ready.”

She walked close to Ben, picking up a knife off the table once more as she laid a hand on his bloody leg. She looked up and hissed. “You know Ben, you’re lucky. I have some medical training from when I was in school for my psychiatry degree, so I know just where to make you bleed.”

With that, Harley dug the blade along the soft flesh where thigh and groin connected, cutting fast and deep; the well sharpened blade of the knife made the cut easy. There was a spray of dark red blood, almost black as the liquid burst from the artery, spraying Harley in the face before she stepped back.

Ben jerked, then went still as the blood started to run full and quick from the wound, creating a large and ever expanding puddle of blood on the floor below his dangling feet.

Jack lifted his brow in surprise then grinned. “All right kiddies, let's wipe the place down and head home...I wiped. How about you babe?”

Harley nodded watching Ben bleed for a moment longer. The man was still staring at her with a look of befuddlement and bewilderment as if he couldn’t understand what had happened or how he had gotten here. She smiled at him before she nodded and turned to Jack. “Yeah, I’m ready puddin. I need a shower.”

Jack frowned. Harley’s voice sounded weak. He hurried over to her and grabbed her just as she turned and seemed to lose all strength, her body folding as her knees gave out. Jack wrapped his arms around her catching her and holding her close. “Let’s get you home pumpkin.”

Alex hurried over to help. “I’ll have the doctor meet us at the apartment you guys are staying at, all right?”

Jack nodded as he lifted Harley into his arms, his own injuries forgotten. “Good.” He chuckled to himself. “That man is making a mint off of us.”

Alex smirked. “Yes he is.”

* 

With everyone working, the clean up didn’t take long until they had wiped the place down for fingerprints and any other evidence that would tie them to the scene, and soon they were on their way back. Alex called the doctor, received an update on Frost, who was doing well. Alice had driven him home. (Henderschott had said he would make a full recovery if given time to heal). Alex had also arranged for Dr. Henderschott to meet them at the apartment, the new place Jack and Harley would be stay for the next day or two until their amusement park was ready to move into for good.
Just before the gang was ready to leave, Jack called them all to him just inside the front of the butcher’s shop.

“I wanted to thank each and every one of you for coming to rescue me.” Jack smiled at each of them. He was holding Harley while he spoke. She was on her feet, but having trouble standing on her own, the rage and adrenaline that had fueled her for the last few hours was quickly ebbing. Her own stubbornness and Jack’s grip on her were the only things keeping her on her feet.

Trope, Roxy and Duela all blushed, but Jason spoke glancing at the women for support. “Thanks Boss. I think I speak for all of us when I say, we’d do anything for you and Mrs. Wayne. We are in this to the bitter end. You’ve done nothing but treat us right, so…” He looked down shyly. “I know for myself, ain’t never had a family, not one I can recall, no education, no friends, no one I could depend on, but being with this gang, you brought me all that...family, friends...so...this is my family and I’ll do whatever it takes to protect it.” Jason looked up at Jack; his blue eyes were intent. Jack felt a welling of protectiveness. Maybe he could be there for Jason like Bruce was never there for him he thought briefly...maybe...

Jack stepped away from Harley long enough to grab Jason by the back of his neck and pull him into an embrace, resting Jason’s forehead against Jack’s shoulder.

He whispered against the younger man’s ear. “I know what it's like to feel lost and alone. Don’t worry Jason, we’re all your family here.”

Roxy spoke up with a smile. “We all agree with Jason. You guys brought us together and well…” She shrugged at a loss for words. “You can count on me, Trope, and Duela to be here whenever you need us Boss.” She nodded, as did the other two women.

Jack grinned with a glance at Harley. Harley was leaning on Alex, but she was smiling. “I feel like a mother with her chicks.” She laughed.

Jack chuckled. “Our deadly chicks.”

Everyone laughed before Jack sighed with fatigue. “Okay, everyone inside--I’m exhausted.”

* 

Alex drove, dropping everyone off at their different places, though Roxy, Duela and Jason all went home together. Trope was dropped off at the edges of Gotham University’s student housing, giving Jack and Harley a kiss on their cheeks before she hopped out. She grinned brightly standing by the side of the car just as tiny flakes of snow began to fall.

“You know, you guys are the best.” Trope grinned.

Harley smiled softly. “You are sweet. I’m glad you’re part of the gang.”

Trope smiled. “Me too. Good night!” She waved and hurried off.

Harley sighed pulling the door closed and leaned back. “This whole night sucked.”

Jack chuckled. “Yeah, it did sweets.”

Alex turned the wheel with a snort. “Yeah, but at least we all lived through it...so far.”

Jack nodded pulling Harley close, his arm around her waist. Harley laid her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.
Jack sighed. “I need a smoke.”

Alex nodded over to the glove compartment. “There is a pack of cigarettes and a fucking Bic lighter.”

Jack untangled himself from Harley, popped open the glove compartment to pull out a package of cigarettes and the lighter. He leaned back to a cigarette and took a deep drag on the cigarette that he slowly exhaled in a heavy cloud.

Alex smiled. “Glad you’re fucking alive.”

Jack grinned. “Me too. Thanks for coming after me.”

“Ah, I didn’t do it for you, you fuck; did it for Harley.” Alex laughed.

Jack snorted. “Jerk.”

“Asshole.” Alex smiled.

The two men laughed while Harley dozed, her head against Jack’s chest. Jack took another drag on the cigarette before he spoke. “I want to arrange a meeting with The Roman.”

Alex cringed. “I thought you might.”

Jack sighed. “Need to do it soon. Panessa’s territory is ours now and I don’t want there to be any misunderstandings on that front.”

Alex nodded. “I have some people…”

Jack closed his eyes taking another drag on the cigarette. “I also want us to start recruiting. We are going to need people…I also want a tech guy…”

Alex frowned. “We have Trope…”

Jack smiled. “No, no…I mean…think about it Alex, where does Batman get all his wonderful toys?”

Jack opened his eyes to look at Alex. “That car of his, the grappling hooks, the armor…where does it all come from? He has to have somebody helping him. And since we are going to take out the Owls, plus make a bigger splash on Gotham, that means another encounter with the Batman isn’t a possibility—it’s a fact. When it happens, I want to be prepared. For the bat or any other costumed party crasher.”

Alex nodded in agreement then shook his head. “Fuck,” he said slowly. “Never thought I would be putting myself in Batman’s spotlight.”

Jack laughed. “You know me Alex; I have to be the center of attention.”

* 

Alex drove them to a different apartment that he owned across Gotham, this one located in the Robbinsville area. He pulled up in front of the brownstone, parking illegally, but he wasn’t really worried about the cops driving by and ticketing him. No one liked to be out at night when it was cold and unless someone actually called the cops especially about the SUV, they should be fine. The neighborhood they were in was an up and coming one, trying to change its spots from a rundown, crime laden area into something new and shiny, but that kind of change took time. Right now the neighborhood was in a sort of purgatory, trying to pull itself out of hell and into heaven.
The entire area was quiet; only a few cars passed by in the night and the occasional sound of a wind chime, or the bark of a dog, but other than the sound of the wind picking up and blowing a few flakes of smoke, this side of Gotham was peaceful this early in the morning. The sidewalk was lit with black iron street lamps that were electric, but with the old fashioned feel of gaslight lamps; probably put up in the last decade or so Jack guessed as the three of them slid out of the SUV.

Jack helped Harley ease out of the SUV. She was exhausted and fading quickly. Once on the sidewalk, Jack wrapped his arm around Harley, carefully lifting her up before she could protest, thought she really didn’t have the strength to fight him as he lifted her up into his arms, holding her carefully and followed Alex to the entrance of the brownstone. Through the light and wet snow, the trio walked up a set of steps where Jack could see a side panel with a list of names. He snorted when he saw one name, Rick Allen...the name of the one-armed drummer from Def Leppard...Alex had a sense of humor.

Almost as soon as they hit the first step leading into the brownstone, they heard the sound of a car door slamming shut; the two men turned back around to see where the sound was coming from only to see Dr. Henderschott, carrying a large, old fashioned medical bag making his way hurriedly from across the street, the collar of his coat up against the chill breeze and tiny flakes of snow.

He smiled pleasantly and waved, looking far more awake than any of them as he hurried over to the sidewalk and up the steps while Alex opened the doors to the building’s main hall. The doors were a heavy set of dark wood doors with stained glass window inserts in the middle. The four of them hurried inside. Alex led the way over to an ancient looking metal cage of an elevator, which surprised Jack when the four of them climbed inside and the elevator moved rather quietly up to the fourth floor. From there, Alex led the way down to the very end of a plain, yet clean hall to the last apartment on the left, opening the door and holding it for Jack to walk in carrying Harley in his arms.

The apartment was a small studio apartment with hardwood floors and exposed brick walls. The room was “divided” into the sleeping area where a double size bed with a plain white comforter sat between two small windows. A couch sat on the left from the bed, pressed against the wall, a flat screen TV on the opposite wall from it. A little half wall divided the tiny kitchen from the rest of the room, providing a countertop for eating and was lined with four black stools. A couple of small end tables held a modern looking bedside lamp with a simple white shade, another matching lamp in the “living room” section and a small coffee table in front of the couch littered with outdated magazines and one set of bookshelves on the right side of the couch that contained a few paperback novels. There was nothing on the walls, just the exposed brick to decorate the simple room.

There was the tiniest of halls that led to a small bathroom with a shower, tub, toilet and sink, just barely big enough for two people to stand in. Jack walked over and eased down to the couch, setting Harley down next to him. Harley was awake by now and she yawned, kissed his cheek as Dr. Henderschott dropped down into a couch with his bag in front of her.

The doctor frowned as he peeled off the bandage to examine the bullet wound, taking in the fact that she was dressed only in her blood stained bra and slacks. She was shivering from both shock and the chill, her skin too pale. Henderschott glanced behind him at Alex. “Can you get some hot tea started or some coffee and we need to turn the heat up. She’s chilled.”

Alex nodded. “Sure thing doc.”

Alex puttered around in the kitchen after turning up the thermostat, setting some water to boil for tea and pulling out a small coffee maker.

Turning his attention back to Harley, the physician muttered more to himself than actually speaking to anyone while he frowned and examined her shoulder wound gingerly. “The stitching is crude, but
serviceable. You popped several of the stiches.” He twisted his lips poking at the wound before he spoke softly. “All right, I’m going to fix this up, disinfect it and get you on some antibiotics and painkillers. You can bathe, but only a sponge bath and then I want you to rest and eat for the next few days.” He lifted a brow at Harley. She nodded. He then glanced over to Jack. “I want you to keep an eye on her young man.” Henderschott frowned only now getting a good look at Jack’s own bruised and bloody face, catching a hint of the bruises on his torso. “You’re next young man. I’m going to examine you too.”

Jack grinned. “I’m all yours doc.”

*

The doctor worked on the two of them for over an hour, drinking three cups of coffee in the process. By the time he was finished, he had Harley restitched and bandaged up, her arm in a sling. Jack had one cracked rib, stitches on his cheek and forehead and another couple on his chest.

Alex brought them both some more tea and some sandwiches he had made...peanut butter and jelly.

“I expect you both to eat these since I’m using the extent of my fucking culinary expertise on you two. The fridge is fully stocked and so are the fucking cabinets. I can have your bags brought over from the other place in the morning. I’ll get Jason or someone to bring them. Anything else you guys need before I take off?” Alex asked looking between the two of them.

Jack grinned. “About a month’s rest maybe.”

Alex snorted. “Like you would fucking do that anyway. It's gonna take me a few days to set up a meeting with The Roman...gonna have to call in a few favors…but you guys can stay here and rest until the park is ready to move into...”

Jack smiled. “Thanks man.”

Alex grinned. “No fucking problem. Okay I’m off. Talk to you tomorrow.”

Jack stood up and followed him to the door. He grabbed Alex at the last moment and hugged him. Alex smiled, hugged Jack with his one arm.

“I’m really glad you’re okay man,” Alex said softly.

“Thanks for coming to help me Alex. You are my best friend.” Jack’s words were filled with sincerity.

Alex blushed. “Shut the fuck up man. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

With that, Jack and Harley were alone.

Jack caressed the side of Harley’s face, his fingertips tracing her jaw, the gesture brushing off flakes of dried blood. “You were amazing tonight.” He studied her face, his blue eyes caressing her features before he spoke. “I never had anyone fight for me before Harley. You have done so on more than one occasion...fought for me…” He teared up.

“You...are amazing Harley. I...”

She stuck her bottom lip out glaring at him though she was sleepy so the effect wasn’t as effective as if might have been. “Jack, I’ll always fight for you. I’ll fight for you, I’ll kill for you. I love you. You...you are everything to me.” She choked on her words. “I love you…” She leaned into him
drawn like a moth to a flame. Jack was her flame, the fire that would burn her...she knew it from the moment she had set eyes on him her first day at Wayne Manor until now...Jack would be the death of her someday but until then... “I love you with every fiber of my being Jack,” she whispered, her breath brushing his lips.

He smiled at his wife, his thumb caressing her lips as he gazed into her eyes. “I know…” He brushed his nose against hers. “I don’t know if I will ever become used to you coming to my rescue Harls..my girl...my friend...my everything.”

Harley smiled sleepily, the drugs and just plain exhaustion were beginning to take their toll as she leaned into him reaching up to run her fingers through his hair. “I won’t let anyone take you from me,” she whispered. “I won’t let anyone get away with hurting you Jack...ever. I’ll kill them all.”

Jack grinned. “I’ll kill them all for you too my sweets. No one will come between us…”

Jack smiled drawing her lips to his own. He kissed her tenderly, his lips caressing her mouth. He pulled away from her lips just enough to whisper. “My hero.”

Harley giggled softly, blinking sleepily, but then Jack stood up. “All right, sponge bath, food, then bed. Wait here while I run a bath, and no going to sleep.”

Harley saluted with her good arm. “Yes sir, puddin sir.”

Jack snorted on a laugh and headed to the bathroom to run a bath.

* * *

Jack carried Harley into the bathroom, Harley with her one arm around his neck, her head resting against his shoulder. He had filled the tub enough with warm water that it would hit her waist deep when she sat in it. He gently set Harley on her feet near the tub, kissed her bloody face tenderly while Harley leaned into him.Jack removed her clothing, tossing the blood covered items in a corner before he eased her into the tub. He stripped himself, tossed his clothing into the same pile before joining her in the tub.

Jack sat behind her and drew her back against his chest, careful of her shoulder.

“There, now how is that?” Jack asked, kissing her ear while at the same time wrapping both arms around her.

Harley sighed. “I may not be able to get up.” She giggled closing her eyes and leaned against him. Feeling the warmth of his skin, the beat of his heart against her back was enough to lull her to sleep.

Jack smiled picking up the washrag that hung from the side of the tub. He wet it and ran the soap over it before he began to run the soapy wet rag down her front, washing the blood away from her breasts. Harley closed her eyes and relaxed into his touch.

Jack murmured, his lips brushing softly against her ear as he spoke. “Just think about cuddling in bed with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.”

Harley made a little groan. “You had me at cuddling.”

Jack laughed softly. “You are so easy to please.”

Harley smiled, her eyes still closed. “You are just charming, that’s all.”
Jack laughed. “Really?”

Harley nodded. “Really. You’ll have The Roman eating out of your hand...or we’ll destroy him like we did Panessa,” Harley said with tired confidence. Jack grinned, kissing her ear.

He carefully washed the blood away, watching the water turn red around them as he worked to clean her off, then himself. Jack gently washed her hair, combing his fingers through her tangled locks until her hair was completely clean before tackling his own. When he was satisfied, Jack toweled his slowly wilting wife and himself before carrying her naked to the small apartment’s bed. After tucking her in, Jack grabbed the sandwiches that Alex had made and crawled--naked--into bed with her, forcing her to sit up.

“I want you to eat before sleeping,” Jack said softly.

“Ahh...puddin…” Harley moaned. “I’m so tired..”

“Not until you’ve eaten Harls. You got to rescue me tonight, but I get to take care of you right now. So eat.” Jack grumped at her until Harley groaned, taking the sandwich.

“Fine, big meanie.”

Jack laughed. “A big meanie that loves you--now eat.”

Harley made a face at him around a large bite of sandwich; the food energized her enough to sit up and finish her sandwich with some vigor. Jack grinned watching her.

“Feel better?”

Harley sighed. “Yeah.”

“Now, come here.” Jack pulled her into his arms and laid back against the pillows. Harley snuggled close against his side, careful of her shoulder, her head resting against his chest and within seconds, they were both fast asleep.

*

Harvey Bullock was standing in the middle of the freezer at Paisanos Butcher shop chewing on the end of an unlit cigar, his nose turned up at the sight around him. Eight dead. One butchered and left to bleed to death, but what had surprised him was that one of the victims was Tomaso Panessa. Scratch that he thought, he wasn’t that surprised. Tomaso was head of one of Gotham’s five families, but he had heard, and seen with his own eyes, Panessa running around Gotham with the man who was currently hanging from a meat hook with his dick and balls in his mouth. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what went down here. The mob wasn’t one of the most “liberal” organizations. Bullock was sure that someone had finally gotten tired of Panessa and his boy toy making a laughing stock of the crime families and decided to send a message. That building that had been blown to fucking hell had been Panessa’s too...so it might be more than simply a bunch of homophobic old mobsters getting angry at Tomaso Panessa, but the man with his junk in his mouth certainly made a graphic statement that someone had hated him...a lot. Harvey reached down and adjusted himself as the uncomfortable thought of having his dick sliced off made him squirm.

He shook himself yelling at the coroner’s people who were still milling about picking up the pieces. “Come on people! Bag it and tag it! Let’s go!”

*
In another part of Gotham, Agatha Wayne was sitting at her vanity putting on the finishing touches to her makeup. It was time to go see her nephew and his wife. She had been in Gotham long enough now that if the Owls didn’t know she was here, they weren’t going to know thanks to Lincoln; and she needed to talk to Jackie. She had been hearing disturbing things about a Red Hood gang through Lincoln’s sources, and what she had seen on the news, the video...that helmet...it was from the house...it had to be Jack and Harley.

She wasn’t sure how she felt about them getting into a life of crime...though considering her own record with the Owls...Her brother would be upset to see that the apple didn’t really fall far from the tree. She frowned, her thoughts drifting to Bruce wondering if there was anything there too...She shook her head, stood up and stepped into the walk in closet to finish dressing. She put on a pair of black slacks, chose a matching pair of black boots, a long asymmetrical black sweater and silver scarf around her neck. She grabbed her leather jacket and her purse, making sure her wallet, gun, pepper spray, taser and knife, as well as her compact, were all inside before she headed out to see her nephew.

*  

The boat ride out to Catherine House was chilly, but Agatha could smell the change in the air, that freshness that drifted through the air, the hint of new life...spring was almost here. There had been some light snow last night, but now it was a little warmer and the air was still filled with moisture which meant it would probably rain tonight. When she arrived and made her way up from the dock she was immediately overcome with a feeling of abandonment. She stood looking at the front of the house with a small frown. She could sense that the the place was empty; the house seemed dead as she examined it. She brought her hand up and rapped her knuckles against the door. The sound seemed to echo hollowly. She waited and rapped one more time. With a slight crease between her brows, Agatha reached into her purse pulled out her keys and opened the door to step inside. She gently shut the door and turned around, standing in the doorway. The house had that yawning emptiness of having been once more abandoned, a vastness of unoccupied space; she could just sense no one was living here now. Her nephew and his wife were gone leaving the house hollow, lifeless. Agatha frowned. She needed to go speak with Cobb, to see if he knew where her nephew and his wife had gone.

*  

She made her way down the walkway that wrapped around the back of the house leading to the small home where Cobb lived, her boots crunching along the path. The emptiness she had felt at the house followed her as she went giving her a slight chill up her spine. It almost felt as if the entire island was dead, unoccupied, as if something horrible had happened and every living thing had fled. The atmosphere left Agatha feeling slightly on edge.

As she approached Cobb’s house, the feeling changed only slightly to an unease in her stomach, as if there was a strange hollow place in the world. She had felt this way before when she had been around death. Death always felt hollow, as if the space where something had once lived had become a negative space...the life sucked from this bubble that surrounded the living creature…

Agatha shook herself as she stopped in front of Cobb’s door, only then realizing that it was open just a crack. She reached out, setting her gloved fingers against the door and slowly pushed. The door opened wider and she stood still looking inside.

She was immediately assaulted by the smell of death, that sweet scent of decay followed by the chill of death. She had been around death many times...she knew the signs.

She took a deep breath and stepped inside.
She didn’t have to go far before she saw the body of Cobb lying on the floor. By the sight of him, he had been dead several days now. She couldn’t be sure without a closer examination, but just with a cursory look, there were no bullet wounds...stab wounds, but from the heavy discoloration in patches over his pale, gray skin he was probably beaten. Agatha frowned in thought...she turned and quickly left, touching nothing else. She needed to find her nephew. Once the Owls learned of Cobb’s death...she shivered, but walked determinedly down the path.

Jack woke slowly to the feel of fingers caressing his face. He smiled without opening his eyes. One eye was swollen, not swollen shut, but pretty badly bruised and the places where he had received stitches felt tight and sore, though Harley’s gentle caresses seemed to ease most of his discomfort. He could also the warmth of her nude body against his side and that felt wonderful.

He smiled softly without opening his eyes. “Good morning pumpkin.”

Harley smiled. “Good morning puddin.”

Jack opened his eyes. Harley was leaning on her good arm, using her wounded one to caress him. He narrowed his eyes at her. “You’re not suppose to be using that arm Harls.”

“I’m being careful.” she said softly. “What about you and your cracked rib mister?”

Jack sat up suddenly, surprising her as he rolled her onto her back, but while the movement was swift, Jack was careful, gentle with her. He smiled lying on top of her making sure that his weight was on the side away from her damaged shoulder. Jack tenderly brushed her temple with his fingertips.

“My rib is fine.” He grinned kissing her very gently. “How is my Harley-girl this morning?” Jack asked while his blue eyes searched her face. She smiled using her good hand to caress his side. “At this moment? I’m happy. Happy that Ben and Tomaso are dead, happy that you are safe.” She brushed her nose against his while she spoke, her lips barely touching his, teasing softly. He eased back down beside her, careful to lay against her unwounded side.

“I love you baby,” he whispered.

Harley leaned into him, catching his lips with her teeth before flicking her tongue along his mouth. Jack closed his eyes with a soft growl spreading his hand against her stomach, leaning in to kiss her mouth deeply, his tongue diving into her mouth. Harley moaned softly rolling her body toward him. Jack lost himself in the kiss, letting his mind become focused on the feel of her lips, the taste of her tongue, the heat of her breath. The entirety of her body against him, the way their bodies fit together so easily. He caught her bottom lip with his teeth, pulling gently before he released her lip and brushed his teeth along her chin.

He stopped, whispering against her skin. “I want you, but…”

Harley pouted. “I want you too...let’s just...be careful. I need you Jack...my puddin.” She giggled softly. Jack shared a laugh with her rubbing his nose against her throat.

He licked her neck slowly hissing passionately. “I can’t stand a day going by without being inside you…”

Jack’s teeth brushed against her skin, tickling mixed with the harshness of his teeth.
Harley closed her eyes, she groaned as Jack shifted his attentions from her throat to her collar sending chills along her spine. His tongue was hot against her skin as he dragged it along the smoothness of her flesh, the wet trail he left chilling in the cooler air of the room. She reached up with her good hand and started to stroke his back, her fingers caressing the muscles of his shoulders and neck until her fingers found his hair as Jack shifted his position lower, his lips sliding their way along her skin. When he came to her breasts he pressed his lips against hers, sucking on the soft flesh. Harley arched slightly groaning and smiling knowing he was leaving a mark on her.

Jack brushed his nose against her breast, taking in the scent of her clean skin, luxuriating in the soft silk of her flesh against his face.

“I love you Harley. I love you…” he whispered, his warm breath tickling the fine hairs on her skin just before he moved up her breast to tease her nipple, his lips just barely brushing the surface of the hard sensitive bud. While he began to tease her nipple, his hand slid down her stomach. He smiled feeling the muscles shift beneath her skin as she moved her legs, her hips twisting just a little as he started to build that yearning heat between her legs. Jack used the tip of his tongue to circle her nipple, flicking the nipple back and forth.

Harley moaned. “Oh Jack...I love you so much…”

The feel of him against her, the warmth and strength of him but then his hand dipped between her legs, his fingers sliding over her clitoris, then deeper until he was sliding two of his fingers into her. Harley arched her back and groaned with pleasure, but at the same time pain shot through her shoulder when she pressed back against the wound and seemed to spread. “Uh...oh ow!”

Jack stopped touching her immediately. “Harley? Oh god, did I hurt you?”

He sat up on his knees quickly, the color draining from his face as he reached up and cupped her face between his hands. “Harley? Tell me what to do! What do you need?”

Harley laughed through the pain. “I just need one of my pills and for you to keep doing what you’re doing.”

Jack stared at her for a moment then laughed. “I can do that. Wait right here.”

Harley smiled. “I’m not going anywhere puddin.”

Jack hurried naked across the room to the kitchen. Harley watched him, the flash of pain settling into a deep ache, but the sight of his naked, muscled ass helped in easing her pain. He moved into the kitchen and poured her a glass of milk, knowing that water, the pill and an empty stomach might make her sick. He hurried back, the view of his naked body even more pleasing to her on the return trip, her eyes caressing him, especially around his hips. Jack didn’t notice her lust-filled look as he stepped to the side of the bed. Her pills were on the table beside the bed. Jack picked them up and he opened them while Harley struggled to push herself up to a sitting position using only one hand.

“I swear I don’t know how Alex does everything he does with only one hand,” she muttered.

Jack laughed. “Determination, and he is a stubborn motherfucker.” He held the pill out and Harley opened her mouth for it. He smiled lovingly at her as he placed the pill on her tongue before handing her the milk to swallow it down with. He took the glass, setting it beside the bed before he walked back around to climb into bed with her.

“I swear I don’t know how Alex does everything he does with only one hand,” she muttered.

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“I thought you might want to wait until the pill started to work,” Jack said looking down at her with a raised brow. “I don’t want to hurt you Harley.”

She gave him a playful look. “You can still do that…” she motioned with her eyes down her body. “Then when the pill starts working, we can really get busy.”

Jack snorted on a laugh, his eyes dancing with delight at his wife. “Get busy? Did you say “get busy?”


Jack hurried to cover her mouth with his to stop her listing while laughing at the same time. Harley sank back into the pillows with a happy groan, returning his kiss vigorously. She wanted to eat him up. She was so happy to have him alive, in bed with her...that black fear that she had felt last night when she thought she might lose him...it was still there, like a horrible little black seed in her gut she might never be rid of...but right now she had him to herself and she wanted to feel him, wanted to show him in the most explicit way possible how much she loved him...if only she hadn’t been shot.

Jack eased her back running his hands over her breast. Harley made little soft noises of want as she gazed at Jack though her dark lashes, her blue eyes shimmered with passion as Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip, his eyes traveling down from her face to her body, watching the way she struggled not to move too much and hurt herself while he fingered her nipples, rolling one, then the other between his fingers and then, then gently rubbing the pad of his finger over the top of one nipple then the other before pinching them gently.

Harley moaned, her good arm, which was between her and Jack, struggled to grab bunches of the sheet as her body tightened, her breathing became heavy while ripples of pleasure rolled through her, sending spikes of heat to her groin causing her to shift her legs as the tightness grew. The sensitivity of her clitoris became almost unbearable, begging for Jack to touch her again.

Jack scooted lower, catching her nipple in his mouth and sucking, his tongue swirling around her sensitive nub while his hand across her stomach stroked lower to tease, just above her clitoris, but without touching her.

Harley groaned, resisting the urge to arch into his touch, which might put pressure on her shoulder, but she stroked her legs against each other, her body ached while she continued to make little noises that told him clearly that she wanted him.

Jack chuckled and tugged at her nipple with his lips which caused his Harley to groan loudly. “Oh Jack!”

He flicked his tongue over her nipple then hissed. “You like that?”

“Jack you’re driving me crazy!”

He chuckled. “It’s about to it worse.”

He slipped his hand down between her legs, using his fingers to gently tug her labia wide, but still he didn’t touch her--he focused his attentions on her breasts, tugging and sucking at the nipple closest to him. He held her labia wide, then only when Harley was nearly writhing did he finally touch her. His long middle finger flicked against her swollen clitoris, made Harley cry out.

“Uh! Uh Jack!”
He smiled, holding her nipple between his teeth tenderly doing it again while flicking his tongue over her nipple. Harley whimpered, nearly in tears. “Damn it Jack!”

He released her nipple and laughed. “You are so wanton Harley...I love it.”

He shifted again and kissed his way down her body, stopping to grab a bite of flesh between his teeth, or to suck until he had created a small bruise which didn’t take long on her pale skin. He then wrapped himself around her hips, one arm tucking up under her rear as he used his hand to spread one of her legs out just a little before he bent down to flick his tongue over her clitoris. Harley groaned, the fingers of her wounded arm spasming as she struggled not to tighten her grip, though her free hand dug into the sheet as Jack flicked his tongue back and forth over her swollen clitoris.

Harley tossed her head back and forth struggling not to move too much and hurt herself while Jack lowered his mouth on her and sucked on her clitoris, stopping only to roll the tip of his tongue over her or to take a long slowly lick before he would suck on her, alternating between light, tender pulls and hard, forceful sucks until she came. Harley gasped as her orgasm flowed over her, her body turned warm and liquid only a second after the intensity of the orgasm nearly raised her off the bed. Jack brought his head up and turned to grin at her, his lips wet. He licked his lips grinning brightly as he shifted back up her body, wrapping an arm around her waist.

“How was that?” he asked rubbing his nose against her cheek.

Harley moaned. “I want you Jack...I wanna feel you inside me.”

Jack smiled. “Are you sure...I don’t…”

Harley frowned with a slight whine in her voice. “Puddin!”

He chuckled. “Okay, okay...let’s switch sides. I want you to roll onto your good side.”

Harley nodded as Jack crawled carefully over her. She rolled onto her side and Jack cozied up behind her. She grinned feeling the satin heat of his erection against her rear, his chest against her back, then the gentle strokes of his hand on her hip.

“How ready Harls?” Jack whispered against her ear. “Keep your damaged arm along your side. I won’t touch your shoulder.”

Harley nodded with a smile. “All right puddin.”

Jack gently lifted her leg into the air bringing his erection forward as he hooked his legs between her thighs. Harley closed her eyes; the warmth of his body felt good.

Harley arched her back, her brow furrowed with pleasure at having him inside her, having their bodies connected.

Jack wrapped his arm around her waist while Harley arched her leg back to wrap it around Jack’s thigh as he stroked her stomach, and his hand slid down between her legs to caress her clitoris while he thrust gently into her. He kissed her ear, dragging his tongue along the tender area right between her throat and ear while whispering, “I love you my Harley-girl, my angel...my pumpkin pie.” He punctuated each endearment with a thrust of his hips all while stroking her clitoris as he thrust into his wife.

Harley groaned, her eyes closed, as her body arched into his, the two of them fitting together perfectly. She was careful of her wounded arm even though the pills had started to work. Her other
hand was flung out across the bed in front of her, holding onto a handful of the sheet, her legs holding Jack’s tightly as he thrust.

“Jack…” she moaned. “I love you… I… I couldn’t live without you puddin…”

Jack answered her, licking her ear. “You are my desire, my violent daydream Harley… only you… against the world Harley… only you.”

His rubbing of her clitoris became more intense and Harley felt that rushing warmth of her orgasm wash over her again. Her body tensed in response and she cried out, arching back against him with a breathy hiss. “Oh Jack… puddin, I love you… I love you so much!” She arched her head back wanting to kiss him. The press of her wounded shoulder back against him caused a rush of pain, but she came again, the pleasure cancelling out the pain with another passionate gasp.

Jack groaned pressing his head against hers, cupping her sex, his fingers pressing against her sensitive clitoris; his lips found hers when he came. “Harley…” he moaned softly. “Harley…” He thrust, pumping into her with each ripple of his orgasm. There was a spike of discomfort from his cracked rib, but it was easy to ignore while he continued to ride his climax until he simply couldn’t move anymore.

They both relaxed into each other, Jack holding on tightly to Harley, kissing her tenderly.

He grinned like a naught child. “I would be happy to spend some time not moving from this bed for a few days.”

Harley giggled and leaned her head back against Jack. He smiled and kissed her lips tenderly. Harley whispered. “That will be nice.”

*  

After about a week, the two of them were nearly bouncing off the walls for something to do. Alex was closer to setting up a meeting between Jack and The Roman, but he had heard that the word on the street was that Falcone was making inquiries into Jack Wayne. There had been no peep from the Owls. Jack was taking this to mean that they didn’t care about Ben’s death, but Jack wasn’t fool enough to think that someone else--such as Ben’s family--wouldn’t want retribution.

But with all the machinations on the back burner for now, Jack was searching the internet... for something, he had no idea what. Jack was sitting on the couch with the laptop computer that Alex had brought him on the coffee table, looking through the online version of the local paper when he saw an article in the entertainment section of the Gotham Gazette, “Has Bruce Wayne Found Love… Again?”

Jack couldn’t stop himself from clicking on the article. He scanned the story, which was the usual blather about Bruce: how good looking he was with a minor note about his younger brother having not been seen at any public events... lalalalada... Bruce had been seen around town recently with Janifer St. Cyr, a socialite and model. Of course, Jack thought with a curl of his lip.

“Idiot,” he muttered. Jack glanced over to Harley. She was in the kitchen cutting up slices of cucumber. Her shoulder was still tender, but she was able to use it more, though the doctor wanted her to continue to wear the sling and limit her work with that arm.

Jack smiled while he watched her. She had her blonde hair piled on top of her head, thick curls spiraling down around her face. She wore a pair of sleep shorts and a half shirt and nothing else, showing long expanses of softly, creamy skin, her long smooth legs, her flat stomach, the way the t-
shirt clung to her breasts, her nipples hard, showing through the shirt...her lack of a bra. He dragged his teeth over his bottom lip feeling that familiar tug of need in his groin. He grinned lopsidedly. Bruce would never know love or lust for anyone like Jack did with Harley.

She came around the half wall with the plate of cucumber, her bare feet making little sound as she walked over to him.

“Whatcha up to puddin?” Harley asked with a smile as she stepped over to sit on the couch next to him crossing her legs before she set the plate down on her lap, grabbing a slice of cucumber and sticking it in his mouth.

Jack chuckled returning his attention to the computer. “Nothing,” he said as he chewed and swallowed. “I was just looking for something for us…” He frowned leaning closer to the computer. Harley, who had popped a couple of slices into her mouth, frowned watching him.

“Puddin?”

Jack’s smile bloomed across his face. “Harley! The circus is in town!”

Harley, her mouth full of cucumber slices, widened her eyes and grinned, her mouth full she mumbled. “Crus?”

Jack laughed. “Haly’s circus is in town! They are set up at the Gotham Fairgrounds and the opening is tonight!” Jack turned to look at Harley his blue eyes dancing with childish wonder and mischief. “How do you feel about going to the circus?”

*

Jack only had to put in one phone call to the circus to get a pair of tickets, the Wayne name, and the fact that the phone was answered by Haly himself who remembered little Jack Wayne and Bruce made it easy for Jack to have two tickets waiting for them when they arrived.

The evening was crisp and cool, but clear. Jack called them an Uber to take them to the Gotham fairgrounds.

Harley was dressed in a little black pleated mini skirt, black hose with black ankle boots and a red sweater, her arm still in a sling (Jack had made sure her sling at least matched her outfit having made sure it was red), stepped out of the Uber with her mouth hanging open and her eyes wide. The circus looked exactly like the large classical circuses she had seen in movies and TV growing up, with lights everywhere, strung along in loops. She could see the big top in the center, a large two peaked red and white striped tent, surrounded by several smaller striped and colorful tents reminding her of the great pyramid surrounded by smaller temples. A large ferris wheel decorated in twinkling lights was easily visible, along with an array of other lit attractions from rides to rings with animals, games and what looked like hundreds of booths catering to anything you could possibly want to eat. The calliope music danced on the air as Harley took in the sights with wonder. Since the Gotham fairgrounds was located near the train station, she could see a long train parked along the side of the circus, the train cars covered in what looked to be old circus posters...it was all just like stepping into the past when circuses were all the rage.

Jack paid the driver before coming over to stand beside Harley. He was dressed in a pair of black slacks, a white and black checked dress shirt, an evergreen vest and black jacket with a pair of Italian leather evergreen, point toed oxfords and matching leather gloves. He stepped up beside her and put his arm around her waist.
“So what do you think?” he asked with a grin.

“It’s...wow. I mean it looks exactly like a circus should look!” Harley grinned.

Jack laughed. “Yeah it does. Come on, let’s go get our tickets! And, I plan on winning you the biggest stuffed animal possible!”

Jack gave her a loud and enthusiastic kiss on her cheek, causing Harley to giggle and blush with pleasure. When Jack was happy, his joy was like a shining thing...it radiated out from him in the most amazing way Harley thought. Anyone would want to be close to him when he was like this, beautiful, happy...Harley returned his kiss, pressing her lips to his cheek. Jack grinned at her and reached up, turning her face gently to his and kissed her full on the mouth, causing her knees to go weak. He rubbed his nose against hers and whispered. “My girl.”

Harley licked his mouth and hissed. “Puddin.”

Jack grinned. “Come on baby, let’s go have some fun.”

Laughing together, they hurried into the main body of the circus as they headed to the ticket booth.

* 

Harley was gaping at everything they passed from the cute games of chance, to the sides shows such as Lila the snake dancer, a mermaid, knife-throwers, and a human blockhead. The circus included a few rides: the ferris wheel, a large, gorgeous merry around, and a giant swing. There were people everywhere, the air was filled with the scents of cotton candy, funnel cake and other unidentifiable smells, but they all combined into a sweet childhood fantasy. The lights were bright and cheerful and the music was loud. Harley thought for a moment, this must be what Christina Rossetti’s Goblin Market must have been like.

Jack led Harley over to one of the booths where a young man with long blonde hair pulled back in a tail, wearing a red and white striped jacket and pants was yelling. “ONLY THE MOST SKILLED CAN WIN AT THIS GAME!! SHOW YOUR MATE WHAT YOU’RE MADE OF!”

As they approached Harley could see that it was a dart throwing game. The booth held an assortment of stuffed animals and other odds and ends one could attempt to win.

The man grinned at them as they came over.

“Want to win the pretty lady a stuff toy?” the circus man asked with a wide grin.

Jack laughed. “Yep, the biggest one you have.”

The guy laughed. “Well to win that...” He pointed at a huge stuffed pink elephant that was easily half as big as Harley. “You need to pop twelve balloons in a row. Miss one and you’re out.”

Jack pulled out his wallet with a grin. “Easy.”

Harley stood back while the man handed Jack twelve darts. He grinned at Jack. “Good luck man, but no one has ever managed to pop twelve balloons in a row.”

Jack picked up the first dart. He balanced it in the palm of his hand. He could feel it was weighted in way that would cause the dart to dip, a relatively typical circus game trick, but it didn’t really matter to him. He glanced at the board of balloons, then at the man. A slow, sexy smile spread across Jack’s face and he winked at the other man, which caused the young man to blush.
Jack turned to Harley. “Kiss for luck pumpkin?”

Harley giggled stepping close and wrapped her good arm around his neck, pressing her body up against his. Jack licked his lips, his eyes gazing at her plump red lips. Jack hissed in a slow seductive whisper. “Tonight, I’m going to lick every inch of you.”

Harley giggled softly, wrapping a leg around his hips as she hissed back. “I’m going to suck on you until you’re begging me to fuck you.”

Jack lifted a brow with a smirk on his lips. “Damn Harley...maybe we should go home now?”

Harley kissed him slowly and sensual, the young man watching had to turn to adjust his pants, especially when Harley slowly tugged Jack’s bottom lip out with her teeth. She let go to whisper. “Good luck puddin.”

Jack reluctantly let her go, his eyes following her for a moment before he turned back to the board of balloons. He held the first dart between his fingers for a split second before he tossed the dart, popping a balloon, then in a quick fashion, so quick that Harley lost count for a moment, Jack picked up and threw the darts, one right after the other hitting a balloon with every toss until, he was done...twelve balloons popped without missing a beat.

The young man blinked, then whistled. “That...was cool.”

He grinned at Jack. “Wanna go again? See if you can do it one more time. I won’t charge you.”

Jack put his gloved hand out with a sexy grin.

The young man quickly grabbed twelve new darts and handed them to Jack.

Jack glanced at Harley. “Another kiss for luck?”

Harley giggled grabbing the back of Jack’s neck and pulling him down for a deep passionate kiss, their tongues playing softly against one another. Jack grabbed her waist, his hands balling up the fabric of her clothing, fighting the urge to toss her down on the game’s counter and...he swallowed and took a breath as she stepped back. Jack let out a breath, glancing at the young man with a grin before he quickly and easily tossed the second set of twelve darts, popping a balloon every time.

The young man shook his head in amazement. “Dude, you got a gift.”

He walked over picking up a hooked stick and used it to take down one of the giant pink elephants, then another handing both to Jack and Harley. “You earned them. You guys have a good time!”

Jack, with an elephant under each arm laughed. “Come on Harls, let's go get seated for the show.”

Harley giggled kissing Jack on the cheek. “You’re amazing puddin.”

Jack shrugged with a grin. “I know.”

* 

Jack held both the elephants, but also holding the fingers of Harley’s good hand, led her through the twists and turned toward the big top’s main entrance where a man dressed in a sparkling red coat with a exaggerated black top hat and a handlebar mustache was calling people into the big top for the main attraction.

“COME SEE THE FLYING GRAYSONS!! THE MOST DEATH DEFYING ACROBATIC,
They filed in with the rest of the crowd, Jack being very protective of Harley, making sure no one came close enough to bump into her arm as he guided her through the crowd, finding them a pair of seats on the fourth row benches that circled the large tent creating a circle around the center for the show. The center ring.

Jack set the elephants down, one between his legs, the other between Harley’s and pulled her close keeping a protective arm around her waist as he whispered in her ear over the sounds of the music and the crowd.

“The Flying Graysons have been with the circus forever. I remember seeing them when I was a kid.”

Harley smiled her eyes going to the top of the tent where she could see the trapeze. She could feel Jack’s smile against her ear. She leaned in close to him just as a man with a large popcorn bag filled box held in place with straps over his shoulders came walking up the aisle yelling about his wares. Jack waved the man over, bought them each a bag of popcorn before he settled in next to her again.

“You know, I always dreamed about having someone to take to the circus with me. Someone special who knew the real me.” Jack mused watching the center ring as a trio of clowns came out to perform for the crowd.

Harley leaned her head on his shoulder. “Well, here I am, Jack.”

Jack smiled contently. “I love you Harley...my harlequin.”

That was the moment that the lights began to dim. There was a moment between darkness and light as the light slowly faded that Jack glanced across the center ring and felt his blood go cold. There, almost perfectly parallel to him and Harley sat Bruce and his date, Janifer.

Jack blinked in shock staring at his brother. He was turned, talking to his date when, as if he sensed himself being watched. Bruce lifted his head and turned, his dark blue eyes meeting Jack’s across the center ring.

Time slowed down as Jack and Bruce stared at each other. Bruce started to stand, but that was the moment that the ringmaster stepped out into the middle of the center ring.

“WELCOME EVERYONE TO HALY’S INTERNATIONAL TRAVELING CIRCUS!”
I'm so sorry about this chapter being late!! I've had a very bad week/weekend which threw me off on my writing. I have a big move coming up and I will try not to let it affect my updating again!

The three men came in just as the ringmaster was spouting off about the traveling circus. There was enough noise that someone could fire a weapon and no one would hear them. The three men stood near the entrance; they had followed Jack and Harley Wayne into the main tent after having lost sight of them for nearly an hour once they arrived at the circus. This being the opening night, the fairgrounds was packed with people. This was not the ideal situation, but the Kosov brothers were neither known for their subtlety nor their brains.

Carmine--The Roman--Falcone had put an informal hit on Jack Wayne, giving each of the families a chance to take out the man who had taken out Tomaso Panessa. (Though only he knew that if they failed to take Jack out in forty eight hours, The Roman planned on going ahead with meeting with him...but he didn't see any reason not to make it difficult for him first.) The head of the Odessa family, Alexandra Kosov was happy to try to take out Panessa’s killers, not because she felt any need to seek revenge on Tomaso’s behalf--she hated Tomaso, especially after a failed love affair with him ended up with her being forced to get an abortion...that was all before she became the head of the Odessa family. No, the men she had sent, all three men she trusted with her life, her brothers, Ivan, Bohdan, and Denys, she wanted them to take out Jack Wayne and whoever was with him. Cut off the head of the Red Hood gang, the rest would follow. Expanding her influence and reach in Gotham was always favorable. Someone had to take Panessa’s place and it was time for the Odessa family.

None of the families had heard anything about the Red Hood in the week since Tomaso Panessa’s death. The Odessa’s, who had one of the better information networks, hadn’t heard a peep in the last week either, but then tonight, one of their informants, a little guy named Kevin who worked for Uber in Gotham had called them with some interesting information. He had called saying that someone named Jack Wayne had ordered an Uber to take him and his wife to Haly’s Circus. Kevin had given them the name and license of the Uber; after that tracing the Uber hadn’t taken much. The three Ukrainian men ended up following the Uber to the circus. They had even seen Jack Wayne exit the car with a woman, her arm in a sling, but they had lost sight of the couple for a little bit. Soon after, they caught sight of them again when the crowds had started moving for the big top. The three brothers saw the couple again as the they entered the tent and the three large men had entered the big top after them, though they kept their distance as they tried to decide what to do.

Denys had tried to call their sister, but all three brothers knew she was going to be impossible to get a hold of. She had a date tonight and when Alexandra had a date, she didn’t like to be disturbed unless it was a life or death situation.

Ivan, the tallest of the three and the eldest, smacked Denys hard in the shoulder, hard enough that the younger man nearly dropped his phone.

“Stop it Denys. We don’t need Alexandra telling us what to do every inch of the way! We know
what she wants, we just do it.” Ivan grinned showing off his gold front tooth, his accent thick while he utilized English as his sister had demanded of everyone in the family.

Bohdan made a face. “We can handle this without her holding our hands Denys.”

Denys frowned. “I don’t like this. This man, he killed Panessa...he killed them all. I just...there is only three of us.”

Ivan smacked his little brother on the back of his head. “And there are three of us to his one.”

Denys winced. “What about the woman?”

Ivan smiled. “Pretty no? She’ll be no problem. Look, her arm is in a--how do say--sling? Broken wing. Maybe she is ready for a change? Wants a real man instead of that pretty boy?”

Ivan and Bohdan laughed as Bohdan snorted. “You think she want a man who looks like a zalupa?”

Ivan snorted. “Khuy tebe v zhopu!”

Denys frowned glancing over the crowd to where he could see Jack Wayne and his woman. He didn’t feel good about this at all. Something was nagging at him, but he couldn’t figure out why...just a feeling.

“Hey, I know you three blockheads.”

All three of the men turned to see a man they knew; they had had drinks with him a few times, even played a few games of seka with him...he was terrible at the game no matter how many times the brothers taught him, Tony Zucco.

Tony Zucco was an average height man with thick black hair. He might have been attractive except for the pockmarks on his cheeks and the desperation in his eyes. Tony was always indebted to someone, whether is was gambling debts or something more sinister. Tony was always doing grunt work for someone.

Ivan grinned. “Tony, what are you doing here my friend? Come to diddle some clowns?"

The brothers laughed. Tony laughed with them, sort of, completely aware that he was the butt of many jokes.

“No man, I’m on a job. Here to collect some money, but the guy who owns this shit show, Carl Canary Haly...he was suppose to pay some protection money, but he ducked out. I’m here to teach him a lesson, ain’t no one too good to pay their fees to the Maroni family.” Tony grinned pulling out an unlit cigar from the pocket of his jacket and putting it between his lips, though he was smart enough not to light it in here.

Denys frowned. “How are you going to teach him a lesson?”

Tony motioned with his eyes toward the trapeze. “See that little swing up there? Well, when Haly’s top grossing act takes to the air, they’re gonna find that they should have checked their equipment a little better.”

Ivan chuckled. “Guess you should always pay your fees, eh?”

They all laughed except Denys. “You think that’s going to interfere with our job? Maybe we should wait?”
Tony frowned. “You guys here on a job too?”

Ivan nodded. “You hear about the Red Hood?”

Tony nodded. “Fuck. Yeah we all heard. He took out Panessa...like took them all, but the women and children.” He shook his head. “Bad business that.”

“You hear there's a price on their leader’s head?” Ivan asked raising a brow in question.

Tony shrugged. “I might have heard something. The Red Hood is here?”

“Da. We are here to take care of him. Though your little business here might help us. Cause distraction, kill him, leave. No one sees anything,” Ivan smirked.

Denys shook his head. “I’m gonna say it one more time. I don’t like this. I think we should leave.”

Ivan smacked his little brother on the back. “Come on, what do that say in America--nut up?”

Ivan and Bodhan chuckled.

Zucco smiled. “Care if I tag along? Help the Odessa clan out a bit?”

Ivan pulled Tony into a bear hug. “The more the merrier they say, yeah?”

Tony laughed. “I’m all about helping.”

*

Jack hissed. “Bruce.”

Harley frowned following her lover’s gaze to see Jack’s older brother staring at them from across the ring. Bruce started to stand, but that was the moment that the ringmaster yelled.

“AND NOW THE FLYING GRAYSONS!”

The music swelled into an elegant piano and chimes sound, the lights dimmed, turning red and pink mixed with light that began to twirl over the crowd before focusing above the center of the ring. There was a large hoop that almost seemed to float in the air above the crowd, and on the ring were three people dressed in matching outfits. But Jack’s attention wasn’t on the acrobats; it was on Bruce. He had his hands balled into fists waiting to see what his older brother would do.

Bruce had started to stand, but his date, Janifer, reached out and took his arm. She said something to him and pouted—it was hard to tell with the dim lighting—but Bruce glanced across the ring toward Jack and let himself be pulled back down to her.

Jack snorted. He could feel Harley’s lips against his ear. “Just ignore him puddin and let’s enjoy the show.”

Jack turned to look at his wife. She had her good arm wrapped around his, her chin on his shoulder smiling at him. Just looking into her blue eyes eased his anger. He shot a look around the ring at Bruce, who seemed to be staring daggers at him and smiled, then blew his big brother a kiss. Bruce started to get up again, but his date wrapped her arm around his firmly...Jack chuckled. Whoever this Janifer St. Cyr was, she wasn’t putting up with Bruce’s bullshit.

Jack put his arm around Harley and pulled her closer, watching the ring performers. The lights switched off, the music changed and then a spotlight clicked on to focus on four people above them
and the trapeze swings between them.

Two people leapt off, two men—or rather a man and a boy Jack and Harley noticed—swinging back and forth. Jack, his arm around Harley, both of them watching the performance, didn’t notice the three men moving down the nearest aisle toward them. The trapeze artists had jumped back to their platforms, now the older man and woman, holding onto the trapeze on either side, leapt off the platform. They passed each other, flipping into the air to catch the trapeze swing that was drifting away from them, then swung back again. The man caught both trapeze and for a moment he held himself suspended in the air.

The three men plus Zucco were coming up on Harley’s right. Their plan was for Denys to grab the woman, yanking her away and slicing her throat just as his older brothers (now with the addition of Zucco) swarmed the man. They eased themselves into position.

The two trapeze artists swung toward each other, the music peaked, the two passed each other, their fingers brushing, sharing an intimate moment between the two of them. The man and woman looked at one another, sharing a look of love and confidence, their eyes on each other, the crowd forgotten for that split second as they passed, smiling. The woman blew a kiss, mouthing “I love you.” The man smiled and mouthed back in that split second, “I love you too,” before they turned away from each other and reached out to grab the trapeze swings, only to have the swing’s ropes, on both trapeze snap the moment each artist grabbed the bar, their weight finally breaking the sabotaged equipment.

*

The lights followed the two artists as they tumbled through the air. A young boy watched as the two people he loved more than anyone else in the world plunged to their deaths. They hit the floor of the center ring with a sound that seemed to him to lack the impact of what had just happened.

Richard Grayson stared at the broken bodies of his parents, unable to comprehend what he had just witnessed.

*

The crowd broke out into screams and shouts as the two artists plummeted to the floor of the center ring below. That was the moment the four men moved in on Jack and Harley.

Denys lunged past the couple sitting next to Harley, their attention on the tragedy before them. He easily pushed past the couple and grabbed Harley by her hair pulling her up to her feet as quickly as he could, yanking the woman up and against him, bringing the blade around to slice open her neck.

Harley cried out in surprise as she was suddenly pulled to her feet by her hair, the pain was intense as several of her hairs were pulled out at the root. She stumbled, her wounded shoulder slamming into the chest of the man who had grabbed her as she tripped over the legs of the couple who had been sitting next to her. The pain of her healing shoulder slamming into the chest of the man who had grabbed her radiated down from her shoulder causing her arm in the sling to go numb, slowing her reactions.

*

Jack turned his head. For a moment his reactions seemed too slow, as if he were moving through molasses. He saw Harley, one moment she was sitting next to him, the next, she was yanked away from him drawing his attention from the scene of the falling trapeze artists to see his wife stumble to her feet, a man with his hand in her hair viciously pulling her backwards down the aisle from him,
tripping over the couple that had been sitting next to them.

Harley stumbled, her shoulder slamming into the man who had grabbed her and her face was transformed by pain. Jack felt it, felt his wife’s pain in his very soul and the rush of anger almost blinded him, the rage that someone had hurt her made Jack want to kill anyone and everyone. Jack surged to his feet, at the same time reaching into his jacket for the switchblade he had slipped into the inside pocket. The blade was new; Harley had purchased it for him—through Alex—just in the last few days. It was a gorgeous blade, highly polished, doubled sided purple Damascus five inch blade. He had taken to putting the blade in a pocket even inside the apartment; he loved it that much and he had slipped it into his pocket without thinking about it just before they left. He hadn’t even mentioned having it with him to Harley. But right now, his fingers brushed against the cool metal handle, tugging the blade free and into his hand, his thumb brushing over the button that allowed the blade to spring forth. But at the same time someone behind him threw a punch, hitting Jack in the back of the neck which sent him stumbling forward a couple of steps, almost causing him to fall over the bleacher seat in front of him.

And then time seemed to speed up.

Jack pulled his blade, hitting the switch at the end with his thumb at the same time that he spun around after his shins smacked into the bleachers. With his arm extended, the blade became a part of him as he slashed out at whoever was behind them. Ivan, who had taken the sucker punch to Jack’s head, leaned back, the blade cutting through the air where his neck would have been, but the tip of the blade still sliced through Ivan’s shirt and a few layers of skin leaving a thin line of blood behind.

Tony had circled around to Jack’s left. He came at Jack, pulling his gun at the same time, but Jack saw him from the corner of his eye. Before Tony could shoot, Jack grabbed his wrist with his free hand, forcing the gun upward. Tony’s finger convulsed at the sudden shift, harmlessly shooting up into the tent just before Jack swiftly brought his knife up and under, slicing the blade under the man’s wrist in a deep slice. There was a gush of blood and Tony dropped the weapon. Jack had cut deeply enough, the blade sharp enough, to slice through the man’s tendons making his hand useless. Jack yanked Tony’s body across his torso, blood spraying everywhere and Tony started to scream. Jack brought his knee up at the same time, hitting Tony’s already useless arm in the elbow with his knees, driving his switchblade into the back of Tony’s neck, yanking the weapon out. Drops of blood caught in the dim light as Jack pulled his blade out and kicked Tony’s feet out from under him. Jack dropped Tony; the man hit the bleachers in front of him before he rolled over it to the screams of other circus patrons who were beginning to realize the violence occurring in the darkness near them on the heels of the acrobats’ deaths.

By this time the crowd had started to turn into a mob. Some of the patrons were fleeing, some from seeing the death of the two acrobats, the rest, that surrounded Jack and Harley, seeing the start of a fight, were trying to get away from the fight that had started. Some ran just because others were running.

Bruce had stood when the trapeze artists fell, but as his eyes were naturally drawn to his brother, Bruce saw the men attacking Jack and Harley. He only fought with himself for a second or two before he left his date and was pushing himself through the crowd trying to get to Jack. Whatever was going on, Jack and Harley were outnumbered and Harley looked to already be injured. Bruce needed to help his brother, Janifer should be fine. His eyes wandered over to the bodies of the two trapeze artists, then up where he saw the young man standing there—a boy really—staring unmoving down at the bodies. For a moment Bruce was back in the alley holding his little brother looking down at the bodies of his parents…

Bruce shook off the image and shoved at the panicked people as he tried to get to his brother now.
Harley snarled more than she screamed as Denys yanked her up and back against him knocking the elephants that Jack had won her to the floor. She felt the coolness of the metal as he brought his arm around and pressed the blade to her throat, but he hesitated...slicing the woman’s throat didn’t feel right to Denys, but that moment of hesitation was all that Harley needed.

She threw her head back as hard as she could, the back of her head hitting Denys in the mouth, smashing and cutting his lips against his teeth; the sudden impact also loosened his grip on Harley’s hair. Harley yanked her head free--losing several strands of hair--and threw her head back again as hard as she could before she spun around, her shoulder throbbing, but the pain gave her focus along with her anger. As soon as she spun around Harley kicked out, catching the Ukrainian between the legs. Denys’s eyes bulged for a moment as he stared at her in shock, the pain radiating up from his groin. She had kicked him hard enough that Deny was sure something had burst; he felt like vomiting. Harley grinned and did a half spin with her body bringing her leg around, the kick just missing him as Denys leaned out of his way at the last second feeling the breeze from her foot passing his face. He was impressed that she had kicked that hard, she would have gotten him right in the face if he hadn’t moved in time.

Harley snarled, hopped up onto the bleacher in front of her (now empty of patrons) her little black skirt fluttering cutely for a moment before she leapt off with a quick full body spin, her skirt flaring out in perfect cheerleader-like perfection. Denys panicked and reached out catch her foot and threw her. Harley yelped, fell, and hit her wounded shoulder on the corner of the aluminum bleachers before she rolled off and landed on the aluminum footboard. Pain exploded down her arm, bringing tears to her eyes. Harley hissed, squeezing her eyes shut for a moment against the hot flash of pain. She gasped, but rolled to her back. Denys started to reached down, but Harley arched her back and threw her legs up to strike him squarely in the chest forcing him to take several steps backwards which only barely gave Harley room to arch again and push herself up off the floor to face him.

Jack grinned, now he only had two men to worry about. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Harley dealing with her opponent; Jack had confidence in his wife’s abilities, wounded though she was. He held his blade in front of him and smiled. “So, may I ask what this is all about?”

Ivan narrowed his eyes exchanging a look with his brother; both men were holding knives as well. “The Roman said whoever takes you out, gets to take over Panessa’s terrority.”

Jack frowned. “He did? Well that just isn't very nice now is it?”

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Bohdan jerked his head at Jack. “Odessa is going to take that piece of the pie pretty boy.”

Jack grinned. “Oh you think I’m pretty? Aren’t you sweet, but I’m afraid my wife won’t like that...she has a tendency to castrate any man who takes a shine to me.”

The two Ukrainians exchanged a look. Jack smiled, clearly judging by their expressions they had heard the gory details of Ben’s body.

“Oh, you thought that was me? Sorry to disappoint boys, that was my wife.” Jack grinned.

Ivan hissed. “Bohdan, let’s kill this piece of korva!”

Bohdan narrowed his eyes at Jack before he rushed him, making several quick stabbing motions with his blade. Jack jumped back, leaping backwards onto the seat behind him, his arms thrown out for
balance as he leaned and weaved to avoid the swift, broad strokes coming from Bohdan. Ivan was about to join his brother when he was grabbed from behind and swung around to find himself facing Bruce Wayne.

Wayne smiled. “No one hits my brother while I’m around, unless it's me.”

Ivan snarled swiping his blade at Bruce, who blocked the Ukrainian’s wrist with his forearm, forcing the blade down, then brought the elbow of his other arm across his body and used that to smash Ivan in the side the face. The big Ukranian stumbled back, but he didn’t fall; instead he twisted around. Bruce moved, keeping Ivan in front of him, his shifting of position bringing him alongside his brother.

Bruce glanced at Jack who was breathing hard, but smiling. “What’s going on Jack?”

Jack glanced sideways at Bruce giving his brother another beautiful smile. “You really don’t want to know Brucie.”

Bruce gave Jack a sour look just as Ivan brought his knife forward, under Bruce’s guard to try to stab him quickly in the stomach. Bruce blocked the strike, then punched the man in the chest with enough force that Ivan stumbled back, choking and coughing for breath.

Jack weaved away avoiding a quick stab from Bohdan, but the man brought his other arm around for a tight hard punch to Jack’s side, catching him right in his broken ribs.

Jack hissed as a white flash of pain lanced up his side, slowing his movements. Jack flipped his blade in the air to catch it again in an underhanded hold. He lunged with the blade in front of him, but Bohran avoided Jack’s attack, trying to bring his elbow down on the bend in Jack’s arm. Jack yanked his entire body backwards just as the Ukrainian twisted his body and caught Jack across his chin with his elbow. Jack hissed, his lips cutting across his teeth.

Bruce frowned with concern. “Jack?”

“I’m fine, just...don’t worry.” Jack actually smiled at Bruce, a genuine smile, not one of the smiles that Jack always gave Bruce, half-cocky amusement, half belligerent little brother. Bruce didn’t look convinced by Jack’s smile, but he couldn’t deny that seeing Jack smile like that...like the brother he knew, made that connection with Jack that he knew had slipped away, suddenly feel a little tighter, but he wasn’t able to say or do more before Ivan lunged and grabbed Bruce by the shoulders of his suit. Bruce responded by grabbing Ivan too, both men holding on to each other by the shoulders, the two big men locked in a struggled of almost equal strength.

Jack glanced at his brother, then chuckled grinning at Bohdan. “Shall we dance sweetie?”

* 

Harley, using only her left hand, brought her fist up in an underhand swing, her knuckles meeting with Denys’ chin in an impressive hit that sent the large man reeling backwards as the impact knocked the man’s head back. Harley grinned viciously, but the strike cost her, her shoulder wound flared, pain burst like a bright white hot star down the length of her arm and throughout her shoulder.

Harley winced in pain not just from her arm, but also her hand; the impact of her fist on his chin sent a vibration of pain into her bones; the skin of her knuckles tore, burning pain raced down her hand. It was as if she had decided to hit a granite wall instead of a man.

Harley glared at the Ukrainian and his stupid iron jaw as the flare of pain raced up her arm and through her shoulder. Harley shook out her fist with a snarled. “FUCK!”
Denys held his blade up. He glanced once over the blonde woman in front of him, his eyes going over her shoulder to see his brothers, not just fighting with their target, but with another man who looked to be Bruce Wayne, Gotham’s favorite billionaire playboy. For a moment his face twisted up in confusion before his attention was drawn to the floor of the bleachers they were all standing on. It was difficult to see with the weird circus lighting, but Denys caught a glimpse of Tony lying on his side, a pool of blood under him.

Denys cursed. He knew this whole thing was a bad idea. They should never have gotten involved in this...let The Roman and his people take down the Red Hood! Especially not after they had returned home to get Ivan’s blade after they had already left that night, bringing bad luck down on them. You never returned home when you forgot something! It was an old superstition, but superstitions like that were old and known for a reason! He knew that, Ivan knew that! Their mother always told them it was bad luck to return home when you forgot something! She had always said that! But Ivan was stubborn, wouldn’t listen! He had said old superstitions had no place in the United States, in their new adopted home, but Denys had just not been able to shake the feeling that going back to get that knife had doomed them all somehow.

Jack giggled, his grin wide as he lunged forward, flipping his knife to a better grip before he leapt up and stabbed Bohdan in the chest. Bohdan looked up, pain spreading from the wound just beneath his collarbone to look into Jack Wayne’s eyes. For a moment Bohdan would have sworn he was looking into the eyes of a demon, something crazed and without mercy. Jack’s smile, his blue eyes glaring down at him...for a moment he was truly scared.

Bruce snarled at Jack. “Be careful! Don’t kill him! We need to restrain them for the police!”

Jack turned to give Bruce an incredulous look while he dodged the Ukrainian’s attacks. “What? For the police? These guys are trying to kill Harley and me!” Jack gritted out while jumping back, just barely avoiding a knife swipe.

Bruce narrowed his eyes at his brother until Jack groaned with an over the top eye roll. “Fine!” He slipped his blade away into his jacket, returning his full attention to Bohdan.

“Lucky you.” He grinned. “My big brother doesn’t want you dead.”

Jack turned his body just slightly to the side and brought his leg up, bending the knee and snapped his foot out to catch the man square in the crotch. Bohdan’s eyes widened comically as he stared at Jack. He dropped his blade, his hands immediately going to his crotch as he let out a strained, muffled groan of pain. Jack grinned, turning and repeating the kick. His foot snapped out and hit the man in the face, snapping his head back.

Jack chuckled as he walked over and looked down at the now unconscious Bohdan. “You know, one of my favorite Mel Brooks quotes is that tragedy is cutting your finger, but comedy is when you fall into an open sewer and die...I would add, or when an imbecile gets kicked in the crotch.”

Next to Jack, Bruce threw Ivan. Jack caught a glimpse from the side as the man was easily tossed by his brother. Jack smirked, impressed. The man toppled over some of the benches, rolling, his to knees and hit the floor with an impact that made his teeth vibrate before he was able to push himself to his feet. Bruce leapt over the bench just as Ivan, wobbling to his feet, turned at the approaching shadow that was Bruce Wayne and blindly, without truly aiming, took several slashes at him. Bruce threw his arms out, avoiding the attack, just barely, before his foot snapped out to strike Ivan in the chest. Ivan groaned, kept his footing and lunged, the blade aimed for Bruce’s face. Bruce leaned back
and grabbed Ivan’s arm, yanking the limb forward while at the same time twisting his body so that his back was to his attacker while hauling the arm over his shoulder. Bruce brought the man’s arm down hard on his shoulder while at the same time struggling to yank the knife out of his hand. He reached up, holding Ivan’s arm with both hands, yanking down with all his strength until Ivan let go of the knife. Bruce grabbed it and turned.

Ivan threw his hand up. Bruce, holding the knife blade outward, unintentionally embedded the blade in Ivan’s palm, the sharp metal slicing through cleanly as if Ivan’s hand was no more solid than melting butter. The two men stared at one another.

Jack, seeing his brother and the man locked as they were, laughed. “Oh, this is funny.”

Bruce let go of the blade and, with just a little hop in his step, he brought his fist down over the man’s outstretched arm and slammed him in the face, right in the middle of his nose with all his considerable strength.

The man’s head didn’t move. His head didn’t twist or jerk, he simply stood still as the punch hit him square in the nose. The sound of crunching bone could be heard, followed by the man collapsing like the building Jack had blown up.

Bruce looked over at his brother as he dropped to secure the man. He started to yell at Jack to do the same, but when he looked over Jack had rushed toward Harley.

* 

Denys watched as his brothers were taken down by the two men. His eyes frantically looked around for an escape, but the woman took that moment to charge him. She turned herself to her good side, the side without the sling and rammed her shoulder into him, throwing him off balance. Denys didn’t fall, but he did bring his blade around thinking to stab her in her wounded shoulder. Harley hissed as she did a light jump, her little black skirt fluttering, and put as much power as she could behind her good arm and swung down, ignoring the knife in his hand to slam her fist into Denys’ face, breaking his nose.

The Ukrainian stumbled back with the taste of blood in his mouth, but before he could react to her, their target, Jack Wayne, had approached and put himself between Denys and the woman.

Jack grinned. “Hi!” he said cheerily.

Then Jack’s hand snapped out and hit Denys in the throat with the side of his hand. Denys gasped followed by a strained gurgling sound followed by a strained cough as he dropped his knife and grabbed for his throat.

Jack grinned. “You know, it’s not nice to pick on my wife.”

Jack then reached out swiftly with his left hand, grabbed the man by the back of his neck just as he threw a hard right, his fist meeting Denys’ face with a meaty sounding impact. The Ukrainian fell coughing and gasping. Jack grinned down at him before he turned, gently taking Harley by her shoulders.

“You okay pumpkin?” Jack asked with concern.

Harley nodded. “Yeah puddin, I’m okay.”

Jack reached out to cup her face between his hands, his blue eyes studying her intently while his thumbs stroked her cheeks tenderly.
“You’re sure?”

Harley nodded. “Yes puddin. I’m sure.” She gave him a soft smile. Jack pulled her close and gently kissed her. Harley melted into the kiss, losing herself in the feel of his lips, the taste of his tongue...when the kiss was disturbed by the sound of someone clearing their throat.

Jack pulled back and sighed, rolling his eyes, turning to look behind his wife to see his brother standing there patiently.

“You wanna help me secure these men?” Bruce lifted a brow at his brother. Jack sighed looking back at his wife, his hands still on her throat, his thumbs never stopped in their gentle caress of her cheeks.

“Give me a sec sweets, then we’re going home,” Jack murmured. Harley nodded. Jack eased her down to the bench, sliding his hand along her good arm as he did so, bringing her hand up to his lips and kissed her knuckles before he walked over to his brother. He frowned as he passed the pink elephants, now dirty and stomped on from the fight. Jack pressed his lips together in annoyance and as he stepped pass Ivan, who was still dazed. Jack snarled and kicked the man as he passed.

Bruce was securing Bohdan and looked up. “I think I heard sirens. The police should be here any minute.”

Jack smiled. “Well goodie, you can give them all the details...just leave Harley and me out of it. We’re going home.”

Bruce stood and grabbed Jack by the arm just as his little brother turned to leave. “You can’t just leave! These men attacked you--you have to tell the police.”

Jack yanked his arm out of his brother’s grip. “I don’t have to tell them anything Bruce.”

Bruce stared at his brother in shock seeming to lose his voice for a moment before he hissed. “Jack, where have you been? What have you been doing? These men...they’re mobsters...what is going on with you?” Bruce’s look of concern bordered on anger.

Jack frowned, his eyes narrowed. “You know Bruce, you lost the privilege of asking me my business when you threw me into Arkham. My business is my own and I don’t feel like talking to the police. You can play nice with them if you want.” Jack turned to walk away but Bruce grabbed him by the shoulder and spun Jack around.

“Don’t walk away from me! You can’t walk away from this! You killed someone!” Bruce hissed, his eyes going to the body of Tony Zucco.

Jack’s movements were quick, quicker than Bruce had ever seen before. Jack had pulled his switchblade from his jacket, extended the knife so quickly that Bruce didn’t realize what had happened until Jack had the point of the blade pricking the underside of Bruce’s chin. Bruce’s eyes widened in shock.

“Don’t touch me Bruce. Don’t you dare tell me what I can and can’t do. Don’t get me wrong, I appreciate you rushing over here to help. You have my thanks big brother, but I don’t owe you anything else. And yeah, I killed him, in self-defense...so what? Why don’t you go find that date of yours? Or does she mean as much to you as say, Selina, Talia...me?” Jack sneered and turned away. “Come on Harley.” Jack shot a grin at his brother, pushing a hand through his hair, slicking back the few stray strands that had come loose around his forehead.

Harley stood up glancing over at Bruce as Jack put his arm around her waist and walked her out of
the Big Top. Bruce watched them go feeling a cold pit in the middle of his stomach.

*

Jack decided to call a Gotham City cab instead of an Uber. For some reason he didn’t feel comfortable with the car service after the attack tonight. Harley stayed quiet, sensing that her husband wasn’t really in the mood to discuss what had happened yet with the fight or with his brother.

When they arrived back at the little studio apartment, Jack turned and locked the door. He turned around and leaned against the door with a sigh. “Well, that was interesting.” He grinned with a huff.

Harley had flopped onto the end of the bed kicking off her ankle boots before flopping back with a wince of pain, her one arm flung out to the side.

Jack smiled walking over to her. He stopped, reached down to remove his shoes and tossed them to the side before he dropped down to his knees between her legs. He moved his hands over her knees and up her thighs. Harley just smiled relaxing into Jack’s touch. He reached up and grabbed the top of her tights and pulled them down. Harley only moved enough to lift her hips up allowing him to tug the tights down easier.

Jack smirked, tossing them away to run his hands up and down her bare legs. Harley sighed happily, then frowned. She pushed herself up with one hand to look down at Jack.

“You don’t think Bruce would have followed us do you?”

Jack snorted while he rubbed her legs picking up her foot and started to knead his thumbs into her instep. “Nah...he’ll be too busy with the cops. Though I’m curious if he’ll tell them the complete truth or not...” Jack frowned in thought as he switched to her other foot.

“What about The Roman and his hit on you?” Harley asked, her concern apparent in her tone and expression.

Jack shook his head. “I’m not worried. I’ll call Alex later, tell him to put the word out that if The Roman wants to play games with me...I’m more than willing to play…” He shrugged. “I suspect this is more of a test. See how I do under pressure I suppose.” Jack smiled. “I like playing games. You know that sweets.” Jack kissed her knee before he stood up and started to slip out of his jacket, pulling at his tie and undoing the buttons of his dress shirt.

Harley watched him, licking her lips slowly, her desire spiking hot and burning through her. Jack smiled at her as he tossed his clothes onto the floor, undoing the buckle of his pants, stepped out of his slacks leaving him wearing only his boxers, sock garters and socks. Harley pressed her teeth into her bottom lip, her brow furrowed with desire as she made a little growl in the back of her throat.

Jack smiled winking at her as he stepped closer to the bed, put one foot on the edge before he reached down to unlatch one of the garters.

Harley watched intently, heated desire rushing to her groin and breasts. Why boxer shorts, sock garters and socks were so damn sexy, Harley had no idea, but damn if watching Jack undress, his fingers brushing down along his legs to unsnap those garters just made Harley hot all over like it was a hundred degrees in here. Jack slipped the garter off, tossing it toward the rest of his clothing, then he rolled the sock down and slipped it off. He grinned at her and wiggled his toes before putting his other foot up and started to undo the clip of the other garter.

Jack lifted a brow at her. “And why are you still dressed?”
Harley giggled. “Sorry puddin, you were distracting me!”

Jack tossed the other garter and grinned giving her an amused, yet seductive look. “Am I?”

Harley giggled stood up and with her one good hand, reached around to rotate her skirt around until the zipper was in front. She then pulled the zipper down before wiggling out of her skirt leaving her in a pair of black panties.

Jack grinned as he stepped closer, his eyes raking over her legs and the black, laced triangle of fabric between her them. “Would you like some help with that sweater?”

Harley smiled and looked through her lashes at Jack. “I would like that?”

Jack reached forward, tenderly moving her hair to the side and slowly pulled her sling over her head, easing her arm down gently. Harley flexed her fingers carefully as Jack gently turned her around, once more moving her hair out of the way with a sweet caress. There was a small zipper at the neck of the sweater that he slowly pulled down. He reached back up, staring at the back of her neck before he smiled, reaching up to drag his fingertip along the back of her slender neck, caressing her skin. Jack leaned in and pressed his lips to the back of her neck, dragging the tip of his nose against her skin, inhaling her scent. Jack’s eyes fluttered close dragging his lips and nose along her soft skin, feeling the tickle of tiny hairs against his lips.

Harley closed her eyes leaning back into his attentions. Her nipples grew harder when Jack’s hands slid under the sweater and started to ease it up. He carefully helped pull her wounded arm through first. Harley hissed a little, the place where she had been shot was tender, especially after the fight at the circus, but Jack moved slowly, carefully until he had his arm free. He tugged the sweater over her head, then down her opposite arm, dropping it to the floor once he was done.

Harley shivered just slightly; the room’s air was cooler, but Jack brushed his lips along her shoulder instantly heating her skin, her very soul with his touch. His arms wrapped around her waist while he dragged his lips along her neck to her ear, then reached up to brush her hair aside where his tongue tickled the back of her ear. Harley leaned into him, her eyes closed. Jack’s hands slid down over her stomach, stopping at the hem of her panties. He moaned softly against her ear.

“I want to taste you Harley...taste you on my tongue, on my lips when you cum...I want to lick all of you…” his thumbs hooked around the hem of her panties and began a slow descent, pulling the fabric down with his thumbs.

Harley groaned arching back against him while reaching back with her good arm, her fingers brushing through his hair.

Jack’s lips roamed down her neck as Harley tilted her head to expose her throat more fully to him. Jack’s tongue danced along her skin, down to her shoulder. He pressed his lips to her shoulder before he tenderly dragged his teeth along her shoulder. Jack grinned and used the tip of his tongue to caress her shoulder, then along her shoulder blade as he pushed her panties down her thighs. Harley stepped wider to allow the delicate cloth to fall the rest of the way down her calves to the floor.

Jack growled when he brought his lips back up her throat, caress her ear, his hands sliding along her thighs before the tips of his fingers caressed her groin, delicately brushing along the triangle of her sex. He wasn’t’ actually touching her clitoris but Harley groan, it almost felt like it, the way his fingertips just barely caressed over the mound of her sex, then lower, his fingers brushing over her labia without parting them. He sunk his teeth into her shoulder before he finally slipped a finger between her intimate lips, his finger tip brushing her swollen clitoris. Harley groaned, reaching
around to grab Jack’s hip with her hands ignoring the pull on her still healing shoulder.

She moaned with need, feeling the bulge of him and the glide of the cotton of his boxers against her backside. He pressed against her, his tongue playing, tickling along her ear just before he pressed his teeth against the tender spot right behind her ear.

Jack pressed her back against him, weaving his hips side to side as if they were dancing to music only they could hear while the fingers of one hand stroked her slowly up and down, teasing her clitoris with a slow back and forth over the sensitive, swollen flesh.

Harley moaned, her head resting back against Jack’s shoulder as he snaked his other hand up the side of her body, his fingertips grazing her skin until he came to her bra and easily, with one hand, unhooked it. He dragged his tongue along the slope of her throat while at the same time dragging the strap down her arm with his free hand and pressing her back against him, his fingers caressing her softly moving up and down. He rocked his hips more, pressed tight against her, his finger pressing and rolling against her clitoris. Harley gasped softly, weaving in sync with him.

Jack purred against her ear, singing:

“Oh girl, the things you make me do!
Genius is the only way to describe you
Anything you've ever dreamed of, baby
Just ask me, I'll do, I'll do
I'll do it for you, babying softly…”

Harley giggled softly. “Is that Prince?”

Jack caught her earlobe with his teeth before he answered. “Yes. You like it?”

Harley, her eyes still closed, dragged her teeth over her bottom lip as she whispered. “Oh yes puddin.”

Jack chuckled and the vibration rippled down her throat. Jack switched hands to continue the slow, sensual roll of his fingers on her clitoris while he reached up to tug her other bra strap down.

Harley let the bra slip down her arm to fall to the floor. Jack grasped her breast, squeezed as his hips ground against her backside.

“Harley…” Jack moaned in her ear, his hot breath caressing her skin as his fingers rubbed slowly up and down then started to move in a circle, gradually building speed while he held her breast, his fingertip flicking over the nipple.

“Cum for me Harley…” Jack groaned.

She came quickly with the sweet caress of her puddin’s voice her orgasm bloomed, spreading out to send heated pleasure cascading through her body, to make her weak in the knees and shivering for more. Jack groaned. “Oh yes Harley..” He continued to finger her in swift, yet sensual circles until she didn’t think she could take any more.

“Jack...uh puddin…” Harley pressed herself up against this fingers, feeling as if her whole body were vibrating until Jack finally released her.
He turned her around and Harley threw her arms around his neck to kiss him deeply. Jack smiled against her lips before he reached up, taking her arms in his hands away from his neck and thrust her back against the bed. Harley’s yelp of surprise quickly transformed into a giggle. Jack grinned at her and pushed his boxers down. Harley’s eyes roamed over Jack’s body, taking in his slim muscles, his flat stomach, the hardness of his erection—it all made her mouth water.

“Get on the bed Harley,” her husband cooed softly as he kicked his boxer shorts out of the way and stepped closer to the bed, brushing his fingertips over her knees. She scooted back into the middle of the bed watching while Jack crawled onto the bed after her, stalking her. His blue eyes seemed to glow through his thick, dark lashes, the smile on his face predatory. She grinned, her eyes skating over his lean body again, her body tightening, heating in response to her desire for him, though she lingered on the bruises on his side where his ribs had been broken, the color still harsh on his skin. She hated to see him hurt...but the feeling faded when Jack was hovering over her, his hair falling across his brow, his tongue tracing the bottom of his teeth as he looked at her as if he wanted to devour her.

Jack smiled, his eyes raking over her again, taking in the pink of her nipples, the way her breasts seemed to swell, the flush to her skin, all of her made his body quake for her.

For a moment she thought Jack was going to take her right then, but instead he murmured. “Roll onto your good side…”

Harley frowned, slightly confused, but did as he asked, rolling onto her uninjured arm. Jack then turned around lying sideways next to her, his head facing her groin and then he lifted her leg to position it over his head. Harley let him guide her, careful not to drop her leg on him, pointing her toe to balance against the bed grinning as his erection was now by her face. She leaned closer brushing her cheek, lips and nose against the warmth of his shaft, his thigh, exhaling her hot breath against his skin.

Jack shuddered at her touch while he slowly caressed her side, his fingers gliding along her hip, dancing against the crease in her flesh where her thigh and groin met as he leaned in and pressed a kiss against her swollen clitoris, the tip of his tongue flicking between her folds. Harley sucked in her breath at the warm, wet feel of his tongue.

“Comfortable?” He asked, his breath brushing warm against her wet clitoris, his breath tickling against her overly sensitive sex.

“Yes puddin,” Harley answered, flicking her tongue out as she did. Jack’s hips jerked in response before he answered. “Good baby girl...good.”

Jack wrapped his arm around her, spreading his fingers and pressing his hand into her ass, burying his mouth against her and licked slowly flicking his tongue back and forth. He growled, rubbing his cheek against her thigh opening his mouth wide, kissing her sex passionately.

Harley made a soft gasp before she wrapped her lips around his member, sucking him into her mouth, enjoying the warm feel of him against her lips and tongue, the smooth satin texture of his member in her mouth accompanied by the heat of his flesh. She wrapped her arm around his waist, careful of her healing wound, but she gently guided Jack closer, her hand resting on the smooth, round cheek of his buttock while she took all of him into her mouth, relaxing her throat to press deeper, brushing her nose against his scrotum before pulling back, weaving her tongue as she pulled her lips along his hard member.

Jack had bent his leg up, being careful of her shoulder, but she could still feel his thigh against her cheek, the slick muscle of his legs. She liked the warm feel of his skin, the satin of his flesh against
her, having her breasts pressed against his stomach, having her puddin’s body surround her while she licked and sucked on him at her leisure. Harley twirled her tongue around him before dragging her teeth gently over his shaft, grinning brightly when she felt him jerk and moan.

Jack groaned against her clitoris, his lips pressed against her, his tongue twirling softly, teasing the delicate flesh, but the vibration of his pleasure, the feel of his groaning, rippled up her body. He flicked his tongue swiftly over her clitoris before pressing his lips down on her again and sucked, accompanied by his own moaned pleasure. Harley pressed her lips down on him, sucking and bobbing her head slowly, wanting him to feel each press of her lips, each stroke of her tongue. Together she and Jack were pleasuring one another, their mouths working together to bring each other closer to climax. It was supremely intimate, in many ways more intimate than when they were making love...there was so much trust, understanding, dependence on one another...

Harley whimpered with Jack’s shaft in her mouth. She had to release him to breathe and let out a deep pleasure-filled cry. Jack was licking her just right, the warm tickle was building, quickly spreading from her groin, through her torso, spreading into her breasts. Harley groaned, her hips thrusting toward Jack’s mouth, demanding more...she quickly took him back into her mouth with a groan of pleasure.

Jack’s member swelled, her tongue and lips, the warmth and wetness of her mouth...God her tongue! Jack thought, the way she kept twisting her tongue back and forth...

He was going to cum. His hips started to thrust in time to her sucking…

Harley moaned, tasting him on her tongue....her puddin was close and so was she…

Harley gasped around his member, her climax burst spreading warmth and a tickling peak of pleasure.

Jack groaned, tasting her pleasure on his tongue. Her hips continued to thrust lightly toward him and Jack buried his tongue in her, his arm going tight around her waist as he yanked her hips toward him, sliding his hand from her ass to the back of her thigh. He wrapped his arm around her leg, pressing the warm flesh against his cheek, hugging her, holding her close. He moved his lips over her in a slow, tender kiss, rubbing his cheek against her inner thigh.

Harley whimpered, sucking hard on Jack, flicking her tongue over the slit of his erection tasting the sweet saltiness of him before she sucked him, once more, deeply into her mouth. Jack groaned against her intimate lips, jerking his hips. She could taste how close he was...she pressed her lips, moving her mouth up and down, her lips pressed against his sensitive skin, feeling her husband shudder.

Jack pulled back from licking her to cry out with a loud groan. His orgasm ripped from him, pulled from him by her mouth, her lips...his whole body arching toward Harley. Harley tasted him as he filled her mouth with his climax, smiling as his essence rolled along her tongue. She swallowed, then pressed her lips against him and continued to lick, suck and tease him feeling the way Jack’s fingers pressed into skin as he struggled to hold on to her.

Jack grunted and groaned, his hips thrusting toward her gently until he was spent, but Harley pulled out his orgasm, forcing him into spasms of pleasure until Jack wasn’t sure how much more he could take. So for revenge he focused once more on her clitoris, tugging on the overly sensitive nub with his lips, flicking with his tongue until she cried out once more, releasing him in her need to be vocal.

Jack chuckled coming up for air and laying his head against her hip as he grinned down at her, his eyes tracing the outline of her body, his lips wet with her.
“How was that?” He smiled kissing her hips.

Harley giggled rolling onto her back just a little and bending Jack’s leg so she could kiss his calf. “I love you puddin.”

Jack rubbed his cheek against her hips before resting his head against her pelvis and closed his eyes. Her skin was soft, like silk… “My Harley-girl…” He purred wrapping his arms around her leg… Harley reached down to play with his hair, her eyes closed.

Jack smiled, content, before he sighed. “I better call Alex...The Roman needs to know exactly where things stand. Besides, he ruined our circus date.”

Harley grinned. “You’ll teach him the error of his ways puddin.”

Jack kissed her belly button. “You’re absolutely right my pumpkin pie.”

They both drifted to sleep with Harley caressing his scalp and Jack’s head resting on her stomach.

* 

The next morning Bruce Wayne sat in his home office staring at his computer letting his cup of coffee get cold. Alfred came in carrying a fresh cup of coffee on a tray, along with a plate of buttered toast since he knew that Bruce hadn’t eaten breakfast yet. He walked over, stopping beside the desk. Bruce didn’t look up as Alfred switched out the cups before setting the plate of toast by Bruce’s elbow. He was slowly returning to his old chores, his strength returning, but Bruce was doing this best to make sure that Alfred stayed on “light” duty for a while yet.

Alfred stood behind Bruce and frowned, his eyes glancing over the news articles on the computer. Bruce was reading about the accident at the circus last night. Bruce had been more than his usual stoic self when he had returned last night. It was clear to Alfred that something more had happened than the accident, but he had been tight lipped about whatever it was that had happened. Alfred had wanted to ask, but he had decided to respect Bruce’s privacy. The younger man would tell him when he was ready.

Alfred glanced over the article before he said softly, “That poor young man.”

“Yes. Orphaned,” Bruce said distractedly. “Both parents, gone, right in front of him.”

“Do you know what will become of him now?” Alfred asked stepping over to catch a glimpse of Bruce’s face in profile.

“I spoke to Gordon this morning, told him how the boy’s story resonated with me, watching his parents die in front of him like that.” Bruce shook his head. “Gordon believes it wasn’t an accidental death either...Tony Zucco...” Bruce’s frown deepened. Alfred could see that there was something more there, something under the skin that the young man before him wasn’t willing to deal with at the moment, but Bruce only said. “He died last night, but Gordon stated that Zucco was an enforcer for the mob, dealt in protection fees, that sort of thing...he thinks that the death of the Graysons is connected to Zucco somehow.” Bruce absently picked up the coffee without really looking at it and took a sip before he continued.

“He also said that the boy will be put in the system unless someone steps forward and claims him. Even though there are several members of the circus who would gladly take the boy in, Gordon doesn’t think any social worker is going to want a child being raised in the circus.” Bruce rubbed his chin.
Alfred tilted his head. “Perhaps, you would consider being the boy’s guardian?”

Bruce frowned, his eyes still focused on the article in front of him. “I...I don’t know Alfred...my work...”

“You said it yourself Master Bruce, you need a partner,” Alfred said softly.

Bruce frowned. His voice was pitched low, but Alfred knew from experience that the tone meant Bruce was thinking. “He’s just a child.”

“Yes, he is a child, lost in the world. Only someone like you may truly understand what he is going through...even if you didn’t make him a partner Master Bruce, perhaps you can give him something that he would otherwise lack...guidance, a helping hand to steer him through the pain he is going through.”

Bruce finally turned to look at Alfred. Alfred smiled at Bruce and said softly. “I won’t always be around Master Bruce and I don’t want you to be alone. Perhaps you should consider what good you could do for another lost young man in need of guidance...”

Bruce frowned glancing away from Alfred before he answered. “Maybe you’re right.”

Alfred blinked in astonishment, but then quickly schooled his features. “Shall I make a phone call, sir?”

Bruce nodded. “Yes. Let’s see about bringing Richard Grayson into the family.”

* *

Wearing only a bathrobe and his briefs, Frost wandered into his kitchen blurry eyed and annoyed. Alex had called him and told him what had happened with the Boss and Miss Harley. Frost was pissed. The Boss should never had gone out without him, definitely not after what had happened with Panessa. Frost wasn’t sure how he was going to go about talking to Jack about not going out without him...he knew his Boss was more than capable of taking care of himself, but he shouldn’t be out without him. It just wasn’t smart...the Boss needed him, needed another set of eyes to watch his back.

Frost pulled out his coffeemaker and fumbled around for the container with the coffee grounds thinking about how he was going to explain to his Boss about not going out anywhere without him when his cellphone rang.

Frost rolled his eyes. He had left the damn thing back in his bedroom. He hurried across his apartment to the bedroom, catching the phone on the fourth ring.

“Frost.”

“Hey sweetheart.”

Frost froze. It was Agatha Wayne. His face transformed into a grin. The night he had spent with her--the several nights actually--were some of the best he had ever had. The woman knew exactly what she was doing and she had the body...Frost pulled his bathrobe over his growing erection...just thinking about the woman...

Frost collected himself. “Agatha...where are you calling from?”

He could hear the smile in her voice. “Gotham.”
Frost grinned. “Gotham...so you’re back.”

“I’m back honey. I need to speak with Jack soon, but...I do have some time before that...can I come over?” Her voice was a rich purr that had Frost’s groin aching. Frost had never been into older women...but Agatha… “Yeah..I would like that.” Two days later…

Jack was barefoot, dressed in a pair of purple boxer shorts decorated with colorful balloons and an unbuttoned midnight blue silk dress shirt, sitting on the couch with Harley’s leg on his lap. Harley was dressed in her own pair of boxers, red and white striped like candy canes with a sleeveless white t-shirt without a bra that read “Bad Bitch” across the front, her hair in pigtails. She was reclined while Jack was carefully painting her toenails, alternating between red and black, his expression quite serious as he worked on her nails and stroking her foot with his free hand while he worked. His own fingernails had already been painted by Harley, a midnight blue to match his shirt. Harley was leaning back with Jack’s phone playing a game of fishdom when the phone started to ring. Harley frowned handing the phone the Jack.

“It’s Alex puddin.”

Jack carefully put the polish down and reached for the phone, pushing the button. “Hey Alex.”

“Okay buddy, I got you your meeting. Called in a lot of favors, but The Roman has agreed to meet with you and Harley, with one bodyguard.”

Jack grinned. “When?”

“Tonight. He wants you to meet him at Kellari Taverna on 44th. Eight pm. He says to dress nice,” Alex said, his voice serious. Alex didn’t say anything for a moment, but Jack could sense he wanted--needed--to say something. Finally he heard his friend take a breath. “This is fucking dangerous Jack. I mean like real fucking dangerous. This is fucking Falcone! The Roman himself, the big guy…”

Jack cut him off. “Alex, you’re going to hyperventilate. This is me, Jack Wayne...I can handle him. You know I can.”

Alex didn’t say anything right away, but Jack could hear him breathing on the other end before he muttered. “I’m a fucking idiot staying with you. I had this nice comfy life ya know…”

Jack chuckled. “You still do. You just have a little side business with me.”

Alex snorted. “Anyone finds out...fuck man, I swear you’re going to get me killed or arrested. Have that fucking Batman swooping in on me…”

Jack laughed. “Hey, all that could happen with or without me. No worries though, buddy; just text me the address and I’ll call Frost. It’ll be fine.”

Alex let out a long sigh. “Just promise me you’ll be careful man.”

“I promise mom. I’ll be careful,” Jack said with a grin.

Alex muttered, “You’re such a fucker,” before he hung up. A moment later, a text with the address came through.

Jack grinned at Harley. “We’re getting dressed up tonight Harley my sweets! Going to go talk some shop with Mr. Carmine Falcone.”

Harley giggled. “Weee!”
Frost sat in the front seat of the car that he had rented (on Jack’s request) for tonight, (a Mercedes Mayback 57S) feeling a bit uncomfortable. When Jack had called him, he had been in the middle of an interesting position with Agatha...but the worst of it was when she had asked him not to say anything about her being there...not yet. She needed to talk to Jack, but not tonight...when he had left his apartment it was leaving a naked Agatha in his bed with the promise she would still be there when he returned. He was happy about that, but he didn’t like keeping things from the Boss. He had eventually decided if Agatha didn’t say anything by the end of the week, he would just tell the Boss about his aunt being back. With that thought, Frost settled in more comfortably with himself...now he just had to hope they got through tonight without any of them getting killed.

The restaurant that Frost pulled up in front of was a typical high-end Gotham eating establishment. He frowned slightly, studying the place. He saw nothing fancier about this one compared to other expensive restaurants in Gotham with a covered walkway that led into the restaurant, fancy lights and a long wall of windows so that you could look in as you walked by. But Kellari Taverna had been around for a long time and it was one of the harder places to reserve a seat as it was always booked solid.

Frost drove the car around to the side, finding a place to park. He was dressed in one of the black Armani suits that Jack provided him, looked every inch the bodyguard. Frost was armed with his customized Glock 17 in a holster under his suit. He knew Jack was armed too, just not with a gun. Jack was carrying that switchblade his wife had bought him, concealed in a pocket in the inner lining of his suit. He had made sure that Frost knew about the concealed weapon; it seemed to make the former cop a little less anxious.

Frost pulled the door open and stepped back for Jack and Harley to exit.

Jack came first. Tonight he wore a white suit, cut for someone with Jack’s physique, highlighting his thin, wiry frame. Jack looked thin, but that hid just how strong Jack Wayne really was, like a secret weapon he held in check until needed. He was wearing a midnight blue silk shirt that matched his fingernails. He wore a matching white vest, but the tie was a shade of purple so dark, and paired against the midnight blue shirt, it looked almost black. His shoes continued the theme, white and blue brogues with blue and white striped socks. He had Harley outline his eyes in black and his lips in red.

He grinned as he unfolded from the car, reaching up to adjust his white trilby hat.

He reached in taking hold of Harley’s hand and lifted her out of the car. She looked devastatingly beautiful Jack thought, in a blue dress only a shade or two lighter than his shirt. The dress hugged her body, with a long pencil skirt that went past her knees, (wearing a pair of silvery white heels), but at the same time showed off her curves. The dress was also sleeveless, with bows on the shoulders, showing off her smooth shoulders (when she removed the wrap) and it had a plunging neckline, well past her breastbone that had Jack hungry to run his tongue over her skin. Harley had scooped her hair up into a loose bun with a few tantalizing curls hanging loose around her shoulders and framing her face.

Frost smiled. They made quite the pair in their matching color outfits. Somehow they both portrayed a sense of power, money and danger...there was definitely an air of danger about the two of them as they walked into the restaurant, Harley’s arm through Jack’s, Frost only a couple of steps behind them.

The inside of the restaurant was warm with the smell of food, mostly fish (which made Harley turn a little pale.) The floor was a soft golden hardwood floor, the lighting a warm buttery color. Tables
were everywhere, though most were intimate round and square tables with white tablecloths and candles. There were a few booths and alcoves where someone could have even more intimate dining.

A young woman, with a rather very short, trimmed afro wearing a typical black and white restaurant outfit hurried over to them. “Do you have a reservation?”

Jack smiled. “Falcone, Carmine Falcone is expecting us.”

She blinked, then nodded and snapped her finger. A large caramel-colored man who resembled a walking wall (an opinion that Harley quickly whispered in Jack’s ear and which earned her a giggle from him) walked closer and motioned. “Follow me.”

The three of them followed the big man through the main room of the restaurant, past some stone arches and finally arrived at the back where they were greeted with a scene.

Carmine was sitting at the head of a large curved table. There looked to be enough seating for twelve or more, but the man was by himself with a large red lobster on the plate before him.

When they arrived, the big man who had escorted them stepped aside.

At first Falcone didn't respond; he simply cracked the shell of the lobster.

Jack didn’t say anything, the only indication that he was ready for anything was the way his grip on Harley’s hand— which he had taken while they walked back here, had tightened.

Falcone looked up, taking a bite of the lobster and said around a mouthful of food.

“So, you’re the Red Hood.”
Jack removed his hat handing it to Frost, but a smirk danced across his features as his blue eyes evaluated Falcone. The man was old, powerful and thought highly of himself--with good reason Jack supposed--but Jack had already decided that Falcone was old school, set in his ways and had been in charge for too long. Term limits, he thought. It was time to give Gotham a new sort of criminal he told himself, something new, something fun. But for now, Jack would play his part, “The New Guy.”

Jack gave Falcone his best smile. “Yes. I am The Red Hood.”

Falcone tilted his head, studied Jack for few beats while he chewed on another bite of lobster. It was clear the man was purposely taking his time, making Jack and Harley stand there before him, an exercise in power so transparent that it made Jack want to laugh. After another bite of food Falcone reached for his glass of wine. He took a sip, smiling like a patronizing yet indulgent grandfather. He set the glass down and motioned at the two seats across from him at the table.

“Please, why don’t you and your lady sit, have something to eat, some wine, while we talk business.” Falcone gestured toward the seats in front of him. “I’m assuming your lady friend won’t mind if the boys talk shop?” Falcone grinned at Harley though he did give her a once over with his eyes. Harley’s hand closest to Jack balled into a fist, but Jack wrapped his hand around hers urging her to settle. She did, letting Jack pull her chair out for her while she gave Falcone a big smile as she took her seat.

As if on cue, two young women dressed in black and white seemed to appear out of nowhere, each carrying plates they set down in front of Jack and Harley. Each plate contained a full boiled lobster, the steam rising slowly off of it, already cracked open for them next to a bowl of melted butter; baby glazed carrots, baked potatoes and steamed clams filled out the rest of the plate. Next, one of the waitresses set down two wine glasses, then poured a Chardonnay into each of their glasses.

Harley glanced sideways at Jack with her brow lifted, clearly asking her husband a question without actually speaking. Jack glanced at her, then the food, then Falcone.

Falcone watched their little exchange before he chuckled. “Cautious, I like that.”

He leaned over with his fork and took a bite of everything on Jack’s plate, then did the same to Harley’s before he laughed. “If I were going to kill you, I wouldn't use poison my boy. I would simply shoot you and I sure as hell wouldn’t do it here in my favorite restaurant. Though I suppose I don’t blame you, since I did put out the word that whoever took care of you would get Panessa’s territory...but after last night, I changed my mind. Now please. Eat.”

Jack glanced at Harley again then shrugged as he picked up his fork. Harley followed suit, ignoring the lobster for the vegetables. Falcone frowned noticing her turning her nose up at the lobster, but Jack smiled and took a bite of the shellfish, chewing slowly before he answered.

“My wife isn’t fond of seafood.”

Harley grinned and added. “Nope.”

Falcone shrugged, took a sip of his wine. He closed his eyes savoring the flavor, then spoke softly after a moment. “Domaine Leflaive Batard Montrachet Grand Cru, expensive, but worth it. From my own cellars.” Falcone smiled at Jack. Jack carefully avoided narrowing his eyes. He knew what
Falcone was doing; he was playing a game. A game that showed off how wealthy he was, but it was also a game of power. Expensive wine showed that he had money, which always equaled power, but Falcone was also making mistakes. One, that he thought Jack would be impressed with the money...which he wasn’t, and two...the fool was purposely ignoring Harley, relegating her to eyecandy and nothing more...

“Now, here is what I’m willing to do...Jack. May I call you Jack?” Falcone lifted his brow at Jack. Jack picked up his glass of wine, took a sip as he looked across the table at Falcone. He discerned this was not a request. The old mobster would do what he wanted, thinking that he held all the cards. Asking Jack’s permission to call him by his name was just a ploy, a way to try to make Jack think they were “pals,” that this was a meeting of equals before he put Jack in his place. Inside Jack was ready to leap across the table, grab Falcone’s fork and bury it in the man’s throat.

Harley was sipping her wine too as she glanced at her husband. She could tell what was going through Jack’s mind. While his expression was mild, Harley knew that look in his eyes—he was murderously angry, though he was keeping himself in check. Harley glanced at Falcone, but it was clear to her, to Dr. Harleen Quinzel, that this man was blind. He didn’t see Jack for the danger he was. Rather, all he saw was a young man, capable maybe, but with no influence and no “family” to back him up. He may be a Wayne, but Falcone only saw a young upstart. She smiled against her wine glass. Her puddin would put him straight.

Jack pressed his lips together, but nodded. He could play along for a while, until he didn’t want to play anymore. Which would be very soon. He glanced at his wife and reached under the table to squeeze her knee. Harley smiled at him; he had her support. She knew her husband well enough to stay quiet, to play the part that Falcone expected—at least for now. Jack had a plan, though; she could almost see the gears moving in her puddin’s mind. She sucked on her bottom lip to prevent herself from giggling.

Falcone leaned back in his seat. The man had an air about him, a certain level of dignity mixed into the theater he was putting on for their benefit. He smiled, that kindly grandfather type smile before he spoke.

“You can have Panessa’s territory. You showed yourself...capable,” he gestured with one hand in a small sweeping motion, “when you disposed of him and his lieutenants and avoiding the Odessa family...I can respect that. So I’m willing to give you the benefit for the doubt for a price. All business, whether it’s guns, drugs, whores...all of it...I get part of your take--sixty percent. “ Falcone smiled taking another sip of wine. He looked back down at his meal not even bothering to gauge Jack’s expression. “Furthermore, you are to leave the other families alone from this point. Personal issues between individual members, fine, take care of that yourself, but anything bigger? You come to me. I’m allowing you to exist, allowing you control of Panessa’s territory, but I expect you to behave, respect your betters and pay your dues.”

Harley frowned looking between the two men. She knew her husband well enough to know that Falcone’s demands weren’t going to sit well with her puddin. It didn’t sit well with her. Telling them they had to pay him so much? Harley was no financial whiz, but sixty percent?! And then leaving the other families alone? It didn’t take a genius to figure out how that was going to go down. It wouldn’t take long before the other families would find ways to hurt The Red Hood gang in ways that they couldn’t retaliate without bringing Falcone down on them.

Harley looked at her husband, but Jack was only smiling as he spoke. “Of course. I understand completely. We’re a small gang, have to work our way up.” Jack finished his glass of wine.

Falcone smiled. “Good, good. It’s nice to to see that you’re smart as well as attractive Mr. Wayne.
Now, one more thing. I’m assuming your brother has no idea what you’re doing correct?” The man speared a carrot from his plate as he gave Jack a mild questioning look.

Harley sensed her husband stiffen slightly at the mention of his brother.

“You’re correct,” he said cautiously.

“I’m also assuming you don’t want him to know about your...activities?” Falcone asked mildly.

Jack tilted his head. “What are you getting at?”

Falcone smiled. “Nothing, just trying to understand. And your girl…” He looked at Harley.

Jack smiled, but at the mention of Harley a deep coldness settled around him. It was palpable and for a moment Harley noticed that Falcone seemed uncomfortable, noting that he had made a slight miscalculation.

When Jack spoke though, there was a bright smile on his lips. “I didn’t think The Roman had to lower himself to threatening women and families.”

Falcone smiled back at Jack. The tension in the air between them built for a split second before Falcone laughed. “You know, I like you. You follow the rules Red Hood, I think that you will do just fine. You have my blessing. The other families will know that all of Panessa’s territory is yours and no one will mess with you unless that want to take it up with me. Now, how would you both like some dessert? They have a fantastic chocolate mousse cake here!”

* *

Jack was quiet as they left the restaurant, his arm around Harley’s waist. Neither Harley nor Frost questioned him or made a comment, though it was clear from Frost’s expression he had a lot to say. It wasn’t until they had returned to the car and slid inside that Jack spoke. (Frost made Jack and Harley wait a moment, giving the car a quick inspection, inside and out, before he would let them get in.)

Once they were inside the vehicle, Harley asked softly. “So, we going to do what he says?”

Jack snorted. “Please. Me? Stick to the rules?! Harley! I’m insulted!”

Jack laughed and Harley giggled, grabbing his face between her hands and pulling him toward her for a kiss. “I knew you would never do what that old mobster said!”

Harley grinned at him.

Jack wrapped his hands around her waist and lifted Harley onto his lap, shoving her dress up her legs so that she could straddle him. He grinned sliding his hands up her thighs, then around her hips gripping her ass and pulling her close. Harley caressed the sides of his neck, leaning over him before she ran her tongue along his cheek. Jack chuckled, his eyes sliding closed for a moment, sighing happily reaching up to caress her face, tugging playfully on a long strand of blonde hair that curled around her face. “Oh no Harley. I’m going to follow his rules for a while, just until I’m ready to take over, or I get bored. Either way, when I’m ready, I’m--we’re--going to burn Falcone and the others to the ground.” Jack purred, rubbing his nose against hers, his lips brushing lightly along hers.

Frost glanced in the rearview. “We probably should think about expanding the gang Boss. I mean...I was just thinking if you are going to…”
Jack had leaned Harley close, her head to the side so he could nip her neck. He dragged his lips along her throat before he spoke. He was still careful of her healing shoulder. She had stopped wearing her sling (not wanting to show weakness in front of Falcone), but Jack knew it still hurt her.

“Mmm...you’re right, we do. Need some muscle, need to fill in a few more skill sets to...” Jack grabbed Harley’s earlobe with his teeth, his fingers finding a spot of bare skin to caress while he spoke. “Flesh out the gang so that we become more of a force than we are now.” Jack ran his tongue along the slope of Harley’s neck, tugging the shoulder of her dress down to continue his lick along her shoulder. “So Frost, what do you suggest?” He glanced up, but Frost had his eyes on the road. Jack smiled and pulled the zipper on the back of Harley’s dress down. She wasn’t wearing a bra with this particular dress so when he tugged down the zipper, the dress fell loose, dropping off her shoulder. Harley giggled softly running her tongue along his ear.

Jack dragged his teeth along his bottom lip, his eyes traveling the line of her dress where it fell just over her nearly exposed breasts, the cloth of the dress resting just over her nipples. Jack smiled leaning down to press his lips to the tops of her breasts. Harley sucked in a breath.

“Gotham city jail released a flock of minor criminals just the other day because of budget cuts and overcrowding Boss; a whole lot a men and women looking for employment. I know a few of them...” Frost said as he drove, his eyes on the road and not on what was progressing in the back seat. Speaking while he knew what was happening was...odd, but Frost just went with it, continuing the conversation.

“There are several of them that would be good for what you want Boss,” Frost continued.

“Mm...I like it. Frost, arrange for some interviews,” Jack said quietly as he tugged on Harley’s hair, pulling her into a deep, passionate kiss. Jack’s fingers grabbed harder at her hair, his fingers pulling just enough to make her moan softly, her hands sliding down over the front of his silk shirt. He pulled her head back to expose her neck and her breasts, the dress falling to her waist. The streetlights flashed across her skin as Frost drove them home.

Jack licked his lips, holding her head back. Harley didn’t move, waiting. Her breathing was becoming ragged with want, she dug her nails into his shirt, and the slight, sharp feel through the material excited him more.

Jack spoke without looking up, his focus completely on Harley’s exposed breasts, the way the light danced over her skin. “I think tomorrow we need to do an evaluation of our new territory Frost my dear, see what’s what since we have The Roman’s blessing, such as it is...”

With his other hand Jack grabbed one of Harley’s breasts, forcing the soft mound up where he bent down and lavished his tongue over her nipple. Harley groaned, her hands sliding up into his hair, knocking his hat off and completely mussing up his hair. He pulled at her nipple with his lips before bringing her head up to press his mouth hard against hers while keeping his fingers twisted in her locks. Jack’s tongue slipped into her mouth where Harley gently caught his tongue with her teeth.

They kissed long and hard, with Jack being the one to break the kiss, but Harley caught his bottom lip with her teeth. Jack grinned, blue eyes catching the streetlights, glowing from under his furrowed brow. He growled softly. Just the sound of Jack’s want had Harley breathing heavier, her body hot, heavy, ready for anything, but she whispered.

“Whatcha wanna do tomorrow puddin?”

Frost spoke up, squirming a little as he drove. They were very distracting and it was also making him think of Agatha who was back at his apartment. He hated not telling Mr. Wayne that his aunt was
back in town, or that she was shacking up with him for the last day or so, but she had asked him not
to tell Jack. She needed to speak with him when she was ready. Frost respected her wishes even if it
went against his loyalty to Mr. Wayne. He had to tell himself that it was actually in his Boss’s best
interest, and he was certain that it was.

He glanced once in the rearview. He couldn’t see most of Mr.Wayne’s head, though it looked like
Harley was holding his head to her breasts. Frost swallowed and spoke.

“There’s a nightclub that’s in the middle of Panessa’s territory called “Over the Moon” that might be
a good place to start Boss.”

Harley moaned softly, combing her fingers through Jack’s hair while he sucked on her breasts, his
teeth pressing into her soft flesh. She shivered, whispering to her husband.

“I think that’s a good idea puddin, starting at the club...nightclubs are where everyone goes and a lot
of news circulates. Whoever owns the place would be a good person to talk to...oh!” She giggled as
his tongue flicked over her breast while she started to rub herself against him; feeling how hard Jack
was only made her want him more. Jack grunted grabbing her hips and pressing her down harder
still. They both hissed together.

Frost nodded. “She’s right. Club owners tend to have their ears to the ground wherever their located.
Plus I’ve heard some good things about the owner of “Over the Moon.” They might be helpful in
getting the neighborhood in order for you Boss.” He accidentally glanced behind him to see the two
of them dry humping, Jack thrusting up while Harley had grabbed the back of the seat and was
weaving her hips against Jack’s lap. Their eyes locked on each other.

Jack shoved Harley’s dress up a little further, past her hips, while unzipping his slacks. He dragged
his teeth over his bottom lip, his eyes looking down over her breasts. He shifted his position before
he spoke, tugging open his slacks and pulling his erection free of his boxers with a groan.

Jack had difficulty speaking, distracted as his eyes roamed over his wife’s body. “Then...uh...that’s
what we’re going to do...grr...ah...okay...”Over the Moon.” Tomorrow night...” Jack held his shaft
with one hand yanking Harley’s panties aside with the other. Harley groaned rubbing against the
head of his erection, feeling the hardness of him, the heat from him. She rolled her body, undulating
her hips slowly. Jack growled low in his throat.

“Ooh...that...that sounds fun...uh...” she hissed just before she lowered herself down on him,
gasping as she felt that warm push of his member thrusting into her. Harley fingers dug into the
leather of the backseat before she wrapped her arms around Jack’s shoulders, leaning into him.

Jack moaned, pressing her down hard on his erection, shivering as the liquid softness of her
surrounded him. He dropped his head back, his eyes partly closed for a moment.

Harley began to move, first rising up before sliding down, piercing herself on him. She gave herself
over to fucking, moving with the hard bouncing before she ground down on him.

Jack wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close, nibbling her breasts as his panting grew
heavier. He arched his body back, stretching his legs with a loud groan. *

Frost reached down and adjusted himself as he drove, his crotch ached listening to them and thinking
about Agatha. He jumped a little snatching his hand back and putting it on the wheel when Harley
bumped against the passenger seat.

*
Harley arched back until her shoulder arched and head hit the front seat, the whole time thrusting her hips down on Jack. He was panting heavily as he rolled a hand up her body, between her breasts feeling the softness of her skin under his fingers. He caressed her breasts, squeezing one then the other while he held her with his other hand, keeping her firmly pressed on him. He dragged his hand down, pulling the fabric of her dress out of his way. His thumb slid between her legs, finding her swollen clitoris and started to rub in slow wide circles.

Harley responded with a cry, her body banging against the passenger seat and back against Jack until she came with loud cry of his name.

Jack inhaled quickly, following her orgasm with his own. He yanked her close wrapping his arms tight around her, thrusting into her, holding her desperately while riding out the orgasm until he didn’t think he could move again. He held her tightly as if he were afraid she would disappear, kissing her throat, then her cheeks and eyes, and finally her mouth.

“I love you Harley...I love you. You’re my diamond, my everything,” he whispered against her lips. “I don’t...I don’t want to lose you ever. I’m going to bring Gotham under my heel...” He looked into her eyes stroking her hair. “I’m going to take all of them down until we’re the ones on top Harley. We are going to be a curse on Gotham Harley...on the Wayne name...” Jack chuckled. “On all of it.” They would be on top and he would make Gotham safer for his wife. As much as Gotham had hurt them, he would hurt Gotham and bring the city under his control.

Harley cupped his face in her hands, returning his kisses stroking her thumbs along his cheeks. She could feel something. “I love you puddin. I know you will puddin, you’re going to all make them sorry.” She smiled and licked his lips. <>He did make one correction to her statement.

“We are going to make them sorry, sweets. We’re a team, you and I.” Jack grinned and held her tight unwilling to let her go until the arrived back at the apartment.

* *

Early afternoon of the next day, Harley was humming to herself. The humming was gradually turning into her singing along to the song that was playing on her phone she had sitting on the counter while she made some tea in the little kitchen. She was busying herself singing and dancing to her playlist while she waited for their lunch order to arrive.

Jack, who was wearing a pair of black slacks, a dark green dress shirt with a black vest over the top which he hadn’t bothered to button and a pair of black and green vertical striped socks, was sitting on the couch, a cigarette in one hand, glanced up from where he was looking over a map of their new territory on his phone, forwarded to him from Trope who had put it together for them and sent it over. He had immediately noticed that the night club that Frost had mentioned last night “Over the Moon” was practically in the middle of the territory. Jack smirked. Convenient he had thought to himself, but right now his eyes were on his wife.

He grinned distracted by her. Harley was wearing a pair of super short pair of pink athletic shorts, short enough that he could see a hint of her nicely rounded rear, and a white hoodie. Otherwise, she was barefoot, her hair in pigtails as she danced and sang to the song that was playing on her phone. She weaved her hips back and forth, twirled and spun on her toes and sang into her cup of tea. Not only did watching her turn him on, with her nicely muscled legs and tight ass, but just her bright smile, blue eyes...Jack grinned brightly falling in love with her just a little bit more as she sang and danced. (She still wasn’t using her arm completely naturally, he noticed, just as Jack’s ribs still hurt him, but neither of them let their healing injuries slow them down/)

“Something in you lit up heaven in me
The feeling won't let me sleep

'Cause I'm lost in the way you move, the way you feel

One kiss is all it takes

Fallin' in love with me

Possibilities…”

He pressed his teeth into his lips, his blue eyes following the lines of her legs as she moved when there was a knock at the door breaking the spell that Harley had been weaving around Jack.

Harley grinned when she heard the knock and hurried over to pause the song and chiming up happily. “Sandwiches!! I'm starved!”

Jack chuckled watching her as she set her tea down and hurried over to the door. She pulled it open without looking through the peephole (Jack winced. He really needed to talk to her about opening the door like that...without looking. And she should at least have grabbed his switchblade…he loved her to bits, but she was still too trusting despite everything they had been through together. Still, she made him smile...that was just one of the many things that he loved about Harley.) Jack had just put his phone down when Harley squeaked in surprise.

Jack was on his feet in an instant ready to kill when he stopped short and stared. Framed in the open doorway was his Aunt Agatha and Frost.

“Hey Jackie sweetie.” Agatha smiled.

She was looking her usual elegant self, dressed in pair of tight black slacks, knee high black boots, white lace top and a fur trimmed black jacket, her hair swept up in an elegant updo, her arm wrapped around Frost who was standing next to her looking both sheepish, embarrassed and ashamed.

Jack looked stunned. “Auntie?”

She grinned at her nephew, releasing Frost and throwing her arms out. “I’m back!”

Harley squealed and threw herself at the older woman. Agatha laughed, catching Harley in an embrace as the younger woman jumped into her arms.

“Oh Agatha!!! I’m so happy to see you!!” Harley vibrated with excitement, then yelped. “Oh my gosh, come in!! Sorry!! I thought you guys were our lunch! We ordered some sandwiches. Oh maybe I can call them and add an order for you before it’s…”

Agatha laughed squeezing Harley tight before she let the younger woman go. Harley wrapped her good arm around Agatha and led the older woman inside while she spoke, Frost following a step behind. “No worries sweetie. Frost and I already had lunch before coming over.”

Jack hurried over and wrapped his arms around his aunt. “God...the last time I heard from you was...was it when I called about the basement at Catherine House?” Jack grinned. “I’m really happy to see you, but what are you doing back in Gotham so soon? I didn’t expect to see you in...oh, I don’t know...ten years?” He stepped back to look at her.

Agatha’s smile didn’t reach her eyes. “We need to talk Jackie.”

Harley frowned with a glance at Frost, but it was clear whatever it was that Agatha needed to
discuss, she hadn’t spoken about it with Frost either.

“Can I get you guys…” Harley started to speak, but that was when there was a knock at the door. Harley blushed. “Oh—probably our lunch.”

She headed to the door while Jack moved motioning for Agatha and Frost to sit while he sat in one of the chairs. Harley came back just seconds later with a bag of food.

She set it down on the coffee table.

“We have a bottle of wine if you guys would like…” Harley asked and Agatha laughed. “Oh honey, you are a lifesaver! Yes! Wine please!”

Jack laughed at his aunt and rose to help Harley. Jack pulled the bottle out of the cabinet looking it over while Harley was pulling down four wine glasses. “It’s Truth & Valor Cabernet Sauvignon Paso Robles—that good auntie?” Jack held the bottle up as he glanced over at her. He noticed that she and Frost were practically sitting shoulder to shoulder.

Agatha laughed. “If it's alcohol, it’s fantastic! But yes sweetie, that’s a great afternoon wine! Black cherry and dark chocolate, just what the doctor ordered.” Agatha smiled as Jack came over with the bottle and Harley with the glasses.

After a few minutes the four of them were sitting, Jack had Harley in his lap, both of them eating their lunch, two “LGBT” sandwiches (Linguica Spread, Goat Cheese, Bacon, Tomato, Sautéed Onions, Seasonal Lettuce, Olive Oil) from the local Gotham City Sandwich shop down the street.

Jack swallowed a bite of sandwich and set it down on the table before chasing it with a sip of red wine before he spoke.

“So, why are you back in Gotham?” he asked, curiosity clear on his features.

Agatha was filling her glass again from the bottle, her third. “I found Cobb,” she said, her voice lacking its usual humor. “Did you kill him?”

Jack frowned. Harley glanced at Jack. Agatha didn’t seem upset about having found a body, nor did she seem especially shocked.

Jack stared at his aunt, clearly looking for something. He frowned. “You didn’t call the police did you?”

She shook her head. “No, I didn’t. I took care of the body Jack...I almost didn’t, but...the Owls will figure it out soon...especially after Ben Orchard’s death.”

Harley piped up, not wanting her husband to be accused of a murder that wasn’t his... “I killed Ben.”

Agatha was about to set her wine glass down when she froze with a glance at Frost. It was clear that while Frost may not have told them about Agatha being in town, he hadn’t told her everything about the death of Ben Orchard or Tomaso Panessa either.

Agatha didn’t react the way that Harley thought she might--instead, the older woman chuckled. “Well, it seems we all have...secrets.” She took a deep breath through her nose and poured enough wine into her glass to have the red liquid dangerously close to spilling over the edge.

“I’ll start first. William Cobb and Ben Orchard were part of the Court of Owls...as was I.”
Harley and Jack both became very still, listening intently as Agatha continued.

“I was a Talon. But first, you must understand, the Court of Owls has been around for a very long time and will probably be around long after the four of us are gone. Each wealthy family of Gotham is part of the Court.”

Jack opened his mouth to protest, but Agatha held her hand up for him to remain silent. “Even the Waynes, though my father refused to join...refused to give them one of his children.” She took a breath. “Each major family is supposed to donate a child to the Court. That child serves the Court however the Court wants...the family remains safe and reaps the profits of being part of the Court. It’s...complicated. My father refused, so I joined willingly.”

Agatha sipped on her wine, her smile a little sad. “I wanted adventure, to be my own person. I didn’t want to marry into another of Gotham’s elite families. I was young, stupid, headstrong...I made a deal with the Court: I would join as long as my family never knew...and they never did... “ She took a long sip of her wine before she spoke again.

“I killed people for them. I was good at it, but...But I never married. Never had children of my own. If I had then…” She shook her head. “I was getting older and slower...the Court wanted fresh blood. They started to look toward you and Bruce...particularly you Jack. So I made another deal. They would leave you boys alone and I would leave Gotham...instead I would become something else for the Court, something more dangerous than an assassin...I became their spy.” She looked between Jack and Harley as she spoke. “I won’t get into all the gory details with you now, but I gave up Gotham, my home to prevent you, Jackie, from being made part of the Court of Owls. But now...you’ve killed Ben Orchard…”

Harley started to reiterate that she had actually done Ben’s murder, but Agatha held up her hand. “It won’t matter Harley dear....you’re his wife...they will consider you both the orchestrators of Ben’s death. The Court may have been after Ben for what he did to you...for going against orders, and for leaving, but Ben’s father is...well the man has clout within the Court...he won’t let Ben’s death go unanswered. And you killed Cobb...they are not going to be happy when they find out. I hid his body, which might buy us a few weeks...months...or only days...who knows?” She frowned. “I’m not sure what’s going to happen, but you needed to know this...I should have told you before I gave you Catherine House.” She lifted her purse up--which she had placed on the floor beside her--and pulled out her package of cigarettes, a package of German made Shepheard’s Hotel cigarettes; she flipped the package open and pulled one out. Before she could search for her lighter, Jack pulled out the special lighter his wife had stolen for him while keeping an arm around Harley so that she wouldn’t tumble from his lap. He leaned over and lit his aunt’s cigarette. She puffed a few times to get it started before breathing in deeply, holding the smoke for a few seconds before releasing it with a sigh. “Thank you darling.”

Jack nodded and sat back, but he blinked a few times then started to giggle. “My aunt...my alcoholic,” (here Agatha frowned. “Hey now! I’m not an alcoholic!...much!”) “Is...sorry…” Jack couldn’t quite control his laughter. “My aunt was an assassin...and now spy? Right?”

She shrugged with a slow blink. “Mostly industrial, but yes.”

“And now the Court of Owls is after me for what? A job? Or punishment? I’ve already said that I plan on wiping them out of Gotham…” Jack smiled at his aunt who lifted a brow at him.

“You do?” She asked, curiosity making her voice slightly harsh.

Jack’s grin spread across his face. “Oh I do...if not completely eliminate, them I’m going to make damn fucking sure they know not to touch me or mine. And that includes my ass of a brother who
would be shitting himself if he knew about any of this!” Jack squeezed Harley tight against himself as he started to rock with laughter. Harley wrapped her arms around Jack, giggle with him, but after a moment or two she realized Jack was more than simply laughing, it was almost like he was having a fit. He was laughing so hard that tears had sprung to his eyes.

Frost and Agatha were watching him with wary expressions, but Harley just curled herself around him giggling until she could lift Jack’s face a little. She was suddenly taken by the look in his eyes...his eyes reminded her for a moment of what his eyes had looked like when they had been in the asylum...that edge of madness hovering just out of reach...just a hint of green at the edges of the blue. Harley could see it...almost feel it as she looked at him, but just as soon as she had seen it, Jack took a deep breath, releasing her to wipe his face.

She caressed his face gently. “Puddin, you all right?” she asked in a whisper.

Jack giggled at her. “It’s just so damn funny Harls...so damn funny...Bruce’s picture perfect world...all of it is fake! Phoney!! How funny is that?” He laughed, bending over.

Harley rubbed his back tenderly.

“Puddin?” she asked.

Jack giggled, looking into her face one more time and for a second Harley saw someone else...her puddin was there, but...not. Then Jack grinned at her and blinked.....and just like that, whatever she had seen was no longer there.

Harley started to move off Jack’s lap, but he reached out and snagged her, pulling her back to him. His voice was a whisper only she could hear.

“Stay...please Harley...I need you close.” Jack ducked his head to catch her eyes. He had a little boy smile on his face, slightly lost, slightly amused, but all of it was her puddin, her Jack.

Harley smiled and settled back onto his lap, snuggling close, putting her arm around his waist. The healing gunshot wound pulled, but she ignored it pressing against him.

Jack leaned his head against hers. He seemed to take strength from her before he spoke again.

“How long before you think the Owls will be trouble?” he asked his aunt.

Agatha had finished off the wine, setting the empty bottle down. “Yeah...yes...I mean yes, I think so...not sure how long...but I think you have some time. I just wish you hadn’t put on that red mask...that belongs to the Owls...to me...to Catherine House. It’s good that you two moved, but...”

She shook her head, both amused and impressed...

“Fashion Week Jack? Robbing the rich...I mean...why?”

Jack laughed. “Why not?”

Agatha stared at her nephew for a good few heartbeats before she grinned. “It’s a bit strange to hear my words that I said to your father, throwed back at me. You have another bottle of wine?”

Harley smiled kissing Jack’s forehead. “I’ll get it puddin.”

He reluctantly let her go. “Bruce always thought the worst of me...so I figure, why not be the best of the worst?”
Agatha chuckled. “Oh Jackie, I can’t believe I’m condoning this.”

Harley returned with a new bottle of wine. She handed it to Jack who read the label. “Antinori Tignanello 2014?”

Agatha grinned holding her glass out. “Filler up nephew.”

Jack smiled opening the bottle with the corkscrew that Harley had brought back with her, the wine bottle popping nicely. He filled his aunt’s glass, then everyone else's before setting the bottle down on the table between them.

He gathered Harley onto his lap again, picking up his glass. “To the future Wayne criminal empire.”

Agatha nearly snorted her wine as she was taking a sip, laughing at Jack. “Oh Jackie, this is so much NOT what Thomas wanted for you boys.”

Jack frowned for a moment...Harley could see something in Jack’s eyes, an emotion that she didn’t understand, but he hissed softly. “Should have thought about that before he got himself killed.” He said it only for Harley to hear before he downed his entire glass of wine with one swallow. He leaned forward to set the glass down a little hard before taking a breath.

Jack smiled. “So, you think I have a while before I have to worry about taking care of the Owls. Good. I want to take care of some other business...not sure how long that is going to take…”

* 

Frost arrived to pick Jack and Harley up around nine in the evening. It was chilly out, a slight drizzle in the air making everything damp, but Jack and Harley had decided against coats for the night since they were heading to a nightclub which would be packed with people and therefore warm, though Jack did use an umbrella to protect them from the light rain.

Harley, her hair worn loose around her shoulders and showing off her curls, wore a chic little black dress that was form fitting. The dress had a choker-like neckline and long sleeves that ended in ruffles, while at the same time the large cutouts at the shoulder exposed her shoulders and collarbone; she still wore a bandage over her stitched and healing bullet wound, but it somehow didn’t detract from how she looked in the dress.

Harley had done her makeup with a smoky feel that made her light blue eyes stand out more and had paired the little dress with a pair of ankle-strap stiletto sandals; under her dress, barely hidden by the short skirt, Harley had a thigh holster high up on her thigh, where she had a knife, an eight inch knife that her husband had insisted she have on her person. She looked and smelled good enough to eat Jack thought gleefully as he handed her into the back of the car.

Jack wore a black suit tonight, slim cut slacks, vest, with a black and white vertical striped dress shirt sans tie, a few buttons open at the collar to expose his neck and the hollow of his throat...all of which made Harley want to lick her way up his neck before making her way down her husband’s lean form. He wore a pair of black gloves, and a pair of black and white wingtip, brogues oxfords. To complete his look Harley had outlined his eyes in black, making the blue stand out like an electric blue, while his lips were a warm shade of red that matched hers...very kissable Harley thought to herself as she took her seat in the car.

He followed the umbrella and slipped into the car next to Harley, adjusting his jacket slightly, feeling the hard end of the switchblade in his pocket, bumping against his ribs. Jack smoothed his jacket before he pulled Harley closer, leaning down to press a kiss to her bare shoulder. Harley smiled,
blushing softly. Jack grinned, dragging his gloved fingers over her smooth shoulder, just before he leaned down to brush his lips across her skin.

“I do like this dress,” he whispered, his breath tickling her shoulder. “Mm...your skin is so soft my sweets.”

Harley giggled, goosebumps racing along her skin from Jack’s lips.

Jack reached down and brushed her thigh where her dress rode up, revealing the blade on her thigh.

“I love that you’re a dangerous woman Harls.” Jack flicked his tongue just barely brushing her lips, though he planned on putting lipstick marks all over her body tonight once their business was concluded...he thought he might spare Frost by waiting until they were back at the apartment later tonight...but it was going to be difficult he thought to himself.

Jack smiled continuing to brush his lips tenderly over Harley’s shoulder as he said, “To the club Frost my dear.”

Frost smiled and saluted Jack in the rearview mirror, pulling out into traffic. Jack continued to caress Harley’s bare shoulder when he asked suddenly.

“So, Frost...you and my aunt...more than just a fling?”

It took an effort of will for Frost not to accidentally step on the gas or slam on the breaks when Jack asked his question. Frost glanced in the rearview. He could see Harley smiling slowly, her head slightly bowed as Jack brushed his lips along her shoulder or lightly pressed his lips to her skin; his arm around her shoulder allowed his gloved fingers to slowly caress her hair or her ear. Jack glanced over, sensing that Frost was watching him.

“Ah...well...No...not really...I...I don’t actually know Boss.” Frost cringed with the realization.

Jack laughed accompanied by Harley’s giggle. “Don’t worry about it. I was just curious.” Jack laid his head against Harley’s shoulder.

Frost still looked slightly pale, but Jack just smiled. “Just don’t let her eat you up Frost.”

“Yes, Boss.”

He glanced back, but it seemed that Jack had moved on, his attention now on kissing his wife. Frost let out a breath of relief.

*

The “Over the Moon” nightclub was located in what had once been a hotel. The building had the art deco feel of the 1920s, a combination of glamour and luxury. The club had played on that design element and feel with a stylized neon logo sign that hung over the front entrance in bright blue and yellow. The sign showed a smiling crescent moon with stars around it and the name of the club as the curved other side of the moon, making a full circle.

There were two large bouncers at the front entrance which had a velvet rope across the front. The two men, one a large black man, the other a large white man, looked like twins in size, both dressed in tuxedos that echoed that 1920’s feel, were checking ID’s and letting people inside slowly. The music could be heard out on the street as Frost drove the car around to the back of the building.

The back of the building was a large parking area where an attendant waited to let cars inside, giving
them a ticket. Frost pulled up after only waiting a couple of minutes before getting their ticket and pulling into the parking lot and parking the car.

Jack smiled. “Ready sweets?”

Harley nodded though she was frowning slightly. “I still think you should have worn the helmet...I mean the Red Hood.” She looked slightly uncomfortable.

Jack caressed her chin. “I thought we discussed that sweets? This is business...I want the owner here to know who they are dealing with. Besides...we’re both armed, and we have Frost. It’ll be fine. Promise...pinky promise.” Jack put his hand up in a fist, his pinky out.

Frost had come around and opened the car door, standing to the side for Jack to exit.

Harley glanced over at Frost and the open door, then back at her husband. She looked at his hand then at him and giggled taking his pinky with hers. “Fine.”

Jack laughed. “Good, now come on, let’s get some drinks, dance and meet this Fish Mooney…” Jack frowned as he slipped out of the car and reached in for Harley.

“That’s the name correct?” Jack asked Frost as Harley stepped out of the car. The rain had stopped, leaving everything wet and shiny this evening.

Frost nodded as he closed the door behind Harley. “That’s the name that I was told Boss, Fish Mooney.”

* *

Jack and Harley didn’t have to wait to get into the club. Frost approached the two men on duty, whispering that the Hood had arrived. The black bouncer lifted his brows then leaned toward his partner who turned to stare, clearly they had heard about the change in command of the territory. The black man removed the rope and stepped aside.

“Enjoy your evening sir at “Over the Moon.”

Jack grinned as he walked past with Harley on his arm. “Oh I plan on it!”

* *

The inside of the club was filled with lights and sounds. The middle of the room was dominated by an island bar in a large oval; the entire bar looked as if were made of pale pink and purple lights, the middle of it dominated by a castle of glass liquor bottles while four bartenders worked the bar, one at each of the cardinal directions.

At one end of the club was a stage were a live band was playing, doing a cover of a song by a Russian musician named HOMIE. In front of the stage was a dance floor that was currently occupied by a sea of bodies. Numerous people danced, others were sitting at little round tables that were littered here and there like mushrooms, some making out in booths that ran along one wall. There were some strobing lights, some cool steam that would occasional slowly roll through the room while a few employees would weave their way through the place delivering trays of food to people who were sitting at larger tables near the booths.

Jack looked around impressed as they found a space at the bar. “This place is nice. I like it.”

Harley smiled. “Me too! I love all the mirrors on the walls! Trippy!”
Both Jack and Harley noticed that a few of the dancers on the floor were laughing…a lot at absolutely nothing. It was a bit odd; they were completely in the throes of wild fits of laughter while dancing. It was hard to tell with the lights, but Jack could have sworn that their skin looked almost…white…definitely too pale. He couldn’t see the color of their hair clearly from where they were and the lights, but…Jack narrowed his gaze…it was noticeably odd.

Jack leaned close to Harley and hissed. “If I didn’t know any better, I would think they’d been sucking on some of my gas.”

Harley giggled. “Yeah…it’s like…”

But she didn’t get a chance to finish before Frost created a space for them at the bar. “Here ya go Boss.”

Jack laughed and turned to Frost. “Thank you darling. So…let’s get a drink and see if we can’t let Fish Mooney know we’re here.”

Frost nodded. “Probably asking the bartender would be your best bet Boss.”

Jack nodded and grabbed Harley around the waist and lifted her up onto the stool making her giggle. He sat down next to her with a grin and motioned for the bartender, a short young woman wearing a white half shirt and a pair of green shorts with what looked to be army boots; her hair bright green, was shaved into a mohawk. She came gliding over in time to the music which had changed to a cover of Sevdaliza’s “Human.” She grinned brightly at the two of them.

“What can I get you two fashionably delicious people?”

Jack grinned at Harley. “Oh I like her! What’s your name darling?”

The young woman grinned. “Everyone calls me Kermit.” She pointed at her head.

Jack laughed. “Oh that’s lovely. All right Kermit, what’s the best drink you make?”

Kermit grinned. “I make a mean Moscow Mule.”

Jack glanced at Harley. “My dear?”

Harley grinned. “Never had one, let’s try it puddin!”

Jack took Harley’s hand and kissed her fingertips, his eyes dancing with love for her. Kermit stared. She had seen a lot of couples, a lot of lovers and people just starting to be in love, but there was something electric about these two. The way they looked at each other was something special, she could feel it like a force around them.

Jack turned to Kermit holding up two fingers with his free hand while with his other hand he held onto his wife. “Make that two Moscow Mules and could you let Fish Mooney know that Red Hood is here to see her.”

Kermit had started to turn to grab a bottle of vodka when she heard him say Red Hood. She had heard all about Panessa. Hell, everyone in the Panessa family territory had heard about what had happened to the entire family, the building explosion and collapse. It was all anyone had talked about until…Tomaso had wound up dead. But the talk was especially about Panessa’s boy toy. It hadn’t been pretty from what Fish had told Kermit. Fish was convinced that the Red Hood was a woman simply because of what had been rumored to have been done to Panessa’s paramour.
Kermit didn’t know if Fish was right about the Red Hood, but she was happy about the whole thing; that little freak had come in with Tomaso once when Panessa had come in to give Fish a hard time about...who knew. The man would come in drink without paying and dance with a few of the pretty girls or boys he took a fancy to...Ben would sit at the bar and leer at her or make off color comments, really creepy ass stuff. He had given Kermit the creeps. Fish had told her only today that they were under new “management.” Kermit wondered if that meant someone else would be collecting the protection money...or did it just mean new trouble, who knew? But her first impression if this guy and his girl were the Red Hood...she liked them.

Kermit swiftly made their drinks, setting them down in front of them with a smile. “I’ll go tell Fish you’re here.”

Jack gave her a stunning smile. “Thank you Kermit dear.”

* 

Fish was sitting in her regular booth, the lights played off her rich brown skin as she watched the dancers. Her short black hair was highlighted with deep red streaks that matched the red and gold dress she wore, a sleeveless, high collared dress that clung to her body like a second skin. She took a drag off her cigarette, letting the nicotine calm her nerves. She was meeting with the big boss in town, the one who had killed all the high rank members of the Panessa family, both male and female with the explosion of that building. The person who had killed Panessa and tortured Ben Orchard, a man she suspected (but didn’t know for sure) had connections to the Court of Owls (who she wasn’t even sure were real or just a nursery rhyme.) Either way this Red Hood was an up and coming force...now she just needed to know how much of a headache this Red Hood was going to make her life.

She might be able to seduce them...male or female...that would be the easiest route to what she wanted, which was total control of her club without the “protection” fees, but she also had higher goals. She wanted a seat at the table...but that was not something she needed to worry about right now...right now she had to see how much of a headache this Red Hood was going to make her life.

She was watching a particular handsome dancer, a young man with creamy white skin when her vision was suddenly blocked by Kermit.

“Fish...they're here.”

Fish frowned at Kermit. “They?”

Kermit nodded. “The Red Hood...it's a guy and his girl...not sure if it's both of them or him...or her, but my guess--it’s both of them. And they got a bodyguard, big guy too...looks like an ex cop.”

Mooney frowned and put out her cigarette in a heavy black ashtray on the table. “Okay, bring them on over.”

Kermit nodded and hurried away. Fish touched her hair and pressed her lips together before reaching forward to grab her glass of wine.

* 

Kermit hurried back to see the two of them flirting with each other, their guard standing with that straight back at attention alert only someone who was trained would have...she motioned at them as soon as she was in front of them. “If you’ll follow me.”

Jack smiled picking up his drink and putting his arm around Harley’s waist as she hopped down from her stool and grabbing her drink as well.
They followed Kermit across the room to where a table sat nearby the dance floor. The back of the table was against a curtained wall. Kermit stopped in front of the table where a trim, attractive black woman sat. She smiled and held up her drink.

“Red Hood?”

Jack grinned. “Fish Mooney?”

She grinned and gestured just as Kermit came back over with two chairs in tow.

Jack set his drink down and took one of the chairs, holding it out for Harley before he took the other.

Fish watched them with interest. Nicely dressed, elegant, especially the man. There was something about him that was familiar though she couldn’t put her finger on what. The eyes...she could swear she had seen him before. The woman was lovely; there was a freshness about her features, her hair, everything about her was open, friendly. Fish let her eyes roam over her body. She was fit...tight muscles, though still feminine...wound on her shoulder...interesting...she had heard that Falcone had allowed some of the other families to try and take Panessa’s property from the Red Hood...heard they ended up in jail too, one dead. But there was also something dark about the woman...Fish had seen it before in the mirror...this woman had killed and would kill again.

Now the man, Fish prided herself on her ability to “sense” people...there was darkness to them both, but the man...there was something lurking in him...something...deadly, incredibly dangerous. But when he sat next to his woman, the smile on his face when he turned to face her, he was fucking charming too. She could see the man oozed charm.

There was something deadly about the two of them and there was no mistake, these two came as a set, a packaged deal, you couldn’t have one without the other; she could tell by their body language, the way the man took the blonde’s hand in his, holding her on his lap, both possessive and...he needed her. Interesting, Fish thought.

She smiled and put her hand across the table. “Fish.”

Jack took her hand. “Jack.”

Then Harley took the offered hand. “Harley.”

Fish settled back in her seat. “Kermit, why don’t you get us some fresh drinks dear?” She smiled at Jack and Harley. “So, you are the Red Hood?”

Jack grinned. “We are.”

He pointed at himself and Harley. “We have a few more members to our gang, but Harley and I lead the troops.” Jack smiled brightly.

Fish tilted her head. “You look familiar.”

Jack grinned. “Jack Wayne. You might have seen my brother on the news a time or two...maybe even me.”

Fish blinked as everything clicked together. “Shit. You’re Bruce Wayne’s brother?!”

Jack laughed. “I am. This is my wife and partner Harley.”

Harley waved. “Hi.”
“So, Fish…” Jack leaned his elbow on his table, his other hand wrapped in Harley’s.” He pointed at Fish from across the table. “Let’s talk about how all this is going to work. I know you and many other businesses around the area pay Panessa or his people money to keep you safe...Now I’m willing to admit I don’t know all the ins and outs and I’m looking for someone willing to work with me...tell me what I need to do to make sure the money you guys are paying is put to good use...to actual protection.” Jack’s smile was radiant. “Tell me what the Red Hood can do to help you.”

Harley piped up with a smile. “See, you can be part of the gang or you can simply be part of the territory, we’re giving you the chance to choose.”

Fish stared at him. She looked over at Harley frowning slightly, but Harley was smiling at her. Fish wasn’t sure if they were serious. They looked serious, but she had been burned in the past. Fish picked up her drink, which Kermit had refreshed just moments ago and took a sip before she answered.

“Can I think about this? I mean, I understand you expect money and a response, but you’ve presented me with an interesting idea. I would like to mull it over.”

Jack grinned. “Of course! Just…” Jack sipped his drink. “We want this to work out well for everyone involved, but I also...I don't take betrayal well. My wife and I killed a lot of people to get to this point. I’m not planning on taking a step backwards.”

Harley smiled with a vigorous nod. “A lot of people.”

Jack grinned at Harley before he tugged her close to steal a kiss.

Fish watched all this was a curious expression. These two were not like any “gangsters” she had ever dealt with in the past. She glanced up at their bodyguard who was standing like a stone statue. The man smiled at her and shrugged. Curious she thought...

Jack stared at Harley for a beat. She smiled back at her husband. Jack brought her hand up and kissed her knuckles before he returned his attention back to Fish. “Well my dear, you think about how you want to play this and we’ll talk again tomorrow night?”

Fish nodded. “Tomorrow night is good.”

Jack stood, with Harley following. Harley giggled smiling at Fish, for a moment her accent thickened as Harley waved. “Nice to meetcha Fish.”

“You too Harley, Jack…” Fish stood and nodded before awkwardly returning Harley’s wave. She watched the two of them go with a slight furrow between her brows before she sank back into her seat. That was the moment that Kermit dropped into the seat beside her.

“They fer real?” Kermit asked watching as Jack grabbed Harley around her waist, yanking her onto the dance floor for a few minutes, their bodyguard standing close, the other dancers on the floor moved around him like he was a rock in a river.

The sounds of Lorn’s “Acid Rain” had started to play and Fish could see the two of them, the leaders of the Red Hood gang, dancing. It was almost as if the crowd around them had melted away, the lights spotlighting just the two of them. Fish found herself unable to look away as Jack grabbed Harley, pressed their pelvises together, his hands starting at her lower back and slowly rolling down over her hips, spreading his fingers as he gripped her ass, pressing her close enough that Fish would have thought they would meld together; the way they flowed together, their bodies moved to the music, neither of them looking anywhere but at each other...they were hypnotic to watch.
Fish smirked watching them as the other dancers melted away, leaving a space where Jack and Harley were dancing, an unconscious circle forming around them. Harley wrapped her arms around his neck, one of her legs pressed between his while he did the same to her and his hands began a slow sensual crawl, exploring her back, then the feel of her hips. While the music slowly flowed into another hypnotic song, Lusine’s “Just a Cloud” began to play, the lights switched to softer colors and the two dancers moved with the sound, their bodies rolling and weaving, their eyes only for each other.

The two of them started to kiss while they moved; a slow and sensual play of tongues, bodies pressed intimately together. The kiss quickly turned into a heated, passionate exchange, the sort of kiss that made Fish jealous. She watched for a few moments, but slowly the crowd began forming back around the two lovers. Soon they were swallowed from her sight; the Waynes had disappeared.

Fish sighed, about to say something to Kermit about the offer from the the new Red Hood gang when she heard a voice that made her skin crawl.

“Well ain’t you two ladies just a picture of beauty.”

Fish looked up to see Salvatore “Sal” Maroni standing by her table. Sal was an average size man who was starting to lean toward the heavy side, but with the beefy build of someone who enjoyed boxing. He had thick black hair, but Fish could tell he was starting to thin on top. He wore an expensive grey suit with a white dress shirt with a red and polka dot tie, but the man had a way of making even a tailored suit look like it couldn’t quite fit him. He was smoking a large Toscano cigar and was surrounded by three of his men who to Fish’s eyes looking like carbon copies of one another; all big, all stupid and all going bald. A bag of assholes she thought to herself.

“What are you doing here Maroni?” Fish hissed reaching for her wine. “Didn’t you hear the news? Panessa’s dead and someone else is in charge and I don’t think he is gonna want to work with you like Panessa did.” She gave him a condescending smile.

Maroni pulled one of the chairs that was still sitting in front of her table. He grinned, sitting with his legs wide apart, taking up as much space as possible.

“Oh Fish, Fish...Babes...you always make me laugh. You really think I care about some overzealous asshole thinking he can step into Panessa shoes?” He grinned at Kermit and snapped his fingers. “Hey, go get me a drink sweetheart, a highball.”

Kermit looked over at Fish who just gave her a slight nod.

Maroni grinned. “That’s how I like to see my girls, obedient. Now, you just keep paying me Babes and I’ll make sure nothing happens to you little club here until I take over all of Panessa’s goods.”

Fish narrowed her eyes. “I heard that The Roman called off the hit and gave his blessing to the new boss.”

“You think I fucking care what the old man did? You keep paying your dues Fish or we are going to have a problem and no fucker in a Red Hood is going to help you.”

* 

Jack and Harley were giggling as they fell into the back seat of the car.

Harley squealed and giggled when Jack dropped into the seat beside her and grabbed her, yanking her onto his lap as he closed the door. Frost started the engine and began to pull out of the parking lot.
“So, what did you think of her?” Jack asked while nibbling at her shoulder, his arms tight around her.

Harley giggled. “I like her. I think she is going to be big help. If we play our cards right, she might even become a team player.”

Jack laughed. “Oh God Harley...you’re using management terms! Who are you?”

Harley squealed again when Jack started to tickle her. “I’m sorry puddin!!”

Jack laughed, kissing her gently at the same time one hand slid up her dress. Harley felt him caress her thigh along the edge of the strap she wore on her thigh holding the knife in place.

Jack’s nimble fingers worked quickly and he pulled the knife free of its sheath, holding it up. The streetlights outside zipping past highlighted the blade.

Jack grinned looking at the knife then at Harley. “I just had an idea.”

Harley narrowed her eyes at him with a smirk. “Oh?”

Jack leaned back a bit and slowly used the knife to cut a line up the middle of Harley’s dress.

“JACK! I thought you liked the dress!” Harley giggled.

Jack pressed the tip of his tongue to his upper teeth. “Oh I did...now I’m more interested in what’s underneath.”

He laughed softly as Harley leaned her head back allowing him to finish the long cut of the dress with her knife until the fabric fell open. Underneath she wore a pair of red lace panties and a strapless red bra.

Jack’s smile widened. “Oh! It's like Christmas!!”
Jack heard the sound of music playing softly. He opened one eye only to be greeted by light...bright and invasive sunlight. He groaned and grabbed his pillow, pulled it on top of his head to drown out the music and the light. After a couple of seconds he decided he needed to snuggle, to have the feel of his wife’s warm body pressed up against his. He grinned happily at the thought of her body pressed along his...maybe burying his face between her breasts...a nipple between his lips... Jack reached over blindly only to realize he couldn’t feel her. He spread his hand wide and patted her side of the bed, the mattress making that hollow like thump sound.

Nope, she was definitely not there. Jack grumbled to himself rolling his eyes in annoyance. He pulled the pillow off his head as he turned to her side of the bed. She wasn’t there at all.

Jack sat up with a pout on his lips as he looked into the room.

Harley was in the middle of the room wearing a pair of indecently short baby blue yoga shorts, and a pink sports bra that had a zipper running down between her breasts. Her blonde hair was up in a ponytail, she was barefoot, and she had removed the larger bandage from her shoulder, replacing it with a smaller one that covered up the stitches in her shoulder. Jack could still see the reddish pink around the wound on both sides, now visible under the smaller bandage. It still angered Jack to see that bullet wound...he wanted to slowly take the life of the man who shot her, but that man was dead already, probably one of the men killed the night Harley came to rescue him, and while the idea was fun, Jack couldn’t bring that man back just to kill him again.

Jack let the violent thought go and simply watched Harley. She seemed to be doing Tai Chi...her movements were slow and careful as she stretched her arms over her head, her legs apart. He grinned watching her, especially pleased when she bent over, her ass in the air in his direction. He wasn’t sure if it was on purpose or not, but he definitely appreciated the view.

Harley, bent over and burst into a bright smile, her head hanging between her legs upside down when she saw Jack was awake and sitting up watching her.

“PUDDIN!!!” she squealed when she saw he was awake.

Jack laughed bringing his sheet covered legs up to rest his elbow on them. “Whatcha listening to sweets?”

Harley stood up and turned around. “Oh, Lamb’s “What Makes Us Human.” It’s an old song on my phone, but it has that nice slow, meditative feel to it.”

She straightened up and stepped over to the bed, hopping onto the bed. “So how you feeling puddin?”

“A little sad my girl wasn’t in bed with me when I woke up, but I was made happy again by seeing that perfect ass of yours in the air.” Jack grinned boyishly and Harley giggled smacking him lightly on the shoulder.

“Wanna do some Tai Chi with me? I haven’t done any in a long while so I thought this morning would be perfect since we are going shopping!” Harley giggled jumping to her feet. “We haven’t been shopping in forever!”

Jack smiled watching her. “Fine, I’ll do some with you on one condition.”
Harley had hopped off the bed and did a little spin to look back at him. “Whatever you want puddin.”

Jack grinned. “You stand in front of me.”

Harley frowned slightly, then shrugged. “Okay puddin.”

Jack chuckled sliding out of bed, stretching his arms over his head and cracked his back.

Harley watched him with what she knew must be a slightly goofy, clearly smitten grin on her face. Jack was wearing only his boxers, a pair of light blue and white striped ones that hung low on his hips giving Harley a mouthwatering view of his lower abdomen and hips, the elastic waist hovering just over his groin. Her body reacted immediately to the image of her husband as he dropped down, his legs wide and touched his toes. The long curve of his exposed back made her want to roll her hands along his skin, feel the working of muscle until she arrived at his rear where she could squeeze the...

Harley shook her head and turned her back on him. Gazing at her husband made her want to throw him on the bed and rip those boxers right off...Harley giggled at her wanton thoughts. Jack really did it for her...really pushed her buttons she thought with a smile.

Jack glanced up. Harley had taken the same position in front of him as requested, her legs spread, her rear in the air. He licked his lips.

Harley grinned as she looked between her legs at him. “Ready?”

Jack smirked back. “If you are?”

Harley giggled, stood straight and with a spring in her step walked over to the coffee table where she had set her phone. She picked it up and started to thumb through her music until found what she was looking for...she hit the play button and waltzed back over to stand in front of Jack.

She grinned at Jack from over her shoulder from her position right in front of him. “Ready?”

Jack’s eyes wandered down her backside, over her thighs. “Oh yeah.”

Harley giggled and set her legs apart. She began by slowly stretching her arms over her head, then brought them back in a circle before tucking her arms to her body. She rolled her body, surprising Jack with the move that was more reminiscent of a dancing stripper pose instead of Tai Chi before she slowly put her left foot forward and moved her arms in what Jack recognized was called the white crane pose. Harley moved slowly, carefully. Jack followed her every movement, not that he needed lessons or that he had forgotten how to do Tai Chi; he just enjoyed watching her move, watching the way his wife used her body.

She slowly switched her poses, twisted her body to the side, bringing her right leg forward, her upper body twisting with the shift of her leg. She turned to look over her shoulder at Jack, her blue eyes sparkling as she gave him a slow, sensual smile.

Jack pressed his upper teeth into his lips, watching her. The flow of her body, the control she had...not only did he admire her, but he desired her. Every movement, every twist of her body as she slowly switched poses made Jack crave her more. Harley was his drug, his insanity, and he needed her more than he needed to breathe. He smiled at the thought while he performed the same movement, twisting his body slowly, gradually taking the pose.

Harley swallowed watching him. No matter how many times they made love, she just couldn’t get
enough of him; her eyes caressed the side of his torso, the dim sunlight filtering through into the room danced across his skin, the pull of his muscles under his thighs…the strength in him...

Harley took a deep breath and forced herself to look away while she slowly switched poses, stepping forward with her hands out, turning her back toward her husband again. She gradually brought her left leg up, turning her leg to the side, her arms slowly coming out, hands held up with her fingers together thinking to herself she should never have agreed to him doing Tai Chi with her because he was just too damn distracting.

Jack grinned and stepped forward, his body only inches from her. He was careful not to touch her, though he slowly mimicked her next movement. Harley had stepped forward with her right foot, extending the left behind her, right between Jack’s legs when he moved up behind her.

Jack leaned forward, careful not to touch her, but he blew against her ear.

Harley giggled. “Jack, stop that.”

He smiled. “Yes ma’am.”

Harley eased her leg from between his in an attempt to bring it forward, but Jack blew a warm breath along her shoulder. The breath tickled causing goosebumps to race along her skin.

Harley shivered, but her voice was low. “Jack…”

Jack murmured softly, his voice caressing her skin. “My Harley…”

Jack smiled and wrapped one arm around her waist, his grip firm and gentle. Together they brought their left legs forward. Jack’s thigh pressed lightly against the back of hers while with his left arm he reached forward, catching her hand and twisting his fingers with hers. His right hand, which he had spread across her stomach, slowly rose up to caress the delicate skin of her tummy, then up to her bra. His nimble fingers reached upward and snagged the pull of the bra’s zipper.

Harley’s breathing became more ragged, her heartbeat accelerating as Jack pressed her back against his chest. He brought her left arm back, wrapping both their arms around her waist.

Jack pressed his lips to her shoulder, all thought of doing meditation gone from his mind as he slowly pulled down on the zipper while their bodies swayed together.

He tugged until the zipper came free and the fabric sprang apart to release her breasts.

Harley sucked in a breath as the cooler air of the room touched her exposed chest. She could feel the smile on Jack’s lips when he kissed the side of her neck. He brushed his lips up the slope of her neck and whispered against her ear.

“I have a whole different kind of morning exercise in mind Harley.” Jack then growled deep in his throat, a sound that sent heat racing through Harley’s body.

Harley moaned softly as Jack released her hand in favor of cupping her breasts, his quickly hardening erection pressed up against her backside. She arched her hips into him, pressing purposely against him, which earned her another soft growl from Jack as he responded by rubbing his pelvis against her backside with more purpose.

With Jack’s lips against her ear, his tongue traced the soft, sensitive skin of her ear lobe while his hands gently squeezed her breasts and their bodies swayed together to Rynx’s “Want You” playing from Harley’s phone. His hands were warm against her flesh as he squeezed gently.
Jack let go of her breasts, his fingers brushing lightly over her shoulders before he slipped the bra off her shoulders, down her arms, the tips of his fingers dragging along her skin. She moved her arms behind her to let the bra drop to the floor. Harley started to turn around, but Jack put a hand on her shoulder, stopping her. She didn’t say a word, she didn’t move.

Jack next took hold of the sides of her shorts and tugged, pulling them down her legs, grinning when he saw she wasn’t wearing any panties under the very short shorts.

Jack hissed. “Mmm...goodie.”

Harley didn’t turn around; she simply stepped out of the shorts when Jack had dragged them to the floor. She glanced over her shoulder at him as Jack slowly stood back up. He gave her a seductive smile before he reached out to trace the very tips of his fingers down her spine, his touch raising goosebumps that raced across her flesh.

Jack stepped close enough that Harley could feel the heat emanating from his body as he continued to caress her skin, the very tips of his fingers brushing along her shoulders and down her shoulder blades; she could feel the tip of his blunt nails against her skin. He dug his nails gently into her skin, dragging them down and leaving a line of red marks along her pale flesh. Jack’s warm breath brushed against the back of her neck.

He hissed low. “Tell me you want me.”

Harley closed her eyes. “I want you Jack.”

He stepped back from her and for a moment Harley started to frown, thinking she had done something wrong, but a heartbeat later she felt Jack step up behind her again. She felt the warm press of his erection against her rear, pressing between her cheeks, his hips touching her skin. His hands rested on her hips then slowly slid down along the sensitive skin between her thighs and hips, his fingers spreading and easing her legs wider apart. His fingers slid between her legs while his tongue ran along her throat.

Harley groaned as his fingers eased between her lips to finding her clitoris. The soft stroke of his fingers sent a cascade of delightful sensation through her body. She reached back behind her to grip his hips, pulling him closer while Jack held the thigh of her left leg out, the fingers of his right hand stroking tenderly against her clitoris, first moving up and down, then starting a slow circle, rolling and pressing against the sensitive nub, then pressing harder.

She leaned back against him firmly, moaning louder as he rolled the tips of his fingers against her, his lips against her ear and whispered.

“Tell me you like that Harley.” Jack growled against her ear.

Harley caught her bottom lip with her teeth and moaned. “Oh puddin...yes...yes I love it. I love you touching me.”

Jack growled again, sliding his long fingers lower, teasing her entrance before he slid them back up to brush against her clitoris.

Harley started to move her hips in time to his strokes, the warm tickle of sensation rushing up from his touch causing her entire body to arch.

Jack rubbed himself against her in time to his strokes, his left hand snaking back up her torso to her breast. He squeezed her breast once before he caught her nipple between his finger and thumb. He twisted gently, pulling a gasp from his wife. He smiled and held her nipple between his thumb and
middle finger allowing him to use his forefinger to stroke against the surface of her nipple.

Harley gasped again; the teasing sensation caused her entire body to jerk, his stroking fingers against her clitoris brushed and twirled until she gasped, her body tightening and aching with her climax.

Jack groaned in response to Harley’s moaning and shaking orgasm, dropping his hand from her breasts to hold her tightly around the waist and continue his strokes while thrusting and rubbing against her, feeling the warm smoothness of her backside against his throbbing erection. He kept circling his fingers against her while Harley cried out and brought her hands around to cover his where he touched her and held her, her head thrown back against his shoulder.

“Uh Jack…” Harley whimpered.

He held her tight, not letting her turn or break free while his fingers continued to stroke and circle her clitoris.

“One more Harley,” Jack moaned against her ear. “One more for me.”

Harley whimpered again, rocking her hips in time to his touch, her body his to do with as he wanted. She needed him to keep touching her.

Jack thrust his hips against her backside, resisting the tempting urge to bend her over. He rolled his finger against her swollen clitoris until her breathing was more ragged, her body tensing as another orgasm rippled up her body.

“Uuhh...Jack!” Harley cried out. He felt her shudder and bit her shoulder as his fingers stroked her wet, slick sex, evoking a fresh groan from his lover.

Jack released her, but only so he could wrap both arms around her and carry her to the bed. He grinned and tossed her onto the mattress, which made Harley squeal, but he was crawling on top of her when she rolled around to face him.

He was about to spread her legs when Harley giggled. “Turn around puddin.”

Jack frowned for a moment as if in his lust addled mind he had forgotten words. Harley motioned with her finger. “Turn around. I want you in my mouth first...I need to feel you on my tongue puddin.”

Jack blinked, then grinned. “Oh!”

Harley laughed. “Oh, is right! Now turn around.”

Jack grinned wickedly as he turned to face her legs. He chuckled and hissed playfully.

“Breakfast! Most important meal of the day!”

Harley laughed. “Jack!”

Jack giggled. “What? It’s true Harley. Are you trying to tell me it’s not important for me to enjoy my breakfast before I start the day??”

Harley was laughing when he grabbed her legs, bending them back and under his arms, completely exposing her, his fingers pressing into her delicate skin before he leaned down to lavish his tongue along her already wet sex.

Harley had just run her hands up the back of Jack’s thighs, the tip of her tongue teasing the tip of his
shaft when Jack ran the flat of his tongue against her. He loved the heady taste of her on his tongue, the scent of her excitement, the soft silken feel of her skin under his hands.

She made a moan, her body shuddering, a slight arch to her back with the feel of his warm, wet tongue flicking and slipping against her already stimulated clitoris. She pointed her toes, arching as much as she could in her position and into his tongue’s attentions. Jack chuckled in response brushing his teeth against her which sent another ripple through her body.

She responded by cupping his scrotum with one hand, massaging gently, alternating between her tender massage to brushing the tips of her fingers along the sensitive perineal region, while using her other hand to hold his member, her lips wrapped around the head of his erection, soft lips pressing down on him before she relaxed her throat to take as much of him into her mouth as she could.

Jack groaned against her, every caress, every lap of her tongue made him weak. The feeling of her soft lips, her wet tongue wrapped around him, sent shivers up his spine, especially when she bobbed her head gently up and down before rolling her tongue around the head of his erection in a wet twirl of pleasure.

Jack pressed his lips to her before twirling his tongue in response. He shuddered when Harley’s muffled groans vibrated up his erection. He arched his back, lifting his head to catch a breath before he buried his mouth against her once more, burying himself in her taste and scent.

Harley wrapped her mouth around him fully; his member was at once hard but the skin was soft. The head of his member was like satin, delicate and tender against her tongue. She enjoyed not just the feel of him in her mouth, the soft feel of his skin, the moans, the pleasure she was bringing him...making her husband weak for her, making him feel good...she lived for that...to make her puddin feel good...to make sure he knew how much she loved him...how much she cared. She groaned loudly when Jack’s own moans vibrated up from her clitoris, rippling through her core and made her climax again. Her muscles tightened in response, but she couldn’t exactly move with the way Jack had her legs bent back, leaving her exposed and at his mercy. She trusted him with her body completely, just as Jack trusted her.

She responded to his moans by brushing her teeth against the head of his shaft, feeling him jerk in response.

She moved her hand that gripped him up and down while she gently massaged his scrotum. Jack’s hips thrust just a little, but she could feel that slight tremble; he was reaching the edge of his tolerance.

Jack pulled away, climbing off her, panting. “Damn Harley...uh...” He struggled for breath grinning at the same time. Harley pushed herself up on her elbows smiling ear to ear.

“Hey puddin.” Harley giggled.

Jack grinned, his lips wet, even his chin glistened with her as he sat up completely, shifting his position over to the head board and leaning back before he motioned to her with his hands. “Come here toots.”

Harley giggled happily and sat up. She came over to him, but Jack motioned in a circle with his finger. “Turn around baby.”

Harley frowned slightly, lifting a brow in confusion, but she did as Jack requested, turning her back to him getting on her hands and knees and wiggling backwards.
Jack grinned, pressing his teeth into his bottom lip, his expression both lustful and with a “naughty little boy” look while his eyes caressed her backside. Harley positioned herself over his legs, looking back to make sure this was what Jack wanted. He responded by placing one hand on her hip, tugging her slowly backwards. When he had in her the right position over him, he reached out and grabbed her hips with both hands, squeezing, spreading her for a moment, just to enjoy the feel of her skin, the round softness of her hips, to gaze at her sex, his lips tingling with the thought of how she had tasted on his tongue just moments ago.

Jack murmured. “You are so gorgeous.”

Harley grinned with pleasure. “You're my handsome puddin.”

Jack chuckled, rubbing his hands over her backside, squeezing slowly, gently pressing his fingers into her skin. She was surely the softest, most precious thing he had ever touched in his life.

Harley glanced back over her shoulder, spreading her legs around his as he guided her back against him. She pressed her lips together on a pleased grunted as Jack positioned her over his lap, sliding his hands along her sides, then down her back. He guided her down, holding himself steady, teasing her once by sliding the head of his erection against her, teasing himself with the feel of her warmth, the wetness of her before guiding himself deep into her.

Harley moaned, arching her back as she slid down on him, feeling that wonderful sensation of Jack’s member, stretching, filling her, their two bodies becoming one.

Jack gasped loudly as she settled over and on top of him. “Uh Harley…”

He pulled her back and Harley sat up arching backwards so that her back was pressed against his chest, her head on his shoulder.

Jack wrapped his arms around her holding her close against him, kissing her ear, her shoulder, pressing his teeth into her skin while Harley bounced, thrusting her hips, grinding and rolling.

Together their breaths came in pants. Harley rolled her head to the side to kiss him, her tongue brushing with Jack’s.

He grabbed her breasts, squeezing, stroking her nipples with his fingers, rolling the overly stimulated nipples before giving just enough of a pinch to excite her. Harley grunted and bit her lip as her body tightened around him while she pulled up and bounced down. She reached behind, using her hands to balance herself while she thrust downward and back onto Jack.

Jack snaked one hand down her belly, caressing the soft flesh, feeling her muscles contract with his touch, until his fingers were once more between her legs. With her legs spread as they were, she was more exposed to him and Jack took full advantage of her position to roll his fingers over her clitoris causing his wife to orgasm loudly, nearly shouting his name.

Jack hissed against her ear. “That's my girl...I love to hear you you cum Harley. Mm...You are so, so wet…”

He pinched her nipple, flicking his tongue over her ear, his fingers continuing to circle her clitoris. “Scream for me Harley...let me hear you scream.”

He rubbed up and down on her, twisting and stroking her nipple with his other hand, his breath hot against her ear whispering her name in a chant. “Harley...uh...my Harley. Cum for me baby...my pumpkin...I want you slick...wet…”
Harley’s eyes rolled closed. She was only aware of feeling, her entire body attuned to Jack, his breath, his touch, the swell of him inside her. She felt that delightful wave, a ripple, that gradually grew until it encompassed all of her. She cried out again, arching her body, which held on tightly to Jack’s erection, squeezing him tight as she flooded over him, hot and wet. “Uh...puddin!!”

Jack grunted then hissed through his teeth as Harley’s body pulled against him, squeezed him. She was wet and slick and her cries of pleasure drove him until he could no longer hold back. His orgasm caused his entire body to jerk, arching into her, releasing all of himself in a flood inside his wife.

Jack wrapped his arms tight around Harley, thrusting up into her as he continued to spill everything into her body. He buried his head against her shoulder, groaning with pleasure and release, his voice muffled against her skin.

“I love you...Harley...my Harley.”

Harley was struggling to normalize her breath, leaning heavily against him. “I love you Jack...I love you,” she whispered, her body going limp.

Jack just held her close unwilling to move, or let her go for a long time.

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Jack was dressed in a bright red suit, black dress shirt--minus tie--black dress shoes and a pair of black leather gloves. He waited by the door tapping his foot. He rubbed his gloved fingers over his smooth chin and looked at the time on his phone then sighed. “Harley--come on, sweets. Frost is waiting!”

“I’m coming!!” He heard her yell back from the bathroom.

Harley came dashing out wearing a sleeveless a-line cut dress that hit just at her knees with a full skirt. The dress was a soft shade of amethyst, but the shoes she was wearing, peep toe ankle boots were a shade of light spring green. Her golden hair was pulled around to the left in a thick long braid tied off with a green ribbon and she wore a simple gold necklace with a small, round emerald in a simple gold setting.

Harley grinned at Jack, her lips a lighter shade of red than his own and grabbed her little green clutch and matching shrug.

“I’m ready!” She grinned brightly racing up beside him.

Jack smiled looking her over. “All right, you were completely worth the wait.”

Harley giggled wrapping her arm around Jack’s after slipping on her shrug. “Ready?”

“Yes I am.” Jack kissed her cheek before opening the door and heading out.

*  

The day the was mild so far, though the temperature was climbing into the low eighties while still partly cloudy.

Frost was humming along to the music, his demeanor happy and light. He had spent a wild and fun evening with Agatha who was sitting next to him--looking gorgeous he thought--with her hair swept back from her face. She was wearing a short, knee-length shirt of black with blue trim, showing off her toned legs, a matching top with quarter sleeves, and a pair of light blue kitten heels and a pair of
large, round black sunglasses. She had her legs crossed, leaning her elbow out the window with a cigarette between her fingers while her other hand was resting on Frost’s thigh. She glanced over at him and while he couldn’t see her eyes he felt the squeeze of her fingers.

Agatha turned around with a big grin to address Jack and Harley in the back seat. “So, what’s the occasion for a shopping trip? Not that you need one, darlings. There is always a good reason to go shopping.” She chuckled.

Jack laughed crossing his legs, pulling Harley against him, his arm around her shoulders. Harley snuggled close to Jack, her hand resting on his knee.

“Well, we’re meeting, for the second time I might add, with a woman named Fish Mooney who owns the “Over the Moon” nightclub. We’re hoping she is going to join us...the gang that is...maybe help us with getting our new territory under control.” Jack grinned feeling happy, relaxed.

Agatha nodded. “It’s always good to use someone who knows the place to help you.”

He pulled out his cigarettes, but Harley sat up, reached inside his jacket. Jack stopped what he was doing and put his arms out to his sides, watching her with amusement while she pulled out the pack herself, along with his lighter. She smiled while pulling out a cigarette, placed it between her lips then flipped his lighter open. Jack watched her lighting his cigarette, the way she held the cigarette between her lips,

Agatha nodded. “Fish Mooney. What an unusual name! I love it!”

Jack laughed. “She has a bartender named Kermit.”

Agatha chuckled. “Once you have your control more firmly in place, I might have to go down there and meet all these aquatic new friends of yours.”

Jack chuckled watching his wife his cigarette before she placed the filtered burning stick between his lips. He took a long drag on the cigarette winking at Harley before he replied.

“Why not just come with us tonight?” Jack lifted a brow at his aunt. “I’m sure Frost would enjoy having you there.” He grinned as Frost winced almost imperceptibly.

Agatha smiled. “Well, if you don’t mind, I would love to do some dancing.” She grinned at Frost who again blushed.

Jack laughed. “Good. Anyway, Harley and I thought it would be fun to do some shopping for tonight AND we are meeting Jason downtown for more specialized purchases.”

Jack let the smoke burn in his lungs while rolling his window in the backseat down. Once it was down, he blew the smoke out.

Agatha glanced to the side. “Jason...Jason...he’s the dark haired young man, the handsome one with the very serious eyes.”

“One and the same.” Jack smiled. “He had a place for us to go so he will be meeting us later.”

Agatha smiled. “Cute young man.”

Frost frowned, but Agatha squeezed his knee. “Don’t worry big boy, you’re my plaything. I don’t like them too young--then you have to teach them everything.”
Jack and Harley both snickered at the blush that crept across Frost’s face.

* 

Rather than going into the main shopping area of downtown Gotham, their small group was heading toward Blüdhaven where they could go shopping for clothing and where they would later meet up with Jason for their more “specialized” shopping needs.

Their first stop was clothing shopping. Their group was heading toward Blüdhaven’s up and coming central business district where there was a revival in the Blüdhaven commercial area with new businesses coming in (not just chain department stores), but local businesses were making a comeback as well.

An entire street in Blüdhaven along the area called The Spine was being populated by trendy coffee shops, bookstores, wine bars and special clothing stores that all catered to shoppers who wanted a trendy Gotham shopping experience without the heavy crowds and expense. For Jack and Harley, the added bonus was that shopping in Blüdhaven made it less likely they would run into Bruce or that Jack would be noticed quite as readily.

The shop they were headed to was one that Jack had found online called “Neutral Territory.” Jack had liked the name, but he had also liked the clothing they had shown online. Neutral Territory dealt in trendy clothing, but also carried an array of offbeat, new designers as well as local designers.

As Frost pulled the car up to the curb, they saw the shop was a small place that occupied the bottom floor of an old brick building that dated back to at least the early 20th century. The front had been trimmed with wood and painted in black and white, with large new windows and a glass door that had the name stenciled across the front. There were large pots outside filled with purple pansies.

Jack grinned. “Oh I like the look of this place.”

Agatha nodded. “Agreed. You always did have good taste...better than Bruce, I must say. He tends to go for the classics granted, but you were never afraid to experiment Jackie. You always had much more of your mother in you than Bruce. Bruce is a great deal like Thomas.”

Jack frowned slightly at the mention of his brother, but he only responded with a low. “Bruce never was one to wear a lot of color.”

Agatha laughed. “No, no he wasn’t, even before your parents were gone...Bruce was always a solemn little boy while you were always the vibrant one.” For a moment Agatha grew quiet, her thoughts drifting into the past, remembering two little boys, always close, like night and day though. Bruce always trying to squash Jack’s much more vibrant nature...as if Bruce were afraid of Jack...of what kind of person Jack was. For a moment she wondered if Bruce was right to be afraid. Look where Jack was now. Working his way through Gotham’s criminal underworld. It made her wonder where Jack would stop, and would he stop? If he managed to put himself at the top, would Jack be content? She had to wonder if deep down, this was Jack’s way of dealing with his parents’ death...if you can’t beat the type of world that took their parents...then join them, crush them and take control of them.

Agatha shook her head slightly, dislodging those thoughts. She had served as part of that underworld Jackie was trying to control. Did she really have any right to question him...maybe she didn’t, not after everything...

“Well kiddies, what are we waiting for?” Agatha asked as she pushed her door open. Frost quickly jumped from the car and hurried around to get her door, causing Agatha to laugh. Jack opened his
own door, sliding out and taking Harley’s hand, drawing her from the car and into the circle of his arms.

Harley giggled wrapping her arms around his neck. “Hey puddin.”

Jack grinned rubbing his nose against hers. “Hey sweets.”

They stared into each others eyes, Jack’s arms snug around her, Harley's arms around his neck.

Jack whispered softly so only Harley could hear. “I want to give you the world Harley.”

Harley brushed his lips with hers. “I only want you Jack.”

He smiled tenderly and kissed her, his tongue caressing hers. Harley made a small noise of want, pressing closer when Agatha cleared her throat.

“We’re on a public sidewalk kids. I mean I’m all for public displays of affection and a little public sex can be fun...But...”

Jack chuckled brushing Harley’s nose with his own before turning, making sure to take Harley’s hand in his gloved one. “Sorry Auntie. Let’s go!”

*

The inside of the shop was warmly lit, the ceiling covered in balls that looked like bubbles to Harley. The bubbles were a series of lights ranging in size from a golf ball to as large as a basketball, all hanging from long silver poles and providing a soft white light. The floors were a shade of warm vanilla tile that created a comfortable atmosphere when mixed with the cushioned chairs and couches that were scattered throughout the room. The walls were a soft shade of grey and held a vast assortment of clothing: from a wall that was only shoes, to racks of men’s jackets, dress shirts and slacks, to circular racks of dresses and headless grey mannequins wearing brightly colored spring dresses to darker, more sensual lines of evening dresses. There were even tables loaded with a rainbow of stockings, socks and ties.

There was a single young man working the store. Tell, almost skeletal thin with bleached blonde hair, he wore a white and gold trimmed suit. He approached them with a smile full of bleached white teeth.

“Hello!! My name is Lance! Welcome to Neutral Territory--how can I help you today?”

Agatha spoke up, pulling her sunglasses off at the same time. “Your best bet Lance honey, is to just stay out of our way and let the professional shoppers shop. You can ring us up at the end. I hope you work on commission sweetie because we are about to make your day.”

Lance looked stunned which was swiftly followed by a grin. “Can I offer you all some coffee?”

Agatha laughed. “As long as I can spike it dear, yes you can.”

Jack grinned as he stood in the front of the store holding Harley’s hand. “Now this looks fun.”

Harley giggled. “Well I already see something I want you to wear.”

Jack grinned at his wife with a single lifted brow. “Oh?”

Harley dragged him over to a wall where several men’s jackets hung, but her eyes were on one particular jacket, a slim cut black jacket with eight large ornate silver buttons that ran up the front of
the jacket. The shoulders had a point to them and the sleeves would end just above the wrist, so that the cuffs of the dress shirt would show. Harley grabbed the jacket, then hurriedly found a white dress shirt. From the dress shirts, she scampared over to the tie table with an amused Jack following behind her. Here, sucking on her bottom lip in concentration, Harley searched until she found the tie she liked, a white and black diagonally striped tie with thin lines of purple running parallel to the sides of the black lines. She next pulled out a pair of slim cut black slacks from a rack, before hurrying over to the sock table and chose a pair of purple and black striped socks. Jack watched her bustling about the store, her arms full, putting together an outfit for him. It was not only adorable, watching her dash about, the look of concentration on her face, but it made him love her just a little more, if that were even possible he thought, the way she was putting so much effort into dressing him...He couldn’t keep the grin off his face.

* 

Agatha glanced over watching the two of them. She smiled, content at the moment. No matter what she might fear for Jack’s future, he had Harley and there was no denying that Harley loved Jack more than anything in the world. She sighed again

Frost frowned as he leaned a little towards her. “You okay Agatha?”

Frost was maintaining a proper distance from Jack and Harley to allow them to have some privacy while at the same time keeping an eye on them while he also moved through the store with Agatha. She enjoyed his company and trusted him with her nephew’s safety.

“Maybe I should put together an outfit for you as well.” She gave Frost a wink which caused the tall man to turn several shades of red while Agatha walked over to Lance. “Sweetie, sugar mama here needs to buy her toy a suit, something that shows off all his assets.”

Lance gave Frost a once over. “Oh, I have just the thing!”

Frost turned even brighter red, the tips of his ears burning, but he was smiling.

* 

Harley was standing in front of the wall of shoes, her forefinger pressed to her lips while she examined the shoes, her other arm holding the clothing she had picked out for Jack. She was looking for just the right pair of shoes to go with the outfit she had put together from the vast array of shoes offered by the shop. She hadn’t noticed that Jack had walked over to the women’s clothing and had only just walked back to her, with a dress draped across his arm.

“How’s the shoe hunting going pumpkin?” Jack asked as he stepped up beside her. He glanced sideways at her with a smile, admiring her profile. Her nose was wrinkled in concentration and her blue eyes were slightly narrowed. She looked adorable, which made him want to toss her up against the wall and pull her panties down...lifting that dress up....Jack shook his thoughts clear...plenty of time for that before heading over to the club tonight. He chuckled softly to himself turning his attention back to the wall of shoes. Harley tapped her lips, unaware of Jack’s lustful gaze while she examined the shoes. “Well, I have it narrowed down between these...” she pointed at a pair of silver and black two tone wingtips. “And these...” A pair of purple and black shaded point-toed triple strapped monk shoes.

Jack tilted his head examining the shoes and smiled. “I like them both.”

Harley turned to look at him. “Me too--that’s the problem.”
Jack nodded. “Let’s just get both.” Jack chuckled. “A person can never have too many pairs of shoes.”

Harley giggled turning to reach for the shoes when she noticed the dress across her husband’s arm. “Jack?”

He grinned brightly, clearly pleased with himself as he held up the dress. It was a short, sleeveless dress that was half black, half white and instead of a straight line dividing the two colors, there was a delicate curve that didn’t quite make it to the middle of the dress. The dress also had a thick black belt that would accentuate her waist.

Harley grinned. “Oh Jack, it’s gorgeous.”

Jack’s lips curled into a smile as he tilted his head examining the dress. “No it isn’t, really, but once you are in the dress, it will be absolutely stunning.”

Harley blushed while Jack stepped over to the rows of women’s shoes. He frowned, narrowing his eyes until he saw the pair he liked. He reached forward and grabbed a pair of black suede, ankle-strapped peep toes, with a structured heel cup and little lace ties. He turned, holding the shoes up.

“What do you think pumpkin?”

Harley smiled. “I think you have excellent taste puddin.”

Jack chuckled. “I picked you didn’t I? I have amazing taste.”

Harley blushed, the two of them heading over to where Agatha was holding up a pink tie against Frost’s cheek. Frost glanced over to Jack and Harley with a look that was clearly a plea for help.

Agatha grinned happily. “Ah, perfect! I need your help! I’m trying to convince this young man to wear more color, but he keeps insisting that he is a bodyguard and looking colorful wouldn’t work for him. I said...bullshit. Just look how like this pink looks against his skin!” Agatha held the tie up to Frost’s cheek once more.

Jack lifted a brow. “Well, you know Frost darling, she does have a point. You do look good in pink.”

The look of defeat on Frosts face was funny enough that Jack and Harley started to laugh as Agatha turned to Lance. “Ring us up sweetie!”

* *

They left the store, bags in hand with Jack pulling out his phone as soon as they were settled in the back. Harley laid her head against his shoulder as Jack hit a number on the phone. It only rang twice before it was answered.

“Jason here.”

“Jason! Darling! We’re all done. Now where are you exactly?” Jack put his arm around Harley squeezing her to his side.

“Hey Boss! I’m at Avalon Heights, the store is called “Yesteryear.” It's part of an old apartment building, the outside is trimmed in green and with gold lettering. It's on the corner of Seymour and Temple. Can’t miss it Boss.” Jason sounded excited to be helping Jack and Harley with something, even if it was something as simple as some shopping.
Jack smiled brightly. “Thank you, darling boy. Will you be waiting out front?”

“Sure thing Boss. There’s a coffee shop just down the street--want me to grab everyone some coffee?” Jason asked. Jack liked the fact that Jason was just being nice, that the young man had no alternative motives than to simply be helpful. He had heard Jason say on more than one occasion that this gang was his family and that family was important. Jack understood that completely...because family wasn’t who you were related to by blood--it was who you chose to bind yourself with…

“Sure Jason that sounds great. I’ll pay you back.” Jack began, but Jason cut him off. “No, no, Boss, this is my treat, don’t worry.”

Jack thought about arguing, but decided not to. He would repay Jason in another way, maybe a nice pair of gloves, or boots, or a pistol...

“All right darling, here are the orders…”

*  

The antique shop was exactly where Jason has said it would be. It also looked exactly as Jason said it would, but the main reason that they found the place was simply that they all saw Jason sitting outside the little shop. He was sitting at a small wooden table and chair just outside the shop, his legs crossed, dressed all in black except for the blood red jacket he wore. His hair was slicked back except for a lock of dark hair that refused to stay in place. On the table were four large to-go coffee cups. Jason had a cup in his hand, but he looked to be drinking a large purplish pink bubble tea.

Harley leaned over to look more clearly through her passenger window at the store. “You didn’t tell me we were going antique shopping puddin?” Jason saw the car and waved at them. Frost responded with a simple wave of his own.

Jack smiled glancing over as Frost pulled the car around and headed down an alley before he took another turn around to the back of the shop where there were several several parking places lined along the asphalt.

“We aren’t. I said specialized purchases and that is exactly what we are going to do.” Jack grinned mischievously. Harley gave her husband a curious look, but he did not elaborate further.

The four of them exited the vehicle, with Jack taking his wife’s hand in his; the feel of his leather glove sliding between her fingers made Harley smile. She squeezed his hand. Jack’s black outlined eyes rolled sideways to gaze at her and he gave her a soft, tender smile, bringing her hand up to kiss her bare knuckles as their little group walked down the alley and around the corner to the front of the shop where Jason waited. He was standing up and smiled when he saw them.

“Hey guys! Got everyone’s coffee right here!” Jason motioned to the table.

Jack walked over putting an arm across Jason’s shoulders. “Thank you darling!”

Jason looked pleased as he turned and quickly handed out the coffees. “Anderson is inside waiting for us,” he said as he reached for the door and pulled it open.

A soft chime sounded as Jason held the door for everyone.

The inside of the shop was dimly lit, while the voice of Fred Astaire could be heard drifting through the shop as Harley looked around in wonderment. The place looked exactly how an antique store looked in every movie Harley had ever seen where the main characters have to go find some exotic object that can only be purchased by a strange old man. There were ancient clocks, pictures, vases,
strange little figurines, plates, dolls—the array of “things” seemed endless. The shelves seemed to stretch the entire length of the store, which also included antique furniture: chairs, tables, sofas, and some pieces of furniture Harley didn’t have names for. But while the shop itself looked exactly what an antique store should look like, the man running the place didn’t look a thing like what Harley thought the owner of such a place would resemble.

While Harley was thinking that the owner had to be an old man, instead she was greeted by a much younger man.

Jason walked to the back where there was a long counter that divided the store from the back of the shop. Standing by the register was a man, tall, maybe around thirty, Harley couldn't be sure, with short, curly red hair and blue eyes. He wore a white short sleeved button down shirt that was snug enough that the garment showed off the fact that Anderson clearly hit the gym more than once, and a pair of khaki slacks. He looked more as if he should be on a California beach than in an antique store in Blüdhaven.

He smiled and extended his hand out to Jack. “So I hear you are friends of Jason?”

Jason smiled. “Anderson and I grew up in the same orphanage and later we were put in the same foster home together, so Anderson is kinda like my big brother.”

Anderson chuckled. “I am your big brother.”

Jack shook Anderson’s hand liking the fact that he had a firm handshake. “Pleasure to meet you Anderson. This beautiful creature is my wife Harley, my Aunt Agatha and my friend and bodyguard Frost.”

Anderson nodded to everyone though he took and kissed both Harley’s and Agatha’s hands. “The pleasure is all mine. So what can I help you find today Mr. Wayne?”

Jack’s grin was wicked and adorable, thought Harley as Jack said softly. “Well, we are interested in some of your more...deadly acquisitions.”

* *

While Jack was speaking with Anderson, Harley’s eyes were drawn to a glass case that stood next to the register against the wall. It was an antique case filled with rings, necklaces and some other pieces of jewelry. Her eyes had found the perfect gift for Jack. Lying on a blanket of black velvet was a pocket watch. The watch was made of some sort of black shiny metal, the cover of which was decorated with laughing skulls and petal shaped openings that allowed one to see the inner workings of the watch, a soft buttery bronze coloring for the gears and springs. The watch had a long chain attached to it. Harley gazed at the watch, her mouth slightly open as she took a breath in thought. It was simply beautiful she decided. Harley could see Jack wearing this, the chain across his stomach when he wore one of his three pieces suits. Just the thought of Jack wearing the watch made her shiver with delight. She smiled brightly; her puddin had to have it.

She had just glanced up when she realized that Anderson was lifting a section of the counter to escort them through when Agatha whispered from beside her. “See something you like?”

Harley hadn’t realize that she had let go of Jack’s hand and stepped closer while the men were talking. She jumped slightly; Agatha could moved extremely quietly.

The older woman smiled. “It’s a gorgeous watch.”

Harley nodded. “It would look fantastic on Jack.”
Agatha smiled. “It would. You should get it for him.”

Harley glanced over to Jack where he, Jason and Frost were talking to Anderson, but they hadn’t actually started to move toward the back. “How am I going to do that without Jack knowing?”

Agatha pressed her lips together in thought, then smiled. “You let me take care of that sweetie.”

The men had started to move to the back of the store when Agatha turned to Harley and gave her a little shove. “You better go. Jackie will be upset if he doesn’t have you beside him.”

Harley giggled and hurried back over to her husband. Jack immediately took her hand, kissed the tips of her fingers.

*  

Anderson led their small group through a doorway and to the back room which looked like a typical break room with an old table, a few chairs, a small refrigerator, a microwave, coffee maker, and some cabinets. But instead of stopping here, Anderson led them through yet another doorway.

“Jason tells me that you are...starting a new business venture,” Anderson said to Jack in a conversational tone as he held open the door for them. “He thought that if you like what I have to offer here, that perhaps we could come to a more permanent arrangement. I’m still working my way up the ladder, so to speak. I would like to move my business to Gotham and I need not just financial backing, but I would also like to build a list of clients. To do that I need word of mouth. Jason thought if you like my wares and services, that perhaps you might consider bringing me in as a more permanent supplier.”

Jack glanced at Jason. Jason looked only a little nervous as he murmured. “Anderson is one of the best at what he does Boss. You’ll see.”

Jack grinned and gave a small pat to Jason on the back. “I trust you Jason.”

Jason smiled but he looked unsure, there was something about the way that Jack had said he trusted the younger man that also communicated a...threat...not to disappoint him.

They walked through a short hallway in desperate need of paint to arriving at yet another door. This door had a security pad beside it and, if Jack wasn’t mistaken, a retinal scan. Anderson swiftly punched in a code before he leaned close and sure enough, a red beam of light scanned the man’s right eye before the door made an audible click and a pop of a door unsealing.

Anderson stepped aside once more pushing the door open with a smile.

The room beyond was not at all what Harley was expecting. The room was lit in much the same way as the front of the shop, with a warm and inviting luminosity, but while the front of the shop was filled with the treasures of days gone by, this room had nothing but the most modern of weapons on display.

The room’s walls were lined from floor to ceiling with blue light display cases of weapons. One wall was exclusively handguns, another was rifles, and another wall was strictly knives. There were so many weapons--many Harley had never seen, not even in movies--that it was almost too much to take in. She squeezed Jack’s hand as they both looked around.

Jack giggled. “Oh, this is perfect.”

Anderson walked over to the middle of the room where a long table sat and threw his arms out.
“Welcome to Anderson’s Collectibles.”

Jack’s lips were pursed in awe as he turned around slowly. “I feel like a kid at Christmas.”

Harley whispered. “They’re so beautiful!”

Agatha swallowed with a whispered, “Damn.”

Frost grinned. “Shit.”

Jason smiled.

Anderson grinned clearly pleased with himself. “I’m not sure what weapons you prefer Mr. Wayne, Mrs. Wayne, but I would very much like to recommend a Glock 26 and one of my favorites, a Heckler & Koch P30L. Though the Glock 34 is a very nice weapon too.”

Anderson walked over to the many weapons on display to take down the two pistols from the display of sidearms that spanned across an entire wall. He turned and walked over, handing the Glock to Jack and the Heckler & Koch to Harley.

“Recontoured grips. Flared magwell for easier reloads.” Anderson smiled like a proud father. “It’s a real nice weapon.”

Jack held the weapon up aiming at the wall, his blue eyes looking down the barrel with a wide smile on his lips. He tried a few different positions with the pistol, flowing quickly from one to the other demonstrating that Jack knew his way around a gun. Harley watched him for a moment, licking her lips and dragging her teeth over her bottom lip, shifting her hips and pressing her legs together as a hot spike of lust raced through her while watching Jack with the gun.

Jack grinned as he aimed the weapon at the wall, then pointed its barrel at the floor. “I like it.”

He released the magazine then quickly reloaded it. He performed a fancy twirl with the weapon before he set the gun down. “Yes, definitely want that one. How do you feel about yours Harley? I want you to try the Glock too.”

Harley, who had finally torn her gaze away from lusting after her husband, was holding the H&K up, her elbows slightly bent keeping the weapon close just like Jack had taught her. She was smiling, enjoying the feel of the weapon in her hands as she sighted down the barrel.

“It feels good puddin. I like it.”

Jack turned back to Anderson. “What else do you recommend?”

* * *

While Jack and Harley were working with Anderson, Frost was standing over by the pistols, his eyes on a Salient Arms International Glock 17. Agatha came up beside him and put her arm around his waist.

“That’s a nice weapon. How about I get it for you?” Agatha purred against his ear.

Frost blushed. “I don’t...you just bought me a suit Agatha.”

She grinned. “Sweetie, I like buying you things.”

“I don’t want you to think that’s the only reason I’m with you Agatha.” Frost said with genuine
concern, but the older woman simply laughed. “Oh sweetie! I know that! But let a woman indulge herself and buy you a few gifts. Makes me happy.”

Frost turned a little to look at her more fully in the eyes. “Let me ge….”

She didn’t let him finish as she pressed her lips to his mouth. She kissed him softly, but firmly then leaned back enough to grin dragging the tip of her fingernail along the lobe of his ear as she hissed, her breath warm and tickling. “Shh...You can make it up to me when we get home later tonight. I have some vibrating anal beads, bondage restraints as well as a set of very interesting cock rings we can try.”

Frost’s eyes widened, his cheeks flushing a brilliant shade of red that ran all the way to the tips of his ears. Agatha laughed with pleasure. “You didn’t think those things were invented by your generation did you sweetheart?”

* 

Jason was standing nearby picking up guns, examining them and putting them back. He stopped at a pair of M1911 pistols. The pair were silver stainless steel with red enameled grips. He picked them up holding them out, twirled them on his fingers, aiming swiftly at different parts of the room. Jason grinned gazing at the weapons in his hands like he had just found a long lost lover. A well-balanced lover capable of unleashing some quick violence.

* 

Jack was grinning as he held a larger weapon in his hands while Anderson was explaining. “This is an AR-15, 11.5-inch. Compensated with an ion-bonded bolt carrier. Trijicon accupoint with 1-6 magnification. And that one…” He pointed over to Harley who was holding a large rifle against her shoulder. Her blue eyes were narrowed as she aimed at the wall playing with the loading mechanism at the same time. “That’s a Benelli M4. Custom bolt carrier release and charging handle. Textured grips, should your hands get... wet. An Italian classic.”

Harley giggled. “Oo! Try this one puddin!! It feels so powerful!”

The two of them traded weapons with Jack taking the Benelli cocking a brow in surprise as he held it up. “Oh I do like this one.”

Harley held the AR-15 and Jack’s grin became more seductive as he hissed. “Mm...you, that gun...and nothing else.”

Harley giggled blushing.

Jack set the gun down with a smile. “Now, show me what you have in regards to blades Anderson.”

Anderson grinned. “Allow me show you these.”

The antique and arms dealer walked over to the wall display of blades, but instead of taking one or two down from the display, Anderson crouched down where Harley only now noticed were several long cabinet drawers. He pulled one of the long drawers out where Harley could see several blades resting in pillows of black velvet, but along the center of the cabinet drawer were several long, wooden cases. He pulled one of these out, lifting it and resting it across his arm before he walked with the case over to the table in the middle of the room where Jack and Harley were standing.

He set the case down and opened it, pulled the lid which divided into two; the case unfolded into two side panels that displayed a series of knives on three levels. In the bottom layer, as Harley looked
down, she saw were several beautiful bowie knives, the other two display layers held diver’s knives, and a series of switchblades.

“These are all freshly stoned,” Anderson explained with a bright smile.

Jack had a soft grin on his face, his eyes dancing with delight like a child at Christmas as he reached down and picked up one of the knives, a Bowie knife with a 12 inch blade. The long, slightly curved silver blade caught the light, which made the blade glimmer. Jack held it up, admiring not just the shape, but also the color of the blade. He laid the blade across the pads of his fingers, holding it out in front of him, his smile widening as Anderson said softly, in the tones of a man in church being moved by the spirit of God. “She is perfectly balanced.”

Jack just stared at the blade. “I’ll take it.”

Jack turned to Harley with a smile as he easily rolled the blade with his fingers before handing it hilt first back to Anderson. “Now, one for my sweets.”

Jack took her hand and tugged her closer to him, putting his arm around her waist while with his other hand he presented the blades like a game-show host. “All right sweets--which one do you like?”

Harley gazed at all the blades with her teeth tugging at her bottom lip. Each one was beautiful, all elegant and deadly. After a moment or two of contemplation, she reached out for one of the divers knives. She held it up to examine. The blade caught the light much the same way that Jack’s blade had done, but while Jack’s blade had a more powerful feel to it, this blade was shorter, making Harley feel that it was one to be hidden, used in secret...she smiled brightly, like a surprise.

Anderson smiled and gestured at the blade in her hand. “That’s a 420 stainless steel blade with an easy rubber grip and it comes with a red sheath and straps so you can strap it on your arm, leg, or just about anywhere you want to conceal a weapon.”

Jack rested his chin on Harley’s shoulder, both arms wrapped around her waist, his breath warm against her ear. “You like it baby?”

Harley grinned. “Oh, I like it.”

Jack smiled and glanced over at Anderson while keeping his chin on Harley’s shoulder. “Anderson, how would you feel about becoming the Red Hood’s exclusive weapons supplier?”

Anderson glanced at Jason who was nodding his head with enthusiasm, then back at Jack. “I...I would love it Mr. Wayne. I do have a large quantity of product that I would like to move. Are you sure you want to purchase so much?”

Jack stood up and reached across the table, taking Anderson’s hand with a firm nod. “Let’s see about getting you set up in Gotham shall we?”

Anderson shook Jack’s hand excitedly. “Thank you Mr. Wayne.”

Jack’s smile spread across his face. “Call me Jack.”

* 

The sun had gone down hours ago and the moon was high in the sky as Jack took a breath through his nose trying to be as still as possible while Harley applied his eyeliner.
Harley frowned narrowing her eyes at him, her breath a whisper as she whispered. “Don’t move.”

Jack chuckled softly. “I have to breathe sweets.”

“Not while I’m doing your eyeliner you don’t,” Harley said with a slight frown as her hand slowly outlined his eye.

Jack grinned. “Okay sorry, no breathing.”

Harley glared at him. “Stop looking cute.”

Jack’s grin expanded. “I can’t.”

Harley pressed her lips together trying not to smirk at her husband while she worked.

He was careful not to move, but he kept glancing down at Harley’s breasts which seemed to be close to bursting out of the top of the dress he had picked for her. He couldn’t wait to get home tonight and unzip her dress just to watch her breasts break free. He licked his lips at the thought of smearing his lipstick across her nipples when Harley hissed.

“Stop licking your lips puddin, you’re going to ruin your lipstick.”

Jack stuck his bottom lip out. “You’re no fun.”

“I’m lots of fun, but I put a lot of work into making you look extra hot, so don’t ruin it.” Harley sat back tilting her head and smiling as she admired her work.

Jack sat back. “How do I look?”

“Good enough that I don’t want to share.” Harley giggled setting aside the eyeliner and taking his hands to inspect his fingernail polish to make sure he hadn’t smeared any of it.

“Ready Harls?” Jack asked.

Harley brought his hand up and kissed his knuckles. “Yep.”

Jack stood tugging her up with him. “I’m going to kiss you, lipstick be damned,” he whispered, his gaze roaming over her face. Jack pulled her close, his lips brushing hers before he flicked his tongue out to kiss her. Harley responded with a soft groan, pressing her body up against his. Jack purred.

“Before we leave tonight, I do have a gift for you.”

Harley blushed. “That’s funny! I have one for you too.”

Jack chuckled. “Okay, you go get yours and I’ll get mine.”

They parted for a moment both returning in moments and each holding a box. Harley handed hers to Jack, a black, square box tied with a red bow and Jack handed his to her, a long, dark blue box tied with a silver bow. They both looked at each and Jack grinned.

“Open at the same time?” he asked.

Harley giggled and nodded. Together they opened their boxes.

Jack let out a soft gasp when he saw the pocket watch nestled in a bed of black velvet. “Oh Harls!” He pulled it out to hold the watch up. “This...this is beautiful Harley. I love it!”
Harley smiled at Jack, then gasped when she opened her box. Resting on a bed of blue velvet was a gold chain. The long, fine gold chain ended with two gold balls and two gold rings. Harley held it up. It was beautiful, certainly, but she was a little confused as to what it was exactly.

Jack, who had just put his watch in his pocket excitedly took the chain from her.

“Now sweets, this is both beautiful and functional. You wrap it around your wrist like this…” Jack wrapped it around her wrist. The chain looked lovely against her skin. Jack brushed his fingers over her skin and across the chain as he whispered. “Beautiful and deadly...like you.”

He demonstrated with nimble fingers how to swiftly unwrap the chain from around her wrist. Then he moved quickly. Before Harley had registered his movement, Jack was behind her and had whipped the chain around her neck, grabbing the other end of the pair of gold beads, his middle fingers slipping through the rings and he pulled. Not tight enough to hurt her, but snug enough that if she moved the chain would press into her throat.

“It's a lovely bracelet that turns into a garrote, my sweets. A little secret weapon. A little extra protection for my pumpkin.” Jack cooed next to her ear.

Harley smiled leaning back into Jack who ran his tongue over her ear. Harley’s breath quickened, her heart hammering in her chest as he pulled back on her just a little, his eyes wandering down from her throat to her breasts, pressing against her dress. Harley made a little moan of want when Jack’s phone rang. For a moment neither one of them moved. But on the third ring Jack slowly eased the garrote away from her throat. He stepped around his wife, taking her wrists and tenderly wrapping the lovely, strong chain back around her slender wrist before he reached over for his phone where it lay on the table without looking and picked it up.

“Jack,”

“Downstairs Boss,” Frost replied.

Jack smiled. “Be right there.”

He hung up the phone. “Our ride is here sweets.”

Harley sighed, but she was grinning. “Let’s go see if Fish has made the right choice.”

Jack laughed. “Yes, let’s.”

*

They headed downstairs and out of the building to where Frost was waiting. Tonight he wasn’t in his car, but in a car that Agatha had recently purchased, a black Porsche Panamera. Frost hopped out wearing a new black suit and a pink tie.

He smiled holding the door open for Jack and Harley. “Hey Boss, looking good.”

Jack chuckled. “I love the tie.”

Frost blushed. “Well...ah...yeah.” Jack held Harley’s hand easing her into the car before he followed. His aunt, sitting in the front seat, turned and grinned. “Hey you two love birds, don’t you both look fantastic!”

Jack and Harley both smiled, but Jack motioned at his aunt. “Looking hot there auntie.”
Agatha was dressed in a long sleeve, snug red dress, the skirt of which hit just above her knees. The
dress had a bateau neckline with a silver accent at the shoulder that tugged the dress across her
breasts in a rather flattering way, and another silver accent that pulled the dress across her hips, again
highlighting the older woman’s hourglass figure, along with a pair of white, strappy peep toe sandals
that accentuated the shape of her legs.

Jack gave his aunt a wolf whistle and a chuckle. “Not sure how well Frost is going to perform his job
tonight with you looking like that.”

Agatha grinned. “You like the dress? I wasn’t sure about the color, but I thought “fuck it, be bold or
go home.””

Harley smiled. “You look beautiful--doesn’t she Frost?”

Frost blushed and nodded. “Yeah, she does.”

* * *

They arrived at the club a little while later to see that just like the night before, the place was busy.
Frost parked the car around back and the four of them headed inside. The music, Janelle Monáe’s
“Make Me Feel” was playing loudly with dancers gyrating on the dance floor and the lights flashing
back and forth. Their small group headed toward the bar where Kermit, dressed in a little leather
black skirt, fishnets, combat boots along with a white dress shirt and a bright neon green tie, waved
at them and pointed over to the left over her head. She shouted with a smile. “Fish is over that way.
Hey, I got Cherry Cheesecake shots on special tonight! You guys wanna try them?!”

Jack glanced at Harley who nodded while Agatha grinned cheekily. “Oh shots!”

Jack gave a thumbs up shouting back. “Sounds good!”

Kermit gave a thumbs up in response as the four of them headed over to meet with Fish.

* * *

Fish was sitting at her table which was covered tonight in a deep blood red table cloth. She was
nursing a Mai Tai her eyes on a young man, dark skin, bald, shirtless in a pair of tight leather pants
who was dancing to the music in a way that was just short of pornographic. The young man had his
eye on her too, the two of them flirting across the room. She grinned, the flirtation putting her in a
good mood despite the few patrons she could see that were under the influence of that new party
drug, “Giggles.”

Giggles had been making the rounds of her club and a few others that she had heard about, for the
last few weeks, but she had seen a steady increase in the number of young people showing up to her
club under the influence of this new drug. No deaths, yet...at least none that she knew about, but she
figured it was only a matter of time. It’s what always happened with new narcotics, even the “best”
synthetic drugs. The drug was one of the reasons she had decided that putting her lot in with the Red
Hood was a good idea...she hoped that Jack Wayne might not only get her out from under Maroni’s
thumb, but he might help her with this problem as well. She was smart enough to know that she
needed help in getting rid of the pusher who was bring this new drug not only into her club, but into
the neighborhood. Panessa hadn’t taken her request for assistance seriously...hell, he had practically
laughed at her.

It wasn’t that Fish had anything against drugs, she didn’t but there was something about this new one
that rubbed her wrong...it was dangerous and it was only a matter of time before….Fish shook her
head clearing her thought. The fact of the matter was that she needed someone to help stop this
drug... not just simply by getting rid of the pushers, but with finding the source of this new drug and
maybe stopping it all together.

Fish sighed and reached out for her drink, her eyes momentarily drifted away from the man she had
been watching dance when she saw Jack Wayne. She smiled. She had made her decision last night
after Maroni showed up and she was feeling good about her choice to side with the Red Hood...she
just hoped that decision didn’t come back to haunt her later.

Jack waved. “Good evening Fish.”

Fish smiled and motioned to the seats around her table. “Welcome.”

Jack smiled pulling out a chair for Harley while Frost pulled one out for Agatha, though Frost
stepped back placing himself in such a way to cover them all.

“Fish, let me introduce you to my aunt Agatha.”

Agatha leaned over the table to take Fish’s hand. “Nice to meet you.”

Fish smiled and shook her hand. “I see the Red Hood is clearly a family.”

Jack chuckled. “Yes, maybe just a little.”

Fish nodded her understanding, family was always complicated.

Kermit came only a couple of seconds later with a tray of shots. She grinned bright. “Everyone
enjoy!”

Jack nodded then turned to look at Fish. “So, have you decided or did we waste our time coming
here?”

Fish smiled. “I’ll join and help,” she said. “But I would ask a favor in return.”

Jack lifted a brow in amusement. “A favor? Really…”

Harley laid her hand on Jack’s knee. “Let’s hear her out puddin.”

Jack gazed at Harley then nodded. “Fine,” he said with a nod. He looked back at Fish with a small
smile. “What do you need?”

Fish started to speak. “I…”

As the club owner opened her mouth, they all heard shouting loud enough that it was audible over
the music; several voices were raised followed by the sound of a louder voice. “Hey!! I’m the
Fucking RED HOOD!! You better fucking let me in!”

Jack looked both surprised and amused. “Oh, I have got to go see what that is all about.”

Harley put her hand on his when Jack stood up. “Puddin, you sure about…”

Jack laughed. “I’ll just be a minute pumpkin, you just enjoy your drink with Fish here.”

Jack stood. “Come on Frost, let’s go see what that’s all about.”

Harley watched Jack and Frost head toward the front of the club before she turned back to Fish. Fish
smiled. “I wouldn’t worry too much. Probably just some asshole drunk and being stupid. Heard a rumor about the Red Hood taking over and decided to see how far he could push his luck.” She sipped her drink with a smile.

Harley chuckled picking up one of the shots, along with Agatha who held her drink up. “To new and profitable friendships.”

Fish and Harley both brought their drinks ups, clicking the glasses when a rough male voice said loudly.

“Well just look at that boys, a table full of lovely available women. Who knew a guy like me could be so lucky.”

All three women turned, but it was Fish who hissed through her teeth.

“Maroni.”
The music had just changed to Doja Cat’s “Go To Town” the bouncy and bubbly tune at odds with the thick atmosphere that surrounded the table.

Fish glared over the top of her glass with a hissed, “Maroni.”

“Ah, come on now Fish, babe, don’t say my name like that. You’ll give a guy a complex.” Sal grinned at her, his hand to his chest like he had been wounded before he shifted his gaze to Agatha and Harley. He straightened his tie as he leered at the two women. Harley had been with Jack long enough that she could tell Maroni’s suit was expensive, yet, it had not been tailored to the man, making him look rumpled and cheap. She smirked. You could buy the suit, but it didn’t give you class she thought.

“Now how about you introduce me to your two very beautiful friends here Fish.”

Fish glanced at the two women with an apologetic look before she said, “Agatha and Harley, Sal Maroni.”

Maroni reached out toward Agatha. The older woman put her hand out and Sal took Agatha’s hand, kissed the back of her knuckles as he purred. “Delighted. I do like myself an older one...usually know their way around the bedroom.”

Agatha curled her lip in what might have been a smile, but said nothing.

He lingered on her hand a little too long. “Charmed. Mm...I do like myself a little bit of vanilla too. Something young and fresh.”

Harley’s face twisted into an expression of disgust before she snatched her hand back.

Maroni grinned. “So ladies, has Fish here been telling you anything about our charming little set up or has she decided to be foolish and throw her lot in with the Red Hood?”

Maroni ignored her and motioned with his finger; one of his bodyguards pulled out one of the chairs, choosing the one next to Harley. Maroni sat pulling up his slacks and running a hand over his tie before he directed his attention to the three women.

“Where’s that cute little green hair piece of ass you got working the bar? I need a drink.” Maroni turned to look at the bar.

Fish narrowed her eyes, but she made a motion with her hand toward the bar. Harley followed Fish’s line of sight to the bar where she saw Kermit who had been watching.

The young woman made a face, but quickly set to work.

Maroni smiled and crossed his legs. “All right babe, so here’s the deal. I’ve decided since YOU have decided to be a pain in my side, make me wait, play with my affections...that from now on, your protection fees are going to cost you more--double.”

Harley blanched. “Protection fees? What are you talking about?” She looked between Fish and Sal.

Maroni grinned. “Sweetheart, just shut up and let the adults talk, you keep that pretty mouth of yours
closed, I might let you put those pretty red lips on something else.”

He winked at her licking his lips.

Harley started to move, her hand going to the bracelet on her wrist when Agatha reached out to put a hand on Harley’s arm, stopping her from moving. Harley shot her a disbelieving look, but it was clear from the expression in Agatha’s eye that she was disgusted with the man too, but there was something calculating about the look she was giving Maroni. Harley frowned, but followed Agatha’s lead and waited.

Maroni continued. “So now I’m gonna need twenty-five hundred every week.”

Fish snarled with a shake of her head. “Sal you can’t do that.”

“Why, you think having some Red Hood in charge of the area really changes our little set up? I don’t care if you do decide to throw your lot in with the Red Hood, I still expect to get paid and if the Red Hood has a problem with that…what’s’ he gonna do about it? Eh? The Roman can say all he wants about who’s who and what’s what, but when it comes right down to it, it’s us, those grunts in the streets, the one’s doing the heavy lifting that should get the pay. The Roman sits on his throne, but I’m the one down on the streets doing the work and I say: you still have to pay Fish.” He grinned nastily. “I mean, I really hate to see anything happen to say…your little green haired friend…or say…” He looked around at the same time pulling out a cigar from the inner pocket of his jacket. He pulled out a cigar cutter, snipped off the end before he pulled out a package of matches. “This is a nice place Fish, real nice. Be a shame if something happened to it.”

Fish hissed. “There’s no smoking in here Sal.”

Sal chuckled while he lit up his cigar. “Is that a fact now?”

Harley leaned forward to pick up her drink. She had only sipped the shot of alcohol before Maroni showed up, but now she downed it before she spoke again. “Fish isn’t going to pay you anything.”

That was the moment that Kermit came over with a tray holding a drink. She set a whiskey mash in front of Sal. The mobster grinned and smacked Kermit on the rear as she turned and left. The young woman jumped giving Sal a dirty look before Maroni turned his attention back to Harley.

“Oh, and why is that sweetcakes?” Sal grinned.

Harley smiled. “Because this is Red Hood territory now.”

Jack laughed from behind Maroni. Harley was fascinated in how Jack could sound so sinister when he usually sounded amused. The leader of the Red Hood had stepped up behind the man without him or his guards being aware of Jack until he was right behind the larger man.

Jack put his hands on the back of Maroni’s chair and leaned forward with a little look sideways at Maroni as he spoke.

“I suppose my wife is pretty confident I wouldn’t be happy about it. And you know, she’s right. My girl knows me better than anyone--ain’t that right pumpkin?”

Harley smiled up at Jack. “That’s right puddin.”

Jack chuckled as he shared a look with his wife. “I love the way she calls me puddin.” He leaned around the chair to smile at Maroni from the other side. The older man had gone very still, like a deer in headlights. It was clear the man didn’t know what to do as Jack purred softly. “By the way, I think
you have my seat.”

Sal turned to look at Jack who was leaning around him and smiling brightly. Maroni was surprised at the whiteness and straightness of Jack’s teeth, he realized in the next moment that the man was wearing makeup.

Maroni could just see Frost standing behind him and his own men who looked startled and unsure what to do. They all had their hands on their weapons, but not one of them was drawn. Sal pressed his lips together in annoyance.

One of Maroni’s men started to draw his gun. Frost did the same, but both Jack and Sal motioned their men to stop. Jack walked around Sal with a casual grace, as if he didn’t have a care in the world, to put himself between Harley and Sal.

Jack grinned. “I’m going to say this again, you are in my seat.”

Sal snorted. “Is that a fact? And who the fuck do you think you are? You know, running your mouth like that...gonna get you hurt boy.”

Jack winced. “Ouch...boy? You know Harls?” Jack turned to his wife. “I’m starting to get a little tired of people always trying to take control away from me...first my brother, then school...the asylum...now little punk ass bitches from the mob...you know...it might make a person self-conscious.”

Harley smiled. “That’s true puddin. It could cause someone to have a personality disorder.”

Jack grinned. “See there! And my wife is a doctor! Now...as I was saying...you are in my seat and I really hate bullies. You’re a bully Sal.”

Sal suddenly stood up, standing up fast enough that he knocked his chair back, but Jack, moving like a dancer, easily dodged the chair, keeping his smile on his face the entire time.

Sal hissed. “Who the fuck are you?”

Jack smiled then performed a theatrical bow his feet together and his arms spread out wide as he bowed at the waist. “Why Sal, I’m the Red Hood.”

Sal frowned, then said with a disgusted expression, “Yeah, I’m real scared.”

Jack grinned. “Damn right you’re scared, I can see it in your eyes.”

Sal narrowed his eyes, clearly embarrassed and angry. “All right Red Hood…”

Sal reached for his gun, but Jack laughed stepping close enough that his nose was almost touching Sal’s. “How brave are you Maroni? How sure are you that if we draw our weapons that you are going to walk out of here, eh?”

Sal snarled. “I’m real tired…”

Jack slapped him across the face. Not a punch, but a slap that was filled with enough derision that Harley and the other women at the table winced. Fish blinked and took a drink.

“Draw your gun Sal...go on.” Jack giggled. “Pull it, show everyone what a big man you are...Let’s see if you’re faster than me, eh?” Jack unbuttoned his jacket, flipped its edge back to show the weapon at his hip, the new one he had just purchased. “Come on Sal--how sure are you that you’re
going to be the one to walk out of here?"

Sal started to speak, but Jack slapped him across the face again.

"Maybe Sal, you’re just trying to compensate for something? Daddy issues? Daddy didn’t hug you enough? Or is your dick too small? Worried you can’t satisfy the ladies?"

Jack’s smile was wide, but there was just a slightly manic quality in his tone and in his eyes. Harley was tense, her eyes darting back and forth between Jack and Maroni, waiting as Maroni stared back at Jack. She was tense, but she grinned pressing her teeth into her bottom lip. The potential for violence in the air was palpable, but after a few heartbeats Maroni stepped back with a laugh.

“I like you. You got balls.” Maroni, he patted Jack on the shoulders then acted as if he were dusting him off before he turned motioning for his men to follow them. The four of them stepped away from the table, but Maroni turned.

“This…” He motioned with his finger circling the table and everyone around it. “This...this ain’t over just, so’s ya know...we gots a lot to...work out...Red Hood.”

Maroni smiled then motioned for his men to follow him. Jack didn’t move; his blue eyes were like ice as he watched the other man leave. When he was sure Maroni was gone Jack pulled his seat out and sat, scooting closer to Harley.

“Did he hurt you? Touch you?” Jack took her hand, kissing her knuckles and her fingers before he reached forward and caught the back of her neck to pull her close for a kiss. Harley relaxed into Jack’s touch, kissed him slowly as she reached up to caress his cheek with her fingers. She pulled away and leaned her forehead against his… “He just kissed my hand and said some...nasty thing, that was all.”

Jack glanced over at his aunt and Fish, while keeping his forehead against Harley's; his long fingers caressing the back of his neck.

Fish nodded. “He just came to demand money.”

Jack kissed the tip of Harley’s nose before he sat back, though he kept her hand in his lap. “Money? I thought Falcone made it clear this was our territory now.” Jack brought Harley’s hand up to kiss her knuckles, softly brushing his lips again her skin while he listened to Fish. Harley smiled at her husband. The gesture was sweet, tender; he always made her feel so loved.

Fish snorted. “Maroni doesn’t care about that. See...here’s the deal. I want to believe you, I want to think you are going to come in here and do things different than Panessa. Panessa let Maroni run his little blackmail scam...get protection money from us...Panessa gets a cut, then he doesn't have to deal with us except for the additional money we pay him in rent, profits...sacrificing a bit to Maroni was just business...but Maroni isn’t willing to give that up now that you’re here.”

Jack frowned in thought. “You want us to…”

Fish interrupted him. “No...that could make things worse. No...what I want you to do is to help me with a little drug problem first...then we can discuss Maroni, Because taking care of Maroni is going to take more than blowing up a building...he’s Falcone's family.”

Agatha finished her drink and motioned at Kermit who was keeping an eye on their table. The green haired bartender hurried over.

Agatha grinned. “Can you get me a corpse reviver?”
Kermit grinned and nodded. “Sure thing!” She hurried off.

Agatha glanced at Jack and Harley before she spoke. “Maroni is going to force the issue, probably sooner rather than later honey. You made a fool of him—he isn’t going to let that stand...probably because he does have a tiny cock.”

Harley burst out laughing. She turned and pressed her face against Jack’s shoulder. He chuckled and scooped her over onto his lap.

“Come here, you,” he whispered. Harley wrapped her arms around Jack’s neck as she shifted from her chair to his lap still giggling. Jack wrapped his arm tight around her, holding her close, brushing his nose against her hair.

“Sorry Auntie, continue,” Jack said with a grin.

She smiled. “He isn’t going to do anything too soon I would think. He is going to want to wait, see what he can find out about you, the gang, make you think everything is fine. He is going to look for your weaknesses, so I recommend you build the gang up quickly and definitely take care of Fish’s drug problem. The more people we have on our side, the better.”

Jack nodded turning his attention to Fish. “That’s me, the philanthropist. So, what do you need us to do?”

Fish sat up straight. She smiled a little, clearly pleased with how Jack and the rest of the gang he had with him were listening to her, paying attention to a problem she had tried to take care of on her own, then had tried to get Panessa to take seriously. Now maybe someone would listen and actually do something.

“There is this new party drug called Giggles that has been making the rounds. It’s not like anything I’ve ever seen before...I started seeing it months ago, but it was rare...just some sort of drug that made people extremely...happy. But now there is this new form of it that has been hitting the party scene more recently...it’s still Giggles, but it’s different. The effects are more extreme.” Fish frowned in thought. “You know...I heard about the gas your gang used at the Fashion week heist...good work that, by the way. Of course, my information on what happened at the event wasn’t clear, but you used a gas that caused extreme laughing...at least that’s what I heard.”

Jack nodded. “I did.”

Fish nodded. “Giggles is like that. It causes heightened euphoria, extreme laughing, the skin goes pale...no one has died yet, but I know a few kids have ended up in the hospital. This stuff...whoever is making it, is changing it periodically. It's only a matter of time before there’s a death...that always seems to happen with designer drugs.” Jack was nibbling Harley’s ear while they spoke. Harley giggled leaning into Jack’s attentions trying to talk as she asked. “Where would you suggest...hehe...puddin!...we start?”

Fish smiled. “I think I should introduce you to Big Mama. She might have more information on Giggles than me.”

Harley turned. “Big Mama?”

Fish nodded. “Yes. She owns a low end biker bar down near the water. You can’t miss it; the place has a large neon sign that reads “Enjoy the Fucking View.” I’ll give her a call and arrange for a meeting tomorrow night--does that work?”

Jack grinned. “I am at your disposal Fish, and as a sign of trust, I’m giving you my phone number.”
Fish smiled raising her glass at Jack. “Thank you Mr. Wayne.”

Jack grinned brightly. “Call me Jack.”

The lighting changed a little, dim orange light resembling spotlight twisted around and focused on the club’s stage. A young woman with dark auburn hair style into double victory rolls and wearing a long blue dress walked out on stage. There was a small band behind her, drums, guitars, the usual.

Fish smiled. “New singer I hired, Sheila Sorrell.”

The woman began to sing, a soft, jazzy version of The Cure’s “Love Song.” She sang in a slow and sensual melody.

Jack smiled at Harley. “Wanna dance with me before we leave tonight?”

Harley giggled at her husband. “I thought you would never ask.”

The two of them stood up, with a wave to Fish and Agatha, and walked over to where others had started to dance to the music. Agatha smiled at Frost. “Whaddaya say big boy? Give a lady a dance?”

Frost frowned in worry. The bodyguard didn’t think of himself as a dancer. But then put his hand out to her. “Sure thing.”

Agatha laughed taking his hand. “You are such a romantic Frost honey.”

Fish watched them with a smile, feeling pretty good about her decision. She liked how Jack had handled Maroni, calling out the man’s bullshit, though at the same time she found him frightening. He and his wife Harley were both daring, passionate...volcanic. There was something on the very edge of unstable about the two of them, but Fish supposed they were all slightly unstable, including herself. You had to be to move in the circles that they moved in…

She sighed wishing she had a refill about the time the Kermit showed up, setting Agatha’s drink down so that it would be waiting for her. The green haired bartender brought Fish a fresh drink of her own.

“Thank you Kermit.”

The young woman grinned giving her a salute before heading back over to the bar. Fish sipped her fresh drink with a sigh. She would just give Big Mama a call before closing tonight to set up the meeting. She knew Big Mama would appreciate the help too; the drug was slowly making its way into her world too...Fish didn't know what it was about this drug that set her off so much, but she just knew...this was going to be bad news for Gotham.

*  

Jack pulled Harley into his arms just as the two of them stepped onto the dance floor. “Do you know how to Bolero dance sweets?”

Harley grimaced. “No I don’t puddin. Never even heard of it.”

He grinned. “Don’t worry, just follow my lead. You are naturally graceful toots, you’ll pick it up no problem. Besides I’m not going to do a strict Bolero, so just dance with me Harls.”

Harley blushed. “I’ll always dance with you puddin. Until the end of the world.”
Jack smiled and gently pulled her close. He leaned his forehead against hers, staring into her eyes for a heartbeat before he began to move with the music. He held his back straight and stepped forward with his right foot, his leg pressed along her left, forcing Harley to step back with her left foot out behind her. Jack dipped her just a little smiling at her before he brought her back up into his arms. He stepped to the left, slowly walking her around in a circle.

Jack smiled at her as he leaned her out from him, holding onto her hand. Harley arched with the move, putting her right foot out, arching her left hand over her head as she held onto Jack’s hand. He gently pulled her back, then spun her in a circle before tugging her back into his arms.

They swayed to the music, Jack staring into her eyes.

Harley smiled back and whispered. “I love you.”

Jack chuckled. “I know pumpkin...I love you too.”

He twisted her around, so that one arm was behind her back, her right hand resting on his chest. Jack held her hand that was twisted slightly behind her back, his right hand holding hers. They strutted in a circle, their eyes only for each other, before he pulled her against his side and leaned, for a moment lifting her just slightly off her feet. He set her back down, standing straight before he spun her out again, releasing her hand to reach for the back of her neck. With a gentle gesture, holding the back of her neck,

Jack pulled her around back toward him before he dipped her back, his arm positioned in such a way that he was balancing her shoulder against his arm. Anybody watching would see the strength and grace of Jack Wayne as he easily held her.

Harley put her right arm around him letting Jack dip her back (her trust that he wouldn’t drop her was complete as he dipped her farther back) moving slowly with the music before he brought her back to her feet and walked her around him, never releasing her hand as he did so.

Harley giggled moving slowly with the music as Jack held her out at arm’s length, his eyes dancing as he gazed at her. Harley rolled her hips back and forth, putting pressure on the balls of her feet, took a few steps back from Jack. She smiled brightly, giving him a seductive look from under her lashes. Jack blew her a kiss with his other hand before he gave her hand a tiny pull and she walked back to him, swaying her hips in time with the music. Jack watched the sway of her hips in the snug fitting dress, the way the cloth tugged at her figure.

The singer switched to another song and the transition between music was flawless. Jack responded to the change in tempo by pulling Harley right up against him, forcing his right leg up between hers which caused her skirt to slide up her legs from where the skirt had been just above her knee to riding now around her upper thighs as Jack shoved his thigh higher giving her a very wicked, not the least-bit-sorry look; his smile was mischievous. He pressed her body close to his and began to roll with the music, his hands resting on her hips. The singer had begun a cover of “Kiss Me” by Lola James; her voice was a soft rolling sound that almost seemed to Harley to take control of her, forcing her to move her hips side to side. Jack moved with her, rolling his pelvis with hers, their bodies pressed together intimately. The words of the song were like a caress that Harley felt as well as hearing them, as they seemed to be speaking about her love for Jack.

“You and I

We're not like anybody else

Hold me tight
Cause you don't want nobody else
I'm lost in you
I'm lost and I can't get away from you
I'm lost in you
Even found I would still find my way to you…”
*
Jack held her tightly, so close that their bodies were almost melded. The feel of his leg between hers was erotic. Harley giggled softly, enjoying the way his leg felt between hers. It was exciting and made her way to purr and rub against his leg to increase the heat that was building there.

She licked her lips, glancing down at where Jack’s leg was between hers, then back up at Jack’s mischievous blue eyes. “You’re going to rip my dress.”

Jack purred in response. “I'm planning on ripping it off of you.”

Harley giggled. “You like destroying my dresses?”

He laughed. “I like getting you out of them--I’m just impatient sometimes.”

He stepped out, holding onto her hand, both of them rolling their hips to the music.

“You know what a bachata dance is?” he asked while they continued to let the music move them.

Harley giggled. “I don’t know any dances except the ones you teach me puddin.”

Jack grinned at her and said, “Just follow me Harley.”

“To the ends of the earth puddin,” Harley replied with the same intensity as before.

Jack gazed intently at her. “You and me against the world.”

Harley took a few steps out before Jack pulled her back toward him, his leg taking up the same position between hers again. They shifted side to side, Jack lifting her leg slightly with each aggressive side move. They slowed their movements to just having their bodies pressed together, weaving aggressively side to side.

Jack slid his hand down her back to her hips, his eyes caressing her face. “You are the most beautiful woman in Gotham Harley...in the world…”

Harley giggled, felt her cheeks warm. “Puddin…”

Jack hissed, leaning closer, his hips a breath away from hers. “I want you Harley.”

Harley took in a breath, a combination of a sigh and a moan. “I want you too puddin. I always want you.”

Jack stepped away from her, holding both her hands, the two of them moving their hips with the music, stepping lightly on the balls of their feet and smiled at each other. Jack pulled her close utilizing one hand to spin her around several times before he yanked her toward him, wrapping his arms tight around her. He pressed his hands to her lower back, their pelvises tight together while they
moved to the music. Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders, her hands caressing his hair, over his ears, staring into the depths of his blue eyes.

*

I'm lost in you
I'm lost and I can't get away from you
I'm lost in you
Even found I would still find my way to you
So kiss me like you never have before
Who cares if anyone's here
Kiss me like we own this floor
Kiss me while my body moves with yours
Tonight's ending is no where near
You're my desire give me more

*

Jack brushed his lips against hers, his tongue caressing the outside of her lips. Harley gently grabbed Jack’s hair in her hands, pulling him down to her mouth more firmly. Her tongue met his in a smooth lick that quickly turned into a deep, passionate kiss. Jack pressed her body up firmly against his, deepening the kiss, all thoughts of dancing gone. Harley moaned softly against his mouth as her right leg traveled up his thigh. He grabbed her leg under the knee, lifting it higher, his body leaning into hers.

The song had stopped and Jack eased back from her with a wide smile.

“Ready to go home sweets?” Jack asked softly.

Harley smiled with a firm nod. “Yes.”

*

They four of them walked outside to discover that it was raining.

Agatha laughed. “Oh course none of us have umbrellas.”

Jack chuckled pulling his jacket off and draping it over Harley’s head. “Don’t worry auntie, I don’t think you are bad enough to melt.”

Agatha grinned. “Oh don’t be too sure about that Jackie.”

Agatha gave a raucous cackle as Frost covered her with his jacket. She laughed and wrapped an arm around his waist.

*

Jack and Harley spent the ride home kissing. Jack had pulled her onto his lap, resting a hand against
her breast while they kissed trying to control themselves (since Aunt Agatha was in the car and Jack wasn’t quite ready to fuck in front of his aunt yet.). Harley reached down between them, gently massaging the hard mound of his erection, making it very difficult for Jack not to throw her down onto the back seat and yank her dress up.

Jack purred against her mouth. “You’re very naughty Harley.”

She giggled softly. “So are you!”

Jack growled softly, deep in his throat. “I don’t know how much longer I can wait.”

He brushed his nose against her, squeezing her breast. Harley replied by squeezing him in return. Jack grunted, catching her mouth again and kissing her deeply.

* 

He wanted her so badly by the time they arrived at the apartment building that he wasn’t sure how much longer he could wait for her. She had teased him mercilessly the entire ride home.

When they arrived back at the apartment building, the rain was coming down much heavier than earlier. Frost parked and started to get out, but Jack reached over and squeezed his shoulder.

“It’s fine. We’ll be fine Frost darling. I’m armed and I doubt Maroni will try anything tonight. You just take my auntie here home. I can tell she is wanting to get you home,” he added with a smirk.

Agatha laughed. “Whoa, dear, I’m I that obvious?”

Jack laughed. “You keep looking at him like you want to eat him.”

“I thought you two were too busy trying not to go at it in the back seat to notice what I was doing.” His aunt laughed reaching over to squeeze Frost’s knee. “Well, I do have some new flavored lube to try.” Agatha waggled her eyebrows at the ex-cop which had Frost blushing and Jack groaning. “Too much information!!! My ears are bleeding!”

Agatha laughed. “Oh Jackie really!”

Jack opened the door. “See you both tomorrow. Have a good night.”

Harley waved as Jack pulled her from the car. “Night you guys!”

Agatha waved then grinned at Frost. “Ready for some exercise sweetie?”

Frost grinned. “Oh yeah.”

* 

The rain was coming down steady as Jack, holding Harley’s hand, led her toward the building. They had just started up the stairs when Jack stopped, yanked Harley into his arms and kissed her on the rain soaked stairs. The rain had soaked them both to the skin as Jack turned her around to press her against the stone railing that ran alongside the steps.

He groaned at his lover, “I want you.”

Harley giggled and softly bit his bottom lip. “Right now?”

Jack smiled against her mouth. “Mmm...right now. I can’t wait anymore.”
Harley brushed her wet lips against his. “It’s raining and we’re outside for anyone to see.”

Jack growled. “Good.”

He reached behind her, grabbing the zipper of her dress and dragged it down. Harley giggled, but once he had the zipper pulled down the entire back of the dress, Jack yanked the dress down until it fell to the wet stone steps at her feet. She stepped out of the dress, her arms around his shoulders kissing him hard. Jack ran his hands up her sides; the only thing she was wearing was a black lace thong.

“Harley…” Jack purred tugging at the thong while kissing her.

Harley giggled and arched her head back, the rain running down her skin. Jack hissed with need watching the way the water mixed with the white light from the streetlamps to caress her skin, highlighting the soft curves and strong muscles of his wife. Her nibbles were hard and there were goosebumps racing along her skin. He dropped down into a crouch on the steps, yanking her thong down with him. He glanced up at her and gently lifted her leg to help her step out of the little piece of cloth, running a hand along the back of each leg as he helped her before tossing the thong over his shoulder where the little piece of lace caught on a corner of brick and hung there in the rain. Harley reached back, balancing herself against the stone railing of the steps smiling down at Jack. He grinned watching the way the rain ran down her naked body. He slowly caressed her legs with the tips of his fingers.

Jack pushed one of Harley’s legs up one step, giving her a moment to balance her heel against the stair, exposing her sex to him. The rain ran down her body, dripping off her as she stood there in nothing but her heels now, making him want to drink from her. He glanced up once at her. Harley was watching him, her teeth pressed against her bottom lip, the rain causing some of her hair to stick to her face while other strands fell forward, drops of water running down the long damp locks. She looked so completely beautiful he thought, like a goddess, naked, exposed to the elements...part of the rain, the air...He smiled leaning in to her and pressed his mouth against her exposed sex. Harley let out a loud moan when the warmth of Jack’s mouth covered her. His tongue flicked out against her clitoris, the warmth of his breath, the heat of his tongue in contrast to the cool rain water that was running down her naked body. He slid his hands up her torso, fingertips dancing across a breast, his tongue coiling against her passionately, brushing against her, flicking back and forth across her clitoris until Harley cried out, reaching down with one hand to grab Jack’s hair, her other hand balancing her against the stone behind her.

Jack moaned against her, grabbing her hips with both hands and sucked on her as she came. Harley cried out with a gasp and threw her head back; the sound of her climax mixed with the sound of the rain hitting the steps and the ground.

Jack released her reluctantly, but he needed to be inside her, to feel her warmth surrounding him. He stood up, unbuttoning his slacks at the same time. Harley grabbed at him, ripping at his tie before she grabbed his damp shirt and ripped the shirt open, sending buttons flying and dancing into the night. She ran her hands down his wet chest, attacking his mouth with hers.

Her hands skated down, pushing Jack’s slacks and boxers down, out of her way so she could massage him, feeling the heat from his shaft in her hands.

Jack groaned at her touch. Though her hands were cool from the rain, they were a welcome touch. She squeezed him and Jack sucked in a breath.

“Harley...uh...” Jack groaned. “I need you pumpkin...I need you now.”
Harley reached up to grabbed the back of his neck and pulled him toward her for a passionate kiss.

Jack lifted her up slightly as Harley released him. He took a moment to position himself before he slid into her; both of them groaned against each others lips as their bodies became one.

Harley whimpered feeling him fill her, stretching her. He was warm, hard, everything she wanted. He lifted her up and turned to sit down on the stairs with Harley in his lap (the whole movement a little awkward with his slacks around his ankles while trying not to trip over them which caused them both to laugh). Harley grabbed his shoulders and put her heels against one of the steps behind him to brace herself while Jack held her hips. Jack smiled brightly at her, despite the rain in his face (it had slowed to a drizzle) while the light danced off her skin from the streetlight made her glow.

“You are so gorgeous,” Jack said with a smile, running his hands up under her arms.

Harley smiled back at him and whispered. “Oh puddin.” She caressed the sides of his neck with her thumbs. “You are my one and only, my love Jack.”

Jack leaned into her touch his eyes sliding close. “I love you Harls...I love you.”

They kissed again, their tongues slowly caressing, sharing soft moans and heated breath.

She started to ride him, slowly moving up and down, using the stairs to give herself more control over her movements, her fingers digging into his shoulders.

She arched her back and slid back and forth crying out as she did so, feeling him going deep inside her with each downward slide.

Jack groaned, his fingers gripping her wet skin as he held onto her. Harley moved harder, quicker as her climax came rushing up from her core. She cried out, arching back.

Jack held her down on him, thrusting up into her, arching off the stairs. Jack cried out with her as he climaxed with his wife.

They continued to move together, riding out their orgasms until Harley fell forward and wrapped her arms around him. Jack held her tightly.

The rain eased to a light misting.

Jack kissed her shoulder, her neck, brushing his lips along her cheek to her mouth.

“You’s go inside,” he said with a soft chuckle. “These steps are surprisingly uncomfortable.”

Harley blushed nuzzling him. “Probably should have gone inside first.”

Jack laughed. “Okay, next time, no sex on stairs.”

Harley purred. “Well...never say never puddin.”

* 

It was still raining the next morning as Jack laid on his stomach, spread across the bed naked, the sheet only barely across his backside. Harley was lying with her head on his back, one arm wrapped tightly around him, her hair covering her face and spread across his back.

He was snoozing, caught between drifting back to sleep and being partly aware of the sounds around him. He could hear Harley and feel the steady softness of her breathing. She was still asleep. He was
thinking about moving, getting up and making coffee, but he didn’t want to disturb her when his phone started to ring.

Jack groaned reaching over blindly for his phone, which he had left on the table beside the bed. His long fingers groped around until he touched it. He grabbed it and answered without looking.

“Jack.”

“Hey sleepy head, it's like fucking afternoon.” Alex’s voice came over the phone cheerful and way too awake for Jack.

“How do you know I haven’t been awake for hours?” Jack muttered. Harley stirred and rolled off of him. Jack shifted pushing himself up to a sitting position and moved the pillows so he could lean back against the headboard. Once he was settled, Harley moved to lay her head against his chest, wrapping her arm around his stomach and closed her eyes again.

“I can tell by your fucking voice. You always sound like your fucking brother when you’re just waking up,” Alex explained.

Jack groaned. “That was fucking rude.”

Alex laughed. “Not sorry man, it’s the fucking truth. Hey--I called with some good news. Your new fucking hideout is ready to move into!”

Jack perked up. “Really?”

Alex laughed. “Yeah really, so get dressed and get your ass down here. I got the fucking keys for you.”

Jack grinned. “Be right there!”

Jack tossed the phone down and slid out of the bed. Harley yelped as his moving dumped her on the bed.

“Puddin?”

Jack turned, the little bit of light coming through the curtains danced over his naked body. He was grinning from ear to ear. “Harls my sweets, our home is ready!”

*  

Instead of calling Frost today, deciding to let his friend have a rest, Jack decided to simply rent a car for the day.

The car was delivered to the apartment building a few hours later. A light rain was falling, just enough to keep everything wet.

Jack, his hand in Harley’s, hopped down the stairs of the apartment building in his excitement. Harley smiled with pleasure at how dashing and happy her puddin looked with a wide smile on his face handsome face. He was dressed in a black three piece suit with red roses embroidered on it, (a set of three roses on the left breast of the jacket and one on each sleeve), along with a white shirt and black tie held in place with a gold tie pin. The chain of the pocket watch that Harley had given him was draped across his stomach, the watch in a vest pocket, and he opted to wear a pair of black leather driving gloves. Harley was dressed in her own three-piece suit, a black pinstripe suit and vest with a blood red blouse underneath with no tie and a pair of red and white leather driving gloves of
her own. She had her hair brushed and pinned to the side, falling over her left shoulder in soft waves. When the two of them made their way outside, they were armed with an large umbrella. (Jack had already been down earlier to load up the car with a couple of suitcases with the clothing and other essentials they had gathered during their stay here.)

Harley stopped on the sidewalk and grinned when she saw the car. “Woozers puddin, it’s pretty!”

Jack laughed. “Yes it is! The car is a Mercedes-Benz AMG GT, black, with a nearly solid black interior.”

Jack hopped down the last steps, holding the umbrella for Harley as they stepped over to the vehicle and he opened the door for her. She slipped inside grinning. The vehicle had that “new” car smell.

She watched as he husband nearly danced around the front of the car to the driver’s side, closing the umbrella before he opened his door and slipped inside the vehicle, tossing the umbrella into the back.

Jack inserted the key, started the engine which gave a low, warm rumble that spoke of power as the car sprang to life. Jack grinned wide, wrapping his hands around the wheel, the leather of the gloves creaking as he adjusted his hold.

He glanced sideways at his wife. “You know, it’s been a little while since I’ve been behind the wheel of a good car in...hell it feels like forever.” Jack grinned wider wiggling slightly in his seat, flexing his fingers. “This feels really good.”

Harley smiled reaching over to squeeze her husband’s knee. “Ready?”

Jack’s grin spread across his face. “Oh, I’m ready.”

With that Jack, turned the key, hit the gas, and the car shot forward accompanied by the soft rumble of the engine.

*

The shadow that had been watching the buildings for the last several nights broke away from the darkness of the alley across the street from where the Wayne’s had been staying. The shadow stepped onto the sidewalk taking on a more human shape, but their appearance was difficult to decipher since their body was covered in black clothing. They could be either male or female; the clothing they wore made any attempt at determining whether they were male or female difficult. Their hair was worn short, almost shaved, and what skin was visible was dark, but their eyes were a startling shade of grey so light that their eyes almost seemed white.

The shadow watched the car leave, but made no move to follow; they simply turned and walked away in the opposite direction.

*

That same morning across town, Alfred held the door open for the young man who had just arrived. Richard Grayson was not quite six feet in height, though at age sixteen Alfred wouldn’t be surprised if the young man had another growth spurt in the next year. Alfred cringed inwardly. He had heard from Bruce that Grayson had only just turned sixteen, the day before his parents’ death. The poor boy, he thought.

The young man was dressed in a pair of jeans with the knees missing, a pair of worn sneakers, and a plain blue t-shirt under a black jacket. He was pale, his eyes bloodshot. Alfred’s heart went out to the young man. He had seen that haunted look before, of someone lost and alone...Alfred vividly
remembered the sight of Bruce and Jack, both boys pale, both boys suffering, both feeling lost and alone in the unfair world. Alfred sighed softly. So much pain and now to see another young man going through a similar loss. It almost made one feel as if Gotham were cursed.

The only luggage the boy had with him was a simple black backpack slung over one shoulder and a dull gray duffel bag.

“Welcome master Richard Grayson, to Wayne Manor.” Alfred stepped forward picking up the boy’s duffel bag.

Dick looked at the doorway with a slight frown before he brought his attention to Alfred. “You can call me Dick, everyone does.”

Alfred smiled and stepped inside motioning for the young man to follow. “Master Bruce should be here at any minute, young sir. He was caught up with something at work and could not make it here in time to greet you himself.”

Dick walked in his eyes going wide as he looked around, walking in a complete circle before stopping to look at Alfred. “So, ah...why?”

Alfred frowned in confusion. “Why?”

“Yeah, why does a big shot like Bruce Wayne want to...I don’t know...become my guardian? I mean, I’m not anything to him...I don’t understand. Besides...I’m planning on seeing if I can become emancipated, you know so...I don’t need some rich guy trying to be my parent.”

Alfred frowned then nodded. “I’m sure Master Bruce would be happy to help you Master Dick...but until then, how would you like some tea and scones?”

Dick stared at him a few seconds, then broke into a smile. “Sure, that sounds great.”

Alfred smiled. “Well, let me show you to your room, then I can show you the kitchen.”

Alfred set off for the stairs with Dick following right along beside him with a big smile. “I’m starved.”

Alfred chuckled. “It's nice to know that young men never change when it comes to their stomachs.”

* 

Jack and Harley arrived at the abandoned amusement park to see Alex and Alice parked by the gates in a brand new baby blue Ford Focus. There was a pause in the rain as Jack pulled the rented car up next to the Ford.

Alex and Alice stepped out of the Ford just as Jack and Harley parked. Alice came rushing over and threw her arms around Harley’s neck as soon as Harley had exited the vehicle.

“Hey!!” she squealed at Harley.

Harley squealed back hugging Alice tightly to her. “Hey!! How are you??”

Alice laughed stepping back and placed her hands on her stomach. She only had a very slight bulge--no one would know she was pregnant unless she told them, but Harley could see that blossoming around Alice’s cheeks, the beginning of that “glow.”

Harley felt a stab of pain in her chest. It wasn’t jealousy, just...the pain of loss...of what might have
been.

Alice grinned. “I’m having my first ultrasound in a couple of weeks. I know it doesn’t really ‘look’ like a baby yet, but I’m—we’re excited,” she said with a glance at Alex.

Harley smiled. She did her best not to let the pain show. It still hurt her though, to know that she had lost a baby that was hers and Jack’s. She touched her stomach unconsciously, but smiled as Alice continued.

“So are you excited about your new place?” Alice asked turning her attention to the amusement park. “This place looks massive. All those abandoned rides, and it’s somehow a little creepy too.”

Harley grinned. “Yes! We haven’t had our own place before. We’ve been in Bruce’s place, Aunt Agatha’s or well...Alex’s...this will be the first time we’ve had our own place.”

Harley said softly as she stared at the amusement park. “A place all our own.”

Alice put her arm around Harley’s shoulders. “Think you guys will be happy here?”

Harley leaned into Alice. “Wherever Jack is, that’s where I’m happy.”

Alice giggled softly. “You two are just so romantic. I love it.”

Alex held the keys up. “Here the fuck ya go Jack, one giant fucking creepy ass amusement park with one livable building, all yours.”

Jack caught the keys with a smile. “Thanks Alex.”

Alex shrugged. “Hey man, that’s what friends are for...by the way, I heard you talked to Fish Mooney--how’d that go?”

Jack shrugged. “Pretty good. She basically gave me a job to prove that the gang is gonna do what we said we are going to do. She’s lucky I like her or I would be annoyed by this whole thing.” He smiled putting his hands in his pockets as he glanced up at the grey sky. “There is some drug called Giggles that is making its way into the club scene.”

Jack frowned. “The odd thing is...sounds a lot like my gas...but...” He trailed off in thought before he continued. “Anyway, she wants our help in getting rid of the dealers working in the neighborhood. Do that and she is on board willing to help with organizing and getting Panessa’s territory under control. Though I think at this point the drug issue is academic, after Maroni showed up and tried to bully her.”

Alex frowned. “Maroni? What the fuck does that reject from the ‘40’s want?”

Jack smirked. “Money. Apparently Panessa was letting him collect protection money. He had some sort of deal going with Panessa...and doesn’t feel the need to stop just because the territory has changed hands. Seems to think that the Red Hood isn’t really strong enough to stop him.” Jack sighed. “The man’s going to be a problem. Especially after what I did to him last night.” Jack grinned.

Alex shook his head. “Fuck, I don’t even want to know.”

Jack laughed. “Don’t worry about him Alex. I know Maroni’s type...a bully. But, just to be safe, I want to do some recruiting for the gang this week. Find us some people...flesh out our ranks because we need numbers. Frost has a few people he wants me to meet and I thought perhaps...” He glanced
“I might know a handful of people looking for work…” Alex shrugged before he continued. “So, drugs, eh? You know I had heard something about a new party drug. Bunch of fucking party kids always looking for the new fucking high.”

Jack pulled out his package of cigarettes from his inner coat pocket and his lighter. He lit one up, offering one to Alex who shook his head. Jack took a hard drag on the cigarette, holding the smoke for a couple of seconds before he spoke, the smoke slowly billowing from between his lips like dragon fire. “This drug interests me. Fish said it causes uncontrollable laughter...some sort of strange high and it can cause the skin to lose color. Sounds so much like my gas...just...I want to know more about it...I want to find the source, not just get rid of these dealers.” Jack took another drag before he spoke. “Anyway, meeting with someone called Big Mama tonight to learn more.”

Alex blinked. “Big Mama...now that’s an interesting name.”

Jack laughed. “Yeah, she runs a biker bar along the river.”

“Look at you, having all the fucking fun.” Alex laughed. “Well, you guys enjoy your new digs. Had a new fucking bed brought in, probably should have got you guys a trampoline knowing the two of you…” Alex grinned at Jack before he continued. “New living room set, the one you sent me online. Let’s see: all new dishes, bathroom shit, everything should be exactly what you fucking sent me. Let me know if anything is fucking wrong Jack and I’ll make sure I get it fixed.” Alex frowned in thought. “I had all clothes you ordered for you and Harley brought over. All the electric is up and fucking running, the plumbing, everything has been fucking updated, even the fucking alarm system is all brand new. OH, speaking of…” Alex dug into the pocket of his jeans and pulled out a piece of paper to hand to his friend. “Alarm code for the house.” Alex tapped his chin with his forefinger. “Oh yeah, a couple of the rides still fucking work! Fucking believe that? The ferris wheel, the bumper cars, the haunted house and the tilt-a-whirl. The guy I had working here, Arthur Brown, says he can have the rest of the rides up and running in no time, if you want, which I figured you fucking do.”

Jack laughed. “What’s an amusement park without the rides?” The two men embraced before Alex called out to Alice. “Alice, you ready?”

“Sure thing!” She turned and hugged Harley. “You guys have fun!” she called as she hurried over to the car. Alex held the door open for her, closing it and giving Jack and Harley a wave before he slipped into the driver's seat.

Jack put an arm around Harley tugging her close against him. He leaned in to brush his nose against her ear, smelling her hair, his lips just tracing her ear as they watched Alex and Alice pull away before turning back to the park.

Jack grinned from ear to ear. “We have our own place now Harls.”

Harley giggled. “An entire park that’s all ours. What are we going to call it?”

Jack tilted his head in thought starting at the gate and the park beyond. “What do you think of the Ha Ha Hacienda?”

Harley snorted as they walked to the gate for Jack to unlock it, and together the two of them pushed the gates open.
“That’s awful puddin,” Harley replied with a giggle.

Jack grinned. “It is isn’t it?”

He grabbed her just as they approached the car, leaning her against the hood to kiss her deeply. Harley smiled into the kiss, wrapping her arms tight around his shoulder.

She lifted one leg to wrap around his hips, her tongue caressing his in a deep kiss.

Jack pulled away just enough to rub his nose against hers. “Our own home, finally.”

Harley brushed her nails through the short hairs at the back of his neck. “Forever puddin.”

Jack caught her bottom lip with his teeth tugging playfully before he stood up straight tugging her with him. “Well, let’s go check it out shall we?”

“Let’s!” Harley giggled.

* 

The people that Alex had hired on Jack’s behalf had cleaned up the place. The grounds were cleared of trash, some of the trees and bushes trimmed back, but not so much that the casual eye would think the place was being lived in. Someone like Batman might have been able to determine that someone lived here, but the casual observer would still see an abandoned park, just a much tidier one.

After driving the car inside and locking the gates again, Jack drove them along the main thoroughfare and soon parked the car close to the house. They parked and got out walking the rest of the way to their new home.

Jack unlocked the door, flipped on the light switch, and held the door open, but just before Harley was about to walk through, Jack grabbed her causing her to squeal as he lifted her up into his arm bridal style.

Harley giggled. “What are you doing?”

Jack grinned. “I’m carrying the bride over the threshold my sweets. Into our new home as a married couple.”

Harley stared at him for a moment. Jack smiled tenderly at her.

“Harley?” he asked softly when she didn’t say anything.

Harley kissed him, a tiny tear rolling down her cheek. She held his face with one hand, her thumb sliding softly over his cheek. Jack adjusted his hold on her, returning the kiss with a tender passion that had Harley burning for him. She pulled away pressing her forehead to his and whispered. “Oh Jack, puddin...I love you so much.”

Jack growled softly in return. “I love you sweets. My Harley...my harlequin.”

He kissed her nose and then her lips and carried her into their new home.

The inside of the house had been thoroughly cleaned, the floors had been repaired, and the walls repainted a fresh, soft grey. The vast array of knick knacks had been cleaned and placed around the house on shelves and in curio cabinets with glass doors making the display of items less...strange. There were new curtains and several pieces of new furniture, (all picked by Jack and Harley online) the living room was furnished with a “u”-shaped five-seat couch, high back plush armchairs and a
chaise lounge in a soft purple tinged shade of grey along with a long black and glass coffee table and matching side tables. The circus posters that could be saved had been framed behind glass and now decorated the walls with more attention to style than before. A thick throw rug lay on the floor in here in several shades of blue-grey in a wavy pattern, that, as Jack jokingly quoted: “Really brought the room together.”

As the two of them walked hand in hand from the living room to the kitchen they could see that the kitchen had been cleaned up, the cabinets had been replaced with new charcoal grey ones, and the counters with white marble. There were new dishes and silverware in the cabinets and the clown figures were placed on shelves and along the counters in here giving the room a strange mix of the modern and the creepy.

The Waynes were giggling, pleased with how the house looked, but the real question they both knew without voicing it out loud, was the bedroom. Jack grabbed Harley’s hand and with a shared smile the two of them rushed up the stairs together hurrying to the bedroom. The other rooms up here they would look at later, but for them, the master bedroom was, really, the most important room in the house.

Jack flung open the door when they arrived upstairs and yanked Harley into the room with him in his excitement. She stumbled through the doorway as Jack flipped on the lights and stopped, her mouth hanging open when she saw how the room had been transformed. For a heartbeat they just stood there and looked around.

The walls had been painted a dark grey with an accent wall in dark mulberry color. The large queen sized bed had thick heavy looking pillows and comforter of off-white with a thick purple throw across the foot of the bed. The ceiling had been draped in fairy lights, strung back and forth to cover the entire ceiling. There were two large rectangular mirrors on the wall on either side of the bed behind the bedside tables which reflected the light from the fairy lights back into the room, creating an ethereal look.

“Oh Jack,” Harley gasped looking around the room.

Jack grinned. “Wow. Alex’s guys did a fantastic job!”

Harley nodded in response. She started to open her mouth to say something about how the colors looked, when she was suddenly yanked forward. Harley yelped as Jack tossed her forward, causing her to stumble onto the bed. Jack followed, tossing himself on top of her, grabbing her arms by her wrists and yanked her arms up to pin them over her head.

“This is a good mattress, firm, but with enough bounce to make it fun,” Jack purred as rubbed his nose against hers.

Harley giggled grinning up at him. “Yes, yes it is...very important part of a new home...a nice...firm...mattress.”

Harley emphasized each word by thrusting her hips up to meet his. She could feel he was hard as he sat across her hips and smiling brightly down at her. She gazed at him, her eyes hot with desire. A lock of his hair had fallen forward when he leaned down...for some reason that one lock of hair loose across his brow made her want him even more now than she already had moments earlier.

Jack dragged his fingers down her arms before he balanced himself on his elbows above her. His breath was warm against her lips when he spoke softly to her. “You know what we should do sweets?”
Harley giggled playing innocent. “I have no idea. What should we do puddin?’”

Jack gently caught her chin with his teeth, just barely pressing into her skin as he dragged his teeth along her chin, gradually shifting to his tongue as he moved along her jaw. Harley moaned softly in response to his touch. Jack licked up her jaw to her ear, balancing himself over her. He caught her ear lobe with his teeth with just enough pressure to make her wince slightly before he whispered.

“I think we need to break in the bed sweets...make sure we like it.”

They both giggled as Jack sat up, shifting his weight on her hips and started to undo the buttons of her blouse. Harley reached up, working at the buckle of his belt, then the button of his slacks, peeling back the material and sliding her hands into his pants to massage him. Jack grunted at her touch. He closed his eyes for a moment, enjoying the warmth of her hand as it transferred through the fabric of his boxers. Harley licked her lips watching his expression as she squeezed gently, feeling the outline of his erection through the boxers teasing both him and herself...she wanted nothing more than to feel the soft satin heat of his flesh in her hand, but caressing him through the boxers delayed her gratification and his for just a little extra fun.

He smirked down at her, knowing exactly what she was doing as he pulled her shirt out of her slacks to finish with the buttons before he tossed the cloth aside like removing the layers of paper to reveal his gift underneath the wrappings. He reached up and laid his hands against her throat, not choking her, but just holding his hands there for a moment as they stared at each other, their gazes filled with lust and love. He caressed her neck, teasing the tender skin, his gaze wandering down to where he saw the red lace bra, the red bright against her pale skin.

Harley took in a deep breath as Jack’s fingertips dragged down her neck to her chest, slowly dragging his hands further down until he touched the lace of the red bra she was wearing, then the smoothness of her skin. He dragged his hands back up, caressing the lace of the bra, his grin widening when he saw she was wearing a bra with a front snap.

“Now when did you get that?” Jack asked.

Harley giggled. “Mm...surprise.”

Jack gently pulled the snap, unhooked it and grinned wider as the lacy material sprang away from her breasts. “I need to pay a little closer attention to your bras I see…”

Jack purred scooting down to run his tongue between her breasts. Harley moaned softly as Jack laid on top of her, cupping one breast while he ran his tongue over the other. Harley pressed her teeth into her lip with a whimper as Jack’s tongue rolled tenderly over her nipple, circling her other nipple with his finger before sliding his hand down her body.

One handedly, he loosened her slacks, sliding his hand under her panties, and between her legs. Harley’s breath came out in a soft gasp, her body arching into his touch as Jack’s fingers slid against her, pressing down and easing up, caressing her gently.

He chuckled against her breast as he whispered. “Mm...Harley...you are so wet…”

Harley’s only answer was to moan loudly as Jack’s fingers dipped into her.

He purred. “Now, let’s see how bouncy this mattress is shall we pumpkin?”

Harley’s giggle soon morphed into a heated groan. “Oh yes puddin…”
Harley pulled her hair back into a loose ponytail at the nape of her neck. She had a few loose strands around either side of her face that framed her features perfectly. She grinned leaning in toward the mirror to finish her look tonight with a dark lipstick to compliment the dark smokey eye makeup that made her blue eyes stand out. She was wearing a pair of black trouser cut shorts, a white dress shirt with a black tie, a black and white striped vest and a short black blazer cut jacket that hit just at the bottom of her shorts. She also wore a pair of black knee socks with some black heels, giving her a sort of business/schoolgirl look.

She had just finished with her makeup when Jack walked back into the bathroom adjusting his watch chain across his vest. She grinned in the mirror at him. He looked every inch the very sexy crime boss she thought, in his dark blue textured suit (there were very subtle embroidered patterns in the slacks, vest and jacket. One would have to step close to see the slight flower stitching in the material.) His wore a slightly brighter blue shirt underneath with a tie that matched the shirt so well in color it was hard to see it except for the gold tie pin. The Italian leather wingtip shoes he wore were two-tone, brown and blue. Harley had done his makeup for him around his eyes, the blue of his eyes against the blue of the suit and the dark smoky eyeliner made him look extra sexy she thought.

Jack finally had his watch situated how he wanted it when he looked up with a smile. “Ready toots? Have your bracelets and your knife?”

Harley nodded. “Yep, ready.” She held up her wrist to show the bracelet and lifted her vest to show the knife at her waist.

He grinned as he took her arm, his eyes wandering down her figure as he whispered. “I like the shorts...lots of leg...”

She giggled. “I hoped you would.”

Jack pulled her against him, his arms wrapping around her, his hands grabbing her rear as he pulled her against him. “Mm...screw Big Mama, let's stay home.”

“Jack!” Harley laughed pushing on his chest. “Stop.”

“Okay fine...but when we get home...leave the socks and heels on,” he whispered.

Harley purred reaching up to brush the tip of his nose with her finger. “You got it puddin.”

“Mmm...goodie.” Jack grinned taking her hand as they walked out of the bathroom. He stopped by the bedside table to grab a pair of blue leather gloves and a walking stick for tonight.

* 

It was drizzling when Jack and Harley made it outside to where Frost and Agatha were waiting for them in the car when they arrived at the gate. Agatha tonight was dressed all in black. She was wearing a snug fitting black dress over which she had a black leather biker jacket and thigh high black suede boots.

“Hey kiddies! Thanks for letting me tag along again.” Agatha grinned brightly, her eyes nearly twinkling.

Jack leaned over the back seat giving his aunt a kiss on the cheek. “Of course auntie, you make us look respectable.”
She laughed. “We are going to a biker bar in Gotham, and you’re worried about looking respectable?”

Jack grinned. “I feel like we are all a little overdressed for this meeting, but isn’t it fun?”

Agatha nodded. “Oh very. It's always fun to make a scene.”

* 

Fish had texted them the meeting time and directions earlier that day, letting them also know that Big Mama was expecting them. Despite the directions and Fish’s assurances of its obvious location, Frost still had a little difficulty finding the place as it was stuck in an out-of-the-way corner surrounded by several empty and condemned buildings. The bar indeed had a large neon sign on the outside that read “Enjoy the Fucking View” shining dully on it, but that was the only indication that there was anything there. There was no actual bar name, or sign stating that this place was a bar, and if not for the bikes and cars parked nearby and the sign, they would never have found it even with Fish’s directions.

Frost held the door open for them as the other three people filed inside.

The bar had a typical “biker” bar feel with a dart board, a pool table, and the lighting was dim enough that the floor looked black. Embedded stools lined the bar, and a few tables with chairs all of which looked battered and old. The cigarette smoke was a thick cloud in the bar, making everything indistinct and murky.

Everyone in the bar, maybe twenty or so men and women, turned to look at the newcomers.

Jack, a bright smile on his face, waved and swung his cane, bringing it down with a loud thunk. “Hello!!! Where can we find Big Mama? She’s expecting us.”

An extremely deep, gruff voice answered. “Over here handsome.”

Their little group stepped further into the bar, heading toward the sound of the voice that came from the end of the bar. Everyone watched their group, all eyes following the four of them as they arrived at the end of the bar to see a man...or a woman...standing there waiting for them.

She was at least six feet five inches, with a hairy barrel chest that was easily seen over the top of the pink, spaghetti strapped dress s/he was wearing along with a white feather boa. Her hair, which looked to be all hers, was cut in a sharp, short bob with long, straight bangs and dyed a dark pink. She had on fake lashes with deep blue eyeshadow and dark red lipstick. She smiled when they were close.

“Hello boys and girls. I’m Big Mama.”

Big Mama put her large hand out to Jack. Her nails were long and painted a soft bubblegum pink with rhinestones on every other nail. Jack didn’t miss a beat, took her hand and kissed her knuckles.

“A pleasure Big Mama. I’m the Red Hood, this is my wife Harley and these are other members of the gang, Agatha and Frost.”

Big Mama smiled at each of them in turn. “A pleasure!”

Big Mama leaned over to take Harley’s hand. “Oh, I do love a couple that works together.” She grinned, then turned her attention to Frost and Agatha. “Oh my, are you two together too? I know you are--Big Mama can always tell these things. OH! I love your organization already! It's like a
couples gang!” Mama giggled and gestured. “Why don’t you all follow me to the back room here.” She turned and yelled. “HEY MORTY! You’re up honey! Keep everyone in line, you got it?” Morty, a younger man with wildly curling hair that was dyed red on the ends waved back. “Sure thing Mama! I got it.”

She grinned lifting up the bar counter at the end for them before leading them to the back room.

The room here looked a great deal like a 1950’s kitchen with everything from the appliances to the cabinets all in pale, bubblegum pink. The table and chairs were white, but the table cloth was pink. It was a shocking contrast from the front of the bar to the back. Mama motioned at the kitchen table and chairs.

“Can I get you all anything to drink? Beer, coffee, tea--I make a mean momosa.” Mama smiled.

Jack pulled out his cigarette holding them up with a questioning look. Big Mama smiled. “Of course.”

Jack nodded, but Harley took the pack from with a smile, and pulled out a cigarette for her husband, took his lighter from him as well, when he offered it to her. She lit the cigarette and handed it to Jack as Big Mama stepped over and pulled a chair out, then sat smiling at all of them. Jack reached out caressing Harley’s cheek with his thumb.

Mama watch the two of them with a soft, yet slightly sad smile before she spoke.

“So, Fish tells me you are going to take care of dealers in Giggles, eh?”

Jack took a drag and nodded. “Yup. Since Panessa’s territory is now…” He looked at Harley, Frost and Agatha. “...ours, and Fish has asked for this favor before she will put her full support behind me. Yes, we are going to take care of the dealer--or dealers--whatever the case may be. Fish said you would have more information?” Jack pulled Harley’s chair a little closer and laid his hand on her thigh while he spoke.

Mama frowned. “Well, I don’t have a great deal more on any of it, but I do know one of the dealer’s names. He’s call Manuel. He works with a partner, Griselda. They sell all sorts of drugs, but just recently, in the last few weeks, they started to sell Giggles. They would be a good place for you to start. I have no idea who is supplying them...I mean the other drugs, sure, some of those filter out from the Gotham PD, other's from Panessa’s crew...or did...I suppose you took care of that didn’t you?” She smiled at him.

Jack shrugged with a grin, but Harley spoke. “The cops are in on this too?”

Mama continued, picking at a loose thread on the table cloth. “Yeah...I mean they’ve always gotten a cut on the drug business in Gotham whether through the mob families or through their own dealers...cutting deals with smugglers, the mob...it’s all pretty messy. You should be careful...that Giggles? I think someone big is dealing in that shit.”

Jack blew out some smoke as he asked. “So where can we find Manuel and Griselda?”

Big Mama frowned in thought. “Next week is Fleet Week. There are tons of parties, alcohol themed events...there’s a booze cruise, a disco party and a huge drinks event at Robinson Park. They are
probably going to be going to at least one of those events, maybe all of them. The problem will be finding them...any of those places would be a good place for you to run into them. They usually hit all the big events in Gotham. I can give you a physical description. That would probably be your best bet. Find the drug and follow the trail.”

Jack smiled sharing a glance with Harley. “I do love big events, don’t you sweets?”

Harley giggled. “I always love a reason to dress up and go out with you puddin.”

* 

They only stayed for a little while longer, before heading out of the bar.

Jack had his arms around Harly’s waist smiling. He felt pretty good about the meeting with Big Mama.

Agatha was grinning too as they walked out into the damp night. “How would you two like to go to dinner with Frost and me? I have a standing reservation at the Gotham Steakhouse and Grill for whenever I want...private table away from the main body of the place. The owner, Joe Humboldt and I use to date back in the day, but he has always held a table for me. It will be fun!”

They had just stepped outside when a man’s voice greeted them. “So you’re the Red Hood, eh?”

The four of them turned to see a man leaning against the wall holding a gun on them. He was around Jack’s age, with hair cut down to stubble, his face unshaven and while his clothing, dark slacks, white dress shirt and dark blazer looked like they may have been nice, they had the wrinkled, unkempt look of someone who had slept in their clothing.

As the man spoke and Jack’s group had turned, four more men walked out of the shadows behind him all of them armed.

Harley felt Jack’s fingers around her waist tighten. “What do you want?”

The man smiled.

“The name is Giacomo, but everyone calls me Gia...Gia Maroni. I think you know my brother.”
Carousels and Kerfuffles

Gia laughed, pushing himself off the wall, his gun held on Jack in the lazily confident manner of someone sure of himself, though he would occasionally tilt the barrel in Frost’s direction. It was clear to Jack the man was a fool since he didn’t see Harley or Agatha as threats—a fool and a chauvinist. Jack grinned to himself, thank goodness for chauvinists like him, because Harley would kick his ass and it would be a joy to watch.

Gia licked his lips, pressed the tip of his tongue to his upper lip while he continued to study Jack, his eyes roaming up and down Jack with a slight sneer. It was clear the man wasn’t impressed as he moved with that cocky selfassurance of one who thinks he has the situation well under control.

“You don’t look at all like I was thinking you would. I mean I saw you at Fish’s place, and I thought: that has to be an act, but no. You look like one of those soft guys who likes to look good, smell good. Pretty boy type. Fuck, you don’t even look like a man with the shit on your face.” He motioned at Jack with the barrel of his weapon. “Make-up? What the fuck? What are you? A fag?”

Gia glanced at his fellows who laughed along with him. All of the men with Gia were the typical mob “types,” men who were followers rather than leaders. Jack surmised they were so desperate to be told what to do, that they would follow an idiot like Gia into a stupid situation, which they had just done Jack thought as he looked the men over with a curl of distaste to his lips. He could feel the shift in Harley next to him. A quick glance showed him that his wife was angry. He could also feel where her nails dug into his arm just slightly before she shifted her hand. There was a small glint caught by the streetlamp as his wife adjusted her bracelet with her fingers.

Jack smiled broadly. God he loved her.

Gia, who was clearly the type who liked to hear himself talk, continued speaking, using his gun to gesture at them—another big mistake Jack thought. If he knew the type of person Gia was and he was pretty sure he did...that gun was going to end up too close to Jack...idiot, Jack thought as he just gazed mildly at Gia.

“Why don’t you ah...let me have the girl there…” Gia looked Harley up and down, his eyes lingering at her breasts in an over the top show of interest. Gia smirked at Harley even as she narrowed her eyes at him as he continued.

“...I’ll show her a good time. Let her see what fucking a real man is like instead of a girl like you? You two do fuck right? Or do you just do each other's makeup?” Gia laughed before he glanced at Agatha and snickered. “Fuck, give me the old bitch there too. She’s pretty damn put together for an old woman, might be fun for a fuck too. Then, I might just think about letting you go.”

Gia laughed again. He clearly thought of himself not just as a ladies man, but also as a comedian Jack thought. Part of him knew he shouldn’t let the little punk get under his skin, that they should try to settle this or simply beat the shit out of Gia and his men and walk away, but Jack knew deep down, he couldn’t do that...couldn’t walk away and leave this man and his goons alive, not after what he had just said, just implied about his wife and aunt. No. This was going to end only one way.

Jack narrowed his eyes ever so slowly.

Jack became very still. Harley felt her husband’s subtle change, a predator readying himself. She grinned. She knew Jack was armed with his gun (she could feel it against his side), but she also knew her husband had one of his knives with him and Jack always preferred knives. It allowed you...
to really get close and personal he said.

Gia stepped closer, holding the gun out. Harley knew exactly what was going to happen, she could almost see it as Gia stepped in front of Jack and held the weapon to his forehead.

“Give me the girl,” Gia said.

Harley took a step away from Jack. Gia paid no attention to her, thinking she was getting to safety rather than leaving her lover room to move. Gia made the mistake of stepping closer, holding the gun to the side and up at Jack’s forehead.

“I said, give me the girl.” Gia grinned at him.

Jack smiled lifting a brow and glanced at Harley. “Give you the girl? What era do you think this is?” Jack chuckled. “Sorry buddy, she isn’t mine to give. Harley does whatever Harley wants and Harley does whoever she wants, when she wants.” He glanced at his wife with a wide smile giving her a wink as he continued. “Besides, Gia you said? She is just too much woman for a cullion like you.”

Gia frowned in confusion. “What the fuck did you just call me?”

Jack smiled. “A cullion. In Arabic it means you’re base, like an animal. In middle-English and Anglo-French it means you’re a fucking, shriveled up testicle Gia. And you know what a shriveled up scrotum is Gia? Useless and disgusting.”

Gia looked more confused, glancing toward his men who frowned and shrugged back.

Jack chuckled. “How about this Gia? Thou globby bottle of cheap stinking chip-oil? Come to get on in the yarbles? If you have any yarbles you eunuch jelly thou.”

Gia looked slightly panicked and clearly more confused.

Jack smiled. “That’s a quote from The Clockwork Orange.” He sighed. “Ugly and an idiot.”

Gia snarled holding the gun up at Jack’s head again. “Take that back you asshole.”

Jack grinned as he leaned in toward Gia, pressing his forehead against the weapon’s barrel as he hissed with a widening smile.

“Make me.”

Jack grabbed the barrel of the pistol with his left hand, wrapping his fingers around the barrel and forced Gia’s arm to the side and down, while at the same time Jack’s right hand shot over their currently joined hands, his fist connecting with Gia’s cheek. The moment that Jack’s fist met the other man’s face, Jack yanked the pistol out of Gia’s hand and tossed it into the darkness. The gun could be heard landing on the pavement and the sound of metal spinning away and disappearing.

Jack grinned with mischief as he hissed. “Oops.”

There was a moment, just a heartbeat where everything was still. Harley always thought about it as the calm before the storm, the perfect moment of stillness just before violence broke out. She grinned brightly. She loved these moments, she realized, as Jack’s blue eyes turned toward her and he winked, a cocky grin on his lips. Harley grinned back. God she loved him so much.

The moment the sound of the gun being tossed away echoed and faded, Gia’s pals attacked.

*
One man, short, red haired and built like a pitbull (at least to Frost’s mind) came charging at Frost. Frost didn’t know what the man thought he was doing with this attack, but the bodyguard was ready for it. If the man was carrying a gun or knife, Frost didn’t see it and he would have pulled his own gun, but this close he had just as much of a chance of hitting Jack, Harley or Agatha as he did the man charging him. He also hoped, by not using his gun, no one would call the cops...that would definitely make the situation more complicated if the cops were involved.

The pitbull was going for a head butt, aiming for Frost’s chest. It was a reckless maneuver, but men like these were seldom professionals and usually not as good at an actual fight as they were at brawls.

Frost sidestepped the man at the last moment. He had been headbutted before by criminals when he worked as a cop. It wasn’t the smartest way to fight, but still, it always amazed him how many criminals tried it. The sidestep caused the ginger-haired man to dash by Frost in almost comical fashion. Frost had his fists up, turned to the side as the man caught himself and spun around.

The shorter man took a swing, Frost ducked, his training kicking in. Frost dove under the man’s wild swing and hit the ginger in the gut with his shoulder. Frost twisted his upper body to the side, bring the elbow of his opposite arm up and used that to hit the man in the face, cracking the ginger gangster’s nose.

The man stumbled forward, surprising Frost when he didn’t fall right away. The man turned with a hiss and pulled out a long, thin bladed dagger.

“All right, you wanna play, let’s play.” The man sneered at Frost.

* 

Agatha’s opponent was one of those type of men, she decided, that spent a lot of time in the gym focused on size and look rather than actual strength, though strength didn’t matter when your opponent was swift and experienced--like herself.

She smiled at the man who grinned at her and made an obscene gesture with his tongue.

“You know, you look pretty damn hot for an old broad. There are a lot of things I would rather do with you than fight sugar.” The man gave her a long up and down look.

“The name’s Marco...I wouldn’t mind beating you then...you know...having some fun honey.” Marco flicked his tongue at her.

Agatha smiled. “Well, Marco, you are a bit...too...Hmm...stupid for me. I like my men, tall, lean, smart and respectful. I’m afraid dear, you are none of those things. And taking care of you is going to force me to rip my dress and I hate that. I really like this dress.”

Marco was about to form a response, but Agatha didn’t wait. She moved swiftly, her years as a Talon guiding her movements; it was always like riding a bike she thought. Marco, who was a fool not to draw any of the weapons he had on him, instead thinking he would simply knock her out...maybe, if time allowed, have his way with her before killing her, used his fists, thinking his size and strength were all he needed against a woman.

Agatha rushed forward and dropped to her knees at the last moment, just as she came up on Marco (she was thankful that the suede boots she was wearing came up just over her knees, which didn’t prevent her from scraping her knees up completely, but they did help. And her dress did rip up the side just like she knew it would...damn she thought.) She brought her arms up at the same time that
she let herself slide on the damp pavement, balling her hands into fists. Agatha snapped her right fist out at the last second, her knuckles connecting with Marco’s groin.

Agatha popped to her feet in the next beat, never once wobbling on her heeled boots. The moment she sprang back to her feet, Marco was dropping forward, covering his groin at the same time. Agatha lashed out, her fist connecting with his throat; Marco gasped and choked. She was fairly confident she had just broken his adam’s apple. Agatha then grabbed Marco by the back of his coat once she was on her feet again and threw him into the wall of the bar.

The man hit hard, leaving a smear of blood on the wall as he fell to the pavement. Agatha, angry and unwilling to leave a witness or a possible complication later, walked over to the now unconscious Marco and kicked him over onto his back.

The man was just passed out for a few seconds and blinked, trying to reorient when Agatha lifted one of her heeled boots over him.

“Sorry sugar…” Agatha’s voice dripped with sarcasm. “But I like gentlemen instead of crass little boys.”

With that Agatha brought the heel of her boot down, piercing Marco’s throat. She moved swiftly, her heel coming down in a quick series of four puncture wounds to his neck, insuring he would bleed out and quickly.

Agatha smiled. “Nothing like a little lesson in manners.”

* 

Harley took a step back when one of the men came toward her. He was tall, slender with hair so dark that it almost looked oily.

He grinned at her. “Gia wants you, but I bet he won’t mind if I have myself a little taste, since we’re cousins and all. The names Luca…so feel free to call it out for me.” He chuckled, pleased with himself.

Harley had her bracelet wrapped loosely around her hand, she could feel the weight of the gold spheres on the ends of the chain resting, one between her thumb and forefinger, the other loose in her palm, she only had to get herself into the right position to use it. She glanced over once at Jack—he was in the middle of fighting both Gia and another man, large, blonde guy…Gia, Luca and the third man all shared a similarity in appearance…Harley wouldn’t be surprised to find out they were all cousins.

Luca smiled and motioned his fingers at her in a come hither motion. “Whatcha gonna do? Fight me bambina? Come on bella, show Luca whatcha got.”

Harley grinned and giggled. “Oh, I’ll show you all right.”

She surprised him as she took a tiny hop and twisted her body, her foot coming up and around toward his head. He just barely was able to knock her heeled foot out of the way, his expression clearly showing he had not been expecting her to really fight back.

He knocked her foot out of the way with one fist while with the other he snapped out, catching Harley in the chin with a sideways punch that was hard enough to knock her off her feet. She landed hard, her back hitting the pavement with enough force to knock the air from her and just barely avoiding hitting her head on the pavement. Luca rushed over dropping to his knees thinking he was going to pin her to the ground, have a little fun, but Harley rolled away, gaining her feet in a smooth
movement. She came up and swung at him with her fists, getting two strikes in while Luca was still on his knees, but he swung up and hit her, knocking her back a step or two.

Harley winced as Luca laughed. ‘Come on bambina! Let’s just stop this, I don’t want to hurt that pretty face if I don’t have to.’

Harley spit some blood. Her bottom lip was cut and bleeding a trail of blood down her chin, the coppery taste of blood on her tongue, but she smiled. “Don’t you know buddy? I like it rough.”

The man grinned, but Harley started to swing her left arm. Luca started to weave to his left--falling for her feint--and Harley swung her foot out again. Her kick caught him across the face, her heel cutting a nasty, deep line across his cheek.

Luca hissed in surprise, jumping back from her and grabbing his face, looking down at his hand in disbelief as it came back bloody.

“You fucking bitch!” he snarled.

Harley only grinned.

He rushed her, taking several quick swings with his fists. Harley leaned back avoiding them at the same time kicking out at Luca, but he was prepared for her and took the kicks to his thighs or arms, preventing any real damage to his torso.

Harley hissed, taking a couple of swings at him with her fists, missing both times. Luca laughed at her and responded with a few punches in return. Harley barely had enough time to bring her forearms up, his fists hitting her arms. The impact sent a vibration of pain up her forearms and forced her back a step or two. Luca grabbed Harley’s right wrist; she leaned back, but he yanked her forward to hit her in the face. The impact bloodied her nose in a sharp spike of pain. Instead of trying to pull herself free, Harley twisted around to Luca’s left and punched him as hard as she could in his side, close to his kidney.

Luca cried out releasing Harley’s wrist, the impact of her punch caused him to bend forward. Harley yanked herself free, slammed her foot onto his thigh while at the same time putting her hands on his shoulders and lifting herself up onto the man’s shoulders. She grabbed his head with her hands and twisted her body as she tried to use her weigh and the strength of her thighs to throw him down.

Luca snarled in pain, but twisted along with Harley, reaching up to grab her knees, the entire action caused Harley to fall. She hit the pavement with her shoulder, but still was able to roll with the impact and continue the roll to her feet, thanking her years of gymnastics training--and her training with Jack--from preventing her from falling badly and hurting herself.

Luca somehow kept his feet, turning toward her. “I’m going to kill you, you fucking cunt!”

Harley grinned, her fists up. “You can try.”

Luca rushed her. Harley swung at his head, but missed. He grabbed her, spun her around, and slammed her up against the outside wall of the bar. Harley gasped in pain, the brick scraping her forehead.

Luca leaned in close. “First I’m going to fuck you, then I’m going to kill you,” he hissed before licking her cheek.

Harley snarled throwing her head back, the back of her skull slamming against his eye. Luca cursed loudly, his hold on her loosening as she slammed her head back a second time to connect with his
Harley twisted around and punched him in his nose, then dropped to her hands as he stumbled back. She brought her leg up and around, the sharp black heel catching him once more in the face as she came back up to a standing position. As he staggered back a step, she kicked him in the knee causing the man to scream as the front point of her shoe hit him right in the soft part of his knee under the kneecap. Luca cried out again, dropping to that knee, Harley grabbed his arm by the wrist when he struggled to swing at her from his awkward half-kneeling position, her fist connecting with the soft part of his elbow; he cried out again. Harley grinned viciously as she took a step back, flung out her right hand, the gold chain dropping down, the gold ball at the end catching the street lamps light for a moment as she whipped the chain around. She snapped the chain out, the sphere striking him in the face. Harley danced around the man until she was behind him, using the chain with the grace and skill of a ribbon dance as she moved behind him, wrapping the chain around his neck and caught the end of the chain at the same time.

Harley wrapped the chain twice around her left hand and once more around her right and she yanked back in the next instant, putting all her weight into leaning backwards.

Luca started to gasp and choke, his fingers reaching up to struggle at the chain, but it was thin and well-crafted, cutting into the flesh of his neck; he couldn’t get a hold of it as Harley snarled and pulled it tighter.

She yanked harder as Luca’s eyes bulged and he gurgled incoherently. His grunting and choking sounds faded, but she kept pulling, the chain demonstrating its worth by not breaking. Harley held it a few moments longer even after his hands dropped, and his weight started to pull her down before she stepped back and with a flourish, unwrapped the chain from around his neck.

Harley smiled and blew a stray lock of hair from out of her face.

* 

Frost’s head snapped back, causing the big man to stumble. The ginger then grabbed him by the throat and drove Frost to the pavement. Frost hit hard, his head bouncing, momentarily causing a wave of dizziness and confusion as pain radiated from the impact.

The ginger grinned, his lips busted, his teeth bloody and his nose bleeding from the beating that Frost had given him. He laughed as he held the point of his knife over Frost’s eye.

“I wonder how long it will take me to dig your eye out.” The ginger sneered.

Frost grabbed the man by the shoulders, but both men turned when Agatha snarled.

“Get your hands off my man.”

Suddenly Agatha was on top of the ginger. She wrapped her arms under his and hauled back, yanking the man off of Frost. Once Frost was free, he twisted onto his side, swinging his leg around and knocking the ginger’s legs out from under him. Both the ginger and Agatha fell to the pavement. The ginger struggled and rolled back using his elbow to smack Agatha in the face before he was on his feet again and going for Frost.

Frost got to his feet and rushed the other man, but the ginger pulled out his gun. Frost didn’t wait or stop, he just reacted and kicked the man’s hand, who got off a shot, but it went wild when Frost’s foot connected, the kick hard enough that the ginger lost hold of his gun.

(The sound of the shot had a couple of people inside the bar looking outside, one of them hurriedly
went to grab Big Mama, though no one called the police.)

Agatha rushed over and grabbed the man’s arm and pulled it out. She straddled his arm, twisting the limb around as she rolled forcing the ginger to the pavement the two of them twisting about until Agatha was on her back, her legs around the ginger’s neck, his one arm stretched out across her chest. She rolled until she was sitting up, her legs still locked around his neck. She snarled and slammed her elbow into his stomach.

Frost rushed over and kicked the ginger in the face, smashing the man’s nose further. Agatha yanked back and squeezed her legs tighter as Frost moved from kicking him in the face to kicking the man in the stomach until he felt a rib break.

Agatha squeezed, pulling on his arm until it snapped. The man would have cried out but her thighs were choking off his air until she hauled back one more time which was accompanied by the loud sound of something snapping and the man stopped moving.

Agatha exhaled heavily as she released the man’s now still body.

Frost hurried over to her putting his hand out to her. Agatha took it, hopping to her feet as Frost hauled her up.

He blushed, but he was smiling as he said softly. “Your man?”

Agatha chuckled. “Don’t let it go to your head or anything.”

*

Jack grinned and took several steps back from Gia just as another man came up beside him after Jack had tossed Gia’s gun away. He glanced once toward his wife, he could see her facing off against another one of Gia’s men. He felt a momentary twinge, wanting to go to her side and help, but he also trusted Harley to take care of herself. He had seen her in action enough to know that his wife could deal with one thug. So instead he focused on the two men in front of him. Gia Maroni and his “bodyguard” he assumed.

Jack smiled. “Two against one? Either you’re more scared of me than you’re acting or you’re just an asshole...I’m voting for the asshole, though I suspect that you’re an asshole regardless...I would tell you to go fuck yourself, but I’m pretty sure you’d be disappointed.”

Gia stared at Jack confused. “What?”

Jack groaned. “I don’t know why I tell jokes to the ignorant.”

Gia hissed. “Shut up! Mattia--kill him!!”

Mattia was a sandy haired blond, tall with a nose far too big for his face, who--when he smiled--displayed a mouth full of yellowed and crooked teeth. “You got it Gia.”

Jack made a face. “I’m guessing the mob doesn’t offer dental. Yikes!”

Mattia pulled a knife out that was strapped at his hip. The knife, Jack noted, was an automatic spring locking folding knife with a four inch blade.

Jack laughed flipping his jacket out of his way and pulling the Bowie knife he had bought not that long ago and held up up in front of him with a grin. “Oh look, you brought an idiot to a knife fight.”
Mattia frowned looking as confused as Gia which caused Jack to moan loudly and roll his eyes. “I’m surrounded by idiots,” he lamented.

Mattia hissed. “Shut up asshole.”

“Ouch. Now that just really hurt,” Jack said with a grin.

Mattia lunged at Jack, twisting his entire body as he swung the blade around. Jack was momentarily caught off guard by the man’s speed and didn’t quite move out of the way in time. Mattia’s blade caught Jack in the face, the blade cutting a shallow two inch line across Jack’s cheek.

Jack took several steps back, reaching up to touch his cheek looking down at the sight of blood on the tips of his fingers with a smile.

“Well done.” He nodded with a smirk. “Now it’s my turn.”

Jack moved swiftly, doing a complete spin that resembled a dancer’s spin using the entire length of his arm as part of the blade he held. He caught Mattia across the chest, his blade cutting easily through the man’s shirt, leaving a thin line of blood when the tip of his blade pierced skin. Jack twirled again, caused Mattia to stumble as the blond tried to avoid the next swing of the blade, but Jack’s knife caught the man in the shoulder, cutting deep. Mattia yelled in surprise as blood blossomed on his shoulder.

Gia, seeing his cousin hurt, yelled. “You mother fucker!”

He yanked out his own knife, a stiletto switchblade, performing the entire complicated flip of his wrist to snap the blade out as he smiled.

Jack laughed. “You really are a sort of mobster stereotype aren’t you Gia?”

“Okay ya pillow biter, I’m gonna cut your face off and slice your dick off.” Gia snarled.

Jack chuckled. “You really are hung up on being a homophobe aren’t you Gia? Is there something you want to tell the rest of us? I really can’t stand people who are so narrow-minded.”

Jack laughed as Gia slashed at him wildly, his attack lacking the focus of his cousin Mattia. Jack easily dodged Gia’s blade. The man’s anger-filled hack and slash attack lacked any sort of coordination, but while Jack’s attention was focused on Gia, Mattia had recovered from the initial shock of being cut and was trying to attack Jack from his left, doing his best to force Jack into a wedge so that he and Gia could flank Jack.

Jack, his arm working back and forth as he blocked the blades, tried to keep enough space for him to maneuver, but the two men were slowly working him around so that his back was to the wall. The sound of metal clinking against metal filled the space in which Jack was fighting. Despite the pain he was feeling from the cuts and nicks Jack was receiving on his fingers and hands, Jack was keeping both opponents at bay.

Jack and Gia slashed at each other, blocking with their arms. Jack went in low and cut Gia across his thigh, while Gia lunged past Jack, slicing deeply along Jack’s hip. There was another wild flurrying of slashes, each man blocking again, Jack getting a few under arm cuts on Gia’s arm, the other man slicing Jack along his forearm and once along his biceps before they pushed away from each other again.

Gia, clearly frustrated, came at Jack with another wild slashing attack, his anger making each of his attacks brutal, though without real focus. Jack surprised him by reaching out just as Gia decided to
lunge instead of slashing. Gia led with his hand holding the knife, but Jack reached out and startled the man by grabbing Gia’s wrist with his left hand. Jack’s fingers were like a vice around Gia’s wrist, digging painfully into the mobster’s flesh. Gia’s knife was pointed at Jack’s thigh, and the two men, for a heartbeat, were caught in a moment of intense staring at each other. Gia looked both confused and angry while Jack simply smiled.

Gia snarled, sweat pouring down the sides of his face as he pushed against Jack, but he wasn’t able to move. Jack was perspiring, but his expression remained calm, with just a hint of amusement.

Gia and Jack just looked at each other, Jack smiled while Gia was hissing with the effort of trying to break Jack’s hold.

Jack leaned in closer to Gia, whispered.

“You are not going to make it out of this Gia. I’m going to kill you.”

Gia sneered and hissed back, spittle flying from between his lips. “You think my brother is going to let you take Panessa’s territory? He is going to drive you into the ground, you pussy.”

The two men were shaking with tension while Jack laughed at Gia. “You really should work on your insults, but I suppose you’ll never get the chance since you’ll be dead.”

Jack sensed movement from his side, his eyes sliding toward Mattia who chose that moment to swing his blade at Jack. Jack glanced back at Gia.

Jack snarled and released his hold on Gia. He twisted his body in an attempt to block Mattia’s attack which left him open to Gia.

Gia grinned viciously. Jack’s movement didn’t allow Gia to hit where he had hoped, but his knife did cut deeply along the side of Jack’s thigh; the sharp blade sliced through the fabric of Jack’s suit as Jack was forced to turn and block Mattia’s assault.

Jack snarled in pain as the burn of the knife parted flesh. He hissed through his teeth at the same time he was finishing the twist he had started. He blocked Mattia’s knife, forcing the man’s arm down and used his now damaged and bleeding leg. Jack used his whole body for the twisting kick, lifting it up his leg, his knee connected with Gia’s hip.

The impact carried enough force to knock the man sideways and almost off his feet while at the same time Jack finished the spin, bringing his leg around and kicking out to catch Mattia in his knee.

Jack completed the spin low and sloppily, coming down wrong on his leg which, as pain spiked hot and white through him, made Jack lose his balance.

Both men let out their own shared gasps of pain from Jack’s assault. The two men staggered back from Jack while Jack moved away from them, each trying to provide enough of a space to fight again.

Gia surprised Jack by lunging in to throw a punch at Jack’s face, while at the same time trying to slash at Jack’s stomach.

Jack grabbed Gia’s left wrist with his off hand, crouched and spun on the balls of his feet to throw Gia over his shoulder. Gia landed on the pavement in a painful heap. Gia gasped for breath and did not getting up.

Mattia growled. “Motherfucker!”
He lunged and slashed at Jack. Jack leapt back, the knife slashing the air in front of him, though the blade’s tip nearly sliced into Jack’s stomach. Jack threw a punch, but Mattia slapped his hand away. The two men slashed at each other, their blades clinking together once, twice. The tip of Jack’s blade cut across Mattia’s arms while Mattia’s knife opened several wounds across Jack’s fingers. The two men circled each other, both bleeding from multiple small wounds.

Jack was grinning. “I have to say, you’re better than I thought.”

Mattia smiled just a little. “So are you. Wouldn’t have pegged you as good in a fight pretty boy.”

Jack smiled wide. “Why thank you dickless.”

Mattia’s eyes widened and he took several quick slashes at Jack.

Jack blocked, catching Mattia under his arm with his own and forcing the knife up. Mattia moved in closer, but Jack once more forced his knife arm up, ducked under Mattia’s arm, which forced the blade upward while Jack moved in closer trying to stab the other man in the stomach. But Mattia grabbed Jack’s hand with the blade around the wrist. For several intense seconds the two men struggled, pitting strength against strength. Jack struggled, hissing, but was able for force Mattia’s arm down and bring his knee up at the same time, giving Mattia two quick thrusts in the stomach with his knee which forced the other man to let go of Jack’s wrist.

Jack grabbed the man by the back of his jacket, pinned Mattia’s knife holding arm up and behind him. Jack kicked the man a couple of more times with his knees while Mattia struggled and shoved the both of them around while Jack tried to stab him.

Together both men spun around and broke apart. Mattia lunged forward at his opponent, but Jack’s left hand snapped out to hit Mattia in the throat. The man choked and stumbled backwards a few steps, but he quickly recovered once more lunging at Jack. Jack grabbed at Mattia, wrapping his fingers around the man’s jacket, with Mattia doing to the same to Jack. The two men struggled, holding onto each other, neither one able to get their blades down to stab the other. They moved back and forth like they were riding the waves on a boat, each struggled to get enough space to stab while holding the other man back. Jack kicked at Mattia’s knees, hitting him, but not with enough strength to knock the man down. Mattia did the same, kicking at Jack’s shins or knees, but neither man could get enough power into their kicks to put the other man down. They struggled intensely for a few moments, trying to use their blades or feet. They were both bleeding, sweating, hissing and grunting with effort of trying to kill each other.

Jack broke his hold on Mattia. For a moment the gangster thought Jack was going to step back. For whatever reason he didn’t react in time before Jack kicked the man in the stomach, forcing Mattia to stumble backwards and against the wall. Jack didn’t hesitate; he rushed in and thrust his knife straight at Mattia’s chest, the blade sliding in easily right under Mattia’s breastbone.

* Gia groaned, his chest and back hurting, the forced exhale of air made it hard for him to catch his breath. He could see Mattia and Jack fighting. He began to push himself up, slowly standing, before leaning over and searching around for his blade which he had dropped, when something slammed into his back nearly knocking him forward. He didn’t react at first; confusion, his wounds, and the lack of breath made him slow as a weight hit his back, followed by something thin wrapped around his neck, and a pair of legs locking around his middle.

A feminine voice next to his ear hissed. “You hurt my puddin. I’m going to send you to a deep, dark place.” The statement was followed by a giggle.
Harley wrapped her garrotte several times around Gia’s neck and pulled backwards. She held onto him, her feet locked around each other, her thighs squeezing tightly as she dug the chain into his throat. Gia struggled, staggered to his feet. At first he reached for the garrotte, but his fingers couldn’t catch onto anything. Just as Luca had discovered, the chain was thin but stronger than flesh. His fingers scratched at his own throat trying to get a hold of something, but unable to feel the chain. Next Gia reached behind him as the pain intensified. Harley was forced to thrash her head from side to side as Gian’s nails scratched at her face. Gia continued to try and grab a hold of Harley, but he finally reached back enough that he was able to grab handfuls of her hair. She snarled in pain as the mobster pulled on her hair trying to yank her over his shoulder. Harley held on tightly squeezing the chain as hard as she could. She gritted her teeth against the pain of her hair being pulled, but she would endure it...she was going to kill this guy for hurting her husband. She took a deep breath and tightened her grip with a cry of effort.

Gia dropped down to his knees. Spittle was flying from his mouth as he struggled for breath making strange wheezing and sputtering sounds, his face turning red and his eyes bulging. Harley pulled back harder and screamed as she struggled while he yanked at her hair.

“JUST DIE ALREADY!!!”

Gia struggled, but his arms suddenly dropped to his sides releasing her hair and he fell forward taking her with him his face smashing into the pavement. Harley’s knees struck the pavement too, the entire action nearly dislodging her. Harley went with him, but she held onto the garrotte snarling.

“GAAAAAH!!!”

She continued to strain, sitting up on her knees, continuing to pull back, the chain now slowly slicing into the man’s neck. She didn’t even notice the blood forming as she continue to strangle him until a hand brushed back her hair and she heard Jack’s voice, soft, soothing.

“You can let go now Harley.”

Harley gasped letting go of her garrotte and looking up to see Jack smiling down at her. Harley made a small squeak before jumping up and throwing herself into his arms.

Jack caught her. He was bleeding from multiple cuts and nicks, but he looked relatively unharmed.

Agatha came over, her arm around Frost’s waist looking around at the dead men. “Well that just went to fucking hell fast. Maroni is going to want to kill you now for sure Jackie.”

Jack sighed. He started to open his mouth to reply when a deep voice answered.

“I know a way we can get rid of the bodies. Sal Maroni won’t know what happened to his brother and cousins…”

They all turned to see Big Mama standing in the doorway of her bar. They could see a few people behind her. She motioned at the bodies looking back over her shoulder.

“All right boys, let’s clean this up before the Gotham PD decides to show up. I doubt that fight went totally without any notice. And you four--get in here and let Mama patch you up.”

* 

Jack winced. He was sitting in the back in Big Mama’s “kitchen” with his boxers pulled down a few inches, exposing his hips as he sat on a stool nursing a strawberry rose sangria (with strawberries floating in the pink drink) while Big Mama stitched up the wound on his hip. She was humming “No
Tears Left to Cry” by Ariana Grande, which was playing on the old CD player behind her while she worked. She tapped her foot in time to her humming while she worked, a pair of sparkling pink cat rimmed glasses perched on the end of her nose as she carefully pulled the thread through the wound. Jack made a face and took a sip of his pink drink.

Harley was sitting on Jack’s other side and held his hand (which had several bandaidps on it as well as more on his wrist, arm…) while eating the strawberries from her own rose sangria. Jack took a breath and laid his head against Harley’s shoulder while Big Mama finished up. He had a bandaid on his cheek covering the wound, another scar to go with his collection Jack had mused. Harley reached up and gently stroked her fingertips along his jaw. Jack closed his eyes relaxing into her touch.

Agatha was curled against Frost, her eyes closed. She looked a little worn in her torn dress, her scraped up knees bandaged along with a bandaid or two on her knuckles.

Frost had his arm around her shoulders holding her snuggly against his side. He was sipping from a soda watching while Big Mama work.

Big Mama had just tied off the stitch and sat back, examining her work before laying a clean white bandage over the wound when a young man stepped into the back. He was dressed in jeans, biker boots and a t-shirt that read “Relax the guitar player is here” across the chest. His hair, like Big Mama’s, was dyed pink.

“We took the bodies to that old opening into the sewer Mama. Doubt anyone will ever find them down there,” the young man said while glancing around at the group of them.

Jack chuckled. “Too bad there are no crocodiles down there…at least not anymore.”

He smirked glancing at Harley. She knew exactly to who he was referring and giggled softly.

Mama nodded. “Good, thank you Robin dear. You guys get the bleach out front?”

Robin nodded. “Sure did. Saw the cops drive by…they didn’t see us…not sure if they were called or just on routine patrol.”

Mama nodded. “Don’t worry about it sweetie. Thank you.”

Robin nodded, smiled at everyone before he disappeared back out front. Mama turned and started to gather up her first aid kit. “There you go. Whew….” Mama smiled. “I think that is some of my best stitch work there. Still gonna scar, but it will be a nice even, thin scar.”

Harley giggled leaning up to kiss Jack’s cheek. “Don’t worry puddin, I like scars.”

She placed her fingers on Jack’s chin, turning him toward her to kiss him on the lips. Jack smiled kissing her softly, turning his body toward her like a moth attracted to a flame. For a moment the world around them was forgotten as their kiss deepened, Jack reaching out to caress her throat.

Mama smiled standing up and clipping her kit shut, then walked over to one of the kitchen cabinets. “Well, Maroni is gonna be pissed that Gia has gone missing with his crew…I can’t believe that little shit jumped you guys like that without Sal…” She started to shake her head in disbelief then stopped and muttered. “What I am saying? No…I can believe it. Gia was always trying to prove himself to Sal. If he thought he could earn points by offing you, yeah, he would have been stupid enough to try.” She walked over to the sink and washed her hands. “Good riddance to bad fish. That little shit was always hanging around here, harassing my customers, trying to squeeze more money out of me.”
Mama walked over and picked up her drink that she had left on the cabinet, took a long drink of the pink liquid before she spoke again.

“If Sal ever finds out...this is gonna be bad,” she said with a shake of her head glancing at Jack. “I just met you and your girl sweetie, but I can tell you, I already like you better. I would hate to see that two of you end up dead over this.”

Jack had stood up and was trying to ease back into his ripped and bloody slacks with a slight wince. Big Mama set her drink down and came over nearly snatching the pants from him. “Leave those, I’ll burn them. I’ll get Robin to grab you something clean. You’re about his size.” She gave him a wink before she walked over to the doorway that led out front to the bar.

“Robin honey! I need some pants pronto.”

Jack smiled gratefully. “Thank you for your help Big Mama, on both fronts.”

She waved him off. “It’s fine. You take care of the drugs and Maroni...we’re square.”

Harley kissed Jack on the nose and stood up, walking over to Big Mama and throwing her arms around the muscular woman. “Thank you Big Mama.”

She looked shocked, then smiled reaching down to hug Harley.

“Yeah, I’m definitely rooting for you guys,” Mama said with a blush.

*

Two Days Later.

Bruce sighed as he finished dressing, frowning in the bathroom mirror as he adjusted the tie. It was his third tie this morning. He was trying to look like the perfect authoritative figure, while at the same time wanting to look approachable. It had been two days since he had invited Richard Grayson into his home and in those two days, Bruce had yet to spend any time with the young man. If he were honest with himself it was because, while he wanted to help the young man, he didn’t know how...he wasn’t sure what to say or do for him. He was beginning to wonder if he had made a bad decision.

That was when there was a light knock at his bedroom door.

“Come in,” Bruce called out from the bathroom. Bruce glared at his tie and sighed quickly walking out of the bathroom and into the bedroom.

The door opened slowly and Alfred slipped inside. He smiled when he saw that Bruce was up and dressed. Today Bruce had chosen a light grey suit for spring with a crisp white shirt and a slightly darker grey tie. Bruce smiled at Alfred as he walked past him.

“Morning Alfred.”

“Ah, good Master Bruce. Master Dick is downstairs waiting for you at the dining room table. He is nibbling on some toast while he waits for breakfast sir...”

Bruce sighed walking over to sit down on the side of the bed, reaching down to pick up one of his black dress shoes and slid it on before lacing it.

“I’m not sure what to say to him,” Bruce admitted.
Alfred frowned. “Sir, if I may…”

Bruce nodded for him to continue while picking up his other shoe.

Alfred nodded. “Just be genuine with him sir. You have both experienced a similar loss; use that as your common ground to communicate with each other. He needs a mentor, someone to guide him along the path that he now must take on his own.”

Bruce stood up after tying his shoes. “I’m not sure I know how to be a mentor.”

Alfred smiled. “Sir, just...be yourself...he isn’t looking for a father--he is looking for a friend, a port in the storm...be that for him Master Bruce. Be his friend first, someone he can come to…”

Bruce nodded then frowned. “I should have been that for Jack,” he said softly, so softly that Alfred almost didn’t hear him.

“Sir…”

“I screwed up so badly with Jack, Alfred...he...he fucking hates me now.” Bruce sighed running a hand over the back of his neck. “I should have been there for him after our parents died. Instead, when Jack needed a big brother, I was so focused on my crusade, my feelings, my wants...I never considered Jack’s.” Bruce ran a hand through his hair. “I just...that night at the circus...for a moment…” Bruce sighed. “For a moment we were brothers again...then just like that...gone again. I know he’s in trouble Alfred...I just...I don’t know if I should try finding him or let him come to me or what. Now I took on this kid...I don’t know what I was thinking…” Bruce muttered.

Alfred stepped closer and laid a hand on the younger man’s shoulder.

“Sir, you saw yourself in this boy. The criminals of Gotham took his parents from him and you saw a chance to help. Just...be yourself…”

Bruce sighed. “That’s just it Alfred. How do I be myself?”

Alfred smiled. “How about we start with breakfast.”

Dick looked up as Bruce walked into the dining room. He had seen Bruce Wayne a couple of times as the man was coming and going, but this was going to be their first time really speaking. Dick hadn't decided yet what he was going to do...stay or go. He still wanted to be emancipated, but after that...where would he go? In two days, however, he had grown to really like Alfred. It was like having a grandfather, something Dick had never had and he found himself reluctant to give that up. He had also been allowed to start school yesterday at Gotham Academy, something he had never done before...he had been homeschooled all his life. And, he had enjoyed it. Granted, he wasn’t so naive to think that one day at the school, which had been great, was always going to be great, but he found that he liked the atmosphere of a real school. He also liked having his own room...an actual room.

Though he thought guiltily, he would give all of it up to have his parents back…

But as the dining room door opened and Bruce Wayne stepped through, Dick couldn’t help but be impressed. The dude, Dick thought, had a presence about him.

Bruce walked over and put his hand out to Dick. “Richard.”
Dick took the offered hand. “Bruce.”

Bruce smiled at the use of his first name as he sat down at the table across from Dick.

Alfred came in a few moments later with a tray carrying eggs, bacon, muffins and juice.

Bruce waited until breakfast was set out before he turned to Dick.

“So, let’s talk.”

*  
Harley stretched her arms over her head with a smile, her blonde curling waves were a mess, some across her face obscuring her view, the rest spread out over the pillows. She giggled happily rolling over only to realize that Jack wasn’t in bed with her. She frowned and sat up to look around. Jack was nowhere to be seen in their new bedroom. Harley made a face. Where was he? she asked herself silently. She threw her legs over the side of the bed. She was naked as she walked across the room grabbing up her pink terry cloth bathrobe and slipped it on. She walked around the bedroom, but there was no sign of her husband. She did find his lighter and pack of cigarettes sitting on the bedside table. Harley frowned picking them up. He didn’t usually go anywhere without them. She slipped both into the pockets of her robe and set off to look for her husband.

She hurried down the stairs and into the kitchen where the smell of smoke lingered like a ghost. She walked into the living room, but she still didn’t see Jack anywhere. Harley stood with her brow knitting and twisted her lips to the side in thought. Where could he be, she wondered. They weren’t holding “interviews” for gang membership until this evening…

She chewed her bottom lip before finally deciding to go out into the park. She walked over to the front door where she had stashed some tennis shoes, slipped them on and went out in her robe to find her husband.

*  
She walked down one of the paths into the heart of the amusement park. The air was still nippy, but she could tell it would warm up into a pleasant day, one of the few that Gotham had in the early spring. She was just starting to become worried when she heard the sound of calliope music playing softly, almost creepily in the distance. Harley caught her bottom lip between her teeth turning around as she tried to figure out where the sound was coming from. It was hard to determine since the music seemed to echo. As Harley turned in a circle, she happened to notice one of the little quaint street signs that had once decorated the park, giving the guests directions to different rides.

The paint on the wooden signs was peeling away and only a few of them still had their names visible, but one of them pointed down the remains of a path indicating that the carousel was down that path.

Harley stood there listening. She couldn't be sure, but that might be carousel music. She shrugged and hurried down the path.

*  
When Harley arrived at the end of the path, she could see that the carousel was indeed active, the ride slowly spinning in a circle while the happy (and slightly creepy) calliope/organ music drifted through the air. The carousel was large, with garish colors, was brightly lit even in the early morning light. She was impressed that Alex’s workers had not only gotten the ride working, but they had also taken the time to clean it. The colors were bright and cheerful, the gold trim glittered from the glow
of the large light bulbs that surrounded the carousel along with the glint of sunlight in the Gotham sky.

She could see bright, cheerful colors of the animals: tigers, peacocks, bison and other animals with colorful and intricately designed saddles moved up and down as they sailed by, mixed in with more mystical creatures such as dragons, unicorns and hippocampus.

As Harley watched the animals go by, she saw Jack. He was riding on the back of a dragon; the carousel creature was a brilliant greenish yellow with a curving two prong tail and a set of tiny wings just behind the painted saddle. The cat like mouth was open in a roar and there was gold trim throughout the figure.

Jack was holding onto the gold pole that ran through the animal, his cheek leaning against the pole as he stared off into space. She could see that his hair was flopping down over his forehead, he was wearing a pair of evergreen colored slacks, a pair of dress shoes without socks and a white and brown checked dress shirt, untucked and unbuttoned. The carousel moved in a circle, the animal going up and down in a slow rhythm. To Harley it almost looked as if Jack had started to get dressed, then in a daze had simply walked out here to ride the carousel. She frowned watching him disappear as the carousel circled around, then reappear a few seconds later.

Harley moved closer. She waited a couple of beats, until Jack came around again before she leapt onto the carousel, just barely grabbing onto one of the unicorns to prevent herself from falling off when her sneaker slipped on the metal floor.

She pulled herself up and used the animals and their moving poles to make her way over to Jack who hadn’t reacted at all to her presence.


Jack was still staring off. His blue eyes looked far away, unfocused. Harley frowned. It was a little frightening the way he looked so removed.

“Puddin?” Harley tried again, but with no response. She put her hand on his leg, squeezing softly. “Puddin?”

Jack blinked then smiled when he saw her. “Hey pumpkin.”

“Why are you out here puddin?” Harley took hold of the pole of Jack’s animal and turned herself so that she was facing him. She held onto the pole loosely as the animals moved up and down.

Jack shrugged. “Bad dream...I was getting dressed, then just decided to come out here.”

Harley frowned. “Puddin, you should have woke me up.”

Jack smiled reaching out to caress her cheek. “You looked so pretty sleeping sweets, I couldn’t wake you up.”

Harley leaned into his touch, closing her eyes. “What was the bad dream about?”

Jack frowned dragging his fingertips along her jaw to her chin before he took hold of the pole again. “It was odd pumpkin...like really strange. Batman was in my dream.”

He smiled oddly at Harley. “It was so...weird. Batman...he killed me in the dream Harley.”

Harley frowned reaching over to caress his thigh. “But Batman doesn’t kill people, Puddin.”
“I know that...but...it was like I knew him Harley...like…” Jack shook his head. “The even weirder thing was that Batman turned into Bruce just before he did it too. And it seemed so natural that Batman would turn into my brother.” Jack smiled. “Think I’m crazy sweets?”

Harley giggled softly and squeezed his knee. “Maybe just a little puddin, but that’s one of the things I like about you.” She didn’t say anything but she wondered if Jack was telling her all of the dream, there seemed to be more, but he said nothing.

Jack grinned and leaned against the pole, his cheek pressed against the metal as he whispered playfully. “Flirt.”

Harley grinned wider. “Oh I haven’t even begun to flirt.”

She pulled the tie on her robe and let it fall so that her robe gradually slipped apart. Jack watched as little bits of smooth flesh were shown, the terry cloth robe hinted at the fact that Harley was wearing nothing underneath.

Jack reached forward and eased the robe wider with the tips of his fingers. “Well, well, look at you running out here to find me while wearing nothing but a robe and some tennis shoes…”

Harley giggled and stepped over to the horse next to Jack’s dragon and swung herself onto it. She yelped once she was on it squeezing her legs together for a moment.

“Oh that’s cold!!”

Jack laughed. “Well, that’s what you get for getting up on that thing naked.”

Jack jumped down and walked over lifting Harley up and off the horse. Harley squealed and threw her legs around him. He laughed wrapping his arms around her, his hands under her rear and lifted her up as Harley draped her arms over his shoulders. He pulled her closer, laying his chin between her breasts as he held her up.

“I don’t know how I can ever have a bad dream with you around Harls,” he said softly, his warm breath tickling the fine hairs on her skin, his fingers squeezing into her rear before one hand slid up her back, caressing her spine. She smiled down at him, brushing her hands through his hair.

“I love you puddin…” She leaned in and kissed him deeply, her tongue moving in a soft caress against his. Jack walked with her, at the same time Harley slid down his body just a little, adjusting the grip of her legs around his waist. Jack purred as he walked with her, the sensation of his movement along with the turning of the carousel was strange. Jack settled her up against the middle wall of the carousel. He kissed her hard, his mouth demanding as he used the wall behind her to hold her up, sliding his hands along her hips, then across her thighs.

Harley groaned against his mouth, reaching down to grab his dress shirt and force it down off his shoulders, her robe doing to the same, falling off her shoulders. Jack pressed his body against hers, holding her up while he let the dress shirt fall down his arms, shaking it free with Harley helping to shove it the rest of the way. Jack dropped one of Harley’s legs, reached down between them to unfasten his slacks, pushing both them and his boxers down to his thighs. He lift her up and slammed her back up against the middle of the carousel, his mouth attacking hers just as Harley let out a surprised, but pleased gasp.

Harley moaned, grabbing fistfuls of his hair as she licked his mouth, running her tongue up along his cheek before returning to his mouth once more.

Jack growled, positioning her, hauling one of her legs up over his arm, allowing her other leg to
drop, while he grabbed her throat with his other hand, pressing her back against the wall just after he shoved himself deep inside her, letting out a deep moan of pleasure as he buried his erection deep into her wet warmth, feeling her body close around him. The calliope music from the carousel nearly drowned out their mutual moans.

The groan she elicited from Jack came from deep in his chest. His fingers squeezed just enough to make Harley groan in delight. He rolled his hand over her jaw, his fingers pressing into her cheek before brushing her lips. Harley snapped her teeth, catching one of his fingers. She sucked on his forefinger, making Jack hiss as he watched her face and thrust upward into his wife.

Harley’s groan of pleasure mixed with Jack’s as her fingers dug into his shoulders, arching back against the wall behind her, her eyes squeezing close for a moment as she felt him deep inside her making her body slide against the back wall that housed the intricate machinery that ran the carousel.

Jack adjusted his hold on her, thrusting his hips upward, pressing deeply into her, his hips moving in an undulating wave. He pulled his fingers away from her mouth, traveling up her face. She could feel the cool dampness of her saliva on her cheek as Jack slid his hand along her cheek before he moved up her face until he could grab a fist full of her hair.

Jack grabbed her hair just firmly enough to limit the way she could move her head, but not to pull her hair.

Harley gasped and whimpered as Jack slid into her and nearly all the way out, her fingers brushing his hair. “Oh Jack...uh...”

She came, nearly losing her balance when the erotic wave of pleasure rolled over her body. She held onto Jack riding out her climax while Jack continued his firm, deliberate thrusts. When he felt her starting to slide down, Jack lifted her up a bit.

Jack growled, thrusting hard before he grabbed her off the wall, dropping to his knees, careful to remain inside his wife. He licked her chin at the same that he grabbed the back of her head and laid her back careful not to bunch the bathrobe under her. Once he had her down, Jack reached back and lifted her legs under his arms and settled them on to his shoulders.

He chuckled, kissing her calf as he whispered. “I love the tennis shoes baby.”

Harley moaned on a giggle, throwing her arms over her head, reaching behind her to wrap her hands around the pole of one of the carousel animals while Jack leaned into her.

She groaned. “I’m so glad puddin.”

Jack licked her mouth as he leaned forward, his hands on either side of her head as he forced her legs to her shoulders, growling playfully. “This may be my new favorite outfit of yours.”

Harley held onto the pole and Jack started to move with more purpose, growling and grunting as he fucked harder while the carousel slowly began to run down, the calliope music starting to play with that strange lulling drag which only made their sounds of love-making that much louder.

Harley cried out, arching her body with another climax her fingers turning white while she held onto the pole behind her. “Puddin!”

Jack grinned purring. “Mm...yes...baby...”

He liked to watch when she came. It wasn’t just a power trip knowing he could make her orgasm, no--he liked to watch her because she was beautiful and somehow she was his lover and no one
else’s.

He thrust so hard that the sound of his pelvis slapping against hers while hissing and grunting her name drowned out the last of the music. “Uh…Harley…”

He came hard, leaning into her, his forehead pressed against hers. Harley released the pole to hold him, watching his face. She liked to watch him orgasm just as much as he liked to watch her. Harley liked that moment of shared intimacy between them, but watching him brought with it a kind of peace, knowing she had and could bring him back from whatever dark place into which he would sometimes wander.

Jack eased her legs back slowly, though he didn’t pull out. He remained embedded inside her, but he wrapped his hands under her head.

He grinned. “That metal floor has got to be uncomfortable.”

Harley giggled. “A little, but I didn’t notice until now. Glad I had the robe on, that helped cushion me a bit.”

Jack chuckled. “I’m glad you had the robe on too. If anyone saw you wandering about this place naked, I would have to gouge their eyes out.”

Harley giggled gripping the sides of his face and tugging him down for a deep kiss. Jack made a soft moan of pleasure. When he pulled away from her, he murmured.

“Let’s go get dressed before Alex and the others show up.”

“Mm…good idea.” Harley giggled.

* 

Jack, dressed in a slimcut burgundy suit (which he had told Harley was a good color to wear to do interviews in, just in case he had to kill anyone, the blood was less likely to show up as clearly) with a white dress shirt and brown tie to match the brown wingtips he was wearing, sat next to Harley. She was dressed in a short red and white gingham dress, with flowy three-quarter sleeves along with a pair of red and white gingham t-strapped heels, her long blonde hair parted down the middle and worn loose. They were in one of the bumper cars, grinning as he spun the steering wheel and sent the car ramming into his aunt and Trope, the two women squealing accompanied by his aunt standing up in the car and throwing colorful insults his way.

Jack just laughed and gave his aunt the finger as he spun the car around.

The entire bumper car “room” had roughly fifteen cars, but only seven of them were occupied with Red Hood members (and Alex’s Dad). In attendance were Jason, Roxy, Duela, Alex and Alice, Alex’s father (who was still in town). Frost was standing near the entrance with a handful of people, roughly eleven, that had been “found” or “gathered” for Jack and Harley to “interview.”

Jack spun the car around when the alarm went off sounding that the cars were about to stop. He parked right in front of the entrance to the bumper cars and hopped out, jumping onto the platform next to Frost before turning on his toe and taking Harley’s hand, lifting her out of the car and into his arms before he turned to the men and women waiting anxiously to see what would happen next.

Jack grinned from ear to ear.

“Well now, let’s start the interviews, shall we?”
The sounds of Le Castle Vania “Awake” played over the bumper car area speakers as Jack, with his arm around Harley, walked over to where the gang had set up a long fold out picnic table. The table had a cloth over it and two folding chairs behind it. On the table were several plates of desserts such as lemon scones, lemon raspberry coffee cake, raspberry cheesecake puffs, and lavender shortbread cookies. There were also plates of food: bourbon cocktail meatballs, herbed cucumber bites, and several other tasty bite-size food.

A large punch bowl filled with raspberry lemonade had actual raspberries floating in it, as well as several bottles of wine such as Mulderbosch 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé Coastal Region and La Follette 2013 Pinot Noir North Coast. The entire thing looked like a setup for a garden party rather than a gang “interview” process taking place in an abandoned amusement park in front of a bumper car ride.

With Harley close by his side, Jack walked briskly over to the two chairs, pulled one out for Harley before taking the other one and sitting down. Frost’s gun was clearly visible where he stood to one side, while Agatha had pulled herself up on the edge of the railing that ran around the bumper car rink. She smiled as Frost handed her a glass of wine he had been holding for her. The rest of the gang lined up behind Jack and Harley in a half-moon circle, each eating and drinking, but each one was armed and ready to jump to defend Jack and Harley if needed.

Jack’s cigarettes and lighter had been sitting on the table in front of his seat. When he sat down, he picked the cigarettes up, drew one from the pack. Harley picked up his lighter and leaned over to light the cigarette for him. The people waiting to be interviewed just watched, all of them uncomfortable with the strange setup and the way Jack calmly continued to stare at them with his startling blue eyes. The bandage on his face was gone, showing the wounds on his cheek, that as far as Harley was concerned, the additional scar made her want to lick his face, his neck...and every other part of him she could get her hands on.

Jack took a long, deep drag on the cigarette, reached over to play with a lock of Harley’s hair while he stared at the gang potentials, his blue eyes moving slowly over the group of people.

Jack blew out a long line of smoke. “All right. Let’s start with the ones you recommended Frost, shall we?”

Frost nodded and walked over to the small group. Harley reached over to pick up a bottle of wine and two of several glasses sitting on the table. The wine had been opened earlier so she simply filled the two glasses, setting one near Jack while he spoke.

Frost motioned to five people who stepped forward. Frost introduced them. “This is Gus Floyd. He used to be part of the Gotham police force. He was busted several times for excessive force and stealing evidence to sell on the black market.”
Gus smiled. “I got sticky fingers and I don’t like stalkers. The kid was threatening some poor girl, but because his daddy was a member of the Gotham elite, he got off and I got thrown in jail. Screw Gotham for jailing me for actually trying to help someone.” Gus finished by shoving his hands into his front pockets.

Jack tapped a finger against his chin in thought. “The excessive force is fine...it’s the sticky fingers that worry me…”

Frost spoke up. “It was drugs Boss. But Gus here knows his way around drug dealers and the blackmarket and just as importantly, he ain’t a user. I thought he might be a big help with trying to track down that Giggles.”

Jack blew out a trail of smoke. “So you vouch for him?”

Frost glanced at Gus. “Yeah. We were beat cops together. We trusted each other to have each others backs...so yeah Boss, I vouch for him.”

Jack smiled, took another drag from his cigarette and a sip of wine before he spoke. “Good enough for me. Pumpkin?”

He turned to Harley who narrowed her eyes studying Gus. Gus smiled in greeting, but he didn’t stare overly long at her. Gus was short, maybe five feet four inches with short brown hair and a forgettable face, but he seemed genuine she thought. Time and actions would tell.

Harley smiled. “I’m good puddin.”

Jack beamed setting his elbows on the table taking a drag from his cigarette and blowing out a long trail of smoke while Harley reached under the table to squeeze his leg. “Okay--next?”

Frost smiled. “This is Clyde Destro and his girlfriend Angora Lapin. They both worked in the underworld in Metropolis. Clyde dealt with car thieves in Metropolis, Angora in arms dealing. They both came to Gotham to try and cut a niche out for themselves without luck. They both ran afoul of Cosa Nostra and ended up in jail. It's a long story Boss, but I got to know them both pretty good. They're good people with some skills we could use.”

Jack nodded sipping his wine doing his best not to jump as Harley’s hand traveled up his inner thigh. She dragged the tips of her nails along the inseam of his slacks until she reached his groin. Jack grinned as he spoke. “Mm...How would you like to work with a new up and coming arms dealer, Angora?”

Angora was petite, shorter than Gus, very slim, with short white hair and large grey eyes. She looked odd next to Clyde who was a big guy, around six feet tall, with long curly hair, an easy smile that made him look younger than what he probably was, and a large belly. They seemed like an odd couple.

She grinned in response. “I would totally love it. Though I tend to like to deal in heavier ordinance.”

Jack turned his attention to Clyde studying the man. He didn’t look like the sort of guy who would be quick and agile when stealing a car, but Jack admitted to himself, he wasn’t an expert...yet. At the same time that he was assessing Clyde, Harley’s hand cupped him, squeezing gently. Jack blinked several times as he controlled his expression before he spoke. “Cars, eh?”

Clyde grinned. “I can boost a car and be gone in sixty seconds, guaranteed.”

Jack looked at Frost who nodded. “That’s what his record claimed too.”
Clyde chuckled. “No one expects the fat guy to steal your lambo­rghini.”

Jack tossed his cigarette to the ground by his chair, smudging it out with the toe of his shoe grinning from ear to ear while Harley squeezed again. He was hard, almost painfully so as she squeezed and leaned her chin on his shoulder smiling as she watched Clyde and Angora. Jack leaned more heavily toward Harley as he giggled. “Oooh I have plans for you my friend!!”

Harley giggled along with him, taking a sip of her wine and massaging Jack. She could feel how hard he was. It made her groin ache.

Clyde walked closer to the table and put his hand out and Jack took it shaking his hand vigorously.

“Oh we are going to have some fun,” Jack said with a grin. After shaking his hand Jack turned to Frost. “Okay, who else you got?”

Frost motioned to the last two people in the small group he had separated from the rest of the “interviewees.” The two men were tall and lean with shaggy red-blonde hair and ready smiles. Frost introduced them. “These two are the Phelp twins, Sean and Connor. Sean is a grifter and Connor a fence. Met them in lock-up. Both are pretty damn good at what they do.”

Jack looked them up and down then laughed struggling to control his jump when Harley scraped her fingernails across the cloth over his bound erection. “You know, every circus needs a set of twins.”

The two men smiled at the same time. “Does that mean we’re hired?”

Jack glanced over at his wife who gave him a thumbs up.

Jack grinned. “That means you’re hired.”

* 

Agatha was watching the proceedings with a slight smile. She couldn’t help but think about how upset her brother would have been by all of this—not just Jack pursuing his criminal lifestyle, but the fact that his sons weren’t close. She knew that was something Thomas had wanted for his children since he and Agatha had never been close. She sighed to herself. She missed her brother and sister-in-law even if Thomas had been so tight laced she was surprised he had been able to breathe. Her mind wandered a bit, thinking about their murder. She remembered that time being so chaotic, the boys alone and her unable to return to Gotham for any length of time to take care of them, having to trust them to Alfred...

She had always been curious about the details of their deaths, but had never pursued an investigation after the cops arrested Joe Chill, though that had never set well with her.

Agatha sipped her wine, glanced up once at the same group of hopefuls and went still. There was a young man in a blue jacket, just to the back of the group here to interview for Jack’s gang. She saw nothing particularly special about him; he was youngish, maybe around thirty with short black hair, slim build, big nose, but other than that there was really nothing at all special about him, nothing that made him stand out from the crowd. He had the type of face and build that would simply vanish in a crowd. It wasn’t his looks that drew her attention at all. There was something about the way he was holding himself, the way his eyes followed the rest of the people here, a sort of quiet intensity that she somehow felt she knew, understood…

* 

Jack reached over picked up a scone and took a bite, giving Harley a playful wink, her hands still
cupping him, when Alex grabbed a young woman from the small group. She had a slight Korean
look to her features, appeared to be in her twenties with her hair shaved bald on one side, the rest of
her hair dyed lavender, wearing ripped up black leggings, combat boots and a deadmau5 t-shirt.
(Harley had noticed that Trope had been staring at the young woman all evening with a look of clear
interest. Harley smirked, thought it was cute. She recognized a blossoming crush when she saw one).
Alex grinned as he shoved the young woman forward.

“Okay Jack, this is Thea--Thea Volt. She used to work for Cobblepot doing his computers and
shit...I don’t fucking know, BUT I do know she did used to work for fucking Apple before she was
fired for some high tech fucking espionage. She almost got herself arrested, but managed to fucking
disappear before she could be caught. I was thinking that Trope could use some fucking help and
who knows? Batman and other costumed yo yo’s like their fucking toys, maybe we should start
thinking about adding some fucking toys too?”

Harley elbowed Jack leaning close to whisper in his ear. “I say we take her. Look at the way Trope
is looking at her!”

Jack glanced over at Trope, then at Thea who seemed to have just noticed Trope. The two young
women were both blushing and exchanging glances. Jack chuckled smiling at his wife.

“You are so adorable wanting to play matchmaker sweets,” Jack cooed giving Harley a kiss on the
cheek.

Harley giggled, but murmured back. “I also think Alex has a point. Who knows, maybe we could
use some high tech toys in the future? It might be fun to see what she comes up with.”

Jack smiled and touched the tip of her nose with a whisper. “Boop.”

Harley giggled as Jack nodded to Alex and Thea. “Okay, you’re in. Besides, I like your hair color.
Purple is one of my...Wait a minute!”

Alex and Thea frowned as Jack stood up, his chair scraping across the concrete floor, the music had
changed to La Roux’s “In for the Kill” (Le Castle Vania remix version), at the same time he yanked
his jacket quickly closed to hide his front, and walked over to them, but continued to walk past them.
Harley was watching her husband with a slight frown as he pulled a tall, slim, bald man from the
back and threw his arms around him.

*

Agatha had returned her attention to Jack, frowning slightly when he got up to go and throw his arms
around some bald man, she glanced over at the man she had picked out and frowned. He was
watching Jack, nothing out of the ordinary--except to Agatha. She narrowed her eyes. The man was
watching Jack with a quiet intensity that she didn’t like.

*

Jack laughed as he zeroed in on a bald man standing a little to the back, reaching out to grab Victor
Zsasz’s hand. “Zsasz! I didn't think I would see you again!”

Zsasz grinned at Jack. Zsasz was dressed in an all black suit, black shirt, black tie. He looked good,
had better color to his skin, his smile bright and ready as he answered Jack. “Well you know how it
is--you can take the boy out of Gotham, but this bitch of a city sucks you back in.”

Jack grinned still holding his hand. “So how did you end up here?”
Jack tugged Victor a little forward, dropping his hand and putting his arm around Zsasz’s shoulders and started to walk him over to the table where Harley was sitting at the table still.

Zsasz shrugged. “Just had my ear to the pavement.”

Jack laughed. “Well you are definitely part of the gang. You ever hear what happened to Jervis?”

Zsasz shrugged. “No. We parted ways not too long after escaping Arkham. Last I heard he was looking for Alice.”

Jack chuckled. “Ah yes...Alice.”

* Agatha frowned. She watched as the young, plain man moved forward. There was something about the way he held himself, the way he moved. And she knew exactly what he was if not who....

She hopped down and walked over to where Jack was standing by the table talking to the man he had embraced and Harley.

“Jackie,” she whispered, covering herself by picking up a bottle of wine, at the same time turning her back to the man she had been watching. Harley frowned looking up at Agatha; she could tell by her expression that something was bothering Jack’s aunt.

Jack grinned. “Auntie, let me introduce Victor Zsasz. He was a friend I made while I was still in Arkham. Victor, this is my Aunt Agatha.”

Agatha smiled with a nod to the bald man. “Nice to meet you Victor. Jackie...I need to talk to you for a moment alone.”

Jack frowned, but Victor smiled. “No problem.”

Jack pointed at the table. “Grab some wine and go introduce yourself to everyone else.”

Victor patted Jack’s back before walking away, picking up a glass of wine from the table as he did so.

Jack turned to his Aunt who held out her empty glass to Harley. “Just act naturally.”

Jack nodded as he reached for his wine glass. Harley picked up the bottle of wine that was between them on the table, stood, and started to pour as Agatha said quietly over the rim of her glass. “That man in the back, he’s an Owl. I’m sure of it. I’ve been watching him; something about him seemed...familiar. The way he is holding himself, the way he moves. I don’t know him, but I recognize the training, the movements, the attitude--I know he’s an Owl.”

Jack frowned as he spared a glance toward the small group of people, then back to his aunt. “Which one?”

Agatha stepped a little closer to her nephew and murmured before taking a sip of her wine. “The man wearing the blue jacket.”

Harley saw him first and traded a look with Jack.

Jack turned slightly and followed his wife’s gaze, saw the man. He was turned to the side so that Jack could see his profile, the long nose, black hair. Now that Jack had seen him, he could tell what
it was that tipped Agatha off. There was a stillness about him that wasn’t...natural, not like the others here. He was trained, probably an experienced killer. Not that that would bother Jack or Harley, but who had trained the man and what his motives were interested Jack. Jack watched as the man milled around the group, keeping himself slightly separate, but actually still part of the main body, hovering on the edges. He was hanging to the side, talking to a young woman, but it was clear to Jack that the man’s attention wasn’t on the conversation he was having...

“An Owl? Here? Why?” Harley asked as she picked up a cheesecake puff and took a bite. She stuck the food into her cheek as she asked in a colder tone. “What do they want with Jack?”

Agatha frowned in thought. “Probably just here to infiltrate the gang. I told you before Jackie, they’ve had an interest in you for a long time, before all of this…” She indicated the gang with her eyes. “He may simply be here to become part of the gang to keep an eye on you. I doubt the Owls have sent him for anything more...violent. I have a source on the inside, I like to think he would have told me if they had decided to eliminate you, which I doubt they would. The Owls are not known to either squander talent or of being stupid.”

Jack snarled low. “Spy on me?”

Agatha nodded.

Jack growled again, his hands balled into fists until his knuckles turned white. “I don’t think I appreciate that. I don’t care how they see me, no one comes into my home without my permission.”

He spun around on the ball of his foot and stomped toward the man, pushing people out of his way. Everyone to turn toward him while at the same time parting for Jack like the Red Sea. Frost started to go after him, but Agatha quickly raced to his side and grabbed Frost by the arm shaking her head.

“Jack needs to take care of this,” she said in a low tone. “Himself.”

Harley stood smiling as she watched her husband. She knew exactly what was about to happen.

The man saw Jack coming at him and took a hesitant step back just as Jack stopped right in front of him. Jack gave the man a vicious grin. The look in his eyes was a cross between mirth and murderous rage.

“So, what’s your name?”

The man glanced around, all eyes were on him, yet no one was “looking” at him. It was clear that while the new recruits were curious about what was about to happen, none of them felt safe enough in their new positions to do anything other than step aside and watch. The man singled out by Jack licked his lips either nervously or trying to act nervous as he shoved his hands into the pockets of the jacket he wore.

“Evan,” he mumbled.

Jack smiled. “Evan.”

Jack’s fist struck the other man across the face so fast that even Harley blinked in surprise. Evan’s head snapped to the side; he stumbled a few steps back until he hit the wall, his hands coming out of his pockets. Jack, his fists still up, took a step back giving Evan a chance to recover. He wanted to beat the shit out of the Owl, not just because the Owls had sent someone into his gang, but because he was furious. Jack was itching for this fight. He could have simply pulled out his gun, or his knife and ended this quickly, but Jack was pissed. He wanted to take his anger out on this man, this representative of the Court of Owls, he wanted them to know he wasn’t going to let them infiltrate...
his gang or his home.

Evan turned back to face Jack, his lip and nose now bleeding. He slowly reached up wiping the blood dripping from his nose off his lips with the back of his hand.

“What was that for?” Evan sounded surprised.

Jack sneered. “The Owls are not welcome here. You’re not welcome in my gang and you are not welcome in my home.”

Evan was momentarily shocked that he had been made. He knew he had been careful. There was no way they could know!

Jack saw it in the subtle shift of the man’s features. It was quick, but Jack saw it. Evan was surprised he had been discovered, but at the same time quickly accepted the fact that Jack knew what he was. And as that realization washed over the man his entire being shifted. Instead of hiding or trying to blend in, Evan switched his stance, brought his hands up, a coolness settling over the other man’s features.

That only made Jack angrier,

Jack took a step closer hissing through his teeth with anger. “I’m going to give you a message to send to the Owls...trying to slither into my gang, trying to get close to me again...getting close to my WIFE...I don’t appreciate it.”

Jack stepped forward to hit Evan again, but the man brought his arms up blocking. He weaved to his right a little and threw his own punch catching Jack in the jaw. Jack took the punch with a smile and slowly ran his hand over his bloody lip.

“Oh good one.” Jack purred.

Jack swung low and to the side, to slam Evan in the kidney then followed the punch with a hit to Evan’s face. He followed that punch with another right, swinging his fist down to catch Evan in the cheek. Jack threw his left, but Evan ducked under Jack’s arm and rose with a solid punch to the face. Jack stumbled to the right before standing up straight, but Evan was ready to hit Jack again, knocking his head to the left. Jack could taste blood in his mouth.

But the blood only made him smile more.

*

Harley had moved to stand beside Agatha, her arms wrapped around herself as she watched her husband.

Agatha glanced at Harley before putting her arm around the younger woman’s shoulders.

“Don’t worry hun, Jack will win.”

Harley smiled. “Oh I’m not worried. Just wondering how much of a mess Jack is going to make of that suit.”

Agatha looked at Harley askew before she burst out laughing.

*

Evan grabbed Jack around the head, forcing him down. Jack struggled, against the hold, but Evan
wrapped his arm around Jack’s throat before thrusting his knee up into his diaphragm.

Jack grunted when his opponent’s knee mashed into Jack’s gut, knocking the air from him, but thrust his entire body upright breaking Evan’s hold on him. Jack sucked in air and laughed. “That the best you have? Or are you one of the lesser Owls? Maybe they sent you here for me to kill...thin the flocks so to speak?”

Evan snarled, his composure breaking. “I don’t know why the Court is interested in you! You’re are nothing, the Waynes are nothing. They are not even part of the Court any longer!! My family holds your chair!”

“Your family?” Jack was genuinely interested, especially if he was gathering enemies he didn’t know about. “Who is your family?”

Evan hissed again spittle flying from his lips. “Galavan!!”

* 

Harley frowned “Why do I know that name?”

Agatha turned to Harley. “What?”

“Galavan...I know that name...Just can’t think of how or where…”

Agatha frowned slightly in thought. “I’ve heard of the Galavans, used to be part of the Court years ago, way before my time...I didn’t know there were any members of the family left.” She tilted her head. “If the Galavans used to have a seat and want it back...and they blame the Waynes...why send a Galavan to watch Jack?”

Harley turned to her. “What’s he talking about, holding a chair?”

Agatha murmured. “That main table of the Court, the ones who make the decisions, the ones who supposedly rule Gotham. The Waynes held a seat, but that was before my time...I am clearly more out of the information loop than I realized.”

Harley chewed her bottom lip turning her attention back to the fight.

* 

Jack laughed licking blood from the corner of his mouth. “Okay...really I’m sorry, but who? I have no idea who that is or why I should care.”

Evan snarled and charged at Jack to smash his shoulder into Jack’s stomach, picking the taller man up off his feet, following with a slam to the floor. The man dropped on top of Jack and threw several punches at Jack’s face, but Jack snapped his arms up to take the majority of the strikes to his forearms; only a couple of the punches broke past his defense, one to catch him in the cheek. The knife wound on his face reopened under the assault; blood ran down Jack’s cheek. Evan’s other successful punch caught Jack on the chin, a small pressure wound opening to leave more blood dripping down onto Jack suit.

Jack brought his knee up to catch Evan in the hip, knocking him off balance. Jack threw his arms over his head and leapt to his feet. (Which Harley found incredibly hot, especially with Jack in a suit.)

Evan kept his feet under him and kept his assault up, leading with a few punches at Jack, scraping
his knuckles against the other man’s jaw. Jack only took the one hit before he snapped an open hand up to snag Evan’s wrist and twist the Owl’s arm away from his face. Keeping a tight grip on Evan’s right wrist, Jack twisted his arm around and lashed out with a punch that impacted with Evan’s face. 

(The sounds of Blue Fountain’s “Eyes on Fire” (Zeds Dead remix) began playing, the music accentuated by the two men’s heavy breathing and the dull sounds of their punches against flesh and bone.)

Evan yanked his arm out of Jack’s grip at the same time the punch split his lip and loosened a tooth. Jack threw a second punch, but Evan leaned out of the way. Jack’s overreached by only a couple of inches, but it was enough for Evan to reach up and grab Jack’s wrist, his other hand reaching out to grip Jack’s shoulder and yank Jack forward.

The Owl threw him against the wall, then pulled Jack back and shoved him against the railing to the bumper cards. He began to throw Jack back against the wall again, but Jack kicked out behind him, his dress shoe hitting Evan in the ankle forcing his legs wide. Evan lost his hold on Jack as he struggled for a second to keep his balance.

Jack turned in the same motion, taking a swipe with his fist at Evan, the backhand strike so fast and vicious that Harley thought for a second she heard a “whoosh” of air. Evan ducked, felt his opponent’s fist brush a few of his hairs, then responded with a right handed punch intended to take Jack in the throat, but Jack caught Evan’s wrist in his hand again, yanked Evan’s arm out, gave him a quick, painful hit in the soft joint of his arm before he ducked under the other man’s outstretched arm, his hand rolling over Evan’s wrist in a firm grip. As he pulled on the Owl’s arm, Jack bent his knees and came in close enough that he could come up and hit Evan under the chin with the flat of his palm.

Jack, his hair falling across his brow, grabbed Evan’s left hand, twisting and yanking his arm up between them while Jack tried to break his wrist, but Evan surprised him by pushing up off the ground and doing a sideways flip to break Jack’s hold.

* 

The small group of people had quickly rushed to one end of the bumper car area trying to stay out of the way of the fight. Harley glanced between the two men and the table they had set up and wondered if she should go make sure to save the wine and food...Jack was going to be hungry after this fight...

She cocked her lips to one side. He would probably want to spend some quality time with his wife, too, she thought as her lips twisted into a grin. Too bad all these people still had to be interviewed...

* 

Jack dropped as soon as Evan landed on is feet swiping out with his left left and spun, knocking Evan’s feet out from under him to drop the other man to the floor.

Evan hit on his side and Jack tried to kick him a few times quickly, catching him once in the stomach, but Evan, his nose bleeding freely, grabbed Jack’s leg with both hands while climbing to his feet and forcing Jack backwards just before Evan surged upwards and twisted Jack’s leg to send him flying before his opponent could land a kick with his other leg.

Jack crashed to the floor, the impact nearly knocking the breath from him. He rolled as Evan came at him trying to kick him, their positions reversed from just a couple of heartbeats before. Jack kicked out too, the toe of his shoe catching the other man in the left knee. Evan grunted in pain taking a
couple of staggering steps back. Jack got to one knee at the same time that Evan stepped close again, but Jack hit Evan in the side of the knee with his fist hard enough that Evan let out a cry of pain.

Jack snapped up to his feet and backhanded Evan before grabbing the other man by the shoulders and rushing him backwards until they hit a wall again. Evan grabbed Jack by the shoulders too and the two men struggled for an intense couple of seconds. Jack tried to kick Evan in the knee, but the position was awkward. Jack snarled and released one of Evan’s shoulders to strike the man in the throat followed by three hard strikes to the face.

Evan surged forward, utilizing the wall to give him leverage, wrapped his arms around Jack’s waist and tried to shove him back. Jack wrapped his arms around Evan, the two men caught in a deadly embrace struggling against each other. Jack punched Evan in the side a couple of times despite the awkward locking embrace. Evan broke Jack’s hold on him, grabbing him around the back of his neck and threw Jack past him.

Jack stumbled with the throw hitting the half-wall barrier that separated the waiting area from the bumper cars, before going over the railing.

Evan raced after Jack, jumping the barrier. Everyone else raced over to the rail too. Harley grabbed hold of the railing leaning over far almost ready to go over to help Jack, but Agatha grabbed her upper arm, her grip like iron as she spoke against her ear. “Sweetie, he has to do this himself. He is the leader of a gang; he has to show them why they should follow his orders.”

Harley turned to Agatha, snarled in return. “But we are in this together!”

Agatha smiled. “I know honey and it’s misogynist but everyone is going to see Jack as the head of this gang. Jack is the leader to these people, they have to know their leader can kick some ass. You’ll get your turn don’t worry.”

Harley pressed her lips together in frustration and turned her attention back to the fight.

Jack surged to his feet just as Evan came at him, but this time Evan flipped open a straight razor. Jack blocked a slash aimed at his neck, the razor slicing through the arms of his suit jacket, cutting skin, though not deeply enough to do more than leave a thin bloodied line on the sleeve.

They continued like that for a few intense seconds, Jack slapping the hand that held the razor out of the way, taking a nick or two on his hand until Jack got in a hard enough hit to Evan’s wrist that he was able to follow it with a fist to Evan’s nose.

The strike to his already damaged nose momentarily stunned Evan. Jack grabbed the hand holding the straight razor and brought his knee up, slamming Evan’s forearm against his knee with three hard, rapid strikes that forced open Evan’s hand, dropping the razor. Jack then grabbed Evan by the head and slammed his head against the nearest bumper car. Evan tried to grab at Jack, but Jack still had a hold of his head and spun Evan around, slamming his forehead into another bumper car.

Evan pushed himself back up and spun around. He grabbed Jack by the shoulders, while Jack grabbed him as well, the two men again in another false embrace, struggled against each other, both of them trying to dominate the other. They both slammed into one of the bumper cars and slid to the floor. They struggled and Evan snaked his hands around Jack’s neck, but Jack snapped his hands up to break the Owl’s hold. They rolled on the floor, each man trying to get the upper hand on the other.

Evan finally grabbed Jack by the arm and flipped him into one of the bumper cars. Jack let out a gasp of pain when his back bounced off the car, but he rolled to his feet and spun around. His hair fell across his forehead as he grinned at Evan and made a kiss at him.
Evan snarled rushing at Jack, who swung, but Evan grabbed his arm, turning slightly and put Jack’s arm under his, Jack twisted and shoved Evan backwards with his body. They hit a bumper car again and rolled to the floor. Evan had Jack on his side, Jack’s arm pulled behind his back. Jack hissed in pain, struggled to sit up; Evan slipped his arm around Jack’s neck. Jack pushed to his feet carrying the other man with him. The both rolled on the floor in a strange two person somersault coming up with Evan on Jack’s back still struggling to strangple Jack.

Jack struggled, gasping for air, his face turning red, but he struggled to his feet taking Evan with him. He clawed at the man’s arms. After a few intense moments of the two men struggling, Jack stumbling and weaving, bumping into bumper cars as he struggled to get Evan off of his back, he finally just threw his entire body backwards, letting himself fall to the floor to on top of Evan. The Owl’s head struck the hard edge of a bumper car, dazing him. Evan gasped, his hold weakening enough for Jack to break free after a couple of elbow slams to Evan’s torso.

Jack rolled around and came up to straddle the other man, one hand going around Evan’s neck. Evan reached up, fighting to grab Jack’s throat, to claw at his face, but Jack smacked his hands away, keeping his hold on Evan’s throat pressing his fingers hard into the man’s throat.

Jack, locks of his hair sticking to his forehead, panting, flipped his now blood splattered jacket back with his left hand and pulled his gun. He smiled as he held the weapon and pressed the barrel to Evan’s forehead at the same time squeezing the man’s throat. Both men were bloody, sweaty and disheveled. Jack was smiling, his teeth stained with blood, fresh blood running down his cheek, sweat mixed with the blood caused drops to fall, dripping on his suit and onto Evan.

Evan spat as he tried to push Jack’s gun arm away. “Kill me and the Owls will come for you!! And it won’t be to recruit you! They’ll be coming for blood!”

Jack smiled. “Then let them come.”

The gunshot was loud, echoing off the walls as Jack shot the man in the forehead.

Jack slowly released Evan’s throat and stood.

Harley made a small squeak and rushed around to the entrance that led to the bumper cars and threw herself into Jack’s arms. He caught her at the last second wrapping his arms tight around his wife and resting his cheek against her hair. He took a deep, calming breath, holding her tight, his gun still in his hand.

Harley moved slightly forcing Jack’s head up as she looked at him. “Are you all right?”

Jack grinned. “Never better sweets.”

Harley kissed him tasting blood, sweat and the sweet taste of his mouth.

Jack held her tight returning her kiss passionately. When he finally broke the kiss, he gently transferred her to his side smiling at everyone who was watching.

“All right let’s see a show of hands, who wants to be in the gang!” Jack yelled with a big smile.

Everyone raised their hands.

Jack chuckled. “Okay then, welcome to the Red Hood!”

*
Outside the amusement park, a figure in black was watching. There wasn’t much to see, but that was fine. She was patient, which was why the Court had given her the job to observe….

* 

Jack groaned letting the hot water run down over his body, his face turned toward the shower head as he rubbed his hands over his hair. Harley stood behind him rubbing soap along his back gently, working her way down to his hips and back again. She had cleaned and rebandaged the reopened wound on his face, but they didn’t have the supplies for her to restitch the cut along his cheek. Luckily it had done enough healing that it wasn’t too bad, but the scar was going to be more noticeable now. All his other injuries were minor, though Harley frowned at the amount of bruises added to the ones from the fight with Gia Maroni; Jack was looking like a damn overly ripe fruit with the number of bruises. It made her want to keep him home, protect him, keep her puddin safe from another other conflicts until he healed, but she knew she couldn’t, especially with the start to Fleet Week and their need to take care of those dealers.

She sighed and gently turned him around.

Jack turned to face her and rested his hands on her shoulders, his wrists balanced against her collarbone, his fingers dangling as she started to soap his chest and stomach. There were bruises along his ribs, arms, a dark one under his eye and another running along his cheekbone. Harley frowned to see her handsome husband so beat up--again.

She kissed his chin before she continued to wash him.

“You know sweets, the next thing I want to do is set up a lab here. A private little chemistry lab so I can go back to experimenting,” Jack said softly, his eyes closed, the water hitting the top of his head and running down his face. “Have some fun...maybe get my wife to wearing a lab coat and heels and nothing else…” Jack grinned without opening his eyes.

Harley smiled running her soapy fingers along his hips before she began to wash his groin. Jack grunted, jumping slightly, but grinned as she murmured. “I think that is a great idea puddin. You can get back to making your gases and some new stuff.”

Jack smiled. “Mm...yeah that would be fun. I always wanted to to see what other properties I could bring out in my serum. I always felt I was just scratching the surface. A real permanent lab would be fun...talk about toys! Who knows what I could come up with.” Jack grinned, but then yelped as Harley tugged on his hair forcing him to lean down and squeeze shampoo in his hair.

“Ow! Harley! Why’d you have to be so rough there!” Jack pouted.

Harley giggled. “Cry baby.”

Jack stuck his tongue out at her grinning as she started to rub shampoo through his hair. He was quiet while she worked, enjoying the feel of her fingers massaging his scalp. She smiled working the shampoo through his hair then rinsed it out before applying the conditioner.

Jack groaned as he brought his head back up, arching a bit to crack his back.

She didn’t need to, but Harley ran her soapy hands over his stomach. Jack smiled.

“Mm...that feels nice sweets,” Jack purred.

Harley giggled. “Good. Now let’s get you in bed with some hot tea.”
“And some snuggling.” Jack opened his eyes to look down at her. Harley sucked in a breath looking up at him. His eyes sometimes glowed, she was sure of it as she stared up at him. Jack grinned, leaning in to rub his nose playfully against hers.

* 

They finished showering and stepped out. Harley got out last, taking a few minutes in the shower alone to wash her hair and shave her legs, and under her arms before she stepped out. Jack was in front of the mirror, towel wrapped around his waist, combing his hair and frowning at the couple of bruises on his face, rubbing the tip of his tongue over the cut in his bottom lip. He followed Harley’s movements in the mirror, watching her towel off, gently squeezing her hair with the towel, dropping the damp towel across the closed toilet lid as she walked over to the double sink that had been installed in their bathroom and picked up her comb to begin working it through her tangles. His eyes roamed over her body, here and there a drop of water from her hair would run down her skin teasingly. There was something exquisitely beautiful about watching her do a simple task such as combing her wet hair, naked, next to him. He wasn’t sure if it was the domesticity of the situation, the fact that he simply found her incredibly hot, or just that he loved her; but watching her standing next to him casually naked and working on her hair turned him on. His erection was almost immediate, the aching need for her tightened his groin, seemed to consume him. He wanted her badly.

Harley started to hum softly to herself while she braided her damp hair, leaning to the side so that the cooling drops of water wouldn’t hit her skin. She glanced at herself in the mirror before her eyes met Jack’s to see him watching her. She gave him a cute smile before she tied off her braid and turned around to bend over, but instead of picking up the towel she touched her toes and stretched, a smile on her face that Jack couldn’t quite see. Jack, his eyes having followed her reflection, watched her bend over, her ass in the air. He traced the lean lines of her legs, back up to the soft roundness of her rear before he hissed.

“You are doing that on purpose.”

Harley glanced over her shoulder at him without standing up, her blue eyes wide with innocence. She even went one step further and fluttered her eyelashes. “Doing what on purpose puddin?”

Jack smirked, tossed his comb onto the counter and turned, taking a step toward her. He reached out to caress her backside, stepping closer still to run his fingertips down the back of her thighs. He loved the way her skin felt, the incredible softness of her skin.

“You know exactly what you are doing sweets,” Jack purred against her before he gripped her hips. Harley wiggled her hips back and forth slowly. She could feel his erection behind her, the slightly rougher texture of the towel instead of his skin; he wasn’t quite close enough for her to rub against him, just enough to brush, a soft tease against the towel which his erection was currently fighting against. She felt her husband jerk, his fingers spasm.

Jack groaned. “That...you are doing that on purpose.”

Harley giggled feeling her husband’s hands tighten on her hips as she purred back at him, moving her hips slowly. “I have no idea what you are talking about.” She arched her back, raised her hips, stood on the balls of her feet. Jack hissed as her cool skin brushed against his erection which felt hot, on fire. The towel around his waist like a prison. Jack tugged her hips toward him and press against her backside. He growled while sliding his hands up her torso. Harley stood up and leaned back against him, reaching behind her to caress his cheek. Jack wrapped his arms around her, spreading his fingers against her flat stomach, then his fingers slid down to her groin. Harley arched her back
again, pressing her hips firmly against him and earned another growl. Harley grabbed her bottom lip with her teeth, grinning at the sound her husband made. She loved hearing his growl, that deep throated rumble sent chills of pleasure along her skin.

“Mm…puddin…why would I ever do such a thing?” She mock pouted before she dropped back down, her hands flat against the toilet lid.

Jack released her hips with one hand and tugged on the towel, letting it fall to the floor. He grabbed her once more and pulled her back against him.

“Because you’re a bad girl Harley, a very bad girl.” He chuckled softly, the sound mixed and enhanced with his growl of need.

His skin had felt cool from the recent shower, but his erection, now pressed between her ass cheeks was hot. Pressing against the smooth, chilled back side of his wife only inflamed him further. He groaned, thrusting his hips just a smidge against her while at the same time sliding his hands down her sides, then up along her spine, his thumbs pressing into her skin as he dragged his hands back to her perfectly round and soft rear. Jack grinned thinking to himself that he was the luckiest man on earth. His eyes raked over her at the same time that he dragged his blunt fingernails down her back watching the way the marks turned red, showing up against her pale skin. It only made him want to fuck her harder, to bruise her, to bite her…

He grabbed one side of her ass with his hand and squeezed.

Harley moaned softly, arching her back and swaying her hips back and slowly slowly, feeling the heat from his erection transfer to her, but it was his slightly painful caresses that were really turning her on. Her core ached, her muscles pleaded to hold him inside her, to feel the delectable bounce of him thrusting into her. He squeezed her ass before opening his hand wide and sliding that same hand down the back of her thigh, digging in his nails when he dragged his hand back up.

“Jack…” Harley moaned, her eyes rolling close.

She pushed herself up to lean against him again. Jack responded by reaching around to cup her breasts, his hot breath caressing her ear. He grabbed her ear with his teeth pinched her nipples, rolling the tips of his fingers over them before pinching them again. Harley made a grunt, arching her breasts into his touch. Jack released her breasts, spread his fingers and glided both hands along her sides to her hips.

Jack held her hips, his fingers pressing into the soft creamy flesh while as the same time he rubbed himself against her, the roundness of her backside, pressing deeper.

He growled against her ear. “Harley…”

He force her back down, bending her over and sliding his shaft between her legs until he felt that warm, wet heat coming from her. Jack reached back and grabbed himself before he started to rub back and forth slowly, teasing them both while as the same time he used his foot to push her legs wider apart.

Harley groaned, adjusting her stance feeling the teasing head of Jack’s shaft against her opening. She rose up on her toes, arching her back, thrusting backwards just a little. She ached for him, ached to have him fill her, to feel him inside her slamming into her, his hips hitting her ass until Jack pressed harder, the head of his erection pressing into her slowly. She closed her eyes in anticipation.

Jack slid into her and they both gasped.
Harley pressed her hands down more firmly on the towel covered seat, arching her head back with a long groan. “Uh puddin…harder…ummm, please puddin…”

Jack slid one hand down her spine then back to her rear, his thumb caressing her tailbone before he rubbed both hands along her ass, squeezing, grinning with pleasure at the red marks he was leaving in her flesh.

“Mm…my pumpkin…my baby…” Jack groaned. “You feel so damn good…so wet…” Jack seized her hips and yanked her back against him.

Harley gasped as he penetrated her deeper, just as she was adjusting.

He reached around, slid his fingers between her legs, parting her to rub his fingers against her clitoris. Harley groaned arching back against him tighter as he rubbed just a little harder, circling his fingers, listening for the catch in her breath, the one that let him know he was pleasing her.

Harley closed her eyes, reaching back with one hand to grasp his hip.

Jack smiled, stroking her, feeling the shiver run up her body as she moaned.

“Oh Jack!!” She arched her back and threw her head back as she came. Jack smiled sliding his damp fingers along her groin to her hip again.

Jack squeezed her hips and started to pound into her harder and faster. She gasped in happy surprise as he rammed into her, the bathroom filled with the sounds of their flesh smacking together mixed with their panting, gasping cries.

Harley’s second orgasm came on like an explosion, ripping through her, causing every muscle to tense in response. She rose up higher on her toes, squeezing him and arching back, her fingers gripping the towel into a knot across the top of the toilet lid as she brought her hands into fists.

“Puddin!” Harley groaned and sharply drew in a breath.

Jack groaned in response, arching his back, feeling her body clamp down on him, squeezing him tighter. He bit down on his bottom lip trying to prevent himself from cumming, but she felt so good that he couldn’t stop himself; with a few more hard quick thrusts Jack cried out, spilling into her.

Harley squeezed him tight, the sounds of his cries sending ripples over her causing her to cum again when she felt her husband orgasm. He continued to thrust into her with eager, hard thrusts that slowly eased back into gentle gliding until he stopped completely, both of them panting.

Jack caressed her sides with feather light touches of his fingertips. His legs felt a little shaky so he simply stayed inside her, caressing her skin, giving himself a chance to catch his breath.

Harley wanted to drop; her legs were shaking a little bit, as were her arms. Jack finally took a step back from his wife and pulled out of her. Harley made a little groan at the separation before she slowly straightened, but Jack wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her back against him. He laid his head against hers, kissing her ear, then her shoulders.

“You know I love you Harley?” he whispered to her, his voice tight with emotion. “I love you more than anything in this world.” He tightened his grip around her. “I couldn’t…” He swallowed before he continued. “I can’t be without you.”

Harley leaned fully against him. “I love you Jack. I love you…you’re my puddin…always.” she smiled closing her eyes. “You are everything to me too Jack…everything.”
She rolled her head to the side, kissing him over her shoulder. “We will always be together.”

Jack chuckled. “King and Queen of Gotham...you and me…”

Harley smiled and whispered in response. “You and me puddin.”

He was quiet for a few moments, just held her with her back pressed against his chest, his arms around her waist, content to hold her. He smiled then, brushing his nose against her ear. He planted soft butterfly kisses against her ear, her shoulders.

“Jack? Are you all right?” Harley asked softly, but Jack only laughed. “Yes I’m fine. Let’s clean up and get into bed. I want to snuggle,” he said with a smile, kissing her ear one more time before he let her go.

*

Later, in the wee hours of the morning, Jack woke from another odd dream. This one was plagued with owls and Batman. Jack woke with a frown already creasing his brow, lying on his back with Harley against his side, her head against his chest.

In this dream, Batman had turned into an owl and then into an Owl. It was all very strange, he thought. He turned the dream over in his head, but after a few minutes he decided it was simply a strange dream and nothing more.

He closed his eyes, pulled Harley closer and easily drifted back to sleep.

*

The opening day of Fleet Week began with the parade of ships sailing through Gotham harbor. The day was sunny and warm, but a light breeze off the water made the slowly climbing heat of the day bearable. Jack, with a pair of dark aviator sunglasses on, was wearing a slim-cut fern green suit with a white shirt, black tie and black wingtip oxfords stood next to Harley, who was dressed in a light weight, red floral pattern sleeveless maxi dress, with a deep v-neck. Her blonde hair was styled in a soft French braid with large round white framed sunglasses, and a pair of high heels with ankle strapped sandals. They were leaning on the railing along the sides of Brown Bridge watching the ships come in. The breeze off the water, plus the extra breeze generated by the ships passing, made Harley’s dress whip around her legs and a few times actually fly up. (She was glad she had worn a pair of little black dress shorts under her dress.)

Jack had his arm around her waist as one of the ships moved under the bridge, Harley’s skirt flying up. (Harley was not the only woman who had chosen to wear a dress or skirt.) A few of the servicemen waved at the bridge bystanders with a couple letting out hollers or whistles that might get them in trouble. Harley giggled.

Jack muttered. “Good thing they are down there and not up here.”

Harley laughed, but she snuggled close, bumping him playfully with her hip. Jack gave her a side glance along with a huge smile before he glanced the other way along the bridge. Mixed in with the rest of the crowd were members of the Red Hood. Jack could see Jason and Roxy, Duela along with Gus, a little further down. On Harley’s side Frost and Agatha stood watching the ships, while the twins Connor and Sean were talking to a couple of young women, and a little further off Trope and Thea stood filming the ships. Zsasz was somewhere in the crowd along with other members of the gang, all with the same assignment...find the dealers.

Jack didn’t expect too much from them right now. Any dealers working the crowd would likely be
working with known customers instead of trying to find new ones during broad daylight. They would be waiting for the partiers, the drinking and the streets filled with young men and women looking for a good time in Gotham. No, right now Jack had them all out here as a way to build more unity between everyone, a little bit of enjoyment together before this evening. That was when the real work would begin.

A disco would be put on at one of the larger clubs in Gotham; Jack planned to send Jason, Roxy, Angora and Clyde to scope out that place for dealers in drugs, looking for any trace of this drug Giggles in the fashion district. Trope, Thea, Duela and Gus would be participating in a pub hop/scavenger hunt looking for dealers in The Bowery, everyone else was basically on stand-by, a call away in case another gang member needed help.

Jack, Harley, Frost and Agatha were heading to the Fleet Week Booze Cruise tonight that was leaving Port Adams for a two and a half hour tour through Gotham along the Sprang River, with a premium open bar, appetizers, and a live DJ. Supposedly the tour went all the way to Arkham Asylum and back. (Discovering where the boat would be going had upset Jack slightly, but only Harley had seen the twitch under his left eye, the vein popping at the mention of the asylum. She had taken his hand and held it with Jack sharing a glance with her, neither of them saying a word.)

*

The evening air was cool, but not so cool that Harley wasn’t comfortable in her rodeo front tie, sleeveless, red linen mini dress and the flat lace-up sandals she wore, the laces of which ran all the way up her calves to just below her knees. Her long blonde hair was still in its soft French braid, with little wisps of gold hair floating around her face. She was holding a drink called a Tropical Painkiller. Jack was leaning on the rail next to her, dressed casually in a pair of white slim cut slacks, a dark blue dress shirt, no tie and a black blazer, along with a pair of black booker oxford shoes and holding his own drink, called a Twisted Mermaid. The two of them were leaning on the railing of the ship which faced The Bowery. They ship itself was made up of three levels with a bar on each level and holding around at least 450 guests. The outside of the boat was decorated in an array of fairy lights in multiple colors as well as flashing “disco” lights. The people here were dancing, talking and eating everywhere, and the music playing loudly was Night Club’s “Show it 2 Me.”

Jack sighed taking a drag on his cigarette as he watched the crowd. He could see Frost, sticking out like a sore thumb in his black suit and tie while his aunt was looking far too sexy for a woman her age wearing a white dress with a daringly deep v-neckline, and slits up the side of the dress that ran all the way to her hips. Jack smirked as he watched Frost for a moment; the poor man was having a hard time keeping his eyes on anything but Jack’s aunt. She was dancing in the middle of the dance floor with some young man who couldn’t be more than twenty-five. The man was clearly smitten and Frost was just as clearly jealous. Jack’s Aunt had her arms over her head, weaving her hips back and forth, moving to the music better than many of the dancers around her who were half her age.

Jack chuckled, tendrils of smoke curling from his lips and nose. Harley, who had been leaning on her elbows watching the lights dance on the surface of the water glanced over at her husband. “What’s so funny?”

Jack motioned with his chin. “Frost is going to shoot someone soon.”

Harley turned and grinned when she caught sight of Frost and the deadly look on his face. She followed his gaze to Agatha and the young man she was dancing with.

“Frost better get out there and dance with her,” Harley murmured.

Jack laughed. “He won’t...duty and all that, but it’s cute to see him so jealous.”
Harley giggled. “I think Agatha is doing it on purpose.”

Jack nodded taking another drag before he spoke. “Oh, she is.”

He released the smoke from between his lips slowly, tossing the butt over the rail with a sigh. “I’ve seen neither hide nor hair of those drug dealers.”

Harley reached out and stroked Jack’s wrist. “It’s a big ship. At least we know they are on here.” She motioned with her head at the a couple of people they could see from their current position. They had seen at least a handful of people on the ship, clearly on Giggles, their skin pale and the laughter...Jack wrinkled his nose. “This Griselda and Manuel are doing a good job staying out of sight. I haven’t seen them yet...and everytime we ask, we get the run around,” He muttered.

They had tried to ask a couple of the people they were sure were using, but all they had gotten in response was a lot of giggling and incoherent gibberish.

Right now the DJ had chosen something a bit slower to play than what he had been focusing on. The sounds of “Silent Killer” by Alexina drifted out of the sound system.

Jack took a large sip of his drink turning to his wife.

“Wanna dance?” He smiled tossing the entire drink--glass and all--over the rail.

Harley giggled. “Sure thing puddin.”

She took an equally large sip from her own drink and did the same, tossing the entire thing over the ship’s side as her husband yanked her into his arms. Harley laughed as Jack twirled them both in a quick circle before he stopped to stare down at her.

Together they moved slowly, Jack wrapping one arm around her, spreading his fingers wide as he pressed his hand against her lower back taking her other hand in his, but kissing her knuckles first. Harley smiled at him, her hand resting on his shoulder, sliding across to caressing the side of his neck while they weaved back and forth together to the music, their pelvises pressed together. Harley stared into his blue eyes leaning up to brush her lips against his while they moved in sync in place. Jack smiled down at her, his smile stretched across his face, his blue eyes intense as he stared at his wife, weaving in time to the music with her.

He surprised her when he suddenly rolled her out from him, keeping a hold of her hand then pulled her back, spinning them both in a circle until she laughed. Jack grinned. He loved the sound of her laughter. As the song came to an end he dipped her, holding her for a heartbeat before he lifted her back up and into his arms. He held her close, his face buried against her neck.

“Mm...I love you Harls,” he whispered.

Harley had her arms wrapped tightly around him. “I love you too puddin.”

He sighed brushing his nose against hers, then murmured. “How about I get you another drink and maybe grab some of those lobster and bacon sandwiches I’ve been seeing. How does that sound?”

Harley grinned. “That sounds fantastic puddin.”

Jack kissed the tip of her nose. “Be right back. Don’t move.”

Harley smiled. “I’ll be right here.”
She watched as Jack wended his way through the crowd heading to the bar. She smiled turning back around to lean on the rail listening and tapping her foot in time to Sia’s “Beautiful People” and watching the way the lights from the ship and the city danced on the water when she felt someone run their fingers up the back of her thigh. Harley turned with a smile thinking it was Jack already, surprised he was back so quickly, when she saw a man she didn’t know, blonde, grey eyes dressed in the white sailor’s uniform of the navy. Behind him were several other young men, all dressed the same way.

He grinned at her and waggled his eyebrows at her. He had the cocky self-assurance of a man who had no problem getting the ladies and was used to having women pretty much fall at his feet. Harley had seen the type before in high school and college. This jerk clearly thought he had a chance with her. The young man winked at her before he spoke.

“Hey gorgeous. Whatcha doing here by yourself?” he asked trying to put his arm around her waist.

Harley shoved him in the chest, at the same time moving sideways away from him. “What the hell?! How dare you touch me! Go away.”

The man laughed and glanced back over his shoulder. “Oh this one wants to play hard to get!”

Harley glared at him, then at his friends who were snickering and giggling like a bunch of school kids.

Their ring leader continued reaching out to try to touch her chin, but Harley yanked her face away as the man pouted. “Come on sweetie. You don’t want to be standing out here by yourself...Let me get you a drink, warm you up a bit. I’ll let you sit on my lap.” He grinned trying to put his arm around her.

Harley snarled yanking herself out of his reach again. “Touch me one more time and you’re gonna lose that hand.”

The man laughed. “Wow, you are feisty. I like feisty girls. A lot more fun in bed.”

Harley spat. “Go away.”

The blonde purred. “Oh come on sweetie. My name is Jake, what’s yours?”

Harley hissed. “I’m married so go away.”

Jake reached out and ran his fingers down her upper arm.. “Come on baby…you’re just saying that...you don’t have ring on...you don’t have to play games with me. I know what girls like you are looking for and I promise I got it.”

Harley yanked her arm away wrinkling her nose like she had smelled something bad. “Look, I’d tell you to go fuck yourself, but that would be cruel and unusual punishment and I’m not that cruel.”

Jake’s friends started to laugh and snort.

Jake frowned looking between her and his buddies, clearly pissed off that she had gotten a laugh from his friends. He reached forward and grabbed her upper arm hard, pressing his fingers painfully into Harley’s skin, trying to intentionally hurt her as he yanked Harley toward him, causing her to stumble. Harley let out a yelp which swiftly turned into a snarl; she swung her entire body, wrapping her hand into a fist and bringing her left fist around, ready to hit Jake in the face and--she hoped--to break the asshole’s nose. The next few seconds were chaotic as one of Jake’s friends realized what was about to happen and had rushed around Harley in order to grab her arm. Harley cried out as her
left arm was grabbed and she was yanked backwards falling against another man, who held her left hand by her wrist and wrapped his other arm around her waist. Jake still had a hold of her and was pulling her forward, their little tussle starting to draw attention.

Jack, who was at the bar, turned when he thought he heard Harley over the music. He was so attuned to his wife that he picked up her sound of distress. He turned around to glance over to where he had left her just in time to see her struggling with several young men around her. Jack’s eyes flashed dangerously. With his teeth bared in rising fury, he immediately started to rush toward his wife, pushing people out of his way with enough force that he was knocking people down without realizing it and yelling.

“HARLEY!”

Frost turned when he heard Jack shout, his hand immediately going to the gun he had concealed under his jacket.

That was the same moment that a large man who happened to be closer to the action, separated himself from the crowd before Jack or Frost could arrive at Harley’s side. The man was dark skinned, bald except for a short trimmed goatee, at least six feet tall and dressed in sailor’s whites just like the men he currently towered over, the men currently surrounding Harley.

He grabbed the one who had grabbed Harley’s arm from behind, lifting the man up by his wrist.

“You all wanna tell me why the fuck a bunch of daddy kissing punks are picking on this nice woman?”
There was a moment of calm. No sound; at least Harley didn’t hear any sound, nothing, no voices, no music, just that perfect moment of stillness.

Harley smiled, allowed the moment wash over her, and closed her eyes for just a second.

She could taste it in the air, a sweet tension, that second before the intake of breath...when the exhale would announce the vicious violence that would follow.

It was delicious. These moments turned her on, especially when she was getting to see Jack in action. Watching the way he moved, the way his eyes would sparkle, that smile...the drops of blood that would stain Jack’s face, the taste of blood on his lips when she kissed him after the violence. He was at his most alluring when he was at his most violent. Harley licked her lips at the mere thought of her husband.

The doctor part of her knew that she had a “problem.” Both she and Jack had a problem; her love of violence was unhealthy, an aspect of herself she didn’t realize until she met the man who would become her husband...but was it really an issue when they both enjoyed it so much, she asked herself?

Her smile extended just a little more, her body twisting, her fingers rolling into a fist as she turned toward one of the sailors who had been bothering her. She could see her husband just behind the man, and he was smiling too. He was reaching out his fingers about to grab the shoulder of the man who had said his name was Jake. The big man who had come to her defense was lifting the little shit who had grabbed her from behind off his feet while the rest of Jake’s friends tried to surround them.

For a moment Harley wondered, did they have a “jail” on a booze cruise? But then she was giggling as the bubble of calm burst and the violence began.

* 

Harley spun around, the skirt of her little dress fluttering, but instead of hitting the sailor in the face as she had intended, she snapped her leg up to hit him right smack between the legs. The impact of her leg meeting with his groin caused the man to produce a yell so high-pitched that Harley was sure only dogs could hear it. Harley giggled with delight. The impact forced him forward, though he tried to swing at her with his right fist, a sloppy swing that Harley easily ducked and answered with her own right hook to his cheek. She quickly followed that strike by pivoting on her left foot, bringing her right leg around for another hard kick to his side. She let out a yelp when her foot connected with his side, pain radiating up her leg for a moment. (She had forgotten she was wearing flat sandals and not heels which she knew made a better weapon.) Harley jumped back grabbing a hold of the ship’s guard rail just as her attacker fell over with a cry, squeezing himself into a fetal position. Harley giggled again as she shook out her foot. He was clearly out of the tussle and it didn’t matter her shoewear; getting hit in the balls hurt regardless.

* 

Jack grabbed Jake by the shoulder and spun the man around with a grin that didn’t reach his eyes. “You touched my wife.”

Jake opened his mouth to reply, but Jack took a step back and kicked the man in the chest. The kick sent him stumbling back into the remainder of his friends who had been too stupid to take off as soon
as they realized a fight was about to start. The men scattered like pins in a game of bowling. Jack laughed at the image of the men as bowling pins.

One of the sailors, a big man who stood an inch or two taller than Jack, took a step toward Jack.

“All right buddy, you just step away and I won’t hit you.”

Jack smiled. “Oh...you’re that cocksure of yourself that you think you are going to actually hit me?”

The man grinned. “All right--don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

Jack shrugged. “I’ll remember that.”

The sailor took a swing at him. Jack brought his arms up, tucking his head, blocking the man’s two quick swings, which fell against Jack’s forearms, sending a ripple of pain up Jack’s arms to his shoulders. It wasn’t much, nothing Jack hadn’t experienced several times before, just enough to make Jack smirk.

Jack scrunched himself to protect his face and chest, bent to the side making himself harder to hit. He kept the sailor’s fist from landing a kidney shot, but it was also allowing the sailor to think he had Jack on the defense. At any moment, Jack was certain the overconfident man would leave himself open.

Jack laughed, edged back just enough to create space between him and this sailor so that he could swing as he exclaimed brightly. “My turn.”

He slugged the man with a hard right to the cheek. The sailor’s expression twisted as pain blossomed in his face. Jack giggled with delight and shook out his fist; he had hit enough people in the past to know when he had cracked a cheekbone.

Another one of Jake’s friends came at Jack with a high swing from the left. Jack ducked and kicked in one easy movement, caught the man in the groin. Jack winced in false sympathy as the man dropped to his knees and fell over with a groan.

“Ouch,” Jack muttered with a laugh.

*  

Frost had joined the fight with two options: he could end the fight right now by drawing his weapon, or he could simply handle it as a drunken brawl, which seemed to be best option even if the weapon would end the fight faster. Nobody liked to fight more than drunken (or not drunken) sailors needing to burn off some steam and Frost could tell this fight wasn’t going to end until every one of these sailors were down.

Frost started to go for the initial grouping of young sailors who had started the fight, but their little tussle was beginning to draw more attention from around the ship; even if no one knew what was going on, some men in uniform were fighting. It didn’t matter what the fight was about, their fellows would be coming to their aid regardless. Frost understood--it was pretty much the same with the cops. You pick on one GCPD officer, you were attacking them all. Frost smirked and pulled his hand back, ready to punch the kid in front of him and take him out quickly, but as Frost turned to look, that only left maybe another ten. Frost sighed. He really couldn’t take Jack and Harley anywhere without them getting into trouble. He smiled at the thought. That was what made them so much fun.

*
Agatha stopped at the edge of the fight with a wide grin. “Mm...boys in uniform.”

She tapped her bottom lip as she took the time to imagine Frost in a uniform, her grin widening. “Oh yes,” she whispered to herself.

She waited another beat to decide if she was going to get involved in the fight, but then decided that nope, she was going to let the younger ones handle it...and besides, they might need her to bail them out. She smiled and turned around heading back over to the now deserted bar (everyone having crowded around for the fight.) She smiled at the bartender.

“Hey handsome, can you make me a sunrise cocktail?” Agatha hopped up onto a stool glancing over at the fight. The young man, Latino, with dark eyes and thick black hair grinned. “For you, I can make anything.”

Agatha chuckled. “How about just the drink sweetheart.”

The man shrugged and set to work while Agatha turned to watch some of the fight over the heads of the other patrons.

* 

Harley was grabbed and tossed toward another set of sailors who had joined the little rumble, a set of three very tall women.

Harley grinned. “Hey!”

The three women, all brunettes smiled back replying in unison. “Hi!”

Harley frowned. “There a reason you three lovely ladies are involved in our little fight?”

The biggest of the three had her brown hair pulled up into a bun and who had tossed Harley into the arms of of slimmest one with a pixie haircut grinned. “The boys looked like they were having too much fun without us.”

“Oh, okay just wondering.” Harley grinned. “You know that one…” Harley searched her mind quickly. “Jake...yeah...he was being grabby you know.”

The woman facing Harley frowned. “Yeah, sounds like Jake. Don’t worry honey. He isn’t going to get away with it. By the way, love the dress.”

The sailor winked at Harley with a jovial grin before she threw a punch that clipped Harley on her chin just as Harley tried to move her head out of the way, but the woman who Harley had been shoved against had Harley’s arms pinned against her chest. The big woman grinned and threw another punch, but Harley was ready and this time tossed all her weight to the right. She and the woman holding her started to fall toward the rail with the sudden shift in weight, while the female sailor who took a swing at Harley missed altogether and instead punched her friend who had been holding Harley. The taller woman’s fist connected squarely in her friend’s face; the impact of knuckles to nose was audible to Harley.

Harley winced in sympathy. “Ouch!”

* 

The large man who had tried to come to Harley’s aid had his back up against Jack’s back, both of them with their fists up. He glanced over his shoulder as he punched another sailor in the face.
“I should introduce myself—the name is Santiago Clark, though everyone calls me Bane. That’s the name I wrestled under before I enlisted.” Clark turned his attention back to another sailor trying to sucker punch him. He kicked the man in the stomach before he turned around a bit and put his hand out to Jack. Jack took the man’s hand, which enveloped his own.

Jack grinned wide. “Name’s Jack, Jack Wayne. I don’t suppose you would be looking to get out of the military would you Bane?” Jack asked as he ducked a swing and delivered his own in return to the man who had attacked him.

Bane grinned and turned his attention to three men trying to surround him on three sides. Jack glanced behind him for a moment; the man was attractive with a ready smile, clearly enjoying a good tussle.

One of the sailors stepped too close and Bane grabbed him, lifted the man over his head and threw the man at his friends, sending all three back onto the dancefloor as the fight gradually was shifting from the railing to the “safer” area around the dance floor.

Bane grunted. “Well Mr. Wayne, I suppose that depends on what it is you need me to do.” Bane picked up another sailor and tossed him onto the dance floor to the drunken cheers of several women.

Jack laughed. “How would you feel about something less than legal?”

Bane smiled. “Well, I suppose it all depends on how much I like you.”

Jack grinned over his shoulder. “I’m a really likeable guy.”

Bane laughed along with Jack when at the same time they both saw two very tall, very muscular men coming toward them from the other side of the ship. Shinedown’s “Sound of Madness” had started to play over the speakers. Jack shook his head, one of the DJs thought they were funny.

Bane hissed. “Aw fuck.”

“Friends of yours?” Jack asked.

Bane shook his head. “Nah, couple of fucking Marines is all.”

Jack snorted. “Ah...gang rivalry?”

Bane grinned. “Something like that.”

The two men stopped to size up their opponents. One of them, a black man with a buzz cut, cupped his hands on either side of his mouth. “Hey squid heads! Why don’t you lot step out of the way and let some real men and women do the fighting instead of playing with a bunch of salt-encrusted milk drinkers.”

Jack blinked. “Milk drinkers?”

Bane grinned. “Yeah...I like milk, so what?”

“A agreed Bane my friend.” Jack chuckled, clearly enjoying himself. “Means we need to show them what drinking milk does.” Jack flexed an arm and Bane started to laugh.

*

Over at the bar Agatha muttered. “Lovely, of course there are marines on this boat.”
She sighed, turning around to face the bartender. The young man grinned back. “Ready to dump that one…” He indicated Frost with his brow; he had clearly noticed the way Agatha had been watching Frost. “…And run away with me?”

Agatha laughed. “You are funny Kenny.”

A man, older than most of the people here and probably closer to her age, was making his way across the dance floor to the fight. She made a face, leaning toward Kenny. The man was white headed wearing the all white uniform of a ship’s captain along with the officers hat and the shoulder epaulets.

“Is that who I think it is?” Agatha asked with a tilt of her head.

Kenny nodded. “Yep, that’s the captain, Captain Stubing. He won’t be…”

But when Kenny looked around, Agatha was gone.

*

One of the marines hit Jack in the chest. “Well, well look at you. Looks like the old squid lover got himself a new boyfriend.”

Bane rolled his eyes. “Rome, Morgan--why don’t you two dicks go find some nice girls to kick your asses for you. I know you both like that sort of thing.”

The one man who had spoken, Rome--from his name tag that Jack just briefly caught a glimpse of--snorted. “Oh haha, looked like you squids need a couple of real men to come in and finish this fight for you.”

Jake, his buddies and the three women twisting and fighting with Harley all stopped to glare at the two marines.

The woman with the pixie cut hissed. “What did they just say?”

Harley, who was being held by her neck, her feet up and, at the moment, resting against the chest of the navy woman across from her, blinked in surprise as she looked up, her hands around the arm of her captor.

Harley looked up at the woman holding her. “I think he said you guys were a bunch of weenies.” She giggled.

The pixie cut sailor snarled. “Yeah, I thought he said something like that.” She released Harley with a growled, “Stupid jarheads only good for one thing, destroying stuff, bunch of…”

*

Jack slipped his jacket off just as the ladies whom Harley had been fighting with walked over and started to create, almost unconsciously, a ring around Bane, Jack and the two marines. The ladies were followed by Jake and the others creating an impromptu boxing ring for Bane, Jack, Rome and Morgan to fight. When Jack saw his wife, he tossed her the jacket with a big grin. Bane glanced over at Harley then Jack with a chuckle just as Jack tossed his jacket to her and began to roll up his sleeves. Harley wrinkled her nose in delight, seeing her husband with his sleeves rolled up was sexy as hell she thought. She blew him a kiss.

“Punch their lights out puddin!” she yelled.
“So that cute little blonde is all yours, eh?” Bane asked while keeping his eyes on the two marines who were splitting off, Rome for Jack, Morgan for him.

Jack chuckled. “She’s not mine, but yeah...My wife Harley.”

Bane nodded smiling. “I do like women who can take care of themselves. I only stopped her hitting that sailor to save him. Idiots forgot we were supposed to be getting a little drunk and having some fun, not acting like a bunch a kids whose balls haven't even dropped yet.”

Jack laughed. “I like you Bane.”

Bane grinned. “I'm a likeable kind of guy.”

The man facing Jack snorted. “A civilian like you think you can take on a marine? You know we are the best right? I'm willing to let you just walk away, tail between your legs if you give me a kiss, right here sweetheart.” Rome used his forefinger to lightly tap himself on the cheek.

Jack smiled. “Sure thing darling.”

Jack’s hands shot out, grabbing the marine by his uniform and yanked him forward, at the same time ramming his forehead into the man’s nose and mouth.

Jack winced and shook his head, reaching up to rub his forehead after shoving the man away from him. “Ouch...damn--no one wins in a headbutt.” Jack brought his hand down to see blood on his fingertips.

Bane laughed. “Unless you are me little man! Bane always wins.”

Bane reached out and grabbed Morgan who had thrown his hands up.

“Hey now Bane, we’re cool right? Remember I made some money for us both when they were playing that...” Morgan put forward his hand, as if for a handshake, but Bane interrupted him and laughed.

“Yeah, we’re cool.”

Morgan smiled and made the mistake of balling his hand into a fist, which he attempted to throw at Bane, thinking he had surprise on his side. Bane caught Morgan’s arm by the wrist, gave Morgan a grin and a wink before he yanked himself closer and with a swift side look at Morgan that was followed by another, even brighter grin, Bane smashed the ball of his hand against Morgan’s elbow joint, giving the man named Morgan three hard, quick strikes before he released Morgan’s wrist, spun around and used his elbow to break the man’s nose hard enough to send the Marine stumbling back from him with a cry of pain and a flood of blood from his nose.

“Just because we’re good, don’t mean I ain’t gonna hit you Morgan. Really thought you would have figured that out about me.” Bane grinned with a shake of his head.

Morgan snarled looking up, his fingers covered in blood from his nose. “You fucking dick!”

Jack’s marine came at him again, grabbed Jack by the shoulders, but Jack brought his foot up and slammed his heel against the man’s knee with a sickening crush, snapping the bone out of place and letting him drop.

Both men heard a “war cry.” There were at least four more marines on the ship.
Bane chuckled. “Well shit.”

Jack rolled his shoulders with a wide smile. “Marines are clearly stupid.”

Bane let out a loud belly laugh.

* 

“Captain Stubing!! May I talk to you?”

The captain sighed turning at the same time as he began to speak. “Miss, I really can’t…” but then he realized this wasn’t one of the newly minted “of age” people on the ship drinking for the first time, nor was it one of the millions of Gothamites of legal drinking age wandering the city or in particular, his ship, looking for a sailor and getting drunk. The voice was attached to a beautiful woman.

Stubing stopped moving, forgetting the fight he was heading over to stop, a little stunned when he saw the woman.

“Ah...yes I’m Captain Stubing ma’am. I was just going to stop…”

The woman stepped up beside him, put her arm around his shoulders and pressed her hips up against him. She was shapely and this close, the captain could smell her fantastic fragrance too. His entire body relaxed.

“How can I help you ma’am?” he asked with a smile.

Agatha smiled back. “My name is Agatha, Captain...hmm...you know I just live for men in uniform, one of the reasons I booked myself onto this ship…” She grinned as she whispered into his ear. Agatha knew exactly how to charm a man like this; it didn’t take much, show a little interest, coo a little and… “They are just boys blowing off steam captain, why don’t you let me help you with this, eh?” Agatha brushed her fingertips along his chin.

The captain smiled, but then frowned again glancing toward the fight. “I don’t know…”

She turned him, her arm moving from around his shoulders to his waist.

“You know Stubing...okay, first: what’s your first name?” Agatha asked with a slow easy smile.

“Uh...it’s Merrill.” The man stuttered a little.

Agatha purred. “Merrill. You know, how about I help you with something….you ever hear about the happiness ceiling?” As she spoke, Agatha steered him toward the bar.

“What?” Merrill frowned glancing over at the fight.

“Happiness ceiling. You see Merrill honey, we all have happiness ceilings, you think you have reached yours and that you cannot be any happier than you are right now. Well sweetie, I’m going to show you that you have the potential to be much happier.” Agatha smiled at him and Merrill grinned stupidly in response.

* 

Frost sighed, one of the men, another sailor, had thought he would throw a kick at him, a drunken, completely off-balance kick, but Frost had simply grabbed the man’s leg, wrapped his arm around it and lifted the man’s limb up so that the sailor was forced to keep his balance on the one foot. He looked pretty ridiculous hopping up and down, his arms windmilling. Frost grinned. A couple of
other sailors had tried to come to their buddy’s aid, but Frost has simply pushed the drunkards out of the way.

Frost was standing there holding the man, wondering what he should do next, when he noticed movement to his left and turned to see the captain (he just assumed by the man’s uniform and the wrinkle between his brow, the intense, and the annoyed glare he was giving the fighters as he made a beeline right to their group), when Agatha seemed to form out of the crowd around the man.

Frost’s eyes were immediately drawn to Agatha, the tight dress she was wearing showed off every curve she had and the lights from the dance floor made her movements sensual, serpentine, sexy. Frost stood still, holding the flailing sailor and watching her as she spoke to the captain. Jealousy burned white and hot in his chest, but just as Agatha turned the man around, heading back toward the bar, she shot a wink over her shoulder at Frost.

He grinned at her and dropped the sailor. He sighed. He wasn’t used to being the jealous type. What he and Agatha had was supposed to be...open...easy, but he knew he was starting to step over that line from friends with benefits into something else...Idiot he thought to himself but for now he wasn’t going to dwell on it. Because he was confident that tonight, she would be in his bed doing something interesting and very intense.

That was when he and the others heard a shout and looked over to see Agatha standing on the bar. She was wiggling a little as she kept her balance on the counter. (Frost knew for a fact that she had excellent balance so that wiggle was for show.) She held a bottle of booze in one hand and a glass in the other.

“Okay boys and girls! Free drinks for everyone!! My treat!”

There was a moment of silence that was swiftly followed by a nearly deafening cheer.

Frost’s eyes met Agatha’s across the heads of the people moving toward the bar and she winked at him. Frost chuckled turning to the sailor he had been holding by the leg just moments ago.

“Let’s go get a beer.” Frost put his hand out. The sailor took his hand and grinned, patting Frost on the back. “Sure thing buddy.”

* 

Jack and Bane watched as the crowd around them immediately started to melt, the music pumping up just a little louder as the sounds of some Japanese pop music started to play, sweet, bouncy and bubbly. Jack blinked for a moment at the way the fight suddenly stopped only to be followed by laughter, drinking and dancing.

Jack glanced over to Bane who had stepped up beside Jack.

Jack grinned. “So, wanna have a drink?”

Bane laughed and smacked Jack hard enough on the back that he stumbled forward a few steps. “Sure thing buddy.”

Harley came racing over to Jack, looking confused. “What just happened?”

Jack motioned with his chin as he took his jacket from Harley. “Aunt Agatha happened. What else?”
He gently grabbed Harley’s chin and examined the bruise on her lip and chin. “My poor girl.”

Harley smiled. “I gave as good as I got puddin.”

He grinned and wrinkled his nose at her. “That’s my pumpkin pie.”

Jack put his arm around her shoulders and pulled Harley close, kissing her on the forehead. Harley smiled happily and draped her arms around Jack’s waist.

Jack murmured. “Let’s get a drink and I’ll introduce you to my new friend.”

* 

Soon they were sitting at the bar, Harley and Jack on one side of Bane while Agatha and Frost were on the other side.

Jack held a glass of whiskey—a double shot—with ice. He had laid his jacket across his lap while he eased a piece of ice across the bruise forming at the corner of Harley’s mouth. She winced, but smiled and licked the ice. Jack chuckled softly as she reached over and picked up her drink, a tropical wine slushie, while tapping her foot to the music playing, Dua Lipa’s “One Kiss”. She smiled at her husband, pulled out the little cherry, holding it by the stem for a moment. She licked her lips biting off the cherry and chewed it slowly.

Jack watched her, enchanted, riveted to the movement of her lips, the twinkle in her eyes, feeling the warmth of her hand when she reached over and laid her hand on his knee. Harley swallowed before holding up the stem. He knew what she was going to do, but he still twitched in his seat watching as Harley placed the stem in her mouth. He watched her lips move slightly, her blue eyes dance before she reached in and pulled out the stem, took her husband’s hand, palm up and laid the now neatly tied stem in the palm of his hand.

Jack’s smiled widened. “Mm...you are talented pumpkin.”

Harley grinned taking a sip of her drink. “Just figure you need reminding once in a while.”

Jack shivered with delight before he turned to Bane who had been watching the two of them, amusement in his eyes.

“Bane, I would like to introduce you to my wife, Harley, Harley Quinn. Harley, this is Santiago Clark.”

Santiago put his hand out to her. Harley gave him her hand across Jack and the big man kissed her knuckles. “Everyone calls me Bane.”

She grinned. “Everyone calls me Harley.”

Jack grinned. “Bane, huh? You said that was your wrestling name?”

He picked up his whiskey and took a long sip turned in such a way that he could easily gather Harley onto his lap. She giggled, shifting from the stool to her husband’s lap easily while tossing his suit jacket onto the counter. Jack ran his hand down her bare legs, enjoying the feel of her bare skin against his hand.

Bane smiled holding his own drink, a glass of rum, rolling the glass between his large hands. “My father was a black man who worked his way through the navy to become an officer. Met my mother while in Colombia; they fell in love for a short time, long enough to marry and have me. Then my
father left. My mother raised me. Bane was my grandfather’s name, Bane Rojas, famous wrestler. I wanted to be just like him, wrestled in school under the name Bane and it stuck.” He smiled as he finished off his drink. “The navy, not so much. My father wanted me to stay in, be an officer like him, but...I had already decided to get out. Your little tussle with those snot-nose sailors is one reason. Too many assholes in the navy.” Bane shook his glass and the bartender turned and nodded, grabbed a bottle of rum and moving over to fill it.

“So, Jack Wayne, Harley Quinn...what is it that you two have in mind?” Bane grinned and picked up his fresh drink.

Jack shared a looked with his wife, smiling before he spoke. “How would you feel about helping me and our little gang take care of a few things here in Gotham? My plan: to be on top of the Gotham underworld food chain.” Jack turned while holding onto Harley and picked up his drink. “I can promise good money, and a lot of killing.”

Bane frowned in thought, staring down into the depths of his drink. “Killing, eh?”

Jack took another sip before his set his whiskey down. “Yup.”

“You know…” Bane grinned. “I don’t think I will have a problem with that.” He held his glass up. “What did you say you gang was called again?”

Jack held up his glass, Harley snatched hers up to do the same thing.


Bane grinned wide. “To the Red Hood Gang.”

The three of them clinked their glasses together.

Someone had switched the music; the smooth, sensual voice of Calum Scott started to sing “If Our Love is Wrong.” Jack smiled and nuzzled his wife’s neck pulling her hair back to give himself better access to the soft spot behind her ear. Jack ran the tip of his tongue along that spot, his hand at her waist squeezing just a little, tugging her back against him. There was a buzz and then the voice of the ship’s captain Stubing announced loudly over the speakers.

“We’ll be heading back to dock now. This is your last chance for drinks which are still free for the next half hour, being paid for by the very generous and very becoming Miss Agatha Wayne, and this will be the last dance of the night as well. Thank you everyone for joining our tenth annual Gotham Fleet Week Booze Cruise.”

“I think my wife needs to dance with me now,” Jack said, downing the rest of his drink in one hard swallow before slamming the glass down on the counter and hopping off the stool, taking Harley with him. She laughed, dropped her drink on the counter as he swung her into his arms, sliding his fingers along her arm as he brought her right hand to his shoulder. He smiled at her, his left hand wrapped around her waist as he began to dance, a slow weave that took them in a circle.

He leaned close to her, his breath russtling the hair near her ear, his hand gently holding hers.

“Mmm...Harley...I live for nights like this, with you in my arms.” Jack purred softly, “All's right with the world.”

Harley smiled in response, squeezing his shoulder. “Us against the world.”

Jack chuckled. “Mm...yes.”
The song continued, the two of them weaving with the music. Jack spun her out then back into his arms wrapping his arm tight around her as he sang the lyrics with the song.

“Throw out the inhibition
You make me feel a feeling that I've never felt before
I don't know if they're gonna like it
But that only makes me want it more
'Cause I'm nobody's but yours…”

He grinned and waggled his eyebrows up and down causing his wife to smirk.

* 

Bane leaned his back against the bar watching the two of them dancing when he felt the person on his left shift. He glanced over at the one Jack had called Frost and nodded. Frost smiled and held up his beer.

Bane nodded toward Jack and Harley. “They seem fun.”

Frost chuckled. “They are more fun usually. This was a quiet night...usually, it’s more violent and a lot bloodier.”

Bane frowned slightly watching the couple dance. “Huh.”

Frost nodded and bumped Bane’s shoulder. “Stick around. I have a feeling things are about to get even more interesting.” Frost sipped his beer and grinned. “Boss has big plans.”

Bane chuckled taking a sip from his rum. “I’ve been looking for interesting. Sounds fun.”

They were both quiet for a moment when Bane hissed. “You guys got any more like...Agatha or Harley?”

Frost chuckled. “Not yet.”

Bane nodded. “You and Jack-- lucky men.”

Frost grinned sipping his beer just as Agatha snuggled in close to his side, her arm around his waist.

* 

Jack dropped Harley’s hand, wrapped his arms around her waist, holding her tightly. He spread his hands, let them flow up her back while he moved with her. He liked that he could feel no bra, knowing she wore only the little dress and a pair of panties made him ache all over for her. They were barely moving now, mostly swaying in one place. Harley brought her arms up to wrap around his neck, her fingers caressing his shoulder. She continued to stroke his hair, her eyes closed, just taking in the scent of him surrounding her, the press of his body against hers, the fabric of his clothing...every little detail of her husband, his very being. Harley tightened her grip on Jack for a moment.

Jack purred softly with the music, his voice caressing her ear while his breath stroked her cheek.

They held each other tighter, her hands feather touching the back of his neck while Jack spread his
hands across her back, slowly caressing her spine.

Jack’s voice oozed over her like warm chocolate while he sang softly to her, a few more words, his lips moving slowly over her skin.

“If it’s me
And if it’s you
And if our love is wrong
Then I don’t ever wanna be right
I don’t ever wanna be right
If it’s real
And if it’s true
And if our love is wrong
Then I don’t ever wanna be right
I don’t ever wanna be right…”

Jack pressed his lips to the corner of her mouth. “I want you Harley. I want you always...hmm....would you marry me again?”

Harley giggled softly. “Oh puddin. I’ll always marry you.”

Jack grinned and spun around before he tugged her close, brushing his lips against hers. He held her, in that moment, a breath between the kiss, his blue eyes staring down into her blue eyes. His gaze was intense; Harley could see dark depths in his eyes that she couldn’t quite reach, pain that lived there in his gaze, but she could see them, waiting for her.

Jack reached a hand around to stroke her jaw and chin lightly.

“I still haven’t gotten to take you on a honeymoon Harley...I still need to take you away somewhere…” he licked her mouth slowly, his tongue traveling along her full lips before he kissed her, a deep passionate kiss that continued for a few seconds more even after the music had stopped.

* 

Their small group had just exited the ship and were standing off to the side talking while Frost went to fetch the car when Jack saw movement. It was nothing strange, just the way a light caught a color that drew his attention, but he saw two people, two people that fit the descriptions that Big Mama had given them for Griselda and Manuel. Of course, it might not be them, but they looked to have left the ship with everyone else and were now getting into a taxi.

Jack snarled. “Fuck!”

His suddenly exclamation startled Harley. “Puddin?”

She turned and Jack pointed across the way to the two drug dealers. “We’re never going to fucking….” But Jack’s words trailed off as Zsasz materialized out of the crowd next to them, dressed all in black. He exchanged a few words with the couple, then leaned in and said something to the
driver of the taxi. He stood up and looked around, as if he knew Jack was nearby, catching Jack’s eye and winked before he slipped into the cab that pulled away from the curb taking their targets with them. Harley frowned watching the taxi and turned to Jack.

“Puddin?”

Jack smiled. “No worries Harls. I think we will be seeing them tomorrow.”

Harley frowned seeing Zsasz getting into the taxi too. “He does know we need them alive right? We need information…”

Jack laughed. “It’s fine sweets. I trust Zsasz to bring them tomorrow...and able to talk...at least one of them…” He sighed and shrugged before he put his arm around her shoulders with a smile turning back to Frost. “Well, I’m ready to call it a night.”

Bane yawned. “It was nice to meet you folks and I’ve decided to take your job offer.”

Jack beamed. “Perfect! Here…” He patted his hands around his jacket which he had slipped back on when his Aunt handed him a pen. “Here ya go Jackie.’

He smiled. “Thank you, my dear aunt.” Jack reached out and grab Bane’s hand and quickly wrote down the address. “Be here tomorrow night around nine.”

Bane looked at the address and nodded. He gave them all a salute before he drifted away into the crowd. Jack draped his arm over Harley’s shoulders, pulling her close against him as he started to walk through the crowd with Frost and Agatha behind them. He was smiling ear to ear.

“I do like how our little gang is slowly fleshing out my sweets.”

Harley grinned putting her arm around Jack’s waist. “Me too puddin, me too.”

*

The shadow that had lost them for the last several hours frowned in frustration when she finally spotted them again. She had seen one of the group, the one who guarded them, but they were too far away and the crowd was too thick for her to easily catch back up. She was still on her mission, track, observe, be ready. The Owls were concerned...

*

Harley yawned again giggling softly as Jack grabbed her up and started to carry her to the main house of their amusement park home. She had her arms wrapped around his shoulders, her head leaning against him as he pushed the door open with his hip, having only put her down long enough to unlock the door.

“You are not going to have to carry me in like this every time puddin.” Harley giggled as he started for the stairs and she wiggled to get free. Jack put her down reluctantly.

“Why not?” Jack slipped out of his jacket after setting her down, tossed it over the back of the couch. Harley flopped down and began to untie her sandals.

“Well I’m sure I’m heavy after a while and besides, maybe I want to carry you?” She grinned.

Jack was leaning with his hand against the rail of the stairs as he kicked his shoes off.

“You couldn't carry me,” he mumbled.
Harley sat up straight with a hard gleam in her eyes. “What did you say?”

“I said you couldn’t carry me.” Jack turned to grin at her while undoing the buckle on his belt.

Harley stood and walked barefoot over to her husband and looked him up and down. “What do I get if I win?”

Jack looked startled. “What?”

“If I carry you up the stairs, what do I get?” Harley put her hands on her hips.

Jack chuckled. “You’re serious?”

“Very.” Harley smirked.

Jack chewed his lip. “What would you like?”

Harley giggled. “Ah...a favor to be turned in at a time of my choosing...you got it.”

Jack grinned. “All right, deal--let’s see you carry me to our room.”

Harley grabbed his left arm, bent down and hefted Jack over her back in a fireman’s carry. Jack was giggling the entire time as Harley then, a little shakily at first, stood up with Jack across her shoulders, holding one of his arms, her right arm between his legs and wrapped around one thigh. With a large grin, Harley then proceeded to slowly take the stairs, one at a time.

Jack was laughing hard enough he was almost in tears.

Harley hissed. “Stop wiggling so much!!”

Jack snorted. “I can’t help it!!”

They were both laughing as Harley carefully arrived at the top of the stairs and walked into their room where she deposited Jack onto the bed with an unceremonious flop.

Jack rolled onto his back laughing hard. “Oh my GOD Harley, you are incredible!!”

Harley giggled. “Yes I am.”

Jack reached out and snagged her wrist, yanking her onto the bed and on top of him. He settled back with a smile putting one hand behind his head, and with the other hand he reached up and brushed his fingertips along her cleavage.

Harley smiled and easily grabbed the dress pulling it over her head and depositing it over the side of the bed. Jack purred deep in his chest. She was topess, the little bit of ambient light coming in from the outside caressed her skin as she leaned forward and started to work the buttons of his dress shirt.

“Yeah know what puddin?”

Jack relaxed watching her face while she pulled the shirt out of his slacks and worked the buttons one by one. He smiled studying the little wrinkle between her eyes as she focused her attention on the buttons, the way her bottom lip protruded slightly, the pink flush on her cheeks. The loose, blonde curls that framed her face softened her appearance even more. He felt that ache in his chest again. He loved her so completely.

“What my peach?” Jack asked softly, his fingertips very gentle as he brushed her thighs reaching up
Harley peeled his shirt back and slowly ran her hand up his chest from his stomach. She could still see the fading bruises on his skin, the healing scars, his tattoos. She brushed her fingers tenderly over him; every inch of him brought her pleasure. She didn't just ache for him physically, she needed him on so many levels. She smiled and traced the lines of his long face, brushing the tip of her fingers along the bridge of his nose. He didn’t share much with Bruce in terms of their looks; Bruce was all hard squares, a wall she had once determined, while her lean and trim Jack, there was something dark in him, darker than she had yet to see, she was sure of it. But unlike his brother, Jack had a depth of feeling, a vibrance to his very being—charisma.

She smiled softly continuing to caress his chest. “I love you,” she said simply.

Jack’s smile brightened. He reached up, slipping his fingers under the hem of her panties. “I love you too pumpkin...always Harley.”

Harley stood up on the bed, and with a little wiggle, pushed her panties down, kicking them off with a laugh. Jack was grinning, watching her as he arched his hips off the bed, shoving his slacks and boxers down, struggling to get them off his feet at the same time as his socks. When he was completely naked, Harley dropped down on top of him. They both laughed as the bed jumped, the springs squeaking and squealing in protest. Jack wrapped both his arms and legs around her, squeezing her tightly and rolling her onto her back, he blew loudly on the ticklish space between her shoulder and ear, pressing his lips against her skin and making rude noises until Harley was screaming with laughter.

“JACK!! Stop!!” She tried to wiggle and kick her legs to get away from him, but he scooted up onto his knees continuing to hold her tightly and hissed.

“Never pumpkin!! You’re my girl!! I’ll never stop!” He blew again making terrible raspberries against her neck.

Jack finally pulled away grinning down at her. He moved his arms up so he could cradle her head, stroking his thumbs along her forehead. “You are a pretty swell girl,” he whispered.

Harley giggled. “Swell?”


Harley laughed her arms tight around him. “Promise me something Jack.”

He brushed his nose against hers. “Anything Harls, anything at all.”

“No matter what happens...we’ll always be together,” Harley said softly brushing her mouth against his before gently pressing her lips to his.

Jack purred, his breath brushing her lips when he spoke. “Never fear Harls, I’ll never go anywhere without you.”

He kissed her hard and sweet, sliding down her body to press kisses to her breasts. He cupped one breast, rolling his tongue along her nipple before sucking the sensitive nub into his mouth, releasing her with a pop of his lips. Harley groaned loudly arching her back, the fingers of one hand sliding into his hair, her nails scraping lightly against his scalp as Jack moved his attentions to her other breast. He licked and sucked on her tenderly, his breath warm, caressing and tickling as he murmured softly. “You are my first...” He kissed one breast. “My last...” Then he kissed her other breast before sliding down and pressing a kiss to her belly. “There shall never be another you...”
Jack moved to position himself between her legs, with a kiss to each hip bone. He blew gently against her clitoris before easing his tongue between her lips, finding the sensitive bundle of nerves. Harley’s breath hitched. She reached down to grab his hair in one hand while with the other she grasped the top of the comforter.

“You are a lifetime Harley, you are my life,” he purred before slowly dragging his tongue over her. Harley moaned loudly, arching her hips into his attentions.

Jack kissed her deeply, his tongue finding all the places that he knew would make Harley cry out, smiling when her fingers tightened in his hair. He leaned into her more fully, his tongue licking and swirling. He wrapped his left arm around her leg, lifting her leg over his shoulder and kissed her even deeper while he slid two fingers into her.

Harley groaned, her bottom lip trembling. “Oh Jack…puddin…”

She felt the smile on his lips while sucked on her, alternating the sweet sucking sensation with a long, slow lick. His fingers moved tenderly, pressing deep into her then slowly pulling out. He kissed her again, using all of his mouth on her, licking slowly, but at the same time increasing the rate of his fingers moving into her, thrusting harder, faster.

Harley’s breathing became pants and her fingers dug painfully into his scalp, her hips thrusting in time to the thrusts of his fingers.

“Oh Jack...yes…”

He grinned, licking her from the point his fingers entered her all the way to her clitoris that he began sucking on. Her cries became higher pitched as Jack worked to bring her to climax again, kissing her passionately, his tongue hot and wet against her. Harley cried out when Jack flicked his tongue in a particular twist. Her fingers tightened in his hair and around the comforter as she came, arching and tensing, her toes pointing as she nearly lifted off the bed.

Jack grinned, moving his mouth over her, feeling the rush of wetness against his fingers when she orgasmed. He didn’t stop, wanting to communicate fully how much she meant to him. He slowly pulled his fingers away from her, made Harley gasp.

Jack crawled on top of her, forcing her to release her hold on his hair. She wrapped her arm around him to pull him close, wrapping one leg around his hip as Jack settled between her legs. He brushed his nose against hers and murmured. “You are the world to me Harley…my entire world.”

Harley blinked, tears gathered in her eyes. “Puddin…”

Jack grinned. “Shh…” He kissed her tenderly.

Jack shifted to enter her at the same time he pressed his mouth to hers in a sweet kiss. Harley groaned softly against his lips, feeling him thrust inside her, completing her, the connection of their bodies sent shivers up her spine. Jack kissed her passionately, his tongue finding hers at the same time he was thrusting up, leaning in to penetrate her slowly, deeply. He made a small grunt of pleasure, his eyes fluttering for a moment. Harley slid her foot down his thigh, slid her hands up his sides and grabbed his shoulders rolling her hips in response to him. She moved her mouth over Jack’s licking in a tantalizing caress along his bottom lip, flicking his bottom lip before catching his lip with the edge of her teeth and tugging playfully.

“Puddin….” Harley growled louder, digging her fingers into his flesh. She closed her eyes for a moment with a deep groan. “Jack…”
Jack lifted up on his elbows catching her bottom lip with his teeth in response, leaning into his thrust, and pressing his forehead against hers. He groaned and pressed deeper, thrust in a smooth rhythm, his movements picking up speed, his hips rolling as he thrust in and out. Harley whimpered, her fingers digging into his muscles, wrapping her legs around him, the wet sounds of their bodies coming together mixed with their heated breaths and the squeak of the bed filled the room. He arched his back, pressing his hips into her caressing her face as he stared into her light blue eyes.

Harley stroked his cheeks, dragging her fingers down to his lips.

They smiled at each other, she cupped his face, he held her head, staring into the endless blue of each other’s eyes as their ecstasy peaked as one.
Harley hummed softly to herself as she cleaned the kitchen. She bopped her hips in time to a song in her head as she ran a damp rag over the countertop. She had her blonde hair up in victory rolls and had chosen another sun dress for today, this one with a vintage style halter top that had a square neckline and rhinestone buttons. She was wearing a pair of vintage t-bar heels with teardrop cutouts in the front that showed off her red painted toenails. Jack was busy putting his lab together over in the haunted house ride when Harley heard a knock at the door.

Harley frowned and looked toward the door. She walked over to the wall where she had her baseball bat and picked it up before she made her way over to the front door. The only people who should know of this place were the gang members, so it should be one of them, but it paid to play it safe Harley told herself. She walked over to the door and opened it just a bit to look outside and smiled.

On the other side of the door, in another black on black suit stood Zsasz with a bouquet of pink roses. Next to him, tied up as if they had been hogtied were the two drug dealers.

Zsasz grinned. “Good afternoon Mrs. Harley; is your husband around?”

Harley giggled and opened the door fully. Zsasz held out the flowers to her. Harley gathered them into her arms burying her face in them and took a deep breath.

“Oh Victor, may I call you Victor? These smell wonderful!”

Zsasz grinned. “Of course you may call me Victor and I am so glad you like them.”

Harley glanced at the drug dealers, who each had a bag on their head so she couldn’t quite tell the amount of damage they had both suffered, but a glance told her one of them at least was missing a finger or two.

“Why don’t you bring them into the kitchen. I’ll go get Jack and we can get started. Would you like coffee, tea, water? I have some lemonade.”

“Tea would be perfect, thank you Mrs. Harley.” Victor smiled picking up one of the drug dealers as if they weighed nothing at all.

“Let me fix your tea then I’ll get my husband and please, just call me Harley; everyone does.” Harley smiled stepping out of the way and left the door open as she walked into the kitchen.

* 

Jack had his phone set in a speaker set to play Metallica’s “Sanitarium.” He had his suit jacket off and hanging on a hook on the wall that had held a plastic skeleton before. He had the sleeves of his white dress shirt rolled up, though his green tie and light silver grey and white plaid vest (along with the matching slacks) were still in place. As he moved about the room, the bright green socks with large purple and gold paisley would occasionally be exposed over the top of his light brown wingtip oxfords while he danced a little to the music. Over his clothing Jack wore a leather apron and currently resting on his forehead were a pair of dark lensed goggles.

He sang along to the music while he measured some dark liquid into a beaker.

“They think our heads are in their hands
But violent use brings violent plans

Keep him tied, it makes him well

He's getting better, can't you tell?”

Occasionally Jack would stop what he was doing as the lyrics of the song sank in and his mind drifted to thoughts of Arkham, of Crane, how close he had come to losing Harley. His mind...or did he lose his mind? Jack grinned at that thought. He knew there was something different about him, not wrong, just...different. He grinned, maybe it was because he didn’t feel a thing about killing other people, or maybe it was because he saw that life was like a hamster’s wheel, a lot of spinning and going nowhere. Pretty damn pointless, which was funny. All that striving to be good, to be orderly...and one thing could change all of that...one little thing. Jack thought about his brother, always striving to live up to the standards that he thought their dead parents would want, two people who were beyond caring. Jack sighed. The only person in the world he really cared about now was Harley. She was everything to him, which went against his philosophy, but she was like a drug—she couldn’t deny her, couldn’t be without her, couldn’t face the world without her by his side. She was his one weakness.

Jack shook himself out of his thoughts and focused on his lab work. It had taken him a while to get the lab set up the way he liked it and now he was getting to play with a few of the chemicals that Alex had brought over for him. Jack felt like a child in toyland, so many things for him to create, so many ways to focus his attentions...

Jack grinned brightly when he heard a knock at the door. He turned with a lifted eyebrow to see Harley poke her head in. He grinned broader when he saw her, his angel in the darkness.

“Hey puddin.” Harley grinned showing off her pretty smile; he always loved her smile.

Jack’s smile in response was brilliant. “Harley! Come in Baby.”

“I just came by to let you know that Zsasz is here with a delivery.” She giggled softly and walked over to Jack as he pulled the apron off, then dropped it and the goggles on a table. She walked into his arms which he held open as soon as he had removed his equipment.

Jack folded Harley against him and kissed the top of her head. Her scent, the feel of her body against his washed away his more morbid thoughts. “Mmm...well I suppose I should go check out the goods. Did he break them too much?”

Harley giggled softly. “I couldn’t tell, he had them tied up and bagged up, but they seemed intact.”

Jack smiled. “Goodie. It’s no fun playing with broken toys.”

The three of them sat around the small kitchen table, Victor with his tea, Jack and Harley with their coffee. In the center of the table was a vase the held the roses that Victor had brought. The fresh flowers filled the kitchen with their scent. The two drug dealers were tied up in another set of chairs, these with hard backs and arms Jack had brought out to make tying them up easier. Both the dealers had a ball gag in their mouth, hands duct taped to the arms of the chairs, with their ankles duct taped to the legs of the chair.

Jack leaned his elbows on the table and sipped his coffee with a smile.

“So, get anything useful out of them?” he asked before he took another sip. “They looked relatively
“A little bit.” Victor grinned. “And what I damaged, I did just under the clothing.” He sipped his tea and continued. “They know exactly who is making and distributing Giggles, but they also know who is making all the money off the drug too. Though they were reluctant to give me a name, even though I can be very persuasive.” Zsasz smiled and shrugged. “I’m afraid Arkham may have dulled my abilities.”

Harley glanced over at the two dealers. Griselda was a short woman with thick, frizzy hair that was clearly dyed red. She might have been pretty at one time, but drugs had taken their toll on her skin and right now she had a black eye. Her partner, Manuel had thick curling black hair, with a thick mustache that immediately made Harley think of the term, “pornstache.” He was also sporting a black eye, along with a bloody lip as well as missing a couple of fingers on his left hand; in contrast to Victor’s claim a moment earlier.

Jack smiled and stood up from the table. “Harley dear, would you go get your makeup and the nail kit, along with the hair cutting scissors.”

Harley jumped up with a bounce to her hair. “Of course puddin.”

Victor watched her leave followed by the sound of her footsteps heading up the stairs and glanced at Jack with a lifted brow.

Jack smiled. “Just going to prepare them. You know Victor, like a mortician.”

Jack glanced at the two captives. “They have to know there is only one way this is going to end. Live fast, die young, and leave a pretty corpse behind.” Jack chuckled. “Or not so much…”

Victor chuckled along with him just as Harley descended the stairs carrying a large box and a little zipper bag. She set everything on the table as Jack stood up and walked over to their “guests.”

Jack stood in front of them with a smile, while at the same time he pulled out a pair of leather gloves from the inside pocket of his jacket, a pair of green latex gloves that matched his tie. He slipped his fingers into each glove as he spoke. “Now, I want to know who is giving you Giggles, where it’s made, who gets the money...that sort of thing. I want to know everything you know.”

Jack stretched his fingers, flexing them a few times in the gloves. “Oh--I’m being rude. My name is Jack.”

Jack gave them a winning smile. “This…” He pointed at Harley. “Is my beautiful wife Harley.”

Harley waved at them. “Hi!” she said in a pleasant tone before she went back to setting up the makeup.

Jack turned and walked back over to the table where Harley had everything, a nail kit with clippers, file, their shared makeup, along with combs, brushes, hair trimming scissors. Jack picked up one of the brushes and the scissors before he walked over to Manuel.

Jack started to brush the man’s hair. He glanced up at Harley. “Sweetheart, where is the water bottle?”

Harley smiled. “Oh, in the upstairs bathroom. Just a minute puddin.”

Jack hummed softly while he brushed his captive’s hair and waited for Harley. Manuel kept very still looking over at Griselda then up at Jack, his expression clearly confused. Victor sipped his tea as
Jack’s hummed turned and shifted to a low murmuring of the lyrics.

“I started a joke which started the whole world crying

But I didn’t see that the joke was on me oh no

I started to cry which started the whole world laughing

Oh If I’d only seen that the joke was on me…”

Harley came back with the bottle of water, a bottle with a spray top. Jack leaned over and kissed her gently before he started to spritz Manuel’s hair. Jack reached over to pick up the scissors and began to trim the man’s hair. Harley seemed to sense what her husband was up to without them sharing a word between them, picked up the nail kit and pulled her chair over closer, until she was positioned in front of Griselda. She hummed along with her husband’s low singing and started to trim the nails of the woman in front of her.

Jack stepped around in front of Manuel and set the scissors down on the kitchen table. “Now, I’m going to remove your gag so we can speak. Please, don’t bother screaming; no one is going to hear you. But, if you insist on screaming, I will have to cut your tongue out and focus all my attentions on your partner Griselda here and you will get to watch. Now, I’m sure you are thinking to yourself...he’s bluffing. Well, you can’t be sure one way or the other now can you? I guess it all comes down to how much of a gambler you are.” Jack grinned. “But, to help you out, I’m going to be perfectly honest with you Manuel. You and your friend here--are not going to leave here alive. It simply isn’t going to happen. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, well, if I’m going to die anyway, then I won’t tell him anything.” Jack frowned and nodded. “Which you could do, of course. But ask yourself, the person you’re working for, do you really think they care what happens to you? Do you really think, whoever they are, is going to spare one thought about what happens to you? And let’s just say I let you go...do you really think they are going to believe you didn’t give me anything after what I’m going to do to you if you don’t talk?”

Jack smiled pleasantly before he stood up again and walked behind Manuel. Harley hummed softly, she glanced up at her husband. Jack gave her a wink. Jack returned his attention to Manuel. He took a moment to remove the gag, setting it on the counter behind him before he picked up the scissors again along with the water bottle, he sprayed the man’s hair as Manuel visibly tensed up. Jack trimmed and hummed, glanced over at Harley. Harley smiled at him as she filed Griselda’s nails.

“Now Manuel--Giggles. Is the same man that gives it to you to sell the one who is making the drug?” Jack expertly trimmed the man’s hair, brushing his fingers through the black locks as he worked. “I know you’ve been through this with my friend, Victor, but indulge me.”

Manuel swallowed then opened his mouth and yelled, “HELP!!” as loudly as he could and began to struggle in his seat, twisting and heaving enough that the chair shook and jiggled an inch or two off the floor. Griselda and Harley both jumped. Victor didn’t move, but Jack stepped around the seated drug dealer as he dropped the scissors and water bottle. One of his green gloved hands shot out to grab Manuel by the cheeks. His fingers squeezed tightly while in one fluid movement Jack flipped his jacket back to pull his knife that rode at his hip.

Jack’s face contorted into a scowl as he held the knife’s in his left hand, squeezed Manuel’s cheeks painfully until the man opened his mouth in pain and was forced to stick his tongue out. Jack placed the tip of his blade against Manuel’s tongue. He pressed down slowly into the wet flesh; the sharp blade cut into the man’s tongue. Manuel started to make noises of protest as his eyes rolled in panic. Jack smiled easily as he watched the blood well up under his blade from the other man’s tongue. “So
“…my friend…” Jack spoke calmly. “This is going to go one of two ways. One, I cut your tongue out and turn my attentions to your girlfriend here. OR, you start telling me what I want to hear. Like I said, either way you and your friend are dying. How painfully and in how many parts you end up in before you die will be entirely up to you.” Jack smiled displaying his perfect white teeth. “How agonizing do you want your death to be?”

Manuel stopped struggling and stopped trying to yell. He glanced sideways at Griselda who looked terrified, but also resigned.

The man nodded as best he could with how Jack was holding his face. Jack very slowly removed his knife tip and released the man’s face. He smiled and put the blade away just as quickly as he had drawn it; the blade disappeared in the blink of an eye.

“Harley my sweet, ready to trade?” Jack picked up the water bottle and scissors.

Harley grinned and set the nail kit down. “Sure thing puddin’.”

Harley picked up the water bottle and scissors. She also picked up where Jack left off with the song, and began to spritz and trim Griselda’s hair while Jack sat down in front of Manuel. He picked up the nail clippers and the file and began to trim the drug dealer’s nails.

Harley sang softly, almost chanting in a sing-song voice more than actual singing while Jack picked up one of Manuel’s fingers and began to trim and file his nails as if nothing had happened... Jack thought that Harley’s voice was soft and sweet.

“I looked at the skies running my hands over my eyes
And I fell out of bed hurting my head from things that I said
’Till I finally died which started the whole world living
Oh if I’d only seen that the joke was on me…”

* 

“So tell me Manuel, from whom do you acquire the Giggles?” Jack’s full attention seemed to be on the drug dealer’s nails. He trimmed them neatly, and filed them carefully. Manuel licked his dry lip and glanced at Griselda before he spoke. “I...I get the drug from Sal Maroni or one of his men. They bring me the goods and I pay him or his people 90% of what we make. I don’t know how much The Roman gets.”

Jack went very still, his voice a whisper. “The Roman?”

Manuel nodded vigorously. “All I know man, is that The Roman is the head guy, the one who gets all the money; he has the people that make the drugs. Griselda and me, we just sell it.”

Jack’s face twitched slightly, the vein under his eye throbbed for a moment, but he continued to work on Manuel’s nails. Manuel glanced over at Griselda as Harley finished with her hair and had moved around to once more sit in front of the wild haired drug dealer. Harley had moved her make-up case closer and was going through it while she hummed holding up different colors of eyeshadow, considering them and putting them back.

Jack pressed his lips together for a moment; he breathed through his nose before he spoke. “So--The Roman, interesting. How does he have the drug made, do you know?” Jack asked calmly. “I mean, who is making it and where?” Jack examined the nail he had been working too. Satisfied he moved
Victor stood up walking over to the stove and glanced at Harley. “Do you mind if I make another cup of tea?” he asked.

Harley glanced up having decided against doing makeup first and was instead going through her nail polish. She had decided on a shade of red called “exotic liras.” She shook the bottle as she glanced up at Victor.

“Oh sure thing! The tea bags are in the cabinet right there.” She pointed out the cabinet with a smile at Victor.


Harley smiled. “Sure thing.”

Jack, who was very slowly filing one of Manuel’s nails said without looking up. “No thank you. Though I think I will have a cigarette, if you wouldn’t mind grabbing the ashtray. It should be next to the coffee maker.”


“Oh, two creams and three sugars, thank you.” Harley had opened the bottle of polish and was carefully painting the other woman’s nails as Griselda stared at her, only occasionally making a sound around her ball gag that Harley completely ignored.

Harley had switched songs, her voice low and soft as she started on the new song, her focus on the task of painting Griselda’s nails. She slowly and carefully dragged the brush over the nail. She glanced up at the woman tied to the chair and gave her a bright smile.

“Young stare makes me freeze but I can't stay still
Those eyes keep me up longer than any other pill
And I know, being together
We feel like forever
And now, more than ever I feel everything…”

Manuel felt sick as he watched the interaction between these people with their casual conversation, the soft singing of the woman, all of them acted as if everything that was going on was so normal, which included the fact that they planned on killing both him and Griselda. There was something so spooky, creepy about the way they didn’t scream, didn’t beat them, didn’t demand answers by physically attacking them...the only violence when the man named Jack had done was when he grabbed his face and cut his tongue a couple of minutes ago. Otherwise it was soft, quiet, friendly. The woman painting Griselda's nails continued to sing, tapping her foot in time to the song she was singing while she worked.

“I'm scared that I'm falling
I'm blind and I'm falling
My love is calling
You can't stop me roaring, I'm soaring
Manuel shuddered as Jack finished with Manuel’s nails and glanced over at his woman at the same time that Victor brought over the ashtray for Jack.

“How about this one puddin? It’s called Licorice.” She handed over the bottle for Jack to inspect. Jack slowly blew out the smoke from the side of his mouth and grinned as he reached over to cup the back of Harley’s neck, tugging her closer to kiss her.

“Perfect sweets.”

Jack turned his attention back to Manual, holding his cigarette between his teeth. The drug dealer could see the coldness in Jack’s eyes, the way Jack smiled at him, sent a shiver down his spine. Jack turned, blowing out another line of smoke, set his legs wide apart and leaned back against his chair as he murmured. “Now…” He shook the bottle, rolling the cigarette to the side of his mouth. “What do you know about Giggles?”

Manuel stuttered. “It-it makes you crazy, euphoric. There’s this rush, and it uh, it ain’t like anything I ever felt before.”

Jack opened the bottle, withdrew the brush slowly. He took a drag on his cigarette again, blew the smoke out through his nostrils as he leaned forward and carefully began to paint the other man’s nails.

“You’ve used it?” Jack asked without looking up.

Manuel nodded. “Yeah, both me and Griselda tried it. It’s like...like meth, but better. That rush, where your heart beats like crazy can last for hours man--like...hours. And the high, man, it’s amazing. It makes you feel on top of the world man, like you can do anything, but at the same time why do anything at all!? You just fucking float and everything...you see the funny side of everything man...and you know that high you get when someone chokes you during sex? It’s like that too man...it’s amazing. Like all the best highs rolled into one! It makes you feel...weightless and it bleaches the skin, like a lot of the ladies like that, but that’s just a side effect that usually fades after like forty eight hours.”

Jack’s entire body had tensed. He had painted two of Manuel’s nails, but he stopped, going very still. He sat back a little, holding the nail brush between two fingers while he pulled out his cigarette from his mouth.

“Makes you laugh, eh? Pale skin...really? Do you know how or where Falcone got this new drug?” Jack asked softly before taking another drag.

Manuel swallowed. “I mean, I don’t know much--Maroni would know more--but I heard Maroni say something about Falcone had a factory, some chemical plant he's using as a front to make drugs. I
heard that he stole this formula from that Red Hood gang, he somehow got some samples from when they robbed that fashion week shit and something about that Red Hood gang using it on Panessa…I don’t know man, Maroni likes to talk when he’s drunk or high…” Manuel closed his mouth then, watching Jack intently. The man had gone deathly still. There was something about him, like a caged animal…something unhinged…Maroni, Falcone scared him, for sure. But this man, Jack, terrified Manuel.

Jack had stopped moving, his hand holding the nail polish brush poised over one of Manuel’s fingernails. Smoke was slowly gliding from the end of the cigarette. Manuel could see a hint of the vein under Jack’s eyes throb again.

Jack hissed softly. “He got samples. From the Red Hood gang? Did someone give him those samples?”

Manuel shrugged. “I don’t know…I mean, that’s what Maroni said…I don’t think so. He ain’t ever said anything about a snitch…just got samples man…that’s all I know.” Jack sat up straight and smiled, putting the nail brush back in the bottle. He took a drag on his cigarette, held it for a couple of seconds, then let the smoke slowly flow from his mouth and nose as he spoke. “Really? Maroni said that did he? I guess that means I need to talk to Maroni. Thank you Manuel.”

Jack’s movements were so swift that even Harley didn’t see him pull his knife. One moment Jack was holding his cigarette, the next, he was holding his knife. The knife was in Jack’s hand, and before Harley or Victor could blink, Jack’s arm shot out, slicing the drug dealer’s throat in one swift, fluid movement. For a heart beat, here was nothing, just the surprised look in Manuel’s eyes, then the blood, bright red, blossomed from the wound which seemed to split open wider, spilling bright red blood down the man’s front in a steady stream as his head fell back.

Jack, his face contorted with rage, watched, his eyes cold as Manuel choked and gurgled a bit before he ultimately went quiet as he died, his front soaked in blood. Griselda began to thrash around, while Harley, who had been intent on painting the woman’s nails, looked up startled.

Harley didn’t move at first. She wasn’t sure what it was that caused her to hesitate, but when she didn’t move fast enough, Jack stepped over to the gagged and bound woman and swiftly, elegantly, slashed open her throat.

Harley winced and yanked herself out of the way as the woman’s neck gushed blood and she began to silently bleed to death, her cries muffled by the ball gag in her mouth and the fact that Jack’s cut was even deeper than the one he had given Manuel. Harley knew with a cut that deep, her husband had severed the woman’s vocal cords. Jack, his eyes stormy with rage while still retaining a coldness to them, cleaned his knife on Manuel’s pants legs before sliding the blade back into the sheath at his waist. He put out the cigarette he had dropped to the floor with the toe of his shoe. Without a word, he grabbed up his cigarettes and lighter, and quickly lit another. Jack took a long drag on the cigarette. He held the smoke for a moment as he closed his eyes before he slowly released the smoke in a long, slow stream.

“I’m guessing I’m going to have to have a talk with both Maroni and Falcone.” Jack’s eyes narrowed dangerously as he held his cigarette between his fingers, a hand on his hip as he glared at the bodies. “I don’t appreciate someone taking something that is mine. I don’t appreciate it at all.”

Harley wrinkled her nose at the two bodies in her kitchen. She started to pick up the polish, makeup and other accessories.

“Puddin, what are we going to do with the bodies?” she asked as she put things back in the makeup case. The blood running down from the bodies was beginning to pool on the floor.
Jack took another long drag on his cigarette before smashing the butt into the ashtray. “I’ll call Alex Baby, get those cleaners--Hook and sons--over here to clean this mess up. And we are going to have a quick gang meeting,” Jack hissed before he turned and stalked from the kitchen.

Harley sighed, looking at the mess. “I just cleaned this.”

Victor smiled. “I’ll take the roses into the next room for you.”

Harley smiled as she gathered up the make-up. “Thank you Victor.”

*  
A couple of hours later, the Hook family had cleaned up the bodies and the kitchen, leaving the room looking spotless. Jack had called a meeting, so the living room of their home was currently filled with who Jack considered the “main” members of his gang: Harley, Jason, Roxy, Duela, Frost, his aunt, Trope, Alex (who showed up without Alice who wasn’t feeling well, but instead had his dad Frank tagging along which had surprised everyone, but Jack seemed genuinely pleased to see the older man) Zsasz, Gus, Clyde, Angora, the twins, Bane, Trope and Thea.

The room was crowded, with a few people standing, others sitting on a couple of chairs, such as the twins who were sitting on the back of the couch, while Thea sat in a chair with Trope on her lap. Jack sat on the loveseat with his arm around Harley and smoking a cigarette, a bottle of whiskey with a glass of ice on the coffee table in front of them, along with an ashtray surrounded by a few candles. Jack had his pointed wingtips resting on the table. Everyone else was either drinking beer, grape soda, water or kool-aid.

Harley had decorated the room with a few lit candles; the warm scent of vanilla filled the air around them, the flickering candlelight mixed with the low lamplight made the meeting more intimate and personal.

Jack took a drag on his cigarette, (Harley noted that Jack had been smoking more than usual today) his agitation and growing anger still just barely in check.

“It has come to my attention that the drug that we were looking into for Fish Mooney and Big Mama--Giggles--is actually something that Falcone found someone to make for him based on my gas.” Jack’s eyelid twitched. Harley frowned sipping her grape soda. She had never seen him this upset, this murderous; not since Arkham.

“I really, really don’t appreciate my things being taken without my permission. I don’t like money being made off my work and I really, really will not be made a fool of. I want to know where Falcone is making this drug and I want it stopped. Which means, my friends, that I am going to take our little gang to the next level. We are going to war with Falcone, now rather than later, and I’m going to be starting with his little enforcer, Maroni.” Jack looked at everyone in the room. “Does anyone have any objections?” No one in the room spoke.

Jack smiled, dropped his feet to the floor and leaned over to put his cigarette out in the ashtray. “Then we are all in agreement?”

Frost glanced at everyone then spoke. “I think I can speak for everyone here Boss--we got your back.”

Jack smiled. “Thank you Frost.”

The gang members all gave murmurs of agreement, which had Jack grinning ear to ear. Never in his life had he encountered this much devotion, or people who trusted him to look out for them. Before--
before Harley, before all of this, his life had been the other way around mostly...being the baby brother of Bruce Wayne, the fragile one, the one who needed looking after, the one who was on the verge of insanity and who couldn’t be trusted. He had always felt that Bruce either treated him with kid gloves, or tried to control every aspect of Jack’s life that he could, but now...Jack was the one in charge. He had Harley by his side, his friend, his partner and his lover. Not only did she make him feel powerful, but she also made him feel protected, sheltered in her love while at the same time able to control his world.

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The gang discussed a few things, other matters such as Trope and Thea who both had come up with an idea on how to make the amusement park more secure. Jack discussed converting another part of the park into “apartments” for the gang, so that everyone had a place to stay if they needed it, and other minor details. Eventually, Agatha came over and sat down next to Harley.

She smiled. “I brought you and Jack a gift, sort of a house warming present I suppose, though I had really meant to give these to you for your wedding.”

Harley frowned. “Agatha you don’t…”

Agatha smiled. “Shh...I wanted to.”

She handed Harley a small box. Harley glanced at her, her blue eyes tearing up. Agatha smiled, reaching up to brush her thumb under Harley’s eye catching the tears.

“Sweetie, you are like the daughter I never had and you make Jack so happy. Granted I didn’t see much of the boys growing up, but Jack was always such a sad, quiet boy. You’ve made him so much happier, so much more himself than he has ever been. His father and mother might not like what Jack has become...and he might not have become a criminal if they had lived, but…” She cupped Harley’s chin. “He knows himself better than he ever did Harley and that’s because of you honey.”

Harley smiled. “Thank you Auntie.”

Agatha grinned getting teary eyed too. “Okay, enough tears, just open the box.”

Harley opened the long, slender box to find a gold necklace with her name in thin, elegant script, a tiny cross of four diamonds hanging off the “y” in her name.

“Oh Agatha!” Harley squealed with delight. Agatha smiled. “I’m glad you like it dear.”

“Oh, I love it! Jack look!” Harley held the box out to her husband.

Jack, who had been deep in conversation with Bane and Frost, turned to look over at his wife and smiled. “Auntie, that’s beautiful!”

“Oh I have something for you too Jackie.” Agatha leaned around Harley as she handed a second box to Jack.

Jack chuckled. “And it’s not even my birthday.”

Agatha laughed. “Shut up and open it.”

Jack smirked and opened the box. Inside was a gold chain. Just by looking at it Jack could tell it wasn’t cheap; she had spent a lot on it, he could tell. The chain was a finely made Cuban link 20
inch chain in 14k gold. Jack looked over at her in shock.

“Auntie I…”

Agatha held up her hand. “There are many birthdays and holidays wrapped up in that gift, so don’t you dare tell me you can’t take it. You will take it and you will like it.”

Agatha gave Jack a firm hard stare.

He smiled and leaned around his wife to kiss his aunt’s hand. “Thank you Auntie. I love it.”

She grinned. “Good.”

She stood up and ran her hands down her very tight, very low cut pink dress. “I’m going to take Frost home and teach him all about the art of Kinbaku.” She waggled her eyebrows at the two of them.

Jack chuckled with a shake of his head while grinning at Frost. “I would say I’m sorry, but I don’t think it’s necessary.”

Frost blushed as Harley leaned over and whispered to Jack. “What is Kinbaku?”

Jack smiled. “Mm…I will have to teach you sometime Harley, it will be a lot of fun,” he said seductively. Harley blushed bright red.

He turned to his aunt. “You two have fun. See you both tomorrow night.”

Frost nodded. “See ya Boss.”

Agatha smiled taking Frost’s hand. “Night my dears. Now, Frost, Kinbaku is all about sensuality…”

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Later that evening Jack and Harley were alone after the gang members had all headed home for the night. Harley had insisted Jack take off his jacket, vest and tie. She unbuttoned few of the buttons on his dress shirt before she made him turn around, his back to her, so that she could rub his shoulders. Harley frowned. Jack’s shoulders and neck were tight, almost like stone when she tried to massage the muscles.

“Puddin, you all right?” Harley asked softly as she began to knead his shoulders.

Jack had his eyes closed as he leaned into her touch. “Yeah, just...still angry,” he said softly.

“That gas, the other venom I was working on before I met you--all of it--it was all I had for a long time, my work. It’s where I focused all of my energy, my skills…and to know that some fucking mobster took it and is making money off my creation, it just burns my ass Harley.” Jack snarled and his hands formed into fists.

Harley rubbed his shoulders before she slid her hands down his arms. “Puddin, relax. I know you’re angry, but you need to relax.” She put both hands on one arm and kneaded down to his forearm. She made Jack turn slightly in order to take one of his hands. She eased his fist open, removed his glove, and started to massage his hand. She dug her thumbs into his palm slowly as she rubbed the tension out of his hand. “Puddin, you know, we’ll find out where they’re making this Giggles, all the places they are making it--if there is more than one--and we’ll burn them to the ground.” She spoke softly as she brought his hand up to kiss his palm. “We burn the plant or store or whatever racket they are
using as a front, kill all of them and simply take everything that’s left.”

Jack turned to look at her. She kissed his hand again with a smile, her blue eyes twinkled at him. Jack chuckled softly before he reached around with his other hand to caress the side of her face with his fingertips. “I love the way your mind works Harley.”

Harley grinned and placed his hand down, then returned to rubbing his shoulders. “Thank you puddin.”

Jack took a deep breath and let it out again slowly. Harley could feel his muscles begin to relax a small fraction. Jack moaned when Harley found a particularly sore spot and rubbed harder. “You’re right Baby, we’ll destroy everything they’ve made off my work...all of it.” Jack smiled, his eyes closed as he spoke. “I want to see Falcone’s face when I kill him too...I want to watch him bleed slowly, realizing that he fucked up. I was going to do it anyway, but now...it’ll be extra sweet.”

Harley kissed the back of Jack’s neck. Her lips brushed against the small hairs on the back of his neck, her eyes closed as she took in the scent of his skin, the feel of his flesh against her lips.

Jack smiled closing his eyes and murmured. “Harls, I was thinking, maybe you should go back to the roller derby.”

Harley frowned as she peered at the side of Jack’s head. The thought seemed random and out of nowhere. She had just moved her kisses to his ear. “You do?”

Jack smiled without turning. “I do. I really would like to watch you skate and it would be a nice distraction. I have my lab, but I want you to have something that is more than simply waiting on me. You enjoyed it so I think you should go back to it.”

“You think they would still want me after all this time?” Harley asked reaching her arms under his and blindly worked on the buttons of his dress shirt.

Jack nodded. “Good. I would like to see you skate. I never got to see you in one of those outfits, slamming your body into other women, beating them up in a real game…”

He chuckled.

Harley tugged his shirt out of his pants before she removed her arms from under his arms. She reached up and over Jack’s shoulders, taking hold of the shirt and peeled the fabric back over Jack’s shoulders. He made a soft sound in his throat, a soft growl. Harley leaned forward and brushed her lips along his shoulders while she slowly moved her mouth over his skin, her tongue rolling out to lick a trail across his shoulders then back at his neck. She opened her mouth wide, gently pressing her teeth into his skin.

Jack groaned and leaned back into her while her hands stroked his chest and stomach.

She glided her hand down to his slacks. Blindingly she worked at the belt, the button and zipper until
she had everything undone which allowed her hands to slip into his slacks and squeeze.

Jack moaned softly as he leaned his full weight back against her.

Harley licked the back of his ear. One of her hands slid up the flat muscled planes of his stomach, her other hand massaged his quickly hardening erection. She caught his ear in her teeth, sucked a little, just enough to cause him to hiss as her teeth pressed down. She opened her hand wide, gathering his erection and balls, all of him still held by his boxers and squeezed while she dragged the nails of her other hand across his stomach.

Harley hissed against his ear. “Just picture it puddin, everything burning, we could let it all burn.”

She squeezed him followed by pressing her nails into his stomach. Jack groaned with pleasure, his body arched with her touch. Harley pulled her hand away only to slide her fingers under the band of his boxers until she felt the hot, hard satin flesh of her husband’s erection. She squeezed him and began to stroke him up and down; her hand alternated between tight squeezes and strokes.

Jack, his eyes still closed, caught his bottom lip with his teeth. He groaned as Harley dragged her nails over his skin with one hand, the other hand squeezed and stroked until Jack was thrusting into her hand. He hissed with each stroke of her hand or squeeze of her fingers.

“Do you want me Jack?” Harley purred. “Do you want me?”

Jack groaned low and deep. “Yes, I want you Harley.”

She smiled, released him, and stood up, she moved around a little so that Jack could see her.

Jack didn’t move, he simply watched her as she reached under her dress and slid her panties down her legs, leaving her heeled red shoes on as she stepped out of them. She smiled as she put her hands on Jack’s shoulders and shoved him back against the couch. She reached for his slacks, which forced Jack to raise his hips as his wife yanked his slacks and boxers to his knees. She stepped over him, standing over his lap. She didn’t say a word, but she smiled pressing the tip of her tongue to her upper lip as she gazed at him before lifting her dress and sitting down on Jack’s lap. She giggled reaching down over her dress to press his erection against her, rubbing him against her as she rolled her pelvis and made her husband gasp.

Jack began to reach for her, but Harley grabbed the wrist of one hand. “Just a minute puddin.”

Jack quirked a brow as Harley placed his hand on her hip. She turned and leaned over backwards, snapping up one of the candles on the living room table. She turned back around and held the candle with a grin.

“What are you going to do with that Harley?” Jack asked, but he smiled as she held the candle up above his chest then slowly tipped it, allowing a couple of small drops of hot wax to dribble onto his chest.

Jack took a hard breath as the hot wax hit his chest. Harley moved the candle, watching as the wax ran down from his lean, muscled chest. The wax quickly cooled as it rolled down to his stomach leaving molded lines of wax behind. She held the candle up high and moved it over his nipples where she let a couple of drops of hot wax fall; Jack hissed with pleasure.

Harley leaned back to set the candle down before she reached for Jack’s glass of whiskey. It was mostly empty, only a sip or two of the amber liquid still in the glass. She held it over him, ook out one of the ice cubes, and held it over her mouth letting the ice drip on her.
Jack watched, a drop of cool water hit her lips, then dribbled down her chin. Intrigued, he watched the drop of water race down her throat, where it disappeared under her dress to travel between her breasts. He groaned, his groin tightening with need that she had already built in him and was now simply torturing him.

Harley grinned and took the ice cube, following the heat of the wax with the chill of the ice.

Jack groaned, his fingers on her hips squeezed. “Harley…”

She giggled softly and put the ice back into the glass before she drank the last of the whiskey in the glass and turned to set it on the table. She turned back to him, laid her hands on his chest and used her nails to scrape the little drops of wax off his chest.

Jack groaned again. He arched into the slight pain of her nails, inhaled sharply when she clawed over his nipples.

She reached up and untied her dress, letting the halter fall.

Jack caught his bottom lip with his teeth and reached up for her breasts. He cupped her breasts, squeezing softly. His touch made Harley moan and arch her back into his touch. She shifted her position lifting up, reached under her skirt to hold him while she lowered herself down. Together they both groaned when their bodies came together. Jack reached up and cupped the side of her neck. He pulled her down for a kiss while Harley rolled her hips, grinding down on him as she reached behind Jack and grabbed the cushions of the loveseat.

Jack put one hand on her hips, sliding his other hand around, he grabbed the back of her neck. He held her down to him so he could kiss her hard against her lips while she bounced up and down. Harley started to move faster, Jack groaned. He released her throat and reached down with both hands to grab her waist, both of them moaned together as she bounced on his erection. He watched her breasts jiggle, his fingers tightened his hold on her as he thrust up to meet her, a happy grin on his face as he gazed up at her. He loved to watch the way her face change, the way her pleasure rolled over her features, or when he looked in her eyes, the way the blue of her eyes darkened with passion. Harley whimpered as Jack’s thrusts penetrated deeply into her. She held the back of the loveseat cushions tight enough that she was surprised she hadn’t ripped the fabric. He felt so good, stretching her, filling her, she simply couldn’t get enough. She rolled her body like a cat, nearly purring too as she ducked down to grab his mouth with her own, her tongue playing with his before she leaned back again for air.

Jack reached under her dress, quickly finding her clitoris with one hand while he held onto her with the other, his thumb rubbed over her in a circle, made Harley gasp. She threw her head back as she continued to bounce, squeezing the back of the couch cushions until she felt the warm rush of her orgasm roll up her body.

Harley cried out, her back arched, her entire body going tight, tension building, then she was flooded with pleasure as she peaked and burst. Harley let out a long drawn out cry of Jack’s name while she continued to ride her climax, her body moved quicker, her hips rolled with her pleasure.

Jack cried out, his head fell back against the loveseat as he felt the warm, wetness envelop him when his wife came. The sensation washed over him and he followed suit, climaxing with a cry. He arched his body back against the love seat, using his entire body to thrust up into his wife, lifting them both off the sofa for a split second before crashing back down to earth together, flooding her with himself.

Harley continued to ride him, her own pleasure rising and ebbing as she caused her husband to jerk and hiss, his whole body almost too sensitive to her movements.
Jack finally needed her to stop; he wrapped his arms tight around her and pulled her close, burying his face against her shoulder.

Harley released the cushions to wrap her arms around Jack’s neck holding him close. They were both quiet except for their attempts to catch their breath together.

Jack sighed his whole body going limp as he relaxed, though he kept his arms around Harley.

“I don’t know if I could do any of this without you Harls.” Jack whispered, his eyes closed. He laughed lightly. “And I don’t mean the sex...I mean all of this, the gang, killing Maroni, Falcone, the Owls...I couldn’t do any of it without you.”

Harley smiled, kissing his ear with a whispered. “You’ll never have to puddin. I’ll always be here.”

Jack’s grip tightened. “Swear?”

For a moment he sounded like a little boy, lost and alone. Harley sat back and cupped her husband’s face in her hands. “I will never go anywhere without you Jack. I go where you go, always.”

Jack smiled and tugged her down kissing her softly.

* 

Dick Grayson was bored. Bored was putting it mildly he thought; he was about to lose his mind. He and Bruce were actually getting along better, which was great! He liked Bruce Wayne more than he imagined he would, but Bruce would still disappear for long periods of time, especially at night and without a word. Alfred always had some excuse and at first Dick bought them, but something just didn’t feel right. Plus, there was only so much Netflix and video games that Dick could stand. He was accustomed to working out a lot, practicing the act with his parents. Bruce had given him full use of the gym and the pool...also great, but after a while it was lonely. No matter how loud he blared the music with working out or swimming, he was still mostly alone.

Alfred tried. He really did and the old man was great. He had taught Dick how to play chess, gin rummy and even poker.

So Dick was doing tonight what he thought any bored teenager would do in a huge manor house...he was snooping.

Dick sighed as he wandered along the portrait hall. He would stop and gaze at pictures of the Wayne family and count how many generations there were, which were a lot.

Dick couldn’t trace his own family back before his great-great grandparents. Bruce Wayne could trace his family all the way back to the beginnings of the country!

Dick stopped at the family picture of Bruce and his brother, taken when the two men were in their late teens. Dick frowned, studying Jack. Unlike Bruce, Jack was much slimmer with light brown hair compared to Bruce’s black. His features were sharper too. Bruce was very square, heavy looking, while Jack Wayne was all sharp angles. Dick tilted his head sideways. At first he had thought that Jack Wayne was dead because Bruce refused to talk about his younger brother, but Dick had learned from Alfred that the brothers had a falling out and that Jack Wayne was still alive, somewhere in Gotham.

Dick was studying a few other pictures of the brothers when he heard footsteps. He frowned. Dick was sure that Alfred had gone to bed. He moved swiftly and silently as he made his way out of the hall, following the sound of footsteps. He didn’t have far to go, only to the hall that ran alongside the
library. He had just stepped into the hall when he saw Alfred disappear...behind a grandfather clock.

Dick raced silently down the hall barely making it past the clock as it slid close with a light click behind him. Dick had been moving so fast that he didn't have time to stop himself or adjust his speed before he was falling head over heels down a flight of stairs. The young man tucked and wrapped his hands around his head, years of being trained how to fall by his father came instinctively to him so that when he hit the bottom of the stairs he only had a few bumps and bruises.

Dick slowly sat up and looked around his eyes going round with astonishment as he saw that not only were there more stairs leading deeper, but from where he was he could see the beginnings of a high tech cave and Alfred, standing halfway down another set of stairs.

Alfred frowned when he saw Dick.

“Oh dear,” the old butler muttered.

* 

The following afternoon Jack drove Harley to the Speed Queen Roller Rink located in Gotham’s Upper East Side. The roller rink was large and the outside of the rink had a stadium fee. There was a huge sign that held the name with a late 1970’s feel to it that read “Speed Queen” over the doors in bright purples and yellows. It was the Gotham City Sirens’ third game of the season today against the Metro City Dazzlers. Harley had call Pamela/Ivy that morning and Ivy had been ecstatic to hear from her. She had proceeded to tell Harley how they had lost one of their girls in their last game when she had fallen and broken her elbow; another was gone because she was pregnant; and one more had left to get married. Ivy had been desperate and pleased to hear from Harley asking her to join their game that day. She didn’t care where Harley had been, only happy that she was here now when they needed her!

Jack, driving a dark purple, Ford Bullitt that Frost and Agatha had dropped off for them (they were going out to lunch but would be coming to the game as soon as they were done), pulled into a parking space in front of the rink. Harley frowned and nervously looked out the front windshield.

“I don’t know about this puddin.” Harley worried at her bottom lip.

Jack laid a hand on her back and rubbed between her shoulder blades slowly. “It’s like riding a bike Harls, you’ll be fine. Besides, you’ve killed people, this will be easy.” Harley frowned slightly. She wasn’t dressed up, wearing a pair of leggings and an oversized purple t-shirt that hung off her shoulder, and a pair of white canvas tennis shoes. She had a duffle bag with some shower supplies, a pair of white skates hung her around her neck (skates they had purchased on the way to the rink.) Ivy had said that she would have a uniform waiting for Harley when she arrived. Where Harley looked completely casual, Jack was dressed in his usual three-piece suit, this time a burgundy and white pinstripe suit, with matching vest, white shirt and no tie. Instead he had the top four buttons of his dress shirt open and wore the gold chain around his neck from his aunt.

“Harley, you are going to be fine.” Jack smiled, leaning over to kiss her cheek.

Harley turned and kissed him, reaching across to cup the side of his face. They took a few moment to kiss, a soft, yet intensely passionate kiss before Harley pulled away with a sigh.

“Oh, okay, let’s go.”

* 

The inside of the rink, which had stadium seating, was crowded with cheering fans nearly drowning
out the sounds of the Scorpions “Rock Me like a Hurricane” that was playing in the background. There were people dressed in the Gotham City Siren colors of red and black in the stands, some with painted faces, some with clown wigs of the team colors, others holding signs, pom poms, et cetera; while several others were dressed in the white and diamond of the Metropolis Dazzlers. The game hadn’t started yet, but it was clear by the excitement in the air it was nearly time.

Jack and Harley were making their way to the locker rooms when Harley saw Ivy. Ivy’s red hair was pulled back in a braid at the nape of her neck and she was wearing a red and black crop top, short shorts, knee high red and black socks along with elbow and knees pads, and her skates were black with lime green stripes. She was talking to another young woman in the same colors, though her outfit was slightly different.

Ivy turned just as Harley and Jack stepped up.

Ivy gasped. “Oh thank God!” She threw her arms around Harley and hugged her tight. “If you didn’t show up, we were going to have to step out of the game!! I got the other two slots filled, but you were my Hail Mary! I’m so glad you could make it!”

Harley hugged her back. “Me too! Glad I could help. Sorry about…”

Ivy held her hand up. “It’s okay. Shit happens, life happens. Don’t worry about it, you’re here now. Okay, now kiss your boyfriend because you’re mine for the next hour.”

Harley laughed turning and grabbing Jack by the lapels of his jacket and hauling him forward. Jack laughed, but Harley smothered the chuckles with her lips. Jack made a little happy moan, wrapping his arms around her until Ivy laughed.

“Okay, okay, come on Harley. I got your uniform in the locker room.” Ivy grabbed Harley and tugged her gently off of Jack. She gave her husband a little finger wave and

Jack waved back yelling. “Kick their asses Baby!”

Jack grinned and went to find himself a seat for the game.

*

Ivy pulled out a uniform from a large duffel bag she had in the locker room and handed it to Harley.

“It might be a little tight, but the more breasts and ass you show the happier the audience is.” Ivy smiled. “And here is your helmet.”

The outfit was in the red and black of the Gotham City Sirens, a pair of knee high, black and red striped socks, along with a pair of fishnet stockings, a pair of shorts so short they might as well be panties, and the crop top would fit snugly showing off her breasts. The helmet was black and red with a massive amount of stickers over it.

Ivy motioned at the helmet with her chin. “Used to be Daisy’s, but it should fit you fine.”

Harley chuckled holding up the shorts. “Jack is going to love this.”

Ivy smiled. “Your boyfriend?”

“My husband.” Harley giggled and started to undress.

Ivy shook her head. “Lucky. I haven’t had time for relationships at all, not with work...this is my
only outlet right now.”

Harley pulled her tennis shoes off and then her leggings. “Work?”

“Yeah, I just recently got this job at Wayne Botanical. I have this new formula that I’m working on to help not just grow more food, but to produce stronger plants. I’ve been working too on some conservation plans to help save more plant-life, prevent deforestation...Anyway...I just got this grant from Wayne Enterprises, but the other scientist I’m working with, this guy Dr. Marc Legrand...total asshole...sorry.” Ivy shook her head. “I didn’t mean to bore you…”

Harley pulled her top over her head. “You’re not boring me. I’m sorry, work sucks.”

“The work itself, no--him, yes.” Ivy laughed.

Harley yanked her skates on. “Well you know, if you ever want to try something new, let me know. I might know of a job…” Harley started to say something else as she was putting on her skates when they both heard the announcer over the loudspeaker call out.

“And now ladies and gentlemen! It’s time to meet your teams!”

Ivy gasped. “Oh hurry!”

Harley nodded quickly lacing up her skates. “Almost done!”

*

Jack was grinning from ear to ear when he saw his wife skate out into the rink with the other women. He wasn’t listening to the announcer, rather only focusing his attention on his wife. He vaguely heard some noise of people moving to his right when he heard his name called.

“Hey Jackie.”

He turned to see his aunt and Frost, but he was surprised to see Jason, Roxy and Bane.

Jack chuckled. “Where did you all come from?”

Agatha grinned. “Ran into the three of them when we were at lunch. They wanted to come watch Harley play when I told them about the game. Hope you don’t mind sweetie.”

Jack grinned. “Not at all.”

Bane leaned over. “I bought this at the entrance.”

The big man was holding up a giant red and black foam finger that read Gotham City Sirens on it.

Jack laughed. “Damn, I should have gotten one too!”

The announcer loudly called over the speaker system. “And now for your local team…”

The women, fourteen of them, skated onto the floor and lined up facing the Gotham side of the crowd. Jack grinned when he saw Harley, taking in the skimpy outfit, her long hair in braided twin tails that hung below her helmet as she skated out with the other women. She looked so damn adorable it took every ounce of his self control not to jog out there and kiss her.

Agatha pointed excitedly. “There she is!!”
Their little group cheered with the rest of the crowd as the announcer basically yelled their names. When he came to Harley the man called out.

“And number 52! In her first game of the season HARLEY BRINGS HELL QUINN!”

Jack jumped to his feet and threw his arms in the air cheering and whooping loudly. The parts of the gang that were there did the same.

Harley looked up at the surge of yelling to see her husband jumping up and down and waving at her. Harley laughed and waved back, laughing harder when she saw Agatha and Frost but then to see Bane with the foam finger she was nearly in tears as the big, bald man waved the finger around while jumping in place.

The girls, after all their names had been announced, jumped and cheered back at the crowd. Harley blew a kiss to her husband before the girls gathered in a tight formation to go around the rink once.

* 

The game was intense.

Harley surprised herself by being good—not perfect, she was knocked down more than once, got an elbow to the lip, but she made some good scores. She had found herself falling into an easy camaraderie with the other women of the team, a few of them she remembered from her try-outs, all of them happy and eager to have her there to play that day.

Jack was nearly hoarse with cheering and yelling. He hadn’t enjoyed himself this much in a long time. Watching his wife on the rink was exciting, fun, and arousing. It was nearing the end of the game, Harley was moving back and forth playing one of the three blockers. Ivy was next to her along with a woman name Mary. They were moving back and forth trying to block three Dazzlers. There was a hard knock from one of the Dazzler’s that sent Mary flying off to the side and into the side of the rink.

Ivy hissed. “You bitches never do play fair!”

One of the Dazzlers grinned. “Oh whatssa matter Ivy, gettin’ soft?”

Ivy smiled. “You wish. Besides you guys know you aren’t going to win, we’re ahead by three points, next round Harley here is playing jammer and she’s already showed your weak team up twice. So no Emma, not getting soft at all.” There was a sound of a whistle, the next jam was up. Emma gave Ivy the finger as she skated off.

Ivy muttered. “I hate her--always has to have such a mouth.”

She shook her head glancing at Harley. “You ready? We got four minutes left, we keep our heads we can win this.”

Harley stretched her arms over her head with a grin. “Oh, I’m ready.”

“This is for the win.” Ivy and Harley grinned, and gave each other a quick pound on the shoulders. The other girls of the team circled around them, everyone giving each other a quick smack on the shoulder as the girls took up their positions.

Harley got into position and grinned at her Dazzler counterpart who was next to her.

“Good Luck,” Harley said with a grin.
The other woman, a thin brunette stuck her tongue out at her.

Harley gave a little “humpf.” “Fine, be that way.”

The buzzer sounded for the round to start and Harley, without another look at her opponent, took off skating as fast as she could.

The positions were tight for about a minute, the blockers giving Harley a hard time, but she swooped and rolled through without being stopped, missing the opposing team’s pivot by barely an inch until she was free. The crowd was cheering as Harley started to skate faster.

One of the Dazzlers hit a Siren hard enough that she knocked the woman off her skates and into Harley’s path, Harley missing her just barely as she twisted, skated backwards for a second or two before she twisted herself back around.

The Dazzlers decided to gang up on Harley when it was clear she was going to be scoring, at least four of them skating to block her in. Ivy signaled at the other girls and the Sirens swooped in. What had started out as a clean win for the Sirens quickly was turning into a brawl as someone on the Dazzlers used an elbow to hit a Siren in the face. A Siren tripped a Dazzler and another Dazzler spun around and slugged a Siren in the stomach.

While all the craziness was going on behind Harley, she pulled away from the others, going for the win when one of the Dazzlers, their leader, Alison, was skating right alongside Harley. The young blonde woman narrowed her eyes at Harley as she came up alongside her.

Harley grinned and winked at Alison before skating in close and elbowed her in the breast.

Alison yelped, falling back and screaming. “You bitch!!!”

Harley laughed turning around and skating backwards while giving Alison the finger before she turned back around, putting some speed into her skating. Alison snarled and hurried to catch up until she was almost alongside Harley. She grabbed Harley by the back of her shorts and yanked. The maneuver almost pulled Harley off her feet, but she kept her skates under her.

Alison zipped up beside her, but Harley was ready for her. She swing her whole body to the right, her shoulder smashing into Alison’s shoulder and hit the other woman with enough power that she came up off her skates completely to crash into the guard rail.

The crowd went wild.

Jack was on his feet with a yell. “YES!! THAT’S MY WIFE!!”

The announcer yelled into the microphone. “That’s the game folks!! Gotham City Sirens 143-141 against the Metro City Dazzlers!”

* 

Harley yelped in surprise when her new teammates rushed her, wrapping sweaty arms around each other as the women screamed and cheered. Harley grinned from ear to ear.

An hour later she was finished showering. She was dressing when Ivy walked up to her.

“I can’t thank you enough for coming in today. Ah...think you’ll be around for our next game, it’s the following weekend…”
Harley pulled her shirt over her head. “I would love to.”

Ivy sighed in relief. “I’m so glad to hear you say that.” She gave Harley a quick hug. “The girls and I are going out dancing, you and your husband want to come?”

Harley frowned. “Can’t,” she said. “We already have plans.”

Ivy waved. “No problem. Maybe next time.” She gave Harley a hug. “That was some great skating. See you this weekend.”

Harley waved as Ivy left.

* *

Harley was just leaving the locker room when a young man rushed up to her, stepping so close that he was almost in her face. Harley yelped and jumped back a step as the young man (who had clearly been waiting right outside the locker rooms) approached. He was about the same height as Jack, but with a bigger build, bulging eyes, a receding hairline and a thin lipped mouth. He grabbed her hand and vigorously shook her entire arm with excitement.

“Oh my God!!! Miss Quinn, can I just say you were amazing out there!” The young man grinned squeezing her hand.

Harley smiled back, letting him shake her hand for a few seconds before she tugged her hand back and quickly put it behind her back. “Uh...thank you.”

He grinned. The man reminded Harley of some old time actor...like if Peter Lorre had a baby with Rami Malek, there was the potential to be a good looking guy, but something about his demeanor was ruining it. The man grinned at her, and his smile, like the rest of the face, could have been nice, but there was something...wrong about it.

“My name is Wayne Wilkins and I have been following the Gotham City Sirens from the beginning and I have to say you are the best new player they have ever had! I mean wowsers!!” Wayne threw his hands up with a wide smile. “You were amazing! I thought Ivy was hot, but you...wow you were the hottest girl out there from either team!”

Harley smiled starting to ease around him. “Thank you. I really appreciate that.”

Wayne grinned. “You can count on me to be your biggest fan Miss Quinn! I come to every game, but now I will be here just to cheer for you!”

Harley smiled nervously. “Wow...eh...thanks.”

Wayne grinned as Harley walked around him. “You are even prettier up close Miss Quinn...like wow pretty.”

Harley smiled and waved. “Thanks Wayne, ah, I gotta go! Bye!”

Wayne waved watching her leave. “I’m going to be your biggest fan,” he murmured to himself.

Harley immediately forgot all about Wayne when she saw Jack and the others waiting for her near where they had been seated. She rushed over to her husband and threw herself into Jack’s waiting arms. Jack lifted her off her feet and swung her around.

“You were amazing!! And hot! Let’s not forget hot!” Jack laughed placing her back on her feet only
to dip her back and kiss her.

Harley giggled around his kiss as Jack lifted her back up and hugged her close.

Bane chuckled. “Man I can’t believe I didn’t know about roller derby.” He shook his head. “Hot women on skates. Can’t believe I’ve been missing this.”

Roxy clapped. “That was so much fun to watch! When’s the next game?”

“Oh, this weekend,” Harley said, looking at everyone.

Agatha grinned. “That was great stuff Harley. You looked great out there. I might have to try that myself.”

Harley, her arm around Jack and leaning against him, smiled. “You should come try out Agatha!”

Frost leaned down and kissed Agatha’s ear. “You would look great in those shorts. Give the other women something to think about.”

Agatha laughed. “Hmm...I’ll have to think about it.”

That evening Jack was smoking a cigarette, lying across their bed already dressed. He was wearing a three piece beige and white plaid suit with notched lapels, a white dress shirt and a tie the almost exact shade of blue turquoise to match his eyes. He had on a pair of dark brown, pointed toe oxfords, with a pair of bright blue socks, which were showing since his pant legs were lifted up a little, his ankles crossed as he watched Harley putting on the finishing touches to her makeup.

She was sitting in front of the mirror finishing her mascara before she applied her finishing spray, wearing only her red lace panties, and nothing else. The light of the room made her skin glow while his blue eyes caressed her skin, skimming over the curve of her back, the flair of her hips. Jack grinned blowing smoke rings while she leaned toward the mirror after she picked up her lipstick. He pressed his own red painted lips together, watching the way she gently dragged the tube over her lips. He grinned, thinking about those red lips wrapped around his erection.

The dress she was wearing tonight was a sleeveless, little black dress with a deep “V” neckline and though the hemline was just above her knees, the dress had a slit up the side that reached almost to her hip. She was going to be wearing a pair of strappy high heel stiletto sandals and the necklace that Agatha had given her.

Jack watched her intently as he blew smoke slowly from his nostrils, and thought about his wife wearing nothing but the heels and the necklace when his phone rang. He frowned looking behind him where the phone lay on the bedside table. He picked it up frowning deeper. The number was to Fish Mooney’s place.

Jack glanced at Harley who had stood up and was slipping her dress over her head. He watched the silky fabric fall into place over her body. The dress seemed to hug her curves, settling over her body like a second skin. The fact that she was wearing nothing but a pair of red, lace panties underneath had his blood boiling with want.

“Jack,” he answered.

“Jack, this is Fish. I have a problem. Maroni is here and he is causing all kinds of trouble. I need your help.” Fish sounded both parts angry and scared.
Jack sat up. “We’re on our way.”

“Thank you.” Fish quickly hung up.

Jack snarled. “Apparently Maroni is already at Fish’s place and he is causing enough trouble she called.”

Harley grabbed her shoes. “Let’s go puddin.”

Jack grinned. “Get your bracelet, the one I got you, and your knife. I have a feeling tonight is about to get a little more fun than we planned.”

Harley giggled.
A handful of the Red Hood gang, consisting of Bane, dressed in a blue suit with a dark blue tie; Frost wearing a black suit and red tie; Agatha wearing a black mini skirt, fishnet stockings, black stilettos with a killer heel and a white blouse open down to her breastbone; Zsasz wearing his trademark black on black suit; Jason wore a pair of tight jeans and a red dress shirt open over a black t-shirt; and Roxy, who was wearing a pair of burgundy slim cut slacks and a black t-shirt and biker boots, all walked behind Jack and Harley, fanning out behind the couple as they entered the night club.

Jack gazed around, watching as the crowd reacted to their entrance. He was both pleased and jealous by the way people stared at Harley in the little black dress she was wearing, paired with the smile on her face, the sparkle in her blue eyes. She was stunning. He knew exactly how beautiful she was...just gazing at her tonight had made Jack’s groin tighten with need. He wanted her--he always wanted her. Jack smiled as he walked beside her, his arm loosely around her waist. Jack caressed her hip with his fingertips as they walked, moving with purpose toward the center of the club. Their group was drawing a lot of attention; Bane was a huge man, and Agatha could draw attention all on her own, but Jack could see that many of the eyes were drawn to the very hot blonde at his side.

Harley, on the other hand, saw everyone looking at her husband. Jack stood out, not just because of his immaculate three-piece suit, but also because the man was simply, deliciously handsome. Jack had an air about him that was palpable, a magnetism that drew nearly everyone toward him. She had been drawn to him from the moment she laid eyes on him in Wayne Manor. She had noticed the way people looked at him every time they were out--men, women, it didn’t matter--everyone was pulled toward Jack. Jack was beautiful, charismatic...Harley grinned. And he was deadly. They could look all they wanted, she thought, Jack was hers, her husband, her lover, and most importantly, her partner, the only person in the world who understood her...and besides, anyone who tried to get too close, like Ben...she would deal with appropriately.

Under his jacket Jack was armed with his bowie knife and two pistols. Jack carried two automatic converted Glock 17’s, a couple of brand new toys. Frost had brought the weapons with him when he and Agatha arrived at the amusement park along with everyone else who was participating tonight. The guns were thank you gifts from Angora and Gus, to illustrate that not only that Angora was a top-notch gun dealer, but the gun’s fancy outward casing had been designed and craved by Gus. The guns, unlike Jack’s other weapons, were black and gold plated, each with an intricate filigree design that covered both weapons which made them each deadly works of art. Jack had been delighted. Like Jack, Harley was also armed. On her right thigh, Harley carried the knife Jack had recently purchased for her from Jason’s friend Anderson, but on her left thigh was another gun from Angora and Gus, a gold and ivory Glock 17, engraved with little detailed leaves and vines. The two newest editions to the gang had made her a set too, a set that complimented Jack’s weapons, but Harley was only carrying one tonight, since trying to conceal a second gun would have been awkward with what she was wearing.

The rest of the gang were armed with their own guns and knives hidden under their clothing. Jack expected a bloodbath and had everyone prepare accordingly. He grinned to himself thinking that a lot of people were going to end up dead, but as long as one of them wasn’t Maroni, he was fine with that. Jack had some things to talk to Maroni about. A slow and painful conversation.

The night club was busy, crowded, and the sounds of Madison Mars’ “Back the Funk” played loudly throughout Fish’s establishment as their group walked into the club. Muted red, blue and purple lighting cascaded over the scene. A few people glanced toward them, but no one seemed to
care. Jack frowned. It was obvious that something was definitely off about the crowd here. As he looked around, he realized that he didn’t see as many people as he thought should be here at this time. There were a lot of people here, certainly, but not like there should be and there was something about the way the people were dressed...he couldn’t quite put his finger on what it was that was bothering him…

Oh, something was definitely up, Jack thought with a grin.

Harley moved to the music beside Jack with a smile, her hip occasionally bumped against his as they made their way into the interior of the club. Jack smirked and squeezed her hip. It was too bad they were here to work; he would love to have Harley on the dance floor again. Dancing with her was one of his great joys, Jack mused to himself. He enjoyed feeling her body move against his, his hands roaming down her back, the music moving the two of them...he sighed. Maybe later he thought.

As their group walked toward the bar, Jack caught sight of Kermit. Her hair was styled in her bright green faux mohawk and she was dressed in a lime green and black vinyl sleeveless mini dress. She was dancing to the music as she worked, but when she caught sight of Jack and his gang, she waved. Even with the colorful lights and relative darkness of the club, Jack caught something in her expression that said everything wasn’t well. She made a grimace and pointed with her thumb. Jack and Harley followed with their eyes to see Fish at her usual table, but she wasn’t seated and drinking. The club owner was standing, her arms being held behind her back by two of Maroni’s thugs. There were several other men all around the table, a couple sitting by Maroni, but most were standing, their hands folded in front of them. Jack counted nine. It was a good bet that they were all armed.

Jack glanced around at the club again. He saw people eating, dancing, and the music was loud. Jack frowned as he realized that a party was being held...but no one was reacting to the fact that Fish was being held against her will. He could see that a few people were drunk, there was a couple on the dance floor who seemed to be more pawing at each other than dancing. There was a group of people laughing...someone had a cake...Jack’s eyes narrowed. These people were far too accepting with what was going on with Fish, as if they didn’t care--or they were used to the behavior and events? He frowned.

Maroni sat comfortably at Fish’s table smoking a cigar, with a bottle of whiskey nearby--which was nearly gone--and a half-filled glass on the table in front of him. Maroni was laughing, a little too much. It was clear that Fish was yelling at Maroni who leaned back in his chair, chuckling with that contented smile of someone who really didn’t care what was being said. The man simply blew out a line of smoke at Fish, followed by a laugh, which was shared by all his men.

As Jack and his gang walked closer, a young woman rushed over behind Maroni and wrapped one arm around his neck. She said something that made Maroni laugh as he pulled her close and kissed her, a sloppy, passionate kiss. The woman laughed and stood up, rubbed his head before she took off to the other side of the room where the party seemed to be taking place.

Jack spoke just loud enough that his people around him could hear.

“I don’t care about any of the guests here. They’re all dead--kill every last one of them, but Maroni? I want him alive. Any of them try to stop us from taking Maroni, get in your way, or look at you funny, kill them.”

Jack heard a murmur behind him before Frost answered. “You got it Boss.”

Jack put on a smile and walked over to Maroni’s table as if he didn't have a care in the world, though his arm around Harley’s waist tightened and his fingers pressed into her skin through the fabric of her
dress. Harley smiled too, putting her arm around Jack, presenting their united front to the enemy.

Maroni looked up as they approached the table. He reached for his glass and grinned at them.

“Well lookie, lookie here, it’s Jack Wayne, the supposed head of the Red Hood gang, the new man in town! How ya doing Jack?” Maroni grinned and sipped his whiskey. “You come to join the party? That’s pretty ballsy to walk into a party you ain’t invited to. But you know what? I’m feeling generous, it’s my cousin Stefano’s birthday!! He is a giovanotto now! You are all invited.” Maroni threw his arms out with a laugh.

Jack barely nodded. It was clear from the man’s speech and overly jolly attitude he was tipsy, and probably already well on his way to being drunk. “Maroni.” Jack turned to glance at Fish who was still being held by two of Maroni’s men before glancing back at Maroni. “Fish, you said there was a problem when you called?” Jack didn’t look at her when he spoke, his eyes on Maroni, two predators eyeing one another, assessing.

“This fuck face decided to take my delivery of whiskey and tequila. He decided to take all my deliveries today and hold them hostage until I pay him and now he has taken over my club for his stupid cousin Stefano’s birthday!!! He isn’t paying me a cent. I’m losing all kinds of money tonight!! He and his men are keeping out all my customers for his private little party! He is trying to put me out of business!” Fish snarled and yanked against the two men holding her.

Maroni laughed. “Oh, come on Fish. Don’t be that way babe! If you would just sit down and have a drink with me…we can be friends can’t we babe?”

Fish snarled. “Don’t call me babe, you fat prick!”

Maroni’s left eye twitched, but he didn’t respond to her except to smile.

Jack motioned with his fingers. Jason and Roxy hurried off and came back with two chairs. Jack held a chair out for Harley before taking his. He watched his wife sit and cross her shapely legs; the black dress rode up on her right leg, revealing the knife held there by the garter, black against her creamy, pale skin. Jack also noted that Harley’s legs did not go unnoticed by Maroni or his men. Jack thought about how fun it would have been to fly across the table and slash Maroni’s throat, but his thought was interrupted as Kermit seemed to materialize out of the crowd beside him. She glanced worriedly toward Fish then back to Jack.

“What can I get you guys to drink?”

Jack smiled. “Do you know how to make a Flirty Lady cocktail?”

Kermit smiled. “You mean with the floating pearls of Chambord? Sure do.”

Jack glanced at his wife. “Does that sound good to you sweets?”

Harley chuckled. “I have no idea what a Flirty Lady is, but sure thing puddin.”

Jack nodded. “Two of those and whatever my gang would like.”

Kermit nodded and hurriedly went around to each member and took their drink orders.

Maroni smirked. “Allowing your people to drink, a little unprofessional there, but it is a party so I suppose why the fuck not? Though I would have pictured you having more of a “manly” drink, like gin or whiskey.”
Jack smiled. “Unlike you Maroni, my people are family, not hired goons whose loyalty is only measured in money. And it’s not up to you whether they drink or not, that’s up to me. As for my drink, a good drink is a good drink, there is nothing masculine or feminine about it. Now, why don’t you tell those two goons to let the lady go? Or are you too scared she might hurt you?”

Maroni frowned with a sideways glance over at Fish. There was a light twitch to his upper lip as he motioned at the two men who held her. They both released Fish, who turned so quickly that neither man had time to react before Fish had slapped both men, hard, across their faces.

One of the men snarled grabbing his cheek. “You fucking cunt!”

He started to raise his hand, but Maroni put a hand out, palm up and hissed right back. “Piero, enough. Let the lady sit.”

Piero glared at Maroni as if he were about to talk back to his boss, but at the last second the man thought better of it and took a step back with nothing but a heavy exhale through flared nostrils. Maroni motioned with his head at the other man. “Carl, go get the lady a drink. Whatcha want Fish honey?”

It was clear to Jack that Fish wanted to snap back at Maroni, to give the mobster a good hard slap too, but she kept her lips sealed.

Instead she muttered, glaring at Maroni. “Tell Kermit to make me a purple cow.”

Carl nodded and walked quickly off. Maroni smiled. “Well, now that we’re all here, let’s talk a little business, then maybe you would all like to join the fun? Have some cake, do a little dancing? I mean, if I had a woman like yours Jack, I would be on that dance or in bed with her all the time.” Maroni winked at Harley giving her a grin that made her skin crawl. Harley didn’t answer the mobster; she just curled her lip in disgust and reached over for her husband’s hand. Jack took her hand, caressing her fingers with the back of his thumb. He could feel that she was tensed, ready to strike, but she relaxed as he stroked her fingers.

A young woman dressed in a black vinyl dress with a spiked dog collar and a pair of black leather platform boots came over with a tray and handed out drinks. Everyone was quiet until the young woman stepped away. She set Fish’s drink down last, with Carl right behind her.

Fish smiled. “Thank you Cher.”

The young woman smiled. “No problem Fish.”

As the young woman was walking away, Piero smacked her hard enough on the ass that everyone heard it. The young woman yelped in surprise and nearly fell over. Fish snarled as she rose to her feet, but Maroni was laughing.

“Oh come on Fish, babe, just boys being boys--you know how it is.”

Jack could hear his aunt cursing under her breath behind him.

Jack took a sip of his drink, his movements slow and measured. The drink was white with pink pearls floating in it. He took a sip, deliberately slow before he spoke.

“I don’t see that we have much business to discuss Maroni. I’m here for two reasons: one, to stop you and your men from messing with Fish and her business. She is part of my family now. And, second; I’m here to find out everything you know about the making and selling of Giggles, then, I’m going to kill you and send your body back to Falcone as a message.”
Jack took another sip of his drink then sat it down carefully on the table between him and Maroni before he reached out and placed his hand on Harley’s knee. He looked up and smiled as he met Maroni’s eyes across the table.

When Jack had mentioned killing Maroni, all of Maroni’s men had shifted, tensed, hands going for weapons though no one drew; all the men looked to Maroni. Jack smiled as his eyes wandered around the table taking note of how many guns were involved before he turned his attention back to Maroni. Maroni didn’t react at first. Then the mobster’s eyes narrowed and he stared hard at Jack before he laughed. “You’re a funny guy. I like that.”

Jack smiled wider. “I’ve been told that.”

Maroni picked up his drink and took a sip. “Giggles, eh? You didn’t strike me as a man who takes drugs.”

Jack squeezed Harley’s knee delicately. “I’m not, but it has come to my attention that Falcone is making this drug off of something that is mine. I want it back and I want it stopped and I will stop it.”

Maroni took a deep drag on his cigar before he spoke, smoke slowly flowing from his nostrils. “Falcone is making a lot of money off that drug and when Falcone makes a lot of money, I make a lot of money. Now, if you are wanting to work for Falcone, we might be able to talk, but you gotta work for me first. I’ll decide whether to bump up your request. Think of me as middle management.”

The music in the club had changed to the more techno/bouncy beat of “Turn Me On” as Maroni smiled. He leaned back in his seat and took another drag on his cigar, blowing out a long stream of smoke. Jack and Harley could see some of the party guests move out onto the dance floor again and start to dance to the music. None of them were aware of the powder keg about to explode.

Jack smiled, took another sip of his drink before he set it down on the table again. Harley uncrossed her legs and crossed them again, her dress falling away to reveal the hint of her gun. Jack smiled at Maroni, but he was speaking to his people positioned behind him. “Remember boys and girls--I want Maroni alive.”

Harley moved swiftly. Without a word from Jack she was on her feet as she yanked her gun free. She aimed with both hands on it and fired, three times in quick succession. Her shots hit Piero; two in the chest, one in the throat, sent the man toppling backwards into the crowd of dancers.

Everyone began to move, shots being fired. The party became chaos in seconds.

Jack grinned as he stood and flipped the table at the same time that his wife was putting Piero down. One of the men on Jack’s left--a tall, thin man with slightly curling hair--lunged at Jack while trying to pull his gun at the same time. Jack grinned. He loved it when he was able to use his knife instead of a gun. So much more personal he thought. Jack twisted to face the man, grabbed his opponent’s hand as he reached for the gun at his waist. At the same time, Jack drew his blade free with his left hand. Jack’s grip slipped and the man yanked his gun free, nearly hitting Jack in the chin as he pulled his weapon, but Jack leaned out of the way, taking a graceful step backwards as the man brought his weapon out. Just as the mobster extended his arm to fire, Jack grabbed the man’s wrist with his right hand and tugged the gunman forward, throwing the man’s balance off just enough that he stumbled, leaning toward Jack.

Jack slammed his knife hand down on the bend in the man’s outstretched arm, but Maroni’s man yanked his arm nearly free and Jack’s blade only sliced a shallow cut into the man’s limb. The gunman yanked against Jack’s hold and freed his arm. He took a step backwards nearly falling backwards, but he righted himself and decided to rush Jack. Jack wasn’t able to move quickly
enough to get himself out of the way before his opponent's shoulder blasted Jack in the diaphragm. The impact lifted him off his feet as the mobster raced forward, took two steps past Harley and slammed Jack into one of the privacy walls that surrounded some of the nearby booths. The two men crashed completely through the wall which caused the couple on the other side, who had been making out (and seemed unaware of the gunshots that had been fired) to scream.

Jack hit the floor first, just missing the table. The impact knocked the air from his lungs in a hoarse cough. The two men struggled, neither able to create enough space to shoot or stab the other, but Jack pulled free of the man’s hold, but the slick floor caused Jack’s opponent to slip. Jack stumbled to his feet, the floor slick with alcohol almost causing him to fall as well. Jack kept his balance, turning to face his opponent fully just as the man got to his feet.

* 

Harley giggled when she shot Piero, watching the man’s body flop into the dancers; they scattered like ducks on a pond. She almost didn’t react in time to Carl trying to slip around to her back or the other four men who were trying to surround her, two of whom had raced from the party to join Maroni’s men. The group of mobsters converged on her.

Harley just smiled wider.

* 

Although Agatha wasn’t armed with a gun, she did have a long, thin, deadly blade she liked to keep strapped to her thigh; generally, she preferred to rely on herself than any weapon. She had told Frost that at her age, her sight with a gun wasn’t as good as it used to be.

Frost has been a little upset with her for refusing a gun, which had been so adorable she thought. She really did love how sweet the man was, which was probably part of the reason they were still together. Usually by this amount of time in a relationship she had moved on to another fellow, but Frost was turning out to be far more open and fun than she had anticipated...which was probably half the reason she was still in Gotham, the other half being Jackie and Harley and her need to protect her nephew from the Owls’ clutches.

It all made her feel more alive than she had felt in years.

She set aside her thoughts as one of Maroni’s men decided that she would be an easy target. The man was big, giving Bane a run for his money in the size department, but when this man smiled he showed a mouth full of gold teeth.

He grinned, putting up his fists. “I’ll go easy on you lady, but I ain’t got a problem hitting a woman.”

Agatha grinned. “Well then, it's a good thing I don’t have a problem hitting back sugar.”

The man took a few swings that Agatha dodged easily before she leapt up and twisted, twisting her whole body to kick the man in the face, snapping his large head to the side. She had kicked him hard enough that she was satisfied to see blood and a gold tooth caught in the cascading purple and red lights of the club as it flew onto the dance floor.

She chuckled. “The bigger they are…”

* 

Bane, who had taken a bullet across the arm, and another in the upper chest roared with rage more than pain. The wounds didn’t seem to stop him, but instead the wounds had turned the large man into
a raging beast. He charged one of Maroni’s men, grabbed and lifted his attacker over his head and threw the man across the room with a loud roar. When he turned his attention to his other assailant, the man had the smarts to turn and run...though Bane charged after him.

Jason and Roxy were both engaged with two more of Maroni’s men. Jason had upended another table that he and Roxy were using as a shield in a mini shoot out with their two mobsters.

On the other end of the room, Cecco, the youngest mobster at the table, as well as Maroni’s nephew, stayed close to his uncle. Maroni hissed. “Get me the fuck out of here Cecco.”

As the fighting broke out in force, some of the people attending the party pulled weapons; the fight now involved everyone in the club. Cecco started to move Maroni toward the exit, but Fish had stood up and pulled her own gun from seemingly out of thin air. She held the weapon on Maroni. His nephew pointed his gun at her and Maroni pulled his own gun.

Maroni sneered. “Don’t be a fool Fish.”

“I’m not being a fool Sal honey. I’m picking a side.” Fish smiled.

“I will kill you,” Maroni snarled.

Fish smiled. “Your nephew could shoot me and you could shoot me...but I will definitely fucking kill you.”

Maroni paled.

* 

Zsasz pulled a Beretta 92FS from the holster under his arm. He smiled as he proceeded to shoot into party crowd while singing softly to himself as his bullets tore through flesh.

"Gotta make a move to a town that's right for me

Town to keep me movin'

Keep me groovin' with some energy..."

He would hum a bit, shoot a couple in the kneecaps before shooting them in the head while he sang to himself.

"Won't you take me to Funkytown

Won't you take me to Funkytown..."

He moved his shoulders in time to the song playing in his head just before he was forced to duck behind a table, crab walk to the side and fire off a few more shots continuing to sing "Funkytown" to himself.

* 

Jack rolled onto his hands and knees, his knife had gone flying when he and the other man had fallen through the flimsy wall. He could taste blood in his mouth and there was a nasty cut along his
shoulder, his suit torn, probably from falling through the wall.

Jack snarled and hissed. “Fuck it!”

He got to his feet just as the other man did too. The two men quickly exchanged a set of blows, fists blocked by arms, the muffled sounds of impacts against clothing and flesh followed the quick succession of blows between the two men. Jack reached out and blocked one strike by grabbing the man’s wrist with his left hand, twisting inward slightly before he slammed his right fist against the man’s side with a quick one-two strike to the ribs.

The mobster grunted in pain. They could both hear screaming around them mixed with the sounds of music and gunfire. A few people ran out of their way, while others didn’t move at all, whether out of shock or perverse fascination, they stayed glued to their spots and watched the fight. The party was made of mostly twenty-somethings and while a few of them had pulled guns, it was clear to Jack that most of them didn’t know what they were doing with their weapons if the way most of them were holding them was any indication. A couple looked as if they might know how to shoot, but most of them were using the weapons as a shields to keep the fight away from them. Jack smirked. He knew it was only a matter of time before an itchy trigger finger or pure drunkenness had one or more of them shooting regardless of friend or foe.

Jack tried to yank the arm of his opponent over his shoulder and throw the man, but his opponent was surprisingly resistant, skilled. The mobster dropped his weight, sent them both to the floor, pulled his arm free from Jack’s grasp.

Jack grunted when he hit the floor, but scrambled quickly out of the way and rolled back to his feet. He grabbed the man—who was still trying to get to his feet. Jack straddled the man’s back, wrapped a hand around the back of his opponent’s neck, and with his left hand pulled his gun. The club lights caught the gold on the gun and made it glimmer prettily as Jack held the gun to the back of the man’s head and swiftly pulled the trigger twice.

Jack dropped the man and sprang to his feet as he ran a sleeve over his blood misted face. He narrowed his eyes, he could see Fish, Maroni and another man at a standoff, guns on each other. He quickly searched the club for Harley and spotted her on the dance floor.

“Harley!” Jack started to go to his wife when another group of men came at him, some members of the party, mixed with more of Maroni’s men which Jack hadn’t seen.

Jack cursed. “Well, isn’t this some bullshit?”

* 

Harley stood still, smiling at the men surrounding her. She looked gorgeous, her hair framed her face, the sexy black dress, her gun in one hand, her blade in the other.

She giggled. “Oh, you guys want to play?”

One of the men, big nose, ruddy complexion smiled. “Look sweetheart, put the weapons down and I promise, we won’t hurt you.”

Harley smiled. “Oh, I’m sure you won’t.”

Harley spun, shooting the man who had spoken in the chest. She continued the spin, shooting another from under her arm, dropping to one knee to shoot another in the knee and when that man dropped to his good knee, she shot him in the face, cursing to herself.
“Shoot...why can’t I ever get a headshot?” she murmured then squeaked as several shots were fired from the crowd. She put on a burst of speed and slid across the dance floor as people scattered and some shot at her as she sailed by, knocking over a table as she did so and rolled behind it for protection at the same time she lost her hold on her knife, the small blade spinning off into the club somewhere.

Harley gasped. “No!”

She started to move to go after her blade, reaching out with her left hand, but several shots were fired at her. Harley yelped then hissed in pain looking down. She had a bloody burn from a bullet graze across her forearm. She winced and pressed her arm up against her torso.

*

Jason grabbed Roxy around the waist. He lifted her off her feet, surprised his friend; she cried out in surprise while at the same time shooting as Jason ran for the closest cover available to them, a booth. He was bleeding from a slash across his face and a few other nicks along his torso as he dropped at the last moment. The slick floor allowed him to slide under the booth table as several shots were fired at them. It seemed that now the mobster’s cousin and his friends were getting in on the fighting.

Roxy yelped and cursed. “I’m hit!”

Jason turned to see that Roxy was holding her leg out, a dark stain of blood ballooning in the front of her jeans where she had been shot in the thigh.

“Shit Roxy!” Jason reached out to touch her face, but she grabbed his hand.

“Just tied it off and keep shooting Jason.” Roxy smiled and Jason, on impulse grabbed her face in one hand and kissed her.

Roxy kissed him back with a smile.

*

Jack ended up on the dance floor as he tried to get to his wife, but Maroni’s people were trying to herd him away from her. Jack had pulled his other gun just as another man was foolish enough to come rushing up toward him. Jack surprised the man as he performed a fancy flip around his fingers with one pistol and re-holstered it and then in the next breath, his now free hand snapped out and grabbed the man by the back of his neck, hauled him close and shot him twice in the stomach with his other gun before letting the man drop to the floor, bleeding and twitching in shock.

Jack sneered. “Yahtzee.”

A woman with short hair and wearing a black suit with a red tie tried to get close. Her smaller size and quick movements had her up beside Jack in an instant, but Jack simply shot her in the head while he tried to move closer to his wife with a hissed:

“Happy Birthday.” Harley made a little yelp as several of the bullets being shot at her made it through the table, blasting holes and wood splinters through the table, missing her by inches. She scooted to the end of the table and threw herself to the floor. Harley leaned around the table and shot her weapon. She hit one man in the leg, the bullet ripping through his slacks in a spray of blood; then as that man fell but before he hit the floor, she shot him again. This time her bullet caught the man in the cheek ripping through the cheek and removing his ear.

She frowned before making a face. “Ew!”
Harley frowned as she ducked back, trying to listen for the other men, but the music was too loud to hear much; even determining the direction of the sharp crack of gunfire was distorted and muffled by the sounds of Sia and some idiots who were still screaming every time a weapon was fired. Harley made a face; all of the noise made it difficult for her to hear anything!

She caught sight of another man and shot, her bullet caught that one in the chest. He shot at her, missed, but the bullet hit the dance floor in front of her. Harley yelped as bits of the floor shattered; tiny pieces exploded in front of her and cut fine lines along her cheeks, arms and shoulders. Harley scrunched into a fetal position when the bullets hit the flooring, but it still hurt when she was showered with sharp debris from the floor.

She heard one of the men yell.

“KILL THE BLONDE!”

Harley scrambled to her feet just as another man (this one was very young) dressed in tight jeans and a loose silk shirt, his chest exposed, dressed more for a party than for a gun fight rushed toward her pulling out a weapon at the same time. He had his gun out, aimed at her, and raced up to her just as she got to her feet. Harley reacted by reaching out with her free hand. She took a step to the side and slammed her hand against his chest to stop him. He fired his gun, but Harley had shifted, moving out of the way and fired her own weapon into the man’s chest. Two quick shots dropped him to the floor.

Harley giggled. “Happy Birthday!”

She spun around. Her turn had her hair flaring out, catching the light as she shot another person, this time a tall, muscular woman; the bullet ripped through the side of the woman’s throat.

By now, most of the “civilians” had exited the nightclub leaving only a few people to fight. Harley could see a couple of dead members of the birthday party, bodies lying in pools of blood. She frowned slightly for some reason wondering how much it would cost to have the Hook family clean this place up. Eight, maybe ten (Harley couldn’t be sure, the lights were creating several shadows) moved onto the dancefloor. Harley bit her bottom lip, she maybe had six rounds left and that was if she had kept count correctly—and her blasted knife was gone.

Harley muttered to herself. “Shoot!”

* 

Agatha gasped as a shot struck her in the hip. It wasn’t deep, more of a nick, but it hurt like a son-of-a-bitch and the blood ruined her dress. She had stumbled backward only to slam into someone. She looked up, ready to pummel whoever it was only to see Frost looking down at her. He grinned at her and put his arm around her waist.

“Mind if I help you out?” Frost asked with a hint of worry in his face.

Agatha chuckled. “Sure thing big guy.”

Frost grinned, but immediately had to take his attention off of Agatha to fire his gun.

* 

Bane was using a table as both shield and weapon. He had struck several of the party-goers and two of Maroni’s men, but he was slowly being backed up against the bar. Kermit and Cher were hiding behind the bar, both young women crouched down along with two other bartenders, a young man
named Lance who was wearing a tight body suit, and Cherry, a pink-haired waitress. The tiny group had, up to this point, stayed out of the fighting. Fish had always told them if a fight broke out, leave it to her. They were to keep their heads down and not get involved. But this was more than a simple spat between a couple of customers, a handsy guest or a drunk.

Kermit could see Bane from her position.

She frowned, then scrambled down the bar. Cher hissed loudly. “Kermit what’re you doing?”

“I’m getting Betty!” Kermit made it to the end of the bar and started to pull out bottles of liquor.

“What? Betty? But Fish will kill us if she knows about Betty, and besides it's just for show!” Cher hurried after her, crab walking her way to the other end of the bar where Kermit pulled out a box.

“Cher, shut up. This is an emergency! Besides, I’m not going to shoot it, he is.” Kermit pointed at Bane who was not at the far end of the bar.

Kermit yanked the box out, flipping the lid open and pulled out a Smith and Wesson 29 classic along with a handful of bullets. She quickly loaded the weapon and with a wink at Cher, hurried over to the other end of the bar where Bane had just picked up someone and thrown them.

Kermit stood up. “Hey big guy!”

Bane’s head whipped around, his eyes were just a little crazed Kermit noted, but she held her hands up, the weapon in one though not aimed at him.

“Hey, just wanna help, thought you might like this?” She held the gun out handle first.

Bane had just enough time to take in the girl and the gun before he grabbed the weapon with a grin and added. “You free this weekend?”

Kermit grinned back. “I might be.”

Harley stood up, her gun arm extended hoping that bravado bought her a few good shots before she was surrounded. The lights of the club were flashing in time to the new song that was playing, some sort of techno beat that Harley didn’t know. One of Maroni’s en came rushing at her from one side and another from the opposite side. She figure they had decided she was an easy target and not to waste ammo on her. One attacker was a dark haired woman, her thick black hair done up in a complicated set of braids; she had a square chin, masculine features. Harley wasn’t sure she could take the woman in a one on one fight. As the woman rushed her, Harley noted she was wearing a deep red dress shirt, silver dress slacks, probably one of the members here for the party Harley thought. The woman reached for Harley’s arm, wrapping a thick hand around her wrist, squeezing and attempting to yank Harley off her feet.

Harley, instead, yanked the woman toward her and snapped her gun hand up to shoot the bigger woman in the stomach. She heaved with the effort to shove the woman toward a man, bald with long, thick sideburns, who was attempting to grab Harley from the other side. The two people collided, both hitting the floor and sliding. Harley spun around, expending two more shots. She grimaced; she might have three left...not enough to take care of the people attempting to surround her.

She was going to use her last three bullets, then hope that these jerks wanted to fight hand-to-hand when she saw movement to her left. Harley turned and saw the lights dancing across her husband as
he stalked across the dance floor. He was quickly shooting guests and whoever tried to get in his way as he hurried toward her. Several men rushed up to stop Jack. He shot one, but only hit the man in the shoulder. The man, big and with a pronounced belly, shrugged off the wound and tried to hit Jack in the face. Her husband hit the man in the opposite shoulder with his arm, knocked the man back a step or two allowing Jack to shoot him again. Two more men, both dressed for the party, rushed Jack. He shot one man in the foot, with a quick laugh. The man stumbled and Jack grabbed him by his shirt, put a bullet in his opponent’s head, spun the now dead body around and into his friend before he shot that man in the face, both bodies hitting the floor at once. Several more men oozed out of the darkness of the club trying to get to Jack, but he was moving and shooting with both guns taking several well aimed shots, dropping anyone too close to him until he was able to jog up to Harley.

Harley grinned. “Puddin!!”

Jack grinned. “Hey sweets, ready to finish this?”

Harley giggled. “You betcha!”

Jack stepped up close to her, the light danced across his blue eyes as Jack placed his arms over her shoulders, aiming his guns at the additional people stepping out to stop them, while Harley wrapped her left arm around his waist. She pulled him closer, her gun arm going around him and under his arm. She grinned biting her bottom lip. Jack smiled down at her.

For a heartbeat, time slowed down. Jack kissed her as Harley yanked him up against her. She felt the jerk of Jack’s arms on her shoulders as he fired his weapons. Harley knew she only had three bullets left, and she had seen at least five men behind Jack, maybe more, she couldn’t be sure, but she fired her weapon counting on them still being in the same location.

Jack had taken note of the other mobsters’ positions, and while he couldn’t be sure he hit them with his eyes closed as he kissed his wife, he was fairly confident in his aim as he leaned in and kissed his wife deeply, five bullets finding five targets, while Harley’s aim hit three.

Harley pulled away from Jack when she felt her gun click, empty in her hand.

“Jack, I’m out!”

Jack started to say something when they both heard Fish scream.

That was when a shot hit Jack in the shoulder. The bullet ripped through his suit jacket and shirt, burning a hole just under the skin and out again. The impact knocked him back and the slickness of the floor made him lose his balance. Jack fell backwards, dropped one of his guns and grabbed Harley by the front of her dress, yanked her down as he fell. As they fell, Jack leaned to the right and fired his weapon.

* 

Maroni scowled at Fish. “You’re gonna die for this bitch.”

Fish smiled “You first.”

Cecco looked between his uncle and Fish, the young man was shaking slightly as he held his gun on Fish.

Maroni hissed. “Kill her.”
It was clear that Cecco had never killed anyone and his hesitated.

Fish smiled. “Cecco, come on sweetie, you don’t want to kill me. Who was it gave you free drinks before you were of age honey? Who talked to you about girls, eh?”

Cecco looked at Maroni who hissed. “I don’t care what she did for you Cecco, she ain’t fucking family. Now kill her!!”

Cecco aimed his weapon at her, his arm shaking. Maroni snarled. “Don’t make me tell your father that you’re a cazzo di vigliacco Cecco.”

Fish started to speak again. “Come on sweetie you know…”

But Cecco fired. His aim wasn’t good and the shot hit Fish, burning across her cheek, breaking bone, bursting the eyeball. Fish stared in shock with her one eye at the young man before she dropped onto the floor.

Maroni grinned, patting Cecco on the back. “Good boy, come on!”

Maroni started to move, just assuming that Cecco was following him. After a second or two he realized Cecco wasn’t with him. Maroni turned only to see Jack holding his nephew from behind, a chef’s blade at the younger man’s throat. Beside Jack stood Harley and behind them both were their gang, bloody, hurt, but relatively intact, along with the bartenders from the bar and few club employees. Kermit cried out and raced over to Fish, dropping down beside her crying.

“Fish? Fish?!?”

Jack frowned as he glanced at Fish then back at Maroni, but Kermit yelped. “She’s alive!”

Jack hissed at Frost. “Call our doctor friend and tell him to get down here.”

Frost nodded, drew out his phone. Jack turned his attention fully back to Maroni.

He laughed. “Did you know they kept knives at the bar?” He shrugged. “I didn’t realize that, which now seems silly to me. Kermit set me straight. They use knives like this one for cutting up lemons, grapefruit…at least that’s what Kermit told me. But I bet this knife would be great for cutting throats, don’t you think Maroni?”

Maroni narrowed his eyes. “You think I’m stupid enough to give myself over for the kid?”

Jack glanced at Harley. “What do you think baby?”

Harley shrugged. “I think he’s right puddin, he wouldn’t.”

Cecco started to shake. “Uncle Sal?”

Jack yanked the boy close and kissed his ear. “Shh…the big boys are talking.”

Jack returned his attention to Sal. “So, you are going to let me kill this kid…your nephew I’m guessing since he called you uncle. Wow…” Jack shook his head before he glanced over his shoulder at his aunt. “Gee Auntie, I’m not sure how I feel about that?”

Agatha was leaning into Frost who was holding her. “It’s a shame. I guess blood is only thicker than water when it comes to Sal…and not the other way around.”

Jack nodded. “I guess so.”
Jack sliced the knife deep into the young man’s throat. There was a spurt of blood that burst across Jack’s hands and down the young man’s suit. Jack had sliced deeply, stepping back and dropping Sal Maroni’s nephew onto the floor. The young man couldn’t make a sound. He grabbed at his neck, flopped onto his side with blood flowing fast and free from the wound, the color leaving his face swiftly. Jack smiled and stepped over the young man, who jerked a few times as his blood continued to flow, creating a puddle around him. Maroni whipped his weapon up, holding the barrel of the gun on Jack.

“Don’t take another step. I’m leaving and I’m going to come back and burn this motherfucking place to the ground!!!” Maroni snarled. “And I’m going to find every one of your motherfucking gang and I’m going to kill them. I’m going to kill every motherfucking one of them!!!” Maroni spit his words at Jack, spittle flying from his mouth. He had started to sweat, a small tremor in his hands as Jack, holding the bloody knife in one hand, slowly walked toward him.

“Oh Sal, Sal, Sal…” Jack said softly, almost too softly for anyone to hear. Then Jack was moving. He raced up to Maroni.

Maroni shot at Jack, but Jack weaved to the side so quickly that Harley didn’t have time to make a sound before her husband had actually dodged the bullet, grabbed Maroni’s gun hand, wrapping his free hand around Maroni’s, flipped the knife in his other hand and jammed the blade down, straight through Maroni’s wrist. Maroni screamed, dropped the gun, but Jack held Maroni’s hand so tightly that the gun stayed trapped between the two men’s hands.

Jack sneered at Maroni, his teeth bloody, his hair falling around his face, his blue eyes slightly crazed as he hissed.

“Now--you are going to tell me everything I want to know.”

* 

Hours later Harley yawned as she made her way across the park. Her wounds were all bandaged and she was Showered as she walked carrying a duffel bag over her shoulder. She frowned. It was going to be a hot one today she thought as she glanced up at the bright summer sunlight and the slightly smog tinged blue sky. She was wearing a pair of large white frame sunglasses, wore her hair--still slightly damp--in pigtails, a pair of very short purple and white athletic shorts, a purple sports bra with a loose fitting purple tank top along with a pair of pink fuzzy slippers.

Harley sang to herself as she made her way across the park to the haunted house exhibit where her puddin and their guest currently were set up. She had tried to convince Jack to shower, get some sleep and eat something before he started to interrogate Maroni, but Jack had been furious and hadn’t wanted to wait. Harley had been lucky to get him bathed and bandaged up by the doctor before he was back at work, which was why she had a bag filled with bagels and cream cheese, and some scones and muffins that Alex and Alice had been kind enough to drop off for her. She had moved the coffee maker to the lab and had started the coffee before she had met Bane at the gate to get the food. Now she was on her way to Jack to make sure her husband ate.

* 

The lab that Jack had set up was much like the one he had in Calliope house except that the walls had been painted to look like stone and the lighting was a strange purple that Jack had kept instead of switching the lights out for something brighter. As Harley made her way through the haunted house, she kept jumping and stifling squeaks of surprise. The attraction didn’t actually work; Jack had turned off all the jump scare devices, the fog machines, and the creepy music that played when they had first gotten the electricity back up, but he hadn’t changed anything else. There were still the fake
tombstones, fake monsters, ghosts, skeletons, a piano that played by itself, plastic knives, cleavers-- everything a haunted house needed and Jack had left it all. Even his lab still had some of the fake lab equipment, large plastic tubes with weird green goo and floating fake heads. There was even a examination table with wires that had a mannequin hooked up like Frankenstein's monster.

Harley giggled as she made her way down the tracks where the cars would have driven the customers through the ride and made her way to Jack’s lab. She could hear the sound of music playing through the walls. She knew Jack had recently hooked up the attraction’s speakers so he could use his phone, play music and have it broadcast through the entire haunted house attraction, or just in his lab. From the sound of it, he was focusing his music in the lab and it was pretty loud at the moment.

She saw Frost and Bane were standing just outside the lab when Harley arrived.

“Morning boys--hungry? Alex and Alice dropped off all sorts of goodies!” Harley held up the duffel bag she was carrying.

Bane’s stomach immediately responded with a growl. Harley laughed as Bane blushed. “Sorry about that.”

Harley made a noise. “Ppffft, don’t worry about it. Okay, I have blueberry muffins, banana nut muffins...No one has nut allergies, right?”

Both men shook their heads in the negative. Harley smiled and continued. “I have cinnamon scones, orange scones and bear claws. They brought over plenty, so what’ll ya have?”

Bane grinned. “One of everything.”

Frost chuckled. “I’ll have an orange scone and a blueberry muffin.”

Harley pulled out the items for them then glanced at the coffee mugs they each had sitting at their feet. “You guys need refills since I'm here?”

Frost frowned. “I don’t…”

Harley gave him a stern look. “It’s fine Frost, I don’t mind.”

Frost exchanged a look with Bane then nodded. “Yeah, that would be nice.”

The men picked up their mugs and handed them to Harley. Harley took them, hooking them over her fingers.

“You guys hear anything new on Fish?” she asked, her voice laced with concern.

Frost nodded. “Yeah, Kermit texted not long ago that she is stable. Though the doc wasn’t able to save her eye.”

Harley frowned. “That’s too bad.”

Frost smiled. “I’m sure she’ll be fine. Fish seems like a fighter and she won’t give Maroni the satisfaction of killing her, even if he ain’t going to live appreciate it.”

“Speaking of our guest--how are things going?” Harley indicated Jack's lab with her head.

Bane, chewing on a large bit of muffin, muttered, “Oh, the bastard is tough. Boss even had us come in there and take a few swipes at him, he didn’t say a thing...or at least he didn’t say anything polite.”
Harley nodded. “Okay, well I’m going to go get Jack to eat and I’ll grab you guys your coffee.”

Both men at the same time responded with a thank you.

Harley stepped into the room, but stopped to lean against the doorway for a moment to watch her husband.

Jack was dressed a pair of black pinstripe slacks with a pair of black suspenders that she knew had little green diamond print and a pair of black wingtip dress shoes. She could see a hint of purple socks, and a pair of purple rubber gloves, and nothing else. He had Maroni stripped down to just his slacks, shoes missing, shirt, jacket, everything else gone. The man was duct taped to a chair in the center of Jack’s lab.

Jack was humming along to the music that was playing (she couldn’t be sure but she thought it might be Tool’s “Sober” that Jack was playing) while he did something she couldn’t quite see over at one of the lab tables which was littered with all sorts of equipment, beakers and any number of things that Harley had no idea what they were used for. The purple lighting of the room was made more strange and eerie by the soft, green glow of the liquid that pumped through the many tubes and containers that continued Jack’s gas. As Harley walked further into the room, she could see the halo of cigarette smoke forming around Jack, his cigarette hanging from his lips as he wrote something down on a slip of paper. As she stepped closer she could see flecks of blood across his chest and arms, one or two drops on his cheeks.

Harley walked past Maroni who had a ball gag in his mouth at the moment. It was clear Jack had beaten on the man as there were angry bruises on his torso, his nose was bleeding and his lips around the ball were split and bloody. There were even a few deep slashes from an extremely sharp blade across Maroni’s torso; but the older man glared daggers at her as she walked by. Harley stuck her tongue out at him with a smile.

“Hey puddin,” Harley said loud enough to be heard over the music as she set the empty coffee mugs from Bane and Frost over by the coffee machine.

Jack turned, pulling the cigarette from his mouth and reached forward to turn the music down on his phone when he saw her. “Pumpkin!”

He opened his arms wide to hug her then stopped himself. “Nope, sorry sweets--don’t want to get blood on you, you look too cute.”

Harley pouted. “A kiss at least?”

Jack chuckled and took the cigarette out, smashing it into the ashtray before leaning forward, his lips puckered. Harley giggled and leaned over to meet his lips with hers. They lingered and smiled, brushed their noses against each other before they sat up.

Harley glanced at Maroni with distaste. “Anything yet puddin?”

Jack frowned. “He’s being stubborn. I guess I’m going to have to get a little more inventive.”

“Anything I can help with puddin?” Harley asked turning away from Maroni.

Jack shook his head. “No pumpkin. Actually, I think it would be best if you weren’t here when I get started again. There are some things, my peach, you don’t need to see.” Harley frowned pressing her lips together into a thin line. She wasn’t sure what to say so she focused on the reason she had come over to the lab.
“Alex and Alice dropped off some treats for breakfast. I have muffins, scones...I want you to eat something and not exist on just coffee and cigarettes.” Harley set her bag up on one of the cleaner spots on the table pulling the bag open.

“And I brought some coffee to make a fresh pot for you and the boys,” Harley said as she pulled out the pastry bags she had been carrying as well as a bag of coffee. She began making a fresh pot, thankful that the lab had running water in the huge, industrial size sinks that were installed against one wall.

Jack chuckled watching her. “I love it when you’re all domestic.”

Harley giggled and turned to stick her tongue out at him over her shoulder as she scooped in the coffee. Jack chuckled, pulling off one of his purple gloves to dig into one of the bags and pull out a muffin before he leaned on the table, examining the blueberry muffin in his hand.

Jack took a bite of the muffin while he watched his wife’s ass as she worked. His eyes traveled down her legs then back up again and grinned as he chewed. He heard a muffled noise from Maroni and turned to see the man looking at Harley too. Jack’s gaze narrowed. A few minutes later the lab was filled with the scent of office.

“Oh Bane said Kermit texted a while ago. Fish will recover, minus an eye.” Harley frowned picking up a bag and digging herself out a scone.

Jack frowned. Harley could see the anger boiling under the surface. He felt responsible. He glanced at Maroni who was clearly grinning at the news of Fish losing her eye. He said something that was muffled behind the gag, but both Harley and Jack knew whatever the man was saying couldn’t be nice.

Jack glared at Maroni while Harley filled three cups of coffee (having snagged Jack’s empty cup as she walked passed it on her way to the coffee machine.)

Harley nodded as she prepared the coffees. She walked over to give Jack his cup as he set the now half eaten muffin down. “I’m glad she is going to be all right.”

Jack took the mug with a nod. “Me too.”

He took a sip and smiled, the fresh coffee tasted good and invigorating. Harley frowned at the half eat muffin.

“You better finish that,” she said with raised eyebrows. “Before I leave,” she added.

Jack glanced at the muffin and picked it up. “Sorry sweets.”

Harley smiled. “So, should I still do the roller derby this weekend?”

Jack grinned. “Of course sweets! We’re settled, you just got started again. I love watching…” He sipped his coffee and waggled his eyebrows at her. Harley giggled.

“Just thought I would check. I wasn’t sure how busy we were going to be.” She glanced meaningfully at Maroni.

“Oh, I think we’ll be able to take a night off. I’ll see if we can get everyone to come and cheer you on.”

Harley made a small squeak. “Everyone?”
Jack laughed. “Why not? The whole gang there would be fun.”

“Oh god, that makes me so nervous!” Harley shook her head with a grin.

Jack laughed. “You will be magnificent sweets.”

Jack finished off his muffin and took a large swallow of coffee. “Okay pumpkin, why don’t you head back to the main house? Daddy has some--work to do.”

Harley nodded and gathered her things before picking up to the coffee mugs for Bane and Frost. She made a kiss face at Jack. “I love you puddin, have fun.”

Jack grinned. “Love you too pumpkin pie, and I will.”

As soon as Harley was gone, Jack picked up his glove and slipped it back on. He flexed his fingers. He reached over and turned the music back up, the sounds of Opeth’s “Death Whispered a Lullaby” not too loud so that he and Maroni could talk, then he stepped over to Maroni.

Jack smiled. “I love this song,” he said softly. He sighed and removed the gag.

Maroni started to laugh. “You got yourself a hot piece of ass there, I’ll admit that. Wouldn’t mind have her ride my lap. Wonder how much she would take, eh? Expensive whore or a cheap whore?”

The hit came so swiftly that Maroni didn’t have time to prepare himself before Jack’s knuckles struck him in the face, made Maroni’s head bounce back to smack against the chair. Maroni cried out as his nose exploded in blood and pain.

“YOU FUCKING BROKE MY NOSE!!” Maroni screamed as blood ran freely down his face.

Jack smiled and cracked his knuckles. “I’m going to break a lot more than that Sal, my friend. You just keep talking about my wife, we’ll see exactly how much pain you can stand, BUT I’m going to be nice. You tell me what I want to know, I’m going to make your death nice and quick.”

“What kind of fucking incentive is that to tell you anything?” Maroni spat, but only ended up dribbling blood and saliva down his chin.

Jack smiled. “Well, how about we get started again and you’ll see just how generous I’m being to you.”

* *

Bane and Frost were talking when the first screams started. Up until now, Maroni’s sounds of pain had been punctuated with angry cursing, defiance and a lot of shit talk. But now the screams were filled with agony.

Bane and Frost looked at one another and both of them paled. Frost turned and glanced into the room. He swiftly turned away putting his back to the lab. Bane frowned and opened his mouth, ready to ask what was happening, but Frost, who now looked slightly green around the edges held up a hand.

“Don’t look, don’t ask.”

Bane swallowed and turned, making sure his back was to the lab.
Harley was lying on the couch, her fuzzy slippered feet up against the arm of the couch as she played a game of puzzle boggle on her phone when the front door opened. She looked up over her phone to see Jack standing in the doorway.

He was covered in blood, nearly every inch of his torso, arms, face, pants, drops of blood decorated his shoes and there was blood in his hair, causing the thick locks to stick to his forehead. He still wore the purple rubber gloves, which were still dripping slow, thick drops of blood onto the floor as Jack stood in the doorway. He didn’t move; he just stood there, though a smile was firmly affixed to his lips. Harley pushed herself up, dropping her phone as she did so. Jack’s smile looked manic. There was an edge to his expression that made goosebumps rush over her skin. His blue eyes seem unfocused as he stared into the room.

“Jack?” she said his name softly.

Jack looked over to his wife. When his eyes caught sight of her, it was as if something in him washed way and she saw her husband though the slight mania she sensed was still there, even if now it seemed to ease into the background.

“Harley.” Jack giggled slightly. “I got the information we wanted: I know where the drugs are being made; I know everything about Maroni’s business...I know where every drug house is, where every member of his gang is; I know where they live, where they work. I know every dealer in Giggles and I know where most of Maroni’s businesses are too…” Jack giggled again, higher pitched this time. “I’m gonna burn it all down Harley. I’m going to go in there and burn everything, then I’m going to walk into Ace Chemicals and blow that fucking place off the map!”

Jack started to laugh loudly dropping his bloody hand onto his knees. Harley quickly got to her feet and walked over to reach for her husband’s hands.

“Puddin? Why don’t we go get you cleaned up, okay?” Jack’s gloved hands were sticky with blood, but Harley held them tightly. “Just kick your shoes off there puddin--okay?” She started to peel his gloves off, dropping them by the door to worry about later.

Jack nodded. “You know Harley...what I did? Might give me nightmares.”

Harley frowned squeezing his hands. “Come on Jack, let’s go upstairs.”

Jack kicked his shoes off, leaving them in front of the door. Harley reached around him and pulled it close.

“Where are Bane and Frost?” she asked as she led him up the stairs in his stocking feet.

Jack smiled. “Oh they are waiting for the Hook family. We’ve certainly been giving them a lot of business lately, haven’t we pumpkin?”

Harley laughed. “We sure have puddin.”

Jack took a breath as they came to the landing. His eyes, which had shone with that maniacal gleam seemed to soften back to his normal sparkling blue as they entered the bedroom.

Harley led him into the bathroom.

She stopped once Jack was in the middle of the bathroom and without a word she reached up and slowly slide the sticky suspenders off his shoulders. Jack stood still, watching her every movement as she guided his arms out of the suspenders, then proceeded to unbutton his slacks. She peeled them back, slid them down his legs to his ankles. She then helped him step out of the slacks, which she
kicked to the side. She squatted, giving Jack a tender smile as she lifted his legs, one at a time and tugged off this socks before reaching up to grab the sides of his boxers and slide them down his legs. He was erect when she pulled the boxers down, his blood soaked face watching her intently as she worked to undress him.

Once Jack was naked, the bloody clothes pushed to the side, Harley pulled the shower curtain aside to start the water. When it was the correct temperature, Harley turned on the shower. She turned back to Jack and began to undress.

“Let’s see if we can make sure you don’t have any nightmares puddin,” Harley said softly as she pulled her top off, then her bra.

Jack smiled watching her before he whispered. “What would I do without you Harls?”

Harley smiled as she finished stripping and pulling her hair out of its ponytails. “Good thing you will never have to find out,” she said softly as she took his hand and tugged him into the shower with her.

The water was warm, maybe a little hot as she turned Jack around so he was standing under the shower head.

Jack closed his eyes arching his head back to let the water run over him. He groaned. “God that feels good.”

Harley picked up the soap and lathered up her hands before she stepped closer to Jack. She ran the bar of soap along his pecs, her soap covered hand sliding down his stomach then against his groin while Jack arched his head back, letting the water run over his face and through his hair. She began to rub the soap slowly over Jack’s chest, then around his waist, watching as the dried blood, turned liquid again, rolled down his skin, mixing with the water and soap.

Harley wrapped her arms around her, caressing his ass before she slid the soap and her hands up his back.

Jack, who had been running his hands through his bloody hair, dropped his arms gently on top of her shoulders, keeping his eyes closed against the onslaught of the warm water running over his sharp features, just letting himself feel the gentle caress of her hands as they moved over him, reveling in the slick slide of her body against his as she stepped closer, her hands on his back and his rear, moving, squeezing, gliding over his soap slick skin to remove all the blood. She moved her hands up his side only to run once more along his chest and groin. Jack moaned low and deep when Harley’s soapy hands caressed his erection, inviting him to thrust into her touch as the soap made her hands deliciously slick.

Harley squeezed, her body aching for him feeling him hard, thick in her hands as she reached down to grab his balls as the same time, squeezing more as her other hand slid up and down quickly, Jack’s breath coming in pants with each slippery jerk of her hands.

Harley smiled and kissed his chin, squeezing him hard one more time before releasing his erection. Jack groaned with displeasure as she put the soap aside to reach for the shampoo. She poured a generous amount into her palm before she stood on her tiptoes and started to rub it through his hair.

Jack laughed, reaching down to grab her waist and hold her steady while she massaged the shampoo through his hair, her fingers working across his scalp. She washed his hair three times to get every drop of blood out of his hair before she was satisfied enough to condition his hair.

“Turn around puddin. I’m going to rub your shoulders while the conditioner is in your hair;” she said
while at the same time forcing him to turn.

“Harley you don’t…” Jack started to say, but Harley forced him to turn away from the shower head. “Shush,” she hissed. “Put your hands on the wall there.” She pointed under his arm and Jack did as he was told. He leaned his hands against the wall as Harley started to rub his back, working out the knots she could feel along his spine and across his shoulders.

Jack groaned, relaxing under his wife’s touch as she dragged her thumbs up and down his spine, her fingers kneading his muscles.

“Oh, now you can rinse,” Harley said as she turned him again.

Jack laughed. “Yes mom.”

“Hey!” Harley gasped and smacked him on the ass.

Jack yelped. “Hey, that hurt!”

Harley made a face as Jack started to rinse the conditioner out of his hair. “Bullshit,” she said.

Jack laughed pulling her close against him kissing her mouth, her cheeks and along her chin. “Hmmm…my sweet, sweet girl,” he whispered as he reached down and tugged one of her legs up, sliding his fingers along the back of her thigh. “My sweet, sweet, Harley,” he groaned softly.

Harley smiled sliding her arms around his waist. “My puddin,” she whispered, almost inaudible above the sound of the shower.

Jack reached up to caress the side of her throat, kissing her deeply, his hand working around to the back of her head where he grabbed a fistful of wet hair, his tongue slowly caressing her tongue, before plunging deep into her mouth, his teeth dragging across her tongue, her lips, when suddenly Jack lifted her up and walked her back against the wall, slamming her back against the solid surface.

Harley gasped when she hit the back of the shoulder and Jack’s mouth attacked her breasts at the same time she wrapped her legs around him. Jack groaned, biting her tongue, sucking on her lips, and pulling at her skin. He lowered his head, his lips and tongue caught her nipples, sucking. He forced a hand between them, his fingers sliding between her legs, finding her exposed clitoris and rubbing her. Harley gasped, arched back against the wall, her fingers digging into Jack’s shoulders.

“Uh...Jack...!” Harley cried.

Jack forced her down the wall yanking her against him at the same time he removed his fingers from her and had Harley whimpering with need. He dropped them both down to the tub of the shower, the warm water hitting them both. Jack laid back, tossing one of his legs over the edge of the tub, just as Harley mounted him, sliding down on him as she pressed her teeth into her bottom lip, her hands pressing into his stomach and her whole body arching with pleasure as she took him into her.

Jack arched up to watch as she slid down on him, watching his shaft disappear into her. He grabbed
her thighs, his leg hanging out of the tub pressed against the side as his hips raised up to meet her.

Harley began to move, rolling her body against him, her head thrown back, the warm water washing over her as she fucked her husband. Jack reached up, pressing his fingers into her skin, dragging them down over her breasts watching the way the water rolled down her body. He thrust to meet her rolling grinds, gasping. He grabbed her hips as she pressed down harder.

Harley dug her nails into Jack’s chest, their bodies sliding against the slick tub making loud squeaking noises against the porcelain surface. She raised her legs up so she was squatting over Jack, and started to thrust harder. The back of Jack’s head hit the tub, his fingers squeezed into her hips as he struggled not to orgasm, waiting to feel her release before he gave in.

Harley’s panting became louder, her thrusts became harder as she came closer, closer, her fingers pressing into Jack’s chest while the wet sounds of their bodies slapping together mixed with the sound of the showers running water which was now quickly cooling down. She groaned and grunted, the pleasure building, and building until she came with a loud cry.

Jack groaned, sitting up as best he could, his arms tight around her yanking her as close as he could with her legs bent between them. Harley cupped the back of Jack’s head, holding him as he pressed his face between her breasts. He thrust up as hard and fast as he could, the pleasure building until he couldn’t stand it any longer. Jack came with a long drawn out cry, collapsing back into the tub and taking Harley with him.

They both laid in the bottom of the tub, panting together until Harley murmured. “The water is getting cold.”

Jack started to laugh. “Yeah it is.”

Harley grabbed his face between her hands, staring hard into his eyes. “Puddin...you all right now?”

Jack smiled reaching up to caress her face, pushing back wet locks of her hair that were sticking to her cheeks, sliding them behind her ear.

“Yeah sweets, I’m better.” He kissed the tip of her nose. “You chased all the possible nightmares away,” he murmured as he ran his fingertips along her face. “I don’t know what I would do without you baby,” he whispered softly before kissing her.

*  

Later that evening, they were both in bed naked, a large bowl of popcorn between them. Jack was sitting up with a pad and pencil, the sheets over his waist while he worked. Harley was sitting cross-legged next to him, tossing bites of popcorn into her mouth as she watched him, the sheet in her lap. She leaned against his shoulder, feeding him bites of popcorn as he drew out a simple map of Gotham.

“According to Maroni, Falcone is having the drug Giggles--as well as several others--made here at Ace Chemicals Processing plant, though the place is very heavily guarded. So, in order to get to it, I want to throw Falcone’s businesses into chaos--everything, from the smallest to the largest.” Jack chuckled. “Our first night will be a night of complete chaos, bringing down mayhem on Maroni’s businesses. Everything that man had, I want destroyed: businesses, family, property, cars...everything. While Falcone is dealing with that, I want to systematically destroy everything of his, so that when we attack the factory, there is no one to stop us.”

Jack grinned.
Harley giggled. “It’s genius puddin!”

Jack put his arm around Harley’s shoulders.

“It is, isn’t it?”

They both laughed falling back on the pillows with Jack pulling Harley into his arms, spilling the popcorn all over the bed.
Bruce closed his eyes and collected himself as he stood in the middle of the “Batcave” surrounded by his obsession. The wall of computers and monitors to his left, his car and other vehicles in various states of assembly, repair, or upgrade on his right. He thought about wearing his batsuit, but that felt wrong somehow. He also thought about wearing a suit, which seemed too formal, so Bruce began to pace, dressed in black slacks and a simple white dress shirt, the sleeves of which were rolled up to his elbows. He worried at his bottom lip with his teeth, a bad habit he had picked up as a kid which he only reverted to now when he was nervous. He had never meant to share this side of his life with anyone except Alfred and even though Alfred had been gently pushing for years for Bruce to tell Jack...Alfred had most recently been urging Bruce to consider a partner. (For Alfred, that partner would preferably be Jack...Bruce knew that Alfred had very strong opinions about Bruce keeping Batman from Jack.) Bruce had told Alfred after his heart attack that he would consider the idea of a partner, but now that the decision had been taken away from him, Bruce realized he had been lying to Alfred; he had no intention of having a partner.

But now…

Bruce still had not really considered a partner an option, yet now the choice was no longer his, taken from him by an overly curious young man.

Bruce had just stopped to face the dozen or more computer screens when he heard movement behind him. He turned to see Alfred and Dick descending the stairs.

The young man looked nervous, but Bruce could see the curiosity in the young man’s eyes as he gazed around the room. Bruce wasn’t sure what was about to happen...make the kid a partner, or be forced to find a way to convince him to keep his secret...

Bruce smiled and greeted his young ward. “Dick.”

Dick hopped down the last couple of steps and hurried over to Bruce. He didn’t wait--he simply barreled ahead.

“You’re Batman.”

Dick didn’t pose it as a question, he just stated it as fact.

Bruce nodded. “Yes, yes I am. We need to talk. I’m…”

Dick interrupted him. “I want in.”

Alfred made a noise behind the young man and Bruce’s eyes shot up to the old butler to see that Alfred was trying not to laugh. Bruce wrinkled his nose at Alfred before turning his attention back to Dick.

“You want in?”

Dick nodded. “I want in. I want to fight crime too. I want revenge…”

Bruce put his hand up to halt the boy mid-sentence. “This isn’t about revenge, Dick. This is about being there to help Gotham...about preventing what happened to me…” Bruce stopped and rephrased what he was going to say. “To us, from happening to anyone else. Revenge...revenge will lead you down a dark path Dick...a path that could easily turn you into someone you don’t want to
be. To quote Marcus Aurelius, “The best revenge is to be unlike him who performed the injury.” That is what I... ” Bruce stopped and took a deep breath before he continued. “That is what we must be Dick... better than those who hurt us. I am working to make Batman both a symbol of hope to Gotham, and something to fear by its dark underbelly. I want to bring justice to those who cannot find justice and I want to let Gotham’s darker side know someone is working outside the law in order to bring that law down on them. I want those who commit evil to know the Batman will bring them into the light, and they will pay for their crimes.” Bruce walked over to Dick and placed his hands on the young man’s shoulders. “We must be better than those we fight. Do you understand?”

Dick, who was gazing at Bruce with what might be hero worship nodded. “I understand. We have to be the good guys.”

Bruce smiled before stepping away from Dick and began to pace as he spoke. “If I agree to let you help me, there are a few rules.” Bruce did not miss the eager gleam in his ward’s eyes at the mention of possible acceptance into being a crime fighter. “One, you must train. You can’t go out onto the streets of Gotham with me unless you train and train hard. You will use your skills as an acrobat and combine those skills with new ones. You will learn to fight, but…” Bruce turned to look at the boy. “We do not kill. I don’t use a gun and neither will you. You will learn to take down an opponent, how to think smarter, be smarter. Two, I make the rules. If I say no, it’s no. If I say you are not going with me, you will obey and you will train. I didn’t just decide to be Batman one day Dick and then race out onto the streets. This was a decision I made when I was younger than you. I trained for years until I felt I was ready…”

Dick started to protest, but Bruce held up a hand to stop him. “I’m not saying you will have to train for years before you can go out with me. You have already started that training with the circus, but I am saying that I will decide when you are ready Dick. Doing what I do, it takes more than simple physical prowess. You show me you can follow rules, keep our secret and dedicate yourself to your training, then you will be working beside me in no time.”

Bruce smiled to ease his words a bit before he continued. “Rule three, you will go to school, and you will keep your grades up...a grade falls below a “C” and you will not be going out with me...and that doesn’t mean you can keep a “C” average...I expect the best from myself and from you.”

Dick made a face, but he didn’t really seem all that upset. Bruce smiled and continued.

“And last...always listen to Alfred.”

Alfred grinned at Bruce who smiled back.

Bruce looked at Dick. “Any questions?”

Dick grinned. “Will I get to learn to drive the Batmobile?”

“No.” Bruce laughed.

* 

The Dollyrots cover of “Brand New Key” was playing loudly along with part of the crowd who were laughing and singing along as Harley, dressed in a pair of white and red striped leggings, a red strappy tank top and tennis shoes, came through the door. She was grinned from ear to ear as she flipped her her hair—which she had worn in two long braids that framed her face—over her shoulder as came rushing into the roller derby rink through the metal double doors with her bag that held her uniform over one shoulder and her skates, now adorned with a pair of red and black pompoms, draped around her neck. Harley turned around as her husband came in after her looking dashing as
always, dressed in slim cut black slacks that highlighted his slender legs and (to Harley’s delight) his tight ass. He also wore a black dress shirt, minus tie, though instead he wore the necklace his aunt had given him and a black blazer decorated with dark purple flowers. He looked far too classy to be attending a roller derby game, Harley thought. Jack laughed to see how excited she was as he hurried up to her and put his hands on her waist before he pulled her close to give her a soft kiss, careful not to mess up his lipstick or hers...that would be for later he thought to himself.

“We’ll all be in the front row Baby...you go change and have a good game.” Jack spoke loudly to be heard over the music playing and the low rumble of the crowd.

Harley rubbed her nose against his and pressed her lips to his mouth. “That was real nice of Ivy to have those tickets waiting for us.”

Jack nodded. “Yes, having a front row seat to see my girl play will be a pleasure. Now, you get going and I’ll cheer the loudest of anyone here.”

She flicked just the tip of her tongue against his lips. “Will do puddin.” She flicked her tongue along his mouth, lingering for a few seconds. “Mmm...I love you,” she whispered.

Jack brushed his nose against her pressing his teeth into his bottom lip as he stared into her blue eyes. “And I love you Harls. Now go.”

He turned her around and smacked her on the ass, sending her off in the direction of the locker rooms. Harley squealed and laughed, waving at Jack as she hurried off. Jack grinned and watched her a moment longer before he turned around. Behind him were some of the members of their gang who had come to watch Harley skate. Alex and Alice had come for the game; Alice was wearing a pair of denim overalls and a green t-shirt looking very domestic as she had her hands resting against her belly. She wasn’t huge, but she was definitely showing her pregnancy. (Jack was happy for Alex while at the same time he felt this small pain in the center of his chest at the thought of what might have been for him and Harley. No use worrying about it, though, he thought.) Alex, wearing a pair of jeans with holes in the knees big enough to be shorts rather than pants, a white t-shirt under a very loud orange and green Hawaiian shirt, had his one arm around Alice’s shoulders, smiling proudly. (Alex had told Jack that he had asked Alice to quit her job and come work for him.) Frank was still in Gotham and had come along too.

Bane and Kermit were here on a first date, and Zsasz had come as well, looking like an undertaker in his black on black suit. The only concession he had made to looking more casual was that he didn’t have a tie on and the top button of his dress shirt was open. Trope and Thea had also come along too. Thea had changed her hair color to half blue, half purple while Trope had gone for a more neon purple. The two technogeeks held hands, whispering and sharing kisses like a couple of newlyweds.

Jack threw his arms out. “You guys ready to cheer our Harley on?”

The little group cheered in response. Jack laughed, turning at the same time and motioned everyone to follow him. “Come along, my dears! Soft pretzels and cotton candy, my treat!”

Frank, who was carrying a plastic diet coke bottle that he had been sipping out of since they arrived, hissed as he walked next to Jack. “You think they serve beer or maybe cheap wine?”

Jack shook his head. “No, they don’t serve any alcohol at these places. Not sure why since beer seems to be a staple of all sporting events.” He chuckled.

Frank laughed. “Well fuck, good thing I brought my own.” He held up the soda bottle with a sneaky grin. He leaned close to Jack, who ducked down to hear Frank better and was immediately greeted
by the smell of alcohol as Frank giggled. “I got wine in here.”

Jack shook his head and laughed in response only to hear Alex shout. “Don’t fucking encourage him Jack! He’s fucking crazy!”

Frank laughed. “Hey, just seeing how far I can go!” Frank’s attention was suddenly pulled away from discussions of his sanity when he saw a few of the roller derby girls on the rink doing a few rounds. “Shabooya! Look at that!! Graw! Think I could get one of these roller derby babes to go out with the old Frank here?”

Alex groaned. “Dad...fuck…”

Jack patted Frank on the back with a laugh. “Being perfectly sane is boring my friend and I’m sure you can find one of these fine ladies to go out with you.”

Frank took a long swig of his wine. “Mm...hot girls in shorts on skates...this is gonna be a great day!”

Together the group made their way to the front seats area that had been blocked off for family and friends of the players. There were several people in the seating area which consisted of an entire set of bleachers. Jack and the others gave their tickets to a young woman with neon pink hair dressed in a Gotham City Sirens uniform and who wore a pair of skates.

The young woman glanced over at Jack and his gang with a smile that quickly transformed into an appreciative grin as she gave Jack a once over. “You’re Harley’s guy ain’t you?”

Jack smiled and nodded. “I am.” He quirked his brow at her. “How did you know?”

The young woman grinned, her hands on her hips. “She said you would be the best looking man around and boy, she was right!” Her grin widened. “The name’s Vanessa, but on the team I’m called Shrike—nice to meet you.” She stuck her hand out to him. She was wearing a pair of black fingerless gloves as well as more than a dozen thin plastic and hemp bracelets.

Jack took her offered hand. “Nice to meet you too. I’m Jack, these are my family here.” He gestured at everyone behind him. Frank, who was standing next to Jack smiled.

“Hey!” He waggled his eyebrows at her until Vanessa laughed. “You’re cute,” she said to Frank as she took the tickets from Jack. She started to say something when she glanced up and snarled. “You get your ass right back out of there, you fucking asshole!!”

Another young woman with black hair wearing the Gotham City Sirens team uniform who was on the skating rink but who had stopped to speak to someone in the seating area turned and snapped at Vanessa. “Shrike! Language! We got kids here!”

Vanessa ignored the woman as she pushed her way through Jack’s group on her skates, only to grab a young man (who had been trying to slip into the special seating area by mixing with Jack’s group) by the upper arm and yank him with her out of their small crowd. She shook the young man with another hissed. “Wayne Wilkins! What have I told you about trying to sneak into the private seating?”

The young man cringed. “Sorry Shrike.”

She shook him again. “What have I told you?”

The young man, Wayne, frowned then sighed. “That I’m not related or dating any members of the
team and I am not allowed into the family and friends seating area.”

Vanessa nodded. “And what did I tell you was gonna happen if I caught you again?”

The young man glanced at Jack then back at Vanessa. “That you were gonna kick my ass.”

“That’s right.” Vanessa snarled. “Now I’m gonna have to kick your ass, but lucky for you it's gonna have to wait until after the match.”

Wayne whined a little. “But Shrike...I’m the team's biggest fan! Doesn’t that count for something?”

Shrike narrowed her eyes. “Wayne, if you weren’t such a perv maybe...now go.”

She gave him a shove. Bane, Kermit and the rest moved out of the way as the young man quickly left. They had all turned away so none of them saw the dirty look he gave Jack...rather than Vanessa. He muttered to himself. “So Harley has a boyfriend? Gonna have to do something about that...but what…” He frowned to himself and made his way up into the stands looking for a good place to watch the game.

Jack frowned, lifting a brow in question. Vanessa shrugged. “He is like our own little super fan, but the guy can be a bit creepy about it. He lurks around all the time, following the team from game to game and even creeps around our practices. I mean, he’s harmless really, but he’s a bit annoying. Well, anyway--you guys enjoy the game!”

Jack turned glancing over his shoulder finding Wayne as he moved up a few of the bleachers. Jack’s eyes narrowed slightly at he watched the younger man.

*  

Harley dropped down onto one of the benches in the locker room and started to take off her tennis shoes when she noticed Pamela at the end of the bench. She was mostly dressed; her shorts were on, socks, skates, but she was holding her shirt in her hands and staring at the floor. Harley frowned standing up and pulling off her leggings before slipping into her fishnets and pulling on her shorts. She pulled her shirt off and had just replaced it with her team shirt when she saw that Pamela hadn’t moved a muscle.

Harley reached out to lay a comforting hand on Pamela’s knee. “What’s wrong with the experiments?”

Pamela sighed. “Just...we’ve been using these herbs to try to create a cancer cure, but a side effect from our experiments is that we created a toxin from the same plant...both of which need further testing. Neither the cure that we’ve developed, nor the toxins have been fully tested, but Legrand wants to jump straight to animal trials...he submitted a request to take the next step, against my better judgment. When I found out…” Pamela rubbed her hands together clearly worried. “I went over his
head to stop him. I went straight to Bruce Wayne and explained that we weren’t ready for that next step. It’s too early, too dangerous. Besides…” Pamela shook her head. “Animal trials are not what we should be doing. I believe in testing, but not on innocent animals…” Pamela shook her head. “Well, anyway, everything sorta of blew up. Wayne fired Legrand after Legrand said Mr. Wayne was a know-nothing rich boy, along with some other less flattering commentary. Then Wayne put me in charge instead…” Pamela looked at Harley.

“Marc wasn’t happy to say the least and he didn’t leave on the best of terms.”

Harley put her arm around Pamela’s shoulders. “Hey, you did the right thing. It’s not your fault your colleague didn’t see it that way. Don’t let it get you down in the dumps. Just funnel that pain and anger into the game…Ivy.” Harley grinned at her.

Pamela glanced sideways at Harley and grinned. “You’re right. I’m Poison Ivy damn it.”

Harley smiled. “That’s the spirit! Let’s go kick some ass!”

Ivy laughed and high fived Harley before the two women finished dressing and headed out onto the rink.

* 

Jack was at the railing that ran around the outside of the rink, his hands wrapped around the rail, knuckles white as he watched his wife. She was skating along the edge, catching up with another blonde from the opposing team. The two women, Harley in her red and black with her blonde braids trailing in the air behind her, the other woman dressed in red and gold, her long hair worn loose, were now shoulder to shoulder. Jack grinned when Harley skated by, taking the time to give her husband a saucy wink as she zipped pass. Jack grinned happily, a warm ripple of pleasure cascaded through his body in reaction to his wife’s wink. It was little gestures like her wink that made him fall in love with her all over again, every day he thought.

Jack laughed in delight at his wife’s antics as he watched with satisfaction to see Harley slam her shoulder into the skater from the “enemy” team. The team they were playing against today was the Central City Rollergirls and it was a very close race. The Rollergirls at the moment were winning by only a few points, but the Sirens were quickly gaining ground. It was still anyone’s game.

Harley’s opponent didn’t fall, but instead zipped further out of her reach. Harley snarled and put on some speed. Her arms were pumping as she twisted at the last moment and rolled swiftly in front of the other woman, her shoulder nicking her opponent when Harley leaned in toward the other woman, which sent the Rollergirl scrambling, her arms pinwheeling as she tried to keep her balance. Harley was grinning viciously as she skated around in a circle only to knock the other woman in the shoulder on the other side which sent that woman sprawling, unable to keep her balance from another impact. When she wiped out, she rolled, catching one of her teammates who tripped over her, and caught another member of the Rollergirls, resulting in a Rollergirl pile up.

Jack pumped his fists in the air jumping up and down yelling at the top of his lungs. “THAT’S MY GIRL!!”

Frank was standing beside Jack hooting and pumping his fist in the air for Harley, his bottle of wine nearly gone, but he was having a grand time ogling the girls. “Come on Sirens!! I gotta get me a poster of these girls!”

Alex was relaxing on one of the bleachers next to Alice, his hand resting on her knee. “You know what’s fucking weird? My Dad will end up on a fucking date with one of those girls. I’m betting
Vanessa.”

Alice giggled. “Oh no! What if Shrike ends up being your step-mother?”

Alex groaned. “God Alice, fuck!! You trying to give me fucking nightmares?”

Alice just laughed.

On the seat just above them, Bane, who looked as if he were being forced to sit scrunched up sat with Kermit, who was dressed in black athletic shorts, a white dress shirt with a thin black tie, the sleeves rolled up and a pair of platform, black ankle boots that still only barely brought her on level with Bane’s chest. Her green hair was stuck up high in the air and she wore a pair of large black, cross earrings. They were sharing a box of popcorn together, though Bane looked slightly timid as he glanced at Kermit who was completely absorbed with the game. She pounded her knee when Harley and Ivy worked together to block one of the Rollergirls from getting past them. The two Sirens skated to the side, and back again, continuing to block the Rollergirl. Their opponent twisted around and began to go around them when Ivy grabbed Harley’s hips and swung her forward and out to the side. Harley bent over and used her ass to hit their opponent in the hip hard enough that it knocked the Rollergirl right off her feet and sent her sliding into the rails that ran along the rink.

Kermit leapt to her feet and yelled. “GO SIRENS!!”

She sat back down with a grin that was all teeth. “Man, I gotta find out if I can try out for the team! This is great and those girls are so hot!” Kermit grinned looking up at Bane.

Bane blushed a little and nodded. “Though you would be the hottest one out there,”

Kermit, who had been in the middle of stuffing popcorn in her mouth stopped to look up at Bane. She chewed and wrapped her arms around his big, muscular biceps and leaned against him. “You really think so?” she asked.

Bane grinned. “Yep. Definitely.”

Kermit giggled.

One step down from them sat Thea and Trope. Both young women were sitting hip to hip, with Trope having crossed one leg over Thea’s thigh, while Thea rested her hands on Trope’s leg, occasionally stroked Trope’s thigh in a familiar, intimate gesture.

Zsasz sat next to them with a frown on his features as the watched the game. He leaned close to Trope. “I’m not sure I understand what’s going on.”

Trope smiled. “Me either. I don’t know a thing about derby...or any sports really, but it does look a little fun.”

Thea nodded as she leaned over to talk to Zsasz. “It’s pretty badass!”

Zsasz nodded his agreement though he muttered quietly to himself. “I still have no idea what’s going on.”

On the last bench before the girls and Zsasz, Frost sat holding a large wand of pink cotton candy while Agatha sat next to him pulling off pieces of cotton candy from her own blue wand of sugar fluff. Frost was trying to watch the game, but he was far too distracted by Agatha’s crossed legs; the skirt she was wearing had a slit in the front that fell away to reveal her knees, and a good portion of her thigh.
Agatha reached over after pulling a piece of the stick candy off and fed it to Frost. “Mm...I might have to get a pair of roller skates. What do you think?”

Frost smiled. “I think you would look good in skates, tight top and some very short, shorts.”

Agatha chuckled, her eyes glittering as she looked at Frost.

*

Over in the stands, Wayne Wilkins, who had been cheering for the Sirens, but particularly for Harley stopped to frown and watch that man who claimed to be Harley’s boyfriend. Something about the man looked familiar, like he had seen his image before, Wayne just couldn’t place where…but he had to admit, the guy was hot. He was well dressed, handsome, looked to be well built and Wayne had even seen a hint of a tattoo on the man’s neck, the gold chain. Fuck, Wayne thought...he would be attracted to him too! But Wayne had his eyes on Harley. He just had to figure out a way to get her to really notice him...then maybe he might stand a chance of convincing her that she was the man for him. Granted, he had tried the same thing with nearly every single member of the Gotham City Sirens team, steadily working his way from Poison Ivy to Bette “Plastique” Souci but none of the girls had even given him a first date. The closet he had even gotten was with “FireBird” Beatriz Bonilla da Costa, who actually gave him a kiss on the cheek when he bought her roses. But up until now, he had struck out with the entire team.

Harley Quinn was his chance to change all of that. He could tell that she was different than the other girls. There was something more dynamic about her.

He sighed in frustration. There had to be a way to get her attention.

*

They were in the final minutes of the game, and both teams were now tied. Harley skated along, her eyes darting to the other team’s players looking for a break. She was sweaty and she could feel that she was going to have a nasty bruise on her hip. She saw a small opening and put on speed, leaning forward, her hands balled into fists. She glanced to the side where she could see Ivy. There were a few opponents between her and her teammate, and a set of blockers in front of them. If she could make a space, then Ivy would be clear to get around the rink and score for the win.

Harley put on some speed and was about to push her away into the blockers, gathering their attention so that Ivy could break free when someone behind her fell. The other skater hit the floor and slid into Harley almost knocking her on her ass, but Harley leaned back some and pinwheeled her arms, just barely keeping her skates under her. The blockers moved, getting into position to block Ivy thinking that Harley was out, that she was either going to fall or loose speed. Harley ground her teeth, coming forward again, and dropped to one knee. She slid across the floor, but she didn’t completely fall over before she was able to push herself up again and started to skate with as much power as she could muster and threw her entire body into the side of one of the blockers.

Harley hit the Rollergirls’ blocker, a brunette with an upturned nose, slammed her shoulder against the other woman’s so hard that the Rollergirl was forced into her teammate’s side. Harley pushed her way in front as Ivy jumped over the downed Rollergirls blockers.

Harley was picking up speed as she turned and yelled at Ivy. “Whip!”

Ivy nodded her understanding.

Harley was moving just ahead of Ivy while the track ahead was clear.
Harley grinned and stuck her right leg back behind her lifting it up enough, her foot held flat, her arms extended in front of her for balance, so that Ivy could grab her.

Ivy smiled glancing back once at the other players before she grabbed Harley’s skate with both hands, one hand grabbing Harley’s ankle, her other hand grabbing the top half of Harley’s foot.

When Harley was sure Ivy was going to have a clear shot, she kicked her leg in, brought her knee toward her chest just as Ivy pulled in towards herself as Harley’s leg brought her around Ivy released. The whole motion propelled Ivy forward.

The crowd burst into a roar of yells and hoots as Ivy skated toward the end making the point they needed to just barely take home the win.

* 

Jack and the rest of the gang all leapt to their feet screaming and cheering. Harley, who was with her team, who were all hugging each other and cheering, broke away and skated across the rink to Jack. She leaned over the rail and threw her arms around him. He kissed her, nearly pulling her over the rail as he kissed her hard, sliding his tongue into her mouth. Harley growled happily, returning his kiss with vigor which had the people around them who could see the two of them cheering, along with catcalls and wolf whistles.

Jack laughed. “You’re all sweaty.” He dropped his voice to a whisper. “I love it.” He licked her cheek causing Harley to squeal. “Jack!”

Jack laughed rubbing his nose against hers. “How would you feel about going out after you shower and we all get tattoos together? Just something fun to remember the day...hmm...?”

Harley purred. “I think that sounds fun puddin.”

Jack grinned flicking his tongue over her lips. “Think I can sneak into the showers with you?”

Harley giggled and turned her head to look sideways at him. “You’re just gonna have to wait puddin.”

She stepped back with a wide smile and waved. “Be right out puddin!”

She skated off to join the other girls. Jack watched her, his eyes raked down over her hips and legs. He licked his lips feeling the warm, tight pleasure in his groin that he only felt when looking at her. He grinned and turned to the others.

“All right boys and girls, Harley and I are getting tattoos today--who’s with us? My treat!” Jack looked around at everyone.

Frank raised his hand. “Count me in. I’ve never gotten ink before!”

Alex groaned. “Fuck...fine, I’m in.”

Alice giggled. “Only if I get to pick for you. I won’t be getting one for obvious reasons, but if they do henna I could do that.” She smiled at Jack.

Jack nodded. “Then we’ll make sure they do henna.”

Bane grinned. “I’m in. I haven’t gotten new ink in a while.”

Kermit grinned. “Me too!”
Everyone, including Zsasz agreed. Jack laughed. “Oh this is gonna be fun!”

Harley closed her eyes and put her head under the shower head’s spray of water. After the game, the warm water felt good. It also felt good to wash off the blood and sweat. Next to her Ivy was washing her hair. Harley watched her for a moment. She got the impression that Pamela didn’t have a lot of friends, that she was a little lonely even though everyone on the team seemed to like her.

Harley waited until Pamela didn’t have her head under the water before she asked. “Hey ah, my husband and I and some friends are going to get tattoos, you’re welcome if you wanna come?”

Pamela blinked, clearly shocked by the idea—or was it that she was being asked Harley wondered. Pamela smiled. “That’s really nice of you to ask, but I need to get home. I have some work I want to do, but...thank you Harley. No one has ever asked me to…” She giggled. “Go get a tattoo...or well, do anything after a game. I appreciate it.”

Harley grinned. “I mean it though, if you would like to come…”

Pamela stepped closer and gave Harley a quick hug. “Thanks, but I really do have some work I need to look over. Maybe next time?”

Harley smiled. “Sure thing Red.”

Pamela grinned blushing a little at the nickname.

Harley had brought a change of clothes with her. She had chosen cut-off shorts, a red and white striped off the shoulder tank top, and a pair of white gladiator sandals that wrapped all the way to her knees. Her damp hair was wrapped up into two twin balls, one on either side of her head and she quickly did her makeup, light pink lip gloss, subtle cat-eye eyeliner and a soft bronze eyeshadow. She looked in the mirror of the locker, giving herself a big smile and blowing herself a kiss before she grabbed her bag and skates and hurried out of the locker room.

She had just come through the doors when she ran smack dab into Wayne Wilkins.

“Oh sorry!” Harley started to take a step back, but Wayne, who had grabbed her hips, pulled her close and kissed her. Harley’s eyes widened in horror. She shoved back, breaking Wayne’s hold on her and slapped him hard enough across the face that everyone coming out of the locker room or just in the vicinity heard the sound of Harley’s hand smacking the young man across the face.

Wayne yelped in surprise.

Harley snarled. “You touch me again and a slap will be the least of your problems!”

Wayne frowned. “I’m sorry Harley, just...you surprised me when you bumped into me and I just…”

“You just took advantage is what you did!” Harley grabbed Wayne by the front of his shirt with both hands, yanking him close so that only the two of them could hear what Harley said.

“You try anything like that again, you’ll be lucky if I’m the one that kills you and not my husband. You got it?” Harley hissed.

Wayne was distracted. This close to her, he could smell her scent...vanilla...warm vanilla, he thought,
and her lips were almost perfect, the shape, the fullness...he wanted to try to kiss her again because her lips had been so soft. He was abruptly brought back from his thoughts as Harley shook him.

“Are you listening to me?” she hissed.

Wayne looked up from her mouth only to be struck by how blue her eyes were… “Yeah...yeah I’m listening.” Wayne said with a dopey smile. Harley didn’t notice the smitten look on his face as she snarled. “Don’t ever touch me again.”

She pushed the obsessed fan away before walking around him and heading off to find Jack. Wayne watched her go, his heart hammering hard inside his chest and his breathing fast and shallow. He just had to find a way to show her how much he loved her...she was different than the other girls on the team...she was just…

“Wow…” he murmured and leaned against the wall beside the locker rooms.

Another member of the Sirens came out, Courtney “Stargirl” Whitmore, one of the younger girls, a bubbly blonde (whom Wayne had asked out every day for nearly two months before he finally stopped), frowned when she saw Wayne.

“Hey, I thought you weren’t allowed around the locker rooms Wayne!” She frowned looking around for a security guard or Ivy.

“Nah, the restraining order expired two weeks ago,” Wayne said as he pushed himself away from the wall.

Courtney narrowed her eyes at him, but Wayne just smiled. “I’m leaving. I already saw who I wanted to see.” He swooned and walked away with a little hop in his step.

Courtney made a face as she headed out, moving in the opposite direction.

“Such a freak,” she muttered.

*

It didn’t take Jack long to find a tattoo parlor in Gotham that would accommodate all of them and provided henna tattoos. The place, called The Jade Mermaid, ended up not being far away from the roller rink. The parlor was much larger than the place where he and Harley had received their first tattoos Jack noted. This parlor was large, with high, arched red painted ceilings that were covered in pictures of classic tattoo art. The floors were shiny hardwood, and there were two reception desks that were smooth half circles of polished wood, holding large binders filled with plastic covered images of tattoos. The walls of the place continued the theme of tattoo art, with more pictures of classic tattoos covering not just all periods of history, but cultures as well. The place reminded Jack of a museum.

As their small crowd filled the front of the tattoo parlour, they could hear the sounds of Florence and the Machine’s “What the Water Gave Me” playing lightly in the background as Jack, holding his wife’s hand, walked up to one of the desks where a young woman sat. She had just taken a drink of coffee and was dressed in a blue halter dress with white polka dots. She had long, light, lavender hair with blue highlights styled with 1940’s bumper bangs. Her arms were covered in tattoos from her shoulders to her wrists.

“Hey guys! You must be the Red family? I’m Lucy! You guys caught us on a good day. We can work on three of you at a time! So, who wants to go first?” The young woman smiled as she stood up.
Jack glanced at their group.

Frost looked at everyone and nodded without anyone exchanging a word. “You and Harley should go first Boss.”

Jack laughed. “All right, so who wants to go with us?”

Alex spoke up. “I think my Dad should go first. Age before fucking beauty.”

Frank gave his son the finger, which made everyone laugh (Alex responded with his own middle finger). “Fine, I’ll go first--buncha cowards.” Frank chuckled, scrunching his nose up.

Lucy led the three of them between the counters while everyone else found seats and started to look through books of tattoo designs.

* 

Jack slipped out of his jacket, folded it over his arm, then began to unbutton his shirt as he sat down in the chair that Lucy guided him to. The tattoo chair sat in front of a mirrored station that was decorated with photos of tattoos, feathers, ink pens, and a multitude of other artists utensil, paint brushes, paper, et cetera. Standing by the “booth” was a bald man with a long, braided brown beard wearing a sleeveless t-shirt, jeans and biker boots. Every inch of the man’s skin that was exposed was covered in tattoos, even his head.

The man grinned at Jack with a nod. “I’m Kevin.”

“Jack.” Jack put his hand out. The two men shook and Kevin grinned. “So, what you have in mind? I like the cards, by the way.”

Jack grinned. “Thanks. I know exactly what I want...a skull with a jester's hat right here.” Jack pointed to his left pec and shoulder. “I want it to cover this whole area.”

“An old fashioned jester's hat, with the bells...like the kind you see on some old playing cards?” Kevin asked as he picked up a large, spiral notebook.

Jack nodded. “Yes, exactly like that.”

Kevin smiled. “Man, I drew this ages ago. Been wanting someone to request it, but I haven’t had one person...you’ll be the first man...if you like it that is.” Kevin flipped through the plastic pages until he found what he was looking for. He turned the notebook and handed it to Jack. On the left side page was a black and white drawing of a realistic looking laughing skull face wearing the traditional “Fool’s hat.” Jack grinned at the picture. It was almost exactly like he had imagined. He’d thought of the tattoo a while ago, an image of death and humor mixed together...to laugh at death or maybe to laugh at the inevitability of death...you couldn’t stop it, or slow it--you could only laugh at it. Jack had been quickly following that path until Harley slowed him down, laughed at death with him. Harley gave life the only meaning it had really ever had for him and if he thought about it too much, it scared him...scared him that he felt that deeply for her. He was incomplete without Harley. Had always been incomplete until Harley had become part of his life, meshed with his soul.

Jack frowned as he touched the picture with the tips of his fingers. “This is perfect.”

* 

Harley was taken to a chair in the booth next to where Jack sat. This one also had a mirror, tattoo photos, but there were posters from broadway shows decorating the wall around the mirror.
Lucy smiled as Harley sat, her hands on her hips. “So, what are you wanting to get?”

Harley grinned. “I wanted a set of four Harlequin diamonds, arranged in a diamond shape right under my left breast.”

Jack, who was lying back in the tattoo chair while Kevin worked on the transfer of the image, sat up turning to look over at Harley, his expression a cross between surprise and a flash of jealous concern that someone was going to be that close to Harley’s breasts, touching them, her…but Lucy smiled. “Oh that’s cool, I like it. My boyfriend plays a lot of cards too.”

“Oh i don’t play cards, but my husband does. He’s very good with a deck of cards. He is actually fantastic at poker and card tricks. The Harlequin originates from a French word, hellquin that means mischievous devil…and that is my husband…a very mischievous devil.” Harley leaned around Lucy to wink at Jack. Jack chuckled and settled back down. He still felt that spike of jealous anger that someone other than him was going to be touching Harley that intimately, but she was his wife now, his mate, his partner…he trusted her even if he trusted no one else. He heard his wife say to Lucy.

“He is the most amazing man.”

Jack grinned from ear to ear. Kevin walked over with the transfer, speaking softly. “That’s your girl?”

“Yes she is...my wife,” Jack said softly.

Kevin smiled. “There’s nothing like finding that one person who completes you. My husband is more than my lover, he’s my best friend.”

Jack smiled. “Yes,” he agreed. “Harley...is everything.”

*

The third tattooist was a young black woman whose hair was styled in thick braids that she had wrapped around her head in three buns. She wore a tank top that showed off the beautiful, colorful tattoo across her chest, a winged dragon in rainbow colors.

She motioned Frank over who took the seat pulling his shirt off at the same time. He grinned. “Give me the biggest, most colorful tattoo ya got!”

The young woman laughed. “I’m Mary and you are?”

“Frank.” Frank grinned. “So, whatcha got?”

Mary smiled studying him for a moment before she said. “How about a winged hourglass with a skull in the middle that has a ribbon around it that reads “Time Flies Live it Up”? She quirked a brow at him and Frank grinned. “Do it.”

Alex, on the other side of the room groaned and laughed. “Fuck.”

*

The tattoos took the entire group a few hours, with a break where Jack ordered food for everyone, including the tattoo artists. He ordered some huge sandwiches from a gourmet sandwich shop located in the Diamond district and paid to have them delivered to the tattoo parlour.

It was quite late by the time they all left. Everyone had gotten some sort of tattoo:
Zsasz had a skull tattooed behind his ear, Thea and Trope had matching, rainbow colored, steampunk inspired skull tattoos, Alex had a skull with one crossed bone on the shoulder of his missing arm, Alice had a henna tattoo matching Alex’s though with stylized flowers, Frost had a similar tattoo to Zsasz, but of a Celtic design, and also behind his ear while Agatha had a death head moth tattoo between her breasts. Bane had a tolima black tattoo done on the underside of his left forearm and Kermit left with a tiny green frog tattooed on her hip.

As their group stood outside the tattoo parlor Jack, his arm around Harley’s shoulders, grinned looking over everyone.

“All right, go home, change—we meet back at the amusement park with the rest of the gang in two hours. Tonight is our first night of unleashing hell. We are bringing down everything that Maroni owned—and I mean everything. Every business, every private residence, every drug dealer, pimp, strip club...if Maroni’s name is on it or attached to it, we are going to burn it. After tonight, everything for us will be different. Tonight the Red Hood gang will be different. We are stepping up and showing that this town deserves a better class of criminal, and we are going to give it to them. We are going to let Gotham, let the mob know...that this…” Jack put his arms out as if he would encompass all of Gotham. “That Gotham belongs to us, to the Red Hood. We are going to let Falcone know that it is time to step aside and let a younger man take over.” Jack laughed. “Oh...this is gonna be fun!”

* 

A couple of hours later, Jack was in his lab working swiftly, wearing only a pair of black slacks, no shoes or socks, purple rubber gloves, the necklace from his aunt and his suspenders. He had a pair of goggles over his eyes, and a wide smile as he carefully poured liquid—the color of which was hard to see in the dim colored lights of the lab—into the empty beer bottles he was using. After pouring in the liquid, Jack would carefully add tar into the mix to make the molotov’s contents sticky, allowing them to not just to stick to what he wanted to burn, but to create a thick, black smoke. The obscuring smoke would make putting the fire out more difficult, as well as making escape from any buildings more difficult for anyone trapped inside. The sound of Aurora was playing through the speakers of the lab singing “Life On Mars” while he worked. Bane, Zsasz, Jason, and Frost were also in the lab, all of them carefully putting the lighter fluid soaked rags into the tops of the bottles as Jack handed them off—using hair dryers on low setting to quickly dry the rags once they were secure in the bottles—before placing the explosives into plastic crates. Frank, Roxy, and Duela came in to collect the filled crates, carefully carrying them off to load into the vehicles that were now parked around the haunted house attraction.

Inside the main house, the warm smell of coffee filled the lower levels as Harley along with Agatha, were sitting at the kitchen table with at least three dozen guns of various sizes and shapes spread out before the two women. Harley had some music playing on her phone while she and Agatha worked on loading all of the weapons. Angora was sitting nearby, a blanket laid out on the floor as she worked to sharpen knives.

In the living room Thea and Trope were busy on their computers, the two women sitting hip to hip. They were working on hacking into some of the Gotham City traffic cams while also booting up their viruses to let loose on Maroni’s computers, building alarms, and power systems.

The ladies had spent over a hour working when the front door burst open with a loud BANG! against the wall.

Harley yelped, nearly dropping the last gun she was loading as she heard her husband yell from the next room over the startled squeals of Thea and Trope.
“I’m done woman!! Time to take a shower!” His exclamation was followed by Jack’s laughter.

Harley giggled and rolled her eyes finishing with the gun just as Jack came into the kitchen. He pouted a little as he stopped in the doorway and murmured. “Thea and Trope just cursed me out for scaring them.”

Agatha laughed. “You deserved it! You could have gotten one of us shot in here!”

Jack’s lips protruded just a hint further, which had Agatha laughing. “Fine, I forgive you. What about you Harley?”

Harley grinned, distracted by how adorable her husband looked wearing nothing but slacks and suspenders, his goggles, which he had clearly forgotten to take off, still sitting on his forehead.

“I always forgive you puddin.”

Jack beamed. “Come shower with me?”

Harley glanced at Agatha who laughed. “Go on. I can finish up here.”

Harley grinned. “Thank you!”

She hopped up and grabbed Jack by the hand and hurried toward the stairs.

*

Harley closed her eyes letting the water run over her face. Jack had been rubbing her back with soap. She felt Jack wrap his arms behind her, pressing his lips to her shoulder. She smiled and leaned back against him.

Jack whispered against her ear. “I’m excited about tonight, what about you pumpkin?”

Harley giggled enjoying the feel of Jack’s chest against her back, the hint of an erection between her cheeks as she let the warm water roll down her breasts.

“Very! I’ve never thrown a molotov before! It’ll be fun,” she replied with enthusiasm.

Jack laughed and squeezed her tightly, catching the lobe of her ear with his teeth. Harley squealed and giggled, wrapping her arms around him and leaned her head toward his lips as Jack tickled her ear with his tongue. Harley wiggled in response to the tickle of his tongue which only made Jack chuckle.

“I thought we might hit some of Maroni’s favorite and most profitable places first tonight. I basically saved the best for us--everyone else has their own assignments, but only the best for the Red Hood and his gal.” Jack licked her ear to emphasize that she was his girl before he continued.

“Maroni owns a strip club called “The Hairless Cat” and a credit union that he uses as a cover for money laundering, The Gotham Credit Union. We are going to hit the main branch. I figure after Thea and Trope hack their systems and transfer all the money we can burn it to the ground along with two of his bigger meth labs. Oh, and a restaurant that serves as a front for weapons dealing.” Jack chuckled. “I also thought we might have some fun, you and I go shoot some of his drug dealers…” Harley squealed with delight.

“That sounds fun puddin!!”

Jack laughed. “So a little drive by shooting, just you and me toots. If we shoot the wrong people...oh
well!” Jack moved his hands over her slick body to cup her breasts. “There are going to be so many fireworks tonight sweets!” He laughed as he squeezed her breasts.

He kissed her neck keeping one hand on her breasts, the other sliding down her stomach, his long, graceful fingers finding their way between her legs. Harley moaned softly, rubbing herself against his seeking fingers.

“Mm...puddin...ah...we don’t...oh!...hehe...we don’t have time…” Harley groaned thrusting her hips as he rubbed just a little harder.

Jack purred. “Just a quicky Harley...help me focus for tonight. Hmm...don’t you want your puddin to be relaxed?”

Harley laughed. “You don’t need help focusing. But I suppose if you need help relaxing...”

Jack grinned rubbing himself against her wet backside. “Yes I do.”

Harley giggled her body shivering with pleasure. “Oh Jack…”

He pressed his fingers against hers, cupping her sex with his hand. “Harley...my Harley…” He cooed, his voice low and seductive. He groaned as he rubbed himself against her backside.

Harley felt that hot pull in her groin, her nipples hard with the need of his touch.

Jack released her only to turn her around in order to kiss her. He walked her back against the shower wall so he could press his body against hers, feeling the soft, slick give of her body against his.

Jack reached up to brush her wet hair from her face before kissing her with a desperation that she felt too. Harley grabbed his wet hair, forcing his mouth to hers, their tongues teasing each other, exploring the depths of their mouths.

Jack reached around and grabbed her rear, pressing his fingers almost painfully into her skin as he pressed himself against her, kissing his wife passionately. Harley reached down and grabbed his wet member in her hand, stroking until Jack groaned with an almost painful need against her lips. He thrust into her grip, feeling the grasp of her hand around him, needing her, needing to feel her surrounding him. She squeezed, then stroked her thumb over the head of his erection before concentrating her strokes around the head of his shaft smiling when Jack jerked, releasing his hold on her ass to slam his hands against the wall on either side of her head. He groaned, his nose alongside hers, his lips brushing her mouth. “Harley,” he hissed as she continued to rub her hand up and down, reaching down with her other hand to grab his balls and hold him gently while massaging. Jack groaned, his eyes open only to slits. She could see the blue of his eyes through his thick lashes as he gazed at her. Harley felt her body burn in response to Jack’s pleasure. All she wanted to do was pleasure him, let him know how much she loved him, needed him, how much he meant to her.

Jack kissed her while sliding one hand down between them, his fingers slipping between her legs.

Harley gasped softly when he touched her, arching toward the back of the shower, his fingers sliding into her at the same time pressing against her clitoris. Harley groaned, her eyes fluttering as Jack curled his fingers, found her g-spot and pressed with just the right amount of pressure that she slid up on her toes for a moment with a deep moan. She licked his lips while she kept stroking him at the same time Jack fingered her. Both their bodies moved with the motions of their hands, the two of them stared at each other, savagely kissing or licking each other.

Jack rubbed the pad of his thumb against her clitoris, three fingers thrusting, curving into her, speeding her closer to climax. Harley squeezed, stroked Jack at the same time until Jack laid his
forehead against hers, his voice catching as he moaned.

Harley came then, thrusting her pelvis into his hands with a moaning shudder.

Jack, his forehead against her pleaded. “Harls…I need you baby…”

She smiled watching his face contorted with pleasure as she squeezed just a little harder while the warmth of her orgasm settled through her.

“Take me Jack,” she whispered before catching his mouth in a kiss.

Jack eased his fingers out of her, kissed her tenderly. Harley released him, and was about to wrap her arms around him when Jack spun her around and pushed her up against the shower wall, at the same time kicking her feet further apart into a wider stance.

He laid one hand against her hip while grabbing himself and guiding his erection to her. Harley lifted up on her toes and arched her back to push her rear towards Jack in response as her husband eased into her.

They both groaned together, both of them ached for each other--their need to share in each other was overpowering.

Jack wrapped his hands around her hips, his fingers pressing into her flesh. Harley shuddered. She loved the way it felt when Jack grabbed her hips and held on to her, thrusting hard and fast into her. She cried out with pleasure squeezing her eyes close as she thrust back.

Jack shoved against her hard enough that Harley’s entire body bounced as she pushed back against the wall meeting his thrusts.

Harley arched her back more, groaning. “Oh puddin…”

She gasped feeling that wonderful, warm buildup as pleasure, burning in her core and rolling up her body. Her fingers struggled against the wet tile as her orgasm rippled through her. “Jack!!”

Jack groaned loudly, reaching around to wrap his arms around his wife and pull her back against him. He wrapped one arm around her breasts, his left hand cupping and squeezing one breast, his lips against her ear. “Uh...Harley...I love you...my girl...uh...my everything…”

Harley leaned back with a moan. She tossed one arm behind her to grab Jack’s neck. He ran his free hand up her side, along her arm to grasp her elbow continuing to fuck her hard and fast, his quickly approaching orgasm prompted his movements to speed up as his need to climax raced closer.

Harley turned enough that she could see Jack’s face. He smiled at her, his blue eyes framed by his thick lashes which made the blue even brighter in the dimly lit shower.

“Jack...my Jack…” she purred softly jerking with each thrust, squeezing him tight. She moaned, laying her head against his forehead. “I love you Jack...I love you.”

Jack came at her words,groaning loudly and making several more hard thrusts into Harley, slapping into her as he let out a loud groan of release.

Harley squeezed him tight, her fingers caressing the back of his neck.

Jack held Harley tightly as if he were afraid to let her go. They both took several minutes to catch their breath until finally Harley dropped slowly down on the flat of her feet. Jack pulled out, but he
held her close swaying slightly, kissing her ear, down her neck and her shoulder.

“My pumpkin pie,” he whispered accompanied by a soft giggle. “My girl.”

Harley closed her eyes leaning heavily against him. “Mmm...my puddin.”

Jack finally turned her completely around to kiss her. “All right, now I’m ready to go cause some mayhem.”

Harley giggled caressing his face. “Let’s go have some fun puddin!”

* 

Jack came down stairs first. He was dressed in a three piece suit of deep, dark burgundy with a dark purple dress shirt and light purple, almost lavender tie with a pair of two-tone, burgundy and brown wingtips; he also wore a pair of purple gloves that matched the shirt he wore. His hair was slicked back and Harley had done his makeup, dark eyeliner that brought out his blue eyes, some dark blue and silver eyeshadow with a maroon lipstick. Right behind him, her makeup the same colors as Jack, though her eyeliner was much more “cateye” than Jack came Harley. She wore her hair loose and wavy and she wore a suit similar in color to Jack’s though the upper lapels of her shorter jacket were black and the sleeves were pushed up to her elbows, her gold garotte bracelet wrapped around her wrist. She wore a simple black dress shirt underneath and a pair of white and black, pointy-toed, black ankle boots. They both wore shoulder holsters under their jackets for their guns, and they each had a knife at their hips. Agatha, who had been sitting on the couch with Thea and Trope drinking coffee and discussing computer hacking with the two young women, turned when she heard Jack and Harley coming down the stairs. She squealed with delight when she saw them.

“You two look fabulous!! I need a picture!” Agatha jumped up reaching for her phone that sat on the coffee table.

Jack laughed hopping down the last two steps before he turned around and took Harley’s hand. “It’s like prom!” he said with a grin as he guided her down the last two steps. “You know, I never went to prom.”

Harley laughed as Jack pulled her against him before he turned to smile at Agatha. Jack licked Harley’s ear playfully, made Harley giggle. “Too bad I didn’t buy you a corsage,” he murmured against her ear.

Harley squirmed and laughed. “Oh puddin!”

Agatha laughed. “Look at my babies getting ready to go declare war on Falcone! Okay you two, smile.”

Jack and Harley pressed their cheeks together and smiled. Agatha took several pictures before she was willing to let them go.

“There--perfect!” She grinned. “I need to get these made into a portrait.”

Jack laughed sliding his hand down Harley’s back to take her hand. “All right, everyone ready, cars loaded, everyone has their targets?”

There was a round of confirmations. Jack grinned. “All right, then. Let’s go paint the town boys and girls!”

Everyone headed out.
Frost hung back. Jack saw the man standing by the wall near the front door. It was clear something was bothering him by the way he twisted a ring he wore on his middle finger. Agatha was cleaning up a little, picking up the cups and glasses left behind and carrying them into the kitchen. Jack glanced at Harley, then back at Frost. She nodded reaching out with her fingertip to catch Jack’s chin, leaning in to kiss him before she smiled and picked up a few cups, following Agatha into the kitchen.

Jack slid his hands into the pockets of his slacks and waltzed over to First.

“Something on your mind?” he asked leaning on the wall beside Frost. Frost frowned looking down at his shoes.

Jack frowned. “You upset about the plan?”

Frost shook his head. “No Boss, it’s just…I…” He sighed. “I don’t like you and Harley going out without me. I know you want to destroy everything of Maroni’s in one night, but what if something goes wrong Boss and I ain’t there to protect you and Harley? I just…I feel like I need to be with you both, like I’m letting you down…”

Jack reached up and put his hand on Frost’s shoulder. “You could never let me down Frost. I promise, it’s going to be fine. These guys will never know what hit them.”

Frost still didn’t looked convinced.

Jack chuckled. “How about you and my aunt follow us? That make you feel better? We’ll just add your destinations to ours and attack together.”

Frost smiled. “Thanks Boss,” he said with a nod. “That would make me feel better.”

Jack grinned hopping up on his toes to kiss Frost on the cheek before he laughed. “No problem Frost darling, no problem at all. Harley!! Auntie!! Time to go, ladies!”

Jack laughed. “Time to show Gotham a good time!”

* 

The Hairless Cat was packed tonight. Alvar Maroni was here with his cousin Dino and a few friends to celebrate Alvar’s divorce from his witch of a wife, Norah. Alvar grinned as he sat near the stage, a large wad of bills in his front jacket pocket. He liked the stage shape, a long, narrow dick shaped stage with lights that ran along it as it spearred itself into the middle of the room. There were four poles that ran along the stage, and on each was a gorgeous woman dancing to the sounds of Portishead’s “Glory Box.” He grinned watching the girls. Sal was supposed to come by, but no one had seen him in the last couple of days. Alvar didn’t think too much about it. Sal was known to disappear and go see his mistress, some girl named Cinnamon or something. When he did, he usually didn’t tell anyone where he was or even when he was going. Alvar shrugged to himself dismissing his thoughts as he shipped his whiskey sour and grinned as the stripper in front of him, wearing nothing but a g-string, performed a very interesting move with her legs spread wide.

He was completely unaware of four people who stepped into the club, his attention fully on the woman in front of him.

* 

Jack frowned as he stood in the doorway, his free arm around Harley’s waist, as he took a drag on the cigarette in his other gloved hand.
“This place smells like cheap booze and stale sweat.” He made a face, wrinkled his nose. He frowned at the patrons, then frowned more at the strippers letting the smoke from his cigarette slowly drift from between his lips.

Frost stood behind him, carrying a wooden beer crate filled with molotovs. (The bouncer at the door was gone, his body currently in the dumpster around the back of the club). Agatha stood beside Frost, her hand on her hip and as she looked around with a narrowed eyes.

Jack glanced to his wife as he tossed his cigarette onto the floor.

“Harley, do you mind?”

Harley kissed him on the cheek. Jack leaned toward her, his red painted lips formed a bright smile.

“Sure thing puddin.”

Harley took a step away from Jack. She walked through the crowd, pushing men and some of the strippers out of her way as she made her way to the stage. She was causing a little bit of a stir as she took the stage.

Harley giggled as she hopped onto the stage. The music had changed to Lana del Rey’s “Burning Desire.” Harley glanced across the club at her husband. She knew this wasn’t part of the plan and that she was playing with fire, but she grabbed the pole and arched back, her legs spread as she held onto the pole with one hand, her blonde hair falling back into a waterfall of gold, her eyes on her husband as she arched her entire body.

She slowly pulled herself back up and hooked her leg around the pole with a wink at her husband. Harley spun slowly before she dropped to her feet again. She bit her bottom lip, rolling her hips to the music, smiling as she slipped out of her jacket, letting it fall to the stage. If anyone noticed her guns, they paid no attention or thought it was part of her costume as Harley started to unbutton her shirt, strutting around the pole as she did, her eyes on Jack.

She licked her lips, stopping for a moment to lick her finger which she then dragged slowly down her chin, her throat and lingered between her breasts.

Jack hadn’t moved far from where they had initially stopped as his attention was drawn to his wife. He watched her intently. For a moment everything around him receded to the background, only Harley stood out, her shirt unbuttoned to her navel, her body undulated to the music as he gazed at the dark lace of her bra against her pale flesh, the lights dancing across her skin, the twist of her hips…

Then she grabbed the pole, pulled herself up and rolled back, lifting her legs and slowly spun to the music, demonstrating her gymnastic skills, the flexibility and strength of her body…

Jack felt that pull in his groin, that need only Harley could awaken in him, but mixed with that need was a flash of hot rage that there were others here, staring at his wife...

Alvar, who had a lovely raven haired stripper sitting on his lap looked up as the blonde climbed onto the stage. She was gorgeous he thought, even with all that clothing on. The young woman moved sensually to the music. Her body had a tight control that was punctuated with easy sensuality. When she stripped off her jacket showing a gun harness, he grinned. Women with weapons was something he always found sexy. Even as the brunette ground on his lap, Alvar found his attention focused on
the blonde as she unbuttoned her blouse to her navel before she continued to dance to the music.

* 

Jack narrowed his eyes, glancing around at the other men watching his wife. He hadn’t expected her to get on stage and start dancing. Well, he had expected her to get on stage, she was supposed to just announce that they were looking for anyone named Maroni, a little distraction, a little bit of theater for fun, just so they would make more of an impression on any of those lucky to escape. He wanted to make sure Falcone knew exactly who was doing all of this...but damn it, he thought. If she wasn’t so distracting...dancing like that...unbuttoning her blouse, exuding sex appeal, her body, that smile...he was at once angry with her for drawing the attention of every man in a place like this, while at the same time he was pleased with her, proud that she was his girl, knowing that no matter what happened, Harley was his wife, his lover...no one else's...and he...he was hers.

But even though he knew that, a hot spike of jealousy drove through the middle of his heart at everyone who watched her. It was a jealousy so strong that burning this strip club to the ground was going to be even more of a pleasure.

* 

Harley did a spin, arching her body in a beautiful curve before she dropped herself back to her feet and shook out her long, blonde hair. She could tell by Jack’s expression from across the room, that her little dance needed to end. But she did have the attention of everyone in the club, which had been the reason for her to jump up here. Her lips tightened in a broad grin.

“Anyone named Maroni here?” she yelled into the strip club.

Alvar grinned and raised his hand. “Right here sweetheart.”

They both heard someone at the bar yell something at her, but Harley’s attention was on the “Maroni” in front of her.

Harley smiled slowly and seductively as she walked closer pulling her weapons at the same time. She squatted down, her legs wide, resting her elbows on her thighs as she held one of her guns close and slowly ran her tongue up the barrel before she asked.

“Are you really?”

Alvar grinned. “Sure am honey. Alvar Maroni and I’m all yours.”

He shoved the brunette off his lap--who grunted with a sour look at both him and the blonde on stage--and patted his thighs. “Wanna have a sit?”

Harley giggled sliding seductively off the stage. Alvar’s attention was on Harley so he didn’t noticed the man who walked up behind him. Alvar grinned as Harley stopped to stand between his legs.

Alvar licked his lips looking her up and down. “So--what’s your name?”

“Oh sugar, you can call me Harley, everyone does.”

That was the moment that Alvar felt a hand grab his hair and painfully yank his head back, a large knife appearing under his chin at the same time. A few of the people close by screamed. Jack grinned knowing they might run for the front door of this place but Frost was there waiting, and his aunt was prowling the establishment to make sure no one thought they would be funny and call the cops. Harley, with a giggle, had jumped back onto the stage. One of the strippers had screamed, trying to
run off the stage but Harley shot her in the thigh, causing everyone in the strip club to stop moving as Harley yelled out.

“Next one who decides to run for it is going to get a big headache!”

Jack, his fingers painfully tight in the man’s hair, leaned close to Alvar’s ear, his red painted lips brushed Alvar’s ear. “That’s my wife you were ogling there, trying to get to sit on your lap...Alvar you said.” Jack laughed. “I’m a very jealous man. My plan had been just to shoot you...well...not you specifically...anyone related to Maroni...you know...just to show that everything the Red Hood gang is doing this evening, is Maroni specific. But...” Jack chuckled. “You were lucky enough to annoy me specifically this evening, so you are going to get special treatment.”

Jack slid the knife’s edge carefully up from Alvar’s throat and along his cheek up to the man’s forehead. Everyone in the club seemed to be holding their breath…

Jack giggled. “Now bear with me Alvar honey, I’ve never done this before….”

Jack pulled up on Alvar’s head his fingers using the man’s hair to pull the skin tight, at the same time that his knife cut through the flesh along Alvar’s forehead.

Alvar screamed.
Burning Down the House

Frost grimaced. From where he stood at the corner of the bar with the crate of molotovs at his elbow he had a pretty good view of Jack and Harley. He glanced over to Agatha who was sitting at the bar, sipping a lavender lemonade cocktail. Her long legs were crossed and her gun rested on the bar in front of her, her fingers lying across it casually. If Jack’s actions disturbed her, she gave no indication. Frost knew Agatha well enough by now to recognize that she wasn’t as relaxed as she looked; she was poised to spring into action at a moment’s notice, not that anyone else would recognize that but him. Even so, it still amazed him how the woman had convinced the bartender to make her a drink while Jack was scalping a man. Frost knew Agatha was charming, but he didn’t really understand exactly how charming the older woman was until he saw her sitting at the bar sipping that drink. Agatha definitely had a way of getting what she wanted, no matter the situation.

Alvar was screaming, his face covered in blood. The noise had been transformed from a human cry into something more primal, piercing. When Alvar had tried to reach up and grab at Jack, Harley had yanked her knife off her hip and swiftly used it to pin one of Alvar’s hands to his thigh.

There were a few of the strippers and a couple of the patrons who had looked away, who had reacted to Jack scalping Alvar with gasps, cries, some retching, but mostly everyone was frozen, shocked. No one had made a move for the door, no one picked up their phones. Most just waited to see what would happen next. Frost didn’t know what that said about the people in this joint, or maybe the patrons and employees’ reactions said more about Gotham than anything else.

Not everyone had remained still, Frost noted. One patron, some balding Gotham businessman here to take a load off and stare at some pretty naked women, had tried to make a dash for the door. The bald little businessman had reacted to the first slice of Jack’s knife across Alvar Maroni’s forehead by bolting up from his chair and making a run for it. Harley had reacted swiftly, swinging her gun around and pulled the trigger without hesitation. The man dropped, a bullet in his back.

Harley was the only one of the four of them to shoot her gun (not including the stripper she had shot in the beginning after Harley’s dance on the pole). After that, no one had tried to take a chance for the door, or to call the cops. (Frost attributed that more to the amount of other illegal activities that went on in here and the fact that several of these men did not want certain “significant others” to know of their extracurricular activities, while a few more well-known Gothamites didn’t want it known by the public that they frequented strip clubs. Frost didn’t know names necessarily, but there were a few faces here he recognized from the local news, a politician, a police captain...) Frost shook his head. All of these idiots probably figured if they kept quiet, did nothing, then they would walk out of here alive, thinking this little incident had more to do with the mob and the man that was being scalped than it did with them.

Frost sighed. They were all so wrong.

A few of them would make it out of here alive, but Frost was pretty confident a lot more of them were going to die. He wasn’t certain if he ought to be bothered by the fact that he wasn’t bothered with that realization.

* 

Jack finished with Alvar, wrinkling his nose in disgust and pulled his gun; he shot the man in the head to stop his screaming. Harley pulled her knife out of Alvar’s thigh, wiping it on the dead man’s knee as Jack shook his head.
“Okay, Harls--remind me to never to that again all right?” Jack shuddered, but then chuckled.

Harley made a face. “Agreed puddin.”

Jack wiped his knife on Alvar’s shoulder, slipped it back on his belt before he walked over to Harley and wrapped a hand around her waist to pull her against him. The crowd of people watched the two in stunned silence as the music continued to play through its loop of songs; Lana del Rey began to croon low and soft.

“I’ve been out on that open road
You can be my full time daddy, white and gold
Singing blues has been getting old
But you can be my full time baby, hot or cold…”

Jack, his eyes slightly hooded, his gazed filled with lust, brushed his nose against Harley’s with a bright smile before he caressed her lips with his. He swung her around, dancing with her for a moment to the smooth, creamy sounds of del Rey’s voice before he jogged over and hopped up on the stripper stage, his gun in one hand, reached down with his free hand to tug Harley onto the stage with him. He grinned wrapping his arm around her waist once more, gazing at her, moving slowly back and forth to the rhythm of the music, each of them holding their guns at their sides. Harley gazed up at Jack, her smile soft as she whispered.

“I love you.”

Jack swayed to the music and leaned down to kiss her cheek, his red lips brushing along her cheek to her ear. “I love you too pumpkin.”

He turned her around, held her back against his chest and wrapped his free arm around her while he pointed his gun out to the audience, Harley pointed her gun in the opposite direction, the two of them swaying to the song.

Agatha finished her drink and jumped off the stool, held her gun up as she swept the club, a small smile on her lips.

Agatha grinned. She really hadn’t had this much fun since she had been a Talon. (That had been such a strange time in her life, one that she had both hated and enjoyed.) Frost stayed where he was, his hand on the crate of molotovs; no one had yet to register what they were, their attention completely on the couple on the stage.

At the other end of the bar, Alvar’s cousin Dino had slowly walked himself backwards into the shadows of the club. He was heading toward the dressing rooms backstage. He had surreptitiously tried calling Sal, but had been met with silence; Sal’s message box was filled. Dino wasn’t sure who else to call. He had thought about Falcone, but Sal had told mentioned often enough that he didn’t want Falcone in his business. They may work for the old man, but that didn’t mean he needed The Roman to come rescue him. Sal had said the less he owed The Roman, the better. Dino figured his only recourse was to get the fuck out of here because he just had a gut feeling, this wasn’t going to end with just Alvar’s death. While all the attention was on the two nut jobs on the stage, Dino slipped into the dressing rooms and out the back.

“All right boys and girls!! Now that the floor show is over, I’m here to let you know that as leader of the Red Hood, I’ve declared everything owned by Sal Maroni to now belong to me. AND since I’m new to the mob business, I’ve decided to make a few…downgrades…close a few shops…downsize
“Harley, pumpkin, I could use a cigarette,” Jack murmured to his wife.

Harley giggled and spun around in his arms. She pulled open Jack’s jacket, caressed his chest, drew Jack’s attention for a moment as she pressed her hips close and pulled the package of cigarettes out of his inner coat pocket. The lighter was with the pack of cigarettes; she slipped it out, licking Jack’s chin as she did so.

Jack grinned while glancing once more at her. She pulled out a cigarette, placed it between her lips before she flicked the lighter’s flame to life. Jack licked his lips watching her and for a moment the people around him—his victims—were forgotten as he gazed lustfully at his wife while she cupped the lighter flame with one hand and held it to the cigarette. Harley took a couple of puffs. She finally took a deep drag on the cigarette before taking it out, the cigarette stained red with her lipstick, and placed it between Jack’s lips. She smiled at him before leaning close to him, blowing a stream of white smoke out with a slow breath. The smoke flowed sensually from her mouth, drifting over Jack’s lips and chin.

Jack grinned at her as he took a drag on his cigarette. He reached up to take it out from between his lips, flicked a few ashes onto the stage floor before he leaned down to kiss Harley. He kissed her hard, his tongue sliding into her mouth at the same time as the smoke drifted from between his lips.

Harley made a soft sound of want as she reached up with her free hand, grabbed the back of his neck. She pressed her fingers into his thick hair and stood on her tiptoes as she kissed him hungrily.

Harley bit at his lips and tongue, flicking the tip of her tongue over his lips before she took a step back, dragging her hand from the back of his neck, down over his front with a brief caress over his crotch.

Jack grinned at her taking another drag on his cigarette; his gun hand never once wavered from its aim into the club. He smiled wide, smoke flowing from between his teeth as he turned back to the patrons.

“As I was saying: I’m closing The Hairless Cat down.”

A few of the strippers made noises of protest, and there was also a low muttering among the patrons (which Jack found utterly hilarious that despite him scalping a man, a few had enough balls to be upset at him for closing a strip club!) Finally one man stood up. He was at least six feet four, wearing jeans, a t-shirt, and despite the humid Gotham summer weather, he wore a leather jacket and a bandana wrapped around his head; a few greasy locks of blonde hair hung from underneath the bandana.

“Who the fuck do you think you are, ya little fruit, coming in here killing that shit,” (here he pointed at Alvar’s body) “and messing up the show? I paid to see some girls strip, not to get caught up in some Gotham mob shitshow! Take your bitch and let some of the girls get back to stripping!!”

The man turned around to the club, clearly hoping for some support, but the club patrons remained quiet, leaving only the sounds of del Rey to fill the silence. Jack grinned as the man turned back to face Jack clearly thinking his much larger size would be enough to intimidate Jack, despite Jack being armed. Jack sighed with annoyance. “I just told you sweetheart–Red Hood and don’t ever call my wife a bitch.” The jovial tone to Jack’s voice dropped to a gravelly snarl on the last words of his sentence.
The biker sneered. “You look like some piece of fruit cake. That chick can’t be your wife.”

The man laughed. “Toss her down here, I’ll show her what a real man is like in the sack.” He turned to look around at the club goers again, but was again met with silence instead of the laughter he had hoped.

Jack frowned. Harley turned to look at him and Jack shook his head sadly. “I really can’t stand homophobes or idiots. This man is clearly both.”

Jack smiled back at the man below, showing all of his teeth. For the first time since he spoke up, the biker paled, looking unsure of himself. Jack’s eyebrows rose a millimeter, barely noticeable, but in the next second real fear flashed through the man’s eyes.

Jack chuckled. “Oh, I guess you just now realized that you fucked up.”

Jack raised his hand and pulled the trigger on his weapon, shot the man in the face. The smile on the Red Hood leader’s lips widened slightly. A few of the women (and men) screamed until Jack snarled and fired another round into the ceiling.

“All right, enough!” He rolled his eyes. “Does anyone else wish to file a complaint?” Jack looked around. “No? Well, then, that’s the big business announcement. I have a few other places to visit tonight so...ciao sweetlings! Oh and can I get someone to ah...I don’t know...cover up these boys and take that young woman into the back and patch her up?” Jack smiled. One of the waitresses hurried over with a tablecloth, staring at Jack as she tossed it over Alvar. Another young woman did the same to the biker, both of them staring at Jack and Harley with clear fear.

Jack spun Harley around and took her hand before the two of them walked off the stage. “You might as well finish up for the evening,” Jack called out motioning to the strippers at the far end of the stage.

*

Agatha walked over to Frost and pulled out one of the molotovs from the small crate.

“You ready big boy?”

Frost nodded with a smile at her.

*

Jack and Harley approached Frost and Agatha as they both slid their weapons back into holsters. Jack walked over to the bar and slipped onto one of the stools, tugging Harley onto his lap. The music had changed to Sky Ferreira “Red Lips.” The music played for a bit until one of the dancers slowed returned to the stage, followed by a couple more as it became clear that neither Jack nor Harley were going to shoot everyone else.

At the bar Jack motioned at the bartender. “Can you make me two black russians?”

The man nodded mutely. It only took him a minute to mix the drinks. Agatha and Frost moved closer.

Agatha frowned. “Jackie dear, what are you doing?”

Jack grinned. “Element of surprise.”
He sipped his drink, kept his arms around Harley who giggled. “Jack you’re terrible!”

Jack smiled. “It’s all a power move my sweet, all a power move.”

Jack took another couple of sips of his drink, kissing Harley behind the ear before he stood up. “All right Auntie, Frost--we have other places to be tonight!”

Jack walked to the door with Harley, Frost, and Agatha following. He turned pulled out his lighter, slipped one of the molotovs out of the crate that Frost had picked up and carried over, pulled out one for Harley and another for his aunt, handing them out like party favors.

He smiled brightly. “All right ladies, ready?”

Harley giggled. “Sure thing puddin.”

Agatha shook her head with a smirk. “Always have to make a production out of something simple don’t you Jackie?”

Jack laughed. “What fun is life without a little theater?”

Jack pulled out his lighter and swiftly lit the rags hanging out of each molotov. The fire burst to life in an instant before Jack turned in one graceful move and tossed the bottle into the room toward the stage. Harley did the same, aiming for the chairs around the stage while Agatha aimed for the bar.

The results were instantaneous. The bottles hit the floor, one hit the stage and Agatha’s shattered a couple of open bottles of liquor along the bar counter. The molotovs shattered before anyone realized what was happening, the fire burst to life and almost immediately began to burn bright and viciously. Jack, Harley and Agatha each grabbed more molotovs, Jack ready to light the rags of the bottle, which came alight in seconds, the three of them throwing their bottles at the same time in three different locations to the sound of screams as the fire, thanks to the liquid contents and the tar inside, stuck and burned, engulfing everything around the shattered bottles and spreading quickly.

Jack started laughing as the placed burned. He lit the last two bottles in the case that Frost was carrying. “Just throw the whole thing in Frost.”

Frost shrugged and tossed the crate with the last two molotovs into the club. Already there were several people on fire, the flames licking up the walls and along the floor.

Jack was pleased to note that the fire alarms didn’t go off and if there was a sprinkler system in the place, it didn’t seem to work.

The alcohol behind the bar caught when Agatha’s second throw had hit several other bottles along the back wall, shattering them along with the molotov. The bartender screamed as the flaming liquid hit him. Jack grabbed Harley by her upper arm.

“Oh well! Those molotovs were stronger than I thought they would be! Come on!”

The four of them hurried out of the strip club with Jack turning around and yanking the door closed, already hearing the sounds of fists against the door.

Jack laughed and grabbed Harley. “Wonder if they’ll figure out the door isn’t locked in time?”

The four of them ran for the car with Jack and Harley chuckling.
Frost turned left, watching as Jack and Harley drove in the opposite direction. He frowned slightly.
Agatha smiled reaching over to lay her hand on his thigh. “They’ll be fine.”

Frost nodded. “Yeah, I know.”

Frost glanced sideways at Agatha as he drove. “I keep meaning to ask you Aggie.”

Frost was the only one in the world who could get away with calling her Aggie, Agatha thought with a smile...except maybe Jack who had called her Aunt Aggie a few times.

She smiled squeezing his leg. “What is it honey?”

Frost frowned. “I know part of why you came back was to protect Jack from the Owls but...this…”
Frost indicated with his head, his eyes, all of Gotham. “What he’s doing...the crime...the murder, arson…”

Agatha smiled with a lifted, perfectly arched eyebrow. “Why do I not stop him?”

Frost nodded. “I mean, I have my own reasons, but...I was just curious…”

Agatha leaned back in the seat, took a deep breath. “My being part of the Owls...it wasn’t my choice really. I...didn’t see another way for myself. I just didn’t want that for Bruce and Jack...especially Jack. He has always been delicate. I knew that from the start, and he seemed more so after his parents’ death. If I could have, I would have been there for him, but…” Agatha shook her head. “But I can now. This...what he is doing...it’s his choice Jonny…” She stretched her legs out. “Good. Bad. Right. Wrong. It makes it all sound so black and white when in reality, everything is in shades of murky grey. Jack is doing what he feels is right. Right for him and Harley...Bruce is doing what he sees is right. I guess I’m supporting Jack over Bruce simply because I understand Jack better.”

Frost nodded. “Yeah...I can get that.”

Agatha smiled and rubbed his thigh.

* 

Across town Jason slipped off his motorcycle carefully. His bike, a black Kawasaki Ninja ZX-10R, was his pride and joy, the first thing he bought himself after the gang's first successful job. It was his baby and it was damn fast. With some of his tweaking, he had improved both its acceleration and top speed.

As Jason stepped off the bike, he moved carefully. He wore a backpack that contained half a dozen molotovs in it and the constant jingle in the backpack was making him nervous. Roxy pulled up beside him on her own bike, a MV Agusta F4 1000 R, red and green; was a beaut he thought, as he watched her ease off her bike. They had gone shopping together, purchased their bikes on the same day. She moved carefully, also wearing a backpack, also filled with molotovs. Jason carefully pulled out a folded up piece of paper from the front pocket of his jeans and looked at the addresses he had written there.

Roxy walked over slowly to stand beside Jason, her hands in the pockets of her jacket. She looked around the area. It was quiet, only one car having driven by in the last minute or so. This area was mostly businesses now closed and this late at night (or early in the morning) there was no traffic to speak of except the two of them. She returned her attention to the building in front of her. The building was an old brick building from around the 19th century, the home to a large pawn shop owned by Sal Maroni called: “Gotham Cash House.”
Roxy frowned at the sign. “Yep, this is the place. Maroni owned the two adjacent buildings too right?”

Jason nodded. “Yeah…” He looked at the paper. “That drug store…” He pointed at the building across the street. “And that dry cleaner.” He grinned glancing sideways at Roxy. “You ready?”

Roxy nodded. “I’ll be glad to get some of these off my back.”

Jason laughed. “Me too.” He turned around and opened up one of the bags on the back of his bike and pulled out a hammer. Roxy gave him a curious look as Jason smiled crookedly. “Just in case we can’t pick the locks.”

Roxy laughed.

*

In another part of Gotham, Victor Zsasz straightened up his tie as he eyed the place in front of him. He wrinkled his nose with a glance at Duela who looked as if she had smelled something sour.

“You smell it too?” Zsasz asked her.

She nodded. “Yeah, smells like rotten eggs.”

Zsasz sighed. “Guess that means we’re in the right place.”

Duela nodded. “So what do we do?”

Zsasz smiled. “You light ’em, I’ll toss them through the door. Simple as that.”

Duela shrugged with a smile. “Simple as that.”

Zsasz nodded. “It’s a meth lab, should light up nice and quick.”

“Like explode?” Duela asked. Zsasz shrugged and said, “Maybe--we should move after the first couple of molotovs.”

Duela chuckled. “Hey, you wanna get coffee after this?”

Zsasz frowned. “I really…”

Duela made a face at him. “Friends...friends getting coffee.”

“Oh.” Zsasz blushed. “Yes, coffee sounds nice.”

*

In the Fashion district, Alex, who was parked a little ways down the street from the credit union owned by Maroni, turned to look in the backseat of the SUV at Thea and Trope. The street was mostly quiet since it was after one a.m. on a weekday. Alex had parked by a couple of other cars before he shut the SUV down. The tinted windows made the interior of the vehicle even darker, but there was a dim glow coming from the back seat.

The two women were sitting close together, both with laptops on their laps, both dressed in black, one with pink hair, one with purple. They worked together efficiently, their eyes moving at the same speed back and forth as they read something on their computers, their fingers moved at equal speed on their keyboards. Alex had no idea what they were doing, only that they were transferring every
Alex turned back around, picked up his phone. “You ladies mind if I turn on some fucking music?”

Together in unison they both said with a soft murmur. “Sure, go ahead.”

Alex glanced at the girls in the rearview one more time; their eyes had never left their computers. He shook his head gliding through his music library until he found something he liked and turned the volume on his phone up.

The sounds of Daft Punk “Human After All” filled the SUV as Alex watched the street, tapping his foot in time to the music and hoping Alice was sleeping peacefully.

Trope suddenly spoke up. “Hey...what is this?”

Alex turned around. “What?”

Trope looked up meeting Alex’s eyes. “I just found something interesting in one of the traffic light computer systems.”

Alex frowned. “Define interesting?”

Trope glanced at Thea and grinned. “Apparently someone has been hacking into the system too, but they left a little monitoring device there for using the traffic cams.”

Alex frowned. “Really? Who on earth would do that?”

Trope grinned. “I’m not a hundred percent sure yet, but my guess? Batman. I mean, from all the footage and the news, his stuff is pretty high tech and I can’t be sure, but it looks newly installed. I’m guessing it's just a camera, sorta like the ones that take your picture if you run a light, but this one looks like it just turns on and sends images...but I can’t…” Trope was suddenly distracted.

“Batman?” Alex frowned, skeptical.

Trope suddenly snarled. “Fuck! Damn thing was boobie trapped!”

Alex looked confused. “What?”

“I tried to hack into it, but as soon as I did the damn thing did some sort of feedback loop and burned itself out!” Trope growled.

Thea put her hand on her partner’s arm. “Hey, it's okay.” She leaned in and gave Trope a kiss at her corner of her mouth. Trope smiled at Thea then sighed. “I should’ve known something like that might happen.”

Thea tsked. “Honey, you couldn’t have known about that.”

Trope made a face.

Alex muttered again. “Batman?”

Trope glanced up again. “I thought of him because he has all those gadgets...at least that's what they say on the news about him...and if I was a vigilante I might try to hack the traffic cams. Certainly would help if you’re chasing someone and you lose them. Except that means Batman has to have a partner...someone to feed him the info...I don’t think he could hack into the cams and drive at the same time...”
Thea laughed, put her arm around her partner’s shoulders and yanked her close for a hug and another kiss. “Trope, you sound like one of those Batman conspiracy theorists.”

Trope giggled rubbing her nose against Thea’s. “Yeah, guess I do.”

Alex looked between the two of them. “So…are you fucking done with the transfer or what?”

The two women beamed at Alex. “All done.”

Alex grinned with a slow nod. “Great, let’s burn this fucker down.”

* 

Roxy let out a half-laugh, half-exclamation of surprise at how swiftly the bottles burst into flames. It only took the two of them less than fifteen minutes to have all three buildings fully engulfed in flames.

Jason laughed. “Okay, that was cool.”

Roxy grabbed his arm. “You know, I didn’t think I cared much about fire, but I think I might have a little arsonist in my soul.”

Jason pulled his arm away from her only to put it back around her shoulders and give her a squeeze. “Yeah, I think I might have a little arsonist in my soul too Rox.” He kissed her on top of her head giving her one more squeeze. “We better get going before someone calls the fire department. Though…” He squinted in thought. “Maybe toss one more molotov…” Jason chuckled.

Roxy turned to walk back to her motorcycle. “Hold on, let me get my phone--I want a picture of your throwing the molotov.”

Jason grinned. “I knew you wanted me.”

Roxy made a rude noise that devolved into a laugh. She crouched down by her bike, pulled her phone out of side bag and hurried back over just as Jason lit another molotov.

He glanced sideways at Roxy. “Ready?”

She nodded and he threw just as Roxy snapped his picture. The bottle hit the side of the already burning building, smashing against the old brick. The weathered wood trim around the window caught fire, along with large patches where the tar had stuck to the brick to burn. Roxy laughed with a glance down at her phone. “That was perfect…” She looked up again about to say something to Jason when movement out of the corner of her eye caught her attention. She saw a long, black car whip around the corner of the building a few blocks up the street.

“SHIT! Jason!!” Roxy pointed before she took off at a run for her bike.

Jason, who had been watching the fire for a few more seconds, turned, saw the car; a long, dark shape barreling down the street. He cursed. “Fuck!”

He turned to race toward his bike as the Batmobile picked up speed, racing down the street toward them, a dark shadow bearing down like a demonic presence.

* 

Batman had been driving along lost in thought. Dick had taken to his training with a dedication that impressed him. The young man had been asking about going out with him, but he had to give the
young man credit; he wasn’t pushing, just inquiring and when Bruce put him off, Dick would simply train harder. Batman was thinking perhaps it was time to let the boy go with him when he heard the first reports over the radio about a fire. He had decided to check it out since he was in the neighborhood.

The Batmobile’s sensitive equipment had detected the smoke, but when Batman had turned the corner he had seen three buildings ablaze. But what had really drawn his attention were the two people silhouetted in the fire’s glow. He had clearly seen one of them throwing something at one of the already burning buildings.

Batman snarled. “Arsonists.”

For a moment he wondered if it was Garfield Lynns, but that was unlikely; there were two of them here, and they were on motorcycles. Just plain, ordinary arsonists.

Batman grinned with a hard set to his jaw.

As he raced down the street, Batman realized he had a choice. He could remain to do what he could with the buildings, or catch those two arsonists. He frowned for only a moment before he hit the gas, making the vehicle to jump forward, picking up speed.

*

Roxy’s motorcycle roared to life, Jason’s doing the same a second later beside her. She glanced at Jason with a grin. “Meet back at the park?”

Jason winked at her as he yanked his red helmet over his head. “I have one of the apartments in the back of the ‘Whip-It’ ride, wanna watch a movie and...who knows?”

Roxy grinned. “You’re on, Hellspawn.”

Roxy hit the gas, her bike rocketing forward. Jason watched her go for a moment with a grin before he turned to see the Batmobile closing quickly. He hit the gas and his motorcycle lunged forward like a caged animal let free. Jason yelled with excitement. “FUCK YEAH!!”

*

Batman hissed when he saw the bikes take off. They accelerated rapidly. He wasn't sure that his vehicle could keep up with the smaller, faster, more maneuverable vehicles, but he was going to try.

“Note to self...” he said out loud. “Work on making the Batmobile faster.”

*

Jason caught up to Roxy, maneuvered alongside her. They both looked back to see the Batmobile in pursuit. Jason grinned, wishing Jack was here; their leader would have loved this Jason thought, but at least he was going to have a story to tell the gang: getting chased by Batman. He grinned brightly as he motioned at Roxy. A two-way coming up. He motioned at her for them to split up. She nodded giving him a quick thumbs up. Batman couldn’t follow them both.

The two of them increased their speed more, rpm’s moving into the yellow as they split at the two-way, Roxy heading left, Jason right.

*
Batman snarled, they were splitting up and moving faster! He took a breath, counted to three and turned the wheel to the left.

*

Jason looked over his shoulder and hissed. The Bat was following Roxy. The ninja’s tires screeched as he pulled on the break lever, spun around and headed back in that direction. There was no way he was going to let the Bat catch Roxy. Just as he was trying to think what he should do, he realized…

...he still had one molotov in his backpack!

Jason hit the gas and the bike leapt to his call, the front wheel coming up off the pavement for a moment as Jason sped to help Roxy.

*

Roxy looked behind her and cursed. Batman was behind her and gaining speed. Her bike was fast and she thought it would be faster than a car, but clearly the Batmobile was something special and she had never actually tried to outrun a determined pursuer while she drove a motorcycle before; all of her experience had been a little less tense. She pushed her bike as hard as she could when she glanced in her mirror, her eyes widening as she saw Jason racing up behind the Batmobile, but remained on the car’s far right.

Jason grinned as he jerked his bike out on the side of the road so he could drive alongside the vigilante’s vehicle.

Jason slipped one arm out of the backpack’s strap, then the other, kept himself steady with experienced balance as he pulled his hands from the handlebars to whip the backpack around and yank out his last molotov. He dropped his backpack, letting it get yanked away from him by the wind as he pulled his lighter out from his front pants pocket to light the rag on the bottle. His motorcycle had slipped back without him actively giving the vehicle fuel; his right hand slammed down on the right handlebar. He twisted, gave the bike fuel, and forced the bike forward, almost even with the vigilante, barely visible through the tinted windows of his unique car. Jason let out a barking laugh as he threw the lit molotov at the Batmobile.

As soon as the bottle crashed against the car’s windshield, Jason leaned forward, grabbed the handles of his bike and twisted on the gas to its fullest.

Roxy grinned when she saw the flames explode across the front of the car. She hit the gas just as Jason came up alongside her. She gave him a thumbs up and Jason laughed returning the gesture, the two of them zipping off into the Gotham night.

*

Batman cursed as the glass exploded into fire, sticking to the car and blinding him as the fire covered the entirety of his windshield. He was forced to pull over; the fire sticking to the windshield made it impossible for him to see and the speed was just adding to the flames as he yanked the car to the side of the road, slamming on the brakes with a loud squeal. He got out of the car watching as the two bikers sped off and cursed silently to himself.

“Another note to self...add some sort of fire extinguisher to the outside of the Batmobile.” He muttered. “And find a way to add a flipping motorcycle.”

*
It was nearly three in the morning as Jack drove the Audi R7 along the back road while Marilyn Manson sang “Cry Little Sister.” Harley leaned back in her seat smiling in contentment as Jack drove with his left hand on the wheel and his right hand resting on her knee. Jack finally pulled the car to a stop, driving up along a guard rail following it to a round clear area big enough for a car to park. He turned off the engine, but left the car’s electric systems on, the music playing softly letting Manson continue his song. Jack had driven them outside the city, along a road with no streetlights and virtually no traffic. They were actually fairly close to the Wayne estates, having driven up to a little used road that had run past the house. Jack had only glanced at the manor once, but never said a word.

Harley had frowned when she saw the manor, but said nothing as they quickly drove by.

Jack had sent Frost and Agatha home after they had finished up at the docks, leaving several warehouses that belonged to Maroni burning. It had been quite beautiful he thought, watching all the destruction up close, but that had given him an idea, which was why Jack had driven them here.

Harley leaned forward to look out the windshield. “Where are we puddin’?”

Jack smiled. “Come on, I’ll show you.”

He turned the stereo up a pip or two before he stepped out of the car, leaving his door open. Harley watched him for a moment as he walked to the front of the car and leaned back against the hood. The night air was cool, a nice reprieve before the hot, humid summer day that would be coming.

Harley frowned staring at him for a few seconds before opening her door to follow. Though few lights were up here, the car’s pearlescent blue caught what little light there was and reflected it back in an almost eerie shine.

“So what are we…” she started to ask as she came around the front of the car, but Jack only pointed. Harley turned. They were parked at an elevated point above Gotham. The view was spectacular with the entire city laid out before them. But now she saw what Jack had wanted to show her. From where they were standing, not only could they see all of Gotham, but they could see the fires burning everywhere, every place a member of the Red Hood gang had hit was burning in bright reds and oranges, black smoke blending into the evening sky accompanied by the lights of a few fire trucks and police cars.

Harley leaned against the hood next to Jack.

“Wow,” she said softly. “It’s beautiful.”

Jack chuckled. “Wow indeed. After this baby, I’m going after Falcone...starting with that damned Ace Chemicals front of his...show him what happens to someone who takes what belongs to me.”

Harley smiled. “Bet that will be an even bigger fire.”

Jack glanced sideways at her with a grin.

They were both quiet for a few moments, watched the burning.

Jack laughed softly. “You know what’s funny Harley?”

Harley turned to look at her husband with a gentle smile. “What’s funny puddin’?”

“Bruce. This would anger him, what I’m doing, even though--in my own way--I’m doing good.”
Jack smiled as he reached into his jacket to pull out his cigarettes. Harley waited while Jack pulled
out the cigarette from the pack, placing it between his lips. She watched intently, the way Jack’s red lips looked around the cigarette, the way he flicked the lighter to lift, holding the flame to the cigarette, his other hand cupped around the flame as he lit it, taking a deep drag once he had the cigarette burning. He leaned back as he held the smoke in his lungs for a few seconds before letting it go. Harley felt a warm ripple rush through her body. He looked so sexy she thought, smoking, the way his lips wrapped around the cigarette, his sharp profile, the way he held the cigarette between his gloved fingers. She smiled. She loved him so much.

“Bruce has always been about law, order, goodness, doing the right thing, but you know, like he can somehow make up for what happened to our parents with good deeds. And you know Harls? Sometimes that just isn’t enough. What I’m doing right now? Going after Falcone, burning away any and all traces of Maroni’s greasy fingerprints on Gotham...ultimately destroying all of it and putting myself in their place...it’s a good thing. Hell, I’ll be doing more good than Bruce ever will. You and I will be better criminals than any of them. We’ll bring a kind of control to the criminal elements of Gotham...We can make sure there is a different sort of control in Gotham.” Jack took another drag letting the smoke slowly ease from his lips and nostrils. “We’ll give Gotham something new, something it really needs.” Jack hissed. “Something Bruce in all his good works will never be able to do, bring a sort of order to Gotham...a level of control that the mob never had or even tried to impose.”

Jack took a hard, aggravated drag on his cigarette. “Never could make Bruce see things the way I do. He was always so sure he was right and I was just fucking crazy.”

Jack’s voice dropped to a whisper. “Guess we’ll see who’s the crazy one.”

Harley laid her hand on Jack’s thigh. Neither of them said anything for a while, just watched the fires burn in Gotham.

Harley watched her husband as he stared out at Gotham and at the fires they had started, his expression both angry and with an undercurrent of sadness. She could see it around his mouth, and his eyes, the hurt he was still carrying because of his brother. She wondered briefly if Jack would ever be able to fully separate himself from Bruce. He was desperate (even if he would never admit it aloud) for his brother’s love and approval. That was all he wanted and when he couldn’t have it, when he knew he would never be able to see the world like Bruce, never fit into Bruce’s worldview, Jack pushed him out, away as far as he could from his brother and his ideals.

Harley pushed herself up from the hood and walked back around to the car’s interior. Jack frowned watching her then jumped slightly when Harley turned the headlights on. He turned round to look through the windshield, but he could only vaguely make out her moving shadow. He heard her flipping through music until she found one she liked. She came back around, the music playing again and smiling at Jack. He heard the beginnings of Lana del Rey’s “Burning Desire” begin to play.

“Harls, what are you doing?” Jack asked watching her with a slight frown as she stepped in front of him.

“I’m going to put you in a better mood.” Harley purred as she walked just a short distance in front of the car so that she was illuminated by the headlights. She smiled at Jack as she ran her hands up her sides and into her hair, threading her fingers through her blond hair as she lifted it up and let it go while doing a slowly spin, her hips weaving back and forth as she danced to the music. She closed her eyes, pressed her teeth into her bottom lip as she moved opening her eyes to slits to watch her husband.

Jack scooted over so he leaned between the headlights and grinned as he brought his cigarette to his mouth. His wife was fully clothed, but his eyes traveled down her body as if she was naked. He
smirked and took a drag on his cigarette as Harley stopped her spin to face him.

Harley pointed a toe to the ground, bending her leg slightly as she turned again, weaving her hips while she let her jacket slip down her arms. She caught it with one hand and spun the jacket over her head with a giggle.

Jack laughed happily watching her, smoke slowly flowing from between his lips and out of his nostrils as he chuckled.

Harley wrinkled her nose at him with a wide smile and tossed her jacket at him. Jack snatched it out of the air before laying it over the car’s hood behind him with a chuckle. He turned back to watching her and gave her a wolf whistle.

Harley winked at him as she tugged her shirt out from her slacks before she ran her fingers up the middle of her torso, slowly swayed her hips back and forth. She kept her eyes on Jack as she gradually unbuttoned each button of her blouse, making the slow reveal of her skin tantalizing, until the silk top hung open showing off the red lace bra she was wearing underneath.

Jack crossed an arm over his chest, tucking his hand under his arm and rested his elbow on his upper arm holding his cigarette to his lips while he watched her intently. He loved watching the sway of her hips, the silky fabric falling open to reveal her pale skin, the red cloth bright against her flesh. His blue eyes were intense as his gazed at each movement of her body, each sway of her hips, each turn, and her skin as it was exposed to the night air. Her skin was almost incandescent in the headlights.

Harley rolled her shoulders, sliding both hands down her hips, swaying to the side so Jack could watch while she slowly pulled the side zipper down over the roll of her hip. Harley pulled her slacks wide, but didn’t pull them down as she mouthed the words to the song rolling her back so that the thrust of her chest caused the sides of the blouse to fall away. She used just the tips of her fingers, gliding over the tops of her breasts to her shoulders. She gradually pulled the fabric of the blouse off her shoulders swaying her arms in a way to let the cloth fall down her arms.

Jack pressed his lips together watching her, smoke rolling gently from his nostrils as his groin tightened; he shifted his hips. He was hard and the slacks he wore felt suddenly too confining as he gazed at his wife while she stripped. He took another drag on his cigarette, his gaze almost frighteningly intense.

Harley tossed the blouse to him (Jack grabbed it out of the air, his gaze never leaving her) before she grabbed her breasts, closing her eyes and rolling her head, shoving her breasts up as she arched her neck. Harley moaned softly before she mouthed the words to the song, her hands snaking down her torso to slowly rub between her legs.

“I drive fast, radio blares, have to touch myself to pretend you’re there
Your hands were on my hips, your name is on my lips
Over over again, like my only prayer…”

Jack worried at the side of his mouth with his teeth while watching her. His gaze was heated and intense, watching each move she made like a predator.

Harley moved in a slow spin until her back was to Jack. She grabbed the sides of her slacks with her thumbs and slowly, arching her hips, pulled them down her legs. She stepped out of the slacks, kicking them backwards toward Jack.

Jack swallowed. She was wearing a pair of black panties. He breathed a little heavier, and corrected
himself--she wore a black thong with little red hearts on the barely-there cloth. He took a deep drag on his cigarette as his eyes traveled down her legs. Harley, with her back still to him, stuck one leg out to the side, reached down to pull down the zipper of her boot before stepping out of it and then doing the same with the other leg.

She turned to face Jack, reaching behind her to unhook her bra, rolling her shoulders as she pulled the bra straps down her arms before tossing her bra to him.

Jack flicked the remains of his cigarette into the darkness at the same time he grabbed her bra out of the air.

Harley giggled doing a slow spin, swaying her hands in the air, her mouth slightly open, her tongue between her teeth.

Jack’s breathing was deep, his eyes roaming over his wife with clear lust as she stepped closer. He grinned at the tattoo under her breast, the others he could see now, dark against her pale skin, the flow of her hips, the hardness of her nipples. Harley licked her finger and reached out to trace her fingertip along Jack’s lips. She smiled at him, flipping her hair over her shoulder as she rolled her head, sliding her hands down over her bare breasts, then along her stomach to catch her panties with her thumbs and slowly glide them down her hips, past her thighs before she let them drop below her calves. She stepped out of them, at the same time dropping her arms onto Jack’s shoulders. Harley smiled, her eyes traveling from his face where she could see the glow of want in his eyes, the way his lips were slightly parted, his breathing heavy...he wanted her. That feeling of knowing how much he wanted her, how much she could make him need her...a need and lust that equaled her own...inspired her. Even in the dark, the lights showed her the shadow of his trapped erection...Harley squirmed, feeling that swelling heat between her legs…

“Jack…” she hissed.

She dragged her hands along his chest before stepping back, rolling her now completely naked body to the music, dropping into a squat, her legs wide. Jack sucked in his breath before she rolled to a stand again, did another spin; the lights from headlights danced across her bare skin as she stepped back and leaned against Jack. She took his hands, which had been on the hood of the car and ran them up her torso to her breasts, her hands over his and pressed his fingers into her breasts.

Jack groaned softly, pressing his cheek to her face, the smell of her hair against his nose, his hands tight on her breasts. Jack pressed a kiss to her temple as Harley dragged his hands down from her breasts to her stomach. She slid his hands down between her leg, then rolled her hips as she pressed her fingers against Jack’s.

Jack licked her cheek with a smile, feeling the how wet she was between her legs. He had just begun to press harder, rubbing slowly when Harley broke away from his grip to spin around to face him. She purred, tugging his tie loose. “My puddin.”

Once she had the tie loose Harley worked at the buttons of his vest, then his dress shirt, tugging the shirt free of his slacks. She swung her hips side to side in a gentle sway to the music while working her way down his shirt, slipping the buttons through the holes until she was able to push the cloth aside and run her hands up the smooth planes of his muscled stomach and up over his chest (careful of his healing tattoo.)

She grinned and reached down to unbuckle his belt.

She leaned forward as the belt came loose, working the button and zipper of his slacks. She leaned close and licked his lips with a whispered, “Puddin.”
Jack smiled in response, felt a shudder of pleasure just hearing her utter her name for him. He grabbed her hips and pressing his fingers into her soft skin.

“Sweets,” he growled back at her.

Harley giggled, yanking his slacks open wide and slid her hand against his erection, made Jack groan while he squeezed her hips and dropped his head back. He squeezed his eyes shut as she grasped him perfectly. “Uhh...Harls...uh baby…”

Harley squeezed again before rubbing her hand up and down against his boxers, the heat of his erection transferring through the cloth as she squeezed again hissing. “Do you want me Jack?”

He thrust his hips just a little. “Yes baby...I want you.”

Harley grinned looking mischievous as she let go of him, grabbed his slacks and boxers and yanked them down, made Jack yelp in surprise.

Harley dropped to a squat, balanced herself easily on the balls of her feet as she ran her hands up his thighs to his hips. Her hands surrounded his erection as she looked up at her husband.

Jack leaned back on his hands against the car, pressed against the smooth hood of the car as he looked down at her.

She wrinkled her nose playfully at him before she flicked her tongue over the head of his erection.

Jack hissed with pleasure; that brief encounter with her tongue sent pleasant ripples running through his body.

Jack groaned. “Harley.”

Harley smiled leaning forward, her breath hot against his sensitive skin as she hissed. “I love you Jack. I love you…”

Slowly she wrapped her mouth around him, slid her tongue along the sensitive underside of his erection, reached up with one hand to wrap around his shaft, and pressed her other hand against his bare thigh to balance herself as she slowly sucked him into her mouth.

Jack gasped, his fingers squeaking against the car’s hood. Her mouth was warm, liquid and slippery as she rolled her tongue over him and slowly, gradually pulled her lips against his tender flesh. Her touch sent ripples and tantalizing shudders of pleasure to radiate through his body.

Jack panted as he looked down at his wife, watching her. Her eyes were closed as she rolled her tongue over the satin surface at the head of his erection, squeezing his thigh when she slowly sucked him into her mouth until her nose was pressing against his skin, her forehead touching his stomach.

Jack shuddered, groaning again. “Harley...uh...my Harley.”

Harley smiled around him in her mouth, slathering her tongue back and forth feeling the goosebumps race over his skin.

Jack groaned reaching down with one hand to stroke her face, dragged his fingers along her cheek, felt the way she hollowed her cheeks when she sucked, before he caressed his fingers into her hair. Harley moaned softly, the sound slightly muffled by having him in her mouth. Jack inhaled with a shudder, the warmth of her breath against his skin had Jack arching, cupping the side of her head as he leaned back against the car, the sound of gravel shifting under his shoes as he pressed up on the
balls of his feet. He let out a breath, panting, and his fingers twitching as Harley bobbed her head up and down over him slowly. She pressed her lips up the length of him. She stopped to suck, her tongue moving back and forth until she arrived at the head of his erection. She opened her eyes to smile at her husband as her tongue rolled slowly around the satin head.

Jack’s breathing was heavy as he looked down at her and said in a thick tone, heavy with want. “Come here baby.”

Harley flicked her tongue against him once more before standing up. Jack grabbed her around the waist, twisting around and lifting her up at the same time before he set her on the hood of the car. The car protested with a miniscule shift of tires and a groan from the hood, but Jack ignored all that as he positioned her on the hood. He grabbed one of her legs, holding the limb up, his hand on the underside of her knee. Harley set the heel of her other foot against the grill as Jack slid into her.

They both moaned as their bodies came together.

Jack gently laid her leg over his shoulder, placing his hands on either side of her head.

Harley giggled as the slope of the hood caused her to slip down a bit, meeting Jack, her breath coming in pants.

Jack grinned with a murmured, “I love you pumpkin.”

Harley reached up to run her hands down his front. “I love you puddin.”

Jack adjusted his hold before he started to move. He thrust into her slowly at first, moving with a steady rhythm, wanting to last as long as he could, enjoy her and her to enjoy him as long as possible. He wrapped his left arm around her leg, kissed the side of her knee. Slowly he dragged his other hand over her breasts, squeezed gently, pinched her nipple between his thumb and forefinger before he rolled the tips of his fingers over the sensitive surface of his nipple. Harley moaned, her eyes fluttered partly close. She reached up and dragged her nails along his stomach. Jack groaned and thrust a little harder, forced himself deeper into her.

Jack continued to drag his hand down along her stomach, felt her soft skin goosebump, and her muscles to contract at his touch as he made his way down to her sex. He cupped the mound of her sex, squeezed her soft skin while he continued to slowly thrust into her. His pelvis slapped against her in what Jack thought of as the most pleasant little smacking noise, then holding his position a moment, he collected himself before he thrust again.

Panting heavily Jack pressed the pad of his thumb between her intimate lips, immediately finding the swollen nub of her clitoris, wet, pulsing with the need of his touch. Harley jerked and hissed softly when he brushed his thumb over her. She wanted his touch so strongly, wanted to feel him stroke her while at the same time she wanted him to pound into her hard and fast.

Jack started to rub her clitoris with his thumb at the same time he was thrusting; the car shifted beneath them slightly causing Harley to giggle. She reached up to rub her hands over his stomach and chest again, then thrust her hips each time he rubbed his thumb against her, each time he thrust into her. Harley groaned. “Mm...my puddin…”

Jack groaned in response. He thrust harder, leaned forward he pushed back Harley’s leg to her shoulder. She gasped and wrapped one arm around his shoulders, then pulled him down to kiss her.
Her other hand smacked loudly against the car’s hood, spreading her fingers as she thrust up with her hips just as his rubbing sent her spiraling over the edge into a thrilling climax.

Her cries were muffled against Jack’s mouth as she slapped the hood of the car again with one hand, digging the fingers of her other hand into his shoulder and grabbed a handful of his jacket when she came.

Jack kissed her hard, pulled his hand away from her clitoris to reach up and grab a fistful of her hair, bit her bottom lip, her chin, then down to her throat. He thrust hard and fast until he groaned loudly, his body bending around hers as his climax rushed quickly through him. He cried out loudly and slammed into his wife, made the car bounce once or twice, but he didn’t stop; Jack needed to follow the rush of his orgasm to the end.

Harley whimpered, another ripple of orgasmic pleasure rolled over her body as she reached up and wrapped her arms tight around Jack, holding him to her, kissing him passionately as she rocked against him, her bare skin against the hood of the car squeaked when she moved. Jack continued to thrust into her, shuddering as his climax slowly ebbed, but his body felt keenly sensitive.

Jack pulled away to rub his nose against hers grinning. “You always know how to brighten my mood, pumpkin.”

Harley giggled, nudging his nose with hers. “I love you puddin, from now and forever.”

Jack smiled closing his eyes for a moment as he brushed his lips against her, enjoying the feel of her mouth against his, the warm, loose-limbed feeling after having sex, basking in the warmth of wanting to cuddle Harley close to him. “You and me against the world pumpkin.”

Harley smiled then shivered. Jack chuckled releasing her leg before he lifted her up. Harley wrapped her arms and legs around Jack as he lifted her carefully. He didn’t want to pull out of her; he wanted to stay buried in her forever. He held her, staring into her eyes and whispered.

“Never leave me Harley.”

She smiled gently, stroked his hair back, caressed his face, and let her fingers drop to trace his jaw. “I’ll never leave you Jack. You and me against the world, remember?” She ran her fingers along his jaw, dipping down to kiss her husband passionately, pulling away just enough to whisper. “You and me puddin, always.”

Jack smiled, searching her face. He never thought he would be the one, between him and Bruce, to to find someone, his partner, his best friend, the one person in all the world who truly loved him and who he truly loved in return. Someone who would follow him into the darkness without ever once doubting him. Just as importantly, he knew he would follow her wherever Harley went.

Jack reluctantly parted from her. He kissed her again, slowly, taking intense pleasure in the feel of her lips and tongue, wanting to bury himself in her, wrap himself in her arms, her fragrance, to feel that warmth, the safety of being with her. Jack bit her chin teasingly before he placed her gently on her feet. “Let’s go home, curl up in bed and watch the news reports sweets. Maybe have some ice cream?”

Harley smiled kissing Jack on the chin before she started to gather up her clothing. “That sounds nice puddin. Maybe we can take a bath together?”

Jack chuckled. “With lots of bubbles--sounds perfect.”

Jack’s smile was wide and gorgeous as he glanced one more time out at the fires in Gotham that
belonged to them.

*  

The following afternoon Falcone was having lunch on the balcony of his apartment. The afternoon was nice, not too hot, not too humid...yet. He had a wonderful view of Gotham and a very attractive companion, a young dancer named Gigi (though he was fairly sure that wasn’t her real name). She was a beautiful young woman with black hair so glossy that her hair almost shimmered. She was wearing a very tight, very short blue dress and a pair of heels that made her look as if she had legs for days.

Falcone smiled at her as he picked up the bottle of wine that sat on the table between them, a lovely Opus One Napa Valley Red Wine 2012, nearly two grand a pop.

Gigi twittered. “Oh Mr. Falcone, are you trying to get me drunk?”

Falcone smiled. “Maybe I am.”

Gigi began to laugh again, uncrossing and crossing her legs, which drew Falcone’s complete attention when he noticed movement inside his apartment. One of his bodyguards, a man named Austin with a build like a linebacker, had walked toward the door and answered it by pulling his gun. Falcone frowned. He couldn’t be sure with the sun reflecting off the glass, but it looked to be Pius, his capo. The two men spoke at the door for a moment before Austin motioned Pius inside the apartment directing Roger to stand with him as Austin made his way over to the balcony.

Austin slid the glass door to the side and stuck his head out.

“Sir, Pius is here. He says he has some news that you need to hear.” Austin looked uncomfortable to Falcone, which meant that Pius had already spilled whatever news it was that he had come all the way here to give him.

Falcone sighed and stood, buttoned his jacket as he did. “I shall be right back Gigi. Enjoy the wine while I’m gone all right?”

Gigi smiled at him with a nod as Falcone stepped through the door following his bodyguard.

*  

Pius stood in the middle of the living room pacing. The man was at least six feet tall, balding with the build that would make one think he was going to fat, but Falcone knew for a fact that the man was made of entirely muscle.

“All right Pius--what is it?” Falcone slid his hands into the pockets of his slacks and pulled out his lighter. Austin appeared at his side with a wood case, opened the lid to reveal the case was filled with Toscanello cigars. They weren’t expensive cigars, but they were the first he had started smoking when he was poor and working his way up the mob ranks. Their oaky flavor had always been his favorite, even when he had earned enough money to spend on more expensive smokes. Falcone pulled one out. Austin took the cigar after placing the box on the living room table and produced a cigar cutter seemingly out of thin air. He cut the end and handed the cigar back to Falcone who flicked open his lighter and took a few seconds to get the cigar burning.

Pius waited until his Boss was ready before he spoke. Once Falcone had the cigar burning nicely, the older man turned his attention to Pius.

“Did you hear about the fires last night in Gotham?” Pius asked.
Falcone nodded. “I didn’t pay much attention, but yes, yes I did see it on the morning news.”

Falcone blew out a long line of smoke.

Pius nodded before he continued. “Those fires were all Maroni properties—every last one of them.”

Falcone frowned. “What?”

“Someone purposely went through Gotham last night and burned every property owned by Sal Maroni. And I mean every property! I don’t know how they knew or who they are, but they didn’t leave anything! If Maroni was even associated with the property, whoever these people were, they destroyed it.”

Falcone snarled. “Where’s Sal?”

“No one can find him Boss. Apparently he’s been missing for a few days,” Pius murmured.

Falcone narrowed his eyes in thought. “Do we have any idea who did this?”

Pius looked down then muttered. “One of the dancers that was at the Hairless Cat said it was some man claiming to be the Red Hood. She said he was dressed in a suit with make up and had some blonde with him. She said he was good looking too and the girl was pretty...hot.” Pius swallowed.

Falcone stared at Pius, his cigar firmly held in his mouth, smoke slowly flowing from his lips and nostrils as he muttered around the cigar:

“Wayne.”

*

Two days later.

Jack, dressed only in his silk evergreen boxers, a pair of green and purple striped socks with the garters, and nothing else, sat at an old piano that the construction team Alex had brought in had found in some old storage building on the amusement park grounds. Jack had immediately had the piano installed in their bedroom where he had personally worked to clean it and tune it. Next to the piano on the floor was a set of tuning forks he had used to tune the piano himself.

He smiled, his fingers moving across the keys with elegance, his eyes closed as he played. His body moved slightly to the music, Rachmaninoff’s Concerto no. 3.

Harley was lying on the bed in a pair of pink panties with a matching pink sports bra, her hair loose around her shoulders as she colored in a coloring book, smiling as she listened to her puddin play the piano. She loved when Jack played; he was so talented. She set her crayon down, folding her arms over the coloring book and laid her head on her hands to watch Jack. The afternoon light, filtered by the curtain, made his skin glow softly. He was like a demonic angel she thought. Her demonic angel.

She sighed softly and admired how handsome her husband looked when his cell phone on the bedside table rang.

Harley pushed herself up and crawled on her knees, reaching for Jack’s phone while Jack continued to play. She hit the button answering with a smile. “Jack’s phone.”

“Hey Harley, how the fuck you doing?” Alex said with a smile in his voice.

Harley laughed, flopping back on her rear. “Hey Alex! What’s up?”
“I got a couple of fucking tickets here I thought you and Jack might get a fucking kick out of. I don’t know if Jack remembered that the Gotham International Car show is this weekend…”

Harley squealed. “YES!!”

Alex laughed on the other end. “I thought you guys might like these fucking tickets. I’ll bring them over to you guys in a few minutes then.”

“Thanks Alex! Jack will be so excited!” Harley squealed.

Alex chuckled. “You’re welcome. I thought he might be. See ya in a fucking minute or two.”

Harley laughed. “See you in a bit Alex.”

She hung up, hopped off the bed and walked over to Jack, wrapping her arms around his shoulders, pressing her lips to his ear while he played. He leaned back against her with a smile and arched his neck to gaze up at her.

“So what did Alex want that has you all excited sweets?”

“Alex got us some tickets to the international car show!” Harley said softly, but with excitement.

Jack stopped playing and turned around to face her. “Seriously?”

Harley grinned. “Yep! He’s going to be bringing them over in a little bit.”

Jack pulled Harley down onto his lap. “Oh, this will be fun. Just what we need, a date night!”

Harley smiled and kissed the tip of his nose. “Just what I was thinking puddin.”

Jack kissed one corner of her mouth, then the other corner. “And what’s even more fun pumpkin? We get to dress up!”

*

Later that evening.

Bruce was dressed in a black Armani suit, his hands in the pockets of his slacks, and smiled as he stood by the Alfa Romeo 4C Coupe watching as Dick, dressed in his own Armani suit, raced around the car in his excitement. This was their first outing as father and son…no, Bruce corrected himself. As teacher and student, friends, partners in crime fighting (eventually) and Dick was having a great time.

Bruce had to admit, he was having fun watching Dick race around inspecting the cars. For a moment Bruce was reminded of a time that he and Jack had come to the car show together, after their parents’ deaths.

They had been in their late teens. Bruce remembered Jack with his long hair pulled back in a messy bun, wearing a silver grey Armani suit with an obnoxious purple and red tie along with a matching vest, a dark purple shirt and a pair of black and white oxfords. Jack’s outfit had stuck out next to Bruce’s more traditional black suit, white shirt combo, but Jack had made the look work for him, drawing the attentions of both men and women.

Jack had been so excited, and not just to go to the car show. Jack, like Bruce had a “thing” about fast cars. It was one of the few topics Bruce and Jack could discuss together without the conversation devolving into a fight. Bruce frowned slightly. He missed those times, the two of them sitting on the
floor in the living room on the computer together, discussing cars...Going to the car show was one of the few times that he and Jack had gone out together without fighting, one of those rare shared interests that brought the brothers together. They had a good time that night, talking about cars...just hanging out, like brothers, without the ghosts of their parents between them, the hostilities between them...the fights, the arguments...Bruce’s fear for his brother’s mental health--all of that had been forgotten as the two young men enjoyed a topic they shared...cars.

And right now, with Dick showing an interest in the cars...Bruce smiled. It was almost like having Jack back.

Bruce frowned and wondered where Jack was right now. He had thought about trying to find him after the circus, but had talked himself out of it. Why was it so hard for him to just contact the one person in all of Gotham who he should have been close to? His own baby brother. Yet he had no clue where Jack was or what he was doing. Further, Bruce wasn’t certain what he would say or do if he knew how to contact Jack.

Bruce sighed. If he could, he would take back having Jack committed. He could understand why Jack had attacked that man. He understood damn it, but he had been so stupidly blind by...what? His sense of right and wrong? His fear for Jack’s mental stability? Or maybe because he knew, in the same situation, he might have reacted just as Jack had...Maybe it was because he felt as if he was walking a thin line between who he was, Batman...and losing it all.

Bruce closed his eyes for a moment, willing himself to let his dark thoughts go and just focus on right now...and Dick who was currently about to wave his arm off in his attempts to get Bruce’s attention.

Bruce chuckled and strolled over to see what it was that Dick wanted to show him.

* 

Falcone took a deep breath through his nostrils, calming himself. He planned on enjoying himself tonight, and, though no one was supposed to be able to purchase a concept car, he had made arrangements to purchase whatever car he wanted. Money talked. He smiled in delight, and it talked loud and clear. Tonight Falcone was going to put Wayne, the Red Hood, and whatever plans that little shit had in mind, out of his head and enjoy tonight with Gigi.

Falcone glanced at the young woman on his arm. She was drawing a lot of attention, which made him smirk. It was a lot of jealous attention. Gigi looked fantastic in a tiny, burgundy slip dress that was so short that young woman was only barely not showing off her black lace thong, which he knew she was wearing, but the rest of the dress made it clear she wasn’t wearing a bra at all.

Falcone grinned. He liked having the most attractive woman in the room, gathering the jealousy and ire of every man in the room. One of the main benefits of power and money.

Falcone and Gigi walked slowly down the walkway, stopping to gaze at a car here and there when Falcone’s attention was drawn to Bruce Wayne.

Falcone narrowed his eyes watching the man and the teenager who was with him. He wondered briefly if Bruce Wayne had any connection with what his younger brother was doing, but after a few seconds of watching the man, Falcone decided probably not. He could make things very difficult for Bruce Wayne if he wished it, but he didn’t see the profit in it. It was Jack Wayne he had a beef with...though Falcone wondered...would his brother be a soft spot he could exploit if Jack Wayne became too much trouble?

Destroying Maroni’s holdings was...annoying...but ultimately Falcone would recover…
Falcone frowned in thought...

*

Jack grinned as he walked in with Harley on his arm.

They were both in “disguises” for tonight. Harley’s disguise consisted of having her hair up in a messy bun, held in place by a couple of hair sticks. She had on a pair of thick, ombre tortoise shell and blue retro cat eyed glasses, a royal blue halter vest top that left her back and arms bare, and a pair of matching blue trousers with a pair of black heeled sandals. Her makeup was done in a winged black eyeliner and a smoky purple eyeshadow and her lips were done in a dark matte red lipstick. Jack’s disguise consisted of him wearing his hair parted on the side and slicked back, a pair of slightly tinted aviator style glasses, with a little rough on his cheeks and chin from skipping shaving that day. His outfit was also a little more casual than Jack would usually wear, a pair of black slacks, a white dress shirt (minus tie), wearing his aunt’s necklace and a light, almost baby blue jacket and a pair of brown, double monk strap oxfords.

Jack leaned close to Harley. “You know, I can’t remember the last time I came to the car show.”

Harley gave his cheek a quick kiss. “I’m glad that Alex thought about you when he got a hold of those tickets.”

Jack chuckled. “Yeah, Alex is a sweet guy even if he doesn’t want anyone to know.”

“So my sweets, shall we go look at some incredibly expensive cars?” Jack asked with a wide smile.

Harley laughed. “Let’s.”

*

The two of them weaved their way through the crowds. Tonight’s showing was not open to the general public. Tonight was only for special guests. (How Alex landed these tickets Jack could only guess). There were politicians, actors, musicians, artists, the super wealthy, anyone who was anyone and who happened to be in Gotham tonight was here. Some light music was playing in the background and wait staff moved around with trays of hors d’oeuvres and drink.

Jack snagged two champagne flutes off a passing tray, handed one to his wife as they slowly drifted toward the Rolls-Royce section where the car maker had nine new models on display. Harley, her arm hooked through Jack’s, gazed over the cars. There was a gentleman up on the dias by a large, long silver Rolls, the display spinning slowly showing all sides of the vehicle in question.

“This ladies and gentlemen, is the Rolls-Royce Phantom! Entering the New Phantom, you experience “The Embrace” of the world’s most luxurious motor car. The space enhances the sense of occasion and effortless entry as the patron settles in to the car. Once inside, “The Suite” redefines comfort and refinement from the newly sculpted seats…”

The man droned on. Jack started to turn away, but Harley tugged on his arm.

“Jack--look!” she hissed, trying to point without being noticed.

Jack followed the direction of her gaze and inhaled sharply too when he saw Falcone, whispering and kissing a woman young enough to be his granddaughter.

As if sensing eyes on him, Falcone glanced over. He frowned looking confused as he stared at them.
Jack chuckled and started to turn when he went cold.

Standing on the other side of the dais watching the rotating car was Bruce. He was standing with a young man of no more than sixteen or seventeen, dressed in a very similar Armani suit as the one Bruce was wearing. The young man had dark hair, a slight smile on his lips, and stood by the billionaire’s side. Bruce had his hand resting on the young man’s shoulders. He smiled down at the young man and squeezed his shoulder.

*

For a moment Jack’s memories rushed backwards. Memories of him and Bruce standing side by side, Bruce’s hand on his shoulder squeezing. Jack looked up at his brother with a smile, that feeling of happiness, acceptance, the love his big brother--the most important person to him--the one person whose love and respect he wanted beyond anything else…

Jack tensed.

*

Bruce, who had been talking to Dick looked up, surprise clear when he saw Jack glaring at him from across the car display. Even with the half-hearted disguise, Bruce knew his brother.

*

Falcone had grinned turning to Gigi. “I’m gonna buy…”

He stopped, his attention captured by a gorgeous blonde in a blue outfit and glasses. She was extremely sexy, easily as attractive as Gigi…he frowned, there was something familiar about the man she was with...

*

Harley glanced over toward Falcone to find him staring at her. He gave her a wink.

Harley muttered. “Oh this is just going swell.”
What's Yours is Mine

Jack frowned when he saw Bruce. He couldn’t help but stare at his brother. A confusing cascade of twisted feelings rushed over him; happiness, anger, betrayal...a hollow sense of loss.

For a moment Jack felt a spike of pleasure when he saw his brother. Jack hated to admit how much he missed Bruce, Alfred, the manor, being...home. It hurt deeply. He wanted so much to come back with Harley on his arm and to maybe...build a life with his brother being part of it. He wanted that more than he had been willing to admit. But those feelings of joy mixed with a deep sense of loss were quickly squashed when Jack got a good look at his brother’s expression. As usual, Bruce looked both concerned and angry. Jack hated that look, the expression that had been on Bruce’s face nearly all the time as they were growing up. Bruce never could quite decide how he felt about his little brother, Jack was certain.

Jack was also certain that part of Bruce hated him. Hated that Jack had never been the perfect little brother, a carbon copy of Bruce, of their father.

Jack quickly blinked back tears that were a mix of pain and anger.

Jack considered just skipping out on the show, taking Harley and heading home to the park, safe in his wife’s arms, to the one person in all the world that accepted him just how he was, who expected nothing from him, who trusted him implicitly through all the darkness, the blood and the violence. But Jack didn’t budge. He wasn’t going to let Bruce chase him off...not now, not ever.

Harley, who had stepped closer to Jack, her hand in his, wrapped her other hand around his arm as she glanced f Bruce, who was now clearly cutting his way through the crowd towards Jack. She felt the shift in Jack’s demeanor, the shift from loose relaxed to a stiff, almost frozen posture--not still from fear, but from something darker, more dangerous. She glanced at her husband’s face. Harley could see the way his blues eyes had a coldness to them...a shell that he was closing around himself to protect himself from his brother. That made Harley not just angry, but furious; furious that Jack felt the need to shut himself off, to protect himself from his own brother. Harley glared at Bruce as he walked closer while the teenager he had with him hurried along behind the billionaire to catch up.

* 

Bruce’s heart raced as he made his way through the crowd toward his brother and Dr. Quinzel. The sight of Jack had been a shock and he had thought for a moment about not approaching his brother, but Bruce found that he couldn’t stay away from him, that he had to speak with Jack. He felt a responsibility to his brother, to try his best to bring Jack home. The worst part was that he suspected Jack was involved with something illegal and that perhaps Jack was too far into something that he couldn’t get himself out of. Bruce felt that maybe Jack needed his help, needed him to show him the way out of whatever trouble he had himself in...out of where he was…

Bruce felt that as his older brother it was his responsibility to help Jack, maybe even bring him home. Alfred would expect no less from Bruce, to put an effort forward to heal the rift between them that had only grown wider the last year and a half.

Bruce stopped in front of Jack. The two brothers stared at each other, though it was Jack who spoke first.

“Hey Brucie, who’s the kid?” Jack sported a grin, but Harley felt his grip on her hand tighten ever so slightly.
Bruce’s lips curved upward into a smile as he motioned Dick forward next to him. “Jack, this is Richard Grayson--my ward.”

Jack’s eyebrows shot up, as did Harley’s. Jack snickered. “Ward? Are you serious?”

Bruce frowned. “Yes, his parents were…” Bruce dropped his voice to a whisper. “His parents were murdered, like ours Jack...I took him in, became his guardian.”

Jack glanced sideways at Harley before he snickered again. Dick looked between Jack and Bruce. Bruce’s lips tightened into a thin, stern line as he narrowed his eyes at Jack. Dick stepped forward and offered his hand as Bruce said a little more harshly than he intended. “Dick, this is my younger brother, Jack.”

Jack glanced at his brother and took Dick’s hand with a slow grin. “Hello, Dick...that’s a very unfortunate nickname. Dick…” Jack snickered.

Dick took a step back with a frown. “My parents used to call me Dick.”

Jack grinned. “Very unfortunate.”

Bruce sighed before taking a deep breath as if trying to calm himself before he continued. “Jack…”

Bruce reached out to lay his hand on his brother’s shoulder. “Why don’t you come home Jack, you and--and Harley. Alfred misses you. I miss you too.”

Jack laughed and edged his shoulder out from under his brother’s touch. “Really Bruce? But why?”

He gestured at Dick. “You got yourself someone new to be a brother to.”

Jack released Harley’s hand to step closer to Dick. Dick didn’t move as Jack looked down at him. “Someone to finally mold into the perfect little brother, to follow your every command like the word of God. Someone who will conform.” Jack grinned at Dick. The smile caused a shiver of cold to run down Dick’s spine as Jack put his hands on Dick’s shoulders, but he turned his ice blue gaze on his big brother. “Someone who will keep their head down, nose to the grind...someone who will follow The Bruce Wayne way.” Jack put his hands in the air, shaking them almost like “jazz hands” or a preacher gesticulating to the Almighty to emphasize his point. “Because--and you should take this to heart Dick…” Jack emphasized the “D” and the “k” of the teenager’s name as he grinned at him, then at his brother. “Because, anything else is wrong and just plain crazy.”

Bruce’s voice dipped into a snarl. “Jack, now…”

“Oh? What are you going to do Brucie? Send me off to boarding school? Throw me in the asylum again?” Jack’s smile was cold. “Better watch out Dick...get on Brucie’s bad side and you just might see the inside of Arkham too.”

“Jack, that’s enough,” Bruce said with steel in his voice. “I want you to come home. I do Jack, really. I want us to try and make things right.”

“Don’t you mean...your right? No thanks Brucie, I’m happy where I am. I have my wife and I have friends. I also have a new business venture that is going to be doing quite well, quite soon.” Jack grinned stepping back to put his arm around Harley’s shoulders. “You’ll be hearing a lot from me real soon Brucie, real soon.”

Bruce narrowed his eyes in concern. “What are you up to Jack?”
Jack grinned. “Oh, you’ll find out soon enough I’m sure.”

Jack blew his brother a kiss as he took Harley’s hand. “I need a cigarette.”

He didn’t give his brother another look as he walked away. Bruce watched him go with a frown creasing his features. Dick furrowed his brow. “That’s your little brother?”

“Yes,” Bruce confirmed softly.

“He doesn’t seem real happy with you and he seems a bit...off.” Dick pursed his lips.

“There is a lot of damage between us,” Bruce explained softly. “Years of damage.”

Bruce sighed and shook his head before his gaze settled on his ward with a faint smile. “Come on, let’s go look at some more cars.”

* 

Across from them Falcone had watched as Bruce Wayne walked up to the couple. He had just finished his negotiation with the representative here for Roll-Royce about purchasing the Rolls Phantom on display (money could get you anything you wanted, even cars not currently on the market). Falcone had just made all the arrangements to have the car pulled from the show and delivered to him by the next evening, when he frowned, staring at the younger man speaking with Mr. Wayne. There was something about him that seemed vaguely familiar, but he couldn’t place his finger on it. After another second on pondering the man his attention was diverted by Gigi who wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Can we go for a ride in your Rolls when you get it?” she asked with a flirtatious smile. “I’ve never done it in a Rolls before.”

Falcone smiled while he placed his hands on her hips. “Well, we are going to have to change that aren’t we?”

Gigi giggled and kissed him passionately.

* 

Jack and Harley stopped outside the building, moving off into the parking lot a little where he could smoke. Jack pulled out his cigarettes, slammed the package against the palm of his hand and yanked out the cigarette.

Harley frowned and took the cigarette from Jack. “You’re going to break it,” she said softly as she took his lighter from him as well.

Jack sighed and didn’t fight her, watching as she held the lighter up to the cigarette, cupped the flame with her hand as she puffed lightly on the cigarette to get the end lit before she gently placed it between his lips. Jack smiled at his wife, took a deep drag on the cigarette, and held it while looking up at the night sky. Even with the lights in the parking lot, some of the stars were visible.

“I’m sorry Harley,” Jack said softly letting the smoke drift from between his lips. “Bruce just…” He closed his eyes. “I can’t believe he got himself a kid.”

“Teenager.” Harley muttered. “That kid has to be around fifteen or sixteen years old.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “Well, I guess when he realized I was a lost cause it was time to try again,” he
muttered softly. “Make a little Bruce clone.”

Harley stepped closer and wrapped her arms around Jack’s waist. He smiled as he pulled her closer wrapping one arm around her, resting his chin on top of her head. Harley closed her eyes, taking in the scent of him combined with the smell of the cigarette smoke, relaxing her. Jack held her with one arm, turning his face slightly to rest his cheek against her hair, carefully smoking his cigarette. He flicked ashes out onto the pavement when they both heard a couple of men talking.

Jack turned, looking over to where two men were standing on the other side of a limo. The two men, both fairly big men wearing typical black suits, white dress shirts, stood together smoking. One of them was leaning his arm against the top of of the car as he laughed.

“Yeah, he bought it right off the dais! The 2019 edition man--you can’t buy that anywhere right now. You believe that. I mean I knew Falcone had money, but not that kind of money.” The one who spoke had short brown hair. He took a drag off his cigarette then chuckled. “Maybe we should ask for a fucking raise?”

His companion, a thickly muscled man with an olive complexion and bleached white hair laughed. “You’re a fucking idiot.” The second man was smoking a cheap cigar Jack decided, judging by the smell of the smoke that drifted toward them.

The other man laughed. “Fine. So when is he getting that Rolls? Did he say?”

The blond grinned. “Tomorrow evening. It’s going to be delivered right to his fucking door, you believe that shit? They got a truck they can drive it into so no one will see it until it’s in his fucking driveway.” The man shook his head. “I wonder what it must be like to afford bitches like that Gigi and buy fucking concept cars right off the floor…”

The other man chuckled. “’Fraid a couple of working stiffs like us will never know…”

*

Jack started to smile slowly.

He whispered to Harley as he tossed the butt of his cigarette to the pavement. “Did you hear that Harley?”

She nodded against his chest followed by a shrug. “Yeah, Falcone bought a car.”

Jack giggled quietly. “Oh he didn’t buy just any car; he bought one of those concept cars, a car that isn’t even on the market yet. That thing is one of a kind right now, worth a lot of money.”

Harley frowned slightly as she leaned back to look at her husband. “What are you thinking puddin?”

“I’m thinking we are going to steal a car.” Jack winked at his wife.

Harley frowned confused. “Why?”

Jack looked insulted. “First, why not? And second...just to needle Falcone...just to show him who has the power…” Jack grinned. “...just a little dig before the main event Harls...and it will be fun!”

Harley frowned. She wasn’t sure stealing a car was going to be that much fun, but who knew she thought. She’d been wrong before.

*
The following evening Jack wore a pair of slim cut black slacks, a black athletic cut t-shirt, a black leather jacket, and black boots. (Harley had giggled and called him a discount Batman which had earned her a tickle attack.) Jack leaned back against the cushions of their couch, his arm around Harley’s shoulders. Harley was pressed against his side, dressed much the same way as Jack, (minus the jacket) all in black, but with her blonde hair pulled back in a high ponytail, her legs crossed, her shoulder against Jack’s side.

Across from them sat some of the gang, those who were going help tonight with the job of stealing Falcone’s car.

Jason leaned against the wall next to Frost (who was dressed in a nice grey suit), his hands buried in the front pocket of his jeans, while Trope and Thea shared one of the chairs, one of them in the chair, the other on the arm, their complimentary hair colors made them look like twins. The two young women had their arms around each other, with Thea’s cheek resting on Trope’s hair. Alex, who wore a bright orange and blue Hawaiian shirt, with a pair of Bermuda shorts and orange flip flops, had arrived just moments ago with the information he had gathered on the transportation and the route that the truck would be taking to deliver the high priced, one-of-a-kind car.

Alex shook his head from his seat in a chair across from Jack and Harley where he leaned on his one arm, rolling an unlit cigar with his fingers. “This is fucking crazy Jack. I mean, the whole scheme to get the car is fucking nuts, but stealing from Falcone? I mean, I know you’re after him, but why the fucking car?”

Jack laughed. “It’s just to rattle him Alex and it’s fun! Sometimes you have to just do something because it’s fun! And this--this is going to be fun. Besides, look at it as payback for his letting his dog Maroni off the leash to what he did to Fish...to us...we’re just repaying him.”

Jack shared a grin with Harley who giggled.

Alex just shook his head. “You’re fucking nuts, you know that right?”

Jack laughed. “Shouldn’t I be saying that to you? Who’s more nuts? Me or the nuts who follow me? Besides, what’s the point of living if you don’t take a few risks?”

Harley laughed as did everyone else in the room.

Alex snorted. “Fuck head.”

Jack grinned. “Ass kisser.”

The two men laughed.

Jack moved his arm from around Harley and sat up, resting his elbows on his knees. “So, girls, you are going to take care of the traffic cams on the route, mess with the cops’ laptops and the radios, correct? Make sure we are blacked out?”

The two young women grinned and at the same time replied. “Yes Boss.”

Jack nodded before he turned his gaze on Jason. “And you’re ready to play the part of the yapping dog?”

Jason laughed. “Oh yeah, the driver’s attention will be solely focused on me while you two get the car, easy.” He winked.

Jack glanced at Alex one more time. “And you’re sure the key will be in the car?”
Alex nodded. “In the fucking glove compartment.”

Thea spoke up. “We got into the trucking company’s system and made sure that the key being put in the glove compartment was part of the request in the transport manifest.”

Jack grinned, smacked his thighs, and stood. “Good...Tonight is just for fun, just to annoy the old man, but after tonight we are going to start with our real attacks on Falcone,” he promised. “I want to destroy that ACE Chemicals plant, the one where he has Giggles made. We are going to start by going after all of Falcone’s big businesses, teach the man to be a little more responsible. Besides, this is all about revenge for what he let Maroni do all this time before I took over. It’s like in the Icelandic sagas, a gift returned for a ‘gift’ given.” Jack’s smile was cold. “I’m going to rain a little vengeance down on him. And we’re just going to hit him where it really hurts...in the pocketbook and in his pride. Now, let’s get this show on the road.”

* 

The moon was full in the Gotham night sky as Jason brought the Kia Stinger he was driving to a stop on top of the overpass where the truck that hauled Falcone’s car would be passing under in the next fifteen minutes...if Thea’s calculations were correct. The sat between Jason and Trope in the front seat, and as if knowing what Jack was thinking, raised her head from her laptop.

“You have fourteen minutes before the truck comes through here,” she said with confidence.

Jack nodded and pushed open the back door. He stepped out carrying the bag of equipment he and Harley were going to use to jump from the bridge onto the top of the truck. It was a reckless, dangerous move, but Jack was excited and confident in his and his wife’s skills. It was daring and something no one would expect.

Jack dumped the duffel bag down near the rail of the overpass before he reached into the car to take Harley’s hand and help her out of the car. He tugged her up against him as she stepped out, giving her a kiss and a smile before he walked over to lean against the car, looking in the driver’s side window at Jason.

“You got this?”

Jason smirked as Thea and Trope, who had been squished into the front seat got out, only to climb back into the car’s back seats. “Sure thing Boss. You two be careful.”


Thea smiled. “We’ll be fine Boss.”

Harley came over to window in the back to smile at the two young women. “You three be careful.”

“We will mom.” Jason grinned at her. Harley laughed and gave him the finger before she stepped away.

The young man turned the radio up as Jack and Harley stepped out of the way. The sounds of Rammstein poured deafeningly from the car and Till Lindemann’s rough voice sang out “Du Hast” for all of Gotham to hear.

Jack and Harley waved as Jason stuck his arm out and waved back without looking. They could see Thea and Trope turn around in the back to wave too.

Jack laughed. “I really like that boy. If I ever decide to retire, I think I will promote him to head of
the Red Hood...what do you think Harls?” he asked as he turned back to look at Harley. She had the duffel bag at her feet pulled open, a small flashlight held between her teeth as she pulled out thick nylon cores and began to secure their lines to the metal slats of the rail.

“I think he would be a good choice puddin,” Harley said as she pulled the flashlight out of her mouth and stood up. “He would make a great Red Hood.”

Jack nodded as Harley handed him the metal hook and belt that was to go around his ankle. She crouched down and attached hers, testing it to make sure the latch and belt were secure. Jack crouched next to her. He attached his own belt and latch before he pulled out a very small metal box from the same bag. He popped the box open to reveal two very tiny explosives he had designed just hours ago for tonight. These mini explosives were remotely controlled, like the explosives Jack had used to take down Panessa’s building (what seemed like ages ago), but on a much smaller scale, designed to simply break the metal clasps and allow them to fall on to the top of the truck. (Harley was quite uncomfortable with the idea of a tiny explosive on her ankle, but she trusted Jack; they had yet to have an accident with explosives that Jack had put together). Jack used some sort of grey putty to stick the explosives onto the metal latches before he pulled out the handheld remote that would detonate the explosives.

Jack held up the little remote, wagging it back and forth with a grin. “Ready to be action stars sweets?”

Harley stood up glancing out toward the freeway. From this position it looked like a long way down to the road below. There were a few cars that zipped by underneath them, but at this time of night, it was fairly quiet and there was a long, dark silence between vehicles.

Jack walked over to Harley and put his hand at the small of her back. He could feel how stiff she was, felt the tension running through her. She was nervous. He supposed he couldn’t blame her, jumping off an overpass was a great deal different than shooting or stabbing someone.

Harley motioned with her head. “Walk out a bit, I want to make sure we have enough rope.”

Jack held the loose nylon rope up with a slight frown. “Looks like enough.”

Harley giggled unsteadily. “You know, Alex is right--this is crazy.”

Jack smiled as he reached out to grab her around the waist and yank her close. He gazed down at her lovingly. “If we weren’t crazy, this probably wouldn’t work.”

Harley smiled up at him before she reached up to stroke his cheek. “I love you. You know I will follow you anywhere Jack, do anything.”

Jack brushed his nose against hers. “I know you will Harls...I know.”

He pulled her closer and kissed her deeply before stepping back. “Let’s get into position.”

Harley nodded. Her heart was pounding, but both of them stepped over the guard rail and gradually adjusted their feet, their arms behind them holding onto the rail as they moved slowly and with great care. It wouldn’t do them any good to fall right now or to accidentally set off the explosives before it was time.

No sooner had the two of them gotten into position than Harley saw the truck, an all black Renault Magnum with a black trailer that contained the Rolls Royce Phantom, coming their way.

“Jack!” Harley pointed.
Jack grinned wider. “Oh, this is going to be fun!”

Harley pointed again. “There’s Jason!”

They could both see the red Kia’s headlights right behind the large, black truck carrying the Rolls they were after. Harley swallowed. This was so crazy!! This was the most insane thing Jack had had them do yet!! Jumping onto a moving truck? She held onto the railing behind her, questioning the sanity of this situation when Jack yelled.

“Jump!”

The truck sped by under them and Jack let go. Harley hesitated for a half second before she followed her husband. Just as they were over the truck, the ropes around their ankles jerked tight. Harley let out a startled gasp; the truck had been rushing toward her, the rope suddenly yanked her back into the air. She wanted to scream but she couldn’t find the air to breathe.

Jack was grinning from ear to ear. Throwing himself into the face of death like this, without worry about the consequences was more thrilling than he could have thought. He laughed as he hit the button that blew the latches that held the ropes to their ankles. The latches gave and Harley felt the hot flash of heat stinging against her ankle and suddenly Harley was free-falling through the air, the top of the truck racing toward her. Just when she was beginning to think she was going to miss, the truck moved swiftly from under her and she slammed into the truck.

She hit hard, knocking the air out of her lungs in a painful gush. Harley started to roll, her momentum and the lack of anything to hold on to kept her rolling toward the edge. Harley let out a cry as her body rolled completely off the side of the truck. For a second she could see the tires, the road that zipped pass all of it made surreal by the flashing lights going by from the city, the headlights from the cars, the truck, almost blinding her. She reached desperately for something to grab, her fingers missed the edge and she started to fall.

Jack reached out and grabbed her arm, his hand wrapped painfully around her wrist. Pain radiated out from Harley’s shoulder as her body’s downward, deadly momentum was stopped hard, her arm yanked upward, and then she was flung forward. Her entire body slammed against the hard metal of the truck’s trailer, knocking her breath out of her again.

Harley grasped as she reached out, grabbing for the metal edge of the truck breaking a nail in the process. Jack was in a crouch at the edge, holding on to the side of the trailer as he yanked his wife upward with all his strength onto the roof of the truck.

Jack pulled backwards, falling onto his back hard enough to knock the air from his own lungs while at the same time he pulled Harley with him. She landed on top of her husband panting. She wrapped her arms tight around him, tried to draw in a breath. The wind pulled at her hair, whipping her ponytail around as the wind struggled to rip them both from the top of the trailer.

Jack grinned, then started to laugh after he sucked air into his lungs. “Told you we would make it.”

Harley’s panicked breaths turned into nervous giggles.

Jack smiled, both of them laughing as he held her close. “Told you you could do it.”

Harley giggled and kissed Jack hard.

He pulled away reluctantly. “Okay baby, let’s do this.”
Jason’s eyes nearly bugged out of his skull when he saw Jack and Harley leap from the overpass and then Harley rolled off the trailer. The two women behind him screamed, which caused Jason to lose control of the wheel for a moment. The car skidded as Jason spun the wheel.

Jason’s eyes shot back to the truck. It was difficult to see with the lack of light, but then he saw the dark figures moving on top of the truck’s trailer. (That and the fact that Mrs. Wayne didn’t hit the pavement in front of him told him the first part of their plan was successful.)

“He got her!!” Jason yelled when he saw Jack catch her.

Trope gasped. “Oh my god this is so crazy!!”

Jason frowned as he realized the truck driver might have heard the impact of Jack and Harley hitting the trailer or worse, had seen them before they jumped. Jason rolled his eyes at himself. Of course they heard that! But maybe the Red Hood’s gang leaders had not been seen. He knew what he had to do.

Jason grinned. “Hold on girlfriends!” He spun the wheel without looking, blasted out from behind the truck to race along the side of the big black vehicle. He flashed his headlights before he hit the gas and the car leapt forward as Jason sped up to zip in front of the truck driver and lay on the horn. Once he had done that he grinned and turned the radio up as loud as the speakers could handle, rolling down the windows at the same time.

Thea and Trope yelped in the back as the sounds of Rammstein’s “Ich Will” blasted out from the speakers. Jason grinned tapping his fingers against the wheel as he continued to stay in front of the truck. Each time the driver started to try and go around him, Jason jerked the car over to block the driver from pulling ahead, playing in front of the truck’s headlights as he zipped back and forth, blocking the truck from going any faster.

*  

Jack and Harley crouched as they tried to make their way to the back of the trailer.

The driver, becoming annoyed with Jason, hit the gas thinking to just simply bump the car. The front of the truck tapped the Kia “lightly.” The impact sent Jack and Harley falling forward to fall down on the roof of the trailer.

Jason glanced over his shoulder with narrowed eyes at the truck. He couldn’t see the driver because of the headlights, only a shadowy figure in the driver's seat.

Trope leaned forward grabbing Jason’s shoulder. “Don’t you dare play chicken with a truck Jason!”

Jason smiled. “I would never do that...geez Trope.”

Trope glared at him in his rearview. “Drive steady. I want to make sure he can’t radio anyone once he gets tired of you being a dick.”

Jason grinned and stuck his tongue out at Trope just as the truck driver laid on his horn.

*  

Jack and Harley made their way to the back of the trailer, staying crouched and crab walking their way to the end of the trailer. Once at the edge, Jack pulled a pair of small bolt cutters from his jacket inside pocket before he crab walked over to the gate release mechanism. He quickly cut the thick, steel wire before he shoved the cutters back into the pocket of his jacket. Jack grinned at Harley.
“Ready sweets?”

Harley nodded and the wind whipped her ponytail around as she grinned. “Yeah, I’m ready puddin’!”

Together they stomped on the edge of the trailer which caused the now loose back panel to spring open. It fell to strike the asphalt with a loud “bang!” Sparks flew as the metal scraped against the freeway asphalt. Jack grinned at his wife as he grabbed the top of the trailer and did a somersault off the back, holding on for a split second before he dropped into the trailer.

Harley giggled and muttered. “Show off.”

She did the same maneuver, easily rolling over the edge. She hung by her arms for a moment. Jack wrapped his arms around her legs and she let go as he lowered her to the floor of the dark trailer stealing a kiss at the same time. Harley grinned, kissing her husband back enthusiastically.

Jack let her go. “Okay, let’s go!”

The car was held steady inside the trailer by a series of nylon tire straps. Jack pulled a box cutter from the pocket of his pants, Harley doing the same on the other side of the Rolls. Together they both cut the tire straps and yanked them clear of the vehicle’s wheels.

Jack pulled open the driver's seat, hopping in just as Harley did the same…

* 

Trope grinned. “Okay, the driver just tried to radio for help, but I blocked him. I was also able to scramble the police radio.”

Thea gave Trope a very loud kiss on her cheek. “You are just amazing babe,” she said with a big smile. Trope blushed.

“Hey if you guys are gonna make-out, can I watch?” Jason grinned in the rearview mirror.

Thea laughed. “Asshole.”

Jason chuckled with an eyebrow quirk while zipping once more in front of the truck when it attempted once more to go around him. The driver laid on his horn and flashed his headlights.

Jason smiled at her in the rearview. “But I’m a loveable asshole.”

Thea giggled and smacked him hard in the shoulder with her fist.

Jason made a face, but smiled at her. “Ouch!”

* 

Harley quickly popped open the glove compartment once she was in the passenger seat and there, resting inside as they hoped, were the keys. She grinned as she snatched them out and tossed them to Jack who caught them easily, immediately shoving them in the ignition. The car started with a quiet purr when he turned the key. Jack shared a grin with his wife.

“Now that sounds sexy.”

Harley giggled. “Hit it puddin!”
Jack laughed and hit the gas, glancing over his shoulder as he drove the car backwards out of the truck and down the ramp. As the Rolls’ tires hit the pavement, Jack spun the wheel and the car handled like a dream despite its size. Jack pressed down on the gas, raced up beside the truck. The car barely made a sound despite the acceleration and speed. He could see Jason and the girls up ahead.

Jack laughed as he laid on the horn and flashed his headlights.

*

Jason looked in the side mirror and hooted. “They got the car!!! Let’s go!!!!”

Jason hit the gas and made his car speed forward.

Jack was coming up fast and did the same, pressed his foot down on the pedal, letting the Rolls speed forward, quickly catching up to Jason until both cars were driving side by side.

*

The truck driver looked confused when he saw the Rolls show up beside him. It was happening at the same time that something was dragging on the truck. Distracted as he had been by the crazy driver ahead of him, he finally had time to glance in his rearview to see sparks bright in the darkness behind his truck and as the man frowned, he realized it was the hatch on the back of the trailer.

Just as he realized that the hatch was dragging on the asphalt, the driver watched for a few seconds as the Rolls drove alongside the asshole in the Kia who had been blocking him from switching lanes. As the two cars pulled up alongside each other, the truck driver saw the passenger in the Rolls stick their hand out the window and wave at the driver of the Kia who gave them a thumbs up.

The driver groaned. “Fuck.”

*

Harley laughed as Jason and the girls took the first exit. Jack sped ahead of the truck. Harley leaned out the window where the wind whipped her hair as she watched the truck disappear behind them.

She giggled dropping back into the seat. She hit the button on her door and the window closed silently cutting off of the wind. She hit another button and a curtain rolled across the window. Harley sighed contently looking up at the Rolls’ starry sky ceiling. “This is a really nice car.” She observed.

Jack grinned. “Sure is. I was either going to make a mess of it and leave it for Falcone to find or drive it into the Gotham river...but you know, I think I’ll keep it sweets. This is one nice car.”

He smiled. “Though I’m going to pain it a different color.”

Harley smiled as she rolled her head to the side to gaze at her husband. “And what color would that be?”

Jack thought about it for a while as he drove before he murmured. “Mm...I don’t know...maybe purple or blue...something really noticeable...I’ll have to think about it.”

Harley laughed. She reached out and laid her hand on her husband's knee with a happy sigh. Even with the crazy nature of the theft, the danger and the close call, Harley was content here with her husband. Jack smiled softly heading back into Gotham and their amusement park home. “So sweets, I was thinking--tomorrow after your game…”
Harley, who had closed her eyes opened them a little. “Hmm?”

“I thought maybe we should go out to dinner. Remember that place I took you with the retro clothes requirement?” Jack asked softly.

Harley smiled. “I do.”

“I thought we might go there...or maybe an evening in, watch some movies in bed…” He smiled at her.

Harley squeezed his leg. “I’m happy no matter what we do puddin.”

Jack picked up her hand and kissed her knuckles. “I love you sweets.”

Harley squeezed his hand. “Love you too puddin.”

*

A couple of days later Harley, dressed only in her sports bra and panties, sat in their bedroom at her vanity braiding her hair, getting ready for the roller derby game that afternoon. She was half watching the afternoon news report on the television while she fixed her hair and makeup while Jack was on the phone with Alex. She glanced in the mirror at her husband. He was lying on his stomach across their bed dressed in a pair of grey slacks and a white dress shirt which he hadn’t bothered to button yet. She smiled. His make up was done, his nails painted black, though his hair was still unstyled, a few brown locks framing his face as he spoke on the phone. She was only partly listening to the news and to her husband, both sounds a light buzz behind her while she leaned in to outline her eyes.

Jack and Alex were discussing the chemical factory that Falcone owned, ACE Chemicals...the front for his more common illicit drugs and the drug Giggles, made from Jack’s own formula. They had been discussing whether Jack should just confront Falcone, but she could tell by the tone of his voice that Jack wasn’t fond of that idea. He wanted to show Falcone that he was messing with the wrong person, that no one stole from him. She had also heard something about an invite from Fish to the club…

She wasn’t exactly listening, her attention divided between their conversation and the news report about how two branches of Wayne Enterprises, Wayne Biotech and Wayne Foods had suffered a fire...or was it an explosion last night or was it this morning? Several people had died and there were a few bits of aerial video of the destruction… Harley frowned. She had missed some of what was being said in the news report, but for some reason something about those places seemed important to her, as if she should know them, but she couldn’t really remember why...not just because they were owned by her brother-in-law, but something else was bothering her about the news report...about those places. But Harley just couldn’t put her finger on why...

After a few seconds, she had forgotten all about it as Jack hung up grinning ear to ear as he rolled off the bed and to his feet to walk over to stand behind his wife.

“Well, it seems we are going to hit Falcone’s ACE Chemicals plant two day from now sweets! Which gives me some time to mix together some of my laughing gas, a few molotovs...maybe some fun explosives...” Jack laughed. “Going to turn it into a real party pumpkin.” He placed his hands on her shoulders and kissed the top of her head. “AND, Fish called Alex. She wanted to invite the gang over to the club tonight for a little celebration party. Big Mama is going to be there and I guess there are going to be a few other business owners that are in our territory who are coming to meet us...I guess it’s also sort of a meet and greet the new bosses. Anyway, Fish promised dancing, good food
and good friends. What do you think? I know we were going to have a date, but…”

Harley interrupted him by looking at his reflection in the mirror as she covered his hands with hers. “I think it will be fun puddin!”

Jack smiled. “Now if you don’t want to go it's perfectly fine.”

Harley laughed. “No, I do! I think it’ll be fun.”

She stood up and turned around. Jack wrapped his arms around her, pressed her close against him while sliding his hands down to grip her rear. She giggled and wrapped her arms around his shoulders.

“How about I wear one of my really short dresses tonight?” Harley cooed softly brushing her nose against his while caressing his lips with hers.

Jack smiled, his eyes dancing. “I think that would be a spectacular idea.”

He pressed her hips against his and kissed her slowly, passionately his tongue moving gently against hers. Harley made a soft moan as they kissed, prompting Jack to lift her up, grabbing her around her legs, turning and dumping her on the bed. Harley squealed and laughed as Jack dropped on top of her and made the bed bounce and creak in protest. He laughed, smiling down at her, his body resting between her legs. Jack stared down at his wife with her braided pigtails, bright blue eyes and her smile—her perfect, glorious smile he thought, the beacon that would always guide him home, to her. Wherever Harley was, if they were together, it was home. He grinned and winked at her before he pressed his lips against her neck and blew a raspberry against her skin. Harley screamed with laughter.

“Jack!!! That tickles!!!”

“Good!!” He smiled brightly, pleased to hear his wife’s rich laugh before he did it again. Jack worked his way down between her breasts, pressing his mouth against her skin and blowing hard which made the loudest, rudest noise Jack could make, sending Harley into peals of laughter. She kicked her legs against the mattress and laughed as her husband teasingly stroked her waist with the edges of his painted nails. He worked his way down further to her stomach, brushing his nose and lips against the softness of her skin, stopping just above her belly button. He licked her skin slowly, sending shivers up her spine before he pressed his lips to her stomach and blew loudly.

Harley squealed again. “Puddin!!”

Jack laughed as he pulled the edge of her panties down past her hip, tracing her hipbone with his tongue. He pulled the other side of her panties down, pressing his lips to her mound, teasing as he went lower.

Harley pushed herself up on her elbows. “Jack...we don’t have time…”

Jack chuckled and pressed his lips against her skin, blowing loudly. The sensation tickled at the same time feeling delicious. He teasingly brushed his teeth against her skin, blowing warm air against her sex until Harley moaned. “Jack…”

“I’m stopping.” He laughed and then took a heavy breath.

He pressed a kiss against her skin before he sat up. “But tonight I’m going to finish what I started.” He winked at her as he pushed himself off the bed with a little hop in his step, putting a hand out to her.
Harley grinned as she took his hand, letting him haul her to her feet. “I’m looking forward to it puddin.”

Jack pulled her close for one more kiss. His tongue slowly slid into her mouth caressing her tongue before he stepped softly dragging his teeth along her bottom lip before he hissed. “I am too pumpkin.”

He stepped away giving her a light pat on the ass. “You better hurry up!”

Harley stuck her tongue out at him with a smile.

* 

When they arrived at the skating rink, Harley could see Alex’s SUV with Jason’s and Roxy’s motorcycles parked next to it. She grinned, delighted they were here for the game. She wasn’t sure who else from the gang was here, but it was nice to see that some of them had come out to support her.

Jack parked and stepped out of the car, wearing a pair of aviator sunglasses, a light grey suit with a dark, almost slate grey dress shirt unbuttoned past his throat, showing off just enough chest to make Harley squirm. He wore a gold chain around his neck that rested just below the hollow of his throat and another one that disappeared under the shirt. He wore a pair of dark brown oxfords with some colorful purple and green socks. He walked around to the side to open the door of the vehicle for her.

Harley hopped out, wearing a pair of large round sunglasses with red-tinted lenses dressed in white denim cutoffs, one of her husband’s dress shirts with the sleeves rolled up with just enough buttons fastened to keep the shirt from falling off, but the light breeze blew enough of the shirt back to reveal her stomach. She rounded out her outfit with a pair of red tennis shoes. Jack grinned as he took her hand, kissed her knuckles while he pressed his nose against her hand while a wicked yet seductive smile danced across his lips.

“You are so adorable,” he murmured before he released her hand and reached into the back to pull out her duffel bag and skates.

Harley giggled. “Flirt.”

He winked at her as he held her bag and skates over one shoulder and took her hand once more as they made their way toward the skating rink. Today’s game was against the Opal Curbstompers from Opal City. It was supposed to be a fairly big game, but Harley frowned in confusion as they walked toward the rink. There were a few people milling around in the parking lot, but there were a lot of people sort of standing just outside the rink talking or simply standing around as if they didn’t quite know what to do with themselves, while others were leaving the rink, filing out as if they had been asked to leave.

Harley frowned as they moved closer to the rink. Something was off; the atmosphere was all wrong for a roller derby game. She didn’t hear the usual loud music or the cheerful banter of the people who did the announcing for the game as she and Jack pushed their way inside. There was still a crowd, but it was subdued, people were milling about, talking in hushed tones. It was all a little odd she thought.

Harley frowned, a line appearing between her brows as she glanced at her husband. “Something’s wrong.”

Jack nodded. “Agreed. Everything feels a bit off. The crowd is really quiet too.”
They made their way deeper inside the rink heading toward the locker rooms. The quiet mood of the people around them continued. Once outside the locker rooms Harley turned and kissed her husband. Jack grinned against her lips, lifting her up off her feet and doing a little spin with her while continuing to kiss his wife.

Harley giggled, wrapping her arms around him forgetting the odd feeling she had only a moment ago, lost in her husband’s kiss.

Jack set her down with a sigh. “Have fun Baby--I’ll be rooting for you.”

Harley kissed him quickly. “Love ya puddin.”

Jack waved as he turned to leave. “Love you too sweets.”

Harley giggled turning, the atmosphere of the rink forgotten as she made her way inside, only to be greeted by the sounds of crying.

Harley frowned in confusion following the sounds to find her entire team sitting on the locker room benches holding each other.

“What’s wrong?” Harley asked. All the girls turned to look at her, but it was Vanessa that stood up, her makeup smeared, her eyes bloodshot, hurried over to wrap her arms around Harley.

“Oh Harley it’s terrible! Pamela is gone!” Vanessa cried onto Harley’s shoulder as Harley held her looking confused. “What? What d’you mean Pamela’s gone?”

Courtney looked up from wiping her eyes. “She was killed at her job last night. The place where Pamela worked...she worked for Wayne Enterprises...some branch...I don’t...she told me once...She was so smart. Anyway, there was a fire...I don’t know...but I guess Pam was working late...and...” Courtney sniffled. “Anyway...she didn’t show up...she is usually the first one here so Babs called her cellphone...” The young woman named Babs had bright orange hair and freckles. She just looked up, her eyes just as bloodshot as Courtney’s as Courtney continued. “...and got no answer...then she called her work number...nothing. So finally she called Pammy’s mother and she told us that...that Pamela died in the fire!”

Harley blinked in shock. “What? But...are they sure?”

Vanessa nodded. “Her mom told us they found her lab coat and some of her teeth...”

That bit of information set off more crying from the other women.

Harley blinked in shock. “She’s gone...?”

* * *

Jack was standing in the bleachers, his arms folded across his chest with Alex, Alice, Frost, his aunt, Jason, and Roxy along with Thea and Trope.

Bane, his hands in the front pockets of his slacks nodded to Jack. “Yeah, they announced it just a little while ago that the game was called off due to the death of Pamela Isley.”

Jack frowned. “A fire at one of my brother’s labs...that’s...” He shook his head again in disbelief. “Was anyone else hurt?” For a moment Jack felt a thud in his chest as the thought of something happening to Bruce made his blood run cold...no matter their differences, he didn't want his brother dead.
“I heard another doctor that worked there died too. A Dr. Marc Legrand, but as far as I’ve heard they were the only two casualties,” Agatha said with a frown. “It all seems rather strange to me. Bruce runs a very tight business, all the safety rules are followed above and beyond requirements by the law, just like how my brother ran the business…” Jack nodded. “Yeah, Bruce has always been really concerned with the safety of those who work for him. You don’t think it was on purpose do you?” He turned to his aunt. She shrugged. “I don’t think Bruce has any enemies...business enemies maybe, but I don’t think he would have anyone who would go to that extreme to sabotage one of his labs. I suppose accidents happen,” Agatha said softly. “But...I’ll check to see if I come up with anything.”

Alex nodded. “I’ll check my fucking sources too, see if anyone has been upset with Bruce Wayne, but yeah...I haven’t heard a fucking whisper about anyone on the wrong side of the law having it out for your brother. I usually keep my fucking ear open for that sort of news.”

Jack frowned, looking between Alex and Agatha. “You don’t think Falcone…?”

Alex shook his head as did Agatha. “Fuck no. Falcone isn’t stupid and this would have been stupid. Killing two scientists too...nah. This sort of thing ain’t his fucking style,”

Alex muttered. “Too messy.”

Jack’s attention was grabbed when he heard his name called.

“Jack?”

Jack turned at the soft sound of Harley’s voice. As soon as he saw his wife he opened his arms and she ran into them dropping her duffel bag and skates. She wrapped her arms around him with a soft sob.

“Oh Jack, it’s terrible!”

Jack held her close. He squeezed her tightly against him, his lips to her ear. He kissed her ear softly as he whispered. “I know sweets.”

Harley sniffed doing her best not to cry, but she said softly. “I think we were really beginning to be friends puddin. I mean...I felt like Ivy was...” Her lips trembled and she pressed her face against his shoulder.

Jack stroked her back. “I know sweets.”

He turned to the others as he held Harley tightly. “I’ll take Harley home. See you guys later tonight at Fish’s place all right?”

Everyone nodded and began to file out, each of them reaching out to touch Harley’s arm or shoulder with a whispered word of condolence.

Jason stopped for a moment. He glanced at Jack then carefully put his arms around them both. He didn’t say anything, simply gave them a tight squeeze before he walked off quickly. Jack smiled at the younger man’s back.

After everyone was gone Jack gently lifted Harley’s face, holding her face between his hands looking into her blue eyes. A few tears raced down her cheeks as she looked at him.

“I’m sorry sweets,” Jack said in a tender tone, stroking her cheeks with his thumbs. “I’m so sorry.”
She sniffled and wiped at her nose with the back of her hand. “I feel a little foolish crying like this...I mean, I didn’t know her that well yet...we had really just started being friends. She told me about some trouble she was having at work with a co-worker...and...” Harley’s bottom lip trembled. Jack pulled her back against him.

“Hey, let’s go home. Want to get in bed and cuddle? Eat some junk food before we go out tonight?” Jack said softly against her ear. “I’ll brush out your hair and make love to you. I’ll even crack open a two liter of grape soda...” He smiled saying that last part as if he had just bought an expensive bottle of champagne.

Harley gave him a hiccup laugh. “Oh puddin...yes.”

*

Harley sat naked in bed, the sheet held to her breasts as she watched Jack. He walked around the room naked while he set a few candles throughout the room, lighting them as he went. Harley giggled as she watched her naked husband walking around the room. She very much liked watching his ass; tight and perfect. Oh, she thought, his behind was a crime it was so nice. She giggled.

He glanced over his shoulder at her, waggled his eyebrows and even wiggled his ass at her as if he knew exactly what she was thinking. Harley kicked her heels against the mattress laughing.

“Puddin!!”

Jack laughed.

He had closed the curtains to block out the sunlight and now had set ten or so lit candles around the room. The soft light was not just romantic, but peaceful.

Jack had put some music on as well. Puccini was playing at the moment as he finished with the candles, quickly flicking his wrist to put out the match before he hurried out of the room and returned with a tray on which he had two champagne glasses filled to the rim with grape soda and as he came closer, Harley could see that he had a plate with Hostess Ding Dongs on it along with a sprig of mint.

“My lady?” Jack said with a grin as he bowed and held out the tray to her.

Harley laughed as she took the tray. “Puddin, this is perfect.”

Jack chuckled as he pulled the sheet back and crawled into bed beside her. He took one of the glasses as Harley set the tray down between them, picking up her own glass.

Jack smiled. “To the love of my life, the only reason I’m still here.”

Harley smiled and clicked her glass against Jack’s. “To the only man I have ever and will ever love,” she said softly.

They both took sips from their drinks before Jack took her glass and set it aside.

He picked up a Ding Dong and held it up in front of her. “Okay, take a big bite!”

Harley laughed. “I don’t know...”

“Ah...come on Harls. I promise to work it off of you.” He waggled his eyebrows at her with a smirk.

Harley giggled with a nod. “Fine.”
She opened her mouth. Jack looked as if he were about to shove the whole thing into her mouth, but at the last second he stopped with a wicked grin on his lips and held it so she could take a bite.

Harley giggled and pointed a finger at him while she chewed and swallowed before she said, “You’re bad.”

Jack took a bite of the confection and laid back among the pillows. “Just have to keep you guessing pumpkin. Don’t want you to be bored with me.”

Harley moved the plate and curled up next to him. “I could never be bored with you puddin.”

Jack set the dessert aside and turned to face her. “I’m never bored with you either Harls.”

He stroked her hair back behind her ear and gazed at her lovingly. “I feel like my life really started with you Harls, when you walked into my life…” He chuckled. “When I carried your bags to your room…” Jack stroked her chin. “I knew from that moment you were going to be special to me. You saved me Harley…you saved me.”

Harley blushed leaning into his touch, her eyes sliding closed.

“I came alive the moment you kissed me,” she whispered.

Jack very slowly ran his fingers into her hair, circling the back of her head and tugged her close. He brushed his nose against hers, his lips a breath from her own. “I have loved to the point of madness; that which is called madness, that which to me, is the only sensible way to love.” Jack grinned then whispered.

“You Harley, you are my only true madness.”

He kissed her deeply, pulled her close, opening his mouth against hers softly. Harley sighed, his lips and tongue felt as if they were melding against hers.

Jack rolled her onto her back, continuing to kiss her deeply, his tongue caressed hers with a deep liquid passion that made her body come alive. She wrapped her arms around him, never wanting to let him go, but Jack rolled his tongue from between her lips to lick her chin as he gently tilted her head back while he ran his tongue down her throat.

Harley moaned softly while Jack worked his way down to her breasts. He slowly ran his tongue over her breasts while with one hand he stroked the lines of her ribs. Harley groaned tossing her head back against the pillows while Jack pressed his lips to her skin, gently brushing his teeth over her. He kissed each breast softly, tenderly, his fingertips dragged down between her breasts while his tongue teased each hardened nipple. His lips brushed against them, tugged gently at her as Harley threaded her fingers through his hair. She arched her back just a little when Jack sucked one nipple between his soft lips while he reached up to drag his fingertips over her other nipple, making his wife writhe in pleasure. He slid his hand up to cup her breast and squeezed gently feeling the soft, warmth of her breast in his hand, the way the fullness of her breast felt in the palm of his hand, the hard nipple in his mouth—everything about her turned him on. Jack growled in the back of his throat, pressing his teeth softly into her until she gasped and arched under his touch. Her inhaled shuddering breaths each time he flicked his tongue over the sensitive surface of her nipple. He rubbed his nose against her skin, his cheek pressed and rubbed against her. He couldn’t get enough of her, the feel of her, the smell of her. Jack growled. “Harley…mine…my Harley…”

Harley tugged at his hair just a little with a hissed. “Puddin…”

He released her breasts, snaking his way down her body and dragging his fingers along her skin,
spreading his hands wide to touch as much of her as he could. Jack kissed her, rubbed his face against her stomach, licked her as he moved lower, worshiped her, his wife, his doctor, his best and truest friend, his Harley. He brushed his nose and lips against the warmth and soft touch of her skin, licked the line of her hip bones, pressed his lips to the mound of her sex and whispered as he made his way lower, then slipped between her legs. He kissed the soft skin of her thighs, licked along the sensitive skin between her groin and leg, biting softly as he growled.

“Doubt thou the stars are fire; Doubt that the sun doth move; Doubt truth to be a liar; But never doubt I love.”

Jack purred as his brushed his nose against her sex, his breath hot against her sensitive skin. He opened his mouth to press his lips against her, his tongue slowly sliding, wet and hot, moving up and down as he kissed her as intimately as possible.

Harley groaned loudly, her fingers tightened in his hair, her eyes squeezed closed as she raised her legs up, her feet rested on his shoulders while Jack deepened the kiss, slowly moving his tongue up and down, twirling gently, taking his time. Tasting her, loving her tenderly.

Harley arched her hips, both hands in Jack’s hair, her pointed toes pressed against his shoulder. “Uh Jack...puddin…”

Jack smiled and moved his hands under her ass, lifting her just a little while he deepened his kiss, the flat of his tongue pressed against her clitoris before he gently twirled the tip of his tongue over her which sent a hot tingle up from her groin to spread out in a warm wave of pleasure throughout her body.

Harley groaned and her brow furrowed just before she gasped when Jack took a long, slow suck, pressing his lips to her while his tongue slid deep inside her. Her entire body tensed as her orgasm rippled through her body, beginning from his mouth on her. She arched, her fingers tugged hard on his hair, but Jack didn’t notice any pain; he only smiled. He slid his hands out from under her to wrap his arms around her legs while Jack deepened the kiss, slowly moving his tongue up and down, twirling gently, taking his time. Tasting her, loving her tenderly.

Harley panted as she grinned down at him. “Oh puddin…”

As Jack crawled back up her body, he pressed kisses to her stomach, between her breasts. “You liked that?”

Harley blushed and giggled. “Very much.”

Jack reached her face and licked her mouth before he kissed her. She groaned as she tasted herself on his tongue; he loved tasting her and being part of her and she in turn loved being part of him, in all ways. He reached up and wrapped his hands around her head, his fingers wrapped around her hair as he kissed her passionately, a kiss so filled with passion Harley wouldn’t have been surprised if the bed had burst into flames.

Jack dragged his teeth along her chin before he sat up on his knees. He pushed her legs up and out, grinning as he looked down at her swollen, wet sex. He stroked his thumb over her, made Harley gasp. He grinned while he pressed and stroked his thumb over her.
Harley mewed and rolled her pelvis in response while Jack licked his lips catching his tongue between his teeth as with his other hand he stroked himself bringing himself close to the edge while he stroked his thumb over her up and down, moving his thumb in a slow circle while stroking himself slowly.

Harley grabbed the pillows over her head and licked her bottom lip as she groaned. “Mm...Puddin...fuck me Jack...please.”

Jack grinned continuing to play with her clitoris. “You cum for me first Harley.”

Harley’s eyes rolled with pleasure when Jack moved a little closer and began to stroke himself against her while he continued to stroke his thumb over her, wet and inviting to him. She was already overly sensitive from her first orgasm that her second came in a rush. She squeezed the pillows and cried out. The instant she came, Jack thrust into her.

Harley gasped. “JACK!!”

She released the pillows to reach up for him. Her hands glided down his stomach as Jack grabbed her knees and held her legs out wide as he stood on his knees and thrust into her with abandon.

Jack groaned. “Harley...uh…”

She whimpered; he felt so good. Her hands dragged down his body to his groin where she caressed him, feeling the way his shaft disappeared inside her. Harley slid her fingers down around his erection at the point he entered her, becoming covered in her fluids as Jack slowed his thrusts. He grinned at her, looking down to watch himself disappear into her, the frame of her fingers over him. She caressed him as Jack pulled out, almost all the way, but not quite. Harley grabbed him and squeezed, which made Jack’s eyes roll.

“Uh...Harley…” he hissed.

She smiled, releasing him to stroke his stomach and chest again, her now wet fingers leaving a trail on his skin.

Jack’s eyes closed just enough that she could see the blue of his eyes through his dark lashes as he stared down at her, his hands slid up to her calves.

“I love you Harls,” he whispered to her, thrusting slowly. “I love you.”

Harley grinned. “I love you Jack...always...you...me…”

Jack hooked his arms under her legs and dropped forward, capturing her mouth in a deep kiss while he started to thrust hard and fast, making the entire bed shake. Harley wrapped her arms around him, her fingers pressed into his back, her cries muffled against his mouth. She could feel that pleasurable pressure as Jack swelled inside her and his thrusts became harder, deeper, faster. Harley dragged her nails down his back and arched into his thrust, cumming with a muffled cry.

Jack groaned as her body clamped down around him, the warm, wet pressure of her orgasm rippled through him. He released her legs and cupped his hands around her face, kissing her hard, pouring himself into her as he came.

Harley began to cry. The intensity of her orgasm coupled with the intensity of her emotions spilled out and she couldn't seem to stop herself. Jack thrust a few more times, riding out the intensity of his climax with a last, low moan of pleasure. He was just coming down from his high when he noticed that Harley was crying.
Jack frowned. “Harley?”

“Baby? You all right?” he asked softly while he stroked her hair back from her face.

Harley smiled. “Yeah puddin, I’m fine...it’s just...I love you so much Jack. I don’t know what I would do without you.”

Jack brushed his nose against her, very softly catching her lips with his. “You’ll never know Harley. Never again will I let us be separated, you got that...Arkham...that will never happen again.”

She nodded while Jack kissed her tears.

“Shh...Baby...pumpkin...don’t cry,” Jack whispered softly.

“I’m sorry Jack.” She smiled and wiped at her eyes with the back of one hand. “I’m happy I promise.”

Jack kissed her tenderly, slowly. He took his time to make sure his kiss communicated every ounce of passion and love he had for her.

She stroked her fingers through his hair returning his kiss just as sweetly.

“Nothing will ever come between us Harls...” Jack whispered. “Nothing.”

* * *

Jack sat with his suit jacket over his lap as he blinked his eyes a bit after Harley finished with his eyeliner. He looked dashing tonight, she decided--well he always looked dashing to her, but tonight he just seemed especially so in his three piece dark purple and burgundy suit with a very fine, almost floral embroidered pattern. He was wearing a white dress shirt with a dark purple tie, matching socks and a pair of burgundy oxfords. Without the jacket on, the twin weapon holster he wore was exposed as was the knife at his hip, and she also found that very sexy. She had painted a dark eyeliner on his eyes, but his lips had just a slight gloss across him. He grinned at her when she finished.

“So how do I look?” he asked.

Harley grinned. “Good enough to eat puddin.”

Jack purred. “Really?”

Harley laughed. “Really.”

Jack smiled and stood up, took her hand. “Just like you then my sweets...good enough to eat...again.” Jack waggled his eyebrows at her and made Harley giggle and blush. She was dressed tonight in a short, two piece dress in dark red with a full short skirt with a sleeveless top that laced up her back, she wore a pair of black stilettos and had her hair down, soft waves curling down her back.

“Ready to go sweets?” Jack asked as he slipped his jacket on.

Harley smiled and flipped her skirt up to show the knife on her thigh and the gun on her other thigh--of which the skirt of her outfit did little to hide. Jack wolf whistled at her and winked.

“Now that is one hot outfit.”

Harley laughed. “Everyone is meeting us there, right?”
Jack nodded as he picked up his dark burgundy fedora, slipped it onto his head and put his arm out to her. Harley wrapped her arm around his arm.

“Yup, everyone should be there, the entire gang.” Jack grinned. “Should be fun tonight.”

*

Jack and Harley arrived only to find that they were the last to arrive; the gang was already there.

Jack started to laugh as they walked in, the two of them greeted by the sight of Bane on the dance floor with Duela, the two of them dancing to the sounds of Taylor Swift’s “Ready For It.”

Harley elbowed Jack in the side as they walked past the dance floor to stop him from laughing as they made their way into the club.

Kermit waved from the bar where Jason and Roxy were sitting as Kermit made them some drink that she set on fire. Roxy cheered, clapping her hands while Jason nearly fell off his stool.

Harley could see Thea and Trope where they sat, cuddled close together sharing some multi-colored drink. Alex was on the dance floor with Alice while Frost was dancing with Agatha.

Frank was leaning against the end of the bar flirting with some redhead that Harley didn’t recognize. She saw the twins talking with Angora and Zsasz was in conversation with Gus. Harley smiled. It was nice to see their little family all together like this, having fun. She tightened her grip on Jack’s arm, who glanced sides at his wife with a smile.

Harley saw Fish as they reach the far side of the bar, dressed in a tight fitting gold evening dress that stopped just above her knees with a slit up to her hip. Her legs were crossed showing off the high cut in her dress and the gold, stiletto sandals she wore. Harley could see that Fish had an eyepatch on that covered her missing eye and part of her face. The patch was gold decorated with large gold colored gems that caught the light, complimenting her dress and shoes. Harley smiled. Fish may have lost her eye, but she hadn’t lost her style.

Fish sat in the middle of a series of black couches arranged in a semi-circle that were trimmed with dayglow blue lights. A long oval table stood in the middle that held several bottles of wine, whiskey, vodka and several glasses. There were several people sitting around on the couches that Harley didn’t recognize, but she did see Big Mama. Big Mama was wearing a long light pink crimped wig that picked up the lights of the club, and a very tight white dress decorated with pink roses and a pair of hot pink pumps. The two women sat close together, their heads nearly touching when Big Mama saw Jack and Harley. She stood up and waved at them.

Jack and Harley moved over to greet Big Mama and Fish.

Big Mama grinned. With her drink in one hand she leaned over and did a quick cheek kiss to each of them before she laughed; her voice was just as deep as Harley remembered it. “I’m so glad to see you two!! Everyone is talking about what you did to Maroni’s businesses! Oh my god, it’s just amazing! Everyone is excited to see what is going to happen next.” Big Mama laughed.

Fish had stood up as well with a smile. Harley hurried over and put her arms gingerly around the other woman.

“How are you feeling?” Harley asked.

Fish smiled. “I’m all right dear. Thank you for asking. Can I get you both anything to drink?”
Harley giggled. “I want to try whatever it was Kermit was making over there that she had to set in on fire!”

Jack laughed. “That’s my girl...living life on the edge.”

Fish laughed and made a motion with her hand, catching the attention of one of the bartenders. “What would you like Jack?”

Jack smiled. “Mmm...how about a simple old fashion?”

Harley smiled. “A wine slushie?”

Fish motioned at the bar, somehow indicating Jack and Harley’s drink order with just a motion of her fingers. She smiled and turned to the women and men who sat around the couch with her and Big Mama.

“Everyone, this is Jack Wayne, the leader of the Red Hood gang and the one to whom…”

There was some commotion nearer the front of club. Jack turned just as a shot was fired.

Duella screamed.
Blood and Bullets

Jack turned at the sound of a shout, his attention drawn to the front of the club, he heard the sharp retort of a sidearm being fired, followed by a scream, and then everything erupted into chaos.

Everything seemed to slow down for Jack as he turned. He reached out with one hand to shove Harley behind him at the same time that he twisted on the ball of his left foot; his jacket tail flew out behind him as Jack wrapped his hand around the grip of one of his pistols. The lights of the club became brighter, the music which had changed from the lighter tones of a pop song into something stronger that melded with the steady increase in movement that Jack saw around him as AutoErotique’s “Asphyxiation” started to play.

Everyone in the club turned toward the sound of Duela’s scream which occurred half second after the gunshot went off. Jack thought he caught sight of the bullet only because the lights danced off the silvery metal as it zipped toward the dance floor. Jack’s eyes followed what he knew couldn’t be the bullet, but there it was...

The bullet almost seemed to him to have moved so slowly that he could have reached out and plucked it from the air. The odd sensation of time slowing down made the scene surreal. The bullet ripped completely through one young woman before it caught Duela in the face. There was a bright burst of blood, even under the pale lavender illumination and shifting lights, the blood stood out as the bullet ripped through his gang member’s cheek…

Jack saw her begin to fall, but that was before his attention was called to someone up front by a shout. Jack turned his attention back to the front of the club. The man who yelled was slightly heavy, maybe in his thirties if Jack had to guess. He wore a plain navy suit, had short almost shaved hair, not someone Jack knew, but the man seemed to know him as he yelled.

“JACK WAYNE!! Red Hood!! I want him and I want him DEAD!!”

Chaos blossomed, time sped up. People began to scream, patrons of the club who had nothing to do with Fish or The Red Hood began to scatter, panic taking over as they tried to get out of the way as more bullets were fired into the crowd.

A dozen men (maybe more, with the flashing lights and dimness of the club it was hard to tell) swarmed into the club shooting as they went and it was clear they were not concerned about innocent bystanders. This was a death team, their focus on killing anyone and everyone who got in the way of their targets.

Jack had to wonder who they were or how they knew the Red Hood gang would be here, but he would focus on that question later--right now he had to do what he could to protect his wife and his family.

*

Jason pushed off his stool just as Kermit yelped and dropped down behind the bar. He pulled his weapons, two Arsenal Firearms AF-1 Strike Ones that Jack had given him, a gift for his work with the gang. Jason was fucking proud of these guns, two-tone black and silver, beautiful weapons...he was proud that Jack had given them to him, proud that the Boss had noticed him, proud to be part of this fucking gang he thought. He would do anything for the Red Hood, anything that Jack Wayne asked.
He didn’t know who these men were and he didn’t care. All Jason cared about was that they were after the Boss and he wasn’t going to allow that. People were running and screaming to get out of the way. Over the tops of their heads Jason caught a glimpse of several men in suits breaking off and pushing their way through the crowd.

An opening appeared between Jason and the two men. He took several steps back and crossed his arms when he fired as two men broke off from the group, firing rapidly at the bar. He had seen Kermit drop down seeking cover behind the bar, but Cher, one of the waitresses, didn’t move fast enough. The young woman was struck in the chest, bright red exploding across her torso, the blood dark against the white plastic dress she was wearing. The young woman stumbled back and hit the shelves of colored liquor glasses behind her. Several of the bottles crashed to the floor. He heard someone scream, but he didn’t see who as he fired at the men.

Jason hissed. “Fuck!”

More shots were fired. Jason ducked and weaved, yelling as he did. “Roxy!! A little help here babe!!”

Another gunman that Jason had missed seeing in the darkened room, mixed with the crowd of people who were trying to get out of the club, came around to Jason’s left and slammed into the young man. Jason hit the bar as the man wrapped his large, beefy arms around him. Jason struggled, loosened his right arm enough to slam his fist and pistol into the man’s face. Jason twisted and rolled the man down to the floor. Jason dropped to one knee by the man and shot his opponent in the chest.

Jason surged to his feet while firing rapidly. He was trying to avoid hitting any of the patrons, but he couldn’t be completely concerned about them; compared to his gang, his family, they weren’t that important right now. His bullets found one of the other two men; his shots ripped through the man’s torso. Bug the second gunman rapidly fired as he dove down for cover behind some tables. One bullet ripped through Jason’s shoulder, forced the young man to step backwards, followed by another shot that burned along Jason’s thigh. He stumbled backwards several more steps; the pain was white hot, but Jason pushed it aside. He deliberately took several steps backwards. He thought he could take cover at the end of the bar when he tripped over something on the floor and came crashing down to the floor.

The impact dropped Jason onto his ass. He scooted back and stopped.

Lying in a pool of blood was Roxy, her eyes stared up lifelessly at the ceiling, her chest a mass of red.

Jason’s voice was a whisper, his eyes wide in shock. “Roxy?”

Jason reached out and grabbed Roxy by her arm and dragged her as he pushed himself backwards on his rear as fast as he could. He made it to the end of the bar and yanked Roxy’s lifeless body with him. He couldn’t hear anything over the sounds of the music and the screams. He only partly registered that he moved through something wet and sticky until he hit something that only partially moved.

He turned to see Frank, Alex’s father, lying on his side, his throat was ripped through from a bullet, there was blood pooled under Frank and soaking his shirt. Jason pressed his fingers to the man’s throat...there was nothing, no heartbeat, no breath.

Jason snarled with a slow blink. “Fuck!”

He holstered one of his weapons to pull Roxy’s body up into his lap, and wrapped his arms around
her as he laid her head on his shoulder. He grabbed his other gun and held them both out as he hissed.

“Don’t you dare be dead Roxy...don’t you dare.” Jason’s voice was desperate even though the ugly truth was right there in front of him.

*B*

Bane turned just as he saw Duela shot. Her head jerked back, droplets of blood were highlighted by the lights of the club which made them looked like dark rubies, glittering wetly for a moment before the blood splashed across his body and face. Her body hit the floor, her head bounced, blood splattered the dance floor, her body parted the crowds of dancers like a stone on the surface of a lake.

Bane was hit in the next second as a bullet ripped through his shoulder. The bullet blasted out the front of his shoulder before he had a chance to pull his weapon and turn. The impact of the bullet didn’t register and neither did the pain. Bane’s only response to being shot was a slight grunt.

Instead Bane’s focus was on his dance partner, his fellow gang member lying at his feet. His attention was drawn down to Duela; her face was a bloody mess, he couldn’t make out her mouth, there was so much blood. At first he was sure she was gone, but no sooner had he thought she was dead, than he saw her breathe, bloody bubbles formed on her lips and from her nose. The bloody bubbles reminded Bane of the bubbles formed from blowing into a soda with a straw. The bloody bubbles oozed down her chin and cheeks. She was alive, but for how long he could only guess.

Bane hissed to both his unconscious friend and to himself. “Just hang on Duela, just hang on.” Bane pulled his Glock 19 from his hip while in the same motion he bent down and with one hand, grabbed Duela by the front of her dress. He lifted the unconscious woman easily off the dance floor and over his shoulder. He held his Glock up and pushed people out of his way just as one of the gunmen, a tall, thin man with a thick mustache came into view. Bane had the man right in his sights, a perfect headshot, but when he pulled the trigger there was a click...and nothing.

Bane snarled. “Fuck me!”

The gunman, who had by now seen Bane, grinned and raised his weapon, clearly thinking he had the big man. Bane, still keeping a hold on Duela, rushed the gunman. The man fired but suddenly, having a very large, wounded, very angry man rush at him, his aim went wild. The man realized the large mistake he had made when his vision was filled with the image of a furious Bane.

Bane grabbed the man by the front of his shirt and lifted the gunman off his feet with his free hand. The gunman started to bring his weapon around while he kicked and struggled, but Bane let go of Duela (but still kept her balanced on his shoulder) as he grabbed the man’s gun hand and forced the gun up and under the man’s chin.

Bane growled, “I fucking hate using guns.”

Bane slammed his forehead against the gunman’s face. The gunman cried out in shock at the burst of pain from his now crushed nose, but he only had seconds to contemplate the pain because Bane squeezed his gun hand, forced the man to shoot himself.

Bane jerked back, his face splattered with blood and worse as he hissed again.

“I fucking hate guns.”

*B*
Five gunmen invaded the dancefloor, alternately shoving patrons out of their way or shooting them. Frost saw Duela go down and Bane lift her up in the next moment. Frost heard more shots fired and from the corner of his eye he could see Jason firing his weapons.

Frost cursed and pulled one of his Glock 17’s. He turned looking for Agatha, surprised and pleased when he saw her beside him as Agatha pulled her pistol, a match for his.

Agatha asked, “Who the fuck are they?”

Frost shrugged. “Maroni’s men? Falcone’s? No idea, but they are gunning for us.”

Agatha began to answer him when Frost shoved her to the side and kicked a shaggy headed blond man in the knee and grabbed the same man by the hair. The man was larger, slightly taller than Frost, but Frost had no problem with handling the man.

Frost grabbed the blonde by the hair and yanked him backwards hard enough that the man lost his balance before Frost switched his grip to the man’s face. Frost yanked the man’s head back further, using the blonde’s nose for leverage and used the butt of his gun to hit the man in the throat. The gunman dropped, choking, grabbed at his throat. Frost shot him in the head.

Agatha grinned thinking to herself that was one of the single hottest moves she had ever seen Frost execute. More shots were fired. Agatha turned firing off a few shots of her own, zeroing in on another gunman, this one was bald, wearing sunglasses of all things she thought, as the man tried to get closer to her and Frost.

Agatha’s first shot struck the bald assailant in the shoulder. She couldn’t hear him over the chaos, but she could see the man’s mouth moving. If she were to guess, he was cursing. The bald man reached out and grabbed one of the patrons, a young blonde woman and hauled her in front of him, just as Agatha shot again. Her bullet hit the young woman in the chest.

Agatha cursed as the gunman held the woman’s body up, using her as as shield. He shoved himself through the crowd trying to maneuver around Agatha and Frost. Frost saw two more gunmen trying to get over to Trope and Thea who had stood up and were trying to get to cover. Frost knew for a fact neither one of them carried a gun or a knife since he had began lecturing the two on learning to handle a gun, knife, pepper spray...anything to defend themselves. They were both simply too caught up in their computers and techno gear to realize that they needed to be armed and ready for a fight. Thea was trying to lead Trope over to the far end of the bar where there were some dividers that could conceal the two young women, though the dividers were too thin to provide any real protection.

For a moment Frost thought about going back to stay by Agatha, but he trusted her to defend herself. Trope and Thea needed him.

*

The music had changed to some techno beat that Agatha recognized as Swedish with the heavy beat, and the lights of the club changed flashing with the music. Agatha cursed. She couldn’t get a clear shot of the man as she shoved through the large amount of people acting like stampeding animals. She could see Frost pushing his way through the crowd when she felt someone behind her...her instincts told her to turn.

She spun around just as a young woman grabbed Agatha by the front of her dress and yanked Agatha forward, while at the same time shoving the barrel of a gun against Agatha’s stomach and pulled the trigger three times.
Agatha gasped in surprise more than pain, but she still dropped her gun. When she dropped her weapon she grabbed the young brunette by the wrist that held her pistol and yanked her forward. Agatha brought her knee up and slammed the woman’s arm down on her knee in three quick strikes. The brunette dropped her weapon. Agatha grabbed the younger woman by the back of her neck, kicked her legs out from under her and dropped the brunette to the floor.

Agatha, blood dripping from her wound hissed without remorse, “Sorry about this honey.”

She grabbed the young woman by her head with both hands under the woman’s jaw. Agatha pulled back on the brunette’s head as the woman kicked her feet against the dancefloor creating a hard drumming sound that played along with the music. Agatha hauled back and with a vicious jerk, broke the younger woman’s neck.

Frost shoved people out of his way to get to the girls. He could see Zsasz who had already gunned down two of the mobsters, but he also noted that two more of the gang were down. It looked as if the Phelps twins were down. He couldn’t be sure, but it looked to Frost as if Connor was dead, Sean was wounded, his leg held out at an odd position as he held his brother. It was difficult to make out under the strobing lights in the club, but Frost would swear something was wrong with half of Sean’s face, there was a lot of blood and more blood was pooling under them.

Frost caught a glimpse of Alex who was firing at a couple of men, his pregnant girlfriend lying between his legs. He couldn’t be sure from this angle, but it looked as if Alice had been shot, there was blood on her front, but he couldn’t tell from his position where she had been shot or if it was life-threatening.

Frost felt something cold run through his veins; everything was going to hell quickly. For a moment Frost hesitated...go to protect Trope and Thea, or get to Jack and Harley...he closed his eyes for a second...the Boss and Miss Harley were armed, Trope and Thea were not...Frost hissed in frustration and continued to push his way to the girls. Frost caught sight of Gus who was shooting into the crowd, his right arm held awkwardly at his side, Angora and Clyde were both down...Frost couldn’t tell if they were dead or not, just that there was a lot of blood as he hurried to the girls. So many of the crew were down...so much blood.

When Frost arrived at the girls’ side, Trope was holding onto Thea, her eyes wide, clearly going into shock when Thea screamed and pointed. Frost turned to see a man with short black hair and thick sideburns—a man big enough to make two of Frost—step out of the darkness of the club and fire his gun at them. Frost didn’t think, he only reacted and threw himself in front of the girls just as they screamed.

The bullet hit him in the side, cutting through the meaty section of his hip. He felt it, but not like he
should. Frost was aware he was running on adrenaline and that when this fight was over he was going to be hurting badly, but he didn’t spend any time on thinking about future pain. Instead he focused on protecting Thea and Trope. He almost fell when the bullet hit him, but he fired back. The bullet ripped through the other man’s shoulder, but did nothing to slow the man down.

The gunman, a good head taller than Frost, roared and charged, surprising Frost as the large mobster hit Frost in the chest with his shoulder and lifted him up off his feet. The effect disoriented Frost as his line of sight suddenly became the man’s ass. The lights of the club were flashing brightly, and the air was knocked from him making it difficult to breathe for a few seconds. The girls screamed and threw themselves out of the way as the big gunman turned and threw Frost.

Frost hit the floor and slid across its surface. He almost lost his hold on his gun and then the large mobster charged Frost again. For a moment, as Frost swiftly regained his feet, the thought that this man had to be crazy, charging him instead of shooting occurred to Frost as the big gunman came rushing toward him.

The large man hit Frost just as he got to his feet. Frost didn’t have time to evade, raise his gun or defend himself. So instead of fighting the man, Frost let the mobster lift him off his feet. The big sideburn toting mobster lifted Frost up off his feet, wrapped his arms around Frost’s thighs and held Frost up, continuing to charge forward. It only took Frost a moment to realize the man intended to throw Frost into a wall. Rather than trying to fight his way free, Frost pressed the barrel of his weapon against the back of the man’s neck and unloaded the rest of his magazine.

Frost jerked back as he fired, a few droplets of blood struck his cheeks. The large man stumbled. He took three steps with Frost over his shoulder before he finally hit the ground, falling forward like a tree. Frost tried not to fall with him, but the dead man’s grip around Frost’s legs was too tight. Frost hit the floor with enough force that the air in his lungs exploded out in a whoosh and his head slammed against the floor, made him see stars mixed with the flashing lights.

Frost laid still and blinked several times, but there was no way he was going to stay conscious. He had been hit in the head before and realized a split second before it happened, that he was going to pass out. Damn it, please let everyone be okay, he thought before he succumbed to darkness.

*  

The business people from Panessa’s old territory who had gathered to meet with Jack and Harley all leapt to their feet. There was a moment of chaos as the people gathered shoved and knocked the couches and chairs out of their way. One man was in such a panic that he flipped over the table followed by his own screaming, and running while only two of the people in attendance, a tall, elderly Japanese man and a tiny Latina woman both pulled their own weapons that were concealed on them and took up positions to shoot back at the invaders.

Harley stepped up next to her husband, the fingers of one hand glided along Jack’s shoulder in a touch that told him she was at his side, she trusted him and she was ready.

Big Mama, at the first sign of trouble, yanked her dress up to reveal a Smith & Wesson 500 Magnum strapped to her leg by a couple of double belts around her thigh.

She pulled the weapon loose and snarled. “Bunch of cunts.”

Jack chuckled before he yelled out, somehow making himself heard over the sounds of the music, the screaming and the sheer panic in the club. “You looking for me boys?” The man who had given the order when the shooters first came into the club turned and saw Jack. Jack frowned, saw something familiar about him, his features--dark hair, a certain set to his shoulders and
eyes...definitely a Maroni Jack decided. There was something about his features that reminded Jack of Sal Maroni. Jack had spent enough time with Sal that he had become intimately aware of Sal Maroni’s features—before they became unrecognizable as human. This man had to be related to Maroni somehow, Jack would bet his life on it...Jack narrowed his eyes as he realized that he was doing just that...

Jack frowned with a glance toward his wife. “I still have no idea who that is, but I’m sure he is related to Maroni.”

Harley frowned with a barely perceptible nod. “Maybe he’ll give you a chance to ask.”

Jack snorted. “I really don’t think he is in the mood for talking.”

Harley asked more softly, leaning close to her husband’s ear. “You think Falcone sent them?”

Jack snarled. “It doesn’t matter...this lands on Falcone’s doorstep regardless.”

With a motion of his fingers, the mobster across the club sent several of the his men to spread out to flank Jack, Fish, Big Mama and the two business owners who had stayed to fight while his other men had already begun to shoot at patrons, Red Hood gang—anyone in their way.

Jack hissed. “I don’t want anyone left alive.”

Jack began to shove his way through the crowd his wife at his side. One of Maroni’s men (Jack began to think of them as Maroni’s) rushed forward. Jack shot the man without taking his eyes off his target...the Maroni who was leading this attack.

* 

Dino Maroni pushed his way closer. He was forced to move toward the bar as people kept getting in his way. For a moment, a brief second, he saw Jack Wayne coming toward him with a pretty blonde beside him. There was a second of hesitation on Dino’s part...a flash of indecision...a doubt that he had made the right decision coming into this place and going after the Red Hood gang because the look in Jack Wayne’s eyes sent a shiver of fear down his spine.

Dino’s hip hit the bar, which forced him to turn or he would have tripped over one of several downed bar stools. He glanced over at one of his men, Augustus whose mother was a cousin to Dino’s uncle. He motioned at Augustus who was immediately was at his side.

“Get Marco and Hugo over here now!” Dino snarled.

No sooner were the words out of Dino’s mouth than Jack was there, emerging from the crowd like a phantom, his gun aimed at Dino’s head.

“Who the fuck are you?” Jack snarled.

Dino raised his own weapon. “Dino Maroni!”

Jack grinned. “I love it when I’m right.”

Jack was about to shoot when something slammed into Jack’s right hand. The impact send a vibration up Jack’s arm which forced his hand open and he dropped his weapon. There had been a flash, light reflecting off metal...a knife, Jack quickly concluded.

Jack hissed, the impact stung enough that Jack thought for a moment that he might have a broken
bone and from the strange numbness that started at his fingers and raced up his arm, Jack was pretty sure he had just gotten his finger broken. He spun around to see a large man wearing a pair of very large, very round glasses.

Jack didn’t throw any witty banter at the man, instead he turned and rushed Dino pushing people out of his way as he closed the short distance in a heartbeat.

Dino brought his gun up and pulled the trigger, but Jack was already past the barrel of the gun, inside Maroni’s reach. He slapped Dino’s gun hand wide and the shot went off missing Jack.

Jack grabbed Dino’s gun hand. The two men struggled as Jack tried to get the weapon out of Dino’s hand and Dino fought to keep a hold of it. A few more shots went off hitting a woman and a young man in the crowd as Jack struggled with Dino.

Dino yelled at the other man. “AUGUSTUS KILL HIM!!”

Augustus rushed forward. Jack still maintained a hold on Dino’s arm, but was forced to turn his back to Dino as he reached for something, anything. Jack’s hand slapped along the bar counter. For a few precious seconds there was nothing, but napkins, a toothpick, before his hand wrapped around a glass still miraculously sitting on the bar untouched.

Jack shattered the glass against the side of the bar, sent the amber contents splattering everywhere just as Augustus came at him, Jack thrust his arm out without looking and the broken glass slammed into the hollow of Augustus’ throat.

Augustus gasped in shock and took several steps back, the broken glass stuck in his throat.

Jack turned his attention back fully to Dino.

Dino had wrapped his gun arm around Jack from behind, the gun still in his hand. Jack twisted and struggled with the man who was surprisingly strong. Jack tried to slam the man’s hand against the bar to break his grip on the gun, but he couldn’t quite get into a position to give the action enough power to break Dino’s hold.

Jack hissed, perspiration dotting his forehead; the clubs lights made Jack look as if he were shimmering. Jack reached out and grabbed a piece of the broken glass that had scattered across the counter. The shard cut into Jack’s palm as he wrapped his hand around it and slammed the shard into Dino’s wrist.

Dino cried out, his hand popped open and he dropped his weapon.

The pain and surprise gave Jack an opportunity to break free of Dino’s hold. The two men continued to struggle as Dino twisted around and grabbed Jack around the waist. Jack wrapped an arm around Dino’s neck forcing the man’s head forward and into the bar. He wasn’t able to get enough power behind the move to cause Dino any real damage or to loosen his grip as the two men swung around.

Jack still had the broken glass in his now bloody hand. Holding Dino’s head against his side, Jack stabbed at the man’s face with the broken glass, cutting deep and bloody gouges across Dino’s cheeks, completely stabbing through Dino’s nose and into one of his eyes. The man screamed loudly while he continued to struggle. His fighting to break free of Jack became manic as the pain sent Dino into a crazed thrashing. Jack released his grip on Dino, grabbed the man by his hair and yanked him toward the bar. Jack lifted Dino up just enough to slam his head on the bar counter.
Jack took the piece of broken glass that had by now cut deeply enough into his palm that Jack would need stitches, and thrust the glass down into the side of Dino’s throat. There was a burst of blood that splattered Jack in the face, blinding him for a moment. Jack grinned and yanked the glass out, then let the man go, taking a step back from the bar as Dino slipped to the floor, a hand going up to his throat, but the wound was a fountain of blood. Dino looked up at Jack with his one eye, astonishment clear in his expression, blood thickly pouring from his throat.

Jack grinned at the same time he wiped Dino’s blood from his face with the back of his hand. “I bet this wasn’t how you thought this was going to play out, was it?”

Suddenly Jack was hit in the side, the air knocked out of him. He winced as one of his ribs popped, and pain radiated up his side.

The Jack and whoever had hit him tripped over a couple of downed stools, both of them hit the floor with a bone jarring impact. Jack gasped when his back hit the ground, the pain from the rib, broken or dislocated, sucked the breath out of him for a second. He turned his head and his eyes widened in shock. He saw Frank’s body…and Jason holding a clearly dead Roxy at the corner of the bar.

Jason saw Jack and for a moment his expression turned to something hopeful, but in the next moment Augustus was on Jack. Augustus hit Jack across the jaw with his fist. Jack tasted blood in his mouth as he struggled to block the next blow. The man’s fists hit Jack’s forearms.

Jason aimed his weapon, but the two men were quickly entangled taking away any clean shot Jason might have had. Jason cursed. He didn’t want to take a chance and shoot Jack…

Jack gasped, his breathing labored from the dislocated rib and now the compression on his throat when Augustus twisted around and wrapped his legs around Jack’s neck and grabbed his left arm. The man yanked back hard enough that he was going to break it. Jack hissed in pain as he struggled, wheezing. He stabbed the man several times in the thigh blindly, smearing blood everywhere from his wounded hand and the blood that was flying from stabbing the other man and trying to break Augustus hold on him. Augustus let out a cry as Jack’s glass blade cut deep enough that Jack could finally break Augustus’ hold.

The two men struggled again and twisted around, the slick floor made the two of them slip and slide around a bit as they tried to grab and overpower the other. Jack gained the upper hand for only a moment before Augustus slammed him back to the floor, a knife in his hand, the multicolored lights of the club reflecting off of the blade.

Augustus grinned viciously and snarled, his expression morbid with the deep neck wound Jack had inflicted upon him. “Now you are going to die.”

“Knives are so much fun aren’t they? You get to be up close and see the play of emotions on your victim’s face…” Jack chuckled. “It’s enlightening isn’t it?

Jack had dropped his glass and wrapped both hands around Augustus’ arm to prevent the knife from going into his eye.

The two men were sweating, blood dripped onto Jack’s lips from his hand wound, his breath was labored, pain shot up his side from his rib as he struggled against the bigger man’s attempt to stab him. Jack had to take a chance. He let go with one hand and with his wounded hand he hit Augustus in the throat where Jack had stabbed him with the broken glass.

Augustus choked, his grip loosening. Jack twisted his head to the side, though the knife’s tip cut into his cheek. Jack took that opportunity to reach up with his free arm to twist his weakening foe’s head
to the side and slam him to the floor while at the same time twisting Augustus’ hand holding the blade to face him. With their positions reversed, Jack put all his weight against Augustus’ hand that held the blade, Jack’s hands wrapped around his so that Augustus couldn’t release the knife. Augustus reached up with his other hand to grip Jack around his face, his thumb against Jack’s eye and began to push against Jack’s eye.

Jack snarled and surged against the blade, pain radiating from his eye, his badly wounded hand, his dislocated rib, until Augustus’ arm suddenly just gave out and the blade sliced cleanly into Augustus’ throat.

* 

Just as Jack had been disarmed, Harley’s wrist was grabbed by a man with pock scarred cheeks Harley only came up to the middle of the man’s chest, which forced her to look up when the man squeezed her hand hard enough that her fingers were forced open and then he yanked her arm up slightly.

Harley gasped in pain as the mobster squeezed hard enough that she thought her wrist would pop.

The man, Marco, grinned at Harley. “Hello angel.”

He twisted her toward him and yanked her forward, slugging her across the face while keeping a hold of her other arm. Harley gasped in pain as her head snapped to the side; she tasted blood and the impact left her slightly stunned. Marco grinned and with a flourish, used Harley’s arm to twist her over his shoulder and slam her back against the floor.

Harley gasped painfully as her breath was forced from her lungs with the impact. Marco stepped over her to straddle her while he kept a hold of her wrist. Harley flung her right leg up in an attempt to kick him in the groin, but he blocked her leg with a simple twist of one of his legs. Harley frowned as she tucked her legs and rolled backwards in a somersault, coming back up on her feet while breaking his hold on her wrist at the same time.

Marco took another swing at her, but instead of simply stopping her roll, Harley did a quick series of cartwheels and a backflip to put some distance between them. People scattered out of her way as Harley cartwheeled to the middle of the dance floor ending with a second full backflip. She grinned, momentarily pleased with herself that she had pulled off her evasion even in heels. Jack would be so proud of her she thought.

She spun around to face Marco again, but the large man had simply grabbed a fallen stool at the bar and threw it at her. Harley yelped and ducked. The stool just barely missed her, but it was enough of a distraction for Marco to charge her.

He took another couple of swings at her, but Harley was ready, ducking and dodging and using her forearms to deflect--rather than block--his heavy blows. She took a couple of swings herself, but Marco easily blocked her, thrusting her arms wide enough that he was able to take a shot at her and punched her squarely in the face. Harley gasped at the suddenly flood of blood from her nose. It hurt like a sonofabitch, but as she wiggled it with her thumb and forefinger, she was fairly confident it wasn’t broken.

“Asshole!” Harley hissed as she spit blood.

Marco grinned at her. “You are fast and quite flexible angel.”

“I ain’t your angel,” Harley snarled. She yanked her knife from its sheath on her thigh, another
distraction for the mobster as Marco’s eyes went straight to where she had lifted her dress. Harley threw her knife at him. She had never thrown her knife before; she knew she wasn’t good at it, but she didn’t need it to hit him. Marco knocked her knife out of the air, but Harley used it to give her a moment to come in quickly, moving under his guard. She wrapped her hands around the back of his neck once she was close, and lifted herself up, wrapping her legs around his shoulders at the same time twisting herself up onto his shoulders. She used her body as leverage to fling the man down to the floor.

Harley hit hard, the floor meeting her shoulder with a painful impact, but she kept her hold on the mobster and grabbed his arm as they both fell. She stretched his arm out against her body, trying her best to break the bone, while at the same time squeezing his throat with her legs. Harley was thankful she had worn a short skirt that gave her lots of room to use her legs.

Marco punched Harley in the thigh hard enough that she lost her hold. He thrust her legs off of him and rose to his feet quickly. Harley rolled swiftly to her feet and started to take a few steps to give herself some distance from him when Marco grabbed her and spun her around at the same time he yanked his own knife out. Harley squeaked as she was spun around and Marco slashed at her. Harley brought her arm up to protect her face and throat. The knife cut deeply across her forearm, made blood flow from the wound dark against her skin. Harley yelped and stumbled back before she surprised him by jumping up and snapping her leg out; the heel of her shoe cut across the man’s forearm. He stumbled back a step before he lunged at her again. Harley dived under his swing, but the heel of her shoe snapped, throwing her off balance. Marco took advantage, slashing at her again, the knife cut a thin line across her chin. Harley rolled away from him, at the same time yanking off her shoes and throwing them at the big man.

The shoes hit harmlessly against Marco’s arms as he batted them away.

Marco smiled and stalked toward her. “Come on angel, we don’t have to fight.”

“Oh, I think we do,” Harley snarled as Marco came close enough that Harley flung herself to the floor, landing on her side and wrapped her legs around his, sweeping him off his feet. Harley reached back over her head and pushed herself up to her feet with a little jump just as Marco began to get to his feet, his hand still wrapped around his knife. He had one leg bent, ready to push himself up as Harley rushed him using his bent leg to propel herself up and onto his shoulders again. She brought her arm up and slammed her elbow down on the his shoulder with enough of an impact that he dropped down to both knees, but the impact of her elbow wasn’t enough to put him out of the fight. She jumped off of him, but he grabbed her ankle and pulled hard, knocking her flat on her face.

Harley twisted onto her back and kicked him in the face with her free leg. Marco cursed pushing himself to his feet while he kept a hold of her ankle and tried to drag her at the same time he tried to stab her again with his knife.

Harley surprised herself when she folded herself to grab his wrist, twisted his arm and grabbed the knife. She cut her fingers on the blade, but was still able to twist the knife around and slash at him. Harley spun around on her back—the slickness of the floor made that easy—which brought her other leg around at the same time Marco (who still held her ankle) made the mistake of yanking back. This brought her body up closer to his, but allowed Harley to kick with her free foot and knock the mobster off his feet. Harley slashed deeply into Marco’s leg, cut his hamstring with her stolen knife. She swiftly stood and turned around to stab Marco in the chest three times in rapid succession before she stumbled away from him, the bloody knife still in her hand.

Harley blinked and then saw a man standing there, staring at her. He was dressed like the others,
navy suit, but this man had a goatee. She didn’t know it, but the man was named Hugo. He had his gun on her, aimed at her chest but there was something in his eyes, even in the dim light that he knew this was a very bad idea. Just when Harley wasn’t sure if he was going to pull the trigger or not, another gunshot rang out through the club. Harley jerked in response and looked down at herself, but there was no wound on her. She looked back at the man who held the gun on her and saw that a hole had erupted in the the man’s cheek as his head was knocked to the side in an explosion of blood, bone and mess of tissue…

Then he collapsed.

Harley stood there in shock for a moment; her eyes shifted to the side and behind the now dead mobster where she saw Jack standing, both hands around his pistol which was aimed at where the dead man had been standing only moments ago.

His gaze met hers, his blue eyes melting from ice to warmth in seconds.

“Puddin!!” Harley ran to him.

Jack opened his arms to catch her.

*

Jack stood outside what looked like an abandoned building. His suit was stiff with dried blood, his hair was a mess and hanging down around his face. His right hand was bandaged, a splint on his broken ring finger, bandages wrapped around his palm against the stitches, his chest and side hurt from the dislocated rib. Getting it put back in place had not been fun, he had to admit. He only stood still for a moment, staring out into the darkness. There was only one street lamp that provided any illumination on an otherwise dark street. Jack stared into that darkness for several beats before he began to pace again, smoking angrily on his cigarette, his lips set in a grim line and his jaw muscles working as he gritted his teeth.

He threw the butt down and awkwardly pulled his cigarettes and lighter from his jacket pocket. He took one out and looked into the cigarette package. He had six left. Jack cursed and lit the cigarette, took a hard pull and held the smoke inside his lungs before he slowly a smokey breath out. They were at a hospital run by Henderschott, a hospital for those who didn’t want to be questioned by hospital staff or the police, for those who worked the darker side of Gotham. The place looked like an abandoned building, and the inside wasn’t much better, but Henderschott had a fully equipped hospital inside with staff, all who were paid well to keep their mouths shut and care for their specialized patients.

Jack closed his eyes and let the tobacco calm him, if only a little. They had lost five people, five members of the gang—dead. Alice had been shot and had gone into labor, but Henderschott had saved both her and the baby, keeping her from delivering early. Alex’s father Frank was dead. Everyone else except Zsasz, Trope and Thea, had suffered some sort of wound.

The Red Hood gang was in shambles, nearly broken.

Duela would be permanently scarred from the bullet that had ripped through her cheek. Agatha...thankfully, Jack thought, would live, though she was going to be out of commission for a while. His aunt was a tough one, a Wayne. Frost, Bane, Jason...all wounded, but on their feet, Gus was maimed, Roxy was gone, and Fish was dead. Big Mama had stayed behind to clean up the mess…

The entrepreneur had discovered that they had been betrayed by one of the people there to meet with
Jack, one of the businessmen had told Dino Maroni where and when they were meeting; someone too scared of Maroni and Falcone to give the Hood a chance. Jack had made sure that his inability to trust had ended poorly. Jack closed his eyes. Harley...his Harley was alive with only a couple of wounds, scars she would bear, perhaps forever. Jack took another hard drag on his cigarette and his lip trembled. If anything had happened to her Jack didn’t know what he would have done...how he would have...He released the smoke slowly, clamping down on the tremor and the burn in his eyes. He wiped angrily at the tears that burned his eyes as he walked back and forth across the crumbling sidewalk...Harley was alive and she was fine. She was just inside checking on his aunt and Alice.

Jack exhaled a heavy breath of smoke as his hand shook slightly again. This entire thing had been one large clusterfuck. He had to figure out what had gone wrong (besides the betrayal), what he ought to have done, and make certain that nothing like this happened again.

He stopped pacing and leaned against the building when the door opened and Harley, barefoot and bandaged, walked out. Seeing her made Jack’s heart thump hard inside his chest.

She hurried over to him and Jack held the cigarette between his lips while he opened his arms. Harley rushed into his embrace, wrapped her arms around his waist. Jack pulled her close against him, and held her tight. Her presence calmed the rage he was feeling, his almost unbearable rage…

He cupped the back of her head, held her close as he tossed the cigarette away and kissed her hair.

“How are you doing sweets?” Jack asked gently.

“I’m all right puddin,” she said quietly. “Are you okay?” She looked up at him resting her bandaged chin on his chest.

Jack closed his eyes. “No, Harley—I’m angry.”

“Me too puddin,” she said softly. “I can’t believe Roxy and Frank are gone…”

He stroked her hair. She could feel the tremble in his hand, but she tightened her arms around his waist, stood on her toes and pressed her mouth to his. Jack tightened his hold on her, cradling her head as he kissed her deeply. Having her close, tasting her, smelling her, everything about her made him relax.

She pulled away just a little to whisper. “You aunt was asking for you.”

Jack nodded. “Let’s go inside then.”

* 

Agatha was lying in a hospital bed. She had come out of surgery a couple of hours ago and had only been awake for a short time. Frost was already in the room when Harley and Jack stepped in, as was Dr. Henderschott.

The physician nodded at Jack and Harley when they entered. “Your aunt is doing well. I should be able to send her home in a few days.”

Agatha, though groggy, groaned. “A few days?”

The doctors sighed. “Yes Miss Wayne, a few days. That’s actually quite a short time, considering you were shot three times remember.”

Agatha stuck her tongue out at the doctor who chuckled turning back to Jack. “The rest of your
people will all be able to leave tonight except Alice and Gus.”

Jack nodded. “Thank you doctor.”

Henderschott smiled and left the room.

Jack moved over to his aunt’s side and carefully wrapped his arms around her shoulders. “I’m so glad you’re going to be fine.”

Agatha smiled and put her arms around Jack with only a small grimace of discomfort. “I’m glad I’m all right too. Been a while since I’ve been shot like that.” She gave Jack a kiss on the cheek. “How are you two?”

Agatha laughed, then winced. “Oh damn.”

Jack stood up, glanced at Frost who had his shirt and jacket resting on his shoulders, the bullet wounds bandaged up. The man looked tired and pale, but whole. Jack started to pace again. “I’m taking Falcone out now...no more waiting.”

Agatha glanced at Harley and Frost. “Jack, I don’t…”

“No.” Jack snarled and turned toward his aunt. “Five of our people are dead! The rest of you...no.”

Jack shook his head as his nostrils flared in anger. “Maroni was Falcone’s pet, his lieutenant and his responsibility. Anything that a Maroni did can be traced back to the old man’s doorstep and this...it may have been a Maroni who pulled the trigger, but it is Falcone who is responsible.” Jack’s voice was low, filled with rage so hot and thick Harley could almost feel it across her skin. He growled more than he spoke. “This won’t go unanswered. He killed my family. My friends! I’m sick of these fucking mobsters!” Jack stabbed at the air. Harley could feel something different in her husband’s tone, in his demeanor. A line had been crossed and Jack was pushing back against that.

“Gotham belongs to me now and I am going to bring revenge down on them for what happened like a fucking GOD!” He turned suddenly and slammed his good hand, balled into a tight fist, into the wall, causing everyone in the room to jump. “I will so utterly destroy Falcone that no one will ever think about going against me and my family again.” His voice was a deadly whisper. Harley frowned when she thought she heard a tiny giggle escape Jack’s lips, but then he stepped back from the wall and turned to Frost.

“Tomorrow, we go to ACE Chemicals. We kill anyone and everyone there and we burn it to ash. Then we are going to go visit Falcone.” Jack smiled slowly. “I want to see how he feels about trying a few of the drugs he's made from my gas, maybe see how he likes what I’m going to come up with next.”

* *

Bruce pulled his cowl off and wiped his brow with the back of his gloved hand. He glanced over at Dick who grinned from ear to ear as he removed his mask too. The young man was dressed in a suit of his own design. Red and black were the dominant colors, red chest piece, the rest black, black cape trimmed in red. The only other color Dick wore was around the black “R” on his left breast, trimmed in a dark gold. He had put the uniform together with help from Alfred. This had been Dick’s first night out, much sooner than Bruce had counted on, but the young man was determined and he had shown progress. Bruce hadn’t been able to come up with a good enough reason to delay the young man any further. Dick trained almost too much, asking questions, performed research, showed dedication and discipline; he was as ready as he could be without actually going out onto the rooftops of Gotham. Bruce mused about how differently things might have been if he hadn’t trained
alone, if he had had a mentor to guide him, but there was no point dwelling on the past. He had the future to look out for, a sidekick to train, a son, a brother-in-arms...

Robin was the code name Dick had chosen when Bruce gave him the option to choose his own name, the nickname his mother had given him, her little Robin was what she had called Dick, her little Robin flying through the air. Bruce hadn’t said anything against the name, and he hadn’t argued with Dick about his color choices, not when he realized what the young man was doing. He was honoring the memory of his parents by wearing the colors of their circus costumes. Bruce wondered what he would have worn to honor his parents if he had thought about it. He had chosen black for so many reasons, not just because the bat was black. He had chosen it for the shadows, partly, but if he was more honest with himself, he might admit that he chose the color for mourning. He mourned the lost of his family, his parents, and his brother by wearing black each night. Bruce dismissed his morbid thoughts in order to tackle the puzzle at hand. He pulled out the chair in front of the Batcomputer and sat down. Tonight had been Robin’s first time out, the focus being to teach Dick how to navigate Gotham when he had heard the call about a massacre at a nightclub.

When they had arrived, Batman had stayed out of the way. The police were already on the scene, so instead he had Alfred patch him into the police radio. He had learned that there were several dead patrons, including the owner, Fish Mooney, whom he had heard about though never spoken to. But the information that interested him the most was when he heard that one of the bodies had been identified as Dino Maroni.

Now back at the cave, Bruce typed in the information as Dick stepped up behind him and put a hand on the back of the high backed chair.

“So who is Dino Maroni?” Dick asked.

“Actually no one,” Bruce answered calmly. “It’s who he’s related to that’s important and that is Sal Maroni, one of Carmine Falcone’s lieutenants. It was known that Sal did some work in Panessa’s territory, a little protection racket for extra cash, and Dino was part of that. Falcone didn’t care about what Sal did on the side, as long as it didn’t interfere with his work for him, and Panessa could do nothing about—he wasn’t at the table and had little real power.” Bruce frowned, glanced back at his protege. “But what I find interesting is that someone, this Red Hood from what my sources tell me, burned down all of Maroni’s holdings. Several months before that, it was Panessa who was the target. It's as if someone is working their way up to Falcone.”

Dick frowned. “What does that have to do with the club and the shootout there?”

Bruce frowned in thought. “Fish Mooney’s place was in Panessa territory. Word has it that this Red Hood gang had taken all of Panessa’s territories. I betting that Maroni still wanted his protection fees paid and the Red Hood gang disagreed. Now Sal Maroni is missing, his properties destroyed and now Dino Maroni ends up dead in a club that belongs to the Red Hood.”

Bruce frowned. He needed to learn about this Red Hood and fast. If his guess was right, a gang war was about to erupt.

And Gotham had enough problems as it was.

* 

Across the city, Falcone cursed loudly and colorfully. Smoke billowed from his mouth as he angrily smoked his cigar. Gigi wore only a green teddy, sat curled on the edge of the large queen size bed, and watched him as he paced. He was dressed only in his slacks, white dress shirt, shoes and his suspenders. They had been in the middle of what was turning into a heavy make-out session when
Alfredo Bertinelli had called to tell Carmine about Dino. Carmine finally stopped prowling the room, grabbed up his cellphone and hit a number. After a second he sneered.

"Tiseu, I want extra men on several of my properties, tonight. You know which ones I’m talking about. Yes, I’m expecting trouble from that cazzo Red Hood gang. Yeah, I’m positive they have something do with Dino. I’m expecting them to make a move on me and I want extra security.”

Carmine started to hang up, but stopped himself. “And put some extra men on ACE Chemicals too.”

He waited and listened to Tiseu before he spoke again. “Look Tiseu--I don’t appreciate my orders being questioned. If you can’t do it I will find...Good. I want it done now.” Carmine hung up and tossed the phone onto the dresser before he walked back over to sit down next to Gigi.

Gigi crawled behind him and began to rub his shoulders. “Everything okay, honey bear?”

Falcone smiled at her over his shoulder. “It’s fine, just business.”

“You sure honey?” Gigi shifted around and Falcone pulled her onto his lap. He nodded.

“Just a Wayne being a pain in my side.”

*

It was late morning. They had returned to the park only an hour or so ago, but Jack hadn't rested. He had showered, thrown on some black slacks and a blood red dress shirt without bothering to button it and had stormed out of the house barefoot to walk across the park to his lab. Frost, Bane, Thea, Trope, Jason and Zsasz were coming over tonight. They were going to hit ACE Chemicals hard tonight. Jack was unwilling to wait. He was more than angry; he was livid.

The true start of the war with the Gotham mob would be tonight.

Harley had thrown on a simple white backless sundress with a little flared skirt and a pair of panties after their shower, not bothering with a bra or with fixing her hair. She had simply combed her hair out to let it air dry. She sighed as she ran the brush through her hair feeling the edges of the warm buzz that signaled that her pain medication was beginning to work. Jack had refused any medication. She wasn’t sure if he was hurting or not but he hadn’t been himself since last night. He had smoked through his package of cigarettes before they left the underground hospital, having stopped to buy a carton before they returned home. He had chain-smoked through another pack before they had showered. She had never seen him smoke like that, clearly aggravated, barely balanced on the edge, his temper simmering just under the surface. He wasn’t calming down at all, it seemed.

She was worried about him, worried about the gang, worried about what was going to happen next.

She made her way down the stairs of their home barefoot. The house was quiet, somber as if the walls felt the shift in mood. Jack had been in the lab for well over an hour and Harley decided that he needed a break. What he needed, she thought, was some food and a few hours sleep, but she would settle for getting her husband to eat. She made her way into the kitchen, made Jack a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and some chocolate milk. She picked up the plate and glass and headed across the amusement park to her husband’s lab in the back of the haunted house ride.

*

Harley could hear music playing through the walls of the amusement ride before she even entered through the front of the haunted house. Jack always had his music loud when he worked, but from the sound of it, he had his music cranked up to deafening levels.

Harley could heard the sounds of Foo Fighters “The Pretender” playing loudly as she made her way
down the tracks to find the door to his lab ajar.

She didn’t bother trying to call out to Jack as she used her hip to push the door the rest of the way open and headed inside.

She saw Jack, his back to her, with goggles covering his eyes, his shirt discarded over the back of a chair as he poured lime green liquid from a glass beaker carefully into a small, round container. She had no idea what he was doing, but it looked dangerous to her. She took a moment to admire his back, the lean muscles, the curve of his spine, which her eyes traced down to his slacks.

She walked over to where the stereo sat and set his food down before she reached over to turn the music down to a whisper.

Jack turned around with a frown that turned into a faint smile on his lips that all too quickly faded.

“Harley, sweets, I’m busy--why are you here?” Jack went back to what he had been doing.

Harley frowned at him before she picked up the food and she walked over to him. “I brought you some food. You need to eat puddin.”

Jack snarled. “I’m busy.”

Harley narrowed her eyes and slammed the plate down on the table near him. She didn’t notice that she had broken the plate cleanly in half. “You are going to eat,” she said evenly.

Jack--still facing away from her--set the container down and repositioned the glass beaker he held back in the metal tripod at his elbow.

“Harley, I need to get everything done for tonight. I don’t have time to eat.” Jack walked over to the other side of the room. He was still so angry she thought, almost blindly angry.

Harley followed him and put her hand on his shoulder and started to pull him around. “Jack, you need…”

Jack spun around and grabbed her by her waist. He yanked her in front of him and kissed her hard, pressing her lips against her teeth, his fingers pressed against her thighs and dragged up her skin, while he shoved her back until the counter pressed almost painfully into her flesh. The metal of the brace on his broken finger was chilled, creating goosebumps across her skin.

Harley made a muffled sound of surprise as Jack pressed his body hard against her, the edge of the table pressed uncomfortably into her lower back as he reached up and grabbed her breasts with both hands squeezing just a little too hard, but she couldn't stop herself from becoming hot; her body immediately responded to her husband attentions.

Harley reached up and wrapped her hands around the back of his head, one hand went into his hair and tugged him closer. She opened her mouth against his, welcoming his tongue and biting at his lips. Jack did the same, though his kisses bordered on savage as Jack lifted her up, reaching behind her to wipe away whatever was on the table to send glass and any number of other things crashing to the floor before he dropped her on the table, all while his mouth never left her lips.

Jack set her on the table edge and reached up to grab the front of her dress, then tore it down the front. Even with his broken finger, and torn up hand, Jack easily ripped the thin material. He growled as his eyes raked over her nearly naked body. He reached up to squeeze her breasts again, then he kissed her savagely; his mouth raked down from her lips, his tongue licked down her throat. He used the full flat of his tongue to trace the line of her throat to her shoulder where he bit down on her hard
enough to bruise her. He dipped his head down lower and sucked at her nipples, his hands squeezed
and shoved her breasts up and together, his teeth caught one of her nipples and tugged in a
combination of pleasure and pain that made Harley cry out.

“Jack!”

Jack attacked her throat again, his teeth found the tender flesh of her neck, biting and sucking as he
continued to squeeze her breasts, his thumbs stroked hard against her tender nipples. He pressed
down on them, then, slid the flat of his thumb back and forth while he bruised her throat with his lips
and teeth.

Harley groaned her breasts were on fire, his touch made her body ache. She wanted him to fuck her
hard, to feel him pierce her while he pressed his teeth into her. Harley dragged her nails down his
shoulders and along his chest, leaving angry red lines against his skin.

Jack dug his teeth into her bottom lip, the combination of pain and pleasure had her groin throbbing.
Harley dropped her hands to the table and wrapped her fingers around the edge as Jack reached
down to yanked at her panties. He stopped to tear the thin cloth, ripped them from her body before
he tossed the ruined garment to the floor.

Harley sat up and her fingers went to his slacks. She worked quickly to undo the button and zipper.
She shoved them, along with his boxers, below his hips. Jack took a few precious moments to shake
the slacks and boxers down his legs before he kicked them off and across the room.

Harley looked down. His erection was hard, swollen with need, she could see a single drop of semen
on the tip of his erection. Her breath picked up as she reached down and wrapped her hand around
him.

Jack jerked as she squeezed, his eyes rolled closed as he growled. “Harley...Harls…”

He grabbed her, yanked her to the edge of the table.

Harley released her hold on him as Jack pulled her closer and shoved himself into her.

Harley cried out, wrapped her arms around his shoulders as her legs went up around his waist.

Jack fucked hard and fast, pounded into her, his hands gripping her hips as he held her against the
table’s edge. He pressed his fingers painfully into her hips while lightning jolts of agony raced up his
arm from his damaged hand, the pull of the stitches in his palm, the ache of his broken finger shot up
his arm, but he held onto her, thrusting hard and fast into his wife.

Harley groaned and dug her nails into his skin. She held on to him as if her life depended on it. She
dropped her hands to reach around and grab his ass, her legs held up, dangling slightly as he pressed
fully into her.

Harley, gasped, tensed as Jack fucked her hard, continued to pound into her, bouncing her up with
each thrust until she cried out with intense pleasure. She wrapped her arms and legs tight around him,
squeezed against him, her entire body folded around Jack when she climaxed.

Jack groaned loudly when he felt her clamp down around him, her body tight and holding him. He
wrapped his arms around her, held her close just as he came with a loud, guttural hiss.

Jack continued to thrust just a few more times, but slowly, tenderly, riding the last waves of his
orgasm.
Harley laid her head against his shoulder. Her body shuddered and twitched. Neither of them moved for what seemed forever to Harley until Jack lifted her off the table and together they sank to the floor of the lab. He sat down, staying inside her, held her tightly against him.

Harley kept her arms and legs wrapped snugly around Jack until he settled down before she loosened her grip only slightly. She stroked her fingers through his hair, softly, brushed his hair back from his face before she caressed him with tender, butterfly light kisses along his shoulder, his neck and across his jaw until she reached his mouth. Jack cradled her head as he returned her kisses with a slow burning passion. He took his time with each lick of his tongue, the press of his lips as he tried to communicate the depth of his feelings to her.

Harley smiled and kissed his cheek, then the side of his mouth. “You could never hurt me puddin, never.”

Jack reached up and stroke both hands down her still slightly damp, clean hair. He tucked strands of her hair behind her ears and stared with concern into her blue eyes. “I’m sorry,” he said softly. “I’m sorry I was so rough.”

“I understand Jack. I’m angry too.” Harley stroked his hair back behind his ears. “I want to hurt Falcone back just as much as you.”

Jack kissed her again before he pulled her close again, his arms wrapped tight around her. “I don’t know what I would do without you Harls. I don’t know what I would have done if…”

Harley pulled back enough to cut him off with a tender kiss. “Shh...we’re together puddin and we are going to do this together too. Besides, lover, I liked what we just did.”

She looked at him through hooded eyes and gave him a smile.

Jack laid his head against her shoulder and held her tight. “I love you Harley.”

Harley closed her eyes and held her husband. “I love you too.”

*  

Evening felt hot and humid in Gotham.

Jack sat on the couch, his legs crossed, a cigarette in his black gloved hand. He was dressed in a dark plum colored three piece suit with a crisp white shirt, burgundy tie, his hair slicked back, eyes outlined and lips painted. Harley sat next to him in a pair of black fitted slacks, a bright blue blouse that made her eyes stand out, some brown ankle boots and her hair down in loose, almost romantic waves.

Bane looked a little pale around the eyes, but his mouth was set in a firm line. His bandages were all covered by his clothing; jeans, a long sleeve dress shirt and just standing there, no one would know right away that he had been hurt. Harley could tell by the way Bane held himself that he was in pain. Frost was much the same way, wearing a black suit and tie and his wounds were also hidden. The only indication of pain he gave were the dark circles under his eyes.

Jason was more obvious, limping slightly and he was pale, with a haunted look in his eyes. The death of Roxy had struck him hard.

Alex was on speaker since he was with Alice. Harley had worried that they would lose Alex—an understandable loss—but he was more determined than ever to help. He had told Jack that he was now one hundred percent in the gang, his information brokerage, his neutral standing that he had
been trying to maintain despite helping Jack was gone. He was throwing himself in with Jack and the
gang completely now. Harley knew he was seeking revenge, just like Jack.

And Zsasz, he seemed content.

Trope and Thea sat on their favored chair together between Frost and Bane.

Jack slowly let the smoke flow from between his lips before he spoke. “Are the gas grenades ready?”

Frost nodded. “Loaded in the cars Boss, along with the two phosphorus grenades in that special case
you gave me. I also put the molotovs in Bane’s car.” Jack nodded and moved his attention to Jason
who took a step forward as if he were in the military to report for duty. It was clear he was hurt in the
way that he moved (at least it seemed that way to Harley) a slight tilt to his gait, the darkness under
his eyes…

“I have the weapons Boss. Anderson gave me a couple of M&P15-22Ps, handful of AR-15’s and as
much ammo as we could carry. I’ve got my bike loaded up and I gave out the weapons, just like you
said Boss.” Jason smiled viciously. There was a gleam in his eye that wasn’t too dissimilar from
Jack’s Harley thought as the young man hissed. “And can I say Boss, I’m ready for some payback.”

Jack stood up as he squashed the butt of his cigarette into the ashtray beside him. “I think we are all
ready, Jason darling, I think we all are. All right boys and girls--load up. I think it’s time we go
tour ACE Chemicals...see what Falcone has up his sleeve--before we take his arm.” Jack chuckled.

* 

ACE Chemicals was one of several factories located on the outskirts of Gotham City. It was what
Harley thought of as a typical large factory for the city. The center building was an imposing gothic
structure with “ACE Chemicals” on the front in pale blue neon lights. The main building was
surrounded by three tall, brick chimneys hat pumped out dark clouds of pollution into the already
thick and heavy Gotham summer night air. As Jack pulled up the road toward the back of the
factory, Harley stared at the place. There was something ominous about the tall brick building. It
reminded her of a castle, or maybe more of a monster she thought as the building loomed large in her
sights. There were security lights around the factory but to her they did little to illuminate the
darkness that surrounded the buildings. Instead the lights created more shadows, more patches of
inky blackness, which only heightened Harley’s feeling about not liking the place. She nervously
fingered her bracelet. Jack turned to look out his window with a grin before he popped open his
door.

“Come on sweets,” he said eagerly, equal parts anticipation, dark humor, and simmering anger.
“Let’s go knock on the door, see if anyone is home!”
A group of vehicles stopped outside the factory under the cover of some trees. Jack pushed his door open and stepped out of the black Hummer just as the others pulled up in two black SUVs and parked behind them. The evening sky was clear, though the heavy smoke churning upwards from from the factory’s numerous smoke stacks made it difficult to see any stars; for a few blocks in each direction, the air held a noticeable haze. Jack grinned and admired the way the factory contrasted with the sky, a dark gothic structure backlit by the full moon, just visible through the heavy pollution while black smoke obscured the remainder of the night sky. All they needed now was the crack of some thunder, maybe a good wolf howl. Harley came to stand beside Jack looking up at factory at the same time that she wrapped her arms around him and laid her chin on his shoulder.

“It’s more frightening looking than a factory has any right to be,” she muttered.

Jack chuckled. “It looks more like a gothic castle than the front for a mobster’s drug factory.”

She nodded as she moved her arms to wrap them around Jack’s waist. He smiled and kissed her cheek as he put his arm around her.

“No worries sweets. We’ll bust in, destroy it, then go find Falcone. Easy peasy.” He turned her around to face him and his arms went around her waist at the same time.

“You’ll see sweets.” He rubbed his nose against hers before he kissed her. Harley leaned into his kiss as her husband held her close.

Bane hopped out of one of the SUVs. He walked slowly--a little stiff from his injuries--around and pulled open one of the back doors where Thea and Trope sat, their heads together, fingers flying over their customized laptops. Jack smiled at Harley as he gave her a light kiss before sliding out of her arms. He took her hand and walked over to the SUV, leaned against the door frame just as Jason, Victor and Frost joined them. They all stood around the open back door and watched the two young women inside.

“So, what’s it look like girls?” Jack asked as he pulled out a cigarette from inside his jacket.

Harley leaned against the other side of the door. She plucked the cigarette from Jack’s fingers with a smile and reached into his jacket for the lighter. Jack watched her and a soft grin tugged at his lips. He loved to watch his wife light his cigarettes for him. He felt it was sweet, sexy and just another small yet intimate connection between them. Harley lit the cigarette, then reached over and placed it between her husband’s lips. Jack reached up to take a deep drag, his eyes on Harley.

Trope answered first. “I have access to all their security cameras. It looks like there are at least fifty people working on drugs on the lower level. There are four uniformed guards, looks like one is at the front gate, another watching cameras…"

Here Thea and Trope both giggled. “And it looks six, maybe eight mobsters, all armed.”

Trope shared a glance with Thea; the two young lovers communicated without speaking before Trope said. “I’m gonna take out their electronic security, but I’m going to have to take out a couple of cellphone towers so we can put the factory in a complete blackout. No one--and that includes us--will be able to use their cellphones, internet…” Trope giggled. “Well of course Thea and I will still have access to the web, but their computers are all going to be dead, but that way no one can call out for help. We are going to be cut off from each other too...but…” She shrugged.
Jack nodded with a grin. “Perfect. I’m not worried because we all know what has to be done. All right, everyone have their protective masks?”

The group all nodded. Jack smile. “Kill everyone, leave no one alive.”

Jack turned to Zsasz. “Do you want to come in with us or…”

Zsasz smiled. “I’ll grab my sniper and walk in. Meet you guys inside in a bit.”

Zsasz winked and turned heading back to the SUV he arrived in and pulled out a Barrett M82. He lifted the weapon up waved at everyone else and simply disappeared into the dark.

Bane chuckled. “He is one scary motherfucker.”

Jack nodded. “Well--he is crazy.”

Jack clapped his gloved hands together (despite his broken fingers, Jack had carefully slid on gloves that night). “Okay, so, everyone got their guns, masks, mollies, explosives? OH Jason, did you pick up the flower bouquet?”

Jason nodded. “Sure did Boss--hold on.”

Jason hurried over to the vehicle he had arrived in and returned a few seconds later with a large bouquet of flowers in a variety of shades of purple, with a few white blossoms mixed in with the purple to create a vibrant spring bouquet. The flowers were held in a pretty white vase with a large purple ribbon that held the cellophane around the bouquet in place. Harley grinned and thought it was a very pretty bouquet.

Jack stepped over and took the bouquet from Jason, pressed his nose into the flowers taking a deep whiff. “Oh it’s just perfect. Just needed to plant a little bomb among the blooms.”

Harley giggled. “Ouch.”

Jack gave her a grin. “Ouch indeed sweets. All right my darlings, let’s go give Falcone the kick in the balls he deserves.”

Everyone nodded and quickly filed into their cars. Jack glanced at Thea and Trope, his hand on the door. “How soon before the towers go down?”

Thea looked up. “We’ll do it the moment we’re at the gate.”

Jack nodded before he closed the door and smiled at Harley. “Let the games begin!”

*  

Trevor sat in his little guard booth and yawned as he rubbed his eyes. The dim yellow light in his guard booth did little to keep him from feeling sleepy as he flipped through the Playboy magazine that rested on his crossed legs. He had been called in tonight when Jim called in sick, again. Trevor adjusted his slacks and thought to himself that he hated his blue guard uniform; the pants were always a little too tight and he didn’t like the material against his skin. He shifted a bit before he settled down again. Trevor was pretty sure Jim was on a bender after his wife left him and was drunk in his apartment under the covers, not sick at all, but Trevor didn’t mind; the extra money was nice, even if the job was boring as hell.

He glanced up at the ACE Chemicals building then back to his magazine. He had been working here
for five years and not once had anyone ever tried to get into the factory at night, not even some stupid kids. He had always hoped to fire the gun he wore on his hip, but not once in that entire time had he even had to draw his weapon.

He flipped through the magazine coming to the centerfold of Shelby Chesnes. He grinned holding the magazine up to get a better look, thinking he would look up her video on Youtube when lights from a car pass over the inside of his little booth.

Trevor frowned when a black Hummer came up to the guard station and stopped at the gate. The window of the big vehicle rolled down and a beautiful blonde (who Trevor thought would look great as a centerfold) came into view holding a bouquet of flowers. She smiled, and Trevor felt a little jerk in his pants. Damn she was beautiful he thought again.

Trevor stood up and opened the window of the booth. “How can I help you gorgeous?”

Harley giggled. “Hi! I’m wanting to deliver these to my boyfriend. Well actually I was hoping I could come in and see him. It’s our one week anniversary!” She giggled and squealed.

Trevor grinned. Whoever her boyfriend was, he was damn lucky.

“Sorry gorgeous, but I can’t just let you come in.” Trevor shrugged. “Them’s the rules.”

Harley pouted prettily. “But I bought these flowers for him and everything...could you...well could you at least see that he gets them?” She gave him a cute, pouty look, batting her lashes over her big blue eyes. Trevor grinned, damn.

He sighed. “Fine, yeah, hand them here.”

Harley giggled happily. “Oh gosh you are just so nice!! I could kiss you!” She leaned out and handed him the bouquet.

Trevor took it, wondering for a moment if he could steal a kiss or would that get him hit by this girl’s boyfriend. He grinned to himself as the scent of flowers filled his little booth. He turned to ask her who her boyfriend was when he heard a soft ticking that was coming from the flowers. Trevor frowned looking down at them just as the flowers exploded.

Trevor screamed as there was a sudden bright white light followed by searing heat across his face.

* 

Inside the Hummer, Harley yelped when the explosion went off. It was strangely quietly, the sound more like a “pop”, like the little tiny poppers kids would throw at the sidewalk than a “boom” like an actual movie explosion. She turned away at the moment of the explosion, the bright white light only catching the periphery of her vision, but she still saw spots as if someone had flashed a camera within her line of sight.

Jack, who was sitting in the back seat, rolled his window down with a laugh. “That went off perfectly!”

Harley giggled and leaned out of her window to check on the dead guard only to gasp in surprise. “Puddin—he’s still alive!”

Jack blinked in astonishment, then snarled. “What?”

He opened his door and hopped out, maneuvering between the vehicle and the guard booth to open
the door that led inside the guard station. Inside, lying on the floor of the small booth was the guard, his face half burned, charred black and red, his right arm mangled beyond repair and the front of his uniform burned. Large patches of crispy black skin showed underneath while other parts of his uniform slowly burned where the explosion had caught the cloth on fire. The man on the floor groaned as he struggled with his left hand, trying to pull himself, up leaving long, blood prints on the booth’s interior wall as his hand feebly continued to smack against the door. Jack sighed with irritation as he looked down at the helpless guard. “I cannot believe I didn’t have that explosion calculated correctly to kill you. I’m really sorry about that. Be right back.” Jack smiled and stepped back out of the booth.

*

Bane watched from the his seat in the SUV behind the Hummer, his hands rested on the steering wheel as Jack, illuminated by the headlights, walked to the back of the Hummer and opened the trunk. Bane watched with a slight frown as Jack fiddled around for a few seconds until he withdrew a tire iron. Bane frowned further as he watched Jack go back into the booth.

He could see Jack through the glass of the booth, then watched with a grimace as Jack began to swing the tire iron in a series of hard, brutal, swift downward swings. Bane clenched his teeth and wrinkled his nose as he watched Jack beat, he assumed, the still living guard with the tire iron. Jack hit the man several times; splatters of blood burst across the glass of the booth. Bane counted, he was pretty sure Jack beat the man for a good solid twelve seconds. Jack continued to beat the guard with the tire iron hard enough that Bane jerked and winced from his position behind the wheel with each swing of Jack’s arms.

The big man watched as Jack came back out.

Jack stopped for a moment, breathing heavily as he brushed a gloved hand through his hair, which had become mussed during the savagery of the attack. Jack walked back to the trunk of the Hummer and tossed the now bloody tire iron into the back. He stopped for a moment to straighten his hair one more time, then his tie. He turned and grinned at Bane, giving the man a thumbs up, before he headed back into the vehicle.

Bane shook his head and muttered. “Damn, that man is cold sometimes.”

*

Robin grinned as he ran through the traffic cams on the Batcomputer in the car. It was so cool he thought, being able to click from one street on the other side of Gotham to the street they were on and watch the Batmobile rush by in the traffic camera. Dick had teased Bruce merrily about the fact that he and Alfred had named everything, Bat-this or Bat-that. It was pretty funny, but also pretty cool, which made him wonder if he should name things too, like The Robin...well he didn’t have anything to name yet, except maybe his taser, the Robin taser. He frowned. Nah that sounded stupid, but maybe eventually he would have his own car or a motorcycle. Yeah, he really wanted a motorcycle. Dick pulled his thoughts away from a Robin Bike and focused again on the computer. Batman wanted him to learn the ins and outs of the Batcomputer that was part of the car in case Batman ever needed him to look something up, or use one of the traffic cameras, et cetera. Batman had told him about being hacked into most of the traffic cams in Gotham as well as having a backdoor into the GCPD computers. The vigilante hoped to be able to access security cams all over Gotham, (right now Batman could only access security cams that had been made by Wayne Enterprises.) Batman also wanted to add facial recognition technology, analyzing technology and to create an extensive criminal database or at least the means to access criminal databases not just at the GCPD, but eventually anywhere in the world. Batman had also confided in Robin that he hoped to
add his own crime lab into the Batcave with all the latest technology. Dick grinned. This was not just
going to be fun, but he felt good about the whole endeavor. He was doing something in response to
his parents’ murder, something good for Gotham and for himself.

Batman glanced over at Robin. “I have a map of Gotham that shows me all the main cell towers in
the city, the city’s power grid, all the major utilities in Gotham. I’m working on updating my data to
include the subway, bus routes, and I’m slowly mapping out the sewer system, which is turning into
a far bigger project than anticipated. I have some maps on the computer of some of old Gotham…”

Dick frowned. “Ah, sorry to interrupt Batman, but…” He pointed at the computer. “When you said
you had a map of all the major cell towers in the area I typed it in just to see and...well one of them
went dead.”

Batman frowned. “Dead?”

Robin nodded. “Yes sir. It was there and then the next second it was gone, like it just blinked out of
existence.”

Batman turned the wheel hard enough that Robin was forced to grab the dash and the ceiling as the
car skidded to the side of the road and parked. Batman turned the computer screen toward him and
looked over the map of cell towers that were scattered throughout Gotham. The map showed an
overlay of towers all shared by different cell phone companies. Each company used different
frequencies and technologies when sharing a tower so they were not sharing actual hardware. Some
of the towers were owned by the actual cell phone company, while others were owned by third
parties who leased the use of the tower. Batman’s frown deepened. Robin was right, one of the cell
towers had gone dark, an area covering about eight blocks...Batman’s eyes widened slightly when he
saw the location--eight blocks right around ACE Chemicals, owned by Falcone. Falcone, the head of
the mafia in Gotham, Maroni’s boss. That had to be more than a simple coincidence.

Batman pulled back out onto the street. “We’re heading over there to check it out. Something feels
wrong.”

Robin grinned. “Maybe we’ll get lucky and something big is going down!”

Batman frowned. “That’s not lucky Robin, that’s bad news.”

* *

The lower level of ACE Chemicals was filled with large metal vats. Each vat was filled with a dark,
yellow-green liquid that bubbled constantly, roiling and hissing. The liquid was kept at a constant
state of near boiling. The acid inside the vats was moved through several pipes that ran throughout
the factory, taking the liquid to who knew where. The rumor was that this factory had once made
playing cards and that the acid was left over from that time. Other rumors were that this place was
used by The Roman to dispose of his enemies. No one knew the truth and no one cared to find out.
All anyone knew for sure was that the place was almost unbearably hot, and the air was filled with
the heavy scent of burnt plastic.

On the other side of the large vats, in a large open space the size of two football fields, were rows of
long tables. Each row of tables was filled with equipment or bricks of drugs. One section of the room
contained large plastic containers of acetone packed heavily against a wall. Dozens of metal
containers of freon and several propane tanks were scattered throughout the room; coffee filters,
glass cookware, several bunsen burners, blow torches and other materials for cooking meth, along
with several fans placed throughout the area were constantly blowing. While most of the factory light
was a pale yellow, the lights over the meth “cooking” area was a brighter white light. There were
also large pallets loaded with bricks of cocaine, alongside others that contained bricks of heroin, marijuana and various other drugs. Here was where Falcone’s multi-million drug business was being run, within the walls of this factory.

Several people worked down among the vats--more than fifty--working the lab and packing the drugs. Most of them wore lab white lab coats, surgical masks, rubber gloves and goggles. Several were cooking meth; the acid smell of burning plastic filled the area, even with the fans constantly running, the smell didn’t really dissipate much. Other workers packed drugs for transportation into suitcases, while others were testing packages of drugs for purity that had been brought in from deals done in Falcone’s name.

Moving among the workers and on the upper levels of the factory were men in suits holding weapons. These men, who walked among the drugs, the production lines and the meth cooking area wore surgical masks as well while the ones on the floors above tended not to bother with the masks.

The factory was at least three levels, only accessible by taking several flights of rusted metal stairs. The upper levels of the factory consisted of pipes filled with water, acid, and any other number of substances that were being carried along past boilers, dials, gauges, levers, and buttons designed to help a few of the employees keep the factory from blowing itself up. Catwalks hung suspended over the vats and the drug area below that led from one end of the factory to the other designed to carry people or equipment through the factory. The upper levels were a confused combination of stairs and doorways leading to numerous dark places within the factory. The walkways and stairs were covered in rust, water and other liquids dripped steadily from the pipes. The steady sound of dripping water combined with the walkways’ slow, eerie creaking to make the upper levels of the factory uncomfortable for anyone up there.

Most of Falcone’s men went no higher than the second level, avoiding the higher reaches if possible. They were a superstitious lot and everyone believed the upper levels were haunted.

Four of Falcone’s men, Tony, Elia, Morris and Michael moved among the workers below. Tony had his gun out while the others were also armed, but didn’t feel the need to have their weapons out. They had worked this gig before and it had long ago become boring for the three of them. Tony was still the new guy, still jumpy and concerned about looking “professional.” The other men just laughed at him and let Tony walk around with his weapon out, teasing him about not shooting any of the workers.

The four men were separated, at different ends of the floor.

Tony had his Glock out and ready. For some reason his skin was crawling tonight. He didn’t know if it was the smell, the scent of burning plastic which made the inside of his nostrils burn even with the mask on, and his eyes were irritated. He had just walked around a pallet of cocaine when he heard something hit the floor. Tony jumped and turned, his weapon aimed at...nothing, but just as he was about to turn back around he heard the sound of something rolling on the floor. Tony frowned and looked down just as something that resembled an aerosol can rolled across the floor stopped as it hit his foot. So much junk down here, he thought.

Tony frowned and lightly kicked the canister away from him, but as the canister rolled away, gas began to leak from the top and the can began to spin as bright green gas was expelled from it, which made the can begin to spin more rapidly around in a circle.

Tony frowned in confusion and began to cough as he brought his arm up to cover his mouth despite already having a mask on. He grabbed his walkie on his hip, though he was coughing the entire time he tried to speak.
“Hey Morris...hehe...ack...Morris you read me? There is some weird smoke…” Tony began to laugh and cough harder, and his sides began to ache as the coughs, mixed with the laughing came out in harder and harsher tones. He blinked his eyes a few times as he heard the sounds of gunfire.

Tony rushed from around the pallet, but he couldn’t see much; the gas obscured everything. He could see shadows and the flash of gunfire, but he couldn’t really tell what was happening. He continued to struggle with the coughing and giggling when someone seemed to melt out of the green gas that had had grown thicker and obscured everything.

The man was dressed in a rather nice dark purple suit, wore a gas mask and held a weapon pointed at Tony’s head.

*

Jack grinned behind the mask when he saw one of the guards rush out of the cloud of smoke. The man stopped when he saw Jack, confusion clear in his brown eyes.

Jack waved. “Hello!”

The man stood there for a split second too long, startled by the sight of Jack in the gas mask. That split second of indecision cost him his life. Jack shot the man in the head, then another quick shot to the stomach before the man fell.

Harley stood beside Jack, also wearing her own mask while the other members of the gang had spread out throughout the bottom floor of the factory. Since there were only a few of them, they couldn’t cover as much ground, but Jack’s laughing gas helped to obscure everything, giving them an advantage as they systematically moved through the lower floor and shot anyone they encountered. At the same time, the Red Hood gang members set their plastic explosives that Jack had handed out in backpacks to each of them. Jack’s backpack had a few other explosive devices as well as a few extra canisters with his gas inside...just in case.

Jack muttered, his voice slightly muffled by his mask. “Those fans are going to clear the gas up swiftly. We need to work faster.”

Harley nodded as she placed an explosive on the pallet of cocaine. “Are we going to set some explosives on the upper levels too puddin?”

Jack glanced up. He could see shadows up there, not many but some men were still on the upper levels looking for a chance to shoot. “Yep. I want to utterly destroy this building.” He laughed softly. “There are millions of dollars in drugs in here--I want there to be nothing left.” He laughed. “Millions of dollars up in flames. Everything burns!!”

Harley giggled. She was just about to place another charge when suddenly a shot rang out. The bullet zipped past Harley, cutting across the top of her shoulder to strike into some of the cocaine, sending it up in a small puff of white powder around her. Harley yelped and ducked as her shoulder became a flash of pain.

Jack stepped in front of her, his mouth set in a scowl, and his eyes narrowed behind the mask as he shot at the shadow that was swiftly being revealed to be a man as the gas began to dissipate. At the same time that Jack shot, he grabbed Harley and yanked her back behind the small mountain of drugs.

Jack cursed. The fans were dissipating the gas for quicker than he would have liked. Already it was clear enough that he could see several men on the other side of the room from him and Harley.
Jack popped up and did a quick count; it looked like at least six armed men. He dropped back down next to Harley.

“You all right pumpkin?” Jack frowned as he saw Harley, who had grabbed her shoulder, moved her hand to reveal it was covered with blood. Harley nodded wincing. “Just a flesh wound I think. The bullet didn’t actually hit me.” She growled. “A graze.”

Jack snarled. “Fuckers.”

Jack holstered his weapon taking a moment to inspect her shoulder. He frowned and ripped the cloth of her shirt that had been torn by the bullet wider, the wound looked worse than it was...he pulled out the handkerchief from the breast pocket of his jacket and laid it across the wound, moving her still intact bra strap over to hold it in place.

“It’ll have to do for now,” he said softly, gently cupping her cheek for a moment. He smiled and kissed the tip of her nose before he pulled out his gun again.

He leaned around the cocaine and quickly brought his head back. “Okay sweets. I see six. Three are near the meth and the other three are moving...I think they are going to try to flank us.”

Harley frowned. “I’ll go for the three up front, you get the three moving targets?”

Jack laughed softly and smiled at his wife. “Sounds good pumpkin.”

Jack pulled his gas mask off and tossed it aside. Harley did the same. She could still smell Jack’s gas in the air, a slightly sweet smell, almost like bubblegum and cotton candy she thought with a smile.

“So what do you want to do puddin?” Harley asked.

Jack smiled. “Oh kill them, I think.” He grabbed Harley by the front of her top, surprising her as he yanked her close and kissed her. Harley giggled and returned his kiss.

Jack licked her lips as he smiled at her; his eyes were bright, dancing with merriment. Harley could see that he was enjoying himself.

“Ready sweets?” Jack asked softly.

Harley grinned broadly. “Whenever you are puddin.”

Jack winked at her.

They both came around the pallet of cocaine, shooting their weapons at the same time. Harley aimed for the three that were in front of them, Jack aiming for the three behind them, Jack maneuvered himself behind Harley, putting his back up against hers while Harley pressed her back to his. Harley fired, catching one man in the shoulder, another in the chest and the third got out of the way by throwing himself down. That man lay on his side and fired at Harley.

She yelped and pushed back against her husband forcing him to move.

Jack fired swiftly, struck one man in the face while another man fired at Jack. The bullet missed, gouging the cement flooring, but chips of cement flew up, cutting through Jack’s slacks and across his leg. Jack hissed and was suddenly shoved back as Harley pushed her back against his. The sudden shift saved him from being shot as the last of his opponents took aim and missed when Jack stumbled slightly.
Jack grinned with both glee and anger as he returned fire. That man took a bullet in the forehead before Jack spun around, grabbing Harley by her right wrist and with his free hand he spun her under his arm and behind him, shooting her last opponent at the same time, the bullet hit the man in the forehead just above his left eye.

Harley popped up out of her spin, Jack’s hand still on her wrist, her arm now pressed against her lower back. She came up against Jack’s chest with a giggle as Jack pulled her up against him.

“How you doing pumpkin?” Jack asked.

Harley giggled. “Just fine puddin.”

Jack smiled. “Ready to head upstairs and set some charges?”

“Sure thing puddin,” Harley said with a smile. “Boom!”

Jack laughed and spun her back out before he dropped her wrist and wrapped his arm around her waist. He pulled her against him and kissed her passionately.

* 

Batman pulled up to the factory. He had found the body of the guard in the guard booth and now he could hear the muffled sounds of gunfire emanating from inside. He saw the two black SUVs and the Hummer (he didn’t bother to check the vehicles’ registration as the sounds of gunfire drew his attention).

He motioned at Robin. “We’ll enter from above. Be careful.”

Robin nodded. “Yes sir!”

Batman watched the boy take off, for a moment feeling a ball of ice in his stomach. His first reaction was to call Robin back and send him outside...there was clearly weapons fire and the boy could get hurt. But he didn’t call his sidekick--partner, protege, student?--back. Robin would never forgive him, but truly, this was what the young man had been training for. This, tonight, would determine whether Robin was ready to or not. Experience was a good teacher.

Batman took off toward the factory.

* 

Jason finished setting his charges, limping as the pain from last night’s wounds slowed him a bit, only then turning around to shoot the man who had been groaning behind him. The dead man was one of the people who worked with the drugs, a nobody, someone who wasn’t armed, just doing a job, but Jason felt nothing when he killed the man. To him, these people were just as responsible for Roxy’s death as the men who had actually killed her. Like those men, these worked for Falcone and that fact alone was good enough for him.

Jason had just returned his backpack to his shoulder when he thought he saw a shadow move above him. He stood there staring for a few seconds, but he didn’t see anything moving. He frowned, but decided it was just the lights playing tricks with him. Besides, he wasn’t going to go against the Boss’s plans; he wasn’t supposed to go upstairs, he was to go to the SUV and get the molotovs ready to throw...this was going to be a spectacular explosion.

*
Jack found the stairs. He grabbed the railing and turned, hopping backwards up three of the stairs before he bowed to his wife.

He grinned at Harley. “Going up?”

Harley giggled as she walked up the three stairs. Jack took her hand and kissed her knuckles before turning around to head up the stairs. He glanced upward. The factory disappeared into hazy darkness above.

The two of them made their way up the rusty stairs to the second floor. Here the thick, rusty pipes slowly leaked onto the stairs, the sound of steam being released and the creak of the metal stairs could be heard, while the sounds of a few gunshots and screams could be heard from below. Jack stepped onto the landing and looked up, frowning slightly; he could see another set of stairs leading up to the third level.

“I’ll go set charges up there sweets and have you handle the ones down here, then we meet right here again. Get this done quickly so we can go pay Falcone a visit. Sound good?” Jack asked as Harley stepped up onto the landing.

She frowned, but nodded. “Yeah, okay puddin.”

Jack pulled her into his arms as she came off the last step. “What’s wrong pumpkin?”

Harley frowned. “I don’t like us separating is all.”

Jack laughed softly. “It’ll only be for a minute or two, I promise. Then we can go home.”

Harley nodded, but she still looked upset. Jack gave her a tight squeeze. “After this, I want to take a long hot shower, make love to my wife and order a pizza.”

Harley giggled softly as she wrapped her arms tightly around his waist and rested her head against his chest. “All right, just be quick okay?”

Jack reached down to lift her chin. “Nothing can keep me away from you Harls. Nothing and nobody. I’ll be like the wind. You’ll see, you won’t have time to miss me.”

Jack pressed his lips to hers, his tongue gently slid against her mouth. Harley opened her mouth, her tongue sliding out to meet his in a tender yet deep kiss. He tightened his embrace, holding his wife against him. Harley made a soft whimper of need, leaning into him before Jack finally stepped away from her. He caressed her chin, smiling as he stared into her eyes.

“I’ll be right back sweets.”

Harley nodded. “You better be.”

He laughed, kissing the tip of her nose before he headed toward the stairs. Harley watched him go with a hitch in her chest before she took a deep breath, straightened her backpack and headed out along the walkway.

On this level, Harley could see several large metal tubes. She had no idea what they were carrying or what they were for, but the tubes dripped water--she presumed--and were covered in rust. She set charges; along old tubes, on strange looking machinery, and along the walkway in two places. As she walked she realized that this walkway ran along the walls, covering the entire length of the building. She stopped at the railing and looked down, she could see several dead bodies, but she also saw Bane, Jason and Frost as they worked along the edges and among the drugs, setting charges as
they went. She frowned when she noticed that Frost was limping, as was Jason. Everyone was still tired and in pain, trying to recover from last night, yet here they were, ready to do whatever Jack needed from them. She smiled softly, proud of their little gang. Harley’s eyes were drawn to the vats of acid. The vats looked larger from up here. The greenish yellow liquid roiled, as if something lived underneath the surface of the caustic liquid. She watched it for a few more seconds; the heavy acid scent wafted up to her and she wrinkled her nose before she stepped back.

She had just started to move again. She noticed as she came closer to a couple of large machines that looked like furnaces or boilers of some sort, that there were places where the path led off into shadows and darkness, which meant there were probably more places deeper inside where she should lay more charges.

Harley made her way between two of the machines on this floor, sliding through the small opening to walk out onto a wider platform. This space behind the machines had what looked like stacks of unused tubing, now rusted into place, some old, rusted file cabinets, a couple of chairs and a desk. Harley frowned, walking over to the desk when a shadow stepped out of the darkness in front of her.

The man, tall, broad shouldered, and with bleach blonde hair, shot at her. Harley yelped and threw herself out of the way, scrambling behind a rusted file cabinet. She pulled her own weapon and leaned around the cabinet. She could see him, standing near the desk where she had been only moments ago and he looked confused.

Harley shot her gun several times, missing with each shot as the man stumbled back and ducked down beside the desk. The man leaned around the desk and returned fire. Harley squeezed herself into the corner between the wall and the cabinet as the bullets flew past her, some hitting the cabinet with metallic sounding pings, others the floor and one hit the wall next to her. She squeezed her eyes closed, feeling bits of plaster and rusted metal hits her from the bullet’s impact. She felt something flash across her cheek, the sudden sting of pain, followed by the warmth of liquid running down her cheek. She slowly reached up and touched her cheek, wincing with pain; unsurprisingly, her fingers came back bloody.

Harley snarled, “Asshole,” before she turned and shot again, but this time only fired two bullets when her weapon jammed. Harley hissed squeezing the trigger several times, but nothing happened. Her gun just clicked.

“Shit,” she hissed to herself. She pressed back against the file cabinet. Her attacker had to have heard the sound of her gun not firing. Harley swallowed, cold settling into the pit of her stomach. A secondary weapon was always good to have, she wryly remembered Frost saying once. She looked around, but she saw nothing here she could use as a weapon. She closed her eyes trying to steady her breath and turned her weapon around, holding it so she could use the back of her gun as a weapon. Her hand shook a little bit with building adrenaline.

Harley frowned. Why was she so nervous, scared? She had fought worse than this, she knew she was capable. Maybe it was this place...the drugs...she had to have breathed some of the cocaine in when it exploded, but that would just make her hyper, excitable, not nervous and tense...but...

She heard her attacker move slowly from behind the desk. He started to walk across the room toward her and debris crunched under his feet. She could tell he wasn’t sure if she was still armed, since she had moved out of his sight. She tightened the grip on her gun; the back of the weapon would act like a pair of brass knuckles, she hoped. Her heartbeat filled her ears nearly drowning out any other sounds. Harley closed her eyes and silently counted to ten as she listened and prepared.

At the end of the count, Harley turned around the corner of the file cabinet, just as she heard her attacker’s steps come closer to her. If she had counted correctly, he should just be coming around the
He came around the file cabinet quickly, his gun out, Harley moved swiftly, surprising herself when she ducked under his arm and spun around. She tried to slam the butt of her gun into him, her aim being for his head. She had been aiming for his face in the hope of hitting him in the eye, blinding him, but missed. Instead she hit him in the shoulder.

The man let out a cry as the impact sent pain radiating down his arm, the breech of the gun impacted with his shoulder hard enough that something cracked, though the impact didn’t cause him to drop his own gun. Instead, he twisted around and backhanded Harley so quickly she didn’t have time to attempt a block, his fist and the gun in his hand slammed across her face, splitting her lip and blood gushed from her nose.

She yelped and stumbled to the right, the taste of blood in her mouth hot and coppery. The impact of his hand and the barrel of his pistol not just split her lip and smashed her nose, the impact broke across the cut she already had on her cheek, opening cut up wider. Pain caused Harley to squint her eyes. She stumbled away from him, almost losing her balance as the pain in her face radiated out, disorienting her for a moment.

The gunman turned around fully and fired his gun at Harley.

Harley gasped. The bullet would hit her in the middle of her chest, and that would be the end of Harley Quinn, but nothing happened.

The gunman tried again. Both of them, for a comical moment, stood still as he tried once more to shoot her, and Harley, stunned, didn’t move away. The man clicked on the trigger, but the gun clicked several times...empty.

Harley spun back around, snapped her leg out and kicked the man as hard as she could in the chest. The gunman stumbled backwards and crashed into the rusted file cabinet. The mobster and the cabinet crumbled to the ground with a loud crash. Harley grabbed an explosive out of her pack, tossed it at him, and ran. She knew it wouldn’t go off until Jack hit the trigger, but at least she knew there was one in this room.

She rushed over to the back of the machines that she had squeezed through to get in here and started to squeeze herself through when the man stood up. She turned, saw him getting to his feet and tried to push herself more quickly through the narrow opening.

The gunman hissed. “Come back here you bitch!”

Harley hissed as she pushed herself out, the rusted walls of the machine ripped her shirt, but she was free. The gunman grabbed her wounded shoulder just as she was stepping out which sent pain radiating down her arm, but she yanked herself free, pulling the man out with her through the narrow opening. She turned, her hand in a fist ready to hit her attacker with all her might, when suddenly a figure seemed to drop out of nowhere between Harley and her attacker.

“Don’t you know it’s not nice to hit a lady?” The young man was almost as tall as Harley, dressed in a black and red costume with a mask and cape. The young man had thick black hair and a ready, cocky smile, visible below his black half-mask.

Harley frowned in shock. “Who the…?”

“Robin, at your service!” Robin grinned then ducked as the gunman took a swing at him.
Jack raced up to the third floor, taking the rusty steps two at a time with a smile on his face. He wanted to set the charges and get out of here with Harley to go take care of Falcone. The thought of seeing the surprise on Falcone’s face had Jack chuckling to himself as he hit the landing of the third floor. This level was barely lit, dim; the few hanging lights up here were weak, the yellow light watery, faded.

Jack walked slowly. There were so many shadows up here, it was difficult to see where the walkway went. He couldn’t tell if it went around the whole of the building or only part way. Stepping off the walkway and onto the main part of the third floor, Jack could see rusted pipes and dials along the wall to his left. The further he walked he could see dark openings that led deeper into the third floor but the shadows were so thick he couldn’t see where exactly they led; did they lead into separate rooms, into small sections?

There was no way of telling unless he went to investigate.

He walked carefully along, setting charges here and there when he heard movement, a soft creak against the metal. He stopped and listened. Jack narrowed his eyes, there was a shift in the air that told him someone was up here with him. Jack kept walking, following the handrail. He assumed whoever was behind him had to be Falcone’s men, probably a couple of guards who had stayed up here instead of heading down when the gas had filled the room and the gunfire had started. He kept walking, listening...he couldn’t be sure, the metal floor echoed and creaked but he was fairly confident there were at least two men behind him. Jack set another charge, slowly sliding his backpack off his shoulder to set it on the floor, then brought his hand to his hips, wrapping his fingers around his knife hilt.

Jack did a little hop, crossing his legs and spun around like a dancer just as one of the two men behind them, both dressed in suits and clearly Falcone’s men came up on him. The first man, also armed with a knife, was about Jack’s height, with black hair slicked back with so much oil that the dim light shone off the man’s shiny hair as he rushed at Jack and tried to take a swipe with his blade. When Jack spun, the dark haired man extended his arm too far. Jack ducked as the knife cut through the air above him, then Jack rushed forward and hit the man with the pommel of his knife’s hilt, catching the man in the side, right under his rib. The dark haired man’s momentum kept him moving forward, gasping for air as he fumbled past Jack.

His friend, a thickly built man with a buzzed head, came rushing up at Jack only a beat behind his friend. Jack grinned and kicked the man in the crotch. Jack grinned, a low blow but effective! Jack then brought his knife up, flipped it around in his hand so the blade faced sideways and took a quick slash at the big man. The knife sliced through the other man’s jacket and into his shoulder.

The big man snarled, more in irritation than pain it seemed, grabbed Jack’s wrist and punched him in the crook of his arm hard enough that Jack’s hand sprang open; the knife dropped and skittered across the metal floor. The big man tried to take a swing at Jack’s face, but the thinner man lunged forward with his other hand leading and used the palm of his hand to strike the buzzcut in the chest, knocking him backwards and forcing him to release Jack’s wrist as Jack yanked his arm free. Jack turned just as his first attacker had gained his feet and came at Jack. Jack spun around to slam his open hand into the man’s throat. That attacker stumbled forward and then his knees slammed against the floor. Jack turned just as the second attacker lunged at him.

Jack danced backwards out of the way of the first attack, but the buzzed assailant grabbed Jack by his shoulder. Jack snarled and hit the man in the side with the side of his hand, ignoring the pain that radiated up his arm as he hit the man again, this time in the side of his throat. The big man took the two hits from Jack without letting go. Jack hissed and tried to kick his attacker, but the man threw his leg backwards, out of the way of Jack’s foot, avoiding the kick. He pivoted his hips to take the brunt
of Jack’s kick against his thigh, perhaps bruising but in no way putting him down.

The two men swung around a couple of times, each trying his best to get a better hold of the other one. Their arms twisted back and forth, one trying to flip the other, but Jack took advantage of a minor slip in his opponent’s form and flipped the big mobster onto his back.

Jack, sweat pouring down the sides of his face, brought his leg up and slammed his foot down on the man’s chest with three vicious kicks. The mobster let out a cry of pain and rolled away from Jack into the fetal position. Jack was about to kick him again in the side when the second mobster rushed Jack, his shoulder hitting Jack in the side and brought him up off his feet to smash Jack against the railing. For a moment Jack teetered, leaning back against the railing. He glanced behind him, could see the light from below, the roiling vats of acid. He was about to fall, but with a snarl of anger, Jack brought his elbow down hard on the man’s back in two quick downward thrusts. The mobster didn’t let go. Jack hissed and snarled, brought his right foot forward and wrapped his leg around the man’s left leg and yanked, throwing himself to the side, away from the railing and back onto the walkway. Jack struggled then rolled and flipped the mobster over him onto the floor.

Jack stumbled up to his feet rushed the couple of steps to the mobster, who just began to stand up. Jack grabbed the man by his head and slammed the mobster’s head against the railing as hard as he could, chuckling just a little. The mobster struggled and tried to grab at Jack’s hands, but Jack viciously slammed the man’s head repeatedly against the rail until blood began to appear. Jack sneered and continued to slam the man’s head against the rail even harder until blood splattered the railing and Jack’s hands. Jack continued until he had split the man’s head open. Jack let the man go, took a step back as the body dropped, just as his friend with the dark oiled hair landed a hand on Jack’s shoulder and began to spin Jack around to face him.

Jack reacted without thought, grabbed the man’s arm with both hands and flipped the man over his shoulder.

Jack kept a hold of the dark haired mobster’s arm, trying to pull it back in such a way that he could break it but the mobster spun around and got to his feet, grabbing Jack at the same time with his other hand as he spun around to face Jack. The two men kicked at each other moving themselves down the walkway,

Jack snarled. “This is getting irritating!”

The dark hair mobster hissed. “You fucker.”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “So original.”

Jack jumped just a little and threw himself to the floor, pulled on the mobster’s arms while he planted his feet against his opponent’s gut, and threw him upwards and over himself to land on the walkway, then Jack performed a reverse roll to straddle the mobster. The buzz headed man kept trying to grab Jack by his throat or to scratch at his face, but Jack snarled, leaning back just enough to keep his face out of the man’s grip and wrapped both hands around the man’s throat to squeeze. Jack’s broken fingers protested the movement, but Jack ignored the pain and focused. Hate and anger were such motivators! The man under him began to kick and jerk trying to get Jack off of him, trying to grab his face, but Jack just squeezed harder. His teeth bared, Jack tightened his fingers as hard as he could. The man’s face turned red, his hands dropped, though his legs continued to kick, but slower. Jack’s whole body shook with the effort of strangling the man.

That was when he heard a voice behind him.
“STOP!! You’re killing him!”

Jack laughed. “Oops, sorry--I think he’s dead already.”

Jack stood and turned, surprised when he saw Batman standing a few paces behind him.

* Robin grinned as he easily avoided the man’s punches. Harley stumbled back as the kid’s fist shot out like a bullet and struck the man square in the face, shattering the mobster’s nose and knocking him out cold. The young man turned to face Harley.

“So, ah, who are you and do you need help getting out of here?”

Harley didn’t quite know what to do for a moment. Who the hell was this kid?

Robin smiled putting up his hands as if she were a scared dog or a skittish cat. “I’m with Batman. I’m here to help.”

“Batman?” Harley’s eyes widened. “Batman’s here?”

Robin nodded. “Yeah, I’m Robin--his partner.”

Harley whispered to herself. “Damn it.”

She needed to warn Jack, the others. Batman was here! Harley surprised the young man by rushing him, grabbing him by his upper arms and threw the young man down the walkway, at the same time removing her backpack and hitting the teenager across the face with it as she took off at a run heading toward the stairs.

Robin fell, throwing his arms up to block the backpack as he hit the floor and rolled. He sprang to his feet in the next moment with a frown on his face. Clearly the pretty young woman was with the bad guys. Why else would she attack him? Though why she was fighting with the guy he had just knocked out, Robin didn’t understand. Still, he took off after her. He grabbed his collapsible bo staff from off his hip and threw it to strike the back of Harley’s legs. The impact sent her sprawling, and her chin slammed against the first step leading up to the third floor.

Harley gasped and blinked as the pain shot up her chin across her face.

Robin frowned. “Look I’m sorry lady, just let me tie you up and we don’t have to fight. I mean, you’re real pretty, like really pretty and I don’t want to have to…”

Robin didn’t get to finish his sentence. Harley used the stair to shove herself up, coming up on her feet and spun around, snapping out her leg. Robin had stopped close enough that Harley was able to strike him square in the chest.

He stumbled backwards from the force of her kick, but Harley wasn’t done. She spun around, brought her foot up for another kick, this one catching the younger man across the face.

Robin stumbled, tasted blood in his mouth. He reached up and touched his jaw, moving it back and forth. “Damn lady!”

Harley turned, trying for the stairs again. She scrambled halfway up when her feet were knocked out from under her and she fell forward again.

Robin reached for her, but Harley twisted around on the stairs and tried to punch him. The young
man snagged her wrist and lifted her up with a move she had not seen before. Harley yelped as Batman’s self-avowed partner threw her back down against the stairs and punched her in the side when she tried to kick him.

“Stay down lady! Geez!” Robin hissed.

Harley narrowed her eyes and slugged him across the face with a left hook the young man wasn’t expecting.

*

Batman stared.

He couldn’t believe it was Jack, his little brother. He struggled to keep his “Batman” voice as he hissed.

“You had that man down, you didn’t have to kill him!”

Jack grinned as he wiped blood from his mouth with the back of his hand, stood up, and dusted off his suit. “Hey Bats, what’re you doing here?”

Batman frowned. He didn’t trust himself to speak for a moment as he watched his brother, his baby brother, wipe blood from his mouth.

He swallowed and spoke, proud that he kept the tremor from sneaking into his voice. “What are you doing here?”

Jack narrowed his eyes as he looked at Batman. This close, there was something about the man’s chin, the set of his jaw, his lips that was so familiar. He had thought this before, as if something pulled at the edges of his mind, as if he should know this man. The familiarity tugged at the corners of his mind. He had thought that last time he had run into Batman, as if Batman was someone he should know. It was irritating, and Jack didn’t like to be irritated.

Batman didn’t move as Jack slowly stepped closer, ignoring Batman’s question. “I swear I know you from somewhere…” Jack tilted his head. “And I don’t mean as the shining pillar of justice you are trying to be...you are far closer to being like me than say...the police, that is.”

Batman snarled. “I take down bad people and bring them to justice.”

Jack shrugged pointing at the two dead men. “What do you think I just did? I served some justice. You think those two were good men? You think any of these people were good?” Jack pointed at the factory below. Batman had seen the dead down there--far too many.

Batman hissed. “Did you do that?”

Jack smiled. “Me and my gang.”

“Gang?” Batman frowned behind his mask, but it was noticeable. Jack laughed. “Red Hood, the Red Hood gang. Don’t tell me you didn’t know it was me? I thought I heard you were one hell of a detective? Well, it's always sad to learn the truth behind the rumor, or the facade. Though I suppose you are just as disappointed, eh? Yes, the Red Hood is led by me, little old Jack Wayne. You gonna run to my brother and tattle on me?” Jack asked with a grin.

Batman shook visibly. Bruce couldn't believe what he was hearing and seeing. He knew Jack had been involved with something dangerous, something illegal; in his heart he had known, but to hear
Jack just casually confess it?! He had just confessed to murder...his own brother was a murderer.

“I’m taking you in,” Batman ground out between clenched teeth, then said, “You need to pay for your crimes.”

Jack grinned. “Oh you can try Batsy, you can definitely try, but I hate to tell you, I’m not going anywhere.”

Batman rushed forward, leading with a kick, twisted and kicked again.

Jack threw his arms up, blocking both kicks with his forearms, but Batman’s speed was surprising. The black clad vigilante kicked a third time, but this time Jack was ready and caught the man’s leg under his arm. At the same time Jack reached out and grabbed Batman’s shoulder. The two men danced around in a circle, as Batman struggled to pull his leg free. He surged upward with his free leg, about to kick the leader of the Red Hood gang in his torso, but Jack snapped his foot out, caught Batman’s knee with enough force to put the man off balance further. He yanked Batman around and with a twist of his arm he threw Batman over, letting go of his leg at the same time. The masked man hit the hard metal flooring with a loud clank.

* 

Harley made it up a few more stairs before Robin knocked her down again and snagged her ankle. She slammed against the rusty stairs hard. The impact set off a fire in her shoulder, but she stopped her face from being planted against the edge of the stairs as Robin tried once more to restrain her. He reached up and grabbed at her shoulder trying to pull her up off the stairs, but as Harley struggled against the boy, he grabbed her hair.

Harley slammed her elbow back, caught her young opponent in the chin, slammed his lips against his teeth.

Robin gasped in pain tasting hot copper as blood suddenly filled his mouth. The impact of her elbow against his mouth forced him to release her again.

Harley made the last of the steps and pulled herself onto the third floor. But Rolbin was right behind her, grabbing for her again, though this time his foot became tangled with hers and they both hit the floor hard.

Harley winced and rolled onto her side with a groan. Robin rose to his feet, stood over her, and said, “Lady, you need to stay down.” Harley took a deep breath, let it out, tired and hurting.

He stepped closer and Harley lunged up, wrapping her arms around his leg. Robin let out a startled yelp as Harley held on. Robin grabbed her hair trying to yank her off of him while he raised his bo stick with the other ready to hit her with it when Harley surprised him and punched him right in the crotch.

The sound the young man made would have been funny Harley thought if she had time to laugh about it as he stumbled back from her. Harley stood up and down from her, on nearly the other side of the landing she could see Jack fighting with Batman.

Her distraction cost her as Robin wrapped his arm around her neck and yanked back. Harley squeaked in surprise.

* 

Batman hit the floor, but the moment he hit the rusted metal flooring, he spun around to rise up on his
feet before Jack had a chance to press his advantage. Batman lurched up and in the same moment he thrust forward, smashing his shoulder into Jack’s stomach, lifted the thinner man up off his feet.

Jack gasped and coughed with the impact of Batman’s shoulder, then gasped in pain again when Batman threw him to the floor.

“Don’t get up,” Batman snarled.

Jack pushed himself part way up on his hands and chuckled, spitting some blood. “You’re better than I thought you would be.” Jack chuckled panting a little as he struggled to catch his breath.

Batman panted too. “You’re better than I thought you would be too.”

Jack stood up. Batman took a step back from him.

Jack brought his fists up. “Ready to try again?”

*

Harley threw Robin over her shoulder. The young man landed on the metal floor hard, but Harley kept a hold of his arm, dropped to straddle him for a moment, her back to him then before the teenager could react, Harley (keeping a hold of his arm) spun herself around to face him, wrapped her legs around his neck while leaning back with his arm, trapped against her. She squeezed with her thighs.

Robin gasped, but then grinned at her, his voice strained as he said in a tight tone. “This would be a teenage boy’s dream if you weren’t trying to kill me.”

Harley frowned at him, cocking a brow in surprise as she pulled back on his arm and squeezed her legs tighter.

Robin grinned brightly at her. “I’d be worried if I didn’t have this…”

Harley gasped as she was suddenly hit with 80,000 volts. She cried out, her body tense before her limbs gave out. Robin freed himself from her legs and stood up smiling.

“I have to say, you are damn pretty and any other time this would have been great, but I’m working sooo…” He shrugged and that was when he heard a shout behind him.

*

Jack spun in a roundhouse kick that caught Batman in the side of the head. He stumbled away from Jack, his ears ringing. He knew he wasn’t fighting as well as he could be, he was pulling his punches because this was his brother. He tried to tell himself not to hold back--Jack was a criminal, he needed help, real help. It was up to him to put Jack down and give him over to the police, then as his brother, he could get Jack help, professional real help. Bruce knew Jack would probably have to be taken back to Arkham and Jack...well, what they had between them would be gone, forever, but Bruce could accept that if he were getting Jack the help he needed and making sure Jack paid for what he had done. Bruce felt the string of tears in his eyes. If their parents knew what Jack had become...

That thought opened up a dark wound in Bruce’s heart…he had become what he was to save Gotham, to save himself and in the process he had lost his brother. Thoughts swirled through his head. What if he had told Jack what he was planning all those years, what if this, what Jack had done was ultimately Bruce’s fault?
Jack kicked him again, this time just a hard kick to the chest that made Batman stumble backwards and slam into the railing. Batman caught himself, but Jack didn’t let up. He rushed the caped crusader, but instead of hitting Batman, or trying to push him over the edge, Jack grinned and grabbed the top of Batman’s mask.

“I think it’s time we find out who you really are Batman, don’t you?” Jack chuckled.

Bruce panicked. He grabbed Jack’s wrist with both hands and tried to rip Jack’s hand away, but Jack’s grip was tight and accurate. He ignored the pain of his broken fingers as he dug his fingers into the mask and yanked.

The two men twisted around and Batman fought to keep Jack from ripping off the mask. Jack grabbed Batman’s shoulder with his free hand and dug his fingers in. He snarled as he pulled at the mask.

Jack laughed through clenched teeth. “Whatcha trying to hide Bats?”

Batman glared at him and finally released his hold on Jack’s wrist only to punch his brother in the face as hard as he could. The punch snapped Jack’s head back and was hard enough that Jack saw stars for a moment. Blood gushed from his nose and he stumbled backwards, but at the same time, Jack yanked back with all his strength and tore the hood off of Batman at the same moment he stumbled backwards a couple of steps until his lower back hit the railing.

Jack’s eyes widened as he saw his brother standing in front of him, dressed as the Batman, but at the same time he had hit the railing hard enough that he lost his balance and toppled over backwards in the next second.

“JACK!” Bruce roared as he saw his brother go over the edge.

Bruce raced to the railing, lunged part of the way over the rusted metal, which nearly sent himself tumbling over the railing too, but he caught himself and Jack’s hand. Jack gasped in pain.

Jack stared up at Bruce wide eyed, then began to giggle. “You’re the Batman?”

Bruce began to pull Jack up, but the glove on Jack’s hand slipped. “Come on Jack, help me!”

Jack dropped the cowl and watched it fall three stories into the vat of steaming acid below before he looked back up at his brother and laughed.

“And you called me unstable.” Jack giggled as Bruce hissed using one hand to hold on to the rail to prevent them both from going over while his grip on Jack’s hand was slipping. “Come on Jack-- help me!”

“Batman?” Both men turned to see Robin jog over only to stop short as a gunshot rang out. Robin jerked, bright red blood spread out from a wound that appeared in the boy’s chest.

“Robin!” Bruce yelled.

A man emerged from the shadows of the third floor. He was big, nearly Bruce’s size, with short, brown hair that might have been styled earlier but was sticking to his forehead as the man sweated, the fear in his eyes clear. He carried a pistol pointed at Robin. It was clear from his expression he was angry, terrified--maybe gassed--and ready to kill someone and that someone was going to be a kid dressed up to fight crime.

Robin turned toward the gunman, the man raised the gun, Bruce knew, without a doubt that the man
was going to kill Robin.

Jack slipped a little more. Bruce had a decision to make.

He looked down at Jack.

Jack stared back at his brother and knew, he knew what Bruce was going to do, who Bruce was going to pick.

“Bruce?” Jack said his brother’s name softly, pain, sorrow, so much wrapped in and around his older brother’s name.

Bruce said nothing. He could see the betrayal in his brother’s blue eyes.

Bruce simply let go.

Jack didn’t make a sound as he fell, but his eyes never left his brother until the moment he hit the acid.

*

Harley stood up a little shakily just as the gunshot sounded. When she looked up she saw Jack, dangling over the edge of the railing being held by one hand...by Bruce? But no sooner had she processed that information than she saw Bruce let Jack go.

“JACK!!” Harley screamed in denial and fear.

*

Bruce spun around after dropping Jack and yanked out a batarang from his belt; he threw it a half-heartbeat later. The light caught the dark metal just as the gunman pulled the trigger on the gun, a shot that would have ended Dick Grayson’s life. The batarang hit the gunman's hand, the point embedded in his wrist, forcing his hand open.

The man dropped the gun after the shot went wild.

That was when Bruce saw Harley rush at him.

She slammed into Bruce with the full force of her body, shrieking like a banshee. “YOU KILLED HIM!!”

She clawed at Bruce’s face, her nails dug bloody red lines down one of Bruce’s cheeks.

“Harley stop!!” Bruce yelled trying to grab her wrists, but Harley pushed back and spun around the heel of her foot catching Bruce in the cheek. The impact had Bruce staggering to the side. Harley hissed and spun again, but Bruce caught her foot.

“Harley stop! Please!” Bruce pleaded with her, but Harley wasn’t listening. She threw herself down to the floor; the sudden shift in her weight pulled Bruce off balance. She followed up with a hard kick to his knee, buckling the joint, then pulled her other foot free to kick him in the crotch; though he wore armor, the strike dropped Bruce to the floor. His sister-in-law moved swiftly, twisting around like a snake to straddle Bruce where she began to rain down punches on his face.

“You killed him!! You killed him--my puddin!!” She was crying uncontrollably while she tried to kill Bruce, beating him, bloodying his face, busting his nose, splitting his lip.
“You killed him…” She sobbed when her body jerked, her back bowed and she toppled off of Bruce.

Bruce shoved her the rest of the way off to see Robin standing behind her, holding his bloody shoulder, his taser in his hand. Though the boy looked pale, weak, on his last leg, Robin smiled.

“I really like this taser.”

Bruce stood up and grabbed Dick gently by the shoulder. “Let me look at that.”

Dick smiled though he was shaking slightly. “Never been shot before…”

Bruce tried to smile reassuringly. “It’s okay Dick, it looks like the bullet went through. Let's get you back to the cave.”

Dick gasped and pointed. “Bruce!”

Bruce turned to see Harley climbing over the railing. He took a step towards stop her as Harley turned to glare at him, but she was crying and her voice broke.

“I don’t have any reason to live without him. You took my heart from me...you killed us both.”

Bruce moved to stop her, but Harley let go.

Bruce made it to the railing and looked over just as her body hit the acid.

End of Part One.
The inside of the factory was hot and humid.

Jason had just started to leave with Frost when something grabbed his attention, movement he caught from the corner of his eye and he looked up at the very moment Jack went over the rail and dangled, his feet kicking the air.

“Frost!!” Jason grabbed Frost, spun the man around, and pointed.

The two men looked up.

Frost cursed loudly. Bane must have heard Frost because only seconds later the big man came into view, his eyes immediately followed the others as they gazed upward.

Bane hissed. “Holy shit, is that Jack?”

Frost nodded. “Come on; we have to help him!”

“Who is that holding him? I can’t see!” Jason snarled as the three men began to move.

“It's too dark, I can’t see either. Wait...what is that?” Frost hissed.

All three men watched as Jack dropped something. At first it looked like a black cloth, but as it turned, pushed by the heat from the vat, they all realized what it was, Batman’s cowl drifting down.

Bane, his voice soft with astonishment. “Is that Batman’s mask?”

None of them had a chance to contemplate the fact that Batman was there or that Jack had de-masked the caped crusader, because in the next second all three turned just in time to see Jack fall.

For a moment it looked as if Jack were floating. He seemed to be falling slowly, but just as quickly time sped up and Jack’s body was pulled down. All of them were struck by the fact that Jack never made a sound, no cry for help, no scream of pain...nothing.

The sound of his body hitting the acid made all three men jump.

Jason stumbled as he started to head in that direction, his eyes had followed Jack descent, but it wasn’t until he heard Jack’s body hit the acid that he was able to move. He wanted to save Jack, the first person to really believe in him, trust him, but he knew he would never make it in time to save his Boss. Once Jack had hit the acid, it was over.

Jason’s heart sank. In two days he had lost Roxy and now Jack. Who else was he going to lose from his little family? These people meant so much to Jason and everything was unraveling, all because of Falcone...and Batman.

The three of them were frozen; none of them knew what to do. They had just watched their Boss, their friend, the head of the Red Hood gang die and none of them could believe it. Jack had seemed indestructible, immortal even. He was their avenging angel and now...

Frost stiffened and whispered. “Harley...oh god, where is she?”

Jason laid a hand on Frost’s arm. “Where is she? We got to find her!”

Bane glanced up, a motion above grabbed his attention along with muffled shouts. He frowned, for a
moment trying to decipher what he was seeing when he saw shadows moved frantically, then he pointed. “There!!”

They all saw her climb over the rail. Her head turned away from them as she shouted at someone, though they couldn’t discern her words. The timbre of her voice carried, the deep sorrow, but not her specific words and then she fell.

None of the men moved, frozen in place yet again at the horrible events unfolding before in such a short time. They knew they could never save her as they watched in stunned silence as Harley threw herself after Jack.

Frost’s voice trembled. “I can’t...this can’t…”

Jason turned and rushed for the stairs, but Bane grabbed him by the back of his shirt and hauled the younger man back.

Jason turned and swung at Bane, but the big man easily leaned back out of the way. “Stop, Jason stop!” He shook the younger man and growled. “We got a job to finish!”

Jason heaved through clenched teeth. “I want to know who killed them!!! We have to punish him!! I want him dead!!”

Bane held on, keeping Jason far enough from him to prevent the younger man from slugging him. He glanced at Frost then back at Jason. “We know who did it--Batman and we’ll get revenge. But we promised Jack, this place is coming down.”

Jason stared at Bane for what seemed forever before he visibly calmed himself and nodded. “For Jack and Harley.”

Bane released him then looked to Frost. “We still gonna try and take out Falcone?”

It was Jason who answered. “Yeah we are. We are gonna finish what the Red Hood started.”

Frost looked at the two men and nodded his agreement before he answered. “Let’s go.”

Bane asked as they were heading out. “How are we gonna set off the charges?”

Frost smiled. “The Boss left an extra detonator in the Hummer, just in case.”

All three of them smiled.

* *

Batman stood in the dark of the upper floor staring at the place from where Harley had jumped and he had let his brother go in order to save Dick. Bruce felt hollow inside. How was he going to tell Alfred. For a moment, just a brief moment, he considered not telling Alfred. The old man would never know, would always think that Jack and Harley were out there somewhere in Gotham…

But no, he couldn’t do that and he knew it.

“You okay Batman? Bruce?” Dick asked softly the pain clear in the young man’s voice. He was doing well, but Dick needed medical attention, and soon. “I’m sorry you lost your hold on that man…and that woman…I thought I recognized her, but…” His voice trailed off as he frowned examining Bruce’s expression. Batman looked like he was going into shock, despite his limited understanding of how shock worked.
Dick had recognized the blonde woman, but he couldn't place where until Bruce said softly. “That was my brother’s...that was my brother and his wife...we met them at that car...” Bruce’s voice choked on a sob as reality came crashing down on him. He had sacrificed his little brother. He had sworn to himself that he would do all he could to protect Jack even when he knew he lost touch with his brother...and now...he had ended his brother’s life. Bruce felt a hollowness in his chest growing, a numbness spreading through his body...Oh god, what had he done?!

Bruce opened his mouth to tell Robin...what, he didn’t know, but he never got the chance because the first explosion ripped through the factory. Both men covered their ears, the noise deafening. That explosion was followed by another that sent both of them stumbling, nearly falling over as the entire building seemed to vibrate and shudder. A heartbeat later, several more explosions rocked the building and the suddenly unstable floor that held them up--for now.

Bruce grabbed Dick by the arm. “Come on--we’ve got to get out of here!”

Bruce pulled out his grappling hook and aimed for a rafter above them. Dick followed suit, and the two men pulled themselves up, heading toward the opening in the roof that had given them access to get into the factory, now using it as their means of escape.

The two of them made it through the opening in the roof just as more explosions went off, the building began to collapse under them, swaying as more explosions rocked the interior.

Batman, pushed Robin before him as they ran. They leaped off at the very last minute only to use their grappling hooks on another section of the now dying factory until they were able to make it to the ground, throwing themselves out of the way barely in time as the building came down in a billowing of smoke and heavy dust. Fires raged across much of the collapsed building materials, acrid and burning odors staining the air and scorching their lungs.

Batman helped Robin to his feet, the two of them turned to watch as the factory was rocked by more explosions, followed by a raging fire taking all evidence with it. Bruce stared at the destruction, his eyes stung with tears and smoke as he looked at his brother’s grave.

* 

Frost waited until morning to go and see Agatha at Henderschott’s secret hospital. He had stayed at the amusement park with everyone else drinking until late before he had headed home. Agatha would be staying at the hospital another few days before the doctor would allow her to be moved back to her place, or Frost’s...he was going to ask her about staying with him at his apartment, but right now he had news to deliver, news he wasn’t sure how he was going to break to her. He had told himself last night he was waiting until morning to let her rest, but he knew that the real reason was he hoped that by morning he would have come up with an easier way to tell her, but he had been wrong. Morning only made telling her that Jack and Harley were dead more surreal, more difficult.

Frost had stopped on the way to visit Agatha in order to buy a bouquet of flowers, something he would have done regardless, but the flowers had more meaning now. He knew they would do nothing to ease the pain that he was about to inflict, but he hoped that maybe they would bring some small measure of comfort.

When Frost arrived at the Agatha’s hospital room, she was sitting up reading a book, wearing a pink hospital gown and a pair of light pink reading glasses rested on the tip of her nose. (Frost smiled. He had learned over the months of being in a relationship with her that Agatha didn’t like any show of weakness in herself, so the fact that she was openly wearing her reading glasses demonstrated to him how tired she was feeling and exactly how much of a toll being shot like she was had hurt her.)
The curtains had been pulled aside to let in the bright summer sun. Agatha looked wonderful he thought. She still looked pale and there were shadows under her eyes, but she had combed her hair and she looked as if she had showered, there was a rosiness to her cheeks and a clearness to her eyes that hadn’t been there yesterday. She looked fresh, beautiful...Frost hated himself for what he was about to do to her. He walked in carrying a dozen white roses.

Agatha looked up over the rim of her glasses, a smile spread across her face. “There you are! I was beginning to worry. I thought someone would have called me to let me know how it went at the factory last night, or maybe stopped by…” She gave Frost a mock look of annoyance which quickly vanished. “How did it go? Did Jack take care of Falcone yet?”

She set her book down and removed her glasses. She set both on the room’s mobile table that was currently across her bed. She smiled expectantly at Frost. Now that he was here, Frost froze, unsure how he should proceed. It wasn’t like he hadn’t delivered news like this before as a cop. He had been part of several assignments where they had to go to someone’s house and deliver the bad news of a loved one's death. But this time… Frost handed her the roses. “I thought you might like these.”

Agatha blushed softly as she took the flowers. “Oh sweetie, these are gorgeous. I love them.”

She buried her face in the flowers taking a deep inhale. She let her breath out slowly.

“Mm...I do love roses. Thank you sugar.” She grinned at him and motioned him to come closer. When Frost did, she reached up and caught his face with one hand before she kissed him, a deep, passionate kiss, her hand slid around to the back of his head, her fingers threaded through his hair.

Frost put one hand on the back of her mattress, the other on the bed rail and kissed her hard in return.

When they finally pulled away from one another Agatha purred. “Mm...I need to find out from the doctor when I’ll be well enough for a little fun.” She smirked at Frost as she traced his jaw with her fingertip. “Sex really is some of the best medicine.” She giggled at him tracing his lips with her fingers before she asked again. “So, last night? I can tell something is bothering you.”

Frost settled his elbows on his knees, folded his hands together and looked down at the floor for a moment trying to figure out how he was going to tell her when Agatha murmured, her voice low with concern.

“Frost, what happened?” There was an edge to her voice, she knew something was very wrong.

Frost sighed and without looking at her murmured. “Jack and Harley. They’re dead.”

Agatha pushed herself up in her bed with a grimace of pain. “What? What’re you talking about?”

Frost closed his eyes for a moment before he looked up at her. “We saw Jack fall into a vat of acid…” He frowned as his eyes went distant for a moment as he remembered what he had witnessed. “Followed by Harley--she threw herself in after him. We think Batman caused their deaths.”

Agatha had gone deathly pale. Her voice was low, barely a whisper. “Dead?”

Frost nodded. “We think Batman was involved because just before Jack fell he dropped something that looked like Batman’s cowl.”

“Did you see Batman?” she asked softly; her voice lacked any emotion.

Frost shook his head. “No, just...just what we thought we saw a cowl, but we know someone was up on the third floor with Jack and Harley and we know someone let Jack fall...”
“Did you find their bodies?” she asked slowly.

Frost shook his head. “They both fell into one of the large vats of acid that were situated around the factory floor, but we also set off the charges after we realized they were--they were gone. We leveled the place, there is nothing left.”

Tears, very slowly began to gather in the corners of her eyes before they ran down Agatha’s cheeks. “Jackie is gone...Harley...oh Jonny…”

Frost was up, his arms around her. She wrapped her arms around him and buried her face against his chest and cried.

*  

Bane was angry.

Everything had gone to shit in two days. He wasn’t sure what was going to happen now with Jack and Harley gone, the rest of the gang injured…

All he knew was that he felt helpless.

He, along with Trope and Thea, Zsasz, Frost and Jason had all headed to the amusement park after destroying the factory building, with a quick stop at a twenty-four hour convenience store to buy out all the alcohol the clerk had in stock. They had spent the night on the merry-go-around, letting the ride play all through the night, drinking themselves all into unconsciousness. Everyone knew they were going to have to tell the other survivors of the gang what had happened, but no one was looking forward to it, no one wanted to relive what had happened, least of all Frost, Bane and Jason, but they owed it to the gang to let everyone know.

Bane was currently walking toward the haunted house ride. The morning sun was too bright and his headache was pounding at his temples. He recalled, as he walked, the conversation they had last night (or was it early this morning?) about Falcone.

Jason wanted blood. He wanted to hunt down Batman and Falcone, he wanted to finish what Jack had started. He didn’t say it, but Bane was sure Jason wanted to be the Red Hood, not because the young man was power hungry, no. If that were the case Bane would have put him down. No, Jason wanted revenge, and he wanted Jack’s memory, the gang, to live on. Bane guessed this was Jason’s way of showing respect for the man, and maybe he was right. Maybe they should keep going.

As their small group had drunk themselves stupid last night, Bane was pretty sure that like him, the others kept expecting to see Jack, with Harley on his arm, walk through the park at any moment with Jack laughing and telling some corny, or off color joke to them, or telling them how he had pulled this fantastic stunt and faked their deaths...

Bane grinned thinking about it. He could easily have seen Jack and Harley dancing together, then drinking with the gang while they all sat around on the ride laughing and celebrating, but it had never happened. They had never returned that morning. Instead the gang was in mourning.

The small group of them had stayed the night, except Frost who had gone home. (Everyone knew he would be going to break the news to Agatha in the morning.) Bane and Zsasz had slept out on the merry-go-around along with Thea and Trope. Bane had acted as bed and pillow to the two young women as they curled into a drunken sleep in his lap. Zsasz had fallen asleep on one of the wooden horses, his cheek pressed up against the metal pole. Now that had been the strangest thing Bane had ever seen. He hadn’t known Zsasz long, but he didn’t seem the type of person inclined to
drunkenness, though he had put down two six packs of beer without saying too much except that Jack had been his friend.

Jason had wandered off, drunk and angry to sleep off his own drunkenness somewhere else in the park. Bane understood, not only did all of them need to process in their own way, but Jason had volunteered to be the one to call Alex and tell him about Jack and Harley.

Bane had woken in the morning with a sense of restlessness, his anger which had been dulled last night by the alcohol was in full swing when he had opened his eyes that morning. He disentangled himself from the two girls. He hated to move them, they were holding one another, curled against him for protection. He smiled and stroked their hair, feeling like a protective big brother before he eased them down as gently as possible so as not to wake them before he had started to go for a walk in the park. The Gotham summer sun was harsh and bright. It was clearly going to be another scorcher of a day. Bane sighed walking past the quiet rides of the park. He had thought to simply try to work off the anger that was building inside him, an anger directed at Batman, at Falcone, but he just couldn't seem to calm down. That was one of the reasons he had joined the military, a reason he never spoke about much, but he had anger issues.

Before he had realized where he was going, Bane found he had wandered to Jack’s lab. He didn’t really know why he had come here, but as he stepped into the lab and looked around, he felt a cold emptiness of loss. Jack and Harley had been becoming more than friends, they had been on the path to becoming family and now, that was all gone.

That was the moment Bane let his rage simply boil over.

With a roar, Bane attacked the lab, his fists crashed into tables loaded with glass beakers and plastic tubing. He moved in a blind rage, his fists smashed, he threw containers of colored liquid, he upturned tables and smashed samples. Bane didn’t really focus on what he was doing, he simply let his rage run.

He had picked up a plastic gallon container, similar to those used for water--except this container glowed softly with some sort of green liquid. He threw the container and its contents with all his strength across the room, where the thick plastic met the wall and cracked open. The contents burst free, the liquid hit the air, instantly creating a thick gas which began to mix with the fumes from other liquids that Bane had unknowingly in his rampage spilled into the air. The room was swiftly filling with a mix of gases. Bane had begun to wheeze, each breath burned as it flowed into his lungs, though he wasn’t completely aware of the burn. Bane was consumed with his anger, his loss, his undirected rage needed to focus and that focus was on destroying this room.

The air in the room had become thick with a light greenish yellow haze that obscured vision. The cloud hung heavy and thick in the room, a miasma of noxious gases. Bane was so focused on destruction and blinded by his rage that by the time the big man realized something was wrong, it was already too late. Bane breathed in deeply and frowned; he couldn’t get in a breath. He grabbed at his throat, barely able to make a sound, a harsh painful wheeze was the only sound he could make. He blinked several times, his eyes burned and began to tear up while his skin itched, then burned. His body felt as if it were swelling, his head felt heavy and he was disoriented.

He began to stagger toward the doorway, reaching into his back pocket, looking for his phone. He yanked it out, held the phone up. The light illuminated his face in the thick cloud of gases around him, but just as Bane tried to focus on the phone, on dialing a number for help, Jason, Frost, the girls…

He fell forward, his face smashed into the floor and he lay unmoving as the gas slowly rolled over his still form, hiding him from view.
When Jason had woken up that morning, his head was throbbing. He had imbibed heavily that night along with everyone else and now he was paying for it with a horrible hangover. His tongue felt like it was swollen and covered in mold, his joints ached and his head and heart felt heavy.

He had wandered to the main house where Jack and Harley had lived, stumbling into the silence of their home.

What he needed was some hot, black coffee and a shower, but he didn’t feel right about taking a shower here, or touching Jack and Harley’s things, so he settled for making the coffee and pulling out his phone. He had volunteered to call Alex. He didn’t really want to do it, but someone needed to and Frost had to go tell Agatha. That was bad enough, but calling Alex too? With a small shake of his head (a gesture he instantly regretted) Jason decided Frost didn’t need to do that chore too. Jason wandered into the kitchen, grabbed the coffee, pulled out the coffee machine and started making some strong black coffee.

As he waited for the coffee to brew, Jason walked back into the living room and collapsed onto the couch. His wounds from the nightclub were aching. Jason sighed and closed his eyes. After a few seconds he smiled as he remembered he had some pain pills from that weirdo doctor Henderschott which he had stuffed in the front pocket of his jeans. He pulled the bottle out, and dropped two into his hand before tossing them into his mouth and dry swallowed them.

He sighed and pulled his phone out. Might as well get the call over with he thought. He hit the preprogrammed number and waited. He didn’t have to wait long before Alex answered.

“I was beginning to get fucking worried that one of you assholes wasn’t going to call me and let me know how it went last night, but it’s fine, I saw it on the news.” Alex sounded more than annoyed.

Jason sighed. “Morning to you too.”

“Hey Jason. So where the fuck is everyone? I thought Jack would fucking call me and let me know when you guys were on your way to Falcone’s at least. Fuck. Did you guys not do it? I didn’t see anything about Falcone on the fucking news...where the fuck is Jack? Why isn’t he calling me? Not that I mind hearing from you Jason.” Jason heard Alex hold the phone away and speak to someone, probably Alice before he was back on. “So, how the fuck did it go?”

Jason chewed his bottom lip before he replied. “Jack and Harley are dead.”

Jason was met with silence.

“Did you hear me?” Jason asked.

“That ain’t fucking funny,” Alex said, his tone flat, dangerous.

“It’s not a fucking joke. They’re dead, both of them.” Jason said, his voice lacked any emotion, flat, monotone as he tried not to feel anything.

Alex was quiet again before he asked, his tone more subdued. “What happened?”

Jason closed his eyes. “Batman pushed Jack into a vat of acid. Harley jumped in after him.”

“What?” Alex hissed. “You’re fucking with me...aren’t you?”

Jason shook his head even though Alex could not see the gesture. “I’m not. Me, Bane and Frost, we
all saw it–both of them. They fell into this fucking huge vat of acid, then we blew that fucking factory to the ground, just like Jack wanted. I hope we got the Batman too.”

Alex’s voice was low as he hissed. “Fuck.”

Jason murmured. “We still want to go after Falcone…”

Alex hissed. “Not now...just...we need to wait...regroup...something…”

Jason nodded, his voice flat. “Yeah...yeah okay.”

Alex said softly. “Look, get everyone together at the park, I’ll be there and we can talk tonight, all right?”

Jason nodded again even though Alex couldn’t see him. “All right. We’ll be here.”

“Good.” Alex hung up.

As he sat there on the couch and stared at nothing, waiting for the coffee, Jason’s eyes landed on something resting in one of the chairs.

Jason frowned and stood up slowly. He walked over to the chair and picked the item up. It was Jack’s “Red Hood,” the helmet Jack wore…

Jason slowly turned the helmet in his hands, studying it. The gang needed a new leader, someone to carry on Jack’s work, his ideas…

Jason stared down into the red visor.

*

Bruce hadn’t slept well at all that night. His dreams had been plagued by the expression on his brother’s face as he had fallen into the acid. Bruce relived that moment over and over again in his fitful sleep, the face of his little brother...then Harley...throwing herself after his brother...Bruce didn’t know if that had just been a sign of her deranged mental state or a real expression of love that she would follow his brother...the dreams had twisted around, playing on repeat, Jack looking at him, resigned to his fate at the hands of his older brother, until Bruce had given up on sleep and simply gone downstairs to the gym to work himself until he was too exhausted to care. He had slept only a couple of hours after that, but at least the sleep hadn’t been consumed with images of his brother.

Bruce showered and dressed (he found himself dressing entirely in black, black suit, shirt, tie...he hadn’t been aware of his choice of colors until he was fixing his tie in front of the mirror. It was then that Bruce realized he was dressed in mourning colors) before he came downstairs. It was still very early, the house was quiet, which was a sure sign that Dick was still asleep. As Bruce made his way to the kitchen, (he thought he would put some coffee on for himself,) he heard the unmistakable sounds of Alfred moving around. Bruce stopped walking and stood in the kitchen doorway. He saw Alfred in the kitchen, doing what he always did, taking care of the family.

Dependable Alfred, measuring out the coffee into the coffeemaker, humming the anthem of Great Britain while he worked. He could tell which blend by the smell, Saint Helena coffee, he could pick out the scents of caramel and fruit. He watched Alfred, who didn’t seem to be aware of Bruce standing in the doorway. He was dressed in his butler uniform as always just with the sleeves rolled up, his jacket over the back of one of the chairs and an apron over his front. He had been slowly working back up to his typical working form; the heart attack now seemed like a distant memory, but as Bruce watched him he could see the signs on Alfred, the scars that the heart attack had left on
him—more wrinkles around his eyes, the corners of his mouth.

To Bruce, Alfred had aged since the heart attack. The once towering, firm figure from his youth, who had seemed untouchable, strong, immortal even, who had been there for him—for both of them...him and Jack when their parents died—a man who had taken over the raising of two young boys, alone, and who had loved them both as his sons...Alfred had supported Bruce in his mission to save Gotham, even protecting Bruce’s secret from his own brother even when Alfred had thought Bruce should share it with Jack...and Bruce knew that Alfred had been the one person that Jack had loved almost as much as he loved his brother... Alfred had finished with the coffee and turned, stopping in his tracks when he saw Bruce standing in the doorway.

“Is all well, Master Bruce?” Alfred asked, continuing what he was doing as if he had not just missed a step.

“I...couldn’t sleep,” Bruce offered softly as he stepped the rest of the way into the kitchen and pulled up a stool, unknowingly taking the same spot that Jack would take when he lived here, sitting in the kitchen and eating his meals with Alfred.

Alfred noticed though he made no comment. “What would you like for breakfast, sir? I was thinking about making French omelettes this morning, something nice and filling for the two of you.”

Bruce frowned, his hands were folded in his lap. “I’m not very hungry this morning Alfred.”

“Sir, if you don’t mind my saying this, breakfast is the most important meal of the day and while I have in the past let you go without eating it, I have a feeling today would be a very good day for you to listen to me and eat breakfast.” While he spoke Alfred walked over to the large refrigerator and began pulling out eggs, butter, tomatoes, onions, and cheese before he pulled out some fresh herbs as well. He set those aside and pulled down a mixing bowl and a pan. Without looking at Bruce as he worked he said softly.

“Something is clearly bothering you Master Bruce. You know, you can tell me anything sir. If you need advice, a shoulder…” The older man finally turned to look at Bruce. “I’m here for you as I always have been.”

Bruce dragged his teeth over his bottom lip in worry. He looked up, but Alfred had gone back to work, chopping herbs. Bruce stared at Alfred’s back. He was sure he could see a slight hunch to Alfred’s shoulders since his hospitalization that hadn’t been there before or maybe it was simply that Bruce was realizing his butler, father figure, mentor was not immortal like he had always felt…and with Jack’s death...Bruce closed his eyes as the pull of despair nearly overcame him.

“I do need to tell you something Alfred,” Bruce said softly at the same time he rubbed his hands up and down his thighs.

Alfred began to crack eggs, his back still to Bruce. “You know you can tell me anything…” he turned to look at Bruce over his shoulder, then frowned. There was something very troubled in Bruce’s expression, he could see a tug around the younger man’s eyes, a heaviness on his shoulders. Alfred had suspected something terrible had happened last night, but neither Bruce nor Dick had said a word. Alfred set down the bowl and wiped his hands on his apron as he stepped closer to Bruce. He dropped “Master” as he focused on Bruce.

“Bruce, what is it?”

Bruce blinked, tears had started to form at the corners of his eyes and to hurry their way down his cheeks. The grief he felt was raw, like an open wound. It burned and threatened to consume him.
Bruce wiped at the tears angrily. He didn’t deserve to cry for his brother, because he was the one who had taken his brother’s life...he didn’t get to grieve, Bruce thought to himself in bitterness. He took a deep breath before he spoke softly. “It’s...it’s Jack...Jack and Harley...Alfred--they’re dead.”

Alfred stared at Bruce, his voice was just a whisper. “What? Dead?”

Bruce swallowed. “Yes.” He turned his gaze up at Alfred.

The older man had gone pale and placed a hand on the counter next to him. “What...what happened?” Alfred asked softly. He looked at Bruce, seeking something there that

Bruce felt he couldn’t give him.

Bruce swallowed. “Last night, Dick and I went to ACE Chemicals to investigate the fact that one of the cell towers in that area had gone black. The place is owned by Falcone and with recent events surrounding Falcone I felt looking into the place was a good idea.” Bruce glanced down. Looking Alfred in the eye was becoming more difficult as he continued.

“ACE Chemicals is a front for Falcone’s drug business. We found several people dead.” Bruce looked up at Alfred. “It was Jack or...It was the Red Hood gang. And Jack...Jack was their leader Alfred.”

Alfred nodded. “Continue.”

Bruce returned the nod. “I saw Jack kill two men. I confronted him as Batman and we fought.”

Bruce could see the fight vividly in his mind, recall every move, every detail of their exchange. “Jack managed to pull my cowl off, but he went over the edge. He was dangling there Alfred…” Bruce’s voice dropped lower still. “I reached out and grabbed his hand, but he was slipping...his fingers were broken on that hand, he was slipping…” What little color had remained in Alfred’s face drained as he realized where this was going.

“Then Dick and Harley were there...one of Falcone’s men stepped out of the darkness and shot Dick, he was going to shoot the boy again. I had to make a choice...I let Jack go.”

Bruce said the words out loud, but they sounded as if they were coming from a stranger. Bruce, who had looked down at nothing again, now raised his head to meet Alfred’s gaze. “I killed him Alfred--I let go, I let him fall into a vat of acid...I…” He closed his eyes. Alfred still didn’t move as Bruce continued.

“After that Harley attacked me, then...she jumped after him Alfred. She said I had killed her already and jumped after him.” Bruce squeezed his eyes shut, but tears fought their way past to fall slowly down his cheeks.

Alfred was shocked. He wasn’t sure how to respond until he saw the devastation in Bruce’s face. The older man walked over and wrapped his arms around Bruce who buried his face against the older man’s chest and wrapped his arms around him just before he broke down.

“I killed my brother Alfred...I killed my brother…”

Alfred stroked Bruce’s back as he held the man much like he had done the night his parents had died. It had been after Jack had been put to sleep with some medication, and a young Bruce, that little dark haired boy with a stern face, had come to Alfred only to break down, the stoic demeanor the young boy had kept in place through the funeral, through his little brother’s breakdown, the lawyers...all of it, had shattered once it was dark, little Bruce had been through so many trials, he had
broken down finally and gave into the tears he had kept bottled up.

That was what this reminded Alfred of, that night when Bruce had lost everything. The old butler held the boy in his arms and let him cry.

*

His mind was in turmoil, his thoughts, like dreams, drifted through a ravaged, jumbled mind. Images of his brother staring down at him as he fell forever. Those cold blue eyes, that frown. Those images ghosted away replaced by Harley, her smile, the look of love in her eyes, the feel of her kiss, the feel of her body against him. The way her presence brought him comfort, joy...she was everything he ever wanted, or needed...Her...his Harley. That was what hurt him more than dying, was being without her, without Harley...for a moment his anger spiked, rage filled him at Bruce, for the lies, but mostly he raged at his brother for keeping him away from her...from his girl.

Then he hit the acid.

What followed was pain beyond description.

Jack screamed, but he couldn’t make any noise as the acid floated inside his mouth, burned his flesh, his eyes. He was blind and thrashing as the acid rolled him around, moved his body as if he was weightless. The acid held him with its constantly turning and twisting of his body, surrounding him in pain that was so intense that Jack blacked out.

*

Pain was the first thing that came to his conscious mind when he could think again. He broke the surface of the acid, gasping for breath that burned as it rolled through his body. He didn’t recall passing out again, he couldn’t think at all, every nerve ending was on fire, the pain was everything. He was consumed by the burning and ripping pain that lanced through him. Pain was all he knew, all he could focus on…it was his entire existence.

He struggled to breathe, struggled to catch a breath that wasn’t filled with burning liquid. His arms were leaden, it would be so much easier to simple give up, to let the acid have him, to leave this world behind, but he couldn’t. It wasn’t in his nature to give up and there was Harley...his girl, the only person in this world he loved...he needed her...and she needed him...

He wanted to scream, but he couldn’t as the pain blanked out his thoughts, ripped through his mind, stripped and tore through his memories, his feelings, his thoughts, burning holes in everything that was Jack Wayne.

He wanted to beg for Harley, needed her, he needed her in his arms, to hear her voice telling him she was there for him. He knew, knew that she could make this all stop, that holding her in his arms, her body wrapped around his, her lips, her voice, with her very presence, she would end the pain. His Harley, his girl...Jack wanted to cry, to scream, he needed her...needed her. He tried to scream for her, call for her as his body was thrown, tumbled and twisted, banged against hard surfaces he couldn’t see in a haze of burning liquid green, but the only sounds he could make were muffled, gurgling cries that no one could hear, cries that threatened to pull away his voice, to drown away the pain...

When Jack finally broke the surface, sucking in air was a misery. The pain that had been horrible before turned into an inferno of agony.

Everything hurt, every part of him burned, his skin was on fire, as if it were being ripped from his
bones, leaving him raw and exposed. His throat, his insides, everything, every part of him burned with an endless fire. His eyes burned so much he couldn’t see. He wasn’t even aware of the blood dripping down his cheeks like tears, dripping from his lips to dribble down his chin.

Jack reached up and grabbed his head, his skull pounded painfully as if a wild beast was trapped inside, seeking escape. Jack buried his fingers in his hair, nails pressed against his skull and laughed. He didn’t know why he laughed, but it was as if there could be no other response to the pain, fear, and loneliness combined with an intense rage, than to laugh.

Pain became everything.

The acid from the factory had washed Jack into the sewers of Gotham, into a complex system of pipes that were covered in complete darkness. Jack tried to open his eyes, but it was painful, as if his eyes had been peeled, leaving the nerve endings exposed. His body was bumped and tossed in the darkness, the chemicals mixed with the river water which pushed his body along with Jack only dimly aware of the movement around him. His body was being shoved and pushed along by the river like a rag doll. He had no control and no way to defend himself as his body was slammed against the sides of a cement pipe, dragged along the bottom or occasionally he would be thrown up against some obstruction in the water, an old bicycle, a refrigerator, a car...he became so battered that all the pain simply melded together until unconsciousness wrapped its arms around him.

When he came back to consciousness, Jack screamed and rolled into a fetal position trying to pull himself away from the pain. The water lapping against his skin was agony, the surface on which he lay burned like nothing he had felt before. It took an effort of will to roll himself onto his back, a strength of will Jack hadn’t been sure he had until that moment. He forced his eyes open and looked up into nothingness, there was only darkness around him.

For a short time, he thought he was dead, he even hoped for a moment that death was coming for him, that death would take away all this exquisite pain, but thoughts of Harley drifted through his pain addled mind. She was lying in bed naked, her blonde hair framing her face, her smile radiant. She giggled softly, sliding her legs together, stretching her arms over her head as she purred.

“Come here puddin, let me hold you.”

Jack shuddered, pain wracked through his body...the only sound he could make was a giggle that bordered on a sob, his tears painted red with blood.

He slowly crawled out of the stream, now a mix of sewer water, river water and the chemicals from the plant. Each movement of his arms was a struggle. His breath came out as a wheeze as he struggled to pull air into his trembling body. He could taste blood in his mouth, drooling over his lips and down his chin. He couldn’t focus his thoughts, he couldn’t see or hear properly. Everything was muffled and above everything else was the pain that threatened to overwhelm all sense and thought.

Jack knew he had to move--if he was going to live, he needed to move. If he was to get back to Harley, he knew he had to move. Harley...he giggled, then choked...coughing up bright green fluid that burned his throat.

He reached out and dug his fingers into soil? Sewage? He didn’t know and he didn’t care. He coughed, forcing the liquid out of his lungs, breathing in tortured breaths of thick, humid air. He pulled himself out of the burning liquid slowly, crawled from the ooze. The burning acid dripped from his body, diluted, but still dangerous. His clothing had been reduced to liquid shreds that sloughed off his body in dripping, melting masses. He continued to crawl until he was clear of the liquid, his arms and legs shook with the effort and then Jack collapsed, the pain momentarily gone as he gave himself over to blissful darkness.
He was not aware of the figures that emerged out of the darkness hours later to find him. The same figures picked up his now bleached white body and carried him further into the darkness.

*

He had no concept of time. His nights and days were melded together into flashes of bright lights, intense, unbearable pain, voices and darkness. He didn’t know where he was or even who he was. He only knew pain...and his dreams.

In the darkness of his mind he saw her. His angel, the golden haired beauty that protected him, eased his pain with whispered words of love to him...he couldn’t think clearly to remember who she was, but he knew she was important, she was everything. He couldn’t remember anything beyond that and he knew he needed her. She was important to him, to his very soul.

In the dreams she was waiting for him, calling his name which he couldn’t hear. He would reach for her, but she was always just out of his reach...he knew if he could just hold her in his arms everything would be all right, but then the dream would end and the pain would return.

When he woke, he woke screaming.

His body burned, everything and anything that touched his skin made him scream. They were wrapping around his limbs, he could feel the pressure from them and the way they made his skin burn. He would writhe around, trying to rip the bandages from his body, but figures would emerge from around him and hold him down. His voice was cracked, hoarse, the screaming only made it worse; his throat felt as if he had swallowed lava. He tried to see where he was, who had him, but his eyes couldn’t focus. Any light made him wince away. He knew figures were around him, but all he saw was the dark shadows, hazy images of people moving around him. He couldn’t see and he couldn’t hear properly either. Sounds were muffled, the voices he heard were like the chattering of rats, but once in a while a sound would break through the haze of noises to pierce into his skull until he wanted to scream again.

His mind was in confusion, thoughts and images moved through his mind, shooting past him before he could grab them and hold on. Images of people he should know...names that had no faces attached to them. The effort of focusing made his head swim in agony, forcing him to let the images go. He didn’t know what had happened; he only knew that he was in hell.

He had no concept of time. His entire existence was pain and confusion, endless, unbearable pain. He heard voices again and again; slurred, muttering voices. He saw faces, but only briefly, illuminated by lights that they carried. They were grotesque faces, stretched and deformed.

He cried out, shielding his eyes from the light, curling in on himself to avoid the light. The pain would spike and send him spiraling into blessed darkness again.

And in the darkness the stream of images returned...people he felt he should know...but it was always her image that drew him...the beautiful blonde...his angel...

*

Jack woke.

His eyes snapped open and it was the first time he was able to focus. He struggled for a few minutes trying to remember his name. His mind seemed slow and sluggish. It was painful to think, but after a bit he remembered his name. He knew who he was, at least partly...he was Jack. The pain was still there, but duller, more manageable. He didn’t think he could move, but he could breathe a shallowly
without the pain burning his throat and lungs. He lay still only his eyes moving to see where he was lying. He could focus a little bit, squinting his eyes to see…

He was lying in a dark room; the only light was soft and filtered. Jack raised his head. He regretted the effort which nearly caused him to black out as he looked to see where the light was coming from. A door at the other end of the tiny room was where the light seeped through cracks around the warped door in the wall. Jack laid his head back down, shuddering as pain lanced through his body. He wanted to fall back into the peaceful darkness, but he wouldn’t allow himself. He struggled to stay conscious and focused.

The walls were plastered with images; posters...old circus posters, faded, decaying images on the walls and there were many masks, painted masks that at one time might have been beautiful, but they were now faded, cracked or torn. As Jack’s eyes wandered the room he saw one mask hanging in a corner. It had once been black, red and white...there were red diamonds on it and circling the sides of the mask were the points of a jester's hat...it was a harlequin mask he realized. Harlequin...Jack tried to form the words with his lips, but it was too painful. He focused on that word, Harlequin...Harley...Harley Quinn.

He frowned...Harley Quinn...Harley… Harley! Her imaged snapped into his mind. His Harley....the angel from his dreams!

Jack pushed himself up, pain burned through him, drew out a scream. He collapsed to the bed and blacked out.

But just before the darkness took him, a memory came back to him, holding her hand...Harley’s hand, slipping a ring on her finger, her smile…

“My girl,” was the last thought Jack had before he passed out.

*

The next time Jack was conscious he remembered exactly who he was, remembered his wife, Harley...he remembered everything.

He felt weak, but more himself. He felt like he was coming apart at the seams, but now, he still felt shaky, slightly unhinged, but he was holding himself together, if only barely.

Jack laid still for a few minutes taking in his environment. He was in what almost resembled a cave. Though it was hard to tell from the dim light filtering in from around the old wooden door, (though as Jack laid there, letting himself adjust, he realized he could see much better than he should have been able to…) looked like they might be made of cement, maybe rock? Cement he decided, they were too smooth for a real cave. He reached up to touch the wall, only then realizing just how bandaged up his hands were. Jack held his hands up and saw the bandages ran up the length of his arms, around his torso and as he pushed himself painfully up to a sitting position, he realized the bandages covered his hips, legs...every inch of him. Jack chuckled softly. He looked like a frickin’ mummy.

He touched his face and pulled the bandages away. The air hitting his skin made him hiss in pain for a moment. It was like his skin was overly sensitive, as if he had been burned, but almost as quickly the pain seemed to settle and recede.

Jack frowned, trying to recall the time between falling into the vat and now, but those memories remained fuzzy. As he began to move, the pain was much milder, more as if he had been working out in the gym and over exerted himself. He felt dirty, grungy and incredibly hungry. Jack moved his
legs off the bed and looked down. The floor, like the walls and ceiling was cement. Jack was pretty sure he was in an old tunnel or a tube from a construction site maybe...He stood up and almost had to sit down immediately. His legs wobbled, he was weak and standing made him dizzy.

Jack put his hands up against the ceiling to steady himself before he took another step toward the door.

When he finally reached the door he could hear the voices on the other side. It sounded as if several people were outside the door and...he tilted his head, the sound of a fire?

Jack turned to look behind him for a weapon, saw nothing but the masks, the mattress on a rusted wire frame and a barrel being used as a nightstand old clothing piled against the back wall, nothing else.

Jack snarled slightly then pushed open the door.

Outside under an old bridge was a large trash can with a fire burning brightly inside it. Surrounding the can were several people, all of whom stopped talking to turn and stare at Jack.

Jack used the door frame (or rather the frame that had been built around the tunnel entrance) and stared out at the group of people.

The first thing that came to Jack’s mind was that these people looked like circus freaks, the type of people who would do sideshows. There was a large woman, unusually large, two women...no, and yes, they were joined at the hip, the side--he couldn’t tell. There was a man covered in hair every inch of him, another man so skinny that Jack could see every bone and lastly there were three men, all dwarves, with bald heads and large eyes.

They were all staring at Jack as he stood in the doorway of the makeshift bedroom.

Finally one of them, the skeletal looking man, walked forward. “You’re awake. How do you feel?”

Jack held on tightly to the doorway. He had already done too much, he felt weak.

“I’m starving,” he muttered.

The skeletal man laughed. “Good, let’s see what we can do about that.”

* 

Jack, still mostly wrapped in bandages, sat on the side of the bed eating from a plastic bowl. The soup was good, surprisingly thick, with large chunks of beef and thick with vegetables.

“My name is Isaac,” the skeletal man said after he handed Jack the bowl.

Jack nodded. “I’m Jack.”

Isaac smiled. “It’s nice to have a name to put to the face now. We found you outside one of the drainage pipes that leads into the Sprang River. You’re lucky we found you when we did, you were in pretty bad shape. I don’t think you would have made it if Celesta hadn’t nursed you back to health. She used to be a nurse.” Isaac smiled.

Jack looked up at Isaac. “Where am I now?”

Isaac smiled. “Our little family lives here under the Sprang Bridge. This…” He pointed at the “room” they were in. “Is a piece of pipe for some rebuilding that never happened. We use it as a recovery
room whenever one of us gets sick.”

Jack frowned with a slight nod, glancing around before he spoke again. “How long have I been here?”

Isaac frowned looking down at his hands before he spoke. “You were in really bad shape. You’ve been here almost thirty days.”

Jack’s eyes widened. “What?”

Isaac sucked on his lips. “You’ve been here with us for a month. We didn’t think you were going to make it, but you surprised everyone.”

Jack stood up nearly dropping the bowl. “Harley! I have to get to Harley!”

Isaac stood up putting his hands out. “Ah, you can’t just run off Jack.”

Jack snarled. “Get me some clothes, I’m going home! My wife…” His voice broke.

Isaac held his hands up and took a step toward him. “Jack...ah...you need to see something.”

Isaac walked to the back of the “room” where he rummaged around. Only now did Jack really take notice of the piles of cloth, clothing, and other things. After a bit Isaac came up with what looked like a cracked hand mirror. He handed it to Jack.

Jack frowned and took the mirror.

What he saw wasn’t Jack Wayne. What he saw was a clown.

His skin was so pale, it looked almost white. His lips were blood red, standing out sharply against the pale white of his skin. He yanked the bandages down off his neck and shoulders, the black of his tattoos stood out harshly against his now milk white skin. His blue eyes were shockingly blue now, a startling contrast against the ghostly pallor of his skin; the shade of blue was almost unnatural, and the dark of his lashes...no, the skin around his eyes was darker, almost black compared to the rest of his skin. Jack reached up with shaking fingers to feel his eyebrows were gone and his hair…

Jack dragged his fingers through his hair, which was now a dark green…

Jack started to laugh. He dropped the mirror letting it crash to the floor as he continued to laugh.

He laughed hard enough that tears began to run down his cheeks.

Isaac watched, pressing himself back away from Jack.

Jack dropped to the bed, wrapped his arms around himself and continued to laugh.

*  

Pamela Isley was dead.

At least that was what Gotham thought. She had died all those days ago in that tragic lab accident at Wayne Enterprises, but that was only partially true.

There had been an explosion caused by Marc, Dr. Marc Legrand when he had tried to kill her...after she had stolen for him. She had taken a rare herb for him, lied for him, falsified results, wrote his reports, but when she had found out what he was trying to do, trying to create a deadly poison to sell
on the black market, weaponizing plants, she threatened to go to Bruce Wayne himself to stop the scientist. That was when he had poisoned her and tried to blow up the lab to cover his trail; but the poison hadn’t worked the way Marc had planned. It didn’t kill her.

Pamela wasn’t really sure what the poison had done to her. Everything had all happened so quickly, Marc’s betrayal, the poisoning, the explosion, and before she knew it, she changed and the lab was destroyed. Pamela could only assume that Marc was still alive. As far as she had been able to gather, no bodies were found, but then again the news assumed her death, he might be dead too or changed, alive? She had no way of knowing.

But what she did know was that she had no idea what was happening to her.

After the explosion, Pamela had found herself wandering out of the remains of the lab, confused, but alive. She had fled, losing herself in Gotham until she found a safe place to hide, a place to hide from Marc, from the world. The explosion had left her confused, disoriented and lost, her body changing right before her eyes and it had hurt like nothing Pamela had endured before. Those memories, of running, of pain...Pamela couldn’t really recall with any clarity what had happened during that period, but the plants, they had sung to her, whispered to her and pulled her here where she had been staying. At the time she hadn’t understood that it was the plants calling to her, she had simply followed the sounds, the soft lyrical pull until she had arrived at her new home. Some place safe, some place where she could figure out what was happening to her. Once the pain had passed, Pamela realized she just how much she had changed. Her body was different.

(She couldn’t know the full extent of her changes without looking at herself under a microscope, but she could feel the changes and see them on her skin. Her once peach complexion was now scattered with patches of green, mottled like camouflage. She had pricked her finger to see if what she felt was true and saw that her blood was clear. The changes to her body were not just cosmetic, but she was changing--morphing--on a cellular level. And she was changing into something no longer human.) She set about creating herself a sanctuary, a retreat from the rest of the world as she struggled to figure out who Pamela Isley was now...or wasn’t…

This place had once been someone’s home, a house that had once been a beauty. It was a grand mansion built around the turn of the 20th century. The place had once been a jewel in Gotham with its thirty-one rooms, castle like tower, vast gardens and large hot house, but that had been decades and decades ago. When Pamela found herself here, the house was a ruin, the gardens and the plants had taken over. It was perfect.

In the short amount of time she had been here, Pamela had made this place a home, closing herself off from humanity, from Gotham, from her past as she learned that she now had abilities, powers. She could...do things with the plant life around her. In the days since her “death” Pamela, who was beginning to think of herself more and more as Poison Ivy, (which seemed to fit her so much better than Pamela) she had learned there was a great deal she could do. She had become one with the earth, with the plants. And most importantly, and surprisingly she thought, she was happy in her little green sanctuary.

Happy was not something she had been in a very long time.

*

Ivy was curled on her side, asleep, surrounded by the flowers she had grown with just a touch, wild roses, honeysuckle and vines that grew around her creating a sort of canopy. She was sleeping soundly when something woke her. Ivy slowly sat up, a little groggily and stretched her arms over her head. She yawned before rubbing her eyes when she felt it again, a vibration among the plants. Something had arrived that was disturbing them.
She stood up and quickly made her way outside of the crumbling manor. She followed the vibration that ran through her plants, leading her to the trickle of river that ran along the property. It had once been much wider, a real “river,” but now it was more of a glorified stream. Ivy was doing her best to clean it up for her plants, but it was difficult since the stream was still connected to the main rivers of Gotham, which in turn were used by several of the factories around the outskirts of Gotham that continued to pump sewage and toxins into the water.

She arrived at the muddy bank and stopped short in complete shock.

Lying on the riverbank was a body.

The body was nearly naked, the clothing looked to be burned off or melted, but the most notable thing about the body was that it was pale. Ivy corrected her thought; pale was wrong, the skin was white and the hair, long hair was tangled around the head like vines, was white as well. Clearly the person was dead. No normal person’s skin would be that color Ivy thought as she took a step closer.

At first Ivy was inclined to leave the body, let the plants have it, fertilizer for new growth, but something compelled her to walk closer, to turn the body over, to see the face of this person.

Ivy reached out and turned the pale, nearly white body onto its back. Once on its back she saw that it was female and the face was still obscured by the hair--white as the moonlight--that lay tangled over the young woman’s features. She could see it was a young woman, but the face…

Ivy reached out and pulled back the hair.

Ivy let out a shocked gasp. She stood up and took several steps back in surprise. It was Harley!

Ivy dropped down beside Harley and quickly checked for a pulse. It was there, but weak, thready. Ivy reached down and picked up her friend; with her new body came new strength. She lifted Harley’s unconscious body and carried her back to the house.

*  

Harley cried.

She had cried in pain at first. When Harley came back to consciousness she had come back screaming in agony. Ivy had realized immediately that Harley was suffering from burns, both externally and internally. Whatever had happened to Harley had bleached her skin, but Harley had also swallowed whatever the chemical was that had created this change in her and it was killing her, slowly melting her insides.

Ivy rushed about her garden looking for the plants she knew would heal her friend, using her skills as a botanist to create a cure for her friend. It only took her a few days until she had it, a concoction, primed with her own blood, that she was sure would speed Harley’s healing. There would be side effects, effects Ivy wasn’t sure about since she wasn’t sure what her blood would do exactly, but Ivy decided that those side effects were worth the risk. Besides, the alternative was death. If Harley was going to die without treatment, killing her by giving her something fatal wasn’t really changing anything.

She held Harley’s head tenderly in her lap, feeding her the dark green liquid like a child, forcing it down her friend’s damaged throat and then Ivy had to wait. Harley would cry in the night, but her cries of pain were mixed with sobs of deep, overwhelming heartache.

It had been weeks before Harley seemed to improve. Ivy built her a bed of roses and honeysuckle, with large thick leaves that cradled the young woman and rocked her. Slowly Harley’s breathing
became steady, her heartbeat stronger until one morning Ivy found Harley sitting up, awake for the first time as, well whatever she was now...

Harley, naked, her eyes bright blue against her milk white skin, stared at Ivy in confusion. “Who are you? Where am I?”

Ivy smiled. “Oh Harley!! I’m so happy you’re okay!”

Ivy threw herself down on the bed and wrapped her arms around Harley.

Harley frowned in confusion, hugging her in return. “Do I know you?”

Ivy laughed and sat back her hands on Harley’s shoulders. “It’s me Pamela Isley! Remember, roller derby, Gotham City Sirens?”

Harley blinked, clearly confused before a smile burst across her lips. “IVY?? PAM!!”

Ivy laughed. “Yes it’s me!”

Harley gasped and yanked her into another hug. “But...you died! They said you died!”

Ivy laughed. “It's a long story.”

Harley pushed her friend back and stared at her. “Are you aware you’re turning green in places?”

Ivy chuckled. “Oh I’m aware. There have been a few...changes. But let’s not talk about me...what about you? What happened?”

Harley stared at Ivy for a long moment, her eyes large and Ivy could see the tears accumulating at the corner of her eyes. “Jack...oh Ivy...Bruce...Bruce killed Jack…”

Harley broke down.

Ivy quickly gathered her close and held her tight as sobs wracked Harley’s body. “Harley...Harley honey calm down. Tell me what happened.”

Harley sat back, her voice hiccuping, her eyes bloodshot as tears continued to roll down her cheeks. “I...Bruce dropped him into a vat of acid...he dropped him...he let him die!!”

Harley began to shake. “I...I can’t live without him Ivy...I can’t.”

Ivy frowned in confusion pushing Harley’s hair back from her face as tears fell down her friend’s cheeks. “Honey, what are you talking about?”

“I jumped in after him,” Harley said in a whisper. “I don’t want to live without him...I jumped into the acid after him.”

Ivy frowned. “You jumped into a vat of acid?”

Harley nodded, her lips trembling. “I want to die Ivy...I don’t want to live…”

Ivy frowned and pulled her friend into her arms to let Harley cry. She wasn’t sure how Harley had survived before she found her, but she had.

“Did you see him...his body?” Ivy asked softly. “When you jumped, did you see him?”
Harley leaned back, her body was shuddering. She felt weak. “No...no I didn’t...”

Ivy frowned stroking Harley’s hair. “Honey, I don’t want to give you any false hope. I mean...you’ve been with me nearly a month. I had to make a healing tincture to save you, but...if you survived, maybe there is a chance he did too?” Ivy smiled softly. She didn’t want to give her friend false hope. Hell, she didn’t believe herself that Jack was alive. Harley had only lived because of her, but she couldn’t bring herself to crush Harley’s hopes just yet. Harley stared at Ivy as she tried to process two things. One that she had been unconscious for nearly a month, and two, if she survived, then maybe Jack did too!

“I need to go! I have to go find him!” Harley stood up, her legs wobbly and almost immediately she came crashing back down. Ivy caught her friend and eased Harley back down.

“I, honey, you can’t go anywhere, not right now. You aren’t strong enough, you need to recover your strength.”

Harley began to cry again. She grabbed at Ivy, holding her hands tightly. “Please Ivy, you have to help me get home!”

Ivy stroked her back, frowning softly as she thought.

*  

It was several more days before Jack could move on his own.

The small group of misfits helped him, providing him clothing and a knife.

Jack immediately set off for the amusement park. He had to find Harley, to let her know he was alive.

Jack was dressed in dark clothing, a pair of jeans, black shirt, combat boots and a jacket to hide his pale skin along with a black fedora hiding most of his green hair. He took a taxi to the amusement park, alone. Isaac had offered to come with him, but Jack needed to go alone...needed to see his girl alone.

Jack’s heart raced. He trembled with the need and excitement of seeing Harley. His angel, the only thing that got him through those days of pain and torment was her...his girl...his pumpkin.

When he arrived at the amusement park Jack was surprised at how quiet it looked. It wasn’t that he was expecting there to be a lot of lights, or anything like that, but the park had that feeling of something...dead, almost like when they first found the place, a ghost of what it once had been. The park felt like that now, as if the life had left it. Jack walked up to the gates and shook them. The gates were locked, as he expected. He stood there staring at them for a few moments before he set off at a brisk walk along the fence. It didn’t take him long to find a place to break into the abandoned amusement park.

Jack hopped over the fence, landing in a crouch. He stood up slowly gazing around with his new eyes. The park was dead, no signs of life at all. He frowned and slowly walked the park. The Gotham night was warm, quiet, the only sound was his shoes against the pavement. He gazed around finding it odd how light everything seemed to him with his new eyes, but everything looked crisper, clearer, as if he had always seen through slightly blurred glass and now he could see the real world. The acid had ripped his old sight away from him only to replace it with new sight...the night was not so dark to him anymore, though bright lights bothered him...he had become light sensitive, the blue of his eyes shifted between his natural shade of blue, to one that was almost white, the blue
became lighter, shifting with his mood. Right now his eyes were darker blue reflecting his worry and fear. What if she was gone? Had left Gotham? Had thought he was dead and had moved away? What would he do? He stopped in his tracks and closed his eyes, centering himself. No, he would not think like that. Harley would never leave Gotham he told himself. But what if she couldn’t stand the sight of him. What if how he looked now sent her running from him? Jack didn’t think he could handle Harley being horrified by him.

He frowned walking the path to the house, his hands in the pockets of his borrowed jeans.

He stopped near the front of the house, breaking out into a smile when he saw that there was a light on.

“Harley…” He said her name softly.

He hurried to the front door and flung the door open only to be greeted by a gunshot that blasted a hole in the wall beside him, level with his head. Jack turned to look into the living room. He didn’t see anyone, but someone snarled.

“That was a warning shot, take another step in here and I’ll blow your head off.” The voice was gruff, but Jack frowned, he recognized that voice…

“Victor? Victor Zsasz?” Jack said softly as he reached up and removed his hat.

Slowly Victor stood up from behind the couch, a rifle in his hand. He stared at Jack in confusion, narrowing his eyes before he whispered.

“Jack?”

Jack grinned slowly. “It’s me….a little more of a cartoon version of me, but it's me, Jack.”

Victor came around the couch slowly, still holding his rifle trained on Jack, ready to shoot as he stepped closer staring hard at Jack.

“Is that really you? But...you’re dead?” Victor tilted his head. “You died.”

Jack smiled, his red lips spread across his face in an almost gleeful expression.

“Tales of my demise have been greatly exaggerated.” Jack laughed.

Victor shook his head and then chuckled softly. “Well fuck me.”

“No thanks. Not that you aren’t a handsome man,” Jack said only to suddenly be grabbed by Victor into a hard embrace.

Victor laughed. “We all thought you were dead! What the hell happened to you? Why is your hair green...your skin...I don’t understand…”

Jack laughed and hugged Victor back. “Where’s Harley?”

Victor stepped back frowning. He looked down then said softly.

“She’s dead Jack.”

Jack’s smile slowly dropped, his voice a whisper of shock. “What?”

Victor set the rifle down as he spoke. “I wasn’t there so I don’t know all the details Jack, but, when
Batman dropped you into that vat...Harley threw herself in after you. Jason, Frost, and Bane all saw it. They all saw her throw herself in.”

Jack’s breathing began to quicken. He reached out and put his hand against the wall.

“She’s dead?” he repeated as if he didn’t understand the words.


Jack stared at nothing, his lip began to tremble as tears began to fall down his cheeks. “She’s dead...Harley’s dead,” Jack murmured. “My girl...my angel...” He let go of the wall and grabbed his head, his voice choked on a sob. “My girl...my girl….

Jack slowly fell to his knees repeating over and over as tears rolled down his cheeks. “She’s dead...Harley’s dead...she’s dead. My beautiful girl...my pumpkin...my angel...”

He dropped to his elbows, wrapping his hands around his head and let out a cry of anguish.
When Love and Death Embrace

Bruce sat outside on the patio enjoying the cool morning. From his vantage, he could out onto the Wayne Manor gardens. Bruce let his mind wander, remembering his mother out in the gardens on her knees planting flowers instead of just letting the gardening staff take care of it. She liked to get her hands dirty, to work. For a moment Bruce could almost see perfectly, one late summer day, his mother on her knees in the dirt, gardening gloves on, her hair pulled back in a ponytail while Bruce and Jack raced around playing cops and robbers. Bruce smiled as he remembered that particular afternoon, Jack had fallen and scraped up both his knees on the path and Bruce had wrapped his arms around his little brother, telling him that it was all right. Their mother had come over to soothe Jack, kissed him on the forehead and told both boys some corny joke that made them both laugh to distract Jack from his pain.

Bruce sighed as he wondered not for the first time, how things might have been different if his parents had lived. How his relationship with Jack might have been different. Bruce closed his eyes as his thoughts drifted to Jack. He could still see the look in his brother’s eyes when he dropped him into the acid. He saw that look every night in his dreams.

Bruce reached out for his cup of coffee. The rich smell was calming. He took a sip frowning in thought. Jack and Harley had been gone over a month now; it was time to let Jack go. He needed to let Jack go so he could move on. Bruce had decided when he got up that morning that he needed to move forward, and the sooner, the better. Then maybe the dreams would stop.

He sipped his coffee waiting patiently for Alfred to return. The older man had brought out the coffee and had gone back in to retrieve a couple of slices of coffee cake he had baked last night. Bruce was worried about Alfred. He knew the older man hadn’t been sleeping well, not since Bruce had told him about Jack’s and Harley’s death. Bruce figured Alfred needed to move past Jack’s death as well, which was why he waited patiently for Alfred to return. He needed to talk to him about his plans.

Bruce heard the door slide open behind him and Alfred came out carrying a tray with an extra cup, a pot of coffee, sugar and cream, and a plate filled to overflowing with large slices of coffee cake. The older man sat the items on the table before placing the tray on the floor next to him and taking the chair opposite Bruce.

He poured himself a cup of coffee, adding sugar and cream, speaking as he did so. “I much prefer a good cup of tea, but every once in a while coffee can be quite nice.” He smiled as he finished with his coffee before he gave Bruce his full attention.

“Now Master Bruce--you wanted to talk?”

Bruce nodded. He decided to cut right to the point. “I’ve decided to bury Jack.”

Alfred paled and blinked before he said, “What sir?”

Bruce set his coffee cup down. “I’ve decided to release a statement about Jack’s death, cremate him and bury him next to mom and dad.”

“But sir, there is no body…” Alfred protested, but Bruce nodded. “I know…the public doesn’t need to know, no one needs to know any details. I will make a statement that he drowned in a tragic accident along with his wife while in Mexico. It won’t take much to create a few false stories…”
Bruce’s voice trailed off. There was no point in going into the details of how to do it; that it could be done was all that was important. “I need this Alfred. I think we both need this. Jack is dead and we need to put him to rest.”

Alfred frowned and took a sip of his coffee. “I suppose sir...I suppose.”

* 

Harley sighed softly as she pushed herself up to a sitting position and wrapped her arms around her legs. She felt out of sorts still. Ivy had found her some shorts and an old t-shirt from somewhere to wear. They smelt earthy, like they had been buried or something and they were dirty, but at least she wasn’t naked any longer which helped slightly in her feeling more “normal,” but she still felt detached, lost. She supposed it was better than the feelings of despair and suicidal thoughts she had been having since she first woke up.

Harley trembled a little as she thought of Jack. She wrapped her arms around herself and the tears came to her eyes. She bit down hard on her bottom lip to stop herself from crying, but the tears came anyway, slowly flowing down her cheeks to drip off her chin.

She had only been awake a few days and still she felt weak. Moving took so much effort that there were days since she woke up when Harley couldn’t...she just couldn’t move. She would lay on her side and cry herself back into a fitful sleep, though recently her sleep had been strangely dreamless, heavy and deep, as if she were drugged. As a doctor she knew that this unwillingness to move was only partly because she was recovering, but mostly it was her depression. The constant, almost drugged like sleep seemed a little strange to her, but Harley was too groggy and numb to really think about what was happening to her. She just couldn't seem to muster any enthusiasm to care. She missed her husband so much that she realized she would rather have died in that vat of acid than live in a world without him. Ivy had told her she would heal, but Harley didn’t think she would ever heal from the wound of losing her only love, her best friend...he was a part of her and she didn’t want to be without him.

She was slowly recovering her strength day by day which Ivy seemed impressed with. She had told Harley she hadn’t expected her to bounce back so quickly after having been in what was essentially a coma for over a month, but in many ways Harley felt like she was still asleep, slowly moving through the days in a haze. While Ivy saw her recovery as remarkable, Harley didn’t really feel all that remarkable. She felt slow and sluggish, lost, confused, depressed. Ivy continually promised her that those feelings would pass in time, but Harley didn’t think so, at least not until she knew if Jack had survived or not. And right now, with no evidence to tell her otherwise, she was afraid that her husband was dead.

Ivy had made Harley promise she wouldn’t leave to try to find Jack at least for a few days because Ivy thought she needed to be monitored and she needed time to recover her strength. (Ivy had no idea what her potion, mixed with her blood, would do to Harley’s system. Obviously, it had healed her, but Ivy was still learning what she had become and she wanted to make sure her friend was indeed recovering before she let her loose in Gotham. Part of this was genuine concern for Harley, but the other part was Ivy’s scientific mind, wanting to see what would happen with her experiment. Ivy found herself fighting to remain human in her dealings with Harley, but it was a struggle as each day a piece of her humanity seemed to slip away to be replaced by her concern over her plants. Ivy was aware that this was happening to her, but she felt powerless to stop it. Or was she really powerless? Perhaps, Ivy thought, she just didn’t care for humans as much anymore? But she knew her conversations with Harley, being with her friend, was her only remaining tangible hold on her humanity. Plus, she enjoyed them. Harley reminded her that she was human still.)
Harley had promised reluctantly, and then Ivy had promised to listen for word of Jack. If Jack surfaced, if Jack was alive or dead, she would find out for her friend.

Ivy spread her connections slowly through Gotham, using vines and weeds to ferret into the places where she might hear word of Jack Wayne.

And many other interesting bits of information.

* 

Harley frowned as she held her hands up and examined her skin. The changes she had undergone were bizarre; the white of her skin, her hair, it was as if she had been washed away, all color gone. She moved her hand and twisted it back and forth. She could see her blood under her skin, the blue veins just barely visible under her skin made her look even more ghostly, unreal. She reached out and held out a strand of her hair. It was milky white, like a ghost. Her brow furrowed. She supposed in a lot of way she was a ghost...a ghost of the person she once was. That Harley, the one who was married to Jack Wayne, was dead. Harley squeezed her eyes shut as she felt that hollowness in her chest open up once more.

Harley laid down on her side and curled into herself, bringing her knees up and wrapped her arms around her legs. She hadn’t been able to sleep normally since she woke up from her coma. Her dreams were plague with nightmares in which Jack was reaching for her. He needed her and she couldn't get to him. Dreams of pain, of acid, everything coated in a yellow green haze…then followed by Bruce’s cold eyes.

She squeezed her eyes closed and let her mind drift to thoughts of Jack.

She focused on his lips, the way he smiled, the sensual way he would lick his lips. The way his lips looked when he had colored them with lipstick. She remembered outlining his eyes in black, the way he would smell...Silly things like riding on the back of his bike, buying clothes, the care Jack took with dressing...the way he would hold his cigarette, smoke slowly flowing between his lips...all those little things. Harley remembered making love with him, the sensual pleasure, the way his hands felt when he touched her, the way he would hold her, caress her, his mouth on her, his tongue...the more intimate touches, her mouth on him, the sounds he made, the moans, groaning her name. She smiled, remembering his laugh, the way his smile reached to his eyes, the way his lips looked, his eyes outlined in black...so blue. Dancing...dancing...Jack holding her in his arms...her mind's eye traveled up to his eyes. No one had eyes like Jack, those beautiful blue eyes.

She started to cry again. Her soft sounds of sadness swiftly turned into gut wrenching sobs and her whole body shook. She wanted her puddin, she wanted, needed Jack. Harley cried until she had no tears left, yet she continued until she made herself ill. She retched, her eyes hurt, her body ached, every part of her was hurting and still, she cried.

* 

Ivy frowned. She was with some of her flowers, practicing making them grow into the blooms so large like nothing ever seen before, large pink and red blooms the size of large animals. Ivy was sure with a little more focus she could grow them even larger! Her work was disturbed when she heard the sounds of Harley’s crying. Harley was making herself ill. Her friend was in such deep mourning that Ivy simply didn’t know if she could help her friend come out of it. She didn’t know what to do for Harley. She had kept her promise to look and listen, which was why she had learned today that Bruce Wayne had made an announcement, that his brother Jack had died. Oddly, Bruce Wayne made no mention of his brother’s wife Harley. Ivy frowned, moving her hands gently over some wild roses. It annoyed her that Wayne had dismissed Harley from her husband’s life. She didn’t
know much about the situation, but she did know that not mentioning Harley was a slight.

The other odd thing about the declaring Jack Wayne dead was that he had said Jack had drowned in Mexico...which according to Harley wasn’t true; so why was he lying? She shrugged. It was all very strange. There was to be a private family funeral, no outside guests. Jack was to be cremated and the ashes interred at the family grave site.

Ivy wasn’t sure whether to tell Harley or not. She knew the news would devastate Harley…

That was the moment that Ivy made a decision. She would simply drug Harley, only for a short time, only until she felt her friend had recovered fully, recovered enough so that when Ivy broke the news to her, Harley could handle it.

Ivy smiled. She laid her hands on her plants and soon she had found some sage of the diviners growing among the remains of the green house. It would only take some mild alterations to have the plant exude its natural properties into the air. The plant was known to cause hallucinations when smoked or consumed, but she could alter that, enhance the qualities to include sleep and a haze of good feelings...enough to keep Harley happy and calm until Ivy decided Harley was ready.

* 

A cigarette dangled from Jack’s lips as he sat at the piano in his old home, the home at the amusement park he had shared with Harley. (He had had the piano moved downstairs because he couldn’t bear to walk into the bedroom he shared with Harley. The sight would have been too much for him, he knew he wouldn’t have been able to function if he had walked into that room knowing she wasn’t there.) Jack was dressed all in black, black suit, shirt, vest, even his socks and shoes were black, which made his white skin stand out sharply against the black. His now green hair was slicked back, cut back into his usual style, his eyes closed. Smoke slowly drifted up around his head, resembling a twisted halo. His fingers danced over the keys of the piano as he played Chopin’s Piano Sonata No 2 in B flat minor.

Jack moved to the music as he played, his brow slightly furrowed. He was playing the funeral march for two reasons: mourning his Harley, and the death of who he was.

Tonight he would be reborn.

Jack had brought his new friends to live at the amusement park, the people who had saved him and brought him back to life. He had decided to give them a place here, in his home. They were now an extension of his family...his new family...his family without Harley. Jack tensed for a moment, his fingers slipped on a key as he thought of his wife...his girl. He almost wished the acid had stripped his mind like it had stripped his skin. For a moment, he wished he could forget because the pain was so strong, but he was going to focus that pain...focus it on destruction...on bringing chaos to Gotham. Jack smiled to himself at that thought, never opening his eyes as he continued to play.

But tonight was all about new beginnings, death and life, rising from the ashes. Jack grinned around his cigarette. Tonight would be the start of something new.

Isaac sat on the couch listening to Jack play, a cigarette in his too thin hand.

As Jack finished with Chopin, his long graceful fingers glided into Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata as the front door opened and Zsasz entered. Behind him came two people, Jonny Frost and Alex.

Jack had learned from Zsasz that over the last month or so, Jason had taken over the name of the Red Hood. Jack had laughed, pleased as punch for Jason. Jack also learned that the girls, Trope and Thea
were working with him. Duela had gone missing after Jack and Harley’s death. Zsasz said she had been upset, her face was badly scarred and she was having difficulties coping with everything. Henderschott was taking care of her, brought in a psychologist, but once word was out about what happened at the factory, Duela vanished. Jack had told Zsasz to leave the young man for now; he would contact Jason later and the others later, but for now he just needed the three of them.

No one seemed to know where Bane was...dead or alive. Jack was confident that he would easily find him. Zsasz told Jack that his lab had been destroyed, that he and Jason suspected Bane had been the cause simply because of Bane’s temper and the fact no one had seen him since that night, but no one could know for sure. Jack had been upset. He didn’t like any of his family members missing, but he had decided when he was ready, he would go after Bane and bring him home.

Jack had sent Zsasz off to contact Frost and Alex, requested that the come to the amusement park house. Zsasz was not to mention Jack to them, only that Zsasz had found something important that he needed to show them. Tonight would be their first time seeing him since Jack’s “death.”

Jack slipped into playing Satie’s “Trois Gymnopedies: No. 1, Lent et doloreux.” He played softly not once opening his eyes to look over at the people entering the room. Frost came in after Zsasz with a frown at the sound of piano music. No one they knew could play the piano, except Jack Wayne, who was gone. Zsasz stepped in and out of the way, Frost came in and turned naturally toward the sound of the music, which was when he saw Jack, although with green hair, white skin, black suit...Frost froze in the middle of the doorway, his mouth open.

Alex, who was coming in right behind Frost was talking loudly. “And this woman had the nerve to ask me if I was left or right handed??!!” Alex rammed into Frost’s back. “What the fuck Frost?!”

He pushed Frost out of his way and walked around him only to turn toward the sounds of piano playing and see Jack.

“What the living FUCK!” Alex hissed and took a step backwards.

Jack finished the piece on the piano with a flourish before taking a drag on his cigarette and smashing the butt into the ashtray at the corner of the piano. He grinned, his teeth startlingly white against his blood red lips.

“Wellcome boys, to my funeral...and resurrection.” Jack laughed as smoke slowly flowed from his lips and nostrils.

He stood up and threw his arms out. “I’ve been baptized!! Cleansed and given new life, new purpose and I wanted my friends, my family and…” (he glanced over at Isaac) “…new family to participate in my rebirth. I want you all to help me wash away the past so I can truly be reborn.”

Alex continued to stare at Jack with a murmured, “What the actual fuck?”

*  

Frost, Alex and Isaac all sat together on the couch. Zsasz perched in a chair, all of them with drinks in their hands. Alex had confiscated an entire bottle of whiskey for himself and was pouring it into his glass, gulping the glass down then filling it again.

Jack stood in front of them with a broad smile on his red lips.

Alex swallowed a large gulp of whiskey and asked with a shake of his head. “Man--how?”

Jack grinned. “No idea my friend, no idea. Fate it seems, has decided I have a mission.” Jack
giggled. Alex frowned at his old friend. The sound was...frightening, a slightly unhinged quality to the laugh that made goosebumps run up his spine.

“Jack, man, I mean...are you okay?”

Jack laughed again. “Am I okay? Don’t I look all right?” He spun around with his arms out, making the tails of his jacket spin out slightly as he stopped in front of Alex and the rest as they sat on the couch. “My life was stripped from me, by none other than my brother! See--that’s the saddest thing about betrayal, it doesn’t usually come from your enemies, but someone you love, someone you thought would understand you, or at least try because blood is thicker than water. At least that’s what I believed! But not as thick as acid!”

Jack began to laugh, but this time the sound clearly conveyed a man on the precipice of madness. Jack was laughing so hard that tears sprang to the corner of his eyes and he was forced to wipe them away with the back of his hand. He grinned at Alex, snorted as he tried to contain his laughter only to give into it again, his hands on his knees, locks of green hair falling across his eyes. It was clear to Alex he wasn’t going to stop laughing.

Frost exchanged a look with Alex before he asked firmly, breaking through Jack’s laughter. “Ah Boss, you wanna explain to us how you’re here, why you look the way you do? I saw you fall. It looked like Batman pushed you? Dropped you? And where is Harley?”

Jack stopped laughing so abruptly it was chilling to the other men, but he smiled. “You saw my brother drop me.” He giggled. “My big brother is Batman...you believe that? I don’t, but it’s true! The stoic dark knight, the do-gooder of the streets of Gotham is my fucking BIG BROTHER!! The man with a stick so far up his ass that he could use it for a pogostick.” Jack giggled again. “And he dropped me, let me go, threw me away like so much garbage. I mean, I know we’ve never gotten along, but really…”

Frost frowned. “Batman,” he said slowly, “is Bruce Wayne?”

Jack giggled putting a finger to his lips. “Shhh...it’s a secret.”

Frost pressed his lips together and sat forward. He held his drink in front of him between his hands as he rested his elbows on his knees. He stared down at the amber liquid before he spoke. “So, Batman is your brother and he...let you go, purposely dropped you?”

Jack pointed at him with one hand while touching the side of his nose with the other hand. “There you go Frost, that’s what happened.”

Jack grinned and gestured at himself with a flourish and a little dance step. “My new fashion statement?” Jack spun around again, sliding his fingers through his hair with a smile, then shrugged. “I have no idea why this happened.” He pointed at Isaac. “My new friend Isaac there and his band of misfits found me and nursed me back to health. I was like this when they found me.”

All eyes turned to Isaac. The unusually thin man nodded. “Yes,” he affirmed. “When we found him, he looked just as he looks now.”

Alex muttered again. “Fuck me.”

Jack smiled and threw himself down on one of the armchairs and crossed his legs as he slouched in the chair. “Really Alex, aren’t you a father?”
Alex gave Jack a finger.

Frost frowned. “What about Harley?”

The room grew quiet. Jack’s face became a mask, his eyes dulled instantly. “My girl is dead.”

Frost whispered. “I’m sorry Boss.”

Alex frowned. “Jack I…”

Jack shook his head. “I… I don’t…” His voice choked and he closed his eyes. Everyone remained quiet while Jack pulled out his cigarettes and a plain Bic lighter. The lighter that Harley had given him, stolen for him that night, the one that he always carried on him was gone when he plummeted into the acid. He stared at the lighter in his hand for a moment, the cigarette dangled between his lips. For a moment he was almost overwhelmed again with thoughts of her, his girl, his wife...his reason...Jack closed his eyes. She was gone and with her his happiness, all of it gone…

Jack took a breath through his nose and lit the cigarette taking a hard drag on it once it was lit and slowly let the smoke drift through his nostrils before he spoke.

“That’s why I called you here. Bruce--Batman took something from me. Now I’m going to take something from him.” Jack grinned and took a deep drag from his cigarette. “I won’t stop until I’ve taken everything, like he took everything from me.”

Alex drank straight from the bottle of whiskey and blinked hard, as if steeling himself before he asked. “What you got in mind?”

Jack grinned. “Oh, you’ll see, this is gonna be fun!”

Alex narrowed his eyes. “Fun in what way?”

Jack smiled. “For starters, we are going to destroy Wayne Manor.”

They were all quiet for a moment before Frost asked. “Why not just tell everyone you know who Batman is?”

Jack snorted. “Please!! And ruin the fun?? I have so much planned for my brother!! So much to pay him back for, so much to take from him. So many games we are going to play now...just like when we were kids, except this time Bruce is going to have to play with me.” Jack chuckled. “Now, this is going to be our little secret, right boys? No one is going to know my brother’s secret, no one beyond this room.”

They all exchanged looks and nodded, but Frost shook his head. “But your aunt…”

Jack stared at Frost. Frost could see the pain in Jack’s eyes; he was trying to hide it, but Frost had known him long enough that he could see the hurt as plain as day in Jack’s blue eyes. Jack finally glanced down and spoke softly. “I can’t Frost, not yet. She can’t know about Bruce and I’m not ready to see her.”

Frost nodded, but he said quietly. “She is still mourning you both Boss. I honestly thought this might break her. You and Harley dying--came damn close.”

Jack took a drag on his cigarette looking down at his shoes. Frost’s words, “you and Harley dying,” were too true. He supposed that he did die, but he had come back. He didn’t say anything for a while letting the ashes from his cigarette drift to the floor as his mind settled; when he finally spoke the
smoke drifted lazily from between his lips.

“Maybe after the house. She might try and stop me and I can’t have that...Bruce needs this message...when it's done, I’ll go see her. I promise.”

Frost nodded. “Thanks Boss.”

Jack smiled and then steepled his fingers, holding his cigarette between them. The smoke slowly snaked up creating the illusion of Jack’s face forming from the smoke. With his pale skin it was eerie to his friends. Jack sat forward. “Good, now Alex, exactly how many incendiary devices and kerosene molotovs do you think you can get me and how soon?”

Alex took another large swig of the whiskey. “Give me twenty four hours, I can get you everything you need Jack.”

Jack’s smile spread across his face, sending a chill down everyone’s spine as he hissed, his voice low and sinister. “Good.”

* * *

Harley woke feeling groggy. She rolled onto her back, struggling to open her eyes. She could see flowers hanging over her head. The ceiling of her “room” on the second floor of the old mansion was a riot of bright colors. Red, yellow and pink roses with other flowers of vivid, lovely colors mixed in that Harley had no names for lined not just the ceiling of the old bedroom, but also the walls as well. The floor was covered in a thick moss of some sort that was soft and warm acting as a perfect bed. There was one window in the room that Harley could see out of, framed by vines, that looked out onto the garden and the hothouse were Ivy spent much of her time when she wasn’t with Harley. Harley frowned staring up at the roses as she laid on the bed of moss. A little light shone in here, but she couldn’t figure out where it was coming from. Some of the plants seemed to have a gentle glow of their own, but...she frowned. That couldn’t be right, could it? She asked herself, but she let the idea go, unable to fully grasp the idea and hold onto it. She was just too tired to really care.

She knew she had been sleeping a lot. No, Harley considered with a frown, more than simply a lot--nearly constantly--not that she minded. At first her sleep had been plagued with dreams and nightmares, but lately her sleep had been so deep that Harley didn’t remember any of her dreams so that when she woke she didn’t wake in tears. That was nice, but Harley felt like something was wrong, she just couldn’t figure out what the “wrongness” was that she was feeling. She knew it was something outside of the yawning hole of nothingness in her chest...the feeling of devastation that she felt over her loss of Jack. Her states of conscious waking seemed few and far between. It was as if everything was in a sort of haze. She pushed herself upright and climbed to her feet. It took her several seconds to be able to stand straight and feel as if she could walk without toppling over.

Harley slowly made her way through the practical jungle that was Ivy’s home. It seemed to Harley that each time she woke, the place had become more and more covered with plants, some of them she recognized, but most of them were becoming strange, like odd hybrids of other plants. It was all very strange, she acknowledged, but Harley couldn’t really seem to focus her attention too much on it because when she tried, her thoughts became fuzzy. It reminded Harley of this one time in college when he roommate had gotten her to try marijuana. All it had really done for her was make her so relaxed she fell asleep, her mind feeling a little fuzzy. But this was different. She felt muddle headed, sleepy, disoriented. She knew something was wrong--she just didn't know what.

She found Ivy where she usually found her when she had enough strength to go and look, in the hothouse.
Ivy was working, as she always was, humming and singing softly to the plants. Harley stopped in the doorway of the hothouse and watched her friend. She could see that Ivy’s skin was changing. When she had first come out of the coma, Harley had noticed there were only a few tiny patches of green on Ivy’s skin, but over the last several days those patches had grown, becoming larger. She had also noticed the Ivy was becoming more obsessed over her plants, talking to them, singing to them. It was definitely strange.

As Harley stood in the doorway watching her friend, Ivy picked up a potted plant. Harley had no idea what it was, only that it was green.

“There, there my little friend, let’s get you out of the dreadful pot and into the ground so you can do your work.” Ivy looked fondly at the plant. “Mmmm...my sage of the diviners...I do so love that name, it is a name that treats you with the respect you deserve, bringer of sleep and sweet dreams...with a little help from me of course...boosting your abilities, and changing them just a little. You are just such a good little thing aren’t you? Helping my dear Harley, keeping those horrible memories away from her…” Ivy’s voice dropped softly. “Letting her sleep away the pain…”

Ivy started to sing softly, low, almost hypnotically as she cooed to the plant.

“The valley green was so serene
In the middle ran a stream so blue...
A maiden fair, in despair, once had met her true love there and she told him...
She would say...

"Promise me, when you see, a white rose you'll think of me
I love you so,
Never let go,
I will be your ghost of a rose..."

Harley stiffened. Her thoughts were slow to form, sluggish, but her analytical mind pushed through the drug induced haze allowing her to focus, at least temporarily. She was able to focus enough to understand what was happening--Ivy was drugging her? She swallowed and took a step backwards, but even now she could feel the tug of the plants’ abilities on her…trying to pull her down into sleep again. Harley wasn’t sure what she was going to do, but now that a seed had been planted with the knowledge that Ivy was drugging her, Harley would do everything in her power to fight against Ivy’s control…

*

Jack sat next to Frost as the other man drove toward Wayne Manor. Frost had picked Jack up at the amusement park and the two men had been relatively quiet as Frost drove.

Frost felt as if he needed to say something about Harley, to somehow express his grief over her death and to communicate to Jack that while he didn’t fully understand his loss, Frost was there for his boss, for his friend.

Frost finally said softly. “I’m sorry about Harley.”

He could see Jack stiffen slightly from the corner of his eye. Jack had been looking out the passenger
window, but when Frost spoke he turned to stare out the windshield. When he spoke his voice was low. “I don’t know how i’m going to carry on without her Frost. I don’t know that I can, except for Bruce.”

Frost frowned glancing over at Jack. The streetlights reflected off of Jack’s white skin making him seem ghost-like. His hair looked dark, almost black with only the occasional light showing that it was in fact green.

Jack spoke again. “I want to make Bruce pay for what he did...for taking Harley...for killing me...I want him to pay for the rest of his life. That is the only reason I’m still here, the only reason I will keep going. Once Bruce has paid enough, then I’m out. I can’t be here without her Jonny...I just can’t.”

Frost was startled when Jack used his first name, but he said softly. “I think I understand Boss.”

Jack didn’t look at him, but he nodded.

* 

Alex drove up to the park and turned off the SUV’s engine. He hadn’t liked it, but he had agreed not to tell Alice that Jack was alive. Jack didn’t want anyone else knowing, keeping that information to just the four men who would be helping him. Alex was parked off the road under the shadow of some trees across from the Wayne estate. As he looked out the passenger window, he could see no lights were currently on except a couple of exterior lights. Jack had said that Bruce and his little sidekick would be out touring Gotham and being do gooders, so there would be no one home—except Alfred—and Jack would take care of him. Alex hadn’t liked the sound of that, but he had said nothing.

Alex knew how hard family relationships could be.

Alex frowned and pulled out a cigar from the pocket of his Hawaiian shirt that he was wearing over his black t-shirt. He had smoked a lot when he was younger and had given it up for a while, but he had picked the habit back up again when his father had arrived in Gotham, the two of them sitting outside sharing a smoke...now his father was dead. He still wanted to pay Falcone back for his part in the death of his father and for what had happened to Alice. She was doing all right, but she was still in the hospital, a month later, and she still was still having occasional panic attacks. Alex had wanted to pay Falcone back too for Jack’s death, but he supposed now that he knew it wasn’t Falcone but Batman, and Batman was Bruce Wayne...he was getting some sort of payback. (Of course, Falcone still needing to be dealt with, but that would come in time, Alex was certain.) This whole thing was just so weird, but Jack was still Jack as far as he was concerned and Jack was his friend. He didn’t’ have a problem with burning down Jack’s old home; he understood Jack’s motivations clearly. Bruce had not just taken part of Jack’s life away from him, it was Bruce’s actions that resulted in Harley’s death. If Alex was in Jack’s place, he would want Bruce’s head on a spike, but Jack, as always, had a plan and Alex trusted that.

Alex lit the cigar and took a few deep puffs on the cigar and glared at Wayne Manor.

A few minutes later another car, a dark red Mazda 3, pulled up behind him. Alex glanced in his rear view mirror. He couldn’t see any people, but he knew it was Zsasz and Isaac the new guy. Only a few seconds later he caught a glimpse in his side mirror of the last car, a dark, evergreen Ford Mustang which he knew belonged to Frost, since he had helped him purchase the car (off the record).

Alex smiled. It would feel good to do some wanton destruction after weeks of mourning. He put his
cigar out in the ashtray and slipped it back into the pocket of his shirt before he hopped out of his SUV.

Jack came walking up along the side of the road dressed in a three-piece black suit with a dark, blood red dress shirt underneath that matched his now deep red lips. He had his hands in the pockets of his slacks, his jacket open showing off the chain across his stomach, an underarm holster that held a pistol under his left arm, black leather gloves on his hands. His green hair was slicked back, though in the dim light it looked almost black, and his white skin stood out harshly against the black of the suit. Alex grinned watching Jack walk over to him thinking that his friend looked like a fucking vampire or an undertaker.

Jack grinned at Alex, his teeth looked a startling white against the red of his lips.

“My friend!” Jack walked over and embraced Alex. Alex smiled and wrapped his one arm around Jack.

He whispered. “It’s really good to have you back you stupid fuck.”

Jack laughed and tightened his embrace.

“I wish I could say it was good to be back,” Jack whispered.

Alex frowned. “I’m sorry Jack. I didn’t say so the other night, but I’m real sorry man, real fucking sorry. I know what Harley meant to you.”

He felt Jack tense. Alex couldn’t be sure, but he thought Jack might be fighting off tears at the mention of Harley’s name. Jack was quiet for a few moments though his embrace didn’t falter. Alex was sure he felt dampness against cheek. Alex tightened his hold on his friend. When Jack spoke, his voice cracked with emotion. “Me too Alex...me too. Harley meant everything.”

Jack held on for a heartbeat longer before he stepped back from Alex with a grin.

“Now, let’s go do some redecorating on the old family homestead.” He chuckled. “I’ll go take care of the gate darlings.” With that Jack glanced both ways before he jogged across the road.

The men here all nodded greetings to one another before they all headed back into their vehicles. Alex could see Jack standing under the one light that shone down by the gate to the estate. He saw Jack move to stand in front of a keypad.

After a couple seconds the gate began to slowly swing open. Jack turned giving everyone a big smile and two thumbs up.

Alex smiled, turned the car on, and headed through the gate, stopping long enough for Jack to jump in.

Jack clapped his hands once he was inside the SUV.

“This is going to be a riot!” He laughed.

*

She heard a voice...a voice in the darkness. Harley frowned since the voice was calling her name. “Harley, come on Harley, it’s me.”

Harley frowned trying to peer into the darkness. “Hey Harley.”
With the greeting hanging in the air, she saw the figure walk toward her. It was her...or rather, it was who she used to be--Dr. Harleen Quinzel. She had her hair up, the fake glasses, the black pencil skirt, red blouse, and that damn white coat. Harleen waved. “Hey sweetie. Time to wake up. Time to deal with the situation.”

Harley frowned. “What?”

Harleen sighed. “Honey, I know we haven’t talked in a while, but you need to get out of here. I mean, your friend means well, but she’s talking to plants and turning green. You know that ain’t normal, right? Also, she’s drugging you. How long before she decides to turn you into a plant too? You need to get out. You need to mourn and you need to decide what you’re gonna do. But you can’t do that here while she’s drugging you Harley. Jack wouldn’t want his girl being doped and controlled by someone now would he?”

Harley started at Harleen and nodded slowly. “You’re right.”

Harleen grinned and pushed her glasses up. “’Course I’m right, I’m a doctor, remember? Now get up and get your ass out of here. NOW!”

* 

Harley woke with a start, then cursed silently to herself. She had fallen asleep again. She laid there not sure what she should do. On one hand it was nice, these endless days of dreamless sleep because when she was fully awake all she did was cry. She knew that whatever it was that Ivy was doing to her was probably the only thing that had kept her from killing herself those first few days...and it was what was keeping her from killing herself now, but Harley found that it really pissed her off too! She was the only one who would determine her fate! Harley decided she had to leave. She knew that Ivy meant well, but...she needed to decide on her own and she needed to mourn, the psychiatrist part...Dr. Harleen Quinzel...knew that...had told her that...Harley felt that overwhelming despair roll over her at the thought of a world without Jack, but she needed to leave and she needed to leave now. She would have to deal with everything else after she escaped.

Harley stood up, her legs weak and shaky. Her bare feet made no sound at all as she stepped out of the room into the hall. There were plants everywhere, wild roses, honeysuckle ferns, and many more the house was only a frame now for the plants, only tiny bits of the house remained visible. Harley had no idea where she was or which way to go, but Ivy had mentioned something about a stream where she found Harley. Maybe if she followed it...

* 

Jack’s first stop before heading into the manor was his old “lab,” the old workman’s cottage that Jack had taken as his own.

Jack had told the others to stay in the vehicles, that he would be back soon. When Jack arrived at the cottage he immediately saw that something was wrong. He reached out and laid his gloved fingertips against the door and pushed gently; the door swung open.

Jack stepped in slowly and immediately saw that the building had been cleaned out. His left eye twisted, his red lips set in a thin line. Though it was dark, he had no difficulty seeing as he walked through the entire place and noted that everything, every instrument, every vial...all of it gone. Jack snarled, a low, deep throated sound. He turned around and walked out, heading back to the parked vehicles. He hit the driver side window with the side of his fist as he walked past the SUV startling Alex as he headed to the back and threw it open. In the back of the SUV were several cases.
Alex came jogging along just as Frost, Zsasz and Isaac exited their vehicles and hurried over. Jack flipped open one of the cases where the incendiary bomblets lay nestled in thick form. Several backpacks holding the incendiaries, as well as a few wooden crates filled with molotovs, were ready to light.

Jack smiled. “Alex, Isaac, set the charges out here. Frost, Zsasz, you’re with me. I’m sure Bruce never thought to reset the alarm codes.” Jack grinned. “Guess he is going to learn from his mistakes.”

* 

Alfred was down in the cave sipping a cup of tea, reading a book, and watching the monitors. He was wearing part of his butler uniform, shirt, slacks, vest, but the jacket was draped over the back of his chair. The manor grounds had security cameras, alarms, several contingencies in place that would let him know if there was a problem, but the house had several security cameras that were linked to the cave so that Alfred could occasionally check on the computer to view the interior of the manor even though the house had its own sets of alarms, separate from the alarms for the Batcave.

He had just flipped the page in his book when he noticed movement out of the corner of his eyes. Alfred set his book and tea down and spun the wheeled chair around so he could take a closer look. The camera feed was in black and white, but the quality was excellent. The cameras were installed in all the rooms of the house, the stairs and the kitchens.

He frowned as he saw three men were in the house. Oddly, none of the alarms had sounded, not the gate alarm, not the security alarm—nothing. If not for the cameras, he might not have known. He quickly checked the cameras that were connected to the regular house security system, but got nothing. It was as if something had simply turned them off. He watched the three men on the monitor. Two of them he didn’t know, but the third...

Alfred leaned closer, with a frown creasing his forehead. There was something about one of them...Alfred suddenly sat back hard, the impact of his back against the seat caused the chair to roll back a few inches. One of the men had turned...it was Jack.

Alfred laid a hand against his chest. It couldn’t be. Master Bruce had said Jack was dead, he saw it with his own eyes and Bruce wouldn’t lie, not about something like that...but there was no denying it...The man visible on the monitor was Jack. Alfred frowned and rubbed his chin. That would also explain why none of the alarms had sounded;

Jack would know the code, but he didn’t know about the extra cameras connected only to the Batcave.

Alfred was unable to move for a few seconds as he watched Jack take the stairs two at a time and head toward his old room. Alfred grimaced. (Bruce had the room cleaned out after declaring Jack dead. Everything in the room had been packed up by professionals and stowed away, along with everything that Master Bruce had found in the cottage. Whatever he had found here had made Bruce more upset, but he had simply ordered it packed up without a word.)

Alfred stood up slowly. He thought about calling Master Bruce, but decided it would take too long for Batman to get here. Besides, the day he couldn't handle a handful of robbers would be the time he walked away from his duties. Alfred studied the monitor, watching Jack. His old eyes could possibly be playing a tricks on him. There was no way that Jack could still be alive, but he had to be sure whether or not this person he was seeing was Jack and not some illusion brought on due to his old age. For a moment he wondered if he was about to have a stroke and that was why he was seeing things?
Either way, Alfred stood up and picked up the lever action rifle, his own weapon from a collection of his that he started after he retired from the military. Bruce didn’t like guns in the house, but that ended at Alfred’s room. Alfred always brought the gun down here to the cave with him, just in case. One never knew what might happen.

The older man checked the rifle, then took the stairs, hurrying up the steps to see who these strangers were and to see who this stranger was that looked like Jack.

*

Jack felt the hole in his heart grow even larger when he saw his room. All his memories, his life before and with Harley, here in this room scrubbed away like so much dirt. Jack felt his sorrow being consumed by his rage, his feelings of abandonment turned deadly...he was going to make Bruce pay. He wanted to be Gotham’s White Knight. Well he would show Bruce something else, something deadly...a villain like no other. Bruce wanted something evil to cleanse, let him just try and cleanse me, Jack thought. His eyes narrowed until the blue glowed as narrow slits under his dark lashes. Jack pulled his backpack around, yanking out one of the molotovs, pulled his lighter and lit the rag before tossing it into the room before he stepped back. The sound of glass shattering and the fire immediately taking and spreading made him smile. There was no sound of fire alarms since he had disabled the smoke alarm system along with the security system. He watched with satisfaction as the carpet, then the walls of the room began to burn. Jack turned on his heel yanking the door close hard enough that the slam of the wood in the frame echoed through the house.

He had just entered the hall when he saw Alfred step onto the landing. Jack grinned seeing the old man, his heart doing a hard contraction in his chest. He hadn’t seen Alfred since the hospital. The old man simultaneously looked good and he looked angry.

“Hey Alfie,” Jack said with genuine affection as he walked down the hall toward him.

Alfred turned, his eyes going wide in shock. “Jack?”

Jack grinned. “It’s me--in the flesh.”

Alfred was still holding his old rifle trained on him, but Jack could see he was shaking slightly. “You can’t be him...what’s wrong with you? You’re dead....Bruce said you were dead.”

“Oh Bruce said that, did he? Well, surprise, Bruce--or should I say Batman--was wrong.” Alfred twitched at the mention of Batman and Jack chuckled. “Oh it's me.” Jack said softly as smoke began to seep from under his bedroom door behind him. “It’s me Alfie. Jack...just...I’m a little different now.” Jack grinned. “I’ve been dead...it’s very liberating. You should think of it as therapy. Bruce has always been really fond of sending me to therapy, so I guess killing me was the ultimate in family therapy. But I did get a very interesting makeover, whaddaya think? Is green my color?” Jack laughed until he was close enough to Alfred that Jack simply walked up until the barrel of the gun was pressed against his chest. “You gonna shoot me Alfred?” he asked with one brow lifted and a crooked smile on his lips.

Alfred stared at Jack, his eyes wandered over his face before he surprised Jack and dropped the gun only to wrap his arms around the younger man.

Jack stood there for a moment before he caved and wrapped his arms around Alfred.

He whispered softly. “Hey Alfie, I missed you.”

Alfred began to cry. “Oh Master Jack...we thought you were dead. Bruce...we had a funeral…”
Jack blinked trying not to cry, but tears rolled down his cheeks even as more smoke rolled into the hall behind him, began to spread out. He squeezed Alfred tight, holding on to the older man.

“Harley’s dead Alfred.” Jack choked on a sob. He had thought he had cried himself out over her, that his pain had been replaced by his rage, but holding onto Alfred brought all of the pain back like a flood. Jack gave into the grief again, pressing his face against Alfred’s shoulder.

“She’s dead… I can’t…” Jack held on tightly to Alfred and his voice broke as he choked on a sob breaking down, crying against the shoulder of the only father he had known since he was little.

Alfred held the young man who he loved like his own son, letting him cry.

“Jack, my dear boy,” he said softly.

Alfred looked up as the smell of smoke became strong. His eyes widened as he saw fire engulf Jack’s bedroom door and move from Jack’s room out into the hall.

“Jack, what have you done?” Alfred asked in shock.

Jack stepped away smiling, wiping away his tears. “I’m burning the house down. I’m destroying it all. I’m killing the past Alfred. I’m rising from the ashes as something new and I am going to destroy Bruce and the Batman…I’m going to take everything from Bruce, just like he took everything from me.” Jack chuckled, though tears continued to slide down his cheeks.

“Jack, my boy, you don’t have to do this.” Alfred reached for him, but Jack took a step backwards away from him. “No, I’m pretty sure I do have to Alfred.” He smiled. “I will be a plague on Gotham, on Batman…Bruce will never have a happy moment in life. I’ll make sure of that. He is going to pay for taking Harley from me. He is going to pay for this…” Jack motioned at his face. “Bruce thought I was crazy before… he hasn’t seen crazy yet.”

Alfred was stunned. He didn’t know what to do, what he could say to change the situation, but Jack put his arm around Alfred’s shoulders. “Why don’t you go ahead and get out now. The whole place is coming down. My friends have set charges everywhere--it’s going to be a blast.” Jack pulled out a device from his pocket and waved it in front of Alfred.

“Boom.” He laughed as he walked Alfred down the stairs. “I’m really sorry to get you involved in this Alfred. Harley and I both loved you.” He dropped his voice. “I still do. You mean the world to me Alfred, but Bruce set us on a track that we seemed destined to follow. There is no avoiding what’s about to happen. So, I’ll give you a head start.”

They had reached the bottom of the stairs just as Zsasz and Frost came into the main entryway about the same time.

Jack grinned. “All set boys?”

Zsasz nodded. “All the charges are set.”

Frost nodded. “Yeah, everything’s ready Boss. Isaac and Alex just signaled they are ready too.”

Jack smiled. “Frost my love, will you escort dear Alfred here someplace safe to watch the show? And make sure he doesn’t have anything on him to contact my brother.”

Frost walked over and took Alfred by his biceps, gently but firmly. Alfred turned to Jack.

“Jack please, don’t do this…”
Jack’s smile dropped as he gazed at Alfred. He shook his head sadly. “I’m sorry Alfred, but I have to...I have no choice.”

“There’s always a choice.” Alfred said gravely.

Jack shrugged. “Maybe, but Batman made this one, I’m simply showing him there are consequences to his choices.” Jack smiled at Frost. “Take him outside and let’s get this show on the road.”

* 

Harley struggled to walk. The urge to simply lie down and sleep was so strong, it was all she wanted to do, and it took all her will not to just let oblivion take her, but she forced herself to keep moving. The twilight made visibility difficult; there were pools of dark, inky shadows and places where Harley would misjudge her steps, but the light still allowed her to leave the house without falling down any stairs.

She stopped at the hothouse to check on Ivy. She wanted to be sure Ivy was actually busy, her attention on something else beside her. Harley found her friend standing in the middle of the greenhouse, surrounded by some overly large pink flowers that looked unnatural. They were too large, the color too bright and something about them gave Harley the willies. Ivy was talking to them, like she had been talking to the potted plant yesterday. Harley frowned as she realized she had no idea what day it was...or how much time had passed since she had last been in here. It could have been twenty four hours, or a week...she had no clue.

Harley frowned, chewed her bottom lip as Ivy moved her hands and more of the strange, pink flowers budded and grew along the vines of the others, moving and shifting to surround her. Ivy chuckled softly. “This is wonderful!”

Harley slowly turned and walked as quietly and carefully as she could. She needed to get out of here.

She made her way around the large glass structure, though the glass was hard to see with the way the plants had grown over it. She stopped for a moment and looked around, trying to get her bearings. The house was behind her, the greenhouse to her right, there was a small grove of trees in front of her. She was going to take a chance and say that the river was in front of her.

* 

She walked for what seemed like forever. The drugs in her system kept trying to pull her down into unconsciousness. All she wanted to do was sleep, but she could almost hear Harleen in the back of her mind yelling at her to keep going, that she wasn’t going to let someone, no matter how good intentioned, control her.

After a while she finally found the “river,” though it was more a wide stream. The water was flowing at a steady pace though which was good. Harley frowned glancing back at the house before she took a step in, hoping that walking through the stream would hide any tracks. She wasn’t sure exactly what Ivy was capable of doing, but anything she could do to make herself more difficult to find would help. She hated to leave Ivy like this, she knew Ivy was only trying to help her in the only way she knew how, but Harley wanted to grieve on her own...and if there was a chance that Jack had somehow made it out alive like her, she wasn’t going to find him while being kept in a drug induced stupor.

Harley slowly stepped into the water. It was cold and sent chills up her legs, was deep enough that when Harley walked out into the middle of it she could feel rocks and other things under her bare feet. The ground was slimy too, which made walking hazardous. The last thing she wanted was a
Harley made a face. The greenish-brown water came up to her mid thigh and in places it was deeper, which caused the ends of her shorts to become wet. She bit her lip and glanced back toward the house which she could now only see hints of through the trees. There were no lights except what was coming from Ivy’s greenhouse. She wondered how long it would take before Ivy realized she was gone? Harley took a deep breath then turned back to the stream and began to walk, following the flow of the water.

*  

The level of the water slowly lowered the longer she walked until she was treading through ankle deep water. The dirty water showed up in stark contrast against her pale, ghost white skin. Harley was exhausted as she shoved her white hair out of her face while she moved to the shore of the stream after she was sure she was far enough away from the house that Ivy wouldn’t find her tracks, if Ivy even thought to look for any. It was dark where Harley was, but she was sure she could see lights ahead of her, sprinkled in places like starlight. She narrowed her eyes blinking rapidly as she tried to focus. She was feeling less groggy, but her head still felt heavy, and things seemed to wobble, but she kept moving. Her feet hurt, she had stumbled a few times cutting up the palms of her hands and her knees, but she kept walking. She wasn’t going to give up. Harleen wouldn’t let her.

The bushes and vegetation gave way to drainage pipes that ran underground. She was forced to crawl over areas where the pipes and flow of water were covered up by mounds of dirt, bushes and trash, so that she had to guess which way to go and follow along where she thought the water had gone, listening for the water until she found where it came out again, flowing slowly out of another pipe. It wasn’t long before she heard the sounds of traffic. It wasn’t a great many vehicles, but she could hear the sound of cars moving by as she walked clear of some bushes to see an old bridge ahead of her and the angled concrete sides of an old canal. Here the water had been reduced to nearly a trickle, but it still flowed along. Harley walked carefully. There was trash down here, old bikes, tires, part of a wrecked car, cans, papers, and other debris. Under the bridge, it was hard to see, but there looked to be some boxes over that way and movement.

She walked closer when she thought she saw light, a fire. There were a few people down there, a couple of shopping carts, boxes. A tall skinny man wrapped in layers of brownish grey clothing came out from under the bridge.

“Hey sweetheart! You cold? Come here, you can stay with us.” The man grinned at her and Harley heard the sounds of several men laughing.

“Yeah come on sweetheart, come get warm with us.” Another voice joined the man who had stepped out from under the bridge.

Harley took a step backwards. “No, I’m fine.”

The thin man who had spoke first came closer to her. “Aw come on sweet thing, we’ll keep you warm. We got some food--fuck we even got some drugs, we’ll share.”

The man came close to Harley and she could smell him, a mix of sour body odor, alcohol, urine and vomit. He reached out and grabbed her wrist. “Come on sweetie.”

Harley reacted swiftly. She yanked her arm back from him, caused the man to stumble toward her, and she followed this by slamming her left fist into the man’s throat with all her strength, which was far more than it should have been in her current condition. Harley registered this vaguely as the man...
dropped, he gasped, struggling for breath, clawing at his throat. His friends rushed out, but instead of—thankfully—attacking her they hurried over to their friend.

“What are you?” one of the men hissed.

Harley just stared at him before she turned away.

Harley walked over to the left side of the canal and climbed the side to find herself facing a road, and some old abandoned buildings. There was trash along the sides of the streets and the few streetlights that worked were weak, one or two sputtered, trying to give out while the others that worked only gave out a small amount of weak light. Harley frowned and looked around. She had no idea where she was so she simply picked a direction and began walking.

She had only been walking for half an hour. During that time she had seen a few homeless hiding in alleys, passed out on benches or huddling in doorways, but no one bothered her as she walked along the road.

She received a few horn honks, but no one stopped until a cotton candy pink 1960 Metropolitan pulled up in front of her. The passenger side door opened. Harley frowned and walked up to the car and looked inside. In the driver’s seat was a woman who had to be in her seventies at least, if not older. The older woman had short white hair and wore large, perfectly round black glasses. She was wearing a pair of brown capri pants, a pink and white striped shirt, and orange shirt over that with a flower crown of bright orange flowers on her head, a large cigar in her mouth and bright blue tennis shoes.

She grinned at Harley as she took her cigar out from between her teeth. “Honey, you need a ride? A pretty little thing like you shouldn’t be out here in Gotham walking around in barely any clothes...and no shoes. Get in sweetie. I got a couple of bottles of coke in the back. The good kind, in the glass bottles and I got some salted peanuts if you want to pour them in the coke.” She grinned and patted the seat. “Come on sweetie, the name’s Pansy and I promise I don’t bite.”

Harley laughed softly then sniffed. “A ride would be nice.”

Pansy gestured with her head. “Well get in girlie before I got to shoot some wiseass. You wouldn’t believe how many people think an old lady in a pink car is an easy target.”

Harley slipped in and closed the door.

Pansy smiled and took off. “Now, what’s a sweet little thing like you wondering about the streets of Gotham for?”

Harley couldn’t help it, her bottom lip started to tremble. “My...my husband...I’m looking for him.”

Pansy frowned. “He run off?”

Harley shook her head. “We got separated. He...” tears began to fall down her cheeks. “He might be dead. I...I don’t know.” Harley covered her face on a sob. “I just...I need him. I love him so much...I just...”

Pansy frowned and patted Harley’s knee. “You tell me where you want to go and I’ll take you. I know what it’s like to be in love sweetie.”

Harley slowly lowered her hands and took a couple of ragged呼吸s. “Thank you.”

Pansy smiled and reached back into the back seat of her car and pulled out a glass bottle of cola.
“Here, you open this and lean back, Old Pansy will get you where you need to go.”

*

Jack, a cigarette dangling from his lips with a wide grin, and the others were all standing by the gate at the entrance into Wayne Manor. Alfred was still with him, Jack having decided at the last minute that Alfred needed to see this as he held up the detonator.

Jack grinned taking of his cigarette and put his arm around Alfred’s shoulders. “Now, for the grand finale! Or maybe this is simply the opening ceremonies!” Jack laughed.

Alfred tried one more time. “Jack please, this is your home, your parents’ home, the home to generations of Waynes…”

Jack smiled at Alfred and the effect was chilling to the aging butler. Jack’s eyes were strange, the blue fading to a chilling shade of blue that looked almost white to Alfred as Jack laughed.

“Well Alfie dear, you can’t start a new chapter without some destruction. Wasn’t it Picasso who said that every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction? Bruce destroyed me Alfred. He turned me into what you see now and he destroyed the one thing in all the world that I loved. I’m his creation.” Jack laughed. “I’m Frankenstein's monster!! And I’m simply beginning to repay him back for his act of creation with an act of destruction.” Jack giggled and kissed Alfred on the cheek.

He placed his cigarette back between his lips which forced Alfred closer. Jack then took Alfred’s hand and placed it over his on the detonator before placing his other hand over Alfred’s.

Jack glanced at everyone and chuckled. “And here we go!”

Jack pushed down on Alfred’s hand, which pushed down on Jack’s other hand pressing the button down.

The explosion was spectacular. A instant of sound, a great booming blast that was followed instantly by a bright red and yellow flash. Jack laughed as the front of the house imploded followed swiftly by the rest of the house, as blasts continued to go off in a series of rapid explosions.

Jack let go of Alfred and threw his hands in the air like he was conducting an orchestra as more explosions followed by blasts of bright lights and fire. Smoke billowed out from the manor as it came down, falling in on itself.

Jack danced around in a circle, stopping to stand in front of everyone swinging his hands back and forth, flowing with the destruction in front of him. He laughed and turned to everyone throwing his arms out and bowing. His friends all shared a looked with each other before they started clapping.

Jack laughed. “Thank you, thank you!”

He walked over to Alfred who was staring in shock as Wayne Manor fell. Jack wrapped his around Alfred’s head and yanked the older man forward, kissing him hard on the lips. Jack held him leaning back and grinning.

“You tell Bruce I’m coming for him!”

Alfred stared in horror at Jack as the younger man smiled. He gave Alfred a gentler kiss on the lips and whispered. “Goodbye old friend...father.”

With that Jack walked away and yelled. “All right boys, let’s go.”
Frost drove Jack back to the amusement park. Jack had sat quietly, once he had entered the car his whole demeanor had changed to something solemn, quiet. Frost said nothing, as he didn’t think anything he could say would be welcomed right now.

He drove into the park turning off the car when they were close to the house. Frost turned to look at Jack finally and said softly. “You sure you want to stay here Boss? You can stay with me.”

Jack stared at the house out the passenger window. He spoke softly. “No, it’s fine Frost. I’ll be fine. You go on home, or go see Agatha...I’ll be all right.”

Frost frowned, but Jack could sense he wanted to say something or protest. Jack turned around and placed his hand on Frost’s shoulder.

“I promise old friend, I’m fine. I need to be alone right now.”

Frost nodded. “All right.”

Jack nodded and exited the car. Frost watched him go, concern clear in his expression, but he started up the car and backed up, leaving Jack alone.

* 

Jack felt hollow. His emotions were all over the place and he had no idea what he should be feeling. He was practically dragging himself toward the door. Part of him wanted to rush upstairs and wrap himself in Harley’s things, to smell her scent around him, to feel her one last time, but another part of him wanted to burn this house and everything in it to the ground, to completely burn away who he had been, destroy the remains of his happiness...then he could focus solely on his revenge against Bruce, the Batman. He wrapped his hand around the knob and pushed the door open. He walked into the house, his expression dead. He only belatedly realized a light was on in the living room which shouldn’t have been on, since he had left the place dark. He pulled his gun as soon as he realized he was not alone.

Lying on the couch, curled on her side, dressed in a ragged t-shirt and a pair of nearly destroyed shorts, her skin milky white, her hair the same color lying tangled across her shoulders and back...was Harley. Her eyes were closed, but it was clear she had been crying, tear streaks stained her dirty cheeks. Her legs were covered in scratches and dirt, dried blood on her bare, damaged feet.

Jack’s eyes widened and he began to shake ever so slightly. But then his rage slowly, like a beast crawling from the darkness of his soul, took over. He closed the space between him and the woman on the couch in two strides and shoved the barrel of his gun against her temple.

Her eyes flew open as she felt the pressure of the gun against her temple.

Jack leaned down getting into her face, his eyes blazed with crazed rage, and when he spoke she could feel his breath against her face, hot as he hissed through his teeth.

“I only have one question...”
Bruce and Dick arrived back at the manor, but it was far too late. They stood in the shadows watching as the manor burned, looking for all the world like a funeral pyre to Bruce. He had seen the explosion while on patrol and as he was speeding home had called Alfred. He had received no answer for what felt like hours, but Alfred had made a quick call on the communicator that linked directly into the Batmobile. All he had said was that there had been an explosion, police and firefighters were on their way, and that they needed to talk. The worst part for Bruce was that he had to stay away, out of sight while Alfred was forced to handle the situation on his own. From the cover of shadows, Bruce watched as Alfred spoke to the firemen and the police and a local news helicopter flew overhead, getting the latest story—and tragedy—in Bruce Wayne’s life. Bruce Wayne would have to make an appearance tomorrow, arriving back from his overnight stay in Star City where he had supposedly taken his ward with him for a private tour of Queen Industries as part of a shared project with Wayne Enterprises. Bruce would have to call Oliver to make sure their stories matched, just in case there was an over enthusiastic reporter, but the lie shouldn’t be a problem, Bruce thought as he watched his home burn.

Dick’s frown deepened as he watched the burning structure. “What do you think happened?”

Bruce shook his head. “No idea. I keep everything up to code; better than up to code. I have all the latest in security from Wayne Enterprises, fire protection…”

“Can we still get to the Batcave?” Dick asked glancing up at Bruce.

Bruce nodded. “Yes. The way we drive out will still be open. It’s just that now, that will be our only way in and out.”

Dick opened his mouth, hesitated, then asked quietly. “Where are we going to live now?”

Bruce frowned then spoke just as softly. “I have a penthouse apartment in the heart of Gotham. We’ll move there until I decide what to do about the manor.”

Dick frowned at him. “What to do? It’s gone, what can you do?”

Bruce sighed. “I don’t know.”

* 

“Who. The fuck. Are you?”

Jack gritted out through his teeth. His entire body trembled with barely suppressed rage as he pressed his gun against the temple of the woman on his couch. He shook slightly as he glared down at the pale woman who looked like a ghost of his wife. Everything about her was Harley, the curve of her full lips, the very slight bump on the bridge of her nose and when her eyes opened, widening as she looked sideways at him, Jack could see that they were blue, the bright, light blue of his wife’s eyes.
But her skin was white, white as pure snow...like his skin. But while his hair had turned green, her hair was white...He wanted it to be her so much that his chest ached. It ached to much that it was hard for him to breathe. He wanted her so much, so desperately that he didn’t trust his eyes, didn’t trust what he saw was her and not just some hallucination, some figment of his cracked mind, playing a joke on him, giving him what he desire most in the world.

It took every ounce of will he possessed, but Jack couldn’t stop the tears that very slowly crept from the corners of his eyes to make their way down his cheeks. They were tears of want, tears of rage, and desperation.

With a shaking hand, Jack reached out and grasped her face. He nearly broke down when he touched her.

She felt real.

Jack’s chin trembled with his heavy, raw emotions. He was torn between wanting to be happy, to believe it was her and angry that fate, the universe, fucking something was messing with him. He wanted to strangle her, while at the same time wanting to embrace her. He was having a hard time admitting it, but deep down he was terrified that she was only an illusion cooked up by his mind because he wanted her back so badly. If he could strangle himself he would...if she wasn’t real...he wasn’t sure what he would do, if he could handle having her so vividly here in front of him only to learn it was a trick of his mind.

* 

Harley went very still when she felt the cool press of metal against her temple followed by the question--who was she?--asked in a voice that was so close to Jack’s that her heart nearly choked her as it leapt up in her chest to slam against her breast bone. Tears immediately stung her eyes and began to fall. It was him! He was alive, Jack...her puddin...the other half of her...he was alive!

It was Jack’s voice, slightly different, as if his vocal cords had been damaged, but as if he were holding something back, struggling with holding something in check. The voice was rougher, strained, but it was him, she knew it. She would know her puddin’s voice anywhere.

Her eyes rolled sideways and she stared at the man holding the gun to her temple. It was him, Jack, but like his voice, he was different. Jack’s skin was milk white like her own, all color washed away. His hair had turned green, a unique shade of green, and his eyes--there was something different about his eyes. These blue eyes were haunted, guarded and struggling to hold something back, but Harley knew it was her Jack, her puddin. She could also tell he was on the verge, teetering on the edge and one wrong move on her part would have a bullet ripping through her skull. He reached out slowly with his other hand, lifting the barrel of the gun away from her temple at the same time. He held her tightly, painfully, his fingers pressed into her cheek, his thumb against her jaw as he forced her head uncomfortably to the side, then turned her face the other way as he studied her features.

Harley said nothing, just she let him study her, his grip hard enough that she wouldn’t be surprised if he left bruises.

* 

Jack stepped back, still holding his weapon on her, his other hand still pressed against the white skin of her face as he used his hold on her jaw to slowly pull her to her feet. She continued to remain quiet as she slowly stood up, though her bottom lip trembled and her icy blue eyes were huge. Harley was both scared and overwhelmed to see him but she could tell that Jack was a powder keg, ready to explode.
Jack very slowly released his hold on her and took a step back. He pulled the pistol’s muzzle away from her head, but held the weapon still trained on her. He angrily wiped the tears off his cheeks with his free hand.

“Strip,” he snarled, his lip curled with barely contained fury.

She didn’t hesitate. She pulled the dirty t-shirt over her head, then slipped the shorts down her legs.

Jack’s gaze roamed over her. He began to tremble again as he studied her. Her skin was white like his, bleached of all color, but there was still a hint of very pale pink at her nipples, a light dusting of colors between her legs, but the tattoos stood out distinctively against her white skin and there were lighter marks, scars from their time together, but it was the tattoos they had gotten together, the tattoos that marked her as his...his wife, his Harley, his heart.

His voice broke, his blue eyes were filled with longing and pain as he very softly murmured, his voice filled with confusion. “Harley?”

Harley’s bottom lip trembled more. He looked like her puddin, but different with his milk white skin, green hair and his eyebrows gone. More tears rolled down her cheeks as she spoke softly, as if saying his name would break the spell and he would vanish or it really wouldn’t be him. “Jack?”

Then she added more softly, her eyes wide with want, with fear, with pain that even though she had felt his touch, that somehow this would all vanish...a product of Ivy’s drugs, her own rattled psyche, the cruelty of the world. “Puddin?”

Jack dropped the gun and rushed to her. He grabbed her face in both of his hands. His mouth covered hers as he kissed her, tears falling freely down his cheeks. He shook with the intensity of his emotions. His hands dropped from her face to wrap around her body; she felt real in his arms, her skin soft, her body warm, her mouth, her tongue...his wife...

Harley made a soft sound of desperate want as his mouth covered hers. He was alive! Alive, her puddin was alive!

She reached up, her hands sliding through his hair, feeling the silky texture of his hair in her hands, between her fingers. Harley whimpered as she grabbed fistfuls of his hair in her hands, her kisses desperate, needy. She couldn’t stop herself from crying. He was alive! Her Jack was alive. She pressed harder against him, she needed to feel him, to know this was real.

Jack dropped to his knees continuing to kiss her in desperation and pulled her with him. If somehow this wasn’t real he didn’t care anymore. He wanted to die right now, in her arms! He could feel her against him, the warmth of her, the texture of her lips, her tongue against his. He could feel her body; but if she wasn’t real, it was a welcome final insanity...but as he continued to assault her mouth he knew this was reality.

He ran his hands over her, touching every inch of her skin that he could, assuring himself that he wasn’t imagining her, repeating to himself in his mind over and over, assuring himself, this was real...this was real. Jack bit her bottom lip hard enough to taste blood, as if he needed that reality to know this was happening.

Harley only made a slight sound, but it was a breathy gasp of pleasure when he bit her. She dropped her hands from his hair and began yanking at his tie, needing to do away with the clothing that separated him from her. She needed to feel him, feel his skin, touch him, touch him everywhere.

Jack yanked his jacket off, tearing the fabric in his desperation to get the garment off of his arms.
Harley’s fingers worked rapidly to undo the tie around his neck, but when she came to the vest and his dress shirt, she simply ripped them open, sent buttons flying across the room in every direction. They continued to attack each others mouths, unwilling to stop, unwilling to separate, their lips and tongues needed the constant, tangible contact. Jack kicked off his shoes while Harley yanked with small grunts of frustration at his belt, ripping his slacks open. Jack stood up, taking Harley with him as he wrapped one arm around her waist and hauled her off the floor at the same that that he shoved his pants and boxers down, kicking them off as he held her against him. He needed the contact with her, needed to feel her body pressed against his and he was unwilling to let her go.

Harley wrapped her legs around him, grabbing fistfuls of Jack’s hair again as she savagely kissed him, both of them panting and growling with desperate need. Jack deposited her on the couch, going down with her.

He grabbed a fistful of her hair and yanked her head back, attacking her throat with tongue and teeth. He groaned when he licked her, tasting her skin on his tongue, feeling her flesh against his own. He spread her legs, sliding one hand down between them. She was wet for him; his fingers pressed down on her clitoris and Harley arched off the couch nearly wailing with the pleasure of his tongue on her throat and his fingers rubbing against her. He attacked her breasts, biting, sucking, licking, rubbing his nose and cheeks over her at the same time he slid two fingers into her. Jack groaned loudly when his fingers became surrounded by the warm, wetness of his wife’s body. He hissed, dragging his tongue over her skin as he thrust his fingers into her.

Harley cried out, cradling Jack’s head against her, climaxing within seconds.

Jack continued to thrust his fingers into her, biting down on one breast before he sucked her nipple into his mouth. Harley gasped, crying both with pleasure and the overwhelming feeling of happiness that Jack was alive, that she had found him.

Jack removed his fingers sliding them against her one more time, rubbing her clitoris before he grabbed one of her legs and pulled the limb up onto his shoulder, in the next moment he slammed into her, burying his shaft deep into his wife.

They gasped together.

Harley wrapped her arms around him, holding on as Jack thrust hard and fast into her, slamming up against her with each thrust. His green hair dropped forward across his brow as he leaned into her. He grabbed her hair and held her head back, dragging his tongue along her jaw and over her mouth. They kissed hard, their bodies crashing together, fucking hard, as if afraid they would lose one another again, desperate to connect again, their need for each other was overpowering.

Jack grunted with each crash of his body into hers.

Harley grabbed his face between her hands, staring into his eyes as he mewled with pleasure. “I love you...I love you.”

Jack groaned, gasping for breath as he continued his hard, deep thrusts. “Harley...my girl...I love you…”

Harley’s eyes rolled back and she screamed her pleasure holding on to Jack.

Jack followed, grunting before he snarled, releasing inside her, crying out his pain and pleasure in one anguished sound of release.

He collapsed against her and lay on top of her panting, his head against her chest.
Harley breathed heavily stroking her fingers through his hair. His hair still felt thick, soft, only now it was green. She stared up at the ceiling, took shuddering breaths until she finally broke down and began to cry great aching sobs that made her entire body shudder.

“Jack…” Harley said his name softly between her tears.

“I’m here Harley.” Jack raised his head and smiled at her. “I’m here.” He gently cradled her face and covered her in butterfly kisses.

Harley returned his kisses stroking his hair back.

Jack smiled and kissed away her tears as best he could.

He eased her leg down and wrapped his arms around her, gathering her close and laid her head against his shoulder as he shifted. He rose up on one knee allowing himself to ease out of her before he stood, lifting her up with him. Harley wrapped her legs around his waist, her arms around his shoulders and laid her head against him. Jack held her close, cradling his wife against him before he carried her up the stairs to the room he hadn’t entered since his return.

Jack carried her through their bedroom and into the bathroom. He didn’t put her down, just balanced her as he leaned into the shower and turned on the water. He set her on her feet, taking the time to remove his shirt, vest and socks.

Harley made a small sound of protest, wrapping her arms around his waist laying her head on his shoulder while he finished undressing. He didn’t push her away, but smiled and wrapped an arm around her.

Once he was free of his clothing on one side, getting the shirt and vest off one arm, Jack quickly peeled away the rest of his clothing. He held her snugly against him as together they slipped under the water.

Soap, shampoo and conditioner were in the shower, replaced over the last month by Zsasz or someone else, or the same items that they had left when their both “died.” Jack wasn’t sure, but he didn’t care. He poured shampoo into his hand and began to wash Harley’s now ice white hair.

Harley smiled and raised her eyes, smiling into her husband’s blue eyes. She continued to gaze at him as she reached over and picked up the soap, never taking her eyes off of him as she lathered her hands before she began to gently rub the soapy lather over Jack’s chest.

Jack had his wife lean her head back into the stream of water, gently moving his hands over her hair to rinse the shampoo out before he applied the conditioner. He took the bar of soap from her, trading off with her so she could have the shampoo. She giggled softly as she stood on the tips of her toes to wash his now green hair.

Jack laughed softly, smiling at her. The more time he was with her, gazing at her, touching her, the more relaxed he became as it sank in that she was really here, she was alive and back with him; his hands rubbed in gentle soapy caresses over her breasts before he followed the curve of her body to her hips. He held her there staring at her for a long moment before he finally spoke.

“Where’ve you been Harley?” he asked when he could trust himself to speak without losing control of his emotions. His voice still broke and he was forced to blink back tears that fell regardless of his efforts, lost in the steady fall of water. He reached up to cup her face, slowly caressing her cheeks with his thumbs as he stared into her eyes.

“I thought I had lost you Harley…I thought…” he paused, took a heavy breath. “They told me…you
were dead,” he intoned softly. His eyes roamed over her face, taking in every little detail that he could, from the soft curl of her lips, to the way her lashes curled slightly at the edges. He closed his eyes and leaned his forehead against hers. “I was dead without you Harls, just a shell without you.”

Harley trembled. He felt the vibration and opened his eyes, though he didn’t move away, his forehead still against hers, his hands cupping her pale, white face. Jack could see the tears mixing with the water on her face, slowly rolling down her cheeks. Her lips trembled as she spoke, the pain in her voice clear. “I...I jumped in after you puddin, after Bruce let you go. I...I couldn’t live without you Jack. I don’t want to live without you. There was no point in living without you.” Her blue eyes seemed to sparkle with the tears that pooled in the corners before overflowing to mix with the shower water on her face.

Jack leaned in and kissed her tenderly, gently lifting her face. Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders and Jack pulled her closer. He brushed his lips against hers, his nose lightly stroked along hers as well, a smile danced lightly along his red lips. “I couldn’t live without you Harley…” His voice was a soft, deep purr as his tongue licked across her lips.

Harley swallowed. “I don’t remember much after that. Ivy...I mean...Pamela Isley is alive...she found me...cared for me…” Harley closed her eyes and swallowed. “She drugged me…”

She felt her husband stiffen, a slight twitch of his fingers where he held her face.

“I’m going to fucking kill her,” he hissed low and deadly.

Harley shook her head looking into his eyes. Jack’s eyes were so strange now she realized as she stared into them, too blue with flecks of white, like ice, mixed into the startling blue of his gaze. He blinked once and the illusion was gone, replaced by Jack’s normal--though still vivid--light blue gaze.

Harley said softly. “She was just trying to help me Jack, in the only way she could think of...by stopping me from thinking of you.”

Jack stared into her eyes and continued to rub her cheeks tenderly with his thumbs. “How did you end up here?”

She shrugged. “Once I realized what was happening...I didn’t know if you were alive, but I hoped that maybe if I had made it...maybe you...I had to know…” She smiled.

“But I found you…” Her bottom lip trembled again, but she smiled. “I found you.”

Jack smiled back at her as he rubbed the tip of his nose against hers. “You did.”

She grinned and reached up to touch his hair. “I like the hair.”

Jack laughed as he touched her wet hair. “I like yours too.”

Harley giggled. “Not too plain? I mean...white...really?”

Jack grinned and whispered as he licked her cheek. “White is my new favorite hair color.”

Harley grinned reaching up to caress his face, her fingertips brushed over where his eyebrows had been. She smiled her fingertip moved softly around his eyes.

“I’m not too hideous am I?” Jack asked with a slight laugh. There was a note in his voice, a hesitation that said he was truly worried she wouldn’t want him.
Harley smiled and whispered. “Puddin, you are beautiful.”

He laughed and wrapped his arms around her lifting her off her feet and spun her around with a loud shout. “MY GIRL!!” He laughed. “I have my girl back!!

Harley giggled looking down at Jack, stroked her hands through his wet green hair. “I missed you so much puddin.”

“Oh god Harley…” He lowered her down his body. “Harley...my pumpkin pie.” He giggled as he set her on her feet and kissed her. He reached behind her and turned off the water before he kissed her again.

Harley licked his chin before she took his hand stepping out of the circle of his arms. “Come on.”

He grinned letting her lead him out of the shower.

*

They tumbled into the bed.

Jack rolled onto his back pulling her with him as they kissed.

Harley sat on top of him and brushed his damp hair back from his face moving her mouth over his with a slow burning passion. Her tongue traced his red lips then down along his jaw. She stopped at his throat to trace a line down to his collarbone with her tongue. Harley dragged her hands along his torso, needing to feel his skin, the dance of bone and muscle under his flesh moving against her hands. She caressed his sides, his stomach marveling at the whiteness of his skin that now perfectly matched hers. Harley dragged her tongue along his stomach, the tips of her fingers cascaded down his stomach feeling the roll of muscle, the silken smooth feel of his skin.

Jack moaned and took a shuddering breath. “Harley...Harley.” He groaned. “I love you…”

He reached down to caress her hair wondering again if this was just a vivid dream, for a moment doubting the way she felt under his hands, the warm silk of her skin, the press of her breasts against his chest...what if this was an intricate hallucinate? He swallowed on the pain of his thoughts. If he woke and she had gone, he would kill himself he decided. He could not live in this world without her. He would just make sure he took Bruce--the Batman--with him.

He groaned loudly as Harley slid down between his legs, brushing her nose against him, then her lips. He caressed her hair looking down to watch her, the way she dragged her tongue over him, rubbing her face against his skin, worshiping, loving... when Harley slid lower and her tongue gilded, warm and wet over his scrotum, her lips pressed against him as she spread his legs further and Jack let out a loud, deep groan.

She sucked on him, licking and mouthing his scrotum. She wanted, needed to explore every part of him, she never wanted to forget what he tasted like, felt like...Harley spread his legs wider, her thumbs pressing into the tender flesh of his thighs before she leaned in and licked his scrotum again, then followed the flow of his legs, licking and nipping the long stretch of his muscled inner thighs before she came up on her knees and dragged her tongue up the satin length of his erection. She moaned as she grabbed him, wrapping her hand around the hardness of him so she could trace her lips with the satin head of his erection.

She loved the feel of him on her tongue, the way his shaft filled her mouth, the satin soft skin contrasting with his hardness. Harley rubbed his shaft against her cheek, dragging her lips along him, followed by her tongue before she pressed her lips around the tip of him. Her tongue played along...
the slit at the top, tasting a hint of the warm salty flavor of her husband. When Jack groaned in response, stroking her hair back from her face, Harley smiled.

Harley wrapped her lips around him, grasping him with one hand before she lowered her mouth down on him. She moved her head slowly, up and down pressing her lips against him, her tongue sliding back and forth covering him in her saliva. She pulled her lips up, rolling her tongue along the tip of his erection, glancing up his body to meet his gaze with a glimmer in her eyes before she slid her tongue down him again, going lower, sliding back on her stomach again and opening her mouth wide to lick his scrotum before she slid her tongue back up again.

Jack’s eyelids fluttered, his fingers tangled in her hair as Harley ran her tongue slowly up and down him. He arched his hips into her attentions, stroking her long white hair back as he leaned up to watch her, a bright smile on his face. He loved watching the way his erection disappeared into her mouth, the way her tongue felt against him, the curve of her lips...

Harley looked up at him and smiled in return, rolling her tongue over the head of his erection before she very gently dragged her teeth over the head of his shaft.

Jack hissed. “Come here Harls, turn around.”

She grinned and did as he requested.

Jack grinned hooking his arms around her legs and ran his hands up her thighs and over her ass. He gazed up at her skin, pale pink surrounded by creamy white. He licked his lips before pulling her down to him, pressing his mouth to her sex, his fingers pressing into her soft skin and groaned as he tasted his wife on his tongue. He ran his hands over her ass and down her sides feeling the silken soft touch of her skin under his fingers, the sweet roll of her curves. He traced her spine with his fingertips then lazily dragged his nails back down her back while kissing her sex, his tongue rolled and twisted slowly, tenderly lathering her in his saliva as he teased her. He squeezed her rear with both hands and pressed her down to move his mouth more thoroughly over her.

Harley groaned. His lips and tongue felt like heaven against her. She tugged one hand under his thigh while she continued to slowly bob her head, her lips pressed against him sucking slowly, gently, her one hand around him stroked up and down in time to her bobbing head. She loved the feel of him in her mouth, the little sounds he made the vibrated up her body, the grunts and groans of his pleasure, the way his hips thrust up to meet her lips. She squeezed her eyes tight as tears threatened again. She was so happy, so beyond any simple emotion like love. What she felt for him swallowed her whole, consumed her. He was more than simply the man she loved, he was everything, Jack was part of her on a level no one could understand. Her emotions were so intense she couldn’t hold them back as tears slowly formed under her lashes to drop against his skin. Jack moaned pressing his mouth more firmly to his wife’s sex. To feel his wife’s body pressed against his, her mouth warm, her lips firmly wrapped around his member, her sex on his tongue, and the shudders of her body. He groaned again. She tasted so good on his tongue. Jack dragged his tongue across her enjoying the way her clitoris felt against his tongue, velvety soft, the sweet taste of her flooding his senses...the way she opened to him...

Jack tightened his embrace around her legs and pulled her down more firmly, slipping his tongue inside her at the same time. He felt as well as heard the vibration of her moan ripple up his body. He made a soft groan of pleasure, sliding his hands up her torso again, feeling the slope of her back, the flare of her hips, the silk of her skin. She was alive...his girl was alive...this couldn’t be an illusion...it just couldn’t be told himself.

He pulled back only slightly to catch a breath before he attacked her sex more vigorously as the overwhelming joy of having her flooded him. Harley was alive! It was as if he needed to keep
reminding himself that she was here, even with his tongue and lips pressed against her sex, he needed to tell himself this was real.

Jack flicked his tongue into her just as he felt her climax, tasting her burst of pleasure on his tongue, feeling the rumble of her groan around his member. He latched onto her, sucked and licked at her wanting to taste every bit of her pleasure, until Harley released him to gasp for breath. He grinned when he heard her panting, but he kissed her sex one more time.

Jack released her with a gasp. “Harley...uh...come here.”

She turned around to face him and he was struck by just how much more beautiful she had become, with her white skin and snow white hair a contrast to the drab world of Gotham, her blue eyes seem to burst from her face. They were clear, soft blue and he could see the love in them clear and beautiful. She was his angel.

Harley almost immediately lowered herself down on him, moaning as she felt him penetrate her. Her body grabbed hold of Jack, the feeling at the same time new and wonderfully familiar. She dropped down and ran her hands over his face, licking his chin and lips as she caressed his face, stroking his hair back as she kissed him, tasting herself on his tongue.

Jack caressed her sides, reaching down to grab her rear as she rolled her body, sliding up and down in shorts bursts. He reached up to caress the back of her neck guiding her mouth to his each time she pulled back. He needed her so badly he thought as he thrust in sensual jerks of his hips. He grinned and waggled his non-existent eyebrows at her, which caused Harley to giggle as she rubbed her nose against his, nipping at his lips, playing with his green hair as she cradled his head.

Jack flicked his tongue against her mouth at the same time he grabbed hold of her, keeping himself buried in her as he sat up.

Harley laughed, wrapping her arms around his shoulders. Jack held her to him and shifted up onto his knees. Once he was settled, Harley dropped back onto her hands smiling at him as Jack ran his hands up to her breasts, squeezing them before he slid his hands back down again. He leaned in to kiss each breast. Harley dropped her head back with a sigh of pleasure. Jack’s mouth moved over her nipples, his tongue flicking out to play with each one causing a shiver of pleasure that was almost too much to bear.

Harley moaned. “Puddin…”

Jack sat back and began to move again, thrusting in and out of her slowly for a few moments. He pressed his lips together watching the way he disappeared into her, the way her body looked, sprawled on her back. Jack thrust a little harder, panting as he caressed her hips with his fingertips. He caused the bed to bounce as he began to thrust a little more vigorously, spreading his legs wider and grabbed her knees, holding her legs wide. His blue eyes took in the way he moved in and out of his wife, their two pale bodies coming together. Jack hissed with pleasure, arching his back.

He slid one hand down her leg while the thumb of his other hand brushed tenderly over her clitoris. Harley jerked and gasped, made Jack smile He continued to brush the pad of his thumb over her, alternating that touch by thrusting into her.

Harley groaned loudly, dragging her hands along his chest and stomach marveling at him, smiling with pure joy before she reached up and grabbed his face to pull him down to her and kissed him passionately.

Jack shifted his arms around to cradle her head as he thrust into her with more force, wanting,
needing to bury himself as deeply as possible into her while they kissed. He wrapped his arms tight around her, holding her close. They looked into each others eyes, nipping, brushing their lips against each other, their tongues flicking and sliding together, there was nothing in the world but the two of them.

Jack purred brushing his nose against hers. “My girl.”

Harley stroked his mouth with her lips, then her tongue as she panted. “Puddin…”

Harley’s eyes widened. She felt that building warmth rush up and peak before bursting over her. Her breath caught. She climaxed, her entire body responding to the flood of pleasure with a loud groan that was followed by the roll of pleasure that began small then seemed to burst like a wave, breaking across her, consuming her when she came.

Tears sprang to her eyes as she moaned. “My puddin!”

Jack caught her mouth in a deep kiss, his hands sliding up to cradle her head, fingers tangling in her white hair. He thrust hard, deep, pressing and arching into her, needing to be part of her, needing the depth of their connection to be made physical. Her body tightened around him, pulling him deeper...that was the moment that Jack came, his pleasure, his love, his need for her ripped from him to flood into her, his cries muffled against her lips. Jack kissed her hard riding out his orgasm while Harley clung to him, her arms wrapped tight around her lover as she started to cry.

Jack held on tightly to her. “Don’t cry sweets, don’t cry. I’m here.”

Harley smiled. “That’s why I’m crying.”

Jack looked down at her with a slightly confused look in his blue eyes. Harley brushed his hair back from his face gazing at him with such love in her eyes that Jack felt tears at the corner of his eyes as he smiled down at her. No one had ever loved him like this...like her.

Harley gazed at his hair, her eyes traveling down his features, tears flowing freely from her eyes. “I love you Jack, my puddin, I love you so much I can’t ever express it. When I thought you were gone I just didn’t want to live any more. I love you so much.”

Jack smiled gently wiping her tears with his fingers. “I love you Harley. You will always be my girl. My heart. My harlequin. We will always be together. They will never tear us apart and if they try, we’ll rip out their throats.”

Harley smiled despite the fact she was still crying as she pulled him down for another long, lingering and passionate kiss.

Jack smiled against her lips, holding her tightly. He was never letting her go he told himself, never.

* 

Harley sighed, content. She was curled in the crook of Jack’s arm, her head nestled against his shoulder and chest. Jack smiled down at her and stroked her hair back from her face. He kept staring at her as if he couldn’t get enough of looking at her.

Harley felt the same. She didn’t want to stop gazing at her husband. She reached out and traced his lips with the tip of her finger. “They are so red now.”

Jack grinned. “You like it?”
She nodded. “Mm...yes. With a little lipstick we can make your lips even redder, like blood,” she said softly. “Then bring out the darkness around your eyes…” She grinned.

Jack laughed nuzzling her nose. “You always have the best ideas.”

She giggled, pleased and whispered while her fingers stroked his cheekbones. “You are so handsome Jack.”

He lifted a hairless brow at her. “You still think so?”

She nodded with a smile. “Definitely, the pale white skin makes your beautiful eyes pop even more, and your hair is always gorgeous. I like green.” She smiled seductively and purred. “My new favorite color.” She emphasized her point by licking his lips.

He grinned a little lopsided, clearly pleased with his wife’s praise. He kissed her slowly, tenderly, letting the gesture communicate the depth of his feelings.

Harley snuggled closer and wrapped her arm around his waist as they kissed. He pulled back just a little and rubbed his nose against hers. “My creamy beauty.”

Harley giggled.

They were both quiet for a little while, Jack caressing her face dragging his nose and lips along her cheek and up into her hair when Harley murmured. “So where is everyone else? The gang?” she asked.

Jack kissed her forehead before he laid back on the pillows and Harley moved to lay her head against his chest. She smiled hearing his heartbeat against her ear. Jack looked up at the ceiling as he spoke. “No one knows where Bane is exactly. There have been rumors of his location. Apparently he went into my lab after I died and destroyed everything, which both pisses me off and is actually quite touching.” Jack grinned. “But something happened to him. Frost said he had heard from Jason that Bane...changed. Not sure what that means, I’ll have to ask Jason, but no one is sure what exactly happened after that.” Jack kissed her forehead as he continued to speak. “I’m sure with Alex’s help we can find him.”

Jack pursed his lips then. “Let’s see what else...Ah, Jason has taken over being the Red Hood and from what Zsasz has told me he is doing a good job with Trope and Thea helping him. Agatha is still healing and she doesn’t know either of us is alive yet. Alex, Zsasz and Frost know, however. Duela is missing. Oh, and I have some new friends for you to meet my sweets, the people who dragged me from my acid grave and took care of me. I brought them all here, new members of our little family.”

Harley squeezed him. “If they saved my puddin then they are more than welcome.”

Jack chuckled shifting to face her again. He kissed her, his lips trailing from her mouth to cheek, nibbling slowly. He smiled to himself. He couldn’t seem to stop touching her, kissing her and he didn’t want to. He wanted to spend days like this in bed with her. Too bad they had work to do he thought.

After a little bit, Jack settled back again, his nose and lips against her ear, Harley asked. “What do you want to do puddin?”

Jack caressed her hair, pressing another kiss to her forehead.

She could feel the smile on his lips against her face. She closed her eyes enjoying the feel of her husband, her puddin...He used the fingers of his arm she was lying on to gently stroke through her
silky soft locks. “I want to contact them all. Bring them here so we can talk. Things are about take a
turn in a very interesting direction. But I think first, I want to find Bane.”

He was quiet for a little bit before he turned to lean up on his elbow to look down at her. Harley
shifted position to get comfortable against her husband.

Jack smiled as he dragged his fingertips along her breasts. “I did something tonight I’m not sure how
you’ll feel about it,” Jack said quietly.

Harley frowned as she reached up to stroke the locks of green hair that had fallen around his face
back, though they refused to stay in place. “What is it?” she asked.

Jack pressed his lips together, then said softly. “I burned down Wayne Manor. I wanted Bruce to
know that I’m coming after him. I thought…” Jack closed his eyes. “I was angry for him killing
me…” Jack opened his eyes as he snarled. “He threw me away...like trash...but the worst part was
coming back only to learn that he had taken you from me Harley...he tried to destroy me and
everything I loved. I cannot let that stand. Bruce wants to be the good guy? The hero? Well I’m
going to become his worst nightmare. Every hero needs a villain.” Jack’s lip curled.

Harley was quiet. Jack, who had cast his gaze down as he spoke, looked over at her only to see her
 glaring. Her gaze met his. “Good. I just wish I could have been there.”

Jack’s lips quirked into a grin. “That’s my girl,” he whispered before he kissed her. Harley giggled
and wrapped her arms around him returning his kiss. When Jack pulled away, only to rub his nose
against her, she asked quietly. “What about Alfred?”

Jack let out a breath. He took her hand and kissed her palm before he answered. “I got him out.”

Harley looked relieved. Whatever hatred she felt toward Bruce and that little shit sidekick of his,
didn’t extend to Alfred. “Do you think he knows about Bruce being Batman?” she asked while she
stroked his chest with the back of her fingers from her other hand, smiling as Jack continued to kiss
her palm, then her fingers. He kissed the tip of each finger before he answered her.

“Oh, I think he does.”

Harley frowned. “Did he tell you?”

Jack laughed. “No, but Bruce couldn’t have kept a secret that big without some help.”

Harley looked sad at this. She had hoped that somehow Alfred wasn’t part of Bruce’s little Batman
game. She had hoped he was innocent, but now...she felt like a stone had been dropped into her
heart, where it would fester. She wasn’t sure if Jack forgave Alfred, but if Alfred knew about the
Batman, Harley wasn’t sure she could forgive him for lying to Jack this whole time. She sighed
mentally and put her feelings on the matter aside; at least for now.

Harley continued to frown as she traced the tattoo that ran along Jack’s shoulder. Her fingers
skimmed along the outline of the cards as Jack spoke. “Bruce doesn’t trust me, never has. I’m too
unstable.” Jack grinned at her. “But I’ve seen the shit Batman used first hand and in the news. No,
Bruce has help.” His eyes went slightly flat. “Which makes his betrayal that much worse. He could
share this with Alfred and god knows who else, but not his own brother? Because I’m fragile?
Unstable? Well, now I’m going to show him just how unstable I can be. I’m going to bring chaos to
Gotham.” He turned her hand around and kissed the back of her fingers. “Bruce wants to run around
playing superhero, the white knight of Gotham? Trying to save everyone...but me.” Jack’s voice
dropped to a whisper when he said “me.” Harley could hear the pain in Jack’s voice. Her heart ached
for her lover. She understood how he felt, being betrayed by someone you loved. Her thoughts drifted momentarily to her mother, betraying Harleen for her stepfather. Harley pushed the thought away to focus on her husband.

Jack continued to speak, his eyes looking off into the distance. Harley knew he was speaking more to himself, to Bruce than to her. “I’m going to be the dragon to Bruce’s knight, a villain to fight, an equal who represents everything he isn’t.” Jack’s voice dropped. “I’ll be the villain of his dreams, a shadow within his shadow...the tumor lurking in his soul.” Jack giggled. “He hides behind his pursuit of justice like it hides all his sins.” Jack giggled again. Harley stroked his face. Jack kissed the tips of her fingers as they passed over his lips. He giggled again, the sound close to hysterical, but he pulled the sound back as he hissed through his teeth. “He tried to take everything from me, from us Harley. He tried to destroy who I was for as long as I can remember...but now...” He grinned. “You and I have come through death and out the other side! We are both reborn! Baptized and stripped away into something new. Batman created us, so I think we need to show him exactly what he created.” Jack grinned down at her.

Harley giggled snuggling close with a nod. “So, where do we start?”

Jack frowned in thought. “Mm...the house was just the prologue, burning away the past, destroying the old to create something new. I think now Gotham and the Batman need to be introduced to the new us.”

Harley frowned in thought. “What about Falcone?”

Jack’s eyes narrowed slightly, followed quickly by his smile. “You know Harls, I think I just might have a couple of ideas.”

She grinned. “I knew you would.”

Jack laughed and kissed the top of her head. “Thank you sweets. But first I think we should focus on getting our merry band of miscreants back together, starting with Bane.”

*

It wasn’t until the morning that Bruce was able to finally speak with Alfred as Bruce Wayne. It had taken a great deal of time to slip into the cave, make sure everything was secure, that the remains of the house were not going to collapse into the batcave; then to arrange arriving back in Gotham with his ward, meeting with police, detectives, insurance...the press. That had been followed with moving into his apartment (which occupied the entire top floor of the Fitzroy building, a Gothic art deco building of black and gold in the heart of the Diamond district) that he kept in downtown Gotham, purchasing a new wardrobe for Dick, himself, and Alfred (who also had his own, smaller apartment on the same floor). By the time he had found space to breathe, it was quite late.

Dick had eaten an entire pizza by himself after Bruce had simply decided that dinner should be a simple affair (plus caving into the wishes of a perpetually starving teenage boy who said he would die without pizza). Dick had gone to his room and promptly passed out. While it worried at Bruce not to go out tonight onto the streets of Gotham, he needed to speak to Alfred about what had really happened last night.

Bruce sat on the balcony of his apartment. He could see Robinson Park from his vantage, the lights of the Diamond district and hear the dull hum of late night Gotham traffic.

Bruce didn’t drink much. He didn’t like the effects of alcohol on his system, but tonight he made an exception. He had two Pimm’s Cup drinks sitting on the table, one in front of him and the other
waiting in front of the empty chair across from him. Bruce picked up his drink, using the straw to lightly turn the slices of lemon and lime around with the ice before he took a sip. He heard the door of the apartment open behind him and the nearly silent steps as Alfred approached sliding open the door and stepping onto the balcony.

“Master Bruce,” Alfred said softly.

Bruce smiled and looked up at his old friend, then gestured at the seat across from him and the drink. Alfred smiled ever so slightly and took the offered seat. Bruce took a sip of his drink before he set the glass down. “I ordered these from the restaurant below. They’re not bad.”

Alfred gave a curious frown as he picked up the drink and took a sip through the straw. He smiled. “Not as good as my brother Wilfred use to make, but acceptable.”

Bruce laughed softly before his expression became grim. “All right, what exactly happened last night?”

Alfred frowned, and Bruce noticed that his eyes took on a haunted. Bruce watched his old friend, his mentor with concern. He could see that Alfred had aged since last night; there were dark circles under his eyes and shadows in his cheeks.

Alfred spoke softly with barely controlled emotion in his voice as he was finally able to share the burden of his knowledge that he had carried with him since last evening. “It was Master Jack.”

Bruce’s eye widened ever so slightly, his voice was hushed with astonishment. “What?”

Alfred met Bruce’s eyes. “It was your brother Jack, Master Bruce.”

“It couldn’t have been!” Bruce shook his head. “I watched him die Alfred...I let him go...he fell into the acid...”

Alfred shook his head. “He’s alive Master Bruce. He...he doesn’t look the same, but it was him.”

Bruce frowned. “Doesn’t look the same?”

Alfred shuddered. Anyone else wouldn’t have noticed the slight tremble that ran through the older man’s body but Bruce did, it was small, but he saw it clearly. Alfred picked up his drink and took a long sip and swallowed before he spoke. “His skin...he looks as if his skin has been stripped of all color--white, like a ghost. His lips were red, his eyebrows were gone, burned away by the acid I suppose, I don’t know, but he still had his hair, but the color...it was green.”

Bruce stared at Alfred as if the other man had grown a second head. “Green. Alfred, are you sure...”

Alfred looked across the table at Bruce. His gazed wasn’t accusatory, he didn’t glare at Bruce for his doubts, he just looked old and sad Bruce noted.

“It was him Master Bruce, there is no doubt. I should think I would recognize the boy I helped to rear into a man.” Alfred frowned and stared down at the drink. “He said that Harley was dead.”

Alfred took a breath. “He cried on my shoulder when he told me.” Alfred swallowed, the pain he was feeling clear in the hunch of his shoulders. “He wanted you to know that burning down the manor was just the beginning. He talked about creation, destruction, starting new and about giving you what you want Master Bruce. He knows your secret now and he told me to tell you that he was coming for you.” Alfred looked up. “He said you created him, created a monster and that he was now going to be the monster you always worried he would become.”
Bruce felt a cold chill race up his spine. “He’s alive--my brother is alive.”

Bruce wasn’t sure how he should feel. He hated that part of him wasn’t happy. Relieved, maybe in some small part of him, was relieved that he hadn’t murdered his brother, but Bruce knew that regardless of Jack surviving, his intent had still been the same, to let Jack die. Bruce felt a coldness in the pit of his stomach that spread out, sending tendrils of ice through him. He didn’t know if it was fear, regret, or maybe something darker, something that Bruce didn’t want to explore. Jack had been driving him to the edge of tolerance for as long as Bruce could remember, always pushing, pushing and never falling into line, never acting or reacting with anything that Bruce considered normal. Jack was almost this side of insanity. There had been a strong sense of relief when he had finally been able to commit Jack to Arkham, a sense of relief that he hadn’t spent time analyzing...probably because he didn’t want to analyze his feelings in regards to Jack. He knew his feelings were twisted up with anger, anger that their parents left them, left Bruce to deal with Jack and his instability, anger at his brother for just not acting like Bruce thought he should, and anger at himself for never being able to simply accept Jack, help him, be there for him. Instead he had focused on his chosen course, to cure...to save Gotham. Bruce wondered if Jack’s behavior was partially his fault. It was not the first time he had wondered if he had helped in pushing Jack...

Bruce dismissed his thoughts and instead he focused on the now. It was better to leave those feelings alone for now, perhaps to be explore later, perhaps to be sealed away. Bruce didn’t know. All he did know was that he couldn’t distract himself with “what ifs.”

“What else did he say Alfred?” Bruce asked as he idly shifted his drink around.

Alfred shook his head. “That was pretty much it sir, that he will be coming for you.”

Bruce moved the straw in his glass. He wasn’t sure why he was doing it, but he needed something to focus part of his attention as he asked, hating himself for asking like this but still...

Bruce pursed his lips. “Coming for me?”

Alfred nodded. “Not only does he blame you for what happened, he blames you for Miss Harley’s death. He says you have created your own monster Master Bruce, that he is going to be your monster.”

Bruce felt the cold spread a little more.

“What do you think he will tell my secret?” Bruce looked over at Alfred.

Alfred shook his head. “No, I don’t believe so Master Bruce. I was given the distinct impression that revealing your alternate identity was not part of his plan.”

Bruce frowned, he really didn’t know how he felt when Alfred said softly. “I also wanted to tell you that I’m leaving.”

Bruce’s head snapped up. “What?”

Alfred took a sip of his drink, his eyes downcast before he looked up and met Bruce’s gaze. “I can’t do this, not right now at least.” Alfred closed his eyes, clearly in pain. “I raised you both as best I could. I love Jack, Bruce, as if he was my own son. Just like I love you.” Alfred opened his eyes again. “You are both my boys. Jack is in pain Bruce, he’s been in pain since the moment your parents died. Harleen brought him happiness, brought him back from the brink he was teetering on. But...” Alfred sniffed. “I need to step away Bruce. I don’t want to see what is about to happen...not now. I don’t know if ever.” He squeezed his eyes close. “I don’t know if my heart can take it Bruce.
This...I know this isn’t going to end well for either of you.”

Bruce stayed silence sensing that Alfred needed a moment to gather himself. Bruce wanted to yell, to protest, to scream...he felt like that child he had been when his parents died, alone, abandoned, lost. He had always known he needed Alfred, but not until this moment did he really understand how much.

“All... please... please don’t go.” Bruce voice was small. He was a child again asking for his daddy to stay, not to go out on a call, not to go to the hospital again and leave them alone...not to die...not to abandon him and Jack to the darkness…

Alfred reached across the table and took Bruce’s hand. “I have to Bruce. I can’t….” He sighed looking old, looking tired. “I’ve wiped both you and your brother’s tears. I’ve held you both. I’ve set bones and bandaged wounds, but I can’t bury both of you...either of you. You are both my boys. I can’t...please don’t ask me to stay and watch this. I need a rest.”

Bruce seized on the line Alfred had thrown him. “A rest, yes. You need rest, a long vacation, away from Gotham.”

Alfred smiled softly. “Bruce, when you started this, when we started this, your mission, our mission was clear. But now...with Jack...” Alfred took a sip of his drink, letting the alcohol push him to continue. “You turned Jack...you’ve set your brother on a path of violence. You didn’t see him Bruce. He is unhinged...there is still...he is still the little boy who chased after you, but dropping him Bruce, you’ve thrown him away Bruce, proved to Jack that he isn’t important to you. You know Jack was always trying in his way to get your attention. His acting out, his misbehavior, his...crazed behavior as you were both growing up has always been about you.” Alfred looked at Bruce with such pain in his eyes that Bruce felt it. Alfred whispered. “You were always pushing him away, focused on your mission. But Jack, he always was trying to get you to see him. Jack loves you Bruce, even after you let him...” Alfred’s voice cracked. “Even after you sacrificed him, I can see he still loves his brother, but it's become twisted Bruce. You took something precious from him, you took the one person that Jack felt loved him as he was...Dr. Quinzel. She loved him completely regardless of his bad behavior, regardless of what he did she loved him, she saw him...she was his rock in the storm. Now that you let him go, and you let her die, I’m scared of what this Jack will do...he doesn’t just want to hurt you for hurting him Bruce, he wants to destroy you, slowly. You turned his love to hate and he hates you as much as he loves you.”

Bruce felt a chill roll over him at Alfred’s words.

Alfred pushed himself to his feet. “I’ve booked on a flight to London leaving in the morning. I...I haven’t decided if I will come back...”

Bruce stood. “Alfred please...!”

Alfred smiled, walked around the table and pulled Bruce in his arms. The older man hugged him tightly, surprising Bruce.

Alfred spoke softly. “Just...I enabled you, allowed you to ignore your brother, hoping that at one point you would see that you needed him, that he could be a value to you, but now...I just can’t stand here and watch you both destroy yourselves.” Alfred shook his head. “I failed you both. I’m sorry.”

Bruce blinked back a tear as he whispered. “No, I failed you...and I failed Jack. My obsession with crime blinded me. I didn’t see what I was doing...to you both. I can change...try to reach Jack...”

Alfred stepped back his hands on Bruce’s shoulders. “A father is the one who guides Bruce, not the
other way around. I don’t know if you can reach Jack anymore Bruce...try, for my sake, your own...and most importantly, for Jack, you have to try and reach him, but I fear it may be too late.”

Alfred turned and walked back into the apartment. He stopped mid step and turned around. “Before I leave, I wanted to give you this.”

Bruce reached out and took a card on which Alfred had written a name and a number. “Her name is Barbara Pennyworth, my niece. She is in Blüdhaven, but she has been thinking about moving to Gotham. She is a computer expert. You are going to need someone to watch your back Master Bruce, you and Master Dick both. I suggest you call her and meet.” Alfred sighed and turned. He walked to the door and left without another word.

Bruce watched him leave feeling lost and helpless.

* 

Frost arrived at the park with Agatha, a frown firmly in place on his features. He hadn’t slept much last night, his thoughts on Jack, the manor. He had wanted to tell Agatha everything that had happened, and he hated lying to her, telling her that he had gone to a poker game with Alex that had ended badly. He could tell she suspected there was something more, but Agatha didn’t push him for an answer. She had simply nodded, but now...Jack had called and asked him to bring his aunt over to the park, but not to tell her he was alive yet. Jack wanted to tell her himself. Frost didn’t like it, but he had told Agatha that Zsasz had something to talk to the both of them about. She had looked suspicious, but had agreed to go.

Agatha had remained quiet the entire drive and he didn’t press. She looked lovely if pale, dressed in a pair of slim cut white slacks, an emerald, sleeveless blouse, her hair styled to frame her face and a pair of white tennis shoes. He could tell she was irritated with him by the lines that pulled around the edges of her lips but she said nothing.

He pulled up and parked in front of the house that had been Jack’s and Harley’s hopping out to open the door for Agatha.

When he came around to open the door he saw that Agatha was staring at the house, a haunted, sad look in her eyes. She hadn’t said much since her first break down over Jack’s and Harley’s death, but Frost knew it hurt her, continued to gnaw at her. She felt that maybe, if she had been there, she could have done something to prevent it. He frowned and suppressed a sigh. He hated seeing her in pain, but he opened the door and took her hand, helping her out.

They walked to the house and Frost knocked.

They both heard Jack’s voice from inside. “Come in!!”

Agatha had gone pale, all the color fleeing from her face. She looked at Frost. “What?”

Frost smiled a little and pushed the door open, holding it for her. Agatha stepped in with Frost following. He nearly bumped into her as Agatha had halted just a step inside. Sitting on the couch, both of them sitting forward and playing a game of cards on the coffee table in front of them—which also held a bottle of whiskey with two glasses, some cheese and crackers scattered across its polished surface. Harley was wearing a dark red button down shirt of Jack’s, unbuttoned to the middle of her chest, the sleeves rolled up and a pair of pink panties; her legs were bare, her white hair brushed back and held loose at the nape of her neck. Jack was sitting next to her wearing a pair of black slacks and another button down shirt of emerald green, a shade or two darker than his hair, the sleeves rolled up like Harley’s, only two buttons held the shirt together in the middle of his stomach. Both of them were barefoot, their snow white skin clear and undeniable.
He looked up with a bright smile against his red lips, his blue eyes unnaturally bright.

“Auntie!”

Agatha screamed.

*

Frost walked over and handed Agatha a glass of straight whiskey he had poured for her. She took the glass and downed the contents in one swallow before handing it back to him.

“Another honey, please,” Agatha asked.

Frost smiled and walked back over to the pour her another glass of the dark amber liquid. Agatha stared at the both of them taking the drink from Frost without turning to look at him.

“I just...I don’t understand…” she said softly, clearly still processing the situation.

Jack laughed. He leaned back on the couch, his arms draped across the back of the piece of furniture, his legs crossed, a cigarette dangling from between his fingers with Harley curled beside him, nestled against him. She sat with her legs tucked under her as she leaned against Jack, playing with the cards by shuffling them.

Jack lazily brought his cigarette to his lips, took a deep drag and held it for the count of ten before he blew out the smoke with a smile. “Bruce...Batman…” Jack giggled. “Dropped me into a vat of acid to kill me. Then Harley jumped in after me.” He glanced down at Harley who looked up at him, her eyes soft, full of love and devotion. Jack’s gaze reflected the same emotions, complete devotion, love, obsession. He wrapped his other arm around her shoulders and pulled her closer still. Harley smiled snuggling against him before she smiled at Agatha.

Agatha said softly, clearly upset. “I’m still having trouble wrapping my mind around the fact that Bruce is Batman...and he let you go...dropped you.”

Jack watched his aunt through the cloud of cigarette smoke. “Well, he did.”

“And, your skin...your hair?” Agatha gestured with her glass at both of them.

Jack glanced at Harley again and grinned. “We were reborn.” He made the statement as if it were simple.

Agatha frowned. “It’s a miracle.”

Jack nodded. “Yes, yes it is. I’m taking Harley’s and my resurrection from the ashes...or acid of our deaths…” Jack laughed and continued, “as a sign.”

“A sign?” Agatha asked.

Jack glanced at Harley who giggled. “We are going to bring some chaos to the lay people, but first--as I told Alfred--creation is an act of destruction. And since Bruce created me...the new me and now with my Harley at my side, we are going to create something new for him. Harley and I will create art! And the task of art is to bring chaos to order...so that is what we are going to do. A new Gotham with a villain to match it’s new face. Besides, I owe Bruce...I owe him for taking everything from me...so I’m going to take everything from him…” Jack’s voice dropped. “Everything.”

Jack took a drag on his cigarette and chuckled. “But first, I want to teach our friend Falcone about
ghosts.”

Agatha stared at Jack. She wasn’t sure how she felt. Jack and Harley had returned from the dead and Bruce was Batman. Her eyes widened slightly. What would the Owls do if they learned any of this?

She felt a chill run down her spine.

*

Jack had told his aunt that the first thing he wanted to do was to get his gang back together and part of that was finding Bane.

That evening Jack and Harley were lying in bed together naked. Harley smiled content, her body felt warm, loose, relaxed after making love with her husband again. She sighed, her husband...her life had been destroyed, then restored to her. Jack was right—he was always right she mused as she watched him. They had been given a second chance, raised from the depths of the acid like angels...she smiled. Jack was her angel.

She sat up to watch him with the cards. Jack swiftly and skillfully divided the cards into three smaller stacks, twisting them around with his long fingers in what looked to be a complicated pattern as he held the cards with his fingers before sliding them easily and smoothly into the desk.

Harley clapped, which made Jack laugh. Though it was clear he was pleased with her admiration, he was just pleased with just having her beside him.

He immediately began to show off, doing card tricks with more flourish when the phone that Frost had brought over for Jack when he had also brought Jack’s aunt, went off with a low buzz. Jack frowned, quickly sliding the cards back into a deck which he handed to Harley. She laid back against his side and began to play with the cards trying to duplicate Jack’s tricks.

Jack picked the phone up. “Darling, you have to stop calling me at home, my wife's getting suspicious.”

Harley turned to glare at Jack while Alex, who had called muttered. “I see the acid didn’t burn away your ability to tell very corny jokes. How the fuck are you two?”

(Jack had called Alex about Harley, nearly going deaf when Alex yelled with joy.)

“We’re fine Alex my darling, just fine. Naked in bed and...” Jack grinned watching Harley with the phone pressed against his ear while he was greeted on the other end with Alex yelling, “I don’t what to fucking know what you two are doing naked okay? I called ‘cause I have some good information.”

Jack laid back against the pillows. “Oh? On?”

Alex’s voice was low. “I just learned where Bane is.”

Jack sat up again. “You did?”

Alex replied. “You ain’t gonna fucking like it.”

Next to Jack Harley held up the joker from the deck of cards and studied it. The image on the card was of a white skinned man wearing a three cornered, black and purple jester’s hat with bells hanging on the corners of the hat. The jester’s hair until the cap where it stuck out was green and his eyes were blue.
Harley held the card up with a smile.

“Hey look puddin, it’s you. You’re the wild card, The Joker.”

Jack turned, the phone still to his ear and saw the card as Harley held it up. A smile spread slowly across his face.

“The Joker, eh?”
Getting the Band Back Together

First everything was green, a light shade that reminded her of summer. It was almost pretty. Then there was burning. That was all she was aware of...her entire existence was the sensation of burning, her skin being ripped from her, peeled like paper, flayed alive. She couldn’t scream because it was burning through her throat, melting her voice, shredding her lungs. That was when she realized the green surrounded her; it was everywhere and everything. She tried to reach the surface, but she couldn’t see with her vision boiled away…but instead of darkness she saw green. And it burned.

She reached out, her fingers moved through the soupy substance, straining for some sort of hold when a hand grabbed hers and hauled, yanking her through the burning liquid. She gasped, sucking in more of the toxic sludge around her. She could taste it, mixed with the blood of her melting mouth, oozing over her melting and dissolving body, but just as she thought all her existence would become agony, her vision returned and she saw him, her lover, her husband...Jack. Harley cried out, reaching for him. He smiled at her, his hand on her wrist tightened, he grabbed her shoulder with his other hand, pulled her through the burning liquid toward him. Harley opened her arms, pushing the pain aside; it didn’t matter because Jack was here...he was alive. If she could only get to him...

Just as she was close enough to touch him, just as her fingers brushed against his face, Jack’s smile began to melt, his blue eyes faded to gooey orbs, his teeth cracked and dissolved, flesh and blood mixed with the green ooze around her...

Harley screamed as her fingers sank into his flesh, blood and skin melting into a thick, noxious slime that ran down his features and flowed over her hand where she touched him. She watched Jack’s features dissolve, the bones of his face peeking through the ravaged flesh...the green acid melted away his lips, his tongue was full of burning holes.

Harley cried out. “JACK!! NO!!”

Harley woke up screaming herself hoarse. She thrashed around as she tried to escape the prison of her mind.

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Jack lay naked in bed on his side watching Harley sleep. The sheets of their bed had slid down to her waist, revealing her milk creme skin. She laid on her side with her hands tucked under her cheek. He smiled watching her, his gaze following the smooth, pale curves of her body. There was just a little light coming in through the window, weak and silvery, but as the light caressed her snow white skin, she looked like she was made of silver, as if a faint glitter was under her skin. She looked unreal, ethereal. Jack pressed his teeth into his bottom lip as he reached out and traced her side with the tips of his fingers. He would never tire of gazing at her, he realized with a smile and reached out to brush his fingertips over her lips. He would have to wake her soon so they could shower and dress to go out tonight, to take the first steps in their fight against Bruce, against the Batman. It was time for them to rebuild what his brother tried to break, to destroy...

He was still having difficulty believing that she was here, alive. He found himself dreaming of losing her over and over again when he closed his eyes. He didn’t want to sleep, it had become so bad. Too many had intruded into their lives, tried--and often succeeded--in hurting them; Croc, Crane, Benjamin, and Bruce, among others. Jack sighed and stroked Harley’s hair. His wife looked like porcelain, unreal with her bleached out complexion, which made him fear that maybe she wasn’t truly here...that he was only imagining her being with him. He needed to constantly have a hand on her, or her body next to his so he could touch her, feel her, kiss her, to know that she was really here.
with him and not some figment he had conjured up. He hated to admit that he was unwilling to let her out of his sight, afraid she would disappear, vanish when he wasn’t looking.

He didn’t want his world to rip apart again and find out that he had been dreaming the entire time, that Harley was still really dead. Jack knew he couldn’t take another break like that, he couldn’t be without her, not again. He would put a gun to his head...

He smiled tenderly at her, letting his morbid thoughts go as he reached out to stroke a strand of white hair from her face. When he couldn’t sleep, he would watch her instead. He would pay close attention to her breathing, lean in close to smell her skin or just stare at her face, assuring himself that she was indeed real.

He was watching her, caressing her jaw when he noticed the slight frown at her lips, the crease in her brow. Her body began to twist as a vibration seemed to race through her, and her body jerked. His heart sank; he knew exactly what was about to happen. Harley cried out in pain, followed by a scream, a scream that came from deep within, torn from her as she lashed out. Jack grabbed her the moment she showed distress and yanked her hard against him, pressing her face against his chest. Harley struggled against him, fighting whatever her dreams had shown her, but he didn’t let go. He wrapped his arms tight around her and held her, his hands in her hair. Harley grabbed a hold of Jack, clawing at him for a few seconds until her waking mind began to catch up with her dreaming mind. She made a small gasp and threw her arms around him. Jack held on tightly to her. His fingers stroked gently over her hair. Harley was struggling to catch her breath as her body continued to tremble.

She choked out his name. “Jack?”

“Shh...I’m here Harley...I’m here. You’re safe.” He frowned as he kissed the top of her head. Harley began to cry, great sobs that wracked her entire body. Jack’s gaze narrowed. This--this pain was all Bruce’s fault...Harley’s pain was his brother’s doing.

Harley sobbed. “Jack...Jack...you died...you died...I can’t...”

She broke down, unable to speak as the tears took over. Jack tightened his hold on her.

“I’m here Harley. We’re both alive,” Jack whispered kissing her hair. He tilted her head up so he could look into her eyes. Her blue eyes were haunted, rimmed in red as she stared up at him. She reached up with shaking fingers to brush his cheek. “Jack?”

He smiled at her. “Yeah toots, it's me.”

She clung to him and began to cry again.

Jack frowned and his eyes stung with unshed tears. It hurt him to see her like this, to know how much pain she was in despite being back with him. She couldn’t sleep more than an hour or two without waking up screaming. It was almost exactly like when they had escaped from the asylum. That place stayed with them, was still with them both, haunting their sleep. Harley had been having fewer nightmares just before...Bruce. Jack’s lip curled when he thought of his brother, again, trying to destroy their lives, to take away Jack’s happiness. It was Bruce who threw him in Arkham, prompting Harley to commit herself. It was Bruce who threw his little brother away like trash and caused his girl to jump in after him...it was all Bruce. It angered Jack that now their deaths had replaced those asylum nightmares with a new ones, and again, it was all because of Bruce. Jack rested his chin on Harley’s head as he continued to stroke her hair and whisper soft words to her. He was having the same issue. Sleep would only come in fits and starts and when it did come, his sleep was plagued with nightmares too, nightmares of pain that were twisted with images of losing Harley,
of having to watch her die over and over even though he had not been there to witness her death--his mind had no difficulty in coming up with visual solutions to that lack, to plague his sleeping mind.

It appeared that dying and coming back hadn’t left either of them unscathed.

Jack held her as tight as he could without hurting her, reassuring her with his body, his presence, that he was here, that he was real and that she was safe. After a minute or so, she relaxed, calming; the tears stopped and her embrace was not as desperate. She sniffled and Jack glanced down at her moving to let her lift her head.

“You okay now?” he asked softly, smiling as he gazed at her. He reached forward to stroke back her hair, cradling her face. His thumb stroked gently across her forehead then along her cheek.

Harley nodded though she kept stroking his face as if she was afraid he would disappear. “Yes. Just...bad dream.”

Jack murmured as he kissed her eyelids and stroked his fingers through her hair and along her jaw. “I know sweets. You’re safe now. I have you.” He brushed his nose against hers. “I love you pumpkin. I won’t ever let you go. I promise.”

Harley, her eyes closed, her lips trembled, leaned into his touch, brushing her nose against his before she kissed him. Her kiss was desperate, passionate. She needed to feel his touch, to know he was there with her. She opened her mouth against his own making a small gasping moan.

Jack closed his eyes giving himself over to her kisses, pulling her up against him, needing her just as much as she needed him.

Harley groaned, kissing her husband harder, more passionately, her fingers moved through his hair as she pushed her body against him. She grabbed his hair, kissing hard, tears slowly seeping from under her lashes.

Jack growled softly, pulling the sheet away so that he could feel the warmth of her naked body against him. He didn’t want anything between them, nothing keeping them apart, even something as simple as a sheet. He settled down between her legs and inhaled sharply with pleasure, feeling her warm and wet, sliding his erection against her before he laid down between Harley’s legs. Jack wrapped his arms around her pressing her close and his erection hardened more, pulsing with his want, his need mixed together into an ache that was soul deep.

Harley made a soft noise of want, wrapped her legs around his, and pressed her hips against him when Jack rolled on top of her.

Jack took a few breaths to calm himself. He didn’t want to just take her, he wanted to love her and if he didn’t calm himself he would take her too quickly...his own desperation threatening to overwhelm him. He gazed down at Harley. He could tell by her expression she didn’t care what he did as long as he made love to her. Her want and need were just as powerful, just as desperate as his own.

Jack smiled at her and Harley started to reach for him again, but Jack put a finger to her lips as he leaned on one elbow. “Shh...Harley...it’s all right.”

She looked back at him, biting her bottom lip and nodded.

He very slowly dragged his fingers down from her lips, over her chin and along her throat. Harley moaned, a soft exhalation of pleasure, arching her head back as his fingers traced down her throat. His fingers continued to glide down between her breasts and along her belly, stopping at her bellybutton. He leaned in and kissed her lips, sliding his tongue along her lips before he gently
caressed her chin with his teeth. Jack licked her chin before his tongue followed the trail traced out by his fingers only moments before. He licked his way down to her breasts where he rubbed his face over her breasts, kissing them gently. His tongue found her nipples, licking and kissing them until Harley moaned. Her fingers stroked through his green hair tenderly while she bit her lip and gasped with pleasure as his tongue wrapped around her nipples. He lavished her nipples with his tongue, switching back and forth between her breasts, occasionally biting before he sat back on his knees and squeezed her breasts together with his hands and stroked his thumbs over her nipples. He smiled looking down on his girl, so pale, like living moonlight.

Harley groaned as her back arched, her arms over her head while she rolled her hips in response to his touch. Jack’s touch made her feel warm, soft, but at the same time, her husband’s touch was a welcome fire. Her body ached, her core needed him to touch her as she began to writhe beneath him.

Jack licked each nipple again before he picked up again, tracing the trail he had mapped out with his fingers, tasting her skin as he slid himself lower, past her belly button until he was between her legs. Jack pressed his lips to her, his mouth moved over her, his tongue finding her sensitive clitoris and licked her, slow and sweet. He laid both hands over her sex, his thumbs pressing up and pulling at her, spreading her wider while he licked her again.

Harley spread her legs for him as Jack pressed his lips on her and sucked, gently moving his head back and forth. He sucked softly, taking his time to please her while at the same time his thumbs and fingers pressed into her skin. He slowly moved his head in a circle while continuing his attentions, slathering her clitoris with his tongue and lips. Harley arched again with a deep moan. Her hands reached out to his green hair, her fingers massaging and twitching as Jack sucked sweetly on her.

He slowly licked her, alternating with gentle sucks against her, shifting one hand down to slide two of his fingers into her.

Harley made a soft, high pitched moan as Jack shifted his weight to his right elbow. His fingers continued to pull and tease at the soft flesh above her clitoris while he slowly sucked her clitoris between his lips. Jack’s fingers moved gently in and out, pushing down at the same time as he thrust his fingers into her all the way. Jack moved slowly, taking his time with each insertion of his fingers until Harley’s breathing picked up, becoming faster. Her body arched, her legs jerked as he brought her closer to climax. Jack groaned against her, continuing his attentions, bending his body into her with his mouth latched to her, alternating his sucking with long licks of his tongue and his fingers continued to move inside Harley with a slow, steady rhythm.

Harley raised her legs up, wrapping her arm around one leg to hold it back while she grabbed his hair with her other hand, her foot resting against his shoulders while she gasped and groaned. Her entire body tightened, warm ripples building quickly. Harley, opened her eyes to look down at Jack, holding his hair back as she watched him suck on her, moving his lips up and down against her, his tongue sliding out slowly...She whimpered. Seeing his green head between her legs, feeling the delicious slide of his tongue against her, she mewled and groaned, her hair falling around her shoulders, thick locks of white falling across her eyes while she watched him.

Jack continued to lick and suck, his fingers moving in and out of her, his groans muffled by her sex, moving his mouth against her until Harley arched her head back into the pillow and cried out. Her fingers yanked on his hair when she arched more, her toes pointing the moment her orgasm burst over her tightening her body.

“Uh...Puddin!!!”

Jack grinned enjoying the pain of her nails against his scalp, her tugging his hair. He continued to lick, moving his lips over her as she jerked and trembled with spasms of pleasure moaning loudly,
her cries pitched high.

He gave one final pull on her clitoris with his lips, sliding his fingers out slowly before he rose up on his knees. He grinned down at her, sticking him fingers in his mouth, licking them off and winking at her as he pulled them out of his mouth. “Mm...delicious.”

Harley blushed, a faint pink coloring her cheeks, chin, and nose, but then she put her arms out. “Come here puddin.”

Jack smiled giving his fingers one more lick before he crawled on top of her, gathering her closer to kiss her.

Harley wrapped her arms and legs around him kissing him hard, tasting herself on his lips and tongue. She could kiss him all day enjoying the feel of him, the weight of his body on hers, she smiled as an nearly overwhelming wave of love for her husband rolled over her and she kissed him harder.

Jack returned the kiss, then grinned at Harley as he adjusted his erection to slowly rub himself against her. He hissed, closing his eyes for a moment. She was so wet, her body welcoming him. He wanted to fuck Harley hard, to drive her into the mattress, to claim her while at the same time assuring her and himself that they were both still here, still alive, still together. He also felt that he needed to go slow, to caress her, cherish her and to humble himself before her...she was his everything.

Harley reached up to run her hands along his face, pushing back his hair that had fallen free around his face. He looked at her with his eyes blazing, the blue striking in his pale white face. She held his face between her hands, staring into his eyes. She became lost in the sea of blue. She murmured intently, trying to convey just how much she loved him but being bound by the limit of language.

“I love you Jack...puddin...I love you.” she stroked his cheeks with her thumbs.

Jack licked her mouth and brushed his nose against hers with a tender smile. “I love you too my sweets.”

Jack kissed her, a kiss so filled with his love and his need for her that Harley whimpered in response, wrapping her arms tight around his shoulders.

Jack took hold of his erection, rubbing back and forth feeling her warm wet fluids on him, the slick back and forth as he rubbed against her. Harley made small noises of pleasure, her body aching to have him until he finally pushed, easing into her slowly.

Harley groaned loudly, her body arched and she tightened around him.

Jack groaned with her, leaning his forehead against hers as he eased into her. “Uuhh...Harley…”

They rolled together, their bodies moving as one.

Jack brushed his nose along her throat before shifting up onto his knees. His lips brushed and caressed her breasts while at the same time he rocked his body into hers. Harley laid back on the pillows, her knees bent, her legs spread making small breathless grunts and moans caressing Jack’s green hair, her hands running over his milk white skin as he moved in and out of her thrusting slowly and his lips danced across her skin. He arched up on his hands, leaning over her, kissing her deeply, their tongues dancing together in a warm caress as he thrust his entire body forward, burying himself deeply inside her.

Harley gasped, running her hands up and down his arms feeling the play of muscles under his skin.
She moaned softly gazing at him as if nothing else in the world was more beautiful.

Jack leaned in to brush his lips and tongue along her throat while Harley cupped the back of his neck, the tips of her fingers caressed the short hairs there while she ran her other hand up his back, desperate to have him close to her, closer still. She hooked one leg around his pulling him closer.

Jack dragged his lips along her cheek to her lips, staring down at her. His eyes seemed to shift, the color becoming deeper, the blue hypnotic, catching the thin light coming through the window. The love in her husband’s gaze made her heart ache. Harley arched her head back, dragging her bottom lip along his chin.

Jack groaned softly leaning into her. He dropped to his elbows, his hands sliding into her hair and grabbing fistfuls of her white locks as he moved, thrusting his hips in slow, deep waves, pressing all of him into her. His lips moved once more from her mouth to kiss her breasts, though never once did he stop with the slow, deep thrusts.

Harley began to pant heavier, her fingers digging into his skin. Her body arched under him when she felt the building heat, the climb of pleasure spiraling upward and upward. She whimpered and groaned, her nails pressed into his flesh as she struggled to hold on to Jack. He felt so good, fucking her slow and deep, feeling the way the muscles in his back and shoulders moved with each thrust. She brought one leg up, her foot caressing his ass, sliding down as she thrust her hips up to meet him when he pressed into her. Harley groaned louder still...

Jack thrust long and deep, rolled his hips, undulating as he fucked her. He laid his forehead against hers, his face contorted with the intensity of his pleasure, feeling her intimate embrace, hot and wet. He thrust as deeply as he could, forcing himself not to hurry, to keep control until Harley cried out, until his wife climaxed. Her movements under him took on that frantic feel as her body built toward her orgasm. She desperately held on, but like a damn breaking, she came, her body suddenly tensing, followed by instantly going liquid under him as her body flooded over him.

“Uhh...Puddin...oh Jack...Yes!” she moaned loudly.

Jack came only a moment later. It was a combination of how good she felt, sliding himself into her, the sound of their flesh meeting, the wet, gooey sound of their shared fluids, but he knew it was her cry, her voice pitched high with pleasure that really had made his climax complete.

Harley held on tightly to him while Jack thrust a few more times, riding both their climaxes until his was jerking and shaking as the intensity of his pleasure made him want to collapse.

He settled down on top of her, nuzzling her neck until Harley began to giggle.

He kissed the sensitive spot just behind her ear before he pushed himself up on his elbows to look down at her. He smiled lazily, stroking her hair. He loved the way she looked after sex. Her eyes glowed, the color becoming lighter. He loved how relaxed she felt under him, the lazy smile on her lips, but mostly it was the look of love in her eyes that made him happy beyond anything he had ever imagined.

He kissed the tip of her nose. “Better now? No more nightmares?”

Harley smiled and giggled softly. “Much better.”

She was quiet for a moment before she whispered. “I wish the dreams would go away.”

Jack frowned while his fingers stroked her cheek. “I’m sorry sweets…” His voice was soft, but filled with pain.
Harley pulled him closer planting kisses on his face, soft butterfly kisses. “I’m sorry too puddin...I know you have bad dreams too.”

Jack was quiet for a long while, so quiet that for a moment Harley thought he had dozed off, but then he sighed.

“Do you want to try and catch another hour before we head out?” Jack asked as his eyes wandered over her pretty face. Part of him hated to go out. He wanted to stay here with her, safe, away from the world and all the things that could hurt them. But he knew they couldn’t stay here. He needed to pull the fractured parts of his “real” family back together and he needed to rebuild what his brother tried to destroy. Jack smiled, he needed to show Batman, to show Gotham, there was a new clown in the big top.

“Cuddling sounds nice; I don’t think I could go back to sleep,” Harley purred as she stroked her fingers along his spine and one foot caressed the back of his leg. He smiled enjoying the feel of her toes against the back of his thigh. He leaned in and licked her chin, playfully running his tongue along her jaw then grabbed her earlobe with his teeth and tugged playfully.

Harley squealed and wiggled. “Puddin!!”

He released her ear with a wide smile. “Mm...the Joker says cuddling is acceptable.” Jack grinned as he eased himself out of her feeling that warmth of her body slip away. For a moment they were both distracted when he began to pull out. She moaned softly hating to lose the contact, the heat and weight of his body pressed against her, inside her. It made her feel a little empty when they separated; but when Jack rolled off of her and onto his back, Harley moved to cuddle against his side.

“The Joker?” Harley asked while she wrapped her arm around his waist and kissed his hairless chest before she laid her head against him. Jack had never been “hairy” and he had shaved before, but now she noticed, that like her, he was hairless everywhere except his head, just as she was, both of them smooth and almost shiny, like new coins she thought with a smile, except she had kept her eyebrows. She closed her eyes enjoying the warmth of his skin, the beat of his heart.

“Yes. The Joker. Jack Wayne is dead. He died that night in the factory...and I was reborn...I’m someone...something else. And so are you, my girl. We are something different.” Jack kissed her forehead. “So it’s time to leave our old lives behind and start fresh. When you showed me that card the other night...I’ve been thinking. I want Jason to stay the Red Hood, he’s earned it. But I need a new name, a new identity to go along with the new me and you gave me the idea. The Joker with his Harley Quinn...two clowns out to show Gotham a good time.” Jack grinned proud of himself.

“The Joker…” Harley said the name, trying it out on her tongue. “I like it puddin.”

Jack nodded while he absently stroked his fingers through her hair, his other hand resting on her arm that was around his waist.

Harley murmured kissing his chest “The Joker and Harley Quinn.”

“The Joker and Harley Quinn…it has a nice ring to it,” he whispered. “A very nice ring, but Harley, you can still call me Jack...and especially ‘puddin.’”

Harley giggled happily, snuggling closer to her husband. “You will always be my puddin, puddin.”

Dressed in his typical style of black suit, Bruce paced his apartment living room as he waited for his
guest to arrive. Alfred had left and Bruce had waited twenty four hours before he had finally called
the number that Alfred had given him. The young woman who answered had a slight British accent
and sounded like she couldn’t be older than fifteen, but she had sounded enthusiastic. Bruce sighed.
He couldn’t believe he was doing this, interviewing a stranger for a position held by the only person
he truly trusted.

The doorbell rang.

Dick, dressed in jeans and a red polo, came rushing out of the kitchen.

“I’ll get it!!” he yelled.

Bruce shook his head. Dick had been upset about Alfred, but in typical teenage boy fashion, had
quickly became enamored of the idea of a possible pretty girl becoming part of their team.

Dick dashed by Bruce, grabbed a hold of the nob without looking through the peephole and pulled
the door open only to stop, frozen in place.

The young woman at the door was indeed pretty. She had short dark auburn hair cut to frame her
face, skin the color of creamy coco and dark, chocolate brown eyes. She was dressed in dark
leggings, an oversize grey t-shirt that read “Nerd? I Prefer “More Intelligent Than You.” across her
chest, with another shirt, red plaid over the top of that with the sleeves rolled up, and a pair of bright
red high top sneakers. She couldn’t have been much older than Dick, who's seventeenth birthday
would be in a matter of days. Bruce would guess she was around eighteen, maybe twenty at the very
most. She was carrying a large messenger bag that probably had a computer in it--judging by the
shape and size--along with a black and orange backpack that seemed to be loaded to the point of
barely being able to close. She grinned brightly and waved at Dick.

“Mr. Wayne...you’re a lot younger than I thought!”

Dick didn’t make a sound. Bruce chuckled softly and walked over, stepping past Dick with his hand
out. “Miss Pennyworth? I’m Bruce Wayne, and this is my ward Richard Grayson...”

Barbara Pennyworth took Bruce’s hand with a bright smile. “Barbara, but you can call me Babs,
everyone does.” She smiled at Dick. “Hey,” she said in a friendly tone.

Dick answered with a noise that might have been a badly garbled, “Hi.” Bruce couldn’t be sure.

Barbara frowned slightly before turning back to Bruce. “So ah, my uncle told me a little bit about the
job. He said you would fill in the details.”

Bruce ushered her in closing the door behind her. Dick was still not saying anything though he was
staring at Barbara as if she were the most beautiful person he had ever seen...which perhaps she was
Bruce thought. For a moment he was uncomfortably reminded of Jack and Harleen...the way Jack
had reacted to Dr. Quinzel wasn’t that too dissimilar from how Dick was reacting now to Barbara,
though Jack always hid his reactions well under nonchalance and wit.

Bruce directed her outside onto the balcony with Dick following behind. Bruce frowned at the
young man then asked Barbara.

“Can I get you anything to drink? Eat?”

Barbara grinned. “You have any iced tea?”

Bruce smiled. “Of course--Dick would you mind?”
“Ah...sure, okay.” Dick walked off to the kitchen slowly turning around to take a few steps backwards gazing at Barbara.

Bruce pulled out her chair and Babs sat, Bruce taking the chair opposite her.

He took a breath then said softly, “Anything we discuss cannot leave this room, you understand? The only reason I’m even speaking to you about any of this is because of who you are and what Alfred means to me.”

Babs nodded. “I understand. My uncle told me this was top secret. He also said I was sworn to secrecy no matter what your decision was...I trust and love my uncle. I would never disappoint him.”

Bruce nodded and smiled. “All right then--let me start by asking you if you’ve heard of the Batman.”

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Jack stood beside the full length mirror in their bedroom, dressed in a pair of dark blue slacks, a dark green vest printed with a pattern of clubs, clovers, hearts and diamonds all in shades of black or a faded red. Under the vest he wore a white dress shirt and over that, a long jacket in a color of purple so dark that it almost looked as black as the lapels of the jacket. He ran his fingers, gloved in dark blue leather, through his hair while Harley adjusted the dark blue and purple striped tie he wore. The colors, though dark, looked bright and stark against his white skin. Jack smiled softly at his wife while she worked on his tie. She glanced up, a tiny smile on her red lips, as a soft pink flowed over her cheeks. She grinned at her husband before she turned her attention back to fixing his tie.

“You look very handsome,” she said softly, reaching up at the same time to brush a lock of his green hair back. He looked so different now from the man she fell in love with, but he was still her puddin. Oddly, something about the way he looked now, the ghost white skin, deep red lips, the way his eyes stood out in shocking blue from the darkness around his eyes, it all seemed more...natural to him than the way he had looked before. She couldn’t explain it, but Jack...no she thought to herself--Joker, looked more...himself in a strange way.

Jack smiled. “You look gorgeous my pumpkin pie.”

Harley giggled with delight.

She finished with his tie and took a step back, cocking her head to the side as she inspected her work. She reached out and ran her fingers along the tie, her eyes slowly moving from tie inspection to look into his bright blue eyes. His gaze was intense and the lack of eyebrows made his blue eyes that much more alluring to her, hypnotic. She caught herself licking her lips. She blushed, caught her tongue between her teeth for a moment, and the blush moved up her cheeks to the tips of her ears. Jack smiled gazing at her, soaking in not just her beauty, but her presence, just having her close, having her back in his life. He could barely stand to have her out of his sight now, and having her not within touching distance was nearly impossible for him to bear. He knew Harley felt the same way just by the way she would constantly touch him, her fingertips always stroking his cheek or brushing against his arm or fingers.

Jack smiled not to show his turmoil behind the smile, but he was scared, scared he would lose her again. He simply would not be able to handle losing her again...he would break, he knew he would. Jack reached out and slid the pad of his thumb over her chin. She looked gorgeous, he thought, her white hair up in a high “ballerina” bun showing off her milk white complexion. Her makeup along with her bleached skin made her eyes brighter, glowing almost, like blue diamonds. His gaze traveled down her body. She was wearing black leggings, a sleeveless, red dress with a mock
turtleneck and layered ruffles that stopped just below her hips, along with a pair of black booties. Jack couldn't stop staring at her at the best of times, but right now she looked so incredible; the colors stood out bright against her bleached skin...she was dazzling. He idly wondered as he released her chin and reached for the weapons Zsasz had brought him, if he would have to kill anyone tonight for looking at her too long. He frowned slightly, then grinned at the idea as he picked up the two Glocks sitting on the table beside the mirror and slipped them into the holsters under his arms.

Harley reached over to the table where his guns had sat and picked up the tube of lipsticks that sat there, red velvet, a shade of matte lipstick that was a dark red, and stood out against the milk white of her skin. But she wasn’t putting it on herself, her lips already painted with the dark color. Instead she reached over and grasped Jack’s chin.

He stopped moving to lift his nonexistent brows.

Harley smiled. “Just hold still a moment puddin, I want to make your lips just a little darker.”

Jack grinned at her with a lifted hairless brow. “Whatever you say my sweets.”

Harley caught her bottom lip between her teeth with concentration as she slowly applied the lipstick to Jack’s already blood red lips making them darker and more defined. Jack held his mouth out, his eyes watching her face, the little tug on her lips with her teeth, the way her eyes became a soft, yet intense blue as she applied the lipstick to his lips. Her mouth opened, her lips slightly parted, her eyes became slightly hooded, a look he had seen on her face during sex. Her expression made his groin ache.

“Now press your lips together,” she said in a heated whisper while she still grasped his chin. Jack did as she asked, pressing his lips together before rubbing them together just a little feeling the slide of the lipstick between his lips.

Harley smiled, her eyes moving from his lips to his eyes. “Perfect.”

Jack growled. “Thank you pumpkin.”

Harley giggled very softly and said with a wink, “You’re welcome.”

Jack reached out to caress her face with the back of his fingers. “Do you know how much I love you Harls?”

Harley caressed his chin with her thumb. “As much as I love you puddin.”

Jack’s eyes stared intently into hers as he hissed. “We are always stronger together Harls.”

Harley nodded. “Yes puddin...yes...”

They stared at each other for a few seconds before Jack leaned in and kissed her.

Harley dropped the lipstick onto the table, her arms moving up to encircle his shoulders, fingers caressed the back of his neck as she kissed him in return. Jack’s hands held her face, his fingers wrapped around the back of her head, pulling her close kissing her with all the depth of his passion for her. They stood in front of the mirror kissing for what seemed forever, and no time at all before Jack pulled back to smile at her. “That’s good lipstick.”

Harley laughed at him, giving him one more light kiss before she stepped back. Jack released her with a grin watching her as she stepped in front of the mirror to check her hair. She looked unarmed, but Jack knew she was wearing a bra holster, a gift sent over by his aunt just today. He found the
idea that there was a weapon hidden on Harley, between her breasts, intoxicating and very, very arousing. Jack longed to slip his hand down between her breasts to pull the gun out.

Harley saw Jack’s reflection in the glass as he stared hungrily at her breasts.

“Puddin?” she asked.

Jack’s eyes came up to meet hers in the mirror and he grinned. “Just imagining undressing you later.”

Harley’s smile was wide. “I look forward to it puddin.”

Jack grinned wickedly in response. Harley turned her head to the side to examine her hair. “So, Big Mama first right?” she asked.

She turned to face him and Jack put his hands on her waist, pulling her closer. “Yep. Just to let her know I’m back—and Jason is going to meet us there.”

“Does he…” She started to ask and Jack shook his head and grinned just a little wider. “Oh no...Frost called him for our big reveal my sweets...a little business, a few drinks, then off to find our dear, dear Bane and hopefully soon, Duela. Though our dear Alex hasn’t located her just yet.”

Harley smiled as she traced Jack’s bottom lip with her fingertip. She pulled his bottom lip down slightly as she did so. Her gaze was steamy, her eyes traveled along his mouth, holding her tongue pressed against her upper lip.

Jack watched her, his fingers pressed into her. He hissed pulling her just a little closer. “Kiss me Harls.”

She smiled, her arms going around his neck.

Jack wrapped his arms tight around her and dipped her slightly with a steamy, tongue coiling kiss. Harley’s eyes fluttered close, the room, the world falling away until all there she knew were Jack’s lips and his tongue in her mouth directing all her focus.

*

The place that had once belonged to Fish had been given a major overhaul in the weeks since her death. Frost had informed Jack and Harley that Fish had left her club to both Big Mama and Kermit in her will. Kermit had decided to leave Gotham after the shootout, heading out to stay with family, in, of all places, Wyoming, so now Big Mama was the sole owner of the club which she had renamed Narrow’s End.

*

Frost, wearing his typical black working suit, pulled around back and parked before he and Agatha—who opted for a white sleeveless blouse and a pair of white bell bottom slacks—escorted everyone inside. Jack with Harley on his arm, stepped inside and stopped in the doorway. The club still had an elegant feel to it, with the subdued gold and yellow lighting which cast the place in a honeyed colored warmth and security. It somehow reminded Harley of being in a grandmother’s kitchen, except instead of cookies you could get good drinks. The bar, Harley noted, was located exactly where it had always been, not looking too much different than before except the bartenders looked to be a mix of drag queens, both dressed in black motorcycle jackets, leather bras and very short, shorts. They worked along with a couple of pretty girls, one dressed in a white, sequin set of overalls, sans shirt, her hair up in a high ponytail while the other wore a pale blue body suit printed with smiling ice cream cones, her hair in double buns, and one very pretty young man wore nothing but a pair of pink
leather pants. The furniture had all been changed with booth areas now sporting a series of large, warm beige couches with glass topped tables in the middle of the more intimate areas. There were several elevated “cages” with mirrored bottoms that held dancers dressed in gold dancing to the music of Die Antwoord’s “I Fink You Freaky” while there were other dancers on the glass floor of the main dance floor.

Harley leaned against Jack’s shoulder to whisper against his ear “Big Mama definitely has different taste than Fish did.”

Jack grinned, the honeyed lights playing off his white skin and teeth. “Indeed. I like it and I would ever so much like to see you in one of those cages.”

Jack gave her a playful wink that made Harley giggle happily as she clung to his arm.

They made their way around the bar to the far end of the room where Jack and the others could see Big Mama, her pink hair was shoulder length and crimped. She wore a light pink blouse with a high ribbon collar tied in a bow with large puff sleeves that ended in tight cuffs at her wrists, and wearing a pair of matching pink slacks that were so tight on her that they looked like a second skin, along with a pair of pink satin pumps. She was sitting on a couch, (much like Fish had done with her table) situated so she could watch both the bar and the dance floor. Sitting on the couch on her left was Jason, his dark hair slightly mussed. He looked slightly older now, Harley thought, and the lock of white hair that was prominent on his forehead was new too. He was wearing his usual favorite outfit, tight black pants, black t-shirt and motorcycle boots, though he had a red leather jacket on despite the late summer weather. He was talking and laughing with Big Mama, a beer bottle held in his hand.

Sitting next to Jason were Trope and Thea. The two young women had their computers with them, their attention on the laptops, but Harley could see that Trope’s hair was a bright violet color while Thea had dyed hers baby blue. The two were wearing black trouser shorts, thick soled black army boots and while Trope was wearing a plain black t-shirt, Thea was wearing a fuzzy pink top in the same shade of pink as Big Mama.

As their group approached Big Mama turned. “Frost! So nice to see you. And Agatha, nice to see you on your feet honey.”

Agatha smiled. “If you don’t mind, I need to get off of them and order a stiff drink!”

Big Mama laughed and motioned at the two other couches arranged in a square in the intimate seating area. “Have a seat,” she offered. “And who are your friends?” She smiled lifting a brow in question.

Jason turned his attention toward the group, stood up and walked swiftly over to Frost when he recognized his friend. “Frost!! I haven’t seen you in weeks!”

The two men embraced, smacking each other hard on the backs. Agatha smiled as she took a seat on the couch next to Big Mama who patted her on the knee as she gave Jack and Harley curious glances.

Jack just watched his two friends without saying a word, glancing down at Harley who smiled up at him as they waited. Jason looked good, as did the girls. It made Jack happy to know they had survived intact after everything that happened, that they had been able to go on, to continue working on making the Red Hood a name that the Gotham underworld knew and hopefully feared.

The music had shifted to Rihanna’s “Diamonds” which was also followed by a shift in the lighting. The lights went down low and dark, the color shifted from the warm gold to a more bluish light with
a sprinkle of “diamonds” mixed into the shifting lights on the dance floor and moved throughout the club, making it almost look as if it were snowing inside the club. People danced, the lights shifted and moved, the glow cast about the room, and the glittering glow danced across Jack and Harley’s pale skin which made both of them seem to shimmer.

Frost released Jason, glanced over at Big Mama, Trope, and Thea who were now looking curiously at Jack and Harley. It was clear they all saw something familiar in the two extremely pale people. Frost kept his arm around Jason’s shoulders, moved the younger man to face Jack and Harley before he began to speak.

“Jason, girls, Mama...This is...” He glanced at Jack who nodded. “This is Jack...Jack and Harley.”

Jason narrowed his gaze. “What? What the fuck are you trying to pull Frost? This isn’t funny.” His nostrils flared in barely contained irritation. “They died--we saw them die.”

Jason yanked himself out from under Frost’s arm and shoved the bigger man, his anger building swiftly. “This ain’t fucking funny.”

Frost allowed Jason to shove him as he shrugged. “I know Jason, believe me I know. I was there remember...but, it is them.” Frost glanced over at Jack before he continued. “You heard about the fire at Wayne Manor, right?”

Jason glanced over at the girls who nodded (both staring at Jack and Harley) before he spoke. “Yeah, so? Who hasn’t? It's the biggest news in Gotham right now.”

Frost nodded. “Yeah well, Me, Zsasz and Alex all went with Jack here and burned it down.”

Jason looked confused. “But...wait?” He turned back toward Jack.

Jack smiled and waved. “Hey Jason.”

Jason stiffened. For a moment his face seemed to transform, quickly rippling from one emotional response to the next. His blue eyes went from denial, to hope, to anger in a matter of seconds. Jason shoved Frost further away from him and stomped over to Jack thrusting his finger out and hitting Jack in the chest. “I don't know who you think you are, freak, but...”

Jack released Harley. His hand shot out to wrap around Jason’s finger while his other hand grabbed the young man’s wrist. Jack stared hard at Jason. The younger man couldn’t move. It wasn’t because Jack was holding him in such as way that he couldn’t move, but it was Jack’s eyes. His eyes had Jason frozen; the color was subtly different, but those were Jack’s eyes. Jason knew those were Jack’s eyes, no one could mistake the intensity of Jack’s gaze...Jason stiffened as he stared back, but then Jack smiled sadly and whispered.“I’m sorry about Roxy. I know you two were close.”

As Jason stared at Jack, the color drained from his face, his voice dropped and broke slightly when he spoke. “I thought...Jack?” He looked confused. “I thought, I thought you were dead...”

Jack grinned. “Hardly.”

Jason made a small sound, half sob, half angry gasp and threw himself at Jack. Jack barely had time to catch the young man before he was hugging him. Jason was struggling not to cry as he hissed, his face against Jack’s shoulder. “I saw you fall. I saw Harley...”

Jack suddenly let go of Jack and turned to Harley.

He stared at her. “Harley?”
She smiled and nodded. “Yep, I’m alive too.”

Jason grabbed her into the circle of his arms, holding them both in a tight hug which was quickly enlarged when Trope and Thea threw themselves on top of them with gasps of shocked delight.

Jack laughed followed by a disgusted sound and his arms going limp. “Ugh, too much human contact!!”

Jason laughed and stepped back looking between the two of them. “What the fuck man...I mean...what happened? Why do you look like that? Where’ve you been this whole time?”

Jack grinned. “Let’s get some drinks, then we can talk.”

* 

Soon they were all sitting around on the couches, drinks in hand as Jack leaned forward with one elbow resting against his knee. A cigarette dangled from between his fingers and his other hand rested on Harley’s thigh. She was sitting close to him, sipping a drink that looked to be made out of the color blue. She sipped her drink through the colorful striped straw with a smile as Jack spoke.

“So there you have it. We both fell into the acid...and survived.”

Jason shook his head. “Fuck man, your own damn brother.”

Trope spoke up. “Does he know you’re alive? I mean, does he know you burned the house down?”

Jack leaned back and raised his arm. Harley instantly curled up next to him as Jack draped his arm around her shoulders. “I left him a message with an old friend, but I have a plan to hammer the message home that I’m after him, that this is just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. Bruce wants to play games? I’m very, very good at games.”

Jason looked eager. “So, what’s the plan?”

Jack smiled. “I want you and the girls here to continue whatever it is you’ve been doing. What I have planned for Bruce, for Gotham, is just a little introduction to the new me, to my new persona...the Joker.”

Agatha frowned as she sipped her cocktail. Something about the way Jack spoke, the new moniker, the fight between him and his brother, Harley...she had sensed it before, seen it in Jack’s eyes, a violent need to prove himself...to prove something to Bruce, but she sensed this was also Jack’s only avenue left to him to show Bruce his affection too.

She took a hard pull on her straw. Bruce was Batman, now Jack was going to call himself the Joker and pursue his brother until one or both of them were dead. She wasn’t sure how she felt about any of it. She hadn’t really thought about what any of this meant, Jack’s return from the dead...Harley’s return and Bruce’s part in all of it. If she was honest with herself (which she liked to think she was most of the time) she had only been focused on her joy that Jack and Harley were alive. She had learned about the manor through Jack’s perspective, burning down Wayne Manor...she could understand why...hell, when she had first left home after joining the Owls to save Thomas, she had been so angry at her brother for forcing her to make that choice (regardless of if he had known about it or not) that she had thought about burning the damnable place down herself. That place had meant so much to Thomas, sometimes she had felt it meant more to him than his own sister, but unlike Jack, she would never consider hurting Thomas seriously...but then again, Thomas didn’t kill her or someone she loved. Thomas hadn’t taken everything away from her and thrown her away like Bruce had done to his baby brother.
She closed her eyes, sipped from her drink again. Thomas and Martha would be devastated to see what had become of their children; Agatha was devastated for them. She hadn’t really realized it, but she had hoped that Bruce and Jack would have a better relationship than she had with Thomas, and she supposed that was always what one wanted, for their children, the next generation to be better than the last. Though Agatha wondered, with Thomas and Martha’s death, had this rivalry between the boys always been inevitable? Those boys were so different. She had seen it from the start, the few times she had seen the boys before their parents’ murder. They had gotten along, but it was clear they were polar opposites of each other. Bruce was so much like Thomas, unbending, unyielding, so sure of himself, righteous. And blind--reckless with his sibling’s emotions. Agatha believed it was because both men thought their siblings love them would regardless, that no matter what happened, they would always love them. Thomas and later, Bruce, were both correct, she still loved Thomas, which was why she cared so much about the boys. And Jack, despite all his rage and pain, loved Bruce. Still, Jack was so much more like his mother, wild, emotional...unstable...Agatha opened her eyes to look at Jack. Bruce had done that to him, bleached his skin to a ghostly white, turned his hair green...scarred him and Harley...he had taken so much from his younger brother...all in the name of helping him. Or was it Bruce’s attempts to shut his brother away, though his intentions were good? Agatha snorted quietly to herself, the road to hell was paved with good intentions.

Bruce had scarred Jack physically and emotionally. She could only imagine what Jack had been like when he thought Harley was gone. Bruce had done so many terrible things to his little brother in the name of “helping him,” that Agatha could understand what was happening with Jack on some level...she and her own brother had such a similar relationship. There were things that Thomas had done in the name of helping her that had scarred her too, and those scars still stung so many years later, but she was wondering if she could stay here in Gotham and watch the destruction. She glanced over to Frost who was leaning forward, listening to Jack. She knew Frost was devoted to Jack, completely. Frost would follow him into the fire, but could she?

She had run away once. The Owls had forced her to leave, but hadn’t she gone willingly?

Agatha sighed. She knew she would stay, at least until the Owls were taken care of...she loved her nephews, but she had already put her lot in with Jack and that would be where it would stay.

* 

Jason frowned, taking a large gulp of his beer. “We haven’t been doing a lot really since you...died. Going after a few drug dealers, some arms deals. Biggest thing we’ve done since you…” He looked a bit sheepish as he said it again. “Since you died, was to break up this prostitution ring that was being run by this new up and comin’ in Gotham, goes by the name Black Mask. No one knows who he really is, but he is starting to make himself known. I heard that even Falcone is getting pretty annoyed and interested in him. Word on the street is that he might be wanting to take Black Mask under his wing. There is a bit of a power vacuum under Falcone at the moment.”

Jack nodded. “I want you and the girls to keep pushing the name of the Red Hood. You are the Hood now Jason.”

Jason frowned chewing his bottom lip for a moment. “You sure Boss? I mean, you’re back! We could be like we were before…”

Jack shook his head. “No darling, we can’t.” He look a long drag on his cigarette. “I need you out there Jason, to continue doing what you’ve been doing, but I also need you to be my eyes and ears on the streets of Gotham, to tell me what the news is with the mob and anyone else who decides to come to Gotham. You are going to be my eyes, ears and recruiter...think of yourself and a branch of the new organization I’m going to build.” Jack chuckled. “The Joker organization.”
Jason grinned taking a sip from his beer. “So what are we going to do first Joker?”

Jack grinned. “We are heading downtown my friends, downtown.”

*C*

Cobblepot tried to keep his facial expression under control as he sat beside his partner, Carmine Falcone. They were both situated up in one of balconies that lined the street. Down below the rabble were lining the streets and alleys cheering for the matches to begin. Cobblepot smiled faintly. There were a lot of them, and the crowds had been growing over the months and so had the money.

Just not fast enough.

The biggest mistake he had made, Oswald thought with a sneer, had been going to Falcone and asking for a loan.

Cobblepot chewed angrily on the end of his cigarette holder. He had needed the money to make this place safe, to safely widen the streets, take out a few of the buildings, for organizing the fights, paying the scouts, the bookies, food, drink, additional entertainment...for hauling in the right quality and quantity of the god damn mud for fucks sake! He had thought he would get a simple loan, open up the fight club to a larger crowd, get some professional fighters involved, add some cage fights, a little more blood, the mud wrestling with the nearly naked ladies...

Violence and sex always equaled more money, but as with anything, first you had to throw some money in to see a return. Instead of getting a loan that he had planned to easily pay back, what he got was a partner he didn’t want and a special series of fights that had turned into some sort of death match. Granted, the money was good, real good, but Cobblepot found that he didn’t have the stomach for senseless violence. He didn’t mind killing someone who deserved it, but this...he sighed and glanced out at the crowds. The music was loud as were the hundreds of people in attendance. The place was packed with humanity. The whole thing made Oswald feel confined, cramped, like the walls were slowly pushing in, a little bit at a time, inch by inch. The location where they were holding the fights contributed to that claustrophobic feeling. The fight club had been moved down into the bowels of Gotham into a section that had been called Wonder City, a place where there would be no Gods or Kings, only the inventiveness of man, a place that followed similar ideals to the 1950’s Objectivist philosophy of Ayn Rand...and ultimately crumbled because of it.

Wonder City was an abandoned city project from the turn of the century, now only a footnote in Gotham’s long history, buried underfoot like so many other things and people that failed to thrive in Gotham’s dark heart, a project initiated by Cobblepot didn’t know who, but it ultimately didn’t matter. It was supposed to be some sort of utopia, a place of scientific advancement with all the latest gadgets that the early 19th century had to offer. And it had been a colossal failure and later buried deep under the true advancement of Gotham. Cobblepot had found the place by accident, or rather some of his people did and he had moved the fights down here, into the city that time forgot. Cobblepot glanced up at the dome overhead, an art deco masterpiece of stain glass with tons of concrete and dirt over the top of it. He frowned, wondering how long before the entire thing caved in. When they had first taken over the place he had been thrilled with it, but now, under Falcone’s boot, the feeling was uncomfortable and confining. He took a deep breath through his nose, glancing once more at Falcone who was now talking to his son, Mario. Falcone held a big fat cigar up, his son lighting it for him and smiling. Cobblepot needed to find a way to get himself out from under Falcone’s influence...some way he had to get free.

He turned his focus onto the beginning of the fights. He smirked seeing that the mud wrestling was well underway, a couple of scantily clad women rolling around and struggling as several men and not a few women, cheered them on. The star in that arena was a woman named Firebug. Oswald had
no idea what her name real name was, only that she was a rather sexy young woman with bright green hair and a nasty attitude. She was the current ruling champion in the mud ring.

Cobblepot’s gaze drifted over to where the cage fights were getting started. There, a huge hulk of a man stood head and shoulders over everyone down below. The man only went by the name Bane and no one had seen what he really looked like, as the man kept his face covered by a black and white luchador mask. The man was violent, truly vicious, unstoppable and monstrously huge. Bane wasn’t the size of a normal man and from what he had heard, the man was an addict—to what Cobblepot didn’t know. What he did know was that Bane’s caretaker, a young, pretty Russian doctor named Viktoria October had come in with Falcone’s people, providing biological enhancements, steroids and who knew what else, but recently she had attached herself to Bane. Oswald suspected they were more than just doctor and patient.

Cobblepot grinned. Despite everything, tonight, money wise, was going to be a very good night.

*

The Joker’s small group, which included himself, Harley, Frost, Agatha and Zsasz, entered through the gates into Wonder City. Jason was waiting outside in case Jack needed him to come in with guns blazing. Trope and Thea were hidden safely away, their communicators linked to Jason, and from Jason to Frost, from Frost to Jack, an open line of communication just in case. Jack had told Jason that he didn’t want to know where Jason was currently keeping his home base, where the girls were hiding out, any of it. That was Jason’s gang now and he wanted Jason to act as an outside force to him, an ally, but not actually part of the Joker gang. (Jack had laughed telling Jason that they would be partners, sorta like Spotify and Starbucks.)

Jack grinned from ear to ear as their small group walked into the underground city through the armed gates behind them, his arm around Harley’s shoulders, both lovingly and protectively. He was not going to let her out of his sight if he could help it tonight. He would never admit it aloud, but part of him was terrified of losing her again, though he covered his fear with a bright grin and a laugh. Harley had her arm around his waist, her thoughts much the same as Jack’s, unwilling to let him go unless she absolutely had to...which, as she looked around at the new fight club, she felt a pit open up in her stomach. She knew without a doubt Jack was going to end up in a fight, end up hurt...

That was the moment there came a loud voice over a speaker that cut through the music and the ambient noise of the crowd.

“Right now Ladies and Gentlemen, it’s time for not one, but two matches!! Over to your left you can see the fiery, the sexy FIREBUG ready to take on anyone who dares to enter her domain and fight her to a stand still in our pool of mud...and no boys, only lady challengers need apply!!” This was met with a chorus of good natured boos. “And to our Right, We have the one, the only monster, BANE!! You know the rules, you survive three rounds with Bane you win $10,000!!! Or die trying.”

Jack grinned brightly kissing Harley on the cheek. “Well, finding Bane in this mess turned out to be far easier than I thought!”
Mud and Cages

The crowd roared their approval, followed by a pounding rhythm as the music swelled and a wave of people moved to watch whichever fight struck their fancy.

Jack grinned, his eyes slightly wild as he whispered to Harley. “Mm...a fight…”

Harley frowned with a glance around. This was not the fight club that she remembered at all; this was bigger and a lot more money was being passed around. When Alex had called to tell Jack that Bane was one of the star fighters in Penguin’s fight club, she had thought of the old one, small, a few dozen people at most in some old abandoned building, not a god damn entire underground city with a crowd that would rival a professional sports event. Yes Alex had told them some of the fights were to the death, especially any fights against Bane and that the money on the table was astronomical, but she hadn’t really “thought” about what that meant at all. But, for a brief moment, she was terrified that she and Jack...Joker...that they were in over their heads. How on earth were they going to pull Bane away from this?

Jack turned to Frost and the rest of their little group, motioning them over to a relatively clear spot where a vendor was cooking what smelled to be funnel cake. Jack laced his fingers with Harley’s as he pulled her over to the stand and made everyone wait as he got in line to buy some of the confection, grinning brightly like a kid at the circus. Harley glanced over to where she could see the large cage. She couldn’t see the fight exactly, just the head of Bane in his luchador mask, though she could hear the anguished cries of whoever was fighting him over the sounds of the cheering crowd. Her frown was turning into a scowl. Harley couldn’t be sure from her current vantage point, but she thought Bane might be...bigger than she remembered. It was really hard to tell from where she was, but she was fairly confident...Bane looked taller, wider...

“Puddin, how are you gonna talk to Bane? I mean, I’m assuming you’re gonna talk to him right? About coming back?” Harley asked.

Jack grinned, the red of his lips stood out against his skin looking like blood against his pale pallor. “Oh yes, I’m going to try talking to him, just don’t see why we can’t do that and eat funnel cake too. Who can say no to funnel cake? Hmmmm...maybe I should lead with that...” Jack mused with a thin smile and speculative glance at the ceiling far above.

Harley frowned and shrugged; there were worse ways to try to start a conversation. She glanced around as they waited in line to order their food. She couldn’t see the mud wrestling at all from where they were currently standing, but she could see that there were other smaller fights going on all through the “city.” She could see small crowds were formed around men and women bare knuckle boxing, a few kickboxing, some others were participating in a style of fighting that she didn’t recognize, but from what she could see, a lot of the style centered around a great deal of footwork, along with a lot of body twists. The style almost resembled dancing to her. She turned around and looked over to where she could see some people were even arm wrestling and all of it, every contest of strength, prowess, and fighting ability was being bet on. She could see money changing hands, which she supposed were smarter bets. But where the real betting was going on was over at one of the refurbished buildings with a large neon sign hung over the front of the facade, the red and green lights flashing read: “BETS HERE.”

Jack walked up to the stand and leaned up grinning at the man in the food stall as he waved at him. The man smiled at Jack and waved back. “What can I get you?”

“Six funnel cakes please and don’t skimp on the sugar.” Jack smiled brightly.
The man nodded and began to work putting Jack’s order together. Jack turned around and leaned his back against the counter. He grabbed Harley by her wrist and tugged her up against him while they waited, his arms wrapped around her waist, with his hands resting at the small of her back.

“Mm…” He kissed her softly. Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders and leaned into his kiss, for just a moment forgetting about why they were here; her only concern was the taste of his lips and the feel of his tongue.

Jack kissed her tenderly before he pulled back and kissed the tip of her nose with a grin. Harley turned around and leaned her back against Jack’s chest. He held her tightly against him resting his chin on the top of her head while they waited.

Harley was watching the cage fight as best she could, only catching glimpses of Bane’s head and not much else. She frowned and glanced up at her husband even though he couldn’t really see her face. “So how you gonna talk to him puddin? I mean, he seems a little busy.”

“Okay pale man, cakes are ready.”

Jack smiled, releasing her as he turned around, pulled his wallet out and reached up to hand the funnel cake man some bills in exchange for the six cakes. Jack handed two cakes to Harley, then while balancing the other four, began to make his way over to Frost and the others, using his hips to push his way through the crowd. Harley couldn’t keep the smile from her face as she followed him, Jack pleasantly bumping people out of his way.

“Coming through! Move it!! Funnel cake!! Out of the way!!” Jack smiled until he finally arrived at their small group. He beamed at them. “Okay kiddos--Daddy brought treats!”

He began handing out the funnel cakes, one to Zsasz, one for Agatha while Harley handed one of the ones she held to Frost. Jack held onto one for himself, plus the extra funnel cake.

Agatha shook her head. “Oh god, my figure is going to suffer.”

Frost smirked and gave Agatha a significant look, prompting her to smack his shoulder.

“Don't you say a word,” she murmured, but Frost grinned.

“I promise it will get worked off.”

Agatha actually blushed taking the cake. “Fine.”

Harley took a bite out of her cake smile before turning back to her husband, their little group close together. Jack tore off a bite of the cake and stuck it in his mouth while balancing the extra one he had bought and speaking around the bite in his mouth. “If I have to, I’ll fight him, then I can talk to him, but I’m hoping maybe some powdered sugar goodness might help me get close.” He smiled holding up the funnel cake. “Who doesn’t like funnel cake?” Jack’s gaze shot between everyone looking for agreement.

Harley giggled around her own mouthful of deep fried sugary goodness, her lips stained with white sugar. “You’re not wrong puddin.”

Jack chuckled and leaned forward to lick the sugar off her lips. For a moment the two of them completely forgot their family around them...

Frost frowned looking between Harley and Jack, trying to school his features, but Harley could see that he thought Jack was nuts. “What are you talking about Boss?”
“Harley wanted to know how I was going to talk to Bane.” Jack turned to Frost before he indicated with his head the cage match where Bane, judging by the sounds, was winning. “If I can't win my way with funnel cake, then I’ll just have to fight him until he gives up and talks to me.”

Frost paled. “Boss, those fights are to the death, you heard that right? I don’t think you can just...fight for fun.”

Jack grinned and took a large bite out of his funnel cake, leaving a smear of white sugar on his lips. “Been dead once already sweetie.” He chuckled and chewed as Harley took her turn to lick sugar off his lips.

Agatha shook her head as she delicately pulled a bite of the cake off somehow doing so without scattering powder sugar. “Jac…” she start to say his name, then stopped herself. She looked from the cake in her hand to her nephew. The skin around her eyes was tight with stress, a pain there that was clear to anyone looking at her. She wasn’t sure if she had completely lost Jack to his new persona yet or not.

Jack smiled at her, his voice was pitched low just for their small group. “You can still call me Jackie, Auntie, only you though and only among us, never where others can hear, okay?” He took another bite of his cake seeming to have not a care in the world.

Harley smiled softly thinking that it was sweet her puddin still would allow his aunt to call him by the nickname she had given him when he was a child.

Agatha smiled and reached out to cup his milk white cheek. Her eyes still looked pained and there was a slight crack to her voice when she spoke. “Nephew...” she said instead. “I don’t know if getting into the ring with him is a good idea. I’m sure none of us...” Her eyes connected with Harley’s. “...want to go through the pain of losing you again.”

Harley nodded. “I don’t know puddin...he looks bigger than before...like, unnaturally bigger…”

Jack snorted. “Don’t worry,” he assured them all with a lift of his hairless eyebrows. “It’ll be fine.” He stuffed a large bite of funnel cake into his mouth, smearing a little powdered sugar again before he spoke. “I’ll get through to him. I have a way with people.” He chuckled.

Jack turned with the extra funnel cake in one hand and grabbed Harley’s hand with the other. He spun around quickly and began to push his way toward the cage fight. Harley exchanged a look with everyone before Jack’s momentum spun her around, forcing the rest of them to either stay put or to follow.

*

Inside the cage Bane roared. He brought his hands forward and slammed his palms on either side of his opponent’s head. The man wobbled, the impact had his ears ringing disorienting him as he struggled to block Bane’s next attack, but the bigger man’s hand shot out and grasped the man by his neck, lifted him off his feet.

Bane held the man up off his feet. To him, the squirming individual weighed nothing, nothing at all and with barely a thought, Bane flexed his fingers, easily snapping the man’s neck. Bane snarled and then dropped the body to the floor. The crowd alternated between cheers and boos. He could see the exchange of money, a few minor fights breaking out along the edges of the cage, but he didn’t care. He was here for two reasons, one being Viktoria and the other being his need to prove himself. After Jack and Harley’s death, he had, in a fit of grief and rage, destroyed Jack Wayne’s lab. Whatever it was that Jack had been brewing in his lab, whatever sets of chemicals
Jack had been using, had mixed with other substances, things that Bane hadn’t understood and combined into a gas that Bane had accidentally breathed in. That, combined with the skin on skin exposure to the fluids in the room and Bane had been...changed. He could feel the foreign chemicals inside of him, altering his body.

Bane’s memory was fuzzy after that. He was blinded by rage, violence, loss. The chemical change in him had made him stronger, faster, but he would also lose control and blackout, losing hours, sometimes days. He had run into Viktoria by complete chance. One night he had found his way into a homeless shelter, had arrived the same night that Viktoria October was there looking for volunteers for a drug experiment while offering food, shelter and money. Bane had agreed to be part of the experiments...and the rest, as they say, was history.

Viktoria had become, at first, enamoured with Bane’s blood, then with what she could create, but lastly with the man himself. She used his blood to create something new, her own drug that she called Titan. It was the combination of the chemicals from Jack’s lab altered by Bane’s blood, and the drug that Viktoria had invented using Bane’s altered blood as a base had created Titan.

Titan made Bane stronger, faster, and more durable that any mortal man. Bane had become an unstoppable force...except that now he was unable to function without Viktoria's Titan being constantly pumped into his system. Worse yet, the drug had also made him more violent with a tendency to fall into blind, murderous rages. Minor drawbacks really when compared to the power the drug gave him, Bane decided. Viktoria had devised a system, similar to an intrathecal pump that kept a steady supply of Titan pumping into Bane’s blood stream.

That was how he ended up here with Viktoria. The fight club was a perfect place for Bane to not just prove himself, but to earn money for Viktoria’s experiments...and hopefully to get her out from under Falcone’s boot. She had sold herself and her experiments to the gangster so that she could continue her work, but now she wanted out. Viktoria wanted her freedom and Bane was determined to win it for her, no matter how many opponents he had to kill to make that happen. Bane loved Viktoria and she loved him. Bane would do anything for her, kill as many men as she needed him to kill...

* 

Jack waltzed up to the guards standing in front of the cage after aggressively pushing his way through the crowd using his elbows and hips. He kept the funnel cake balanced in one hand while he kept a tight hold on Harley’s hand with the other until they arrived in front of the two guards standing outside a cordoned off area around the cage. The two men, both tall and built like wide, muscular walls, just stared, their expressions dour. The two men could have been twins, their build and expressions were so very similar Harley noted as she stared at them, except of course for the fact that one was white and the other was black. Her eyes narrowed, a small smile spreading across her lips. Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee she thought to herself.

Behind the men was an area around the cage where several people milled about, a few in suits looked like managers or mobsters, (Harley could see that one or two of them looked to be armed) and there were several people that might be medical staff? Harley wasn’t sure how matches to the death worked...maybe they were simply morticians? She wrinkled her nose as her gaze traveled along to the curve of the cage. There she could see a young woman, maybe a little older than her--though it was hard to judge from this distance--with a short black bob that had a white streak in the front, not too dissimilar from Jason’s white streaked hair. She was dressed in black slacks and blouse with a white doctor’s jacket and a stethoscope around her neck. She was watching the fight intently. Next to her was a short man with a long black ponytail dressed in jeans, and a green t-shirt. The man may have been short, but he was heavily muscled with the leathery look of an old fighter. Other than those two, Harley didn’t see any “regular” people past the area that was coordinated off from the
main crowd, she presumed for the purpose of keeping the cage separated so that no one could hang on it, reach into the cage, or be able to throw things into the cage during fights.

Jack smiled brightly holding up the funnel cake. “I’m a friend of Bane’s and I would like to speak to him. I brought him funnel cake!” Jack said the last part as if he had just brought forth the most wonderful of gifts. The two guards exchanged a look with one another neither one of them saying a word. Jack stuck his bottom lip out.

“Should I have brought cake for you fellows too?” Jack’s expression shifted from expectant to sad.

The black one chuckled. “Sorry Bozo, no one talks to Bane. You either fight him or you watch.” He looked Jack up and down. “Though I’m gonna tell ya, he would wipe the floor with your skinny, white clown ass.”

The white guard shrugged. “You might be able to talk to Trogg, he’s like Bane’s manager, or maybe that hot piece of ass Dr. October. But Bane, Bane don’t talk to no one. You wanna talk to the big man, you gotta get in the cage and only Trogg approves who gets to go into the cage with Bane.”

Jack was about to reply when the short man that Harley had noticed only a moment ago, glanced in their direction. He cocked a brow watching Jack for a few seconds before he made his way over to their little group. (Harley noticed that Frost, Agatha and Zsasz were close, but they were also blending in with the crowd).

The man stopped on the other side of the gate that separated the two spaces and leaned against the gate between the two guards, crossing his arms. He looked Jack up and down, then turned his attention to Harley. This time his inspection was much slower as his brown eyes traveled down her body and back again before he brought his attention back fully to Jack.

“So what’s your story clown?” the man asked.

Jack only smiled. “I’m an old friend of Bane’s. Just wanted to have a few words with him.”

The short man narrowed his eyes. “I’m Trogg, Bane’s manager and Bane ain’t got no friends buddy, ‘cept me and Doc October. You wanna talk to him you’re gonna have to fight him, get in the ring with him…”

Jack shrugged as he handed Harley the funnel cake. “All right…”

Trogg grinned. “Oh no, ain’t that easy clown face. First, your girl there, Snow White--she’s gotta go and fight our little fire princess Firebug. She wins, you get to come fight Bane. She loses, then you go away.”

Harley felt Jack tense. She quickly glanced sideways at him. The smile was still there, but his eyes were flat, deadly…

“I’ll do it,” Harley said quickly before she could think better of it.

Jack turned to look at her in confusion. “What?”

Harley frowned glancing from Jack to Trogg. “It’s not to the death or anything, it’s just wrestling in mud, right? I’ll do it.”

Trogg’s grin was slimy, Harley decided. “All right, your ghost girl beats Firebug, then you can get into the ring with Bane...whether he talks or not will be entirely up to him.”
Trogg slid past the gate and the two guards who were grinning as Trogg motioned at Harley. “Come along princess, let’s get you in the tub there with Firebug.”

Jack yanked Harley close and hissed. “Harls, what are you doing?”

Harley smiled. “Puddin, it’s fine. I can beat her.”

Jack stopped following Trogg, shoving the funnel cake he had been carrying into the chest of a man walking by as he grabbed Harley by her upper arms.

“Harls, I just...I don’t want you getting hurt,” Jack whispered through his teeth.

She smiled at her husband. “Trust me Jack—I can do this.”

He frowned looking into her eyes. “I trust you Harley, I trust you above all others. I just don’t know if I can let you get hurt…”

Harley stepped closer and wrapped her arms around his shoulders, kissed him. The kiss was full of her desire and love for her husband as her tongue slipped between his lips. Jack groaned as he wrapped his arms tight around her waist, lifting her off her feet and kissed her back until the few people around them started to cheer or yell obscene remarks. Jack put her back on her feet slowly as Harley grasped his bottom lip with her teeth, sucked slowly before she let him go. Jack gave her a lopsided grin, his hand sliding down to grasp her rear.

Harley giggled, and her voice was quiet as she laid her forehead against his, her eyes looked into Jack’s as she spoke. He could hear her despite the crowd yelling at them.

“Puddin, do you think I like the idea of you getting hurt? Do you think I want you killed? I love you puddin, I can’t stand the thought of anything hurting you--and Bane is a killer now. What if you can’t convince him you are you? He could hurt you puddin, you think I want that?” Her lip trembled. “Did you consider how I would feel about you stepping into the ring with him?” She tried not to let them fall, but a couple of tears rolled down her cheeks.

Jack frowned looking genuinely confused by her question. He hadn’t been thinking about how she would feel if he got himself hurt, he had mostly been thinking about getting his family back...about keeping Harley protected...about getting the pieces back together so that he could punish Bruce, Falcone...the Owls...about how he wanted to torture Gotham in order to hurt the Batman...having Harley back would not change his mind about that. Batman, Bruce, had to suffer for what he did, what he failed to do because it didn’t matter that they both were alive. What mattered was that Bruce had…

Jack frowned deeper, he hadn’t thought about what his possibly getting hurt would do to Harley...he only thought about what he needed to do...about how her getting hurt would affect him...not the other way around.

“I have to try and get him back Harley. Bane is one of us,” he said softly.

Harley nodded letting go of him so she could reach up and wipe away her tears with the back of her hand. “I know puddin, I understand and that’s why I’m not trying to stop you. I want Bane back too. I know this is important, which is why I’m going to wrestle that Firebug and beat the shit out of her.” Harley smiled. “What’s a little mud?”

Jack stared at Harley for a moment then snorted on a laugh turning around and draping his arm across her shoulders and resumed walking toward Trogg.
“I love you.” He said affectionately.

Harley grinned. “I love you to puddin.”

Jack whispered. “I promise you pumpkin, Bane won’t hurt me.”

Harley frowned. “How can you be sure?”

Jack shrugged. “Think of it as intuition of someone who has come out the other side of death.”

Harley made a rude sound. “That makes no sense at all.”

Jack’s only response was to laugh.

Trogg waited for them with a smirk. “Done putting on a show for the locals and ready to put on a real show girlie?” Trogg did a game show hostess bow and arm gesture toward the large plastic pool about eight feet in diameter, large enough for two adults to move around in and filled knee high with “mud.” The pool had a little platform on the outside of it, with stairs leading up and to the platform and another set that led into the mucky pool, all of it designed to protect the wrestlers from the crowd and prevent the crowd from simply throwing themselves into the pool of mud. A couple of men where dragging out a young woman covered in the milk chocolate goo, her bra hanging off, a blood dripping down her chin from her split lip. On the other end of the pool, standing on the outside of it, a young woman with skin the color of warm caramel, shapely, wearing a neon green bikini which matched her neon green hair, was currently being hosed off. She glanced across the pool at Harley, Jack and Trogg with a curious frown, and then her eyes settled on Harley.

Harley was keenly aware of how she looked with her snow white skin and white hair. The woman smiled just a little and gave Harley a wave. Harley waved back. Trogg grunted. “That there my friends is Firebug, our current champ. You get in there and beat her...and I’m gonna be nice, you only have to pin her once–you do that, I’ll let you into the ring with Bane. And if you can get Bane to talk, well, more power to you.”

Harley nodded and began to remove her clothes. Jack made a sound of protest grabbing Harley by her shoulders. “Pumpkin…”

Harley gave Jack a narrowed eye look. “I am not wrestling in my clothes puddin. It’s bad enough that I have to in my bra and panties. I’m going to be muddy and then wet. I don’t want to ruin my outfit and when I’m clean and hopefully dry, I want to be able to get dressed again.”

Jack wanted to protest, but he knew she was correct. He pressed his lips together and hissed in defeat. “Fuck.”

Harley smiled and cupped his cheeks between her hands. “Don’t worry puddin. I’m all yours.”

Jack growled his gazing shooting around the crowd. “It’s going to be really hard not to blind everyone here.”

She giggled and planted a kiss on his red lips before she took a step back to pull her shoes off, handed them to Jack before she began to slide out of her leggings. She handed them to Jack before she turned around. “Get my zipper puddin?”

Jack looked patently unhappy as he grasped the zipper of her top and pulled it down. “The urge to burn this place to the ground is growing,” he muttered behind her back.

Harley smiled with a soft giggle. “Maybe later puddin.”
Jack grunted.

Trogg chuckled. “All right sweetheart, what’s the name?”

Jack growled deep in his throat turning his strange blue eyes on the shorter man. “You call her sweetheart, honey, sugar...anything else little man and I’m going to rip your dick off.”

Trogg blinked in shock at Jack, not because he hadn’t been threatened before--he had--but the viciousness and cold blooded way that Jack said the words, followed by the lipsticked smile that did not reach the man’s browless blue eyes, actually made Trogg shiver.

He put his hands up. “Fine, it’s fine mister, we’re all cool here.”

Harley pulled her dress top off over her head, patting her hair to make sure it was still in place as she said to the short man, “Just call me Harley.”

Trogg nodded and did his best not to look at the young woman, as Harley was now standing in her underwear, which included a pair of red lace thongs...he only caught a glimpse of them as he kept his eyes up, but Trogg saw that they were a particularly tiny pair of red lace thongs matched with a red lace bra and she was hairless, everywhere if his brief glimpse had been correct. He swallowed. He made no response to Jack or Harley and instead walked up to the stairs and climbed up to the platform. He stood there for a moment looking over the crowd before he cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled out, his voice projecting over the sounds of the music and crowd. “All right ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, time for out next match!”

A young woman dressed in another bikini, this one blue, came hurrying over with a megaphone and handed it to Trogg. Trogg gave her a lecherous grin as he took it and held it up to his mouth. “Our champion Firebug will be going against the sexy Harley!!”

He turned and motioned for Harley to climb up onto the platform. Harley leveled a smile at Jack, giving him a quick kiss at the corner of his mouth before she hurried up the stairs. Jack stared after her holding her clothing and looking dangerously unhappy. Frost moved closer and leaned down toward Jack’s ear.

“Boss, you want me to…”

Jack gave his head a tight shake, but his eyes were narrowed. “No. Not yet, maybe later.”

Frost nodded and took a step back toward Agatha who glanced at Frost.

Frost muttered. “He said no.”

Neither Agatha nor Frost needed to ask what they were talking about. It was clear from Jack’s expression, he was beyond simply angry; he was furious. Frost sighed. That man doing the introduction wasn’t going to have much life to live after this Frost thought to himself.

*  

Harley stopped near Trogg, the crowd screaming their approval. Usually rogg would manage to get a pinch in or a pat on an ass cheek, sometimes he even managed to rub up against the women who participated in the mud matches, but this girl’s boyfriend, with his corpse white skin was watching him with those beyond-the-dead eyes which looked even more unsettling with the lack of eyebrows. Plus, the man’s freaky complexion paired with the green hair...Trogg shuddered. He had thought when he first saw the two of them that it was some sort of weird makeup trend, like club kids or Goths, but now that the girl was nearly naked...it clearly wasn’t makeup...bunch of freaks Trogg
thought, even if the girlfriend was a hot piece of ass. He shook his head and continued with his routine.

“Watch as two gorgeous women cover themselves in mud as they fight for dominance!! Who will win??!!” Trogg grinned and lowered the megaphone as he gestured at the pool.

“Just step on down into the mud there swee…” He stopped himself glancing back to see the pale man watching him intently. “Harley.”

Harley saw the other woman quickly hop into the gunk. Harley moved slowly down the ladder and slipped her foot into the disgusting looking mess. It felt cool, even a little slimy, but it wasn’t mud at all. It felt more like warm, watery jello.

Trogg brought the megaphone back to his lips. “Just a quick rehash of the rules: No kicking! Especially in the face or groin. No pinching! No biting! No hair pulling!! And last but not least, no arguing with the referee!” Here Trogg pointed to a man wearing a black and white striped shirt.

Trogg smiled. “Now, do you all remember how a match is won??”

The crowd responded with yelled affirmatives.

“So boys and girls, how do we win?!” Trogg held his hand to his ear.

“RIP HER TOP!! RIP HER TOP!!”

Jack’s eyes widened. “What?”

He started to take a step forward anger blazing in his gaze as he hissed to himself. “That motherfucking little troll…”

Frost was there at Jack’s side quickly, his hand on Jack’s shoulder. “Boss…”

Jack stopped moving, but Frost was acutely aware that Jack staying in place had nothing to do with Frost grabbing his shoulder. “I am going to kill that little snake,” Jack hissed.

“Okay Boss,” Frost agreed. “But you can’t right now--not here, not like this.” Frost leaned down and hissed in Jack’s ear. “There are too many people, mobsters and cops…”

Jack took a deep breath through his nose and chuckled. “Of course not, you’re right… but I won’t forget…” Jack grinned brightly. “I think I need to start a list, a people-to-kill list.” Jack laughed. “Oh, I do like the sound of that.”

“All right ladies! Let’s go!” Trogg grinned his voice carrying over the crowd. “Let’s get dirty!”

* 

Harley watched as the other woman made her way closer, stopping and dropping to her knees. Harley smiled at the woman across from her and waved. “Hey.” Firebug grinned back. “Hi.”

“So, what happens if I win?” Harley asked. She knew there had to be more of a prize than getting her husband into the cage with Bane.

Firebug smiled. “Well, it’s a thousand dollars, though most men just like to try to beat me not for the money, but because they get to wrestle me and try and get my top off. They learn real quick, I’m a serious athlete. I think they are also convinced I like seeing their goop covered junk, or they like watching two women slipping all over each other and a free mud covered boob shot.”
Harley frowned. “Oh. Sorry.”

Firebug grinned with a soft laugh. “It’s fine. I get paid every night so I don’t really care. Besides, no one’s ever wins the prize money. I always win.”

“You must be good then.” Harley nodded as she spoke.

Firebug’s smile was bright. “One of the best.”

“You ever consider putting your talent to use doing other things?” Harley asked as the two women moved on their knees and started to move around each other looking for an opening.

“What do you mean?” Firebug frowned at the pale woman’s words.

This close Harley could see she was a pretty woman, her eyes an unusual shade of yellow gold. Harley shrugged. “I don’t know, maybe joining an up and coming organization where you can make some money without degrading yourself like this…”

Firebug frowned, which was followed by a smile. “You know what? Let’s talk later.”

Harley grinned, but her smile didn’t last long when Firebug lunged, wrapping her arms around Harley’s shoulders and immediately threw her down into the goop with a loud splash that sent a spray of brown flying in all directions, sending some of the droplets to rain onto the crowd around them. The crowd was cheering, chanting, “TAKE HER TOP! TAKE HER TOP!”

Firebug was strong, but Harley found herself easily squirming out from under Firebug’s grasp. Still on her back Harley spun herself onto her side, the gooey stuff around them made each move a quick slip and slide as she brought her right leg up and wrapped it around Firebug’s neck and used her strength and weight to force the other woman down. Harley pushed herself away from Firebug once she had knocked her into the murk, and the ooze allowed her to slip easily to the side of the pool where she struggled for only a few seconds to get to her feet. She was already covered from head to toe in what look like thick chocolate milk.

Firebug got to her feet.

The two women circled each other, moving carefully as the slick goo around them made it difficult to keep their footing.

*

Jack was clutching Harley’s clothes to his chest when a man, short, bald with glasses tapped him on the shoulder. Jack turned with his eyes narrowed.

The guy smiled at him. “Hey ah, I’ll give you five hundred dollars for her top.”

Jack blinked as he let the words process. “What?”

The man grinned. “I said I’ll give you five hundred dollars for her top, two hundred just to let me smell it.”

Jack turned so fast that the man didn’t have a chance to react before Jack slapped the man across the face, knocking his glasses into the crowd, followed by stomping onto the shorter man’s instep. The man fell back, but no one in the crowd caught him. Instead everyone backed away letting the bald man fall. Jack snarled, but Frost was there catching Jack by his upper arm.
“Boss…” Frost hissed. Interrupting Jack was becoming all too frequent in this place, Frost thought with a grimace.

No one came to stop the little fight thought several patrons were laughing and a few were yelling. “Kick his ass clown boy!!”

Jack glanced at Frost. “I’m fine.”

He reached down and grabbed the man by the front of his shirt and hauled him to his feet pulling him close enough that when Jack snarled, spittle flew across the man’s face.

Jack’s voice was low and menacing. “You leave right now. If I find you I am going to cut your nose off and shove it down your throat until you choke on it.”

The man in the glasses nodded. “Yes sir, yes…”

Jack grinned. “Joker.”

“Yes sir Mr. Joker.”

Jack grinned and shoved the man away from him. The bald man turned and fled.

Jack made a face as he said conversationally to Frost. “I don’t like the ‘Mister’ part...just Joker I think…”

*

The two women were locked around each other, arms around torsos, legs intertwined in an almost intimate embrace. Firebug struggled and pushed, brought her legs up to wrap tight round Harley’s waist while Harley struggled to break her hold. Harley sensed that she might actually be stronger than Firebug. She wasn’t sure why she felt that way, though it felt as if something was coursing through her. Her mind drifted back for a split second, something that Ivy had said to her, but in the next instant the thought was gone as Firebug struggled to move her hands up, her slimy fingers struggling to grab a hold of Harley’s bra strap, but Harley kept shifting her body, just enough to make it impossible for Firebug to get a good hold. The two women rolled in the muck, the chocolate colored slime covering their entire bodies and gobbing into their hair.

The only reason Harley was having trouble was because the “mud” made moving so uncertain. Every time she thought she had her footing, or that she could make a more aggressive maneuver, the sloppy mud would cause her to slip or lose her grip. The two women rolled, and Firebug was clearly doing her best to get Harley below her, getting the edge if she could get on top of Harley.

Harley yanked her arms down, the slime let her slip her arms easily between her and Firebug. She shoved her limbs between the two of them, just as Firebug rolled Harley onto her back in the muck, forcing the other woman to break her embrace for a second. Harley took advantage of that moment and pressed her hands against the other woman’s chest. She could have broken Firebug’s position over her by simply squeezing her breasts painfully, but to Harley that seemed like a cheap shot, akin to kicking a guy in the crotch, (and she wasn’t in a life or death fight) so instead she shoved.

The move did indeed break the hold that Firebug had on Harley, but Harley surprised herself when she shoved with enough force that not only did she push Firebug off of her, but she sent the other woman flying up and back before she came back down into the slime hard and slid on her ass to hit the other side of the pool.

Firebug gasped in surprise when she hit the side of the pool, almost hard enough to knock the air out
of her lungs, her legs spread out in front of her as she watched Harley get to her feet. Harley grinned, her teeth showing bright white against the slimy mud covering her hair and face.

* 

Jack grinned slowly watching his wife fight. He could be mistaken he thought, but she seemed a bit stronger than he remembered her being…

* 

Firebug hurriedly got to her feet and charged at Harley, half sliding and half running. Harley ran forward and performed a double twisting double back, surprising herself as she flipped over Firebug and landed on her feet sending muck flying around her. Harley spun around and threw both her hands out, the palms of her hands hit the other woman. Harley shoved Firebug in the back with a surprising amount of force to send the other woman sliding again. Firebug pinwheeled her arms for a second as she tried to keep her balance, but she fell over. Firebug gasped in shock as the vibration of slamming into the mud and floor beneath rippled up her body. She spun around on her rear with a hiss of annoyance.

Firebug shoved herself to her feet and rushed Harley thinking to knock her off her feet if she moved swiftly enough, but Harley giggled in surprise at herself as she brought her arms up crossing them in front of her so that when Firebug hit her, Harley slid backwards to the edge of the pool and then she lost her footing in the slippery goo. Harley yelped in surprise, her sudden confidence in her unusual speed and reflexes slipped a bit when she fell, but she snapped her hands out and grabbed Firebug to yank the other woman down with her.

Firebug wrapped herself around Harley as soon as she fell. The two women struggled, trying to keep a hold of the other while at the same time fighting for their tops. Harley could feel the other woman’s hands sliding across her back as she tried to grab at the hooks of Harley’s bra, then transferring her grip to try and yank the straps off her arms when she couldn’t get a hold of Harley’s back strap.

* 

Jack was hissing under his breath, balling her clothes up in his hands. “Come on Harley, come on sweets, you can do it.”

* 

Harley stumbled to her feet, but kept herself from slipping as she grabbed Firebug and lifted, surprising herself as she lifted the other woman off her feet with little effort, as if Firebug weighed next to nothing to her as she lifted the green haired woman up and then dropped her back into the mud. Thick droplets splattered into the air and over the rim of the pool to splash over the crowd.

Harley threw her arm up blocking the mud from splashing into her face. She dropped down on top of Firebug, trying to pin the other woman, but Firebug reached up and grabbed her, stuck her feet up to slam the bottom of her feet into Harley’s chest. Harley gasped, but she didn’t have time to react before the woman flipped Harley over her head. Harley twisted in the air and landed on her feet in a crouch (surprising herself yet again), slipped a little, but didn’t fall. She spun around just as Firebug came up and crashed into her.

* 

Jack cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled with glee. “GO PUMPKIN!!”

He grinned thinking he might have to buy a plastic pool so he could wrestle Harley in it, all oiled up
and naked...he wondered if any place was open this late where he could get a pool and some almond oil?

*

Harley snarled and flipped Firebug onto her back. Mud splashed in all directions. The two women struggled, slipping and sliding all over the pool floor and against its side as they fought to get the upper hand. Firebug tried to get out from under Harley while Harley fought to keep her down. Firebug reached up grabbing at Harley’s bra and began to pull. The crowd went wild with yelling. Harley slapped Firebug across the face with enough force that she snapped Firebug’s head to the side momentarily leaving a clear space on the woman’s cheek. The impact of her hand was enough that Firebug’s grip on Harley’s bra loosened since the strike momentarily stunned her. Harley took advantage of the momentary shift, stood up just enough to flip the other woman around and grab the ties of her opponents top and pulled back. The ties unraveled. Firebug scrambled to grab her top, but it was too late. Harley stumbled to her feet, the top in her hand and waved it over her head with a hoot before she launched it into the crowd who was screaming with excitement.

Trogg looked surprised as he put the megaphone to his mouth to announce. “And we have a new champion!”

Harley put her hand out to Firebug. The other woman looked at the offered hand for a moment before she took it and let Harley pull her to her feet while she kept one arm across her breasts.

Harley smiled. “So, you think about my offer Firebug?”

Firebug smiled. “My name is Bea Bonilla da Costa and...how about we meet for lunch tomorrow and talk about it?”

Harley grinned at her fellow muddy wrestler. “Sounds great.”

*

Jack stood protectively near Harley, holding her clothing and a towel that Trogg had tossed to him, (the man having enough good sense to head back toward Bane), a cigarette dangling between his red lips while Harley was being hosed off by a young man who was doing his best not to look at her. Harley stood with her arms over her head, eyes closed as she let the water and mud run down over her body. If she was aware that the water had made her bra and thong more see-thru she wasn’t showing any sign of it, more concerned with getting the muck off her body than whether anyone was seeing anything they shouldn’t. Jack was giving the people milling around in the background enough of a murderous look that no one’s gaze was lingering.

Jack pulled his cigarette out, smoke slowly rolling from between his lips as he watched Harley, his gaze primal, lustful, but with a mix of love and devotion. He smiled at Harley, his gaze rolling down her body as she moved, bending over to run her hands down her legs. She would occasionally rub her hand over her breasts, stomach, sliding more of the mud off before she would turn, slowly, standing on her tiptoes for a moment arching her back as the water washed away the muck. Jack watched her like a predator, his eyes flashing over to the man holding the hose every so often. The young man had only needed one death glare from Jack to know enough not to look at Harley as he tried to clean her off, keeping his eyes on the floor waiting until he saw the water run clear before he turned off the hose.

Harley turned to look over at Jack. He smiled watching the way the mud rolled off revealing her bleached white skin underneath. It was eerie, almost as if the water was washing away all her color to reveal a ghost, but at the same time, as Jack’s eyes raked over her, it was sexy, watching the water
run down her stomach, over her legs revealing the snow white skin.

After another few seconds Harley shivered and giggled hurrying over to Jack. He slipped his cigarette between his lips as he held up the towel for her. Harley hurried into his embrace. Jack wrapped the towel and his arms around her and pulled her close, kissing a damp spot just at the corner of her forehead.

“You did good there Harls. That was incredible,” Jack purred softly. “You, as always, were amazing my sweets. Though I think I will enjoy it far more if I was the one wrestling you...in a pool of warm oil maybe?”

Harley snuggled in close to him with a giggle. “I’ve never moved like that before puddin, it was like...I don’t know...I’m stronger, more agile...I can’t really describe it.” She laid her head against his shoulder. Jack held on tightly to her, rocking her back and forth in his arms.

Jack cooed softly. “You were impressive.”

She giggled. “I’ll have to switch from roller derby to mud wrestling?”

Jack snorted. “Unlikely. I’m not too fond of my wife being lusted after by a room full of mostly men.” He squeezed her. “Come on. I need to go over for my little bout that you won for me.”

As they walked over toward the cage, Jack kept an arm around Harley’s shoulders. She smiled happily and put her arm around his waist. She had taken the towel and wrapped it around her torso, looking as if she had just stepped out of the shower. She reached up and loosened the bun she had her hair in, letting the long white locks fall in slightly damp waves down her back. She looked angelic, like something other than human. He was aware of people looking at Harley, still in her underwear even thought she was now wrapped in a towel and the violent urge to pluck out their eyeballs was almost too much for him to resist. He didn’t just hate the fact that people were looking at her nearly naked body--he loathed it.

Instead of thinking about murdering all those people though, Jack focused himself on the fight with Bane, convincing the man who he was, and getting him to come home. He took a deep drag on his cigarette before causally flicking the still burning butt into the crowd as they kept walking until they arrived at the cage. The crowd was becoming restless, more congested right around the cage, waiting for the next event with Bane. Jack mused with a smirk that this must have been what it was like during the gladiator games, that lust for violence and blood. The human animal didn’t really change much he thought...they craved violence, destruction...chaos. He giggled, drawing a look from his wife as he thought about the chaos he was slowly going to unleash on Bruce, on Falcone...on Gotham City. He was only giving them what Gotham wanted...like a good entertainer should he thought.

Trogg was standing by the cage speaking with Dr. October; Bane was already inside moving restlessly around the cage, grunting and snorting like an animal. Harley’s eyes widened as they approached. She could see when Bane would pass by, that the man was bigger than before...she couldn’t be sure, but she thought he might be bigger even than he had been an hour or so ago...and for just a moment as the the flashing lights moved over the large masked man, she could have sworn she saw a faint glow of green under his skin. But just as she thought she saw the glow, following the lines of his blood vessels under his skin, Bane moved past and the illusion was gone.

The two guards opened the gate for them as Jack and Harley strolled up. The white guard smirked at Harley and his eyes began to trace her body when Jack growled. The man glanced over, the lustful smirk on his face falling as he glimpsed Jack’s expression. Jack smiled, but it wasn’t pleasant and something about his eyes made the guard feel cold. He quickly dropped the smirk and glanced away
from Jack and Harley, like a dog hoping not to be noticed as he held open the gate.

Harley and Jack stepped through while Jack’s smile and eyes continued to bore into the offending guard as he walked by.

Trogg was waiting for them next to Bane’s doctor, Viktoria October; when he saw them he waved them over.

Trogg grinned at Harley as they approached. “That was pretty impressive, you might consider taking Firebug’s place. A pretty woman like you with moves like that, you could make a lot of money.”

Harley felt her husband stiffen next to her. She still had her arm around his waist and squeezed, pressing Jack’s body up against hers more to comfort him and silently keep him from murdering the man in front of them. She had this gut feeling that if she let Jack go, Trogg would be hard pressed trying to keep his blood inside his body.

She smiled at the short man. “No thank you. I’m perfectly happy working with my husband.”

Trogg shrugged looking only slightly disappointed. “Okay, fine. You ready mister?” He looked to Jack.

Jack’s smile eased into a relaxed confidence as he released his hold on Harley. He handed her the clothing he had been holding for her before he began to strip off his jacket, shirt, and tie. “I am.”

Trogg shrugged and began to head up the steps to the cage to make his announcement when he stopped. “Hey, what do they all you?”

Jack smiled as he bent over to remove his shoes and socks. “You can call me Joker.”

Trogg frowned at the name, then shrugged. “Okay, Joker it is.”

Trogg made his way up the few stairs to the outside of the cage, holding his megaphone to his lips as he yelled into it. “All right--you guys ready??”

The crowd yelled their approval. “You’ve already seen three men try their hand at defeating the monster that is BANE!”

The crowd responded with cheers and a few boos interspersed. Bane roared in response, slamming his fists together as he stalked the cage.

Harley frowned looking up at the cage, then back at Jack. “Are you sure about this puddin? Bane doesn’t look...right. He seems more like a caged animal than the man we used to know. I mean look at him puddin, he’s way bigger than when we knew him. And even steroids over a month can’t do...that.” Harley’s eyebrows were lifted in surprise and some amount of alarm as she watched Bane.

Jack was holding the wrist of his right arm and stretching to the side before switching arms and doing another stretch; this was greeted with some female cheers in the crowd. Harley turned to look at the crowd, her eyes narrowed.

“He’ll know it’s me sweets. Don’t worry. And besides, isn’t the old saying: the bigger they are the harder they fall?” Jack grinned at her as he stretched his arms over his head. Harley reached out and ran her fingers along his chest and down his stomach. His skin was so white, like flower petals, soft, the black ink of the tattoos stood out starkly against his milk white skin. Jack chuckled, goosebumps racing along his skin from her touch. Her eyes traveled up to his face, a lock of his now green hair had fallen loose around his forehead. She reached up and tucked the hair back as she gaze at him.
Jack grinned at her and his lips stood out, bright, blood red against his skin and the healthy white of his teeth. Harley sighed in frustration at the fact that he didn’t seem to be taking this seriously at all.

Jack cupped her face between his hands and whispered, his lips close enough that she could feel their movement when he spoke. “Don’t worry sweets. I’m going to be fine.”

Harley frowned. “You better be puddin or I won’t forgive you.”

Trogg walked around the outside of the cage, lights danced around him as someone turned several small spotlights on him. He yelled at the crowd throwing his free hand up into the air. “Our next combatant to take on the all time winner, the killer known as Bane is--THE JOKER!!!”

The crowd cheered. The lights narrowed in on Jack who grabbed Harley and pressed her against him, kissing her until her knees felt weak. The crowd around them cheered and whistled as Jack lifted her off her feet, continuing to kiss her as if she were the air he needed to breathe. Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders returning the kiss passionately, desperately until Jack set her down on her bare feet.

He grinned at her and kissed the tip of her nose. “Be right back pumpkin pie.”

He winked at her. Harley could have slugged him, but she smiled instead. She loved him so damn much and he was being so reckless she thought. She sighed and moved over to where Bane’s doctor was standing, the other woman’s gaze flickering between Harley, Jack and Bane.

The woman put her hand out to Harley as she approached, a small yet open smile on her lips. “Hello, I’m Dr. Viktoria October, but you can call me Viktoria.”

Harley smiled. “Harley and that is my husband Ja...Joker.” Harley glanced toward the cage with a frown.

Viktoria patted Harley’s shoulder. “Don’t worry. I have had an 80% revival rate for Bane’s victims.”

Harley turned to look at her with a frown. Viktoria smiled. “The matches are to the death, no one said they had to stay dead. If I can help them after they lose, I do. People wouldn’t keep challenging him if they all died--doesn’t matter how big the pot is--but as along as they have a chance to live, they keep trying.”

Harley nodded matter-of-factly. “That’s nice of you.”

Viktoria shrugged. “I don’t know about nice exactly, but my Bane would not be happy if he killed them all...I save who I can and who I’m allowed to.” Her eyes were a dark blue and she glanced over to the right beyond the cage. Harley followed her gaze and gasped softly. There was Cobblepot, no surprise, but sitting next to him was Falcone. Harley’s eyes widened in surprise. She glanced into the cage then; she wasn’t sure how Jack was going to react about Falcone being here, but she would bet quite a lot that it wasn’t going to be good.

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Cobblepot frowned. The Joker? What an odd name he thought. He pulled out his opera glasses to try to get a better look at the man about to enter the cage. White skin...that had to be some sort of all body makeup to make his skin look that white...green hair, another odd choice...He got a brief glimpse of the man’s face, handsome in a strange way, but he lacked eyebrows and his lips...had to be lipstick to get them that red and his eyes were a vivid blue. Cobblepot humphed to himself, hadn’t seen eyes like that since Jack Wayne and that bastard was dead. Cobblepot frowned slightly, wasn’t
the way he would have liked to beat Jack Wayne, but...He shrugged and let the thought fade away.

Oswald glanced over to Falcone; now if only Falcone would have a fatal accident…

*

Jack walked into the cage. He could hear the sound of Trogg behind him locking the cage door. Bane turned when Jack entered and his eyes flashed behind the mask. Even with the distance between them, Jack could see that Bane’s eyes were dilated to the point that the black of the pupil almost took up the entire iris leaving only a very thin line of color around the exposed pupil. He snarled at Jack as he stalked closer. The two men began to circle one another; Jack frowned, studying Bane. Harley was right. Bane looked much, much bigger, his hands were huge and Jack could see a green glow under Bane’s skin that traced the veins of his body. Something was up with Bane, certainly, but Jack laughed to himself. Clearly, something was up with all of them.

Bane stopped just inches from Jack.

Jack smiled back at him.

“Hey Bane, you are not going to believe this, but it’s me Jack.” Jack put his arms out to his side and did a little spin. “I’m alive.

Bane didn’t answer him, he didn’t show any recognition as he reared back and swung his right fist at Jack.

Jack leaned back, though the big man’s fist still nicked him across the front of his nose, barely a touch and without any damage. Jack swung a left hook and struck Bane across the right cheek just as Bane was still leaned forward into the swing he had intended for Jack. If Bane hadn’t leaned forward Jack wasn’t sure he would have been able to reach the big man’s face at all. It was as if Bane had been turned into something almost inhuman.

Jack followed his left swing by bringing his other hand up in an undercut that hit Bane hard in the jaw; he quickly followed that with another punch from the left that caught Bane in the back of the big man’s head with yet another hit from Jack’s right fist catching Bane directly in the face.

Jack started to press his advantage, but Bane roared and burst upright. His large right fist lashed out, striking Jack in the chest and sent the slimmer man practically flying across the ring to crash into the cage.

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Harley gasped and began to grab at the cage, but Viktoria reached out wrapping her hands around Harley’s shoulders and hauled her back from the bars.

“No! Don’t grab the cage--you could get your fingers or arms broken!” The other woman cried out as she pulled Harley back from the bars.

Harley turned to look at the young woman, her eyes wide with concern. “What is wrong with Bane? He wasn’t this big before…”

Viktoria frowned “Wait...what? You know Bane?”

Harley frowned glancing toward Trogg, but the man was too far away and with the volume of the crowd there was little chance that he could hear them. Harley put her hand on the doctor’s shoulder and pulled her close.
“Yes we know Bane. That’s why we’re here, to bring Bane home,” Harley said with a crease in her brow, her tone intense.

Viktoria frowned in confusion. “Home?”

She then glanced around, especially at Cobblepot and Falcone where they sat on a balcony watching the fight before her gaze came back to Harley. “Are you friends of his?”

Harley nodded. “Yeah, it’s...it’s been a while and….anyway that doesn’t matter, we are here to bring him home.”

Viktoria bit her bottom lip in thought before she said, “Do you think you can get him out of here, get him someplace safe?”

Harley frowned. “Yes, but...What is going on?”

Viktoria sighed. “I’m...he...” She closed her eyes and swallowed, trying again. “I love him and Falcone has us under his thumb...Bane is addicted to a drug I made, based on his altered blood. I call it Titan...” The doctors’ voice cracked, Harley realized that whatever was going on (and it seemed as if there was a lot that needed to be explained later) it was hurting this woman and Bane. The doctor was visibly becoming upset, starting to break down, but Harley grabbed the other woman by her upper arms and held her giving her a little shake.

Harley’s voice was firm as she whispered only taking a heartbeat to correct herself, stopping herself from saying Jack’s name. “Joker and I will get you out from under Falcone, you have my word. Bane is part of our family, and we help family.”

Viktoria stared at Harley, her blue eyes filled with fear, but also a sliver of hope. Harley could tell the woman was desperate and willing to take any offered branch that might help her and Bane. Viktoria nodded then whispered. “Thank you. Even if you can’t help us I appreciate that you want to...” She closed her eyes. “We don’t have any friends here.”

Harley smiled a little then glanced back at the fight. “Course it won’t do any good if Bane kills him.”

Viktoria frowned. “Well, I will say this: Bane has usually put his opponent down by now, so the fact that your Joker is still standing is amazing.”

The two women turned to face the cage watching the men they loved battle it out. Viktoria reached down and took Harley’s hand, surprising the pale woman, but Harley held Viktoria’s hand and squeezed. Please, Harley prayed to whatever was out there, let Jack get through his intact, please.

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Down in the crowd, Agatha held onto Frost’s arm, her gaze on her nephew. Her lips were a thin line and Frost could see the strain around her mouth. He glanced over at Zsasz who looked slightly paler than usual. As if sensing Frost’s gaze, Zsasz glanced over. The normally cool and efficient man looked upset too, but as Frost knew, there was nothing any of them could do but watch.

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Bane took a swing, but Jack jumped back just out of reach. The two men turned, keeping at arm's length away from each other.

Jack smiled and his voice was pitched low to prevent anyone else from hearing him but Bane.
“Come on Bane dear, I know I look dramatically different, but I assure you, it's me, Jack.”

Bane grunted. There was no recognition in his eyes, only murder. Jack pouted.

“Really Bane, I mean I appreciate your desire to kill me, but can’t we at least discuss it? I’ve been dead already and I suspect you have gone through a similar situation? A resurrection?”

Bane growled and swung at Jack. Jack leaned back smiling as he noticed that his reflexes seemed...quicker, easier...

Bane snarled at Jack and the large man moved surprisingly quick. His arms moved in a rapid one, two swing, first his right, then his left. Jack moved out of the way avoiding Bane’s right hook, but the left caught Jack across the ear, knocking him off his feet.

Jack hit the concrete floor of the cage, his shoulder taking the brunt of the fall. Jack gasped more from the shock than the pain which was strangely not as noticeable as he would have thought, though his ear was still ringing. Bane came after him, his right fist coming down at Jack’s head like a jackhammer. Jack’s eyes widened and he rolled out of the way. Bane’s fist smashed into the concrete, missing Jack by less than a finger’s width.

Jack rolled again as Bane came after him, continuing to slam his fist into the space where Jack had been, but Jack was quick, rolling away with only a second to spare until Bane in frustration reached for Jack, tried to grasp his smaller opponent.

Jack twisted around on his back and slammed both feet up, pushing up with as much power as he could into the maneuver. The flat of his feet slammed Bane in the chest and while the strike didn’t knock the man down, it did--surprising everyone watching--knock the giant man back a step or two, giving Jack enough space and time to get back up to his feet.

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Viktoria gasped. “He moved him?!”

Harley grinned. “My puddin is just full of surprises.” And hopefully more than just that, she thought, cheering her husband on silently.

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Jack sprang to his feet, his fists out, but yelped as Bane kicked him just as he got to his feet. He didn’t block in time, though he did twist his body to the side allowing his hip to take the main force of the impact. Jack stumbled back a couple of steps, but the altered Bane’s attack didn’t put him down.

Jack spun around, using his entire body to give the kick enough power that when his foot struck Bane across the face, he hit the big man with enough force that Bane’s head snapped to the side. When Bane turned back to face him Jack could see blood staining the cloth of the mask. Jack grinned.

“Oh Bane dear, it looks like I made you bleed sweetheart.”

Bane roared and charged at Jack whose eyes became as large as half dollars.

“Shit!” Jack yelped. He turned and ran.

Bane bellowed like a silverback gorilla as he came racing after Jack. Jack ran to the end of the cage.
Harley shoved her arms through the bars and was screaming. “Get out!! Puddin get out!!”

Her heart dropped to her stomach when Jack looked at her, but in the next instant Jack was yanked off his feet by Bane and held over Bane’s head, one hand around Jack’s thigh, his other hand grabbed Jack by the back of his neck leaving Jack’s arms free.

Bane lifted Jack over his head. Harley’s eyes widened in terror as the large man started to bring Jack down, at the same time Bane brought his knee up. Harley could see what was about to happen, Bane was going to break Jack’s back against his knee!

She screamed. “NO!!”

Viktoria raced up beside Harley grabbing the bars and screamed. “BANE STOP!”

Bane, turned, the sound of Viktoria’s voice drew his attention. Harley almost took a step back; she could see that Bane’s eyes were completely black, and the whites were shot with red. His teeth were bared and stained with blood. Jack must have busted Bane’s lip, she noticed with fierce pride.

Viktoria held the bars next to Harley, her voice tight. “Bane, don’t--please.”

Bane hesitated looking at Viktoria in confusion, the bloodlust made rational thought difficult. He snarled and shook his head side to side for a moment like an animal, but his hesitation caused his grip to loosen on Jack.

His handhold loosened just enough, but it was all that Jack needed to break free. He threw all his weight forward, twisted his body and broke Bane’s grip. Jack dropped to the floor, hitting his shoulder again, ripping some of the skin away at the same time that his hip smashed equally hard and painfully against the concrete. Jack gasped, the hot flash of pain blasted through him, but he moved swiftly, scampered to his feet and stumbled backwards putting himself temporarily out of Bane’s reach. Bane, like a T-Rex, noticed movement from the corner of his eye. He swung his head around when Jack stumbled away, his eyes focused on the pale man. He sniffed the air.

Jack’s eyes widened as he glanced at his bleeding arm then back to Bane. Bane was smelling the blood in the air. Bane growled baring his teeth as he turned on Jack.

Jack cursed. “Fuck, fuck, fuck!”

He didn’t have time to do more before Bane came charging at him like a bull.

* 

The crowd was screaming for blood.

Harley hissed at Viktoria. “What is wrong with him?”

Viktoria’s bottom lip trembled. “It’s the Titan. It turns him into a monster, all he wants to do is destroy. Regular humans, it turns them into…” She shook her head. “Creatures--burns through their bodies until they are nothing but husks. Bane is the only one who has been able to withstand the drug, his body feeds off of it. He’s addicted and I have no idea how to get him off…” She covered her face with her hands. “Falcone has ordered me to increase his dosage… I don’t know if it will kill or him worse, turn him into a true monster.”

Harley frowned, then put her hand on Viktoria’s shoulder, her eyes on her husband. Fear made her heart race until she was sure anyone close to her could hear it.
Jack snarled with a grim smile on his lips. He could taste blood on his tongue as Bane came at him and threw his fist, connected hard against Bane’s face. Bane took the hit, his mouth dripping blood, but he didn’t slow down. He swung his right hand, backhanding Jack, sent the pale man flying backwards, but Jack twisted and kept his feet under him. Bane hit Jack three more times, a punch to his chest, another punch to Jack’s stomach and another across the face.

Jack stumbled back, gasping in pain. His mouth was filled with blood—enough he had to spit a gob of crimson onto the concrete—and the air was knocked from his lung, but he was still standing and he was pretty sure Bane hadn’t broken anything. Not yet. Jack wasn’t sure why, but he was taking Bane’s beating and judging by the power behind the man’s strikes, Jack should have been down long ago, but he was still standing for some reason.

Jack brought his arms up when Bane started to punch him, his fists flying swiftly, each hit of the man’s fists was like being hit by a truck, the vibration of each hit radiated through the bones of Jack’s arms sending bright sparks of pain up to his shoulders. Bane threw another punch, Jack ducked and spun under Bane’s arm, came up along Bane’s back and threw his own punch, struck the big man in the ribs.

Bane roared as he turned, but Jack was ready for him despite the pain in his knuckles, the skin scraped off from where he had hit Bane. Jack threw another punch, smashed the huge man in the face again; the fabric of the luchador mask burned across Jack’s knuckles. Bane took another swing at Jack, but Jack weaved out of the way, avoiding not just one but two more swings from the large man. Jack snarled and smashed Bane again in the face. He followed that by using the elbow of his other hand to smash Bane back, came in close…and that was when Jack realized he had made a mistake.

Jack came in too close, trying to press his advantage.

Bane roared and before his eyes, the big man seemed to grow just a little bigger. Jack’s eyes widened as he watched in shock. The green glow in the larger man’s vein burned bright and he expanded.

Jack hissed. “What the fuck?”

The crowd lost their collective mind.

That was when Bane kicked Jack.

The air was knocked from Jack’s lungs in a painful rush. Bane grabbed Jack by his shoulder, his large fingers pressing down on Jack and he threw the smaller man across the cage. Jack slammed into the metal bars. The impact didn’t break Jack’s nose or any other bones, but blood burst in a flood down his lips. Bane stalked forward and grabbed Jack by the back of his neck before the pale man could get his bearings and hit him, pounding Jack in the chest, face, shoulders. Jack struggled to block and throw a few swings of his own, but he seemed to be doing little except enduring Bane’s abuse.

Bane threw Jack down then kicked him in the side. Jack gasped in pain unable to stop Bane as he grabbed Jack by the back of his neck and lifted him to his feet. Bane wrapped one hand around Jack’s head, the other around Jack’s jaw and chin. Jack grabbed at Bane’s hand, struggling as Bane began to twist, trying to snap Jack’s neck.

*
Harley cried out. “He’s going to kill him!!”

Trogg was laughing. “Yeah, that’s what Bane does sweetheart.”

Harley turned seeing that Trogg had sauntered closer to the two women. He grinned at Harley. “Sorry honey pie, but your boyfriend ain’t gonna make it out of that cage.” Harley didn’t think, she wasn’t sure what she hoped to accomplish, but she launched herself at Trogg with a snarl. She spun around and aimed a kick that caught the man in the face, dropping her towel at the same time that her heel connected with Trogg’s cheek. She knocked his head to the side and bloodied his lip. She spun swiftly for another kick that hit the man in the chest and knocked him off his feet.

The crowd around them was cheering, watching as Harley, dressed only her in underwear, gracefully spun and kicked Trogg again. The announcer couldn’t stop her, off balance, dazed, and she was moving too quickly, each spin followed by another. Nobody, not even the guards, rushed out to Trogg’s defense.

Harley kicked the short man with all her strength in the chest, cracking several of the man’s ribs as she knocked him flat, nearly knocking him off the platform that ran around the cage. When he landed hard on his back, Harley jumped onto the man straddling him. She grabbed him under his chest and hissed through clenched teeth. “Give me the key to the cage!”

Jack hissed in pain, clawing at Bane’s arms, but it was like trying to loosen the grip of something made of stone. His fingers clawed and tore at Bane’s skin, but Bane seemed completely unaffected as he kept pushing, struggling with Jack, straining but slowly twisting Jack’s neck.

Jack, lipstick smeared across his lips and cheek, grinned at Bane, looking into the nearly solid black, bloodshot eyes and hissed. “You saw me fall into the acid, didn’t you? You saw me die.”

Bane snarled, but Jack saw a flicker of something in Bane’s eyes. It wasn’t much, but it was there--he hoped--a hint that Jack’s words had touched on something.

Jack groaned in pain, but smiled regardless. “You saw Harley…” Jack couldn’t keep the pain out of his voice or the tremble when he said softly, his voice strained by the pain. “You saw Harley throw herself into the acid Bane, didn’t you?”

Bane’s cheek twitched.

Jack struggled, spittle flying from his lips as he fought against Bane. The pain was building, the strain of struggling against the man as he tried to break Jack’s neck made Jack’s muscles tremble with the effort of resisting. He didn’t know how much longer he could hold out.

Jack hissed, his voice low, rough. “Remember the party on the ship, when we first met? The fight? Or when you and Kermit came to Harley’s roller derby match?”

Bane blinked. He frowned in confusion.

Jack smiled as he felt Bane’s grip loosen a little bit more when he spoke, though his voice was filled with pain. “Remember the fight at Fish’s club?”

The black in Bane’s eyes suddenly shrunk. Bane blinked several times before his eyes focused on Jack and his grip on Jack’s head loosened more. Jack saw Bane shrink, losing some body mass just a little bit as he said in a confused voice, little more than a murmur. “Jack?” Jack’s voice was strained, but he grinned. “Welcome back big guy.”
Bane frowned, blinked, confusion clear as he looked down at Jack. “What the fuck happened to you?”

Jack couldn’t help it—he started to laugh.

* 

Harley snatched the keys from Trogg as he held them up. She belted him across the face one more time for good measure, broke the man’s nose, which earned her a round of cheers from the crowd. She leapt to her feet and raced for the cage door, slamming the key into the lock. Viktoria was right behind her as Harley turned the key and threw the door open, the two women running into the cage to a chorus of both cheers and boos.

Just as Harley arrived in the middle of the ring ready to attack Bane, the big man dropped Jack. Jack fell to his knees, coughing and gasping as he lifted one hand to his throat. Harley cried out and threw herself to her knees beside him wrapping her arms around him.

“Oh puddin!!”

Jack laughed, coughed, laughed more, still struggling to catch his breath.

Bane was looking around as if he was lost. His gaze fell on Viktoria. She rushed to his side, wrapped her arms around his waist and began to lead him from the cage. The crowd was yelling, people clearly getting upset. Harley helped Jack to his feet, the two of them stumbling after Bane and Viktoria.

People were yelling for the their money back while others were cheering and yelling, “JOKER JOKER!”

Trogg, holding a handkerchief to his bloody nose was holding the megaphone to his lips and snarling into it. “All right everyone--calm the fuck down!”

Just as they exited the cage, Jack grabbed Bane’s arm. The big man turned to look at Jack, clearly confused still.

Jack smiled. “Get to the amusement park as soon as you can.”

Viktoria glanced around Bane to lock gazes with Harley. “Amusement park?”

“Bane will know,” Harley said as she quickly started to lead her husband out of the fight club.

* 

Up on the balcony Falcone frowned watching the pale couple leave while Dr. October led Bane away. “Now that was interesting.” He muttered around a cloud of smoke drifting up from his cigar.

Oswald glanced over at him. “Interesting? Bane fucking lost! That’s never happened!”

Falcone smiled. “Precisely. I want to know who this Joker is…”

* 

Harley was driving. Jack wore only his slacks; his shirt, jacket and shoes had been lost in the club when they fled before either onlookers or guards could decide if they wanted to inflict harm on those who had lost them money. He was laying back in the passenger seat next to her, his eyes partly closed, lipstick smeared across his lips and chin, but he was watching her. She still wasn’t dressed,
having nearly forgotten her clothes when she dropped everything to attack Trogg, only grabbing
them at the last minute as they left.

Harley glanced at her husband. “You think he’ll remember?”

Jack knew exactly who she was talking about and he smiled. “Oh, I have no doubt.”

Harley squeezed the steering wheel as she drove. “You scared me,” she said quietly.

Jack smiled. “I’m sorry sweets.”

He reached out and stroked her thigh. “I am truly sorry sweetie, but we needed Bane back.”

She nodded. “I know. Viktoria…”

Jack glanced at her in confusion and Harley shook her head. “Sorry. Dr. Viktoria October, Bane’s
doctor, the one that helps keep him drugged up and functioning--she said she and Bane are under
Falcone’s thumb.”

Jack’s eyes narrowed. He hissed in a low tone. “Falcone.”

“She said something about a drug she made from Bane’s blood, a drug Bane’s addicted to…” Harley
shook her head. “He grew didn’t he? In the ring?”

Jack nodded. “He did. And his eyes…” Jack frowned, then sighed and relaxed back into the seat.

Harley licked her lips, then asked quietly. “Jack, do you think something else happened to us, when
we fell into the acid? I mean, besides bleaching our skin and changing our hair…”

Jack stared out the front window of the car as Harley drove. “Yes. Have you noticed if your eyesight
is better?”

Harley frowned in thought, then nodded. “Yes, yes I have.”

Jack grinned. “Stronger, more flexible...tougher.”

Harley glanced sideways at him, her brow furrowed. She surprised Jack as she yanked the wheel to
the side; their car’s tires screeched as she yanked the car to the side of the road, nearly coming up on
the sidewalk. A few cars that were on the road honked their horns at her, but she ignored them. She
slammed on the brakes bringing the car to a stop. She turned off the engine and turned to face Jack.

“What is going on with us? What happened to us Jack?” Her bottom lip trembled. “I don’t
understand…”

Jack didn’t say anything, but instead he opened his arms to her. Harley threw herself into his
embrace. He pulled her the rest of the way across the seat and onto his lap. Harley wrapped her arms
tight around his shoulders and buried her head against his neck.

Jack smiled stroking her back. “Oh sweets I don’t know...we were reborn, like the phoenix, we rose
from the ashes of our deaths. We are no longer what we were...maybe we are something better?” He
chuckled low, his voice husky. “Don’t worry my sweet little pumpkin, we are in this together no
matter what it was that happened to us. You are the harlequin to my clown.” He smiled tenderly
stroking her hair. “No matter what we are my sweets, I will always be with you. Remember, you and
me against the world--always.”

Harley lifted her head to look down at him. Her eyes roamed over his face, her fingers stroked
through his green hair as she gazed at him, the street lights dancing over his pale skin.

“*I love you puddin*,” she whispered. “*I don’t care what happened to us, as long as you are always with me.*”

Jack ran his hands up her back in a tender caress. “*I’ll never go anywhere Harley, nothing and no one, on heaven or earth will take me from you again. Nothing.*” He tugged her down and kissed her. His tongue moved lazily over hers, his hands rose up at the same time and easily unhooked her bra. Harley returned his kiss slowly, dropping her arms from his bare shoulders just long enough to let the bra slipped down her arms before she let it fall to the floor of the car.

One of Jack’s hands slid into her hair, grabbing a fistful of her white locks and pulled her head back exposing her neck. He ran the flat of his tongue along the tender flesh of her throat, down to her collarbone. He pressed his teeth into her neck, sucking hard for a moment, his fingers tightening in her hair while his other hand reached up and cupped her breast, pushing up, bringing her nipple higher to his mouth. He pulled away from her throat, smiling as he glanced at the dark purple mark he had left on her nearly flawless porcelain skin before he lavished the sensitive nub of her nipple with his tongue, his grip in her hair tightening.

Harley moaned softly, her fingers grasped his bare shoulders while Jack sucked on her nipple.

He switched to the other breast, his teeth teased her nipple causing goosebumps to race over her skin. Jack tugged her back further by her hair, her body arched back from him, and with his free hand he slipped his fingers under her panties and between her legs.

Harley gasped, one hand slammed against the window, her other hand reached out and grabbed the steering wheel in order to balance herself as Jack pulled her hair, forcing her back until his knuckles brushed the dash. He held her like that while his fingers explored her, sliding between the warm, wet folds of her skin.

Harley moaned while Jack stroked her, the pad of his fingers slowly rolled her clitoris, his touch tender, his caress sweet. His fingers in her hair loosened, allowing Harley to raise her head. She kept her hands on the glass of the window and the steering wheel as she began to roll her hips, moving with the strokes of his fingers. She groaned, gazing down at him, her blue eyes hooded, her dark lashes framed the blue of her eyes, along with the dim lights of the streetlight made her blue eyes glow.

Jack growled, his gaze lingering over her face, taking in the fullness of her lips, the way her tongue slipped between her teeth, the way her body moved against his fingers. Her breath was coming quicker, her breasts full, her nipples rosy against her pale porcelain skin. He rubbed a little faster, building his speed with the increase of her breath. Harley threw her head back with a groan of pleasure, arching as she came against his fingers.

Jack hissed and slid two fingers into her, dragging his other hand along her cheek and down her throat. He groaned, his fingers dragging along her pale milky white skin as he continued to gently thrust his fingers up into her, feeling the warmth and delicious wetness of her on his fingers. He cupped her sex, his fingers deep inside her, stretching the poor lace of her panties until they began to tear. He grabbed one side of the thin cloth and with his surprising new strength, he easily tore the cloth from her leaving her completely naked on his lap.

Jack squeezed one of her breasts, his fingers thrusting up, his thumb caressing her clitoris.

Jack groaned. “*My girl*…”
Harley’s eyes rolled. “Puddin...ah...Jack...”

He purred. “Call me Joker...just once pumpkin...”

He thrust his fingers up, grinning at the sound of how wet she was...wet, soft, and wanting...he licked his lips. “Come on Harls...”

Harley groaned. “Uh...Joker....ah!!”

She came again, her body tightening as Jack’s fingers thrust up into her.

He groaned. “Uh, Harley...”

He pulled his fingers away which nearly caused her to collapse against him. He moved quickly pulling his slacks open and nearly ripping his boxers aside to free himself. He grabbed the side of her hip with one hand and held his erection guiding her down on him.

They both moaned together as their bodies joined together. Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders, pressing her forehead to her lover’s.

She stared into his eyes, her voice low and thick with emotion.

“My Joker,” she growled with a grin.

Jack grinned back at her, his hands sliding up her sides then back down again. He grabbed her ass and pressed her down on him.

“My girl, you’ll always be my girl Harley...always.” Jack growled and thrust up into her.

Harley cried out as she thrust back, pressing her mouth to his, her tongue thrust into his mouth at the same time as she rolled her hips.

Jack groaned, squeezing her ass.

They moved together, the car shifting with their fucking. Jack drove her down on him growling and panting as her fluids washed over him.

“Grrr...Harley...Harls...” He snarled, pressing his head back against the seat.

Harley licked his cheek with a shudder. “Uh puddin...”

She came with a jerk of her entire body, clamping down around him. She cried out loudly, thrusting faster and harder until she was a shuddering mess of over stimulated pleasure.

Jack cried out, his eyes closing and his brow knitting with the intensity of his pleasure as he burst inside her with a jerk of his entire body.

He shuddered, his hair falling around his face as Harley kept moving, rolling her hips for a few more minutes until he had to grab her and hold her against him, his face buried against her shoulder, her hair covering his face as he held on tightly to her.

Harley held him, stroking his green hair back.

“I love you. I love you...” she whispered softly.

Jack purred. “Hmm...I love you...never forget Harley...I love you.”
Harley glanced sideways at Jack and grinned. He looked dashing she thought, dressed in a silver grey jacket and vest, with black slacks a white shirt and a terra cotta colored tie. He had on a dark brown wide brim hat pulled low on his head, his dark green hair only barely visible underneath. The pointed oxfords he wore matched the hat, in color, perfectly. He had on a pair of dark lensed bronze metal aviator sunglasses to hide his face and his unusually blue eyes. Jack held his wife’s hand tightly in his brown gloved hand as they walked down the street, his other hand in the pocket of his slacks. He looked casual and relaxed with a lazy smile on his red painted lips. Harley grinned with a shiver; all she wanted to do was kiss those lips.

Harley caught a glimpse of herself and Jack in a mirror in one of the stores that they walked by. She had played up her white porcelain complexion and hair by having her hair up in two braided buns on either side of her head, which drew attention to her long pale neck and her snow white hair. She received a few sideways looks from people passing by, but no one reacted oddly, most just smiled and gave her quizzical looks. Harley thought if anyone found the way she and Jack looked to be strange they gave no indication. Harley smirked at the thought—this was Gotham where a rainbow of hair and skin colors were seen everyday, and two people with stark white skin and unusual hair wouldn’t stand out all that much.

Harley grinned squeezing Jack’s hand, the leather of his gloves creaked slightly. He glanced over at her with a soft smile. She could see a hint of his unusual blue eyes as he gave her a red lipsticked grin shocking off his perfect teeth against his red lips. Harley, dressed up in the new clothing that Agatha sent over, smiled back with pure happiness at Jack, a little skip in her step. She felt good today. She reached up and adjusted the pair of sunglasses she was wearing, the frame and lenses of her Elton John style glasses were both a dark shade of pink which made her see the world with literal, rose-colored glasses. She wore a pair of pink denim leggings with a matching pair of wedge pink sneakers and a black shirt with scalloped edges and a white peter pan collar, all of which made her feel very cute. She was also carrying a pink, dome fabric umbrella which she had resting on her shoulder and a pink purse that was draped across her middle and rode along her hip as the two of them strolled down the sidewalk. Not too far behind them, blending into the crowd, was Frost. He was dressed casually today, which Harley found weird. The tall man was wearing khaki slacks and a simple white button down shirt, looking like every other moderately attractive man on the streets of Gotham on an early fall day. Hell, she thought, the shirt wasn't even tucked in! It was so strange that each time she glanced behind her and caught a glimpse of him, she would giggle.

She felt Jack jerk her arm slightly. “Stop staring there Harley, if someone is watching they'll make Frost. Besides, you keep laughing at the poor man, you are going to hurt his feelings.” Jack’s lips curled into a smirk.

Harley nodded, but she looked over her shoulder at Frost who had stopped to look at dresses in a shop window. She giggled again which caused Jack to yank playfully on her arm. She quickly turned back around and spun her umbrella on her shoulder holding it upright better to protect herself from the sunlight.

They only had to walk another block before they saw the coffee shop that Firebug had asked them to meet her at this afternoon. Harley had been surprised to get a message from the wrestler sent to her via Alex. Harley had so many questions about how Firebug had known to contact Alex, but she figured Alex’s tentacles in the Gotham information business were wide and far reaching. Any message sent out was bound to come through him at some point even if he wasn’t currently active in the information business any longer.
Jack stopped and pointed. “There it is.”

The coffee shop, The Gotham HideOut, occupied a corner of an old turn to the century brick building. The shop had two large windows with the name of the shop painted across the top of the glass in a style of rustic lettering that reminded Harley of a floral shop for some reason, though the lettering also made her think warmth and comfort. Jack pushed the door open, a small bell lightly tinkled as he held the door open for her, the warm, comforting smell of coffee rolled over them both. Harley grinned as she stepped inside, closing her umbrella at the same time. The aroma made her think of rainy days curled under a blanket on the couch, snuggling with her husband. Not that they had had many days like that, but the warm, delicious scent of coffee immediately made her want to do just that. The inside of the shop matched the lettering. There was a homey, rustic feel to the place with the rich brown hardwood floors and exposed brick walls. A large glass display case was filled with delicious looking pastries, and a large board behind the baristas—all of whom looked like they had stepped off the covers of some twenty-something fashion magazine—that held long lists of coffee choices.

Harley quickly spotted Firebug sitting at a table by herself, her green hair unmistakable. She looked quite different when she wasn’t covered in mud and half naked, Harley realized. Firebug, or Bea Bonilla da Costa, had her bright green hair up in a long ponytail, dressed in a pair of black leggings, boots and a Ramones t-shirt. She was currently looking at her phone while idly spinning a large white coffee cup with her other hand.

Harley tugged Jack with her as she hurried over. “Bea?” she asked and the young woman smiled frowning only slightly as she asked. “Harley, Joker?”

Harley nodded. “That’s us.”

Bea motioned at her table. “Please--have a seat.”

Jack pulled out the chair for Harley, leaning over to kiss her cheek. “Would you like a drink my sweets?”

“Oh yes please.” Harley smiled at him reaching up to stroke his chin. Jack returned the smile as he stood. “And what would my pumpkin pie?”

“Mm...how about a white mocha?” Harley asked.

Jack touched the brim of his hat. “As you wish,” he said before he stepped away, his long legs quickly taking him across the room to the counter. Harley watched him with a soft smile.

Bea asked softly. “That was an amazing fight last night between him and Bane.”

Harley turned around. “You know Bane?”

Bae shook her head. “No, I mean, no one does, but Viktoria...I mean Dr. October. I know her. She has been working with me and my little issue.”

Harley frowned her attention fully on Bea. “Issue?”

Bea frowned. Harley could see there was something there she wanted to talk about, but instead the other woman asked. “I know you offered me a job...something away from the fight club and Falcone...”

Harley reached over and placed her hand over the top of the other woman’s. “No, I offered you a place with our family. We’re not a gang or an organization, we’re a family.”
Bea frowned. “Like the mob?”

Harley chuckled. “Only vaguely. No, we are a real family and a real family sticks together.”

Bea picked up her coffee as Harley tilted her head. “Why don’t you tell me how you ended up in the fight club doing mud wrestling for money.”

Bea laughed. “Well, I ended up there because of my brother. He came into the country illegally and I came here after him. Some...things happened and my brother Lajos, he got himself in debt to the Falcone family; he had to do some work for them and I helped. I was in an accident, my brother was killed.” She suppressed a sigh and went on in a tight tone. “I found my way to Falcone and his doctor, Viktoria October. I stayed because I needed the money to pay off Lajos’ debt, but October was also helping me.” Jack returned and set Harley’s coffee in front of her taking the seat next to his wife. Harley smiled. “Bea was just explaining why she was working at the fight club.”

Bea smiled, hesitated, took a breath. “I...the accident...something happened to me and now I can do things?”

Jack slid his sunglasses down to looked at the green haired woman over the top of his glasses. “Things?”

Bea blinked seeing the unusual shade of blue that was Jack’s eyes. He smiled at her. “Do tell my dear, what things?”

Bea stared at the two of them and it was clear she was weighing something in her mind. She sighed, chewing her bottom lip for a moment before she cupped the finger of one hand with the other and held it across the table. Jack and Harley leaned in close to look at her finger and both of the gasped in surprise as green flame engulfed Bea’s finger. She held it for a breath, then just a quickly the flame disappeared.

Jack giggled. “Oh now, that is neat!”

Harley picked up her coffee with a grin. “So, that’s your little problem?” Bea nodded. “I can’t control it very well, only in small doses like that. Dr. October was helping me not just figuring out what I can do, but helping me with controlling the flame.”

Jack sipped his coffee. “So how much fire can you produce?”

“Only my hands, but Dr. October thinks I could do more.” Bea picked up her coffee cup.

Harley smiled. “So what would it take for you to join our little family unit Bea?”

Bea looked between them. “If you can get me out from under Falcone, and my brother’s debt, I’m yours.”

Jack chuckled. “I think we might be able to help you out there my dear and appropriately named Firebug. I have a little job planned that will not only bring Falcone to his knees, but will announce to all of Gotham that there is a new threat in town, a new family of clowns in Gotham’s circus.”

Jack glanced at Harley over the top of his sunglasses, the two of them sharing a chuckle.

Bea looked between them, but Harley put her coffee down and pulled her purse onto her lap. She opened it and rummaged inside before she pulled out a card and handed it to Bea.

Bea took the card and examined it. The card looked like a joker playing card with the bright image of
a laughing clown with red lips and green hair. On the back of the image was an address.

Jack stood, took Harley’s hand and gently pulled her to her feet.

“Come to that address this evening and you can meet the rest of the family, my dear.” Jack pulled Harley against him. Jack turned his face to gaze at Harley. “I think you will find we are all a rather close knit group.”

Harley giggled and traced Jack’s bottom lip with her finger. He turned and nodded to Bea. “We hope we see you there darling.”

Harley waved. “See you soon!”

Bea watched them go with a small smile. Maybe wrestling with Harley had been just the thing she needed.

*

Bruce was dressed casually in black slacks and a white dress shirt, the sleeves of which were rolled up. His simple oxfords barely made a noise as he walked down the stairs into the Batcave, carefully balancing a tray with a plate of chocolate chip cookies on it and two glasses of milk. He was greeted by the sounds of keys clicking. Barbara Pennyworth looked far younger than Dick at the moment, in a pair of rolled up jeans and a long sleeve black and white striped top. She had on a pair of white tennis shoes, her red hair styled around her face and sat at the wall of computers, her fingers flying over the keyboard, her eyes darting among the multiple screens. She looked intense with a slight frown on her lips, her nose wrinkled as she worked. Bruce could see by the images on the screens that she was doing research on Wayne Tech.

Bruce smiled. Barbara he was a lovely young woman, sweet, friendly and determined. He could see a lot of her uncle’s fire in her as she read over police reports, studied the few cases he had solved as Batman, read over the specs for his equipment, vehicles, familiarizing herself with all his tech and his journal entries, reports on his encounters as Batman. But there was one thing that wasn’t in the files that he felt he should talk to her about.

Bruce walked over, set the tray down between them though not in her space, pulled the second desk chair out and sat down. Barbara didn’t startle at all. She just smiled, her eyes roaming over a file.

“It looks like you are slowly tackling bigger and bigger crimes, almost like you are circling the mob...or at least that’s what an amateur sleuth might deduce from the crimes you have gone after in recent months, say--the last eight.” Barbara turned to look at him. “You have a plan to go after the big crime families in Gotham or is it just coincidence?” She spun the chair around to face him, the front tips of her shoes on the floor while moving the chair back and forth.

“I’m not sure,” Bruce admitted softly. “There are other issues to consider. For each head I cut off, another, potentially more dangerous one takes its place. If I could cut off the main head, perhaps, I might make a major difference, but when there is a power vacuum, there is always someone who likes to fill it. I just have to be satisfied with the little progress I’m making now, but I hope to cut off the main head soon.” Bruce spoke with a firm rod of steel in his voice.

“So what you’re saying is that you’re not sure you want to take out Falcone?” Barbara asked reaching over for one of the cookies and grabbing her glass of milk.

Bruce nodded, also picking up a cookie. “I’m not sure if taking out Falcone would be the best thing for Gotham no...there are a lot of elements worse than Falcone who could step into the void left by
his absence.” Bruce took a bite of his cookie and chewed thoughtfully before he swallowed. He picked up his glass of milk and took a sip before he spoke again. “I came down here to tell you something that I felt might be important for you to know if you are going to be working for me.”

Barbara lifted her brows in question as she took another bite of cookie.

Bruce sighed. “I’m assuming Alfred gave you the public version of events regarding what happened to Wayne Manor?”

Barbara nodded. “Yeah, something about a gas leak…”

Bruce nodded. “That truth is, it wasn’t a gas leak. It was my brother.”

Barbara frowned. “Your brother? I thought your brother died in a boating accident or something…”

Bruce sighed and set the half eaten cookie down. He rubbed his hands along his thighs before he spoke. “My brother...Jack...I thought he was dead, I really did. I was there when it happened...as Batman. I was investigating activity at a chemical factory, and he was there.” Bruce closed his eyes for a moment. “My brother was involved in criminal activity. I don’t know the extent of it, only that he was deeper involved than I realized. We fought, he fell over the edge of a railing. I caught him, but then...I let him go and he felt into a vat of acid. His wife was there as well. She threw herself in after him. I thought Jack was dead...I thought they were both dead, but Jack…” Bruce looked at Barbara as he spoke. “He wasn’t dead, though he was changed. I can’t explain it, but...he is alive. He came to the manor and he is the one who burned it down. Jack destroyed our home to get back at me for what happened...for what happened to his wife...” Bruce’s voice broke.

Barbara looked stricken, the color drained from her face, but she waited, letting Bruce collect himself.

Bruce took a deep breath through his nose and said softly. “That is why Alfred left. He was here when Jack arrived, spoke to my brother. I understand why Alfred left...Jack was like a son to him...we both are...were...and seeing how Jack had changed...” Bruce shook his head. “Anyway, I thought you should know the truth about me, about what happened and why Alfred left.”

Barbara didn’t say anything. She wanted to, she had so many questions to ask, there was so much that Bruce wasn’t telling her that she wanted to know, but she was smart enough to realize now wasn’t the time. She would have to save her questions for another time.

“Thank you for telling me,” she said softly.

Bruce shrugged. “I just, I didn’t want you working for me under false pretenses, I needed you to know the truth. I drove Alfred away...Jack and me both.”

Barbara frowned then said softly. “Family is hard. I mean, no one’s got a perfect family. So you and your brother got some drama...maybe you can work it out, but even if you don’t, family sometimes is the people to choose not that people you’re related to.”

Bruce looked up at her and smiled. “Thank you Barbara.”

“Pfft, call me Babs.” She turned picking up another cookie.

Bruce smiled. “Babs.”

*
Dressed only in her black bra and panties, Harley sat cross-legged on their bed watching her husband get dressed. Tonight was going to be the first meeting for the new gang, Joker’s gang (and ostensibly, Harley’s) and Jack seemed rather concerned with how he was going to dress. He wanted to present the new him in a certain light, a new image...plus, he was also concerned about his plan to kidnap Falcone’s son, Mario. Jack had explained his plan to Harley as: kidnap Mario and make an announcement to Gotham; to challenge Batman to come and rescue the son of Gotham’s most notorious criminal, the head of all the crime families in Gotham; and to make Batman feel the sting of failure.

Jack giggled to himself as he adjusted his tie. The suit he had chosen for tonight was a dark purple three piece suit with gold accents in the threading, an asymmetrical four pocket vest in an even darker shade of purple on the edge of being black with a silver chain that ran across Jack’s abdomen. The shirt underneath was white and the tie he had chosen, held in place by a silver tie pin, was a shade of blue that almost perfectly matched his eyes, with a pair of sharply pointed black and purple oxfords.

Jack ran the palms of his hands carefully over his green hair that was slicked back as he inspected the suit.

Harley smiled, watching Jack as he looked at himself in the mirror. “Alex did such a good job with your suits,” she said with a smile.

Jack chuckled running a hand down the front of his jacket. “I have to admit, for a man who thinks holey jeans are the height of fashion, he did a fine job. I only told him where to go and a list of colors I liked; my friend did the rest and he did well.”

Jack turned and threw his hands out. “You like?”

Harley giggled. “Oh, I like very much puddin. Purple is a gorgeous color on you.”

Jack’s smile spread across his face. “Mm...I will always take compliments from the woman I love. Help me with my lipstick sweets, then you should probably get dressed, not that I have any issue at all with your current state of undress, but no sense distracting the gang,” he said with a wink.

Harley giggled, hopped up off the bed, and hurried over to her makeup. She quickly searched through her lipsticks until she came up with the one she was looking for, a shade of red lipstick called “On Fire.” She moved over to Jack and stood in front of him on her tiptoes. She held his chin in her hand as she applied the color to his lips.

“So, how are we going to kidnap this Mario guy?” Harley asked, her attention on his lips.

Jack waited, his blue eyes following hers until she was finished before he pressed his lips together rubbing the color on his lips. He loved the expression she made when she was intent on a task--determined and cute.

“I have no idea. I’m hoping that your other new friend, Dr. October, shows up with Bane and that our new little Firebug might have some ideas too. Once we have our little worm, I know exactly how to set the trap for Falcone...and a little introduction to Gotham. And to the Batman, of course.” Jack smiled with a little crook at the corner of his mouth. “I also have a little idea that I’m rolling around about paying Bruce a visit soon. But first...Mario.”

Harley smiled. “I do like that color on you.”

Jack purred pulling her close, pressing her nearly naked body up against his while his hands slid
down to cup her rear. “I think later I’m going to see how well this lipstick stays after some vigorous bowl licking.” He grinned and lifted his non-existent brows at her.

Harley began to giggled and playfully smacked his shoulder. “Puddin!”


Harley shivered with a blush. “I better get dressed.”

Jack brushed his nose against hers. “Yes, I suppose you should, but later…” He kissed her deeply, his tongue sliding into her mouth and he dipped her back. Harley nearly purred with pleasure, her fingers pressed into his shoulder. He set her back on her feet and slowly stepped back, but when she hurried to the closet he gave her rear a light, playful smack.

Harley squeaked and laughed as she hurried over to the closet. She pulled it open and reached for the dress she had hanging on the back of the door, a little black skater dress with button short sleeves and peek-a-boo sheer mesh panel that made up the top of the dress, sleeves and the back with a little velvet collar and velvet ends to the short sleeves. She pulled out a pair of red suede flats with black laces on the side. Jack watched her intently as she dressed, as she slipped the dress on over her head, then pulled the flats on. She sat down at her vanity and started to brush out her hair, parted it, pulled some of it back into a ponytail. Harley then used two of her fingers to roll up the front of her hair to the side in two large victory curls. She pinned them in place, then pulled out the ponytail. She next fluffed out the rest of her white locks so they cascaded down the sides of her head and draped over her shoulders.

Jack smiled all while watching her; he liked watching her dress, do her hair, put on her makeup. He took a deep breath. There was something sexy about watching her dress that was almost as alluring as getting her out of her clothing. As he gazed at her, Jack realized how hollow his life would have been if he hadn’t found her again...just simple things like watching her dress would have been lost...for a moment Jack was almost overwhelmed by that hollow, lost feeling, that emptiness that would have existed in him without her; almost immediately that feeling of hollowness twisted into anger, anger at the world, but mostly, anger at his brother. Bruce would never understand, never truly understand what he had tried to do to Jack. So many times he had tried to take Harley away from him and then he succeeded. The fact was that he now knew that Bruce didn’t love him, had never loved him. If Bruce cared about him he would never have done what he did...he wouldn’t have kept his secrets, he wouldn’t have tried to take Harley...he wouldn’t have let him die all for that...kid he had taken under his wing. If Bruce loved his brother, he would never have replaced him.

Harley had leaned forward, glancing at her husband in the mirror as she started to paint her lips with black lipstick. She noticed that Jack wasn’t watching her any longer, his eyes had gotten this far off look. From her vantage point, she would swear she could see them change from bright blue to almost white. Jack’s lips twitched and she could see tension in his jaw. She quickly stood up, hurrying over to him.

“Puddin? Jack--Joker?” She whispered in concern, her fingers gently glided over his cheeks as she tried to get him to focus on her.

“Puddin, come back, please,” Harley whispered, her voice laced with worry.

Just when she was beginning to think something was very wrong, Jack’s eyes snapped over to hers and he giggled. “Hey there pumpkin, you ready?”

Harley frowned with a question in her eyes. “Puddin?”
Jack smiled wrapping his arms around her waist and pulled her up against him. “What’s wrong sweets?” He frowned. “You only did half your lipstick…”

Harley looked confused as she gazed at him then said softly. “It’s nothing.”

Jack kissed her nose. “Go finish putting on your face sweets, then lets get downstairs.”

Harley nodded with only a slight frown and a confused look, but she said nothing, returning to her chair to finish with her lipstick.

* 

The downstairs of their home was crowded with everyone in attendance, including the members of the Red Hood gang, Bea, Zsasz (who it was clear to Harley at least, was completely smitten with Bea), Frost, Agatha, and Alex.

Harley came in from the kitchen carrying a tray with a variety of drinks, from a couple of mugs of coffee, two Smirnoff Cherry Blasts (which Harley was very proud of herself for making), a hot chocolate and some butter rum cocktails. She was in the middle of passing out the drinks when there was a knock at the door.

Jack, who had been sitting on the couch talking to Jason about the latest “bust” that the Red Hood gang had performed, grinned brightly as he pushed himself up. “That must be Bane and the good doctor!”

He hurried to the door and pulled it open. Bane, without his mask and wearing a simple t-shirt that seemed to be stretched to its limits and a pair of jeans, filled the doorway. It was clear the man was bigger than he used to be, taller, broader. His muscles, even with the t-shirt he wore, were more defined, more noticeable. Jack guessed that his friend had gained quite a few inches in height and perhaps a hundred pounds at least. When Bane saw Jack, his expression went from a sort of neutral state into a full blown smile. Bane grabbed Jack, wrapped his big hands around the thinner man’s upper arms and lifted him off his feet and into a tight bear hug. Jack only had enough time to respond with a slight, “Ah!” sound before he was being hugged by the bear of a man.

Harley giggled pressing her lips together on a wide smile.

Jack’s arms were pinned to his side as Bane hugged him, pressing Jack against his chest and rocking Jack back and forth. Jack grinned the entire time.

“Shit man, I thought you were dead!” Bane said loudly with a hitch in his voice. Harley noticed that his voice sounded rougher, deeper than it had been before she and her puddin had died. Bane squeezed Jack tight. “Fuck man...it killed me to think we had lost you both. I just...it hurt man...it hurt…” Bane said more quietly.

Jack groaned his head thrown back, his tongue sticking out dramatically. “Can’t breathe! Going to die again…”

Bane laughed though Harley noted his laughter didn’t contain that free open sound it had had before, like something was stilted in him. It hurt her to hear him sounding so different. She would have to find out more details about what happened to him, about the drug Viktoria said he was addicted to...and maybe there was a way for Jack to help him.

Bane chuckled giving Jack another squeeze. “Sorry buddy.”

Bane placed Jack back down on his feet though he kept a hold of Jack’s upper arms looking him
over. Bane grinned as he spoke. “I like the green hair dude, not sure about the lack of eyebrows, but you manage to make it look good.”

Jack smiled. “What can I say, I’m a leader in fashion. Soon all the kids will be throwing themselves into vats of acid to achieve this look.”

Bane snorted. “Glad to see an acid bath hasn’t harmed your sense of humor any.”

Jack laughed. “Never my friend, never.”

Bane laughed with Jack as he turned and looked into the room, his gazed distracted when he saw Harley.

“Harley!!” He grinned at the pale woman.

Jack just barely got himself out of the way in time as Bane barreled into the room and grabbed Harley, causing her to drop her tray (thank goodness she had gotten all the drinks off of it she thought) as he lifted her off her feet and pressed her against him in a heavy hug.

“There’s my sweetheart!!” Bane laughed, though still not with the same freedom as he had had before. It was clear to the doctor part of Harley that Bane had been through some trying events that had changed him since their deaths. She wondered if she could convince Harleen to talk to Bane, or if she could convince Bane to talk to Harleen, maybe work through what he had gone through since their deaths...Harley let the thought go as Bane squeezed her tight, the big man hugged and pressed her against his chest, rocking her a bit as he did so.

“Damn girl.” Bane choked a little. “I’m so damn glad to see you alive, to see you both alive.” He sniffed. “About killed me when you two were gone, but now...look at you!” Bane grinned. “You both look good, a lot more white than I remember, but all you white people look the same to me.”

Harley giggled wrapping her arms around Bane as best she could and hugged him back. “So glad to see you back.”

Jack snorted from behind Bane at the white comment as he walked around and again took his place on the couch watching Bane and Harley with an amused and pleased grin.

Bane smiled down at Harley. “You look spectacular Harley, pretty as an angel. I love the hair, suits you.”

Harley giggled. “You look good too Bane. A lot bigger than I remember.”

Bane nodded. “Yeah, seems we all been through a few changes.”

Bane chuckled setting Harley delicately on her feet, glancing toward Jack, then back to Harley with a smile before turning his gaze to look at everyone in the room, taking in each member of the gang. “God damn, it's so good to see you all again.”

Jason had stood up and reached over taking Bane’s hand with a smile. “Good to see you big guy.”

Bane chuckled and yanked a startled Jason into his embrace giving the young man a hug and ruffling his hair. He had just released Jason when Trope, (her hair dyed purple with blue bangs) who had been waiting patiently, jumped up from where she had been sitting on Thea’s lap and hurried over, throwing her arms around Bane. “I’ve missed you.”

“Hey sweetheart!” Bane wrapped an arm around her and motioned for Thea (whose entire head of
hair was a light sky blue) to come over with the other. Thea leapt up and rushed over, both women wrapping their arms around Bane.

Bane hugged them both with a gentle laugh. “There are my girls. I miss my two unicorn sisters.”

The two women laughed. Trope looked up at him. “Unicorn sisters?”

Bane grinned. “That’s how I always thought of you two...with the hair and all.”

He shrugged slightly embarrassed, but the two young women simply hugged him in response.

He sighed, let them go, and turned toward Viktoria who had come in and closed the door behind her, but stayed where she was by the front door while Bane greeted everyone. She had a soft expression in her eyes, a cross between being pleased and upset as she watched Bane with his adopted family. He had spoken to her about these people when he had been able to, about how they had met, the feeling of family he had received from them, a feeling that hadn’t been part of his life much for many years. She had felt how deeply Bane cared about these people and how acutely their loss had affected him. She had tried to encourage him to reconnect with those who were still alive, but he had told her after the death of their group’s leaders, and his new condition, he just hadn’t felt right about seeing them. But now, with the two main people alive, Bane had been eager to return home.

Bane motioned to her. “Guys, I want you to meet Dr. Viktoria October. This woman saved my life in more ways than one.”

Viktoria blushed. She looked like a professional in a simple black pencil skirt with a dark blue blouse and a pair of simple matching pumps. “Bane…” she began, but Bane grinned and walked back toward her and put his arm around her shoulders. He pulled her against his side affectionately. “Hey it's true!” he said with a smile. “If not for you, I don’t think I would have made it.”

He gave her shoulders a squeeze. “You not only saved me from dying, but you’ve saved my heart too.” He gave her a soft smile Harley noted, a smile filled with tenderness. Oh yeah Harley thought. Bane was in love.

Viktoria blushed tucking a lock of her hair behind her ear as she glanced down, slightly embarrassed. Bane grinned looking at everyone in the room.

“This drug she came up with, it saved my life.”

Viktoria murmured. “It’s also made you an addict.”

Bane snorted. “Honey, that’s a small price to pay.”

There was an awkward silence until Harley motioned them in. “Grab a seat you two, you’re part of the family now. Oh Bane, Viktoria, let me introduce Bea, who I’m assuming you already know as Firebug, our newest family member.”

Bea smiled from where she sat on one of the kitchen chairs, a drink in her hand. “Hey Bane, Vik.”

Viktoria looked surprised. “You’re here?”

Bea shrugged. “Hey don’t look so surprised, I hate Falcone as much as you do.”

Bane nodded. “Nice to see you Bea and glad to know we aren’t the only ones with a Falcone issue.”

Bea laughed. “Yeah, well we all have an issue with Falcone.”
Bane leaned against the wall. Viktoria moved to stand near him. Bane rested a hand on her shoulder as he turned his attention to Jack. “So, Viktoria said you wanted to help us get out from under Falcone?”

Jack nodded. “That’s right. My plan is to wear Falcone down into a whimpering mess of a man, then I’m going to kill him. A slow, fun destruction with the added bonus, I’m going to do it all in front of Batman...and Gotham gets to meet their new, soon-to-be favorite criminal, The Joker and his gang of Jokesters…” Jack tapped his chin. “Though on second thought we can work on that name.” Jack laughed.

Alex took a sip of his drink. “So, what’s the plan?”

“We are going to kidnap Falcone’s son Mario and kill him on live television!” Jack said proudly.

Everyone was quiet for a moment. Harley, who had walked over and sat on her husband’s lap, glanced around. Everyone seemed to be slightly in shock by the idea, but she smiled when she realized no one looked against it either.

Alex whistled. “That is one fucking bold move...Joker.”

Jack grinned. “I know. I thought it might be a nice way not only to announce ourselves to Gotham, but to let the mobsters know we’re coming for them AND to let Batman know we mean business. We are going to wipe Gotham free of it’s mob influence and replace it with us, but now we are going to do so on a much larger, much grander scale. It’s going to be fun!! And in the process we are going to needle Batman until I finally kill him.”

Bane frowned. “We’re going after the Batman too?”

Jack laughed. “Oh, you don’t know the news do you my friend?”

Bane frowned deeper. “Well, I know it was Batman you were fighting when you...died.”

Jack nodded and leaned forward, a maniacal grin on his face his blue eyes dancing with a strange mirth that was somewhere between humor and murder. “Yes, yes, but did you know, my dear friend, that Batman is none other than Gotham’s favorite playboy...Bruce Wayne?”

Bane blinked in confusion. “What? But...ain’t Bruce Wayne your brother?”

Jack giggled, his eyes gleefully manic. “The very same! Isn’t it delightful?”

Jack started to laugh, but the laughter was strained and haunting, sending chills up the spines of everyone here. Jack leaned back, continuing to laugh until he had to reach up with his fingers to wipe the tears from his eyes. “It’s the best joke EVER!” He snorted on a little giggle.

Harley had her arm around Jack’s shoulders. She stroked her fingers through the fine short hairs at the back of his neck while he laughed. She could feel the subtle shift in her husband, the tensing of his muscles as he spoke of his brother, then the strange relaxing of his shoulders as he giggled. This close and knowing her lover, she could hear the sorrow in his laughter, the pain that his humor was masking. Jack was hurting, deeply, deeper than maybe even she could heal.

She leaned close, placed a kiss against his ear, then another at his temple. Jack relaxed more, his giggles easing, his eyes drifting slightly as he leaned into her kisses. He stroked his hand that was resting on her knees gently along her leg. Jack turned his blue eyes on her. She could see he was thankful for her attention, bringing him back from the edge he was teetering on, and his giggles died down until only a slightly manic smile remained. He grinned and caught her chin with his long, agile
fingers and tenderly guided her mouth to his where he kissed her passionately, his tongue sliding into her mouth, forgetting about anyone else that was in the room as he delved into her mouth to let the warmth and passion that she created him in burn away the pain that was mixed with his love for his brother.

Jack bit her bottom lip with a growl tugging back playfully, now back to his more usual calm.

Harley reached into his jacket and pulled out Jack’s package of cigarettes and his lighter. She smiled as she placed the cigarette between her lips. Her thumb rubbed over the lighter, frowning only slightly. She missed the lighter she had stolen for him...gone now...she would have to get him another special lighter she thought, a Joker lighter. Jack watched her as she lit his cigarette. She clicked the lighter closed, held the cigarette between her fingers as she took a deep drag on it. The smoke didn’t burn down her throat and into her lungs like it used to do; the burn was still there, but muted. It was something to think about another time she thought as she smiled at her husband, taking the cigarette and gently placing it between Jack’s waiting lips. She blew the smoke out slowly. The smoke rolled along and caressed Jack cheek. He smiled lazily, removed the cigarette from his mouth and tugged Harley close. He kissed her. Harley made a soft sound of pleasure before she pulled gently away and laid her head against his with a whispered.

“You all right now puddin’?”

Jack smiled. “Yes my pumpkin, much better.”

He sighed contentedly and turned his attention back to the room of people who waited patiently.

Bane spoke first with a shake of his head. “So you’re telling me it was your brother that let you fall?”

“Oh Bane sweetie, he didn’t just let me fall, he dropped me on purpose.” Jack replied with a smile as smoke slowly rolled from between his lips. “He was holding me and simply let me go.”

Bane started at Jack, then muttered. “That is fucking cold.”

Jack shrugged. “No one can hurt you the way family can.” Jack said quietly before he smile. "Ah well, as they say: family is the people you choose and I have chosen all of you.”

Harley knew Jack meant that, but she also knew that Bruce had cut his brother so deeply that Jack would never recover, not until Bruce was dead...and perhaps not even then. Harley was sure that what Bruce had done to Jack would never and could never been repaired.

Bea looked confused. “Bruce Wayne is Batman? Is that what you’re saying...and he’s your brother, so that makes you…”

“The late great Jack Wayne. That is who I was--Bruce Wayne’s younger, insane and always in trouble little brother.” Jack said softly. “But Jack Wayne died a horrible death at the hands of Batman. I on the other hand, have been resurrected as the Joker.” He tilted his head at Bea, and the smile on his face grew just a little as he twisted his hand elegantly and bowed his head.

He smiled sweetly and rested his chin in the palm of his hand. “Is that going to be a problem Firebug?”

Bea put her hands up. “No, hell no. Family is complicated, so yeah...I mean no. You don’t have to worry about me telling anyone anything.”

Jack smiled just a little wider yet. “Oh good. Now boys and girls, we need a plan on picking up our little worm.”
Viktoria held up her hand a little hesitantly. Everyone turned to look at her. Under the scrutiny of the assembled people, she felt growing anxiety, but quietly said, “Um…I have an idea of where you can easily take Mario from.”

Jack grinned. “Oh do tell! Share with the class!”

Viktoria frowned slightly, but continued. “Mario likes to party. He has a fiance, but he likes to party without her nearly every night at this club owned by his father, though I don’t think Falcone has ever stepped foot in there. The club he likes to go to, Inferno, it has this gimmick where the staff wear horns and fangs, but Mario hangs out in the VIP section known as The Second Circle, where all the sex and drug use takes place. Anything you want want in terms of sex and drugs, can be found in Inferno’s Second Circle--anything goes. That is where Mario likes to spend his time nearly every night. The only reason I know anything about it is because I’ve been called out there to administer naloxone to that fool on more than one occasion. How Falcone’s idiot of a son is still alive is a medical miracle. Anyway, it’s a little bit of a BDSM sort of club.”

Jack’s smile was wickedly gleeful. “A nightclub, really? How interesting.”

He leaned back pulling Harley close. “How would you feel about a night on the town my sweets?”

Two nights later, Trogg, dressed in an all black suit and trying his best to look good and professional, was hurrying into the Inferno. The red, pink and purple neon that made up the sign of Inferno pulsed in the wet Gotham night. The rain made the colors of the sign dance along the sidewalk and the liquid darkness of the asphalt. The color choice always bugged him about this place. It was called Inferno, shouldn’t the lights be red and orange or something? Trogg shook his hair as he got out of the limousine he had been driving and opened the back door.

Four scantily clad young women, none older than twenty-three, all slid out of the car giggling. Each one of them was a paid escort, all paid for by Mario. Trogg leered at the women as he motioned at the club.

“Follow me ladies.” Trogg turned and headed to the door. There was a long line, wrapping around the corner of the building with people all waiting to try to get into the dance club. Trogg grinned, noting plenty of beautiful women were waiting. Trogg narrowed his eyes, picking out half a dozen as he walked swiftly up to the bouncer, the four escorts hurrying along behind him.

The bouncer on duty tonight was a man named Daniel who had the typical bouncer build, tall, his chest and shoulders muscled and wide enough that any major league football team would have been pleased for a chance to get a hold of him. He was dressed all in black too, black slacks, black t-shirt with the name of the club blazoned across it in bright pink and purple; the shirt looked as if it was struggling to keep all of Daniel inside. Daniel’s blonde hair was cut in a ducktail with just the hint of a mustache across his upper lip.

As Trogg came closer Daniel nodded. “Hey Trogg.”

Trogg laughed. “Hey Daniel.” He motioned the young man closer. Daniel knew the drill and leaned down as Trogg hissed. “Four blondes, a brunette and two blacks girls, they are all within the first twenty, send them all to the Second Circle, got it?”

Daniel nodded then grinned. “Mr. Mario feeling good tonight?”

Trogg chuckled. “Yeah he is. He is planning on partying until the wee hours.”
Daniel laughed. “I don’t know how that man walks straight, let alone stays engaged.”

Trogg shrugged. “The privileges of money.”

Daniel unhooked the rope behind him and stepped aside as Trogg led the young ladies behind him in. Daniel gave the women a wink. “You girls have a good time.”

They all tittered and laughed following Trogg into the club.

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Just a little ways down the street, Frost opened the car door and Jack slipped out. He was dressed in a black silk shirt, no tie, the buttons undone to the middle of his chest. He had on a pair of black slacks and a vest of purple and gold with a pair of gold and purple sharp pointed toe oxfords. He grinned, his lips blood red as he ran his hands over his hair, making sure the green locks were slicked back. He then turned and reached in to take Harley’s hand and gently pulled her out of the car.

She stood up with a smile. She was wearing a dress so tight that it looked like it was actually painted on her and not a cloth dress at all. The dress was short, black and sleeveless with asymmetrical straps over one shoulder, a deep cut out over her breasts that showed of her cleavage, the left side was a line of cutouts that started right under her breast and made their way down the entire length of her torso, showing off the fact that she was clearly not wearing any underwear. She had on a pair of stilettos with heels sharp enough to be weapons that faded from blood red to black. Her white hair hung down in rolling waves down her back.

Jack slipped his arm around Harley’s waist with a bright grin.

“Ready to paint the town red my sweets?”

Harley giggled. “Definitely.”
Safe Word

Harley frowned as she gazed around the inside of Inferno, illuminated with pink and blue lights that mixed strangely with the thick, red velvet decor and made the place feel cramped--and, she thought, that was not even accounting for the high quantity of people inside.

There were several poles scattered throughout the room on small, round elevated stages where a single person--some male, some female, and some indeterminate--danced. The floor was a slick shiny red that melded into what looked to be some thick red and gold carpet; though it was difficult to tell with the weird lighting and all the people moving about. There was a main bar draped in red velvet looking curtains that wrapped around the bar with red leather topped stools. There were red cushioned chairs as well as giant red “X’s” reminding Harley of weird crosses that ran around the outside of the club, each one with someone strapped to them arms and legs spread.

The sound of Sisters of Mercy’s “My Corrosion” was playing loud enough that the air felt like it was vibrating with its own life. Men and women were walking around the place with trays of drinks, dressed in black, shiny rubber and leather, each of them wearing chains, masks, and with exposed pierced nipples or other pierced parts of themselves exposed. There were people with whips, people in full rubber outfits with only their eyes and mouths exposed, people wearing only chains with piercings all over their bodies. Some patrons were wearing only buckles or ropes, there were people on leashes, some carrying and dancing with whips, but lastly there were the “regular” people crowded onto the dance floor or in chairs and booths drinking and watching other dancers.

As Harley looked around with slightly wide eyes, she noted that there were stairs that led up into a separate section that was cordoned off by a velvet rope and guarded by two large men dressed in black suits with leather or lace masks across their eyes. There was a kaleidoscope of lights that could be seen from that upper level, and a few scantily clad women and men going up and down the stairs, but other than that she couldn’t see anything else. She did notice that occasionally someone would come down the stairs, either a man or a woman, the man wearing nothing but a pair of leather pants, with biker boots, and the woman dressed in a spiked leather harness bra and a collar harness with a waist leg garter harness and a pair of fetish boots that looked like horse hooves. They would mingle on the dance floor and pick a few people out, and then lead them upstairs.

Jack stood for a moment, taking in the scene around him. He narrowed his eyes and wrinkled his nose as his gaze wandered over the club just before he broke out into a wide grin. “This place seems nice.”


Jack chuckled and bumped her hip with his. “Why do I feel like my aunt would know a lot more about this sort of thing than I’m comfortable with knowing she knows?” He shivered at the thought of his aunt and Frost in rubber suits and chains.

Harley giggled again. “Your aunt is very...cosmopolitan, puddin.”

Jack looked contemplative, he suddenly had an image of his aunt in black leather with a whip and Frost tied to one of the X-shaped crosses while his aunt whipped him. Jack’s eyes widened, followed by him making a goofy face just before he grabbed his wife’s hand. “I have far too vivid of an imagination sweets. I need a drink to chase away that image I just gave to myself!” He shuddered. “Going to give myself nightmares!”

Harley giggled as she was hauled across the room with Jack shoving people out of his way as he
pushed through the crowd to the bar. Half these people were likely masochists anyway, Jack mused. They probably enjoyed a good shove.

When they arrived at the bar, Jack turned and grabbed Harley by the waist, lifting her up and setting her on one of the red stools. He smiled, kissing the tip of her nose which made Harley smile before he turned to get the bartender's attention.

One of the three bartenders working stepped over, a young woman wearing a black leather halter top and flared mini skirt. Her blood red hair was pulled up and back into a high ponytail with a chain that ran from her pierced nose to her ear; both ears were heavily pierced, and her chin was tattooed with a design from under her bottom lip to wrap under her chin, but her smile was sweet making her look more adorable than edgy.

“Hey, love the look, man.” She smiled looking between the two of them. “Very cool and unique, the white, white skin and I love the shade of green your hair is too.” She leaned close to Harley and gasped. “Your hair is so white! I’ve never seen anyone get their hair that shade of white, like snow. Gorgeous!”

Harley giggled and smiled. If the girl only knew. “Thank you.”

The bartender grinned as she stood back up. “So, what can I get you two?”

Jack grinned glancing at his wife. “Why thank you darling--my wife and I do try to look good. So what’s your name sweetheart?”

“You can call me Wanda.”

Jack purred, leaning his elbows on the counter. “Well aren’t you just sweet. Wanda--what a delightful name. Don’t you think that’s a delightful name Harley?” Jack smiled at his wife.

Harley giggled. “Oh it's just lovely, just like you Wanda.”

Wanda laughed, showing dimples in her cheeks. “Thank you.”

Jack grinned, his red lipstick making his teeth that much whiter. “And what, Wanda dear, would you recommend for my lady and me to drink?”

Wanda thought for a moment, then smiled. “Well, I would recommend one of our signature drinks called a BDSM; it has dark cacao liqueur, maraschino liqueur, whipped cream and a cherry on top.”

Jack chuckled. “Sounds delightful. What do you think pumpkin?”

Jack turned his attention to Harley who grinned. “Sounds fantastic.”

Wanda nodded. “Two BDSM’s coming right up.”

As the bartender moved out of the way to make their drink, Jack hopped up onto the stool next to Harley and spun around to look out onto the room, his gaze going up to the upper floor.

“Hmm...how should we get up there sweets?”

Harley had been watching the people that moved up and down the stairs; they were all good looking people, people who stood out. Harley’s attention was momentarily drawn to the door as she saw Frost enter (Agatha was still not on top of her game and while she had wanted to come along, Jack had convinced her to stay with Trope and Thea tonight and help them with Jack’s little project.)
Zsasz came in right behind Frost, and a few seconds later she saw Jason, their little team...with Bane waiting to be called in later...were all here. Harley watched as Zsasz headed over to where a demonstration was going on that seemed to be about whipping. Jason headed onto the dance floor, immediately blending in with the other dancers, and Frost went to the other end of the bar.

Wanda returned a few moments later with their drinks, a three layered concoction of dark, clear, and whipped cream with the promised cherry on top. Harley giggled with delight picking up her drink. “OH it's pretty!”

Wanda laughed at Harley’s reaction. “Thank you. You two enjoy.”

Jack picked his drink up and gave Wanda a salute with it while Harley turned around to face the interior of the club, with her drink in hand. She giggled picking up the cherry and popping it into her mouth while moving her body to the music. Jack smiled at her, taking the cherry from his drink, rolled it in the whipped cream before he leaned over to trace her lips with it.

Harley grinned and opened her mouth just slightly, letting Jack trace her lips, her tongue snaking out to lick the cherry before Jack placed it between her lips. Harley caught the cherry with her teeth holding it as her blue eyes gazed lustfully at her husband before she rolled the cherry into her mouth.

Jack growled watching her.

Harley took a sip of her drink which tasted of bitterness mixed with sweet. She licked her lips glancing toward the top floor of the club again. Jack followed her gaze, then back to Harley. He could tell she had a plan to get them up to the Second Circle. She finished her drink just as the music changed, surprisingly switching to Donna Summer’s “I Feel Love.” The lights switched to a more disco feel, flashing with a strobe effect.

Harley hopped off her stool and took Jack’s hand. Jack quickly downed the rest of the drink as Harley dragged him onto the dance floor.

She turned to face her husband putting her arms over her head which pulled her snug dress up on her shapely legs as she began to twist and rock her hips. Jack grinned, placing his hands on her hips, his fingers stroking the skin exposed by the dress’s cutouts. He pulled her close as Harley lowered her arms, arching her body into his and rolling herself to the music, her shoulders back just a little. Jack leaned in close, his head touching hers as his hands slid up her hips then round to grab her rear. He pulled her against him, sliding a beg between hers which forced her dress up further. They rolled and undulated together to the sound of Donna Summer.

Harley giggled brushing her nose against Jack’s, bringing her arms up to slip around his neck and traced his mouth with her lips.

Jack brushed his red lips against hers, letting the beat of the music and his desire for his wife guide his movements. His hands snaked up her back, his body leaning into hers as he pressed his mouth to hers, his tongue sliding sensually into her mouth.

Harley groaned dragging her lips along his tongue, while her tongue twisted with his, her hands sliding along the back of his neck.

Jack pulled Harley up, then surprised her as he made her squeal by spinning her out, forcing several other dancers to scurry out of the way.

Harley let go of his hand and put her arms in the air again, rolling her hips as she spun around giving Jack a hungry look as she rolled her shoulders and her hips.
Jack watched her move, her body turning, her hips swaying to the music. She made his groin ache and his mouth water as his eyes raked over her with longing, taking in every detail of her body as she moved.

She spun around and arched her back, the figure hugging dress showing every curve of her body. She glanced over her shoulder at her husband with a coy look and purposely stuck her rear out toward Jack. Jack licked his red lips as he reached out and grabbed her hips, pressing his fingers into the soft flesh of her curves, finding the places where the cutouts left her skin exposed, stroking the satin flesh and wishing the fabric of the dress wasn’t between him and the rest of his wife’s skin. He tugged her back up against him, pressing his pelvis against her, rubbing just slightly to tease himself and her.

Harley’s eyes rolled with pleasure, her smile spreading across her face at feel of her husband’s hard bound erection against her backside. He made her body ache for him. She giggled as she arched back to drag her hands along his cheeks, thinking how she actually wouldn’t mind strapping him to a cross and having her way with him, then she stepped out of his reach.

Jack grabbed her hand before she was too far away, pulling her back against him. She bumped up against his chest. Jack’s eyes stole down to her breasts, pressed against the chest, grinned crookedly before he looked back up to meet her gaze. He gently caressed her arms, guiding them up to place her arms on his shoulders, his fingers dancing down her arms, caressing her skin softly, sending goosebumps along her skin, before he slid her hands into a classic tango position.

Harley’s lips curved into a grin as she looked into her husband’s blue eyes as he began to move her around the dance floor in the steps of a classic tango. He moved her gracefully in time to the sensual sounds of Donna Summer’s voice, dipping her back to lick her throat or nip her chin before he would spin her around again, holding her close to him.

Harley laid her cheek against his as he weaved in place for a moment before turning them both in a quick circle; her feet moved with his as if they had done this a hundred times before. He stared into her eyes, forgetting for a moment why they were here, where they were, and even the music playing; for this moment the only thing that Jack cared about was her, his girl, in his arms. Jack smiled at her and Harley felt her heart race as heat rushed through her body, burning with a liquid sensuality between her legs as she stared back into his bottomless, bright blue eyes.

Jack’s teeth shone in a broad smile as he gazed at her. His body ached with need for her, especially knowing how close he was to having her (she wore nothing under that dress.) All he had to do was lift the cloth a little further up. He groaned holding her tight, his siren, his angel, his madness all wrapped in one pretty package. He would die for her, kill for her, live for her. Jack dropped her hands to wrap his arms around her. He pulled her up against him delighting in the way her body felt flush against him, and just before he kissed her, he reached one hand into her hair, balling his hand into a fist, kissing her hard, letting his passion for her fuel his actions until Harley groaned and wrapped a leg around him. When her thigh came up and Jack grabbed her leg, lifting the limb against his hip, her foot bumped the handle of the gun that Jack had hem clipped to his slacks and pressed against his lower back. She smiled wickedly at the thought of what Jack was going to do with that gun. She knew her husband was also armed with a knife and poppers, which he thought would be funny. She giggled as her hands caressed the back of his neck, her husband the Joker.

*  

Their little dance had worked. Someone from upstairs in the Second Circle sent the young man and woman both down to fetch them to join the party above.

Frost saw the couple he had pinpointed earlier going around the club to tap people on the shoulder
and lead them up the stairs. He watched as they headed out onto the dance floor making a beeline
toward Joker and Harley. Frost glanced across the club to where he saw Zsasz sitting, a woman
wearing a pair of sparkling, disco ball influenced mouse ears on her head, a black mask and a leather
bikini was sitting on his lap kissing the top of his bald head leaving perfect red lip marks behind.
Frost smirked. It would have been hilarious if Frost had been a little more relaxed, but it wasn’t all
that amusing at the moment; this entire thing had him on edge. He would have felt better if they had
more people with them, if Jac...if Joker didn’t seem so unstable, and he knew Harley would simply
go along with whatever Joker did. Frost adored his Boss, but right now...He sighed with a small
shake of his head. At least they had an ace up their sleeves with Bane.

Frost sipped his drink, waiting for Zsasz to look over at him knowing the bald man, while quiet, was
always acutely alert. The bald man turned when he sensed eyes on him and nodded at Frost with a
small smile. Once Frost had Zsasz’s attention, he shifted his gaze to the couple from the Second
Circle. Zsasz followed Frost’s lead and his gaze turned toward the couple approaching Joker and
Harley.

Jack weaved in place, keeping Harley’s body pressed against his as he kissed her, exploring her
mouth with his tongue, his hands slipping down her torso to squeeze her rear. He growled softly
biting her bottom lip while pulling her harder against him. Harley rubbed against him until she
moaned, reaching down to grab his rear and tug him more firmly against her, her dress riding up.
They were both deeply into their dry lovemaking on the dancefloor when they were both tapped on
the shoulder. Jack licked Harley’s lips, his hands traveled back up her body, but he held her close,
unwilling to let her go before he turned to look at the leather and spike wearing couple.

The woman smiled. “I’m Mandolin, this is Saxophone. You’ve both been invited into the Second
Circle--if you’ll just follow me.”

Jack chuckled. “Mm, so who invited us?” he asked as he wrapped his arms around Harley’s waist,
lifting her off her feet as he continued to weave. Harley giggled grabbing his shoulders while Jack
playfully bit at her belly.

Mandolin simply smiled. “Our boss, the owner. He only selects the most interesting to join the
activities of the Circle.”

Jack grinned brightly then looked up at Harley. “So, what do you think sweets, shall we?”

Harley giggled as Jack slid her down his torso and placed her back on her feet before he took her
hand, kissing her knuckles. He stared at her with an amused grin.

“Sure thing puddin.” She giggled.

Jack noticed the man named Saxophone, who had been silent during the entire exchange, had
walked off. Jack followed the man briefly with his eyes and saw that he had headed over to tap
Jason’s shoulder which made Jack smile wider. Good, back up he thought as he and Harley followed
Mandolin to the stairs.

* 

The guards at the top of the stairs, looking like a matching set, similar builds, both dressed in black
with matching black masks and bald heads, unhooked the rope and stepped aside at their approach,
letting Jack, Harley and Jason enter the Second Circle.

In the Moment’s song “Blood” was playing loudly on this level as the three of them walked into the
Second Circle and looked around. The upstairs was painted all in red, with red and black marble
flooring, blood-red walls, and even the lighting had a reddish hue to it. There were several rows of red and black chairs, couches, some situated into little “private” sections where smaller parties were drinking and playing, clearly demonstrating that all activities were permissible in the Second Circle. There were women and men, some naked or wearing very little, dancing on tables. There was obvious sex going on that included whips, cuffs and other playthings, while waiters/waitress dressed in a wide variety of leather, rubber, and straps and chains, moved around carrying trays of drinks, and each one of them wore a mask over their eyes.

There were several large crystal chandeliers up here and hanging between them were two young men and a woman, all naked, tied up bondage style and swinging slowly, one with hooks clearly in his flesh helping to support him, although he looked to be in throes of ecstasy rather than pain.

Harley giggled and leaned close to her husband to whisper. “I wonder if they need dusting after hanging up there all night?”

Jack snorted and gave his wife a playful pinch.

Harley squeaked to Jack’s delight.

There was a large bar up here as well, but the three bartenders wore very little. One young woman who sported long pigtails that were in a rainbow of colors, wore a black leather corset with many buckles, straps that circled her bare breasts, and a black thong. The young man, whose head was buzzed shiny bald, worked next to her. He was dressed in a head-to-toe nylon bodysuit with only a section cut out for his mouth and another section for his crotch, though the young man’s penis was wrapped up tight in a stainless steel chastity cage. The last bartender was dressed in a sleeveless black rubber bodysuit with a black corset, sky high black boots, and a black military hat on her ink black bobbed hair. Unlike the room downstairs, this one had a few more toys on display. One wall along the back held a variety of toys, from whips, collars, and chains, to ball gags and crops, canes, paddles, feathered ticklers, to nipple clamps and restraints. Patrons and staff of the Second Circle would walk up to the wall and remove whatever it was that they wish to play with at the moment. There were the same X’s along the walls, all occupied by naked people getting whipped or paddled. There were a few “beds” where people were being tickled or teased with hot wax, whips or feathers.

A large dance area occupied a section between the more private areas and the bar where several people were dancing, a few doing a lot more than dancing, but no one seemed to notice or care.

Jack frowned slightly and leaned over to Harley. “Some of this looks fun, but I think I would rather do that in our room alone with you.”

Harley giggled. “You can tie me up any time puddin.”

Jack smirked at her when Mandolin tuned with a smile. “Everything here is open to you. As long as all parties are willing, anything is allowed in the Second Circle. Over there is our owner’s section, but only approach if he calls you.” Mandolin pointed to her left where they could see a circle of couches along the wall where a man who had to be approaching six hundred pounds sat, with a woman wearing nipple clamps and nothing else sat on one side and a man wearing only buckles—that didn’t cover anything—was on his other side.

“That is Mr. Lynch,” Mandolin said with a smile. “He welcomes you to enjoy all the Second Circle offers.” Mandolin motioned as she continued. “Over here is one of our prime members, Mr. Mario Falcone.” Mandolin pointed to the right and there was Mario, dressed in leather pants and a white flowery shirt looking like a cheap pirate. He was laughing at something as he tugged on the chain that dangled between a woman’s breasts while he sipped from a champagne glass. (Harley recognized him immediately from the pictures that they had found online, the man had that sort of
slimy demeanor that only men with too much money and too much time indulging their appetites had about them). Mario’s area was dominated by several women, several of whom were making out with each other. Jack noted that there was an occasional pretty young man mixed into the group. Jack grinned as he saw not just Mario, but Trogg sitting at the far end of the couch with a couple of women around him.

Jack chuckled to himself. Perfect; nothing like taking care of two things at once he thought to himself. He liked to multitask.

Mandolin smiled at the three of them. “Please make yourself at home, enjoy a drink at our bar, play with anything you like. Again--nothing is forbidden in the Second Circle.” With that, she and Saxophone strolled back over to Mr. Lynch’s side of the room.

Jack glanced at Jason who gave him a barely noticeable nod before he walked over to the bar. Jack took Harley’s hand, pulling her onto the dance floor.

“How do you wanna do this puddin’?” Harley asked as Jack tugged her along with her hand before he turned and spun her into his arms, her back pressed against his chest. He began to weave his hips as his hands glided over her breasts. He held her breasts, squeezing them together, feeling the warmth, the softness, the weight of them in his hands while pressing his pelvis against her rear, the two of them moving in sync.

Jack frowned softly, one hand running down her stomach. “Hmm...not sure pumpkin, let’s just see what happens.” Jack laughed softly as he leaned in to nibble her ear.

Harley smiled, her eyes fluttering as Jack spun her around. He yanked her up against him and slid his leg between hers again, causing her skirt to hike up her thighs all the way to her hips. His hands slid over her rear, grabbing her and yanking her close while he lifted her up slightly at the same time. Harley slid her leg up along his as Jack pulled her closer, their pelvises rubbing together, continuing their sensual dancing as the music rolled into K. Flay’s “Blood in the Cut.”

Jack rolled his hips slowly, moving down her body dragging his nose against her chest, snapping his teeth at her while his hands snaked down her side until he was in a crouch. He grinned then. He so much wanted to shove her dress up and bury his mouth against her sex, to flick his tongue against her and hear the music of her moans. Instead, he looked up at her sucking in his bottom with on his wide grin.

Harley smiled down at him, her hands sliding through his hair as she gently thrust her hips at him. She wanted him, wanted to feel his tongue on her, wanted to wrap her lips around him and suck on him, suck him deep into her mouth...

*  

Mario was laughing as he poured some champagne down the cleavage of one of the women he had bought for tonight. She giggled, arching back letting him lick the alcohol from her neck down to where it pooled between her breasts when he saw Harley on the dance floor. He stopped what he was doing to stare. He had never seen a woman like her, her skin like porcelain, her hair white enough that she was matching all the colors in the room. The black dress she wore stood out against the milk white of her skin. She looked like a goddess, an unreal creature, perfect and unblemished...she didn’t look quite real he thought. He saw the man she was dancing with, but only briefly, his full attention on the girl. She was unique and he liked to have unique things. There was one thing that Mario was good at and that was getting what he wanted, no matter how hard it was to get, no matter the price and if he couldn’t get it himself, he could also rely on his father to help him out.
It was amazing what money and power could get, he thought as he licked the champagne off his “date,” though his eyes were on Harley. He followed the lines of her body as she moved, her hips swaying sensually, her body arching, her dress riding up her legs. She moved with the strength and grace that he liked in all his women since it made them very good in bed. He continued to watch her. She was like an ice princess...just so different.

He grinned. It was decided, he had to have her for the night, but she was different and Mario always liked to have anything different.

* 

Jack tossed Harley’s arms over his shoulders holding her close, both of them rocking their hips back and forth against each other. Jack stared into her eyes, his fingers tickling up her sides. Harley squirmed, which made him laugh as he licked her lips. The music edged into something softer, more sensual, FKA twigs’ voice flowed softly as her song “Pendulum” played over the sound system.

Jack rolled Harley against him, his tongue traveling along her smooth throat as she arched her head back, completely forgetting the reason they were here, too caught up in Harley. He wanted to have her, right now, his body aching for her. He pressed his aching groin against Harley, enjoying the way she rubbed herself along him, knowing exactly what she was doing to him. Jack’s tongue licked along her ear lobe as he cupped the back of her head, feeling the soft waves of her hair between his fingers. He kissed her, his tongue sliding into her mouth, caressing her tongue, kissing her deeply. Harley moaned, one hand grabbing the back of his head, her fingers gathered his hair, pressing his mouth harder against hers. She licked his tongue and lips catching his bottom lip with her teeth.

Jack growled softly. “I want you. I need you.”

Harley’s voice was half moan, half responding growl. “I want you too puddin.”

He smiled closing his eyes for a moment just feeling her body against his, the press of her breasts against him, the heat emanating from between her legs as his thigh thrust up against her. He whispered against her ear again, his lips close to tickling the sensitive skin of her ear, his tongue flicking against her creating a warm ripple down her spine as he asked. “Want a drink pumpkin?”

Harley purred. “I would love one.”

He let her go reluctantly and Harley took a step back, but she continued to move to the music, almost in a trance. He loved watching her, the way her body weaved and twisted with the music. Jack dragged fingers over her, his hands caressing along her breasts, feeling her nipples hard under the fabric. Harley made a soft gasp of pleasure her eyes opening just a little to stare at him under her lashes, her lips opened just enough to make her mouth tempting. Jack grinned dragging his teeth over his bottom lip. As Harley continued to dance, Jack noted that her gymnastics training made her sensual movements and gestures that much more graceful. She started to stop and follow him, but Jack dragged his fingers between her breasts and stopped her with just a small amount of pressure.

“You keep dancing sweets. No reason to stop something so beautiful,” he purred.

Harley grinned at him, her cheeks rosy. “You say the sweetest things.”

Jack chuckled and purred. “I’ll be right back.”

He hurried over to the bar, his long legs cutting the distance quickly. He glanced over his shoulder once as Harley, her eyes closed, once more moved gracefully to the music. Jack felt a momentary
spike in his heart as a wash of feelings came over him. The intensity of his love for her burned his eyes for a moment. She was everything to him he thought, everything—without her...he shook himself as the remembered feelings of despair and pain washed over him. That was over and he was never losing her again he thought. He smiled wide as he turned back to the bar and rapped his knuckles on the counter as he leaned against the edge.

The bartender with the bare breasts hurried over with a smile. “I’m Venus. What can I get you?”

Jack leaned forward a little with a smile. “Hello Venus, I’m Joker. What drink do you have that would tell my girl how much I want her?”

Venus smiled. “Oh god, that is like, so sweet! You call her your girl?”

Jack chuckled. “She’s more than just my girl. She’s everything to me.”

Venus shook her head. “Wow, she is one lucky girl to have a guy feel that way about her, and such a handsome one at that. Mm...Let me think...do you wanna get kinky with her or vanilla?”

Jack giggled. “Oh, let’s say kinky.”

Venus nodded. “Then I would recommend a Dirty Shirley shot. It has vodka, the juice of Ole Smoky Tennessee Moonshine Cherries, grenadine and topped with the moonshine cherries. It’s also bright red. How does that sound?”

Jack grinned. “Delicious Venus and red is one of my girl’s favorite colors.”

She nodded with a wide grin. “Coming right up.”

* 

Mario grinned, pushing himself up. The woman he had been drinking champagne off of reached up and grabbed his hand. “Where you going sweetie?”

Mario grinned as he shook her hand off. “I got a prize to go fetch.”

Trogg, who was enjoying the attentions of two lovely ladies, glanced up as Mario stood and began to make his way past him. Trogg frowned as his gaze followed Mario. He saw that his boss was heading out to the dance floor. That was when Trogg saw the extremely pale woman dancing. It was as if the other dancers had unconsciously stepped aside, creating a circle of space around the gorgeous dancer. She moved with controlled elegance and grace. Her body flowed to the music as if the notes of the song were guiding her while she spun around, her arms weaving, her hips rolling side to side. He frowned then. She looked familiar, but he had to admit, she was damn hot. The dress looked fucking painted on her he thought, and the black stood out against her stark white skin and her equally white hair. She looked ethereal. Trogg smirked. He could see why Mario was making a beeline toward her; the man always liked the exotic.

Trogg furrowed his brow in thought as he thought again that she was very familiar. Someone with skin that color was unusual enough that he knew he had seen her before, but he was slightly drunk and a little high, so he shrugged, turning his attention back to the young women who were hoping he would buy them some pretty gifts for fucking him. The short man chuckled. The pleasures of money he thought, dismissing Mario from his mind. Mario pushed a few people out of his way as he headed over to the pale woman. She still had her eyes closed as her body moved gracefully and in time to the music, as if she had not a care in the world. Mario walked up behind her while she spun her body around admiring the curves of her figure. He leered at her, his eyes following the flow of her body. He reached out and ran his hands up her thighs to her hips.
Harley immediately knew it wasn’t Jack touching her. She knew her puddin’s touch, the feel of his hands on her body. Her eyes popped open to see who had dared to lay hands on her. She was surprised to see that it was Mario Falcone. Harley balked for a moment. She wasn’t really sure what to do, as this was the man they were here to kidnap. The plan was to get close enough to drug Mario’s drink...then take him once they got him outside of the club, but now...he was right here in front of her and she had no idea what she should do.

Harley glanced toward the bar, but Jack had his back turned and was talking to the bartender.

Mario grinned and the leer in his expression made her skin crawl.

“Hello beautiful.” Mario moved to the music though he left his hands on Harley’s hips. He kept trying to pull her closer, but Harley set herself firmly, having stopped dancing altogether.

If he noticed her distaste, he made no indication which made Harley think the ass was probably used to women reacting the way she was right now. “My name is Mario, Mario Falcone. You might have heard of me.”

He kept moving his hips back and forth, his hands firmly on her hips, purposely sliding his fingers along the cutouts of her dress to touch skin. The sensation was like a cold wet snake slithering along her flesh. He yanked her forward, almost against him, but Harley put her hands out against his chest preventing him from drawing her in closer.

Mario pouted. “Come on dance with me beautiful,” he urged. “What’s your name?”

“The name’s Harleen and I don’t feel like dancing,” Harley muttered, unwilling to let him say her true name. She tried to pull away, but Mario’s grip on her hips tightened.

He smiled continuing to dance, weaving his hips back and forth, completely ignoring her efforts to pull away.

“You know, I have a lot of money Harleen. Girl like you, a very beautiful girl, could make a lot of money hanging out with a guy like me.” Mario smiled. “I pay very well and the happier I am, the more I pay.”

Harley shoved against his chest, resisting the urge to punch him only because she didn’t want to ruin their chances of kidnapping the man by putting him on alert, but she didn’t want to dance with him and she didn’t want him touching her. She was getting angry, angry enough by his yanking on her that she was about to say hell with the plan and kill the bastard herself, right here.

“Look, just let go of me and I’ll dance with you all right?” she snarled, but Mario refused to let go. He pulled her closer as if he was unaware of her hands on his chest trying to hold herself away from him. His hands moved around, using his fingers to crawl around to her backside and grip her rear.

“Aw, come on, don’t play coy. You know, I have a couple of spreaders at home...some handcuffs, I even have nipple clamps, pinwheels, clit suckers, butt plugs...you name it baby, I got it. Everything your perverted little heart could want. And there are certain things I’ll even pay extra for...”

His gaze moved down to her breasts.

Harley snarled. She didn’t care that they were supposed to kidnap this guy! She was going to kill him!

*
Venus walked over with the two shots, her gaze wandered over to the dance floor. She grimaced as she set the drinks down. “Ah, Joker, you might want to go save your girl. That creeper Mario is all over her.”

Jack turned slowly.

He saw Harley, her hands against Mario’s chest pushing herself as far away from him as she could without resorting to violence. He could hear Venus talking behind him, her words only barely penetrating his mind as he glared at Mario.

Venus was saying that Mario Falcone was the type of man that gave BDSM a bad name. Everyone knew how bad he was, but Mr. Lynch kept letting him in because of Mario’s father’s money.

Jack filed that information away, but his attention was on the fact that Mario was getting handsy with Harley. The man had his hands on her hips, and then he tried to yank her closer his hands working around to grab her rear. Jack snarled, the sound low and deep in his throat. He bared his teeth. He didn’t stop to think, didn’t consider their plan, the possible fate of his friends below, or Jason who was currently sitting at the other end of the bar talking with some woman; he didn’t care about any of it at the moment. The plan could go to fucking hell because that bastard was touching Harley! Jack trembled just a little as a manic sounding giggle bubbled forth.

Venus frowned. “Ah, Joker, you okay?”

But he wasn’t paying attention. All Jack cared about, all he saw as his vision turned red, was someone touching Harley, touching his girl, trying to take what was his, trying to hurt his wife and something in Jack’s mind snapped. Suddenly his carefully thought out plan didn’t matter any longer; all that mattered to him was that someone was touching his girl and that someone needed to be hurt for it.

That someone was Mario Falcone.

Time slowed for Jack. He could see the placement of every person on the dance floor from the corner of his eye. He didn’t hesitate or care about any of them as he reached behind him and pulled out his gun from its holster at the small of his back. The weapon, a Ruger SR9c that Frost had gotten for him as a gift was a nice, simple pistol loaded with seventeen shots. Jack brought the weapon up, grinning the whole time as the world narrowed down to the barrel of his gun and the man touching Harley. He aimed swiftly, barely giving it a second thought as he pulled the trigger.

The bullet flew across the space between him and Mario. The bullet, like Jack, only had one target, the rest of the crowd reduced to slightly unfocused figures as the bullet raced forward until it found its mark.

The bullet slammed into Mario, ripping through clothing and penetrating the side of his knee, then through his leg in a blast of fabric, blood and bone.

Mario screamed. Instead of instantly buckling over, he grabbed harder at Harley as white hot pain raced up the man’s leg.

Harley pushed him with all her (now enhanced) strength, sending the man toppling backwards to fall as he screamed in pain trying to grab at his now shattered kneecap.

Jack grinned as time sped up again and people began to scream. He reached over and grabbed one of the shots. Venus was staring at him as Jack downed the shot with a smile.

Jack winked at her. “You’re right Venus, that is a really sexy drink.”
Downstairs, the sounds of “Queen of Pain” by the Cramps was playing so loudly that for a moment Frost wasn’t sure he had actually heard the sound of a gun being shot, but then he heard a scream. Frost’s eyes shot up to the upper floor of the club.

He muttered under his breath. “Fuck.”

No one downstairs had reacted to the sounds coming from upstairs. Considering what type of club it was he supposed screams were common, but he just knew it was the Boss...then he saw the first person come running down the stairs and Frost knew he had been correct.

“Fuck,” he muttered again and pulled out his phone. He only had to text one word. “Now.”

Jack started to walk across the dance floor as people scattered. One of the guards at the entrance rushed over to restrain him, but Jack spun his gun, sliding it into the front of his slacks before he pulled another weapon from the front pocket of his slacks, a Microtech Combat Troodon DE knife. The blade, like the handle, was black, another beautiful gift from Frost. First Jack simply turned and punched the man in the throat just as the bouncer came close enough. The man grabbed at his throat, making horrible choking noises that were barely audible over the sounds of the music, shouts and running feet. Jack grabbed the man’s shoulder with one hand, yanked him forward, at the same time he popped the blade and shoved it under the man’s chin and up into the man’s mouth. The man’s eyes rolled wildly as from his mouth blood spilled down over his lips and dripped from his chin as he stared at Jack.

Jack held the man close to him, grinning into the man’s face, his blue eyes wide and gleeful.

Jack purred, his eyes smiling into the other man’s. “You know, this is why I like knives, up close and personal.”

Jack yanked his knife out and in a graceful movement, sliced open the man’s throat before he released him.

Jack smiled down at the dying man. “You really should consider a different line of work, you’re really not that great of a guard.”

Jack shrugged with a soft chuckle before he turned away. He saw Harley kicking Mario and laughed.

“Hey pumpkin! Whatcha doing?” Jack asked with a big smile.

People were rushing past, heading for the stairs. Trogg stood up trying to see what had happened and wondering where the fuck the guys who were supposed to be up here protecting Mario were. He had seen one of them over getting his ass whipped by some kid in leather pants and the other had been over by the bar. There were supposed to be at least two others up here, but Trogg didn’t see them anywhere. Those fuckers were so used to Mario dismissing them to do what they wanted, that none of them were any good at their job anymore he thought with a snarl.

He had heard the gun shot but the sound hadn’t really registered as a weapon firing until he had heard a scream, but even then, screaming was something that happened so often up here...by then so many people were moving he couldn’t see what was going on and he didn’t see Mario anywhere.
Trogg started to shove people out of his way, heading toward the last place he had seen that sonofabitch Mario when he saw the Joker.

Trogg’s eyes widened. He remembered him from the fight club, that pale sonofabitch had fought Bane...lost him a fuck ton of money too. Trogg pulled out his own knife, a little yet deadly blade he kept on him, used it to play with some of the ladies and for when someone was getting out of hand at the fight club. He began to move slowly, using the cover of people trying to leave to sneak his way over when he saw Harley...the ghost white beauty from the fight club...the mud wrestling! That was where he remembered her from and she was with the guy...the Joker...

Trogg narrowed his eyes and muttered. “Bitch.”

His gaze moved to the wall of toys and he smiled.

* 

Harley kicked Mario in the stomach with the point of her shoe, snarling with each kick. The man curled in on himself cried out like a baby until he wet himself.

Harley jumped back in disgust. “Seriously? Eww!”

She looked up when she heard Jack call out. “Hey Pumpkin!”

“Puddin!” She waved at her husband with a bright smile, but suddenly someone grabbed her from behind lifting her off her feet. Harley yelped in surprise, but she reared back, smashing the back of her skull into the face of the person who had grabbed her. She heard a male grunt of pain and something wet in her hair. She grinned viciously and brought her fist back, slamming it into the man’s groin. The man who had her, one of the patrons dressed for a night on the town, gave a high pitch squeal of pain dropping Harley. She spun around, brought her arm up and used her elbow to slam the man in the chest. He gasped in pain and bent forward. Harley spun around with a giggle, using her other elbow to strike the man across his face. Whether or not she had broken his nose before, she shattered it now with her second impact.

The man fell, but Harley saw several more people moving toward her. Judging by their dress she was guessing they were all patrons thinking that their BDSM experience meant they could dominate her. BDSM heroes, she thought with a smirk, then Harley smiled and made a run for the wall of toys, her gaze zeroing in on a wooden paddle.

* 

Jack hissed when he saw a man grab Harley from behind, but his hiss of anger was replaced with a laugh when he saw his girl beat the shit out of the man in just a few seconds. He stopped and clapped before sticking two of his fingers in his mouth and whistled.

“That’s my girl!!” he yelled.

He turned to look over at the bar where Venus still seemed to be paralyzed. Jack grinned and pointed at Harley for Venus’ benefit. “That’s my girl!!”

He didn’t get much of a chance to enjoy watching Harley (he noticed more people converging on her and her immediately running for the wall of BDSM toys) when a man dressed in what looked like a rubber surf suit with the crotch cut out tried to take a swing at Jack.

Jack brought his arm up to block the man’s punch with his forearm. The man shoved Jack back and brought his foot up, kicked Jack in the chest. Jack took the hit with a smile. The man in the surf suit...
tried to swing at Jack again, but the green haired man simply batted Mr. Rubber-suit’s fist away taking a step backwards and took his own swing at the man with his knife. Jack was holding the blade down when he lashed out, hoping to slice the man across his throat or face, but the man in the rubber surf suit surprised

Jack as he ducked under Jack’s arm and hit him in the chest, lifting Jack off his feet to slam him to the floor.

*

The chaos that was erupting upstairs of the club was just now beginning to trickle down as people began to realize something was wrong. Frost saw several men, all dressed in matching black slacks, t-shirts and black masks, who seemed to materialize out of nowhere and head up the stairs. Frost pulled his gun, held it down and close to his body. He saw Zsasz do the same when they both heard the roar outside.

Suddenly a body came flying through the doorway to land on the dance floor and skid and bounce across it like a stone skipping on water. There were several screams, then the doorway was blown inward as Bane, his luchador mask in place and his veins glowing green stood in the shattered doorway and roared.

The screams inside the club hit a higher pitch as Bane began to pick people up at random and throw them across the room.

Frost cringed. “Shit, I knew this was a bad idea.”

*

Harley kicked her shoes off and ran, pumping her arms to give her more speed, her gaze zeroed in on the paddle on the wall that looked like an old fashioned school paddle that she had seen in a hundred movies. The paddle looked like it might be walnut, maybe four inches across and about twenty inches long. Not as good as a bat, but she would make do.

She grabbed the side of one of the unoccupied beds (people were leaving those strapped or tied to crosses or “beds” instead of getting them free in their frenzied mob mentality of escape), which was simply a hard, flat surface, like a table, except with straps, and jumped onto it. Her feet hit the solid platform of the bed and she raced across its surface as several people, five in total, three men and two women, converged on her. She raced across the hard platform and did a little flip off the end, landing on her feet with a bright smile as she reached out and grabbed one of the large paddles off the wall.

She spun around and swung the paddle with one hand at the two people who were closest, a man wearing nothing but buckles and a woman in a black bra, corset and panties. The man ducked her swing, but Harley countered with the elbow of her other arm to smash the man in the face. The woman had leaned back, the swing missing her completely as well, but just as Harley used her elbow on the one man’s face, she did a swift turn toward the woman and kicked her in the chest, knocking her back several steps and into the side of another bed.

Harley shoved her paddle at the man, using the flat end to try to knock him back. The man leaned back, her thrust barely missing him, but Harley followed this with a quick and low strike, slamming the man across one of his knees. As her weapon struck the man’s leg, Harley dropped down onto one knee. She twisted to the side and thrust the paddle out to hit the lunging woman in the groin. The impact of the hard top of the paddle meeting her unprotected groin made the woman the corset gasp in pain and stumble back, her hands dropping to her crotch too late to protect it.
Harley stood and swung the paddle with one hand as hard as she could, straight across the woman’s face, shattering her nose, mashing her lips, and breaking several teeth.

The woman fell and didn’t get up.

Harley’s attention was drawn back on the man just as he hit her in the face.

Harley gasped in surprise, tasting blood in her mouth, but she hissed, her bloody teeth bared, and her blue eyes looked slightly crazed.

The man who hit her took an involuntary step backwards realizing too late that he had just made a grave error.

Jack got to his feet at the same time the man who had thrown him did. Jack had kept a hold of his knife and when the man swung at him, Jack raised his arm, blocking the blow and forced the man’s arm up high; Jack tried to slash at the man’s stomach with the knife. His opponent hit Jack in the chest hard, sent a vibration of pain through his torso and made Jack cough, but the attack wasn’t strong enough to knock Jack down.

The man swung at Jack again, forced him to leaned back. Jack kept his arm up to prevent the man from hitting him with his other fist, before Jack ducked under the raised arms, past the man as he attempted another slash with his knife. Jack’s opponent was surprisingly agile as he yanked his arm down and flipped Jack, both men once more hitting the floor.

Jack snarled in anger shoving himself to his feet as the man made a grab for Jack’s leg. Jack thrust his knife into the middle of the man’s back before he grabbed the back of the man’s head and thrust down, smashing his face against the floor.

Three more men were converging on Jack. He muttered, “Can’t they see I’m busy? Geez.” He shouted as she shot all three men quickly before pressing the gun to the back of the head of the man he was holding down. “I mean, everyone needs to wait their turn—I’ll get to them and if not me I’m sure Harley will happily beat you all to death.” He giggled as he stood up, but just as soon as Jack was on his feet, someone hit him in the small of his back, tackling him to the floor.

Downstairs Bane was a one man wrecking crew, killing and destroying without reason. Frost grunted, ducking as a table came flying overhead. He yelled at Zsasz, glancing up the stairs.

“We gotta get the Boss and Harley out of here with Mario, but I don’t think Bane is going to let anyone leave.”

Zsasz frowned before he motioned. “I might be able to slip out and get Dr. October; isn’t she supposed to be with him?”

Frost nodded. “She might not be able to get in. You think you can get past Bane?”

Zsasz grinned. “Of course,” he said with confidence.

With a wink at Frost, the bald man slipped into the panicked crowd. Frost shook his head. He glanced up the stairs and took off, pushing or shooting anyone who got in his way.
Jason had yanked two hidden weapons out within a heartbeat of Joker shooting Mario. He hopped onto the bar when he saw two of the bartenders going for weapons under the bar.

He grinned and his boyish good looks made the expression slightly sinister. “You know, I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

The young male bartender made a grab for what looked to be a shotgun. Jason was quicker. He shot the man in the forehead. The woman next to him screamed. Venus, on the other hand made no sound and stood still while she simply stared in shock.

“You ladies want to live through this, I suggest you get down.” Jason grinned and winked. “It’s about to get a lot more messy in here.”

Venus slowly slid down and put her hands on her head. Her fellow bartender looked between Venus and Jason before she finally did the same.

Jason grinned. “Thank you.”

His attention was drawn back into the fight. His gaze landed on Jack who had just stood up after shooting some dude in the face.

Jack saw Jason standing on the bar and waved. “Hey!!”

Jason laughed and waved back. “Hey Boss.”

Jason’s smile faltered as two shadows rose up behind Jack. He didn’t wait, but fired, two headshots, taking out two men moving towards Jack’s back. Jack spun around in surprise then turned back and waved again.

“Thanks darling!!”

Jason chuckled. “No problem Boss!”

Just as Jack turned away, another man, this one was fairly muscular and wearing nothing but black and red speedos, grabbed Jack’s gun arm and shoved his arm up before he punched Jack in the mouth. His hold on Jack prevented the slimmer man from stumbling back. The nearly naked man hit Jack again once more in the mouth.

Jason yelped. He could see blood trickling down from Jack’s nose and bloody mouth. He brought his weapons forward to shoot the man attacking Jack, but the crazed crowd blocked his view of Jack and his opponent.

Jason snarled. “Fuck me!”

*

Harley turned, her paddle a bloody mess as three more people decided to try their hand at taking her down.

Harley rolled her eyes. “Either you guys are all stupid or you are taking this BDSM thing a little too far and hoping I’ll beat you to a bloody pulp. It’s your lucky night, because I will.”

She didn’t wait for an answer; instead she used her entire body to swing the paddle at the first person to get too close to her. The paddle struck the woman across the face with a loud thunk that could be heard over the sound of the music. The colored lights caught the flash of blood, spittle, and teeth
flying as the woman crumpled to the floor, her jaw broken and hanging oddly.

Harley turned as another man tried to grab her. She thrust the handle of the paddle up into the man’s chest, driving his breath from him. She rolled the paddle back up and knocked the man in the side of the face before she spun on her bare feet, rolling the paddle once more around to hit him across the face, first one direction before snapping his head in the other direction as she used her paddle to slap him across the face. Blood splattered across the man’s face and onto the floor before he fell down, unmoving.

Harley giggled in satisfaction.

Suddenly there was the snap as a whip came out of the shadows and struck Harley in the hip, ripped across her side where the dress exposed her skin to leave an angry bloody slash in its wake. Harley cried out in pain and surprise. She stumbled back a few steps with blood running down her side.

She spun around, her eyes flashing angrily, and blood on her lips. She narrowed her eyes as the man holding the whip stepped out of the shadows.

“You!” she hissed.

Trogg snapped the whip against the floor with a grin. “Hello beautiful. Ready to submit?”

Harley’s eyes narrowed, she smiled. “Sure, you first.”

She raced forward and grabbed her paddle with both hands while dropping to her knees. She slid across the floor and swung the paddle upwards.

Trogg snapped the whip at her, the end of it cutting along her forearm, but the pain didn’t stop Harley as she slammed the paddle forward under the whip and into Trogg’s stomach with enough force to knock him off his feet. She hopped up back onto her feet as her opponent slammed onto the floor.

She sneered down at the little man and hissed. “You know what? I think my puddin could have a use for you.”

With that she brought the paddle over her head and slammed it down on one of Trogg’s knees, shattering bone.

Trogg screamed and grabbed his leg.

Harley laughed. “What was that? I didn’t hear you?”

She brought the paddle down again against the same knee, smashing one of his hands as well. Trogg’s screams turned into guttural sobs of anguish.

Harley giggled, though her blue eyes were flat. “You know what Trogg honey? I don’t know a lot about BDSM, but I do know one thing--it’s about permission you little shit and I don’t give you permission to ever touch me!”

She cracked the paddle across his face knocking him out.

“Hmpf.” Harley grinned.

* 

Jack struggled. He was stronger than this man, but his balance was a little off as he tried to bring his
gun arm down and the polished floor was making it difficult. The man began to force Jack backwards. The soles of his shoes slipped a little on the floor until Jack yanked himself backwards and brought his foot up to smash the sole of his foot into the crotch of the other man. The man in the speedo let Jack go with a gasp of pain. Jack giggled and brought his gun up to shoot the man in the crotch through his hands.

Jack grinned. “Teach you to wear a speedo.”

“Hey!!”

Jack turned as another man wearing black leather pants and a harness of leather and chains swung, snapping Jack across the face with a riding crop. Jack blinked, opening his mouth a couple of times tasting blood in his mouth again. The crimson blood coated his lips, making them a brighter red. The crop left a harsh bloody mark across Jack’s snow white face.

Jack reached up and ran his fingers over his wound, smearing the blood from one side to the other creating a wide bloody smile. He giggled as the man with the crop, now not looking so sure of himself, took a step back from the pale, green-haired man.

Jack grinned, his teeth bloody against his now extended smile. “Oh now, come on sweetling, smile!!! I’m not going to shoot you.” Jack held his hands up and slowly put the gun back into the front of his slacks. “See, let’s play nice shall we?”

Jack took a step toward the man, giggling as he did so. The man with the riding crop swung the crop in front of him, cutting the air.

“Stay back!” he yelled.

Jack chuckled as he tilted his head to the side. “Oh but I thought we were going to play?”

The man used the riding crop to try to keep Jack back, but the pale smiling man grabbed the crop in mid-swing, wrapping his hand around it. He grinned, holding it as the man struggled, trying to pull the crop away from Jack, but he simply held on and giggled.

Jack yanked back, ripping the crop out of the man’s hand. He smiled, flipped the crop around and caught it by its handle. He held it up to examine it, then grinned at the man.

“My turn sweetheart--what’s your safe word?” Jack giggled.

* 

Jack was breathing heavily, but he was grinning from ear to ear as he looked down at the man he had just beaten soundly with the riding crop. The man was groaning loudly. Jack twisted his lips in annoyance before he pulled his gun out once more and shot the man in the face. He took a deep breath and looked around, a slight frown dancing across his features.

“Oh, we’re done? No one else wants a go?? My safe word is Guacamole!! Anyone??” Jack threw his hands in the air as he laughed, but his attention was then drawn to Harley just as she brought her paddle down on someone.

His smile was bright. “Oh, my girl seems busy.”

He started to walk across the dance floor using the crop to encourage anyone in his way to move. He waved as he saw Jason, who had just shot two more people who thought him an easy target.

“Darling!! Would you mind grabbing Mario there…” He pointed at the man who was still on the
floor in a pool of his own urine and crying in agony.

Jason made a face, then shrugged. “Sure thing Boss.”

Jack walked over to Harley just as she knocked Trogg out.

He smiled. “Hey pumpkin, you done?”

Harley turned to see her husband, blew a loose strand of hair from out of her eyes, and squealed dropping the paddle and threw herself into his arms. Jack caught her and kissed her, lifting her up against him, his arms sliding under her rear as he held her up. Harley thrust her tongue into his mouth, the taste of their blood mixing on their tongues. Jack growled deep in his throat, holding her close before he lowered her back down to her bare feet.

He frowned caressing her face. “Who hurt you sweets?”

“Oh it's fine puddin.” She pointed to the whip marks on her side. “That little creep did that.” She pointed at Trogg lying unconscious on the floor. Harley turned her attention back to Jack with a concerned frown. “Looks like someone hit you in the face too.” She touched his lips tenderly, followed by a ginger touch of the wound on his cheek.

He smiled. “Don’t worry my sweets. They didn’t use a safe word.” He giggled. “You ready to go? Jason has Mario.”

She pointed at Trogg. “I think we should take him too. He might be useful.”

Jack frowned, but after a moment his face brightened. “Oh, I know just what to use him for!”

Jack bent down and lifted the short man up, throwing him over his shoulder in a fireman’s carry. “Okay, let’s go! Still have a lot to do!” Jack headed for the stairs where Jason was waiting just as Frost came scrambling up the steps.

Jack smiled. “Hey Frost, my love, how’s it going downstairs? Oh, and hey, can you take this for me?”

Frost cringed but took Trogg, tossing the man over his shoulder as he spoke. “Bane is out of control Boss. He is killing and destroying everything. I tried telling him to stop, but he took a swing at me. Good thing I’m fast and he was distracted with other people too stupid to get out of his way in time.”

Jack’s eyes widened before he turned to Harley. “Harls! We’re missing it!”

Harley laughed. “Well let’s get downstairs before the cops come!”

Frost frowned looking between Jack and Harley before he said. “Boss, we can’t get out because Bane won’t let anyone leave. Zsasz went to go find Dr. October because we don’t think she can get in to stop him.”

Jack nodded. “Okay, but I wouldn’t mind seeing Bane rampaging.”

Jack grabbed Harley’s hand and pushed by Frost and Jason, the two of them laughing.

Frost sighed glancing at Jason then shrugged, shifting Trogg’s body. “Let’s go.”

* 

The dance lights were still going and the pre programmed music was currently playing Jamiroquai’s
“Canned Heat” while Bane tore the club apart.

Jack arrived at the bottom of the stairs with Harley’s hand in his and let out a high pitched gasp. “OH my GOD Harley--look at him go!”

Harley watched as Bane, who seemed to fill the room and with his veins glowing green under his skin, ripped the bar counter up and threw it across the dance floor. There were several patrons and staff still trapped inside, screaming as the counter slid across the dance floor and into a wall where it hit with an impact that created a crater in the wall.

Bane roared, his head whipping around. Harley could see his eyes were glowing green as well. He seemed to grow a few inches right in front of them.

“Puddin...did he just grow bigger?” Harley asked in a whisper against his ear.

Jack giggled. “Oh he did! He did!”

That was when Zsasz, holding Dr. October’s hand, pushed himself through the broken doorway followed by the sound of sirens.

Bane’s head whipped back and forth, his eyes glowing unnaturally bright as he roared, the sound of the sirens triggering him as he smashed his fists into the floor.

Jack squealed. “Oh my god, he is magnificent!!”

Bane’s head whipped around to Jack and Harley. He snarled, which was followed by another roar of rage. He launched himself toward Jack and the others.

Frost and Jason, now behind Jack and Harley both cursed. “Ah fuck! BOSS!”

Jack laughed and clapped his hands and stomped his feet in glee. “Hahaha!!”

Harley grabbed Jack by his shirt. She shook him a little trying to get him to focus. “Puddin!! We need to move!!!”

Jack was laughing so hard he had tears in his eyes and with the bloody smile on his face, he looked crazed. He was still laughing leaning forward with his hands on his knees. Harley shook him. “JACK! PUDDIN!!”

Jack’s eyes, which were that strange unnatural shade of blue, snapped to hers then back to the oncoming Bane. His expression changed as if he was finally realizing they were in trouble.

“Oh shit,” Jack said softly. He grabbed Harley and shoved her behind him and drew his gun out from the front of his pants.

He pointed it at Bane and yelled. “Don’t make me do it!! BANE!! Don’t you fucking hurt Harley!!”

That was when another voice cut through the music, Bane’s roaring and Jack’s shout.

“BANE!”

Bane stopped in his tracks just before he would have been on Jack, Harley, Frost and Jason. The large man turned to see Viktoria. She was dressed in a pair of jeans and white shirt, unarmed but her hands were out and she was holding a syringe in one hand.

“Bane, it’s time to come home,” she said softly.
Bane took several deep breaths as she approached him, but he didn’t move as she came forward and took his arm. The syringe contained a clear liquid that almost looked as if it had sparkles floating in it. She put the needle to the huge man’s arm and plunged the liquid into Bane’s flesh. He shuddered then as his mass was reduced only slightly. Viktoria looked up at everyone.

Jack was still holding the gun on Bane, though he grinned brightly. “We ready to head out?”

She nodded. “Yes, the cops will be here anytime.”

Jack put the gun back into the front of his pants. “Okay, let’s go my dears, we still have so much to do before our introduction to Gotham!”

Jack hopped down the last few stairs before he turned and put his arms out to Harley. She squealed and jumped into his arms wrapping her legs around his waist, her dress sliding dangerous up her thighs. She cradled his face in her hands and kissed Jack, her tongue tracing his bloody lips with delight. Jack growled and squeezed her rear before he shifted her onto his hip throwing his free hand up into the air.

“Let’s go my clowns!!” Jack laughed, turning to head toward the exit.

He kissed Harley as the beat of Florence and the Machine singing “Kiss with a Fist” played over the sound system. Jack danced, bobbing back and forth a little while he carried her out of the club, followed by his gang, and singing at the top of his lungs.

“A kick to the teeth is good for some
A kiss with a fist is better than none…”

Harley giggled holding him tightly kissing his ear as he danced out with her.

*

Later that evening, Batman stood in the bloody remains of Inferno. Batman had left Robin in the car; he didn’t think a BDSM bar would be appropriate for the teen, though Robin had complained quite vigorously.

The police detective Bullock was shaking his head. “So far reports are crazy. We got at least fifteen dead and another twenty or more injured. Not only do we have a fucking giant, or a “troll” attacking, we have reports up there on that fucking Second Circle where the real creepos like to play, they say two people with white clown makeup--one of them with green hair--attacked several people. The man was going around with a smile painted on his face in blood and the woman with him was beating people with a fucking paddle. Personally, I think there were too many drugs and spankings going on and things got out of hand.”

Batman frowned, looking around at the aftermath of the violence that had occurred here just a couple of hours prior. “Clowns you say?”

Bullock nodded. “And a giant, don’t forget the giant, Bats.”

Batman frowned.
They had returned home late, or as Jack had said: it wasn’t late, but really just early in the morning.

Jack knelt down in front of Harley and very carefully applied the first aid ointment to her side and hip. They were both naked, their hair wet and freshly washed. While Jack was applying the cream to her side, Harley combed her wet hair and braided it. She had her eyes partly closed enjoying the gentle touch of her husband’s fingers on her skin. Jack’s expression was intent as he worked to cover the wounds on her sides. They looked harsh and painful against her pale skin, and that made him angry. The urge to head out to where he knew Frost and Jason were holding Mario and Trogg was almost too strong to resist; he wanted to go and beat both of them to death for hurting his wife, but, lucky for the them, his naked wife was too much of a temptation to resist. He would just hold that anger in check for later.

Mario and Trogg had been taken by Frost and Jason to a secure location where Jack and Harley would go visit tomorrow, while Trope and Thea set everything up for their big introduction to Gotham. Jack smiled at the thought of it. He was excited—the whole thing was going to be so much fun! He grinned as he gently spread the cream over the slashes on her side.

Jack glanced up at her as he cooed. “All better?”

Harley smiled at the same time, pushing a lock of white hair that she had missed from her braid back behind her ear and nodded. “All better puddin, thank you.”

She reached out and caressed her fingers through his slightly damp green hair. He smiled up at her, his eyes traveling up her body slowly, taking his time to enjoy every naked inch of her.

Jack hopped to his feet and tossed the cream aside; the tube hit the floor and skidded out of sight.

Jack gazed at Harley and reached out to caress her face.

“You were so magnificent tonight. My sweet, deadly angel.” Jack spoke with love in his voice as his fingertips caressed her jaw, his eyes tracing the lines of her face.

Harley’s white cheeks turned pink at his words. “You are so sweet.”

Jack chuckled, but his voice was soft and sweet filled with affection as he caressed her jaw. “Only for you.” He traced her lips with his fingertip until Harley giggled and sucked her lips in. “That tickles.”

Jack laughed softly. “Now, for some real healing.”

He slid his arms around her waist and gently tugged her to him. He gazed at her lips, then gradually up at her eyes before he kissed her, taking his time to enjoy the feel of her lips, the way her tongue felt against his, her body soft and smooth. He loved the way she fit up against him, the way that her body was made for him and his body for her. She was always meant to be his girl Jack believed; she was what he had been waiting for his whole life without realizing it and she had been through hell and back with him. His perfect girl, his pumpkin, his wife. Jack smiled slowly as an idea began to form in his mind while he pressed her against him.

“Harley—will you marry me?” he asked while brushing his lips against hers.

Harley laughed softly. “Silly, we’re already married.”
Jack brushed his nose against hers, his lips playing against her. He licked her lips, played with her tongue before he answered her.

“That was before...when we were Jack and Harley. Now I’m Joker...the Joker and you are my Harley Quinn...we died...Jack and Harley died so that Joker and Harley Quinn could live. We lost everything Harls, our lives, our identities, and we nearly lost our family. But worse, we almost lost each other. Fuck Harls, we both thought we had lost each other!” Jack squeezed her tightly. “I think that means another marriage is in order, another chance, a symbol of our bond, to reestablish the fact that we are inseparable, and that even death couldn’t keep us apart.” He stared into her eyes. Harley could see the intensity of his emotions as he spoke. Even with his emotions running high, Jack had a smile dancing across his pale face. She could feel his lips move against hers as he spoke. “I, the Joker, am asking you, Harley Quinn, to marry me.”

Harley’s hands caressed down his lower back, as she stared back at him. Her fingers spread out to grab his rear and press him up against her. She loved the feel of his erection pressed against her abdomen, hard and warm while her arms were around him, holding him close, never to let him go.

Jack purred and his blue eyes glowed from under his lashes as he whispered, asking once more. “Will you marry me Harley Quinn, will you marry your Joker?”

Harley giggled. “Yes Joker, I will marry you.”

Jack laughed happily and lifted her up off her feet. Harley squeaked in surprise, wrapping her arms around his head and leaned into him as her husband carried her over to the bed. Harley laughed and squealed as he tilted her over his shoulder a little, coming dangerously close to toppling her over while he crawled on his knees onto the bed while trying to balance Harley, but ultimately she made him too heavy and the two of them collapsed onto the bed laughing.

Jack rolled up into a sitting position, folding his legs before he reached for her, grabbing Harley by her ankle and hauled her toward him. He let go of her ankle and grabbed her wrist pulling her up and onto his lap.

Harley giggled as she twisted around to sit on his lap, wrapping her arms and legs around him. Jack smiled brightly at her. “There ya go pumpkin, sit on daddy’s lap.”

Harley laughed and smacked his shoulder lightly. “Puddin! That’s terrible!”

Jack continued to chuckle. “You like it when I’m terrible.”

Harley giggled louder, stroking her fingers through his green hair. “I do like you being terrible.”

Jack grinned at her with a wink. “I knew it. Come here to daddy sweets, I want some sugar and some spice.”

Harley brushed her lips against his and whispered. “Mm...puddin.”

She reached down between them, stroking her hand along his member in soft, but firm gestures. Jack arched his head back with a low groan. “Uh, Harley.”

She pressed her teeth into her lip watching his expression. She continued to stroke him up and down enjoying the feel of him in her hand, but especially liked the look on his face, his brow furrowed, his mouth slightly open. She rubbed her thumb over the head of his shaft, spreading the drop of thick moisture at the tip around the head of him. Harley licked her lips, her groin aching, watching Jack’s expression of pleasurable agony made her want him all the more. She wanted to make him cry out, to yell her name. She lifted up just enough to hold Jack in position before she slid down, feeling that...
pleasurable pressure followed by his shaft filling and stretching her. She dropped her hands to his shoulders and leaned, pressing her hips down on him with a low moan. He felt so good; their bodies coming together made her shiver.

Jack pulled her closer, shuddering when he felt how wet she was, her body wrapping around him and holding him inside her. His hands went to her hips, spreading his fingers to grab as much of her as he could as he pulled her closer. He thrust up with his hips, though the position left Harley all the power. He slid his hands up to her waist, bending his head to kiss and suck at her breast.

Harley caressed his shoulders, up the back of his neck, and stroked her fingers through his hair, rolling her hips into him at the same time she cradled his head against her chest.

Jack ran his hands gently up her sides, caressing her back, brushing his nose against her skin, his tongue flicking out to tease her nipple, which he quickly followed with a tender kiss while Harley thrust against him, moving back and forth and occasionally shifting her hips side to side.

Jack smiled, lifting his head from her breast to lick at her mouth. Harley rose up over him cradling his face in her hands while she moved back and forth slowly, squeezing her inner muscles and made Jack groan loudly. He pulled her closer, his hands sliding down to her rear, his fingers grabbing her ass cheeks and sliding between them, reaching down to feel his shaft moving in and out of her as Harley moved against him. He hissed with a smile, feeling her slick fluids coating him each time she moved back, then the feeling of her body taking him in again made his shiver.

Harley moaned as she arched her back and cupped the back of Jack’s head at the same time. Her nails pressed into his scalp when she leaned back, thrusting herself forward, sliding on his lap. She dragged her teeth across her bottom lip, the intensity of her pleasure was building with each stroke of her hips along his erection, each thrust forward brought her closer and closer...

She gasped loudly, glancing down at Jack, her breath quickening when she saw his expression, the blue of his eyes just visible through his lashes, his mouth slightly open, a smile gracing his lips and the dim light glancing off his straight white teeth. Harley’s heart swelled in her chest. She loved him so much; it was all consuming, she would and had done anything for him and she would continue to do whatever Jack needed. She would not just help him, but love him and protect him. She gasped, arching her back, thrusting onto him, her body trembling with each stroke.

Jack pulled her closer, meeting her thrusts with his own, his crossed legs bending up slightly with each movement of his hips. He kissed her throat, his lips gliding up the column of her neck, his hands pressed harder against her back holding her close. He was desperate to hold her against him, to feel her, to take comfort and pleasure from the woman he loved.

Harley moaned loudly, her thrusts increasing in intensity, coming quicker and quicker, her breathing becoming louder as she became wetter. Jack trembled feeling her swiftly approaching orgasm. He kissed her collar, her shoulders, and licked her neck whispering sweet nothings to her.

“Harls, my pumpkin, my girl...” His voice was thick and deep with emotion.

“Uh...uh, puddin!” she groaned. Strands of her white hair came loose from her braid, sticking to her white skin, snow against alabaster. Jack smiled at the image of her, hair stuck to her forehead and her cheeks as she worked up a slight perspiration that made her snowy skin sparkle, as if flakes of snow or diamonds decorated her body. She moved her body against him, showing him her love in the most primitive and expressive way possible. It wasn’t that they were fucking, Jack thought, it was that they were joining together, their bodies, their pleasure, their love, sharing themselves with each other in a way that no one else could understand.
Jack could do this with no other but her, ever. His arms around her tightened at the thought of how much he needed her, loved her.

Jack hissed, watching her. She was so beautiful, his girl, with her creamy, milk white skin, pressed against his matching coloring, the slight rosey pink of her nipples, the pink of her sex, but it was her expression that turned him on the most, that look of sexual pleasure on her face that excited him beyond reason. He dipped his head down once more to kiss and suck at her nipples, tasting the sweetness of her skin, enjoying the feel of her body shivering against his when he lightly grasped her nipple with his teeth. The way her muscles tightened around him, the feel of her heels pressed against his back all combined to drive him nuts! But it was her deep moan of pleasure that sent shivers up his spine, knowing he was causing that expression, that sound of wild abandon made him grin.

He bit down on the curve along the side of her breast, sliding a hand along her ribs to push her opposite breast up, to squeeze the silky softness of her breast while he bit down on her skin and sucked hard. He wanted to leave a mark on her, a purple brand on her creamy skin. He smiled pulling back to gazed at the reddish, purple mark left by his mouth, shifting to another position to make another mark, this time adding the slight pressure of his teeth. Each time he pressed his teeth against her, Harley groaned. Jack moved his mouth along her skin, his tongue sliding along, enjoyed the slightly salty perspiration until he arrived at her shoulder where he bit her again, leaving another mark before switching to the top of her other breast, growling deep in his throat with each thrust of his hips and bite of his teeth.

Harley gasped and leaned back. Jack uncrossed his legs, which allowed Harley to reach back behind her with one hand and grab his calf, her other hand on his shoulder. Her fingers dug into his flesh as she held on and thrust forward harder and faster, her breath coming in quicker, deeper pants. She leaned back, placing her feet on the mattress, spreading her legs a little wider, letting go of his leg to put both hands on his shoulders so that Harley could thrust harder, deeper. Her mind was a blank filled only with the primal sense of her pleasure and her love for the man she was with.

Jack kept his hands on her back, helping her balance, watching the slip and slide of his penis entering her, sliding almost out, then into her again as she moved back and forth. He thrust back, though Harley was doing most of the work. He licked his lips at the glistening wetness she left behind on him, accompanied by the sound of their bodies coming together. He grunted with the effort of holding back while Harley just thrust with more abandon, her pants mixed with grunts of passion, her fingers pressed hard into his shoulders as she arched back further.

Just when Jack thought he couldn’t hold back any longer, she came with a gasp and a loud, lingering moan that ended in a little squeal.

Harley cried out, throwing her head back, her eyes tightly closed as her body bowed backwards her hips thrusting down on him while as she climaxed with a loud, shuddering cry. She dug her nails hard into his shoulders with both hands, her body tightening when she arched into him.

Jack yanked her closer then, needing to feel her, desperate to have her close, wanting to feel every moment of her climax. He groaned when he felt the flood of her orgasm wash over him. He trembled, his fingers spasming as he struggled to hold onto her, as well as to hold back. He didn’t let himself climax with her; he wanted to wait.

Jack needed to feel her orgasm again, needed to have her wash over him, soak him with her fluids again. Jack instead focused on her, on how much he loved her, how much he needed her. He gently covered her neck, shoulders and breasts in kisses, tightening his hold on her.

Harley giggled with pleasure, leaving her cheek against her arms, wrapped tightly around him as she hugged him.
“Mmm...my puddin,” she purred, catching the lobe of his ear with her teeth for a second before she leaned back and placed both her hands on Jack’s chest and shoved.

Jack blinked in surprise as her shove sent him backwards onto his back. Jack made a small startled grunt as he went down. At the same time Harley came up to position herself on top of Jack (careful not to pull off of him), her knees forward and her feet planted on the mattress so she was squatting over him.

Jack grinned lopsidedly up at her placing his hands on her bent knees. “Being a little aggressive are we?”

Harley giggled and then growled. “I want you to scream puddin.”

Jack lifted a brow at her, his smile crookedly endearing she thought. She grinned, pressing her teeth girlishly into her bottom lip as she rested her hands on his chest, sliding her hands up to his shoulders, caressing his throat before her fingers glided up to where she caressed his jaw with her fingertips before dragging her fingers over his lower lip. Jack licked her fingers as they passed over his mouth, making her giggle.

Jack slid his hands under her rear, giving her a good squeeze as he did so.

Harley lifted up, sliding her hands back down to his chest where she pressed her hands against him, using him to steady herself, her eyes fluttering as she squeezed him with her inner muscles. Jack groaned, his eyes rolling back in pleasure. Another louder groan was followed by her slowly lowering herself down. She moved carefully, slowly, taking her time to find not just her rhythm, but to check her balance as well. She wanted to feel every inch of him as she moved up and slowly down, tightening her muscles around him.

Jack groaned loudly as warm ripples rolled through him. His hands snaked from her rear to her thighs, helping to hold her up. This position made her fully exposed to him, her clitoris swollen bright pink, asking for him to touch her. He raised his head, catching her gaze for a moment. Harley looked down at him, a seductive smile traced her lips at the same time that her hands pressed against his chest. She lifted up slowly, then down again, moving with slow, deliberate thrusts. She moaned softly, the feeling of his hard shaft inside her made her want to shudder, but at the same time the feeling of being with him like this, so intimately intertwined made her gasp as her emotions roiled up and bubbled over. She loved him so much; that combined with how good he made her feel, so unbelievably good on so many levels, made her gasp. Harley swallowed, her piston-like movements began to increase in speed and intensity. Her hands pressed down on his chest harder, her nails digging into his flesh just slightly.

She brought her knees forward, leaning toward the man she loved at the same time continuing to bounce up and down, holding her body tense as she moved. She grinned down at him, and breathlessly she murmured, “Scream for me puddin...I wanna hear you yell.”

Jack hissed through his teeth in response, his hands sliding up under rear then up around her hips.

He groaned with a laugh. “Make me pumpkin.”

Harley giggled sliding her hands down to his stomach, spreading her legs wide to the side. She grinned at him, her eyes sparkling. She pushed up then with her bottom lip caught between her teeth, and she moved up and down again, building up to faster movements.

Jack pressed his lips together, stifling a long groan watching her going up and down on him, his hands sliding along the tender underside of her thighs. She arched her back, her arms both squeezing
and thrusting her breasts out. Jack slid his hands long on her thighs, caressing the soft, silky flesh, his eyes moving from watching the expression on her face, to looking down to watch his member disappearing into her, her clitoris pink and wet, her body leaving his shaft glistening and wet. He hissed with pleasure, his teeth clenched.

Harley moaned and she stopped with the up and down bounce to start a grinding roll of her hips against him, pressing down and taking him completely inside her.

Jack shuddered arching his back while thrusting his hips up into her. “Oh god Harley…”

Harley giggled between her moans. “Cum for me puddin, cum for me...scream for me Jack…”

She gasped, squeezing and grinding as she purred. “Cum for me Joker.”

Jack cried out loudly, thrusting up and almost convulsing when he climaxed. He threw his head back against the bed, his mouth opened as he groaned and squeezed her hips. The sound of his moan filled their bedroom.

Harley cried out loudly and dropped forward when he climaxed. She ground her hips against him, her thighs clamping tight around him. She kissed him roughly at the moment she orgasmed.

Jack wrapped his arms tight around her, swallowing her climax-wrought groan, his tongue in her mouth. He bent legs up trying to hold her tightly. He finally rolled over to his side taking her with him, wrapping himself around her.

Harley giggled holding on tightly, hooking her ankles behind him.

Jack brushed his nose against her, nipping softly at her lips. “You are such a bad girl.”

Harley giggled. “You like it.”

“Mm...I like it very much.” Jack purred before he playfully covered her face in kisses until Harley was laughing. “Stop!!”

Jack whispered. “Oh no, you can never make me stop pumpkin. You are mine and I’m going to kiss you as much as I want.” He made loud kisses as he pressed his lips to her cheeks and nose causing her to squeal.

Jack stopped with a chuckle. “Wanna hear a joke?”

Harley giggled. “Okay.”

Jack, stroking back the loose strands of her hair, murmured with a grin. “A teacher is teaching a class and she sees that Johnny isn't paying attention, so she asks him, "If there are three ducks sitting on a fence, and you shoot one, how many are left?"

Johnny says, "None."

The teacher asks, "Why?"

Johnny says, "Because the shot scared them all off."

The teacher says, "No, two, but I like how you're thinking." Johnny asks the teacher, "If you see three women walking out of an ice cream parlor, one is licking her ice cream, one is sucking her ice cream, and one is biting her ice cream, which one is married?"
The teacher says, "The one sucking her ice cream."

Johnny says, "No, the one with the wedding ring, but I like how you think!"

Harley stared at him for a beat before she burst out into laughter.

Jack chuckled holding her close. He could feel the vibration of her laughter through her entire body and into his. He snuggled her closer, enjoying the sensation as Harley whispered back. “You’re horrible.”

Jack chuckled. “That’s why you love me.”

Harley purred. “One of many puddin, one of many reasons.”

Jack nuzzled her neck with a whispered, “I love you my sweets.”

Harley closed her eyes. Jack shifted a little, slipping out of her, made her stick her bottom lip out. He laughed softly kissing her bottom lip.

They were both quiet for a little bit, neither of them moved, content to lay in each others arms. Jack lazily kissed her eyelids, then her nose and cheeks until he finally arrived at her lips again.

Harley sleepily smiled. “Puddin? You all right?”


“About?” she asked softly, her eyes closed. She tucked her head under his chin and tightened her grip on him. For a moment an overwhelming feeling of fear washed over her, fear of losing him again. She didn’t know where it came from or why, especially after making love, but it was suddenly there. The feeling was powerful and it made her shiver. Harley pressed her cheek against his chest squeezing her eyes shut against the spike of fear in her chest.

Jack felt her body shiver and he tightened his grip on her.

He chuckled giving her a tight squeeze and a kiss on top of her head. “I’m just thinking about what’s coming. About punishing Bruce, Gotham. It’s just going to be so much fun pumpkin!! I have so many plans swirling in my head. It’s a bit overwhelming really. There is so much to do! We are going to remake Gotham into something so special Harley, together with our new family.”

She could feel the emotions in Jack, in the way his body tensed and relaxed, the rumble of his voice in his chest.

He whispered softly. “You, Frost, Agatha...all of them--they are my real family Harls. They are the people that stood by me, by us, no matter how bad things have gotten. They have stood with us and unlike my brother or your mother, they are our real family Harls. They loves us and we love them, that is what family is all about. Not blood.”

Harley kissed his chest. “You’re right puddin. You and our friends, they are the family I want, the family I’ve always needed.”

Jack laughed softly squeezing her playfully. “We are going to have so much fun Harley...so much fun together, all of us.”

Harley pressed her teeth worriedly into her bottom lip. She closed her eyes and held him tight. She didn’t care what happened next, she only cared that she would be with him, by his side through all
the trials yet to come. She was going to help her puddin do whatever it was he needed to do.

And she had her own revenge to seek on Bruce Wayne.

Harley smiled as Jack pulled the covers up over the two of them.

*

Carmine Falcone wore an Armani suit and puffed on an expensive cigar as he paced his office. The office, which was located in the heart of the fashion district, was a testament to Falcone’s wealth. The walls had aged cedar wood paneling along with several tall bookcases that contained books he had never read, along with paintings that he had purchased, expensive paintings, including a nude by Modigliani and an untitled piece by Philip Guston. Falcone stared at the painting without really seeing it as smoke slowly rolled from between his lips, fogging up the glass that he had surrounding and protecting the painting. Falcone liked to protect his investments, and sometimes that meant protecting them from himself.

His office contained a large glass desk that dominated the left half of the room next to the large window that looked out at Gotham, with an expensive black leather chair. On the desk Falcone had a laptop and a crystal decanter that contain cognac with two glasses sitting on a silver tray alongside a large crystal ashtray, but in his hand Falcone carried a large glass filled to the rim with bourbon, the bottle of Ancient Age Bourbon sat on a bookshelf as he continued to pace the office, puffing on his cigar like a great dragon, waiting for his appointed man to arrive and the man was late. Falcone hated it when his people were late.

He had just finished off his glass and jammed out the cigar; he had reached for the bottle to refresh his glass when he heard a light knock and his secretary, a very pretty and shapely brunette named Angela opened the door. Today she was wearing purple, a very flattering color on her rounded curves.

“Mr. Falcone, Sargent Loeb is here to see you,” Angela said with the same flirtatious smile she had on her lips since the moment he had hired her.

Falcone nodded. “Send him in, Angela.”

She smiled and nodded and a few seconds later the ugly visage of Sgt. Gillian Loeb filled the doorway. The man hurried into the room looking nervous.

Angela closed the door; as soon as she did Loeb smiled and pulled out a flash drive. “I got the copies of the camera footage as soon as I could Mr. Falcone.”

Falcone grabbed the bottle off the bookshelf and walked over to his desk. “Well, what are you waiting for?” he snarled taking a seat behind his desk. He set his glass and the bottle down, flipping up the lid of the computer and put his hand out for the flashdrive.

Loeb hurriedly handed the drive over. Falcone shoved it into the slot on his computer, his fingers quickly moving over the keys and had the video going in moments. Falcone narrowed his eyes as he scrolled through the footage. Loeb stepped over to the mob boss’s desk.

“Sir, if you move to the 48 mark, that is when the giant shows up. There isn’t any footage of the Second Circle—they actually don’t have cameras on that level sir. And the security cameras at the club have no sound. I believe that is where your son was located so there is only some minor footage of him being carried out of the club. This camera was mostly focused on the entrance and the stairs. There is...”
Falcone snapped, “Shut up.”

Loeb snapped his mouth shut.

Falcone sped the footage up to where Loeb had recommended. That was the moment someone or something crashed through the door. Falcone sat up straight and leaned closer to the screen. He recognized who it was—Bane, but only because of the man’s size and he knew the mask. Even with the grainy image, the pattern of the mask was something he knew from the fight club...the images of the rest of the people involved was fuzzy, grainy. All Falcone could see was that one of them was female and with white skin...

Falcone snarled low. “Bane...what the fuck was he doing there?”

As Falcone watched, the camera only caught one angle of the destruction, so that Falcone was only seeing moments as Bane moved through the club like a one man wrecking machine. Without looking up from the computer, Falcone hissed. “Where is the rest of the footage?”

“Sorry sir. I was only able to get the film from the one camera.”

Falcone glanced up with narrowed eyes at Loeb who looked as if he were about to wet himself. “Sorry sir, it took a lot of waiting and misdirection to make that copy. But if you watch, you will catch a glimpse of the people who took your son.”

Falcone snorted and returned his attention to the screen. Bane had moved out of view of the camera’s lense, but Falcone saw movement by the stairs, a group of four people, three men and a woman. Two of the men looked to be carrying bodies, though from the camera’s location he couldn’t be sure who they were. Falcone’s attention was on the two people in the front, both with ghost white skin. Loeb spoke, leaning over to point at the scene. “We think those are your son and the man named Trogg who works at...”

Falcone snapped as he paused the image. “I know where Trogg works you little weasel. Why are they taking him too?”

“No idea sir,” Loeb replied with a little shrug.

Falcone stared at the image. The two people in the front, a man and a woman, pale, ghostly white skin...something looked familiar about them, but the footage just wasn’t clear enough.

Falcone hissed under his breath. “Send Angela in here on your way out.”

Loeb started to say something, but Falcone looked up at him with narrowed eyes as he quietly repeated, “Send Angela in on your way out.”

Loeb nodded. “Yes sir.”

Falcone watched as the officer left. A few seconds later Angela walked into the room. “Yes Mr. Falcone?”

Falcone picked up the bottle of bourbon and poured himself another glass. “First, call Gigi and tell her that I’m picking her up for lunch, next I want you to contact Tallyman, let him know I have a job for him.”

Angela paled just slightly around the eyes. “Tallyman sir?”

Falcone nodded. “I have a few people who need to pay for their bad decisions.”
Bruce, dressed casually in black slacks and a white dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up, was down in the Batcave with Dick and Barbara. He stood by the computers, his arms crossed over his chest as he stared at the security camera footage on his computer screens in front of him. Dick sat in one of the chairs trying to resist the urge to spin around, though he did have his feet on the floor, his entire body slumped as he moved the chair back and forth with the balls of his feet. Bruce watched as Babs, a pencil stuck behind her ear and her tongue sticking out just slightly from between her teeth, did everything she could to make the image clearer.

After another couple of second Babs cursed under her breath and sat back in frustration. “Shit.”

“Language,” Bruce said without emotion and without looking over at her where Babs glared in annoyance at the computer screens. Instead, his eyes were narrowed as he focused on the images before him.

“Sorry.” Barbara sighed. “I can’t make it any clearer. This is some of the worst recording I’ve seen; it’s primitive, god da…” She cut herself off. “Anyway, I’m sorry—it’s the best I can do.” She slumped back in her chair in frustration.

Bruce nodded his understanding. “Anything on the plates or the cars?”

She shook her head. “I checked the traffic cams and there is a glimpse of their group splitting up outside. I mean, the giant guy is hard to miss, and I can see a hint of some of them getting into a vehicle, but with the crowd outside and other people leaving… ” She threw her hand up at the grainy image. “I couldn’t get a plate. All I can get is that the one guy is huge…or was huge. Is it just me or did he seem to shrink?”

Bruce only grunted in response.

Babs exchanged a look with Dick as she said, “Anyway, the traffic cam shows him getting into a van, but I can’t get a good image of the plate…so, that’s as good as I can get and there were no cameras on the second floor of the club. Seems that the club doesn’t have cameras up there.”

Bruce hissed in frustration. “So what you’re telling me is that we didn’t get anything at all.”

Barbara sighed. “That’s right.”

Bruce nodded. “Just keep your eyes and ears open, both of you. This was a big deal. They took Mario Falcone; his father is going to respond with violence. I want to be ready.”

With that Bruce turned and left.

Dick and Barbara watched him go before they turned back to exchange a look.

Dick made a face. “Whaddaya think crawled up his shorts?”

Barbara turned back to the computer, her fingers flying over the keys as she chuckled. “Better watch it. I think he might hear you.”

Dick wrinkled his nose and sat up straighter. “So, he tell you all that stuff about his little brother.”

She nodded, her eyes still on the computer screen. “He did.”

“Kinda weird don’t you think? I mean, his brother went nutso and Bruce is all straight and narrow,”
Dick muttered as he pulled out a piece of gum and offered it to Babs.

Barbara shrugged, taking the offered gum without looking at him, her eyes still on the computer as she tried and failed to do anything with the image from the cameras.

“Family is always weird, and some people just have weirder families than others.”

Dick frowned slightly and shrugged. “True. My mom said family wasn’t about who you were related to as much as it was about the people you chose to bring into your life.”

Barbara smiled. “Your mother sounded like a smart woman.”

Dick nodded, his voice sad. “She was the best.”

Barbara turned her chair around to face him. “Hey, I’m sorry.”

Dick shrugged slipping another piece of gum into his mouth so that the wad was much bigger and then gave her a slight smile. “It’s cool. I miss them, every day, but Bruce has been great, mostly. A bit of a hard ass actually, but…” He shrugged again. “I admire him. It’s just...he needs to loosen up a bit.”

Barbara laughed as she chewed her gum. “Yeah, he seems a bit tightly wound.”

Dick grinned. “You have no idea.”

*  

Frost, wearing only his boxers and a grey t-shirt, walked into his living room carrying two mugs of coffee. Agatha was sitting on the love seat wearing a pair of white sweats, a loose white t-shirt and a white sweater, her feet were bare and her hair was slightly rumpled. Frost smiled as he handed her the cup of coffee. Even dressed casually and with mussed hair, Agatha was all class and sexy as hell to Frost.

Agatha took it with smile. “Thank you dear. So you were saying about Jackie last night?”

Frost sat down next to her with his own mug. “He seemed more unhinged than I’ve seen before. It was... I mean, the plan went to hell. Jason said it all happened so fast. I guess Mario was trying to dance with Harley and instead of sticking to the plan, the Boss lost his temper and simply shot Mario in the knee in front of all those people. He didn’t care. We were only supposed to call in Bane if things went wrong, but damn, things went wrong fast.”

Agatha sipped her coffee. “Sometimes plans go south.”

“Yeah, but...it was a madhouse in there. Bane immediately was out of control and the Boss...he was just killing people...which, I mean he’s done that before, but there was just something different. He almost didn’t get us out of there before...” Frost sighed. “If Harley hadn’t yelled at him, got his attention, I don’t think he would have cared if Bane attacked us. It was different...he’s never been careless about our lives quite like that before Agie.”

Agatha reached out and stroked her fingers behind Frost’s ear. “Don’t worry Jonny. Jackie and Harley have had a traumatic experience. It’s natural that it’s going to take them both some time to adjust, unless you’re thinking about leaving him?” Agatha asked with concern.

“I guess you’re right. I’ve just never seen the Boss so...” Frost shrugged. “I don’t know. He’s just...he’s different and not just in how he looks. I can’t put my finger on what it is, but I have this
feeling...” He shook it off. “I would never leave him Agie. He is more than my Boss, he’s a friend, he’s family. And family—real family—stick with you no matter what because family isn’t about blood, it’s about the people you love and who love you back. It doesn’t matter how the Boss may change Agie. Him, Harley, all of them...you...” He gave her a loving smile. “You are my family.”

Agatha smiled and set her coffee down on the table on her side of the love seat and pulled Frost into her arms. He set his coffee down and gathered her close, laying his head against her chest.

Agatha whispered against his hair.

“I’m so glad Jackie has friends like you Jonny.”

*

A week had gone by with no word about his son and Falcone was not just upset, but livid. Gigi was lying across the couch dressed in a sheer pink babydoll lingerie top made of chiffon lace with a matching pair of thong-like panties and nothing else. She watched as Falcone, still dressed in his grey suit and tie, poured them both a shot of whiskey.

“Carmie, you really need to relax. Maybe Mario wasn’t really kidnapped. I mean, you know how kinky he can be, maybe this is just some sort of sex game he’s playing?” Gigi smiled as Carmine came over and handed her drink to her and sat down beside her, laying a hand on her leg as she lifted them for him to sit and replaced her legs on his lap.

“No Gigi honey, this ain’t one of my boy’s games. He would have contacted me by now.” Falcone frowned. “He knows better.”

Gigi took a sip of the whiskey and did her best not to make a face. She didn’t like whiskey, but she drank it for him.

“No, someone took him. I just don’t understand why, I haven’t received a ransom note...nothing. What the fuck do they want?” Carmine took a large swallow of his drink. Gigi began to say something when Carmine’s phone began to ring playing the main theme from The Godfather.

Gigi giggled. “That is so funny that you have that as your ringtone.”

Carmine smiled at her. “What? It’s my favorite movie.” He picked the phone up and answered. “Falcone.”

Gigi giggled under her breath. “Of course it is.”

Carmine listened, a frown creasing his features. “Send him up.”

Gigi looked up. “But Carmine, I thought tonight...”

“This is important Gigi, just shut up, okay?.” Carmine stood while Gigi made a sour face at him. There was a knock at the double doors.

“Enter,” Falcone called out. The doors were opened by one of Falcone’s guards, who stepped in with a man following close behind him while another guard closed the doors behind the two men. The man behind the guard was a very tall, slender black man with close cut hair, wearing a crisp white suit with a black turtle neck underneath.

The man stepped around the guard and put his hand out to Falcone. “Mr. Falcone, you sent for me.”
The man’s voice was smooth, cultured; there was a slight accent that Gigi couldn’t quite place. Falcone took the man’s hand. “Tallyman?”

The man smiled and bowed slightly. “At your service Mr. Falcone.”

Falcone smiled. “Can I offer you a drink?”

Tallyman glanced once at Gigi, but then quickly dismissed her as he turned his attention to Falcone. “No thank you, I’m just here about the job you have in mind, Mr. Falcone.”

Falcone nodded. “All right, straight to business. I want you to find my son and kill whoever took him.”

Tallyman frowned sliding his hands into the pockets of his white slacks. “I’m not usually in the business of finding lost children.”

Falcone snorted. “You’re in the business of settling scores. I’m not hiring you to be a detective, I’m hiring you to help me find the sonofabitch who has my son and kill him. That is what I want you to do, to kill them and everyone they love, I want him or her or them dead. I want their family dead, lovers dead...and I want my son returned.”

Falcone took a breath and added, “I will pay double your fees.”

Tallyman smiled. “Double you say?”

Falcone nodded. “Double.”

Tallyman smiled and put out his hand. “Then you have hired yourself an assassin Mr. Falcone.”

Falcone smiled and took the offered hand. “Good, and I know just where you can start, with a man in my employment named Bane.”

*

A week had gone by, the evening air was crisp, almost downright cold and they could both easily see their breath in the air.

Jack, with Harley sitting behind him, grinned from ear to ear as he twisted back on the handle, feeding more gas to the motorcycle and made them leap forward. Jack let out a wild laugh as he sped through traffic. (Jason had brought the bike over for Jack, a gift for him. Jack had been over the moon, grabbing Jason up into a tight hug. It was a Harley Davidson Breakout, painted a dark purple and Jack loved it.) He wasn’t wearing a helmet, so his green hair flew back, but he did have on a pair of black lensed goggles along with a royal blue three piece suit, black dress shirt with a royal blue tie, blue and black checked socks with brown monk strap dress shoes and a pair of burgundy leather driving gloves. Harley, her hair up in ponytails that were currently trailing behind in the wind, had her arms wrapped around Jack’s middle. She could feel the knife he had concealed under his jacket where her arms pressed against him, and grinned. She wore a pair of her own goggles over her eyes and had a bright smile on her face. She was wearing a pair of red skinny jeans, a black top with sheer upper panels that had little polka dots throughout the material. Over that she wore a quilted black leather jacket, a little red purse over her shoulder, and a pair of red heels decorated with black polka dots.

She yelled, whooping and let go of Jack to throw her arms up into the air just as Jack took several curves in the road, causing the bike to lean dangerously to the side. Jack laughed, his smile spread clear across his face while the bike zipped dangerously through the Gotham evening traffic.
They were headed out to a location in The Hills district where Frost and Jason had stored their “victims” for the last week in an abandoned building while Thea and Trope worked their computer magic.

Jack pulled the bike around the building, an old abandoned building on a street that looked like it too had been long abandoned. There were few people about, a couple on a street corner who stepped back into the shadows when the light from the bike washed over them; a few homeless people were visible here and there; and piles of trash were gathered at the corners of buildings and in the alleyways. This part of The Hill looked like a lost and neglected toy, there was once love here, but over the years that loved had faded leaving this place sad and depressed.

Jack parked the bike and hopped off gracefully, shoving his goggles up onto his forehead, causing strands of green hair to fall to the side of his goggles. Harley did the same with her goggles just before Jack turned and grabbed her around the waist and lifted her up. Harley giggled putting her hands on his shoulders smiling down at him as Jack spun her around once before setting her on her feet with a deep kiss.

“Mm...your lips always taste like candy sweets,” Jack purred brushing his nose against hers before he released her, turning to grab the handles of the bike and walk it toward a metal door set in the back of the building. Harley hurried over to the door and performed a complicated sets of knocks as she grinned over her shoulder at him.

“You are so sweet puddin.” She giggled as the door opened to reveal a normal (his new normal) size Bane without his mask.

Bane grinned down at her and Jack. “Two of my favorite people!”

Harley reached up and wrapped her arms around his waist giving the big man a hug with a gleeful giggle. “Bane!”

Bane laughed hugging her in return with one arm as he stepped back to let her in and to make room for Jack to roll his motorcycle inside.

Jack grinned. “Hey Bane darling, how are things going?”

Bane closed the door letting Harley go at the same time. “The unicorn sisters have everything up and running, just waiting for you and Harley.”

Jack’s smile was bright. “Perfect!”

Jack set the bike in a corner and turned to face Bane and Harley, his arms outstretched to display himself. “How do I look? Good enough for TV?” He did a little spin showing off his outfit. Harley gave Jack a wolf whistle at the same that Bane replied with a grin. “You look great Boss.”

Jack reached out and grabbed the hand of a giggling Harley to spin her around and into his arms. “Now, Harley looks good enough to eat, don’t you agree Bane?”

Bane chuckled. “My little girl looks like an ice princess Boss.”

Jack smiled, gazing down at Harley. “Mm...my little frosty cupcake.”

Harley laughed. “All right you two, enough--come on.”

The two men laughed as Bane took the lead with Jack and Harley following.
He led the two of them down a little hall that twisted to the left, which opened out into a large central room. The room was filled with adjustable umbrella lights, several green screens, a lawn chair, and a colorful beach umbrella. There were several large cameras on tripods and stands, microphones and so many other little things that just delighted Jack. They looked like they had a real studio.

Jack and Harley saw that Thea’s hair had been shaved on the side, but the top was a thick wavy blue. She was bent over her computer, typing away intently. Trope had her hair braided in pigtails, now a rainbow of bright colors that were startling against the all black outfits the two young women wore; she was typing away at such a speed that it was impressive. They were set up in a corner with several computers and computer screens on the wall in front of them, typing away though Trope turned around when she heard them and waved. “Hey Boss! Harley!! Almost ready! Another few minutes and you’ll be broadcasting on every station and over all networks, even cable. We’ll only be able to hold control of the signal for a few minutes, but it should be long enough for you.”

Jack waved. “Thank you darlings!”

Harley giggled and waved back at the girls.

Jason, who had been peering into one of the cameras came over with a grin. He was dressed all in black tonight. “Want us to move them into place Boss?”

Jack nodded. “Please.”

Jason nodded and motioned at Bane, the two men disappearing deeper into the building.

Jack, holding Harley’s hand, walked over to where Alex, Frost, Agatha, Bea, and Zsasz were sitting at an old wooden table on some equally old kitchen chairs. A few of them were drinking beers, though Zsasz looked to be drinking seltzer water. Agatha, who had been sitting on Frost’s knee jumped up.

“Jackie! Harley!! So good to see you both.” She wrapped her arms around them and pulled them into a hug. “Sorry I missed all the fun at the Inferno though.”

Frost chuckled at Agatha’s choice of words.

Bane came around the corner at the other end of the room carrying two metal chairs with two men strapped securely to them with duct tape. Behind him came Dr. October and Jason. Jack turned, watching as Bane carried the two men and their chairs as if they weighed no more than a couple of sacks of potatoes. He took the two men over to the little studio set up and set the chairs down next to the umbrella. Both men had tape over their mouths and were struggling against their bonds as Bane straightened their chairs before Viktoria did a quick inspection of Mario and Trogg. Bane loomed nearby, watching their prisoners while Jason strolled back over.

Jack smiled. “So, have they been good?”

Jason snorted. “I’ve learned a lot of new curse words if that is any indication as to how things have been.”

Jack laughed. “Well, I am so glad your education hasn’t been neglected.”

Trope called out. “We are going to be ready in like, fifteen minutes guys.”

Jack clapped his hands. “I guess it’s almost show time. I need a mirror! Need to make myself presentable.”
Frost pointed. “There’s a bathroom over that way Boss.”

Jack nodded and waved, tugging Harley along with him as he made his way to the indicated bathroom.

*

The bathroom was small, just barely big enough for two people, with plain white tile walls and a linoleum flooring, a simple shower, toilet, a baby changing table that was shoved up against the wall, and a mirror over the sink that had a crack that ran diagonally from the upper right corner to the left bottom corner. The light was a harsh white that seemed to emphasize the smallness of the room.

Harley dropped her purse down on the baby station, shoved her goggles inside the purse, and began to pull out some makeup from her purse--brought just for this occasion--and placed the items on the table, a deep red lipstick, black eyeliner, a comb for Jack’s hair, and some hair gel. She glanced up from placing the items on the table. She noticed Jack, both hands on either side of the sink, his goggles dangling around his neck as he leaned toward the mirror. He was staring at himself in the mirror, his nose slightly wrinkled, his hairless brow furrowed, then smooth as he widened his eyes, then furrowed again as he glared at himself. He had combed his hair back with his fingers, but after the ride here on the motorcycle his hair was still a bit wild with long strands, curling ever so slightly, framing his face.

“Everything okay puddin?” Harley asked as she finished setting out the makeup.

Jack frowned without looking at her. “I don’t think I look frightening enough sweets. I think I need something...more.”

Harley stepped over to her husband and leaned against his shoulder looking at him in the mirror. Their gazes met in the mirror. She tilted her head to the side and smiled slowly.

“You are going by the Joker now right? Why don’t we play up the clown aspect of that...you already have a sort of darkness around your eyes that makes the blue very striking, let me darken that further and I can make your smile come out to here...” She put her arm around him and with her fingers indicated his smile, how she could stretch it past his lips.

Jack chuckled. “I like it--do it sweets.”

Harley grinned and turned him to face her. Jack grinned at her, stealing a quick kiss. Harley giggled returning his kiss before she reached back for the eyeliner. She started with his eyes, drawing the pencil around them. His electric blue eyes were already highlighted by a darkness around them that was now natural for Jack, but Harley darkened them more, using her fingers to smudge the pencil out further. She picked up lipstick and began to color Jack’s already red lips, making them a deeper shade of red.

Jack watched her, adoring the wrinkle between her brows as she concentrated on what she was doing.

After she finished coloring his lips, Harley very slowly extended the red out from the corners of his mouth by barely an inch, keeping the line nice and smooth. She finished and took a step back to examine her work. Jack smiled at her, and the red was bright against his perfect white teeth.

Harley’s smile slowly spread across her face. “Almost done puddin.”

She picked up the comb and ran it through his hair, slicking it back.

Harley grinned. “You are so handsome.” She turned him around. “Look in the mirror puddin, tell me
what you think.”

Jack turned to gaze at himself in the mirror. He turned his face one way and then the other, smiling the entire time.

“Nothing like going to work with a great big smile,” he said with a chuckle just before he grabbed Harley and yanked her into his arms. She yelped in surprise as Jack lifted her off her feet and swung her around in the tiny bathroom.

“Puddin!” Harley laughed.

Jack beamed at her. “You, my girl, are a genius!”

Harley giggled with delight as Jack set her on her feet and grabbed her face in both hands, kissing her soundly.

“Now, let’s go make some magic!” Jack laughed grabbing Harley’s hand and yanking her out of the bathroom with him.

*

Jack walked back into the large room and yelled. “I’m ready for my close up!!”

Jason looked up from where he was working with the camera, then over to the girls. Trope didn’t turn around from the computers, but she thrust her hand back behind her giving them all a thumbs up.

Everyone else in the room turned to look at Jack with startled gasps.

Jack grinned with delight throwing his arms out. “How do you like my look?”

Frost nodded. “Creepy boss.”

Zsasz grinned. “I like it.”

“Fuckin’ A,” Alex echoed.

Agatha murmured. “That is chilling Jackie.”

Jack grinned happily. “Perfect!”

Jason motioned at Jack. “Okay Boss, get in position.”

Jack kissed Harley one more time before he walked to the little “stage” that was set with the fold out chair and umbrella, along with Mario and Trogg who were continuing to struggle, only stopping to stare as Jack strolled over to them. He waved his hand at them both with a big smile.

“Hello boys, ready to make TV magic? I know I am.” Jack laughed as he sat down in the folding chair and crossed his legs elegantly.

Jason glanced at Trope who began to count down out loud. “Three...two...”

Harley went to stand behind Jason while everyone else stayed where they were, Jack pulled out a pack of cigarettes, pulling one out and lighting it as Trope called out. “ONE!”

She hit something and all her computer screens switched over to a blue screen before they were
suddenly filled with Jack’s smiling image.

Jason turned the camera toward Jack and everything went quiet.

*

All across Gotham, all televisions and streaming devices, everything suddenly went blank. Three seconds later an image of a green haired man in what looked like clown makeup popped up on the screen.

The man took a hard drag on his cigarette before he very casually blew out a stream of smoke and he grinned at the camera. To the audience he looked as if he were on a beach, the scene behind him was of a sunny beach and a blue sky. The clown sat under a beach umbrella while two men sat duct taped to a couple of chairs with tape over their mouths, staring back at the camera. Falcone had been lying back on his couch sipping some bourdon with Gigi’s head on his lap, watching some dance competition show that she liked when his eyes widened in disbelief as the screen flipped to some fake ass beach scene, but it was the sight of his son Mario and the man Trogg who worked for him, duct taped and gagged sitting next to the clown that made the mob boss’s blood run cold.

*

Dick had been playing on his phone and watching a ball game when the TV went wonky. He frowned, glancing up as the screen clicked back on, revealing a man with green hair and two men who were taped up.

Dick’s mouth dropped open before he yelled. “Bruce!! Babs!! You might wanna come see this!”

*

The sound of old fashioned cheerful organ music from a carousel began to play. The music very slowly faded until it was only background noise as the camera focused fully on a green haired man sitting on a fake beach.

“Good evening Gotham!!!” Joker grinned at the camera, smoke slowly rolling from between his smiling lips as he bounced his crossed leg, leaning back in the lawn chair as if he had not a care in the world. “Let me introduce myself Gotham...” Joker pressed one hand to his chest. “I’m the Joker.”

Trope triggered the sound of applause and canned laughter.

The Joker laughed with delight before he turned his attention back to the camera. “I thought it would be a good time to introduce myself to all of you here in beautiful Gotham City. I’m here to bring a whole new world of fun not just to you, the simple citizens, but to the mob families that control nearly all of Gotham’s crime.” He winked at the camera. “And who control a lot more than that.”

Joker stood up with a bounce, flicking his cigarette off screen as he walked over to stand behind Mario and Trogg, placing his hands on their heads. The two men began to struggle in a futile effort against their bonds.

“Now, tonight these two are my special guests. This here...” Joker pressed his fingers into Mario’s head tightly, holding him still. “Is Mario Falcone, the son of Gotham’s own crime lord, Carmine Falcone. And this...” Joker pressed down on Trogg’s head. “Is a man named Trogg. I don’t actually know a lot about him, but he works for both father and son Falcone. I have these two delightful men here with me for two reasons. One, as a challenge to Batman, Gotham’s own White Knight...or should I saw Dark Knight since he likes to creep around at night and beat the living shit out of poor criminals just trying to get by on the tough streets of Gotham. And two...for you Mr. Falcone...this is
just a little warning to let you know, I’m coming for you, I’m coming for you, your family...all of it.”

Joker laughed. “Now, let’s see what our very special guests have to say, shall we?”

Joker turned his back to the camera and ripped the tape from the mouth of Mario Falcone before he stepped out of the camera’s way.

“YOU MOTHERFUCKER!! My Father is going to RIP OFF YOUR DICK AND STUFF IT DOWN YOUR THROAT!!” Mario screeched, his voice breaking as he yelled.

Joker turned to the camera and put his fingers to his mouth that he held open in mock shock, his eyes going wide in mock surprise. “Such language!” He turned back to Mario. “Do you kiss your mother with that mouth?”

Mario opened his mouth again, about to yell more profanity when Joker slapped him hard across the face with one gloved hand before wagging his finger at him. “That is quite enough young man.”

Joker turned back to the camera with a grin. “Sorry folks, sometimes you just gotta show children some tough love.”

Joker put his hand out gesturing with his fingers. Off camera Jason threw him a roll of duct tape, which he caught, and yanked some out while Mario started to protest.

“Don’t you dare, you fucker!!”

Joker shook his head as he reapplied tape to Mario’s mouth. “Tsk tsk. Remember: Manners maketh man.”

*

In Wayne Manor, Bruce stood behind the couch with his arms crossed over his chest, while Dick still sat watching the television. Bruce had gone pale when he saw his brother, with white skin the color of milk, green hair, and the wide red smile. Bruce felt a shiver ran up his back.

He turned to Barbara who was standing at the other end of the couch. “Is there any way you can trace where the signal is coming from?”

Barbara shrugged. “I don’t know. I can try.”

Bruce nodded. “Go.”

He turned his attention back to the television as his brother continued.

Bruce said softly under his breath low enough that only he could hear. “Oh Jack…”

*

Joker walked behind Trogg. “Now, I wonder what our little Trogg has to say?” His grin was crooked as he ripped the tape from the bound man’s face.

“You fucker!! When I get free I’m gonna make you watch as I rape your girl!”

Joker’s smile dropped, and his eyes, which had been dancing with amusement, went flat. Harley gasped in shock as Jason cursed low under his breath. Everyone else in the room made little noises in response to Trogg, all eyes on Joker.
Joker’s smile quickly returned.

“Well, you do have quite a tongue on you Trogg. I guess it’s a good thing that I don’t actually need you except as an example to Batman and Falcone that I do mean business.”

Joker turned his full attention on the camera with a big smile. “Look away if you’re squeamish!”

He pulled his knife out from under his jacket and with a flourish, flicked the blade open. He moved swiftly, grabbed Trogg by the hair on top of his head to yank his head back. The man’s eyes widened in shock as he realized what was about to happen, but Joker just grinned at the man, then back at the camera.

“Let the games begin.”

With a bright smile, Joker drew the knife across Trogg’s throat.

Mario tried to scream, his body thrashing wildly in the chair.

*

Bruce gasped in shock.

Dick turned away.

*

Falcone tossed Gigi to the floor, throwing his glass at the TV where it smashed against the screen sending veins cracking through the LED screen as he stood up and snarled, his face turning red. “I want the Joker’s head on a spike RIGHT NOW!!”

*

Somewhere in Gotham, in a small apartment hidden away in the forest of old buildings that made up this end of Gotham, Jonathan Crane watched the programming in front of him. He was sitting in an old, patched up cushioned chair that was much too low to the ground for his long legs, causing him to have his legs bent at the knee and spread wide, his knees practically in his face. His arms laid across the arms of the chairs, hands gripped the ends, fingers pressed into the fabric. He narrowed his eyes as he watched the clown on the screen. There was something familiar about that clown’s features, something about his face…the way he spoke. The Joker...

The clown on the screen motioned to someone off camera as Trogg bled out on the screen for all of Gotham to see. He twitched feebly and his head hung forward against his blood covered chest. “Oh! Before I go kiddies, I want you all to meet my Mrs. Joker. Come here pumpkin, let the nice people see how pretty you are and what a lucky man Joker is.”

Harley giggled and hurried over nearly falling into the Joker’s arms. Like him, her skin was clown makeup white, but her hair was the same color as her skin, white, making her look like an ice queen...

Crane leaned forward, his brow furrowing as he stared at the screen, the Joker’s voice echoing in his room. He stared at the woman and a slow smile spread across his face as he whispered low and dark. “Harleen…”

“Good night Gotham!! Sleep tight and sweet dreams. Be seeing you Batsy!! Good luck finding me and the Missus. Oh, and Falcone...hope you find your son soon before he becomes a pinata!!”
For a moment the screen filled with the visage of the Joker, his laugh echoed into the small apartment room, then suddenly the visual snapped out of existence and Crane’s television was suddenly back to the droning sounds of a regular television program once more.

Crane smiled. “It seems my dear, precious Harleen is now wearing some sort of mask...not the same person as she used to be...” Crane smiled slowly. “The Batman, the Joker...perhaps it’s time I showed Gotham my mask too.”

Crane looked over to the mask that covered a styrofoam head, a mask that resembled a burlap bag that looked to be held together with thick black stitching ran along the top and down the side of the strange mask, with small cutouts that would barely show the eyes of the person beneath, and a ragged cutout for the mouth with long, ragged black stitching creating a fearful frown across the dark, rough material.

“Yes, we all wear masks--perhaps it’s time I should wear mine too?”
The following night, Jack and Harley headed out to the fight club to watch Bane fight. The plan was to go to the fight, then for Jack to take Harley out to dinner, a little date just the two of them and maybe some celebration back home. Jack wanted to go simply to watch Falcone squirm, and perhaps talk to Penguin. He figured that his old friend Cobblepot would not be working with Falcone of his own free will, that the little man had probably gotten himself twisted around Falcone’s finger, which was good for Jack who figured he could always use knew frienemies in the upcoming fights with the Bat.

Jack frowned in the mirror. Harley had purchased him some temporary hair dye that had colored his hair a strange reddish color with green undertones where his now natural hair color struggled to bleed through. Harley had also applied make-up to his skin, giving him a skin color that closely resembled his pre-acid bath tone; furthermore he wasn’t wearing any lipstick or eyeliner.

Jack glared at his reflection. At the moment, he hated it.

Jack made a face in the mirror as he pulled on the dark purple leather gloves over his hands.

“I look weird Harley,” he stated with a slight pout. “I miss my lipstick.”

Harley smiled without looking up as she pulled up the zipper on her thigh-high black boot. “You are still my handsome puddin.”

Jack turned to look at her over his shoulder and lifted one of his penciled in eyebrows at Harley. She had drawn eyebrows in for his disguise and while he thought she had done a good job, he had quickly grown accustomed to no eyebrows and having them made him feel odd.

“Like this even?” he asked with genuine curiosity.

Harley looked up from zipping up her other boot. “Even like that. I find you sexy as hell no matter what puddin.” Harley smiled and blew him a kiss.

Jack smirked at her. “You are crazy.”

Harley giggled. “That I am puddin, but you like me crazy don’t you?”

Jack chuckled as he nodded his head in agreement. “That I do Harls, that I do.”

Harley smiled looking down to check her boots.

Jack gazed at her with appreciation, even in her disguise she was gorgeous. She was wearing the boots along with a short black flared mini skirt and a loose grey sweater that fell tantalizingly off of one shoulder. She had applied very little make-up to her skin so that while she still looked quite pale, she had added pink highlights that gave her white flesh the illusion of color, just the right amount of pink shimmer so that her skin glowed a little. It gave her the illusion that her skin tone had more to do with the lighting than the fact that her skin was actually bleached white. Her hair was still white, but she had let Trope and Thea get a hold of her earlier today; the two girlfriends had colored the ends of Harley’s hair turning one side of her hair pink, the other side blue giving Harley a cotton candy look. Jack grinned. Harley always looked good enough to eat he thought, but comparing her to candy made him lick his lips, his eyes roaming down her figure as the thought of licking her came to him vividly, her thighs against his cheeks, her fingers in his hair, the taste of her pleasure on his tongue. He sighed, maybe later when he didn’t look so...weird.
Harley had pulled her hair up into two pigtails, but the tails were folded giving her the illusion of twin buns on either side of her head, the pink and blue curled down close to her head making her look younger, sweeter, Jack thought with amusement. She had put on her makeup differently than her usual style, with the help of Thea and Trope she had contoured her features in a way that made her look slightly less like herself. It was quite the change Jack thought and while he could still see his wife in her face, she looked just different enough that someone else—especially people not familiar with her—wouldn’t necessarily recognize her.

Harley ran her hands over her skirt as she looked up at Jack, the thick black framed glasses she wore completed her disguise, hiding the vivid blue of her eyes and definitely making her look like someone else instead of his Harley Quinn.

Harley smiled. “Put the glasses on puddin and let me see.”

Jack stepped over to the chair that sat in the corner of their room and picked up the brown fedora, placing it on his head along with a pair of lightly tinted glasses that hid Jack’s now unusually bright blue eyes. He was dressed in a pair of brown slacks, a light blue dress shirt, no vest and without a tie. He looked very pedestrian, all very boring Jack thought glumly. Even the jacket he wore screamed “I’m boring,” but being boring was part of the plan because it would let him blend in with the crowd better, to hide in plain sight. The only thing he liked about his disguise was at least it was tailored nicely and fit well. The only thing he wore that had any of Jack’s flair were the shoes and the socks, a pair of dark brown monk strap shoes with some purple and green striped socks, the only color Harley would allow him for their disguises.

“I still don’t see why you get to have color in your hair and I have to go with this...weird red.” Jack folded his arms over his chest, the glasses perched on the tip of his nose.

Harley laughed as she pushed herself up and walked over to him, sliding her arms around her husband’s waist. “Puddin, we talked about this...”

Jack sighed. “I know.” He laughed, kissing the tip of her nose. “I just hate dressing so boring.”

Harley kissed his chin carefully, not wanting to mess up his makeup. “I’ll make it up to you, I promise.” <>Jack grinned. “You better.”

She giggled. “I will. Ready?”

Jack sighed. “As I’ll ever be! Let’s go watch Bane smash some people!”

Harley laughed, stepped back and took his hand forcing him to uncross his arms. “Come on, you grouch.”

Jack laughed then, letting her pull him from the room, but on the way down the stairs he slipped his hand under her skirt and gave her rear a squeeze. Harley squeaked, which made him laugh.

* 

The fight club was just as crowded as the night Jack and Harley had come to find Bane. They could see Bea over by the mud pool already in a bout with some young man who was being cheered along by his drunken friends. Harley could tell that Bea was playing with him, giving the man’s drunken friends a good show by putting their pal into embarrassing holds, keeping him down long enough for them to take a few pictures before she would flip the poor man into another painful and embarrassing position. Harley chuckled, but turned her attention to the large cage.
Jack smiled when he saw Bane and Viktoria near the large central cage. Bane, wearing his mask, was pacing the inside of the cage and occasionally pumping his fists. His whole body was tight, muscles bulged with the light green glow of the Titan drug in his veins visible as he moved around the inside of the cage waiting for his next victim while Viktoria, looking professional in black slacks, matching blouse and white lab coat, watched him, a frown clear on her face as she fiddled with the stethoscope that hung from around her neck.

The two of the moved further, going around Bane’s cage to get a better view of the balcony. Jack’s attention moved from the cage to his true goal of the night, Oswald Cobblepot. Oswald and Falcone sat on their “thrones” in a place of honor on a balcony that looked down on the rabble, away from everyone. Jack had difficulty reading their facial expressions from his position, but judging by the way Cobblepot was sitting on his chair, his arms folded protectively around himself, wrinkling the expensive suit he wore, and his cigarette burning itself to ash at the end of his cigarette holder, Jack saw a man who was very unhappy, but doing his best to look genteel and smile. Jack smirked. It was pleasant to see Oswald taken down a peg or two.

Jack turned his attention to Oswald’s balcony companion. His main reason for coming to the fight club was not just to watch Bane, but Jack was also here to watch Falcone squirm a bit as he tried to keep up appearances that he had everything under control even with his son still missing. Joker had left no other messages about Mario Falcone’s fate and he had no intention of leaving any...not yet. The game had just started ad Jack had decided while he had one pawn, everyone else had knights and bishops; it was his turn to collect more pieces, stronger pieces, in the game.

As Jack frowned trying to work out how he was doing to get close to Cobblepot--who he didn’t believe for a moment was working willingly with Falcone--he studied the balcony. Oswald had three women with him, two at his sides, another at his back and a young man kneeling at his feet with his arm across Oswald’s lap. Jack’s lip curled in derision. The man always was so decadent.

Jack pursed his lips in thought. He didn’t need to know the reasons why Cobblepot was working side by side with Falcone, allowing the mobster to be part of his fight club; all Jack needed to know was whether or not he could get old Pengie to flip and work for him...as they say, the enemy of my enemy is my friend...perhaps that old adage held true, at least for the time Jack needed it to be true. He grinned. As Jack continued observing Penguin and Falcone, he saw a club employee escort a young woman onto the balcony. He couldn’t hope to hear what was going on, but he tilted his head in curiosity as the woman leaned down to Oswald and grinned, followed by a few words from him and a kiss on her cheek. A moment later, a chair was brought for the young woman to sit. Interesting.

The music thumped loudly, the sounds of music mixed with shouts, cheers and the basic human rumble of several bodies occupying one room filled the air. As Jack and Harley made their way deeper inside the building and closer to the balcony where Penguin sat, Jack’s grin widened when he saw Falcone better. It looked as if the man had aged since the last time Jack had seen him. He had an additional guard at his back that made four and as Jack let his gaze wander around the club, he could see several more thuggish men in suits, trying to blend into the crowd. The mob boss’s men fit in with the fight club patrons about as well as oil in water.

Jack ran his tongue over his teeth in thought. How to get up to Penguin without drawing Falcone’s attention? That was when his eyes landed on Bea. She was in the middle of being hosed off at the moment ,which was perfect.

Jack pulled Harley close so he could whisper in her ear. “Harls, I have a job for you.”

Harley grinned at her husband. “Anything puddin.”

Jack kissed her on the cheek carefully. “I need to be able to talk to Pengie, but without being so close
to Falcone that he recognizes me, or hears anything I want to talk about with Penguin. I think Bea might be able to get you up there to deliver a message for me...” Jack frowned in thought. “I don’t like sending you up there, but…”

Harley smiled. “Bea will be with me. Not a problem puddin.”

Harley glanced up at the balcony. “You don’t think Cobblepot would betray us do you?”

Jack glanced back at the balcony too, following her gaze. “No, I suspect old Cobblepot just might be thankful for our help.” If not, Jack thought, it will be a really interesting night.

Harley grinned, kissing the corner of his mouth. “I’ll be right back then puddin.”

Jack grabbed her hand as she started to walk away. Harley turned to look at him with a frown only to find Jack’s eyes behind the glasses shadowed. “Be careful sweets.”

Harley smiled reassuringly. “I will puddin. Don’t forget, Penguin helped me once. I trust him.”

Jack’s frown deepened, but he let go of her hand watching his love make her way toward Bea.

* 

Bea, dressed in a dark green bikini with a halter like top and cutouts that ran down the middle between her breasts and a tiny bottom with cutouts along her hips, she was drawing a lot of attention as she stood talking to Harley while wringing out of the water from her ponytail. She frowned at Harley, rubbing the back of her neck as she thought about Harley’s request. “I guess so, I mean Mr. Cobblepot picks men and women out all the time to spend the night with him and I know sometimes some of the others around here will bring up people who want a chance to be with him. He’s pretty popular, though I think it has more to do with the money around him than with Cobblepot himself. I mean, he can be charming in his own way, but he ain’t no Brad Pitt that’s for sure.”

Harley chuckled. “But do you think you can get me up there without raising any suspicions?”

Bea shrugged. “Sure. I’ve never brought him anybody before, but there’s a first time for anything. Besides, I know he likes me. If I bring someone up he is sure to want to meet them if only to be nice to me.”

Harley grinned. “Perfect.”

* 

Mixed in with the patrons of the club, the only thing setting him apart from anyone else was the white suit he wore; Tallyman studied the crowd around him. There was nothing unusual that he could see though he didn’t really expect there to be. He was here to catch Bane after the fight and question him about what he was doing at the club the night Mario had been taken. Tallyman had come to the club tonight not really expecting to see Bane, but he was surprised when Bane and his doctor girlfriend had shown up tonight, which, if they had nothing to do with Mario’s abduction made sense, but it could also be a ploy to throw Falcone off their scent. It was also possible they didn’t have any idea that there had been cameras at the club. Tallyman gave a mental shrug, he didn’t think they would be that stupid since a man of Bane’s size was hard to hide and from the images on the video he had seen, the man had grown far beyond his normal size, not something you could hide. So again, maybe they had nothing to do with Mario Falcone’s kidnapping, but he still needed to talk to them. It paid to be thorough.

He knew Falcone already owned their asses, thought he didn’t know the details, but if they hadn’t
shown up here tonight that would have set off more alarm bells, so this could simply be them hiding in plain sight.

Either way, he would talk to them after the end of the fights tonight.

*

Harley and Bea made their way through a door into the building that ran alongside the building where Cobblepot and Falcone sat overlooking the fights. Bea led Harley through a doorway and up a hidden set of stairs, all peppered with armed guards. The men and women on guard duty only nodded their acknowledgement of Bea and Harley, but didn’t stop them or search them. A couple of men on the stairs grinned. “Hey Bea, how’s it going tonight? Heard you embarrassed from frat boy.”

Bea laughed as she walked past swinging her hips with a little extra sway to them immediately drawing the undivided attention of the two nearest men.

“Oh you know how it is, couple of drunk college kids get their friend to go into the ring and I have to teach them a lesson about not touching what isn’t theirs to touch.” She smiled. “That’s always fun.”

They walked past those two, but one of them called back. “Hey Bea, who’s your friend and where are you two heading to?”

“My friend here wants to meet The Penguin.” Bea stopped and cocked her hip out laying her hand on it and giving the guard her best smile. Harley turned and did the same, shifting one leg onto the stair above her so that her short skirt fell away off her thigh giving the two guards a hint that she wasn’t wearing much under the skirt. The one who had stopped them grinned.

“That man sure is lucky.”

His friend smacked him in the shoulder turning away from the women. “It’s the money that’s attractive Benny.”

Benny shrugged. “Yeah, but still...damn lucky.”

The two men began to have a discussion about how much money one needed to attract beautiful women as Bea rolled her eyes and motioned for Harley to continue following her up the stairs. Harley silently nodded at Bea in agreement, wondering what was wrong with so many men.

The two women arrived at another set of doors at the top of the stairs where two guards, a tall woman with blonde hair buzzed so short that Harley thought she qualified as bald and a man with hair long enough that he had it braided well below the nape of his neck; both dressed in the typical black suits of bodyguards the world over Harley thought with a slight smirk.

The woman smiled when she saw Bea. “Hey, I got a new one for you.”

Bea laughed. “Hit me Marie.”

The woman grinned. “Arguing with a lawyer is like mud wrestling a pig, sooner or later you realize that they like it.”

Bea and Harley both laughed, but the man standing guard shook his head. “Honey, your mud jokes are getting worse.”

The woman smiled and shrugged. “Sorry, I can’t help it, but at least I haven’t repeated myself yet.”
Bea laughed. “It’s fine you two. How’s the baby making going?”

The woman grinned giving the man next to her a wicked grin. “Oh, good.”

The other guard blushed then shook himself. “What you need Bea? You don’t usually come up here.”

“I promised my friend Sally I would introduce her to Mr. Cobblepot.” Bea indicated Harley with a slight nod of her head.

Harley smiled and waved.

“Oh okay.” Marie glanced at her partner before she leaned over and opened the door.

Bea and Harley stepped onto the balcony.

Harley blinked looking around. It was a really good view from up here, she thought. The occupants of the balcony turned. Falcone frowned giving the young women a once over look before he turned back around to watch the festivities, dismissing them both while Cobblepot’s gaze lingered on the two young women. He gave Bea a very clear once over before turning his attentions to Harley, his gaze lingering on her legs. Oswald’s current companions all glared at the two women.

He smiled taking a drag off his cigarette, smoke slowly rolling from his nostrils as he spoke. “Well hello Bea my dear, what brings you up here?”

Bea smiled. “I have someone who wants to meet you.”

She indicated Harley who giggled and waved. “Oh wow, Mr. Oswald Cobblepot! I’ve heard so much about you.” Harley hurried forward and the two women around Cobblepot stepped back while the young man at his feet scooted out of the way looking annoyed as Harley plopped herself down on Cobblepot’s lap.

Oswald looked startled but pleased as the young woman wrapped her arms around him, giving him a fantastic view of her thighs when her short skirt fluttered up.

*

Down below Jack was trying to watch the balcony without full on staring; someone would notice his scrutiny if he wasn’t careful and that just wouldn’t do. Right now, he had to be careful...and he hated it. He had moved himself into a better position to spy on the balcony and its occupants when he saw Harley step onto the balcony with Bea. He felt a flash of panic when he saw her, out of his reach and surrounded by people who could hurt her. He pressed his lips together in anger and frustration, but this was his plan and he trusted Harley. He just really didn’t want anyone to touch or hurt his girl.

He had just registered her appearance there when she was suddenly in Cobblepot’s lap. Jack growled low in his throat as he began to rush forward only catching himself in mid stride, his eyes still on his girl. She was kicking her legs and leaning into Cobblepot. There was something over-the-top about her actions and Jack smiled. She was acting...of course she was...He cursed himself for his hot flash of rage, but calmed. He only had to trust her, which he did; he trusted Harley with his life.

*

Harley threw her arms around Cobblepot’s neck, leaning in close as if she were going to kiss him. Oswald grinned broadly as this new, lovely woman came close, her glasses sliding to the end of her nose. She winked at him.
"Hello Pengie."

Oswald stared at her for a moment in confusion. It was clear that he didn’t recognize her at first as he gazed into her face. Harley smiled as she waited, when suddenly she saw understanding blossom across his features as he realized who this was...Harley Quinn, the Joker’s girl. Like everyone else in Gotham, he had seen the broadcast, but as he gazed at her in dawning horror he realized she was also Harley, Jack Wayne’s girl. Or had been. Jack Wayne was dead and so was Harleen Quinzel...this couldn’t be the same woman, though they shared similar features he thought. There was something wrong with her eyes and something off with her demeanor. Cobblepot was confused, but he pushed all those thoughts aside to focus on the woman on his lap.

Penguin glanced once at Falcone who was paying no attention at all to him, his full attention on the fight Bane was currently participating in.

Oswald hissed back. “You’re Harley Quinn, the Joker’s girl. I saw the broadcast--everyone in Gotham saw it.”

Harley smiled. “The Joker wants to talk to you. He feels you both have a mutual enemy and that joining forces might be in the interest of both of you.”

Oswald glanced from her out into the crowds below with a look of confusion in his eyes. “He’s here?”

Harley nodded. “So, do you wanna meet?”

Oswald frowned for a moment before he hissed. “I don’t know. What’s he want?”

Harley leaned closer her lips practically pressed against his ear. “He figures you aren’t working with Falcone because you want to be, so maybe you can help each other out.”

Cobblepot frowned in thought. A chance to get out from under Falcone sounded good, a chance to take his fight club back, and all the profits that went with it...but this Joker person seemed dangerous. Oswald chewed the end of his cigarette holder before he answered.

Oswald murmured back. “I won’t get my hands dirty.”

Harley giggled. “You don’t have to...information is all Joker wants.”

Oswald chewed on the end of his cigarette holder as he thought about what this might mean to him before he nodded. “All right,” he conceded. “I’ll meet.”

Harley grinned. “Good, is your number the same?”

Oswald nodded, suddenly more uncomfortable knowing that this woman and the Joker would have his number, but he took a nervous pull on his cigarette telling himself his number wasn’t unlisted so maybe it wasn’t that strange. Still, he couldn’t seem to prevent the chill that ran up his spine and the goosebumps raised on his skin.

Harley beamed again and wiggled in his lap for show, but Oswald grunted as she rubbed against him however unintentional the gesture was. She was a sexy woman and she was sitting on his lap, things happened.

Harley kissed him on the cheek. “Good. He’ll be in touch and Ozzie,” she smiled with a glint in her eyes behind the glasses. “No tricks.”
Oswald frowned, but nodded. “No tricks.”

She laughed and hugged him. “Thanks Ozzie, talk to you soon.”

Oswald nodded as Harley stood up. She kissed him on the nose with a grin as she said more loudly. “I look forward to hearing from you Mr. Cobblepot.”

Oswald smiled at her. “I look forward to our meeting my dear.”

Harley waved and walked back to Bea who had remained near the doorway, not quite willing to leave Harley alone up here. Falcone paid no attention as the two women turned and left.

Harley left Bea to finish out her night of mud wrestling and soon was back with Jack who grabbed her hand as soon as he was close enough to her and yanked her into his arms. Harley smiled snuggling close. “He’s with us puddin. At least he is willing to talk.”

Jack purred licking her ear as he whispered. “Good job sweets. I knew I could count on you, though I didn’t like you sitting on his lap.”

Harley frowned. “I’m sorry puddin, but…”

“It’s okay Harls, I understand, though I still might have to punish you. I might have to just tie you to the bed when we get home…” He grinned. “Have my way with you.”

Harley’s cheeks turned red as she teased in response. “Oh no, please don’t punish me Mr. Joker.”

Jack laughed, but hissed against her ear. “Just Joker sweets, just Joker.”

*

Later that evening at the end of the night, Bane and Viktoria were heading out. The big fighter had seen Jack and Harley briefly; Jack told him to come by tomorrow night.

The disguised man had a project for the gang that he wanted to discuss with everyone.

Bane sighed with exhaustion.

Viktoria frowned with concern, laying a hand on his arm. She could still see the Titan in his viens, a soft glow under the skin. At least right now the drug’s intensity was far less noticeable than when he was pumped full of it for the fight club. Viktoria had no idea how Bane continued to function. “Are you all right?”

Bane nodded, laying his large hand over hers. “Yeah, just tired.”

Viktoria frowned. “I…”

They had just walked outside the building, the air had that almost metallic scent of rain in the air. The two of them had turned toward the parking lot where Viktoria’s car was parked when a man stepped out of the shadows forcing Viktoria to hastily swallow down a startled yelp. How the man had managed to remain hidden while wearing an all white suit, she didn’t know, but he had appeared as if from nothing at all.

“Hello, Bane, Dr. Viktoria October. I would like to talk to you both about the night that Mario Falcone was kidnapped.”

Bane growled dangerously. The drug in his body made the veins along his arms begin to glow more
strongly as Bane hissed. “Who are you?”

Viktoria stepped closer to her lover, wrapping both arms around Bane’s forearm. She could feel the swelling of his muscles…

“You can call me Tallyman. I’ve been hired by Mr. Carmine Falcone to find his son. I’m asking you what you know about it.” Tallyman smiled, his voice calm, almost dead sounding with little to no inflection in his words. He stood with his hands behind his back, looking casual as if he were simply out for a stroll and happened to stop and talk.

Bane growled again. “Why talk to us? We don’t know anything about it.”

Tallyman sighed. “Well, you see the club had cameras and they caught sight of you inside the club, destroying it.”

Bane frowned looking down at his hands before he glanced back up at Viktoria. Bane pressed his lips together before he answered. “I don’t remember much about that night. Viktoria and I had decided to try the place out. I don’t know what happened, but…I black out sometimes…”

Tallyman frowned. He had heard about the drug that Bane used, provided by Falcone. Tallyman had heard about the man’s blind rage, which could explain his rampaging presence at the club.

“I don’t remember anything when I have one of my episodes,” Bane said softly, clearly troubled by the thought. “I don’t remember anything at all.”

Tallyman turned his attention to Viktoria. “Were you there?”

She nodded. “I was. Someone cut in line and when Bane said something to them, that person cursed Bane out. It doesn’t take a great deal to trigger him, not with the drug enhancing his intermittent explosive disorder and Bane lost control…I guess the rest was visible on the camera.”

Viktoria sighed. “Bane had nothing to do with the kidnapping and if his outburst helped the kidnappers, that wasn’t Bane’s fault or intent.”

Tallyman frowned looking between the two of them. What they said made sense with what little he knew about Bane and the drug from Falcone. The tape showed no real interaction between Bane and the kidnappers, so...

Tallyman took a step back, putting his arm out in invitation. “Thank you both for your time. Have a pleasant evening.”

Bane grunted in response, unable to keep the sarcasm out of his tone. “Thanks.”

As the large man and the doctor walked to her car, Tallyman watched them go. Something still felt off to him, but he couldn’t put his finger on exactly what that was…yet.

*

It was late, the streets of Gotham were mostly deserted as all decent people had gone to bed leaving the late night streets to the other side of Gotham. The air smelled of rain with an undercurrent of some rotted vegetation, almost like cabbage. After the fight club and Cobblepot agreed to meet, Jack had driven Harley on their motorcycle to an all night diner that was located nearby. Jack had seen the place the last time they had been here and decided he wanted--needed--a slice of every pie available. And a greasy hamburger to boot.
“I think I could eat a horse,” Jack muttered as he turned toward the diner.

Harley laughed. “Me too.”

Jack laughed leaning back a little toward her. Harley wrapped her arms tighter around him and kissed his shoulder. Jack pulled up in front of the diner, parking the bike. He eased off turning around to help Harley off and pulled her into his arms. He hugged her tightly, pressing her against him. He gazed down at her, rubbing his nose carefully against hers while also doing his best not to smear the makeup he wore.

“Mm...I love you sweets.”

Harley giggled. “I love you puddin.”

The diner’s outside was nothing special: a neon sign over the entrance announced that the diner was simply named Gotham Diner with two long windows that ran out along the sides from the glass door.

A dainty chime signaled whenever someone entered the diner. The interior of the diner had all brick walls and warm amber colored tiles on the floor, highlighted with the dim, twilight glow of golden colored lights. There was a brick counter with a glass display case that was filled with the pies they offered behind the glass. The place smelled of old grease, coffee and sugar.

There were a few people in here, a couple of old men, four sets of teenagers out way past their bedtimes and at least one pair of young lovers. Jack, holding Harley’s hand, led her over to one of the booths where the red vinyl of the seats was worn and cracked. A waitress, with a head of white hair cut short, and a few wrinkles around her eyes, but with a grandmotherly pleasant look, came over to take their order. She looked tired, but she smiled. “So what can I get you two good-looking people?”

Jack glanced at his wife reaching across the table to take her hand and smiled at the waitress. “Cheeseburger sweets?”

Harley smiled. “Sure thing puddin, sounds delicious.”

Jack grinned his eyes darting to the woman’s name tag. “All right Queenie. Two cheeseburgers, no onions, with a side of fries, two chocolate malts and one piece of every pie you have.”

Harley began to laugh as the waitress frowned. “Are you sure? One piece of every pie?”

Jack grinned. “Oh yes I’m sure my dear, bring it on!”

“Want anything to drink besides the malts?” Queenie asked.

“How about some coffee?” He looked at Harley who nodded her agreement. Jack smiled at his wife before turning back to Queenie. “Coffee then.”

The waitress headed off to put their order in calling out as she did. “Hey Alison, two cheese cows!”

Jack tugged on Harley’s hand. “Come over on my side sweets. I’m lonely over here.” He stuck his bottom lip out to accentuate his point.

Harley smiled and hurried over, her hand in his the entire time as Jack tugged her into the booth as soon as she was around the table and nearly onto his lap.
She laughed falling into the booth. Jack wrapped his arms around her and gazed at her lovingly, his eyes behind the glasses glided over her face before he reached up and caressed her jaw.

“Kiss me pumpkin,” he whispered.

Harley sighed happily leaning in to kiss him. Jack pulled her closer his hand moving to the back of her neck, his mouth moving over hers until Harley felt the butterflies that had already burst to life when his lips brushed hers, begin to spin and spiral with the pleasure of feeling his tongue in her mouth, his lips pressed against hers and his hands, one on the back of her neck the other resting on her knee. He only stopped when the waitress returned with their coffee.

Queenie chuckled as she set the cups down and filled them with hot black coffee. “Oh don’t stop on my account. It’s always nice for an old lady like me to see a couple of sweet lovers.”

Jack smiled at her. “Thank you Queenie.”

She smiled back. “Be right back with your malts and I’ll start bringing the pie slices over for you while you wait for your burgers.”

After the waitress left, Harley turned to Jack, scooting close enough their hips touched. Jack put a hand on her thigh, under her skirt.

“So what exactly do you want Penguin’s help with puddin? Or is it just to have someone else against Falcone?” Harley asked as Queenie returned, deftly placing a slice of apple, peach, lemon and chocolate pie on the table in front of them—each on its own saucer—before she hurried back over to the counter.

“I have a plan sweets,” Jack said with one eye squinted introspectively. “I have Mario, but I think I need to really get Falcone’s attention and Penguin is going to help me do that.” He grinned then, clearly pleased with the plan that he hadn’t told Harley yet.

Queenie arrived back at their table with two chocolate malts, two large cheeseburgers with a side of fries, a slice of peanut butter pie, and a slice of cherry. Jack clapped his hands at the sight of the burgers.

“Yes!! Food!”

Harley laughed at him as she inspected her burger, which looked delicious. The meat glistened, the cheese melting down the sides. Queenie had just walked back to their table with more slices of pie smiling as she set down a slice of pumpkin pie along with a slice of coconut cream. “I hope you two have a big appetite.”

Jack grinned brightly. “Oh I’m gonna work it off of her later.”

Harley gasped and playfully smacked Jack in the shoulder as he lifted up his burger, wagging his painted on eyebrows at her.

Harley giggled as she picked up her burger taking a bite a half second after Jack when the little chime over the door rang. Harley glanced up just as Jack did, both of them frowning as three men stepped into the diner.

They were each dressed oddly and the man that was slightly in front of the other two was much shorter than the men behind him. His hair was dark and curled softly around his shoulders under a very large dark green top hat, an old fashioned price tag stuck in the band around the hat. He was also wearing a patched up green overcoat with tails along with a white shirt and red bow tie, red vest...
and checkered green and black pants along with combat boots of all things Harley thought. The two men behind him wore regular street clothes, but they each had bunny masks over their faces and--what drew everyone’s attention--they held AK-47’s in their hands.

The man in the hat giggled as he asked loudly for the whole diner to hear. “Alice?! I’m here to take you home my dear. You are terribly late for the tea party Alice dear. The March hare is most upset and the Dormouse simply won’t wake up!”

Queenie hissed. “Fuck, not him again. Shit. I knew we should have called the cops on him the first time he showed up.”

Jack tilted his head to the side, slowly setting his burger down as he stared hard at the man in the hat before his said slowly. “Is that Jervis Tetch?”

Queenie didn’t move, no one in the diner moved, all watching Tetch and his armed rabbits as they walked further into the diner. “Alice! Come out, come out!” Tetch called.

Queenie glanced at Jack and Harley, pitching her voice low. “You know him? He’s been in here a lot over the last few weeks. He has an obsession with our cook Allison…”

Tetch called out again. “Oh Alice dear! We are running oh so late for our tea party.”

A young woman stepped out from the back. She had long blonde hair that was tied up into a messy bun on her head. She wore blue jeans and a blue t-shirt with a white apron over the top. She wiped her hands slowly along her apron trying to walk calmly, but it was clear she was terrified.

“Jervis…” she said with a tremor in her voice.

Tetch smiled. “There you are, dear Alice!”

“Jervis, you need to leave these people alone. I’ll come with you,” Allison said, and took a shuddering breath. Harley glanced at Jack, then back at the young woman as Tetch replied. “But Alice, I can’t just leave these cards. They took you from me, trying to take you to the Red Queen Alice! They have to pay.”

Jack narrowed his eyes, but then suddenly stood up. Harley gasped as Tetch turned to look at Jack. A ripple of fear ran through the patrons of the diner, all eyes turning toward Jack.

Jack smiled and bowed. “Hello Hatter, it’s been a long time.”

Tetch narrowed his eyes angrily. “Who are you? Do I know you?”

Jack’s smile spread slowly across his face. Jack took his glasses off, which made his startling blue eyes stand out more vibrantly as he took his hat off and put his arm across his chest for a very elegant bow despite the small space of the booth. “Why Hatter, I’m simply beside myself with grief that you don’t remember me, your friend, the Cheshire Cat.”

Everyone was silent watching the exchange, their nerves on edge.

Tetch tilted his head. “I know you, I do or am I mad?”

Jack smiled. “You do old friend, you do, but we’re all mad here my friend. Some of the best people are mad.” He chuckled softly.

With a slight nudge of his thigh, Jack urged Harley to move. Harley slid to the side and stood as Jack
followed her out of the booth and began a slow approach toward Jervis, his hands out. Jervis watched him with both madness in his eyes, but with a calculation as Tetch weighed how much of a threat Jack was to him. Harley could see Tetch was trying to decide if Jack was not just friend or foe, but a threat to him. She glanced sideways at her husband, watching the way Jack approached the man slowly, smiling the entire time.

Jervis narrowed his gaze. “Are you here to take my Alice, Cat?”

Jack smiled and reached back for Harley’s hand. Harley stepped forward taking Jack’s hand, lacing her fingers with his as Queenie hissed. “Don’t...”

“I have my own girl, Hatter. My own little white rabbit.” Jack smiled.

Jervis studied Harley intently before he smiled and turned his gaze full on Harley. “White Rabbit my friend! It’s been a long time, but you are always running late.”

Harley quickly searched her mind. She had read Alice in Wonderland years ago. “Well ah, yes my pocket watch has stopped working, too much tea in the works.”

Jervis chuckled. “Did you remember to add jam?”

Jack took another step forward keeping a hold of Harley’s hand. “Hatter, my dear, dear Hatter, I do believe that you have the wrong Alice.”

Tetch frowned. “No no, I have the right Alice. She just isn’t quite herself is all. Once I get her back to the tea party she’ll remember who she is.”

Jack shook his head frowning sadly. “I’m afraid not dear, dear Hatter. This isn’t your Alice.”

Hatter looked unsure. “But Cheshire...”

Jack smiled wide, his grin taking up his entire face. “As they say Hatter, haste makes waste. So think my friend, are you in haste to find Alice that you will take any Alice you find instead of the right Alice?”

Tetch came closer until he was standing in front of Jack. He leaned forward and whispered loudly. “You don’t think this is the right Alice, Cheshire?”

Jack shook his head sadly. “I do not my friend. You have the wrong Alice. I think you need to keep searching. Isn’t that right rabbit?”

Harley nodded. “I’m afraid so Hatter. This isn’t your Alice at all.”

Jervis removed his hat and held it in front of him worrying at the brim with his fingers. When he spoke, his voice was sad. “I’ve been without Alice for so long Cheshire. I don’t know how much longer...”

Jack put his hand on Jervis’ shoulder, and the shorter man looked up at him with pain clearly etched in his eyes. Jack felt a pang of sympathy for the man—he would be lost without Harley too. “I understand my friend, but this Alice is not your Alice and Rabbits don’t know how to use guns Hatter. Isn’t that right White Rabbit?”

Harley nodded. “It’s true, rabbits have no idea how to use guns.”

Jervis looked unsure, his eyes darting from Jack, to Harley, to Allison before he finally said.
“Rabbits, give the guns to the White Rabbit. We are leaving, this isn’t the right Alice.”

The two men with the weapons moved like robots as they walked over and handed the weapons to Harley. Harley let go of Jack’s hand to take the weapons. She lifted a brow at the masked rabbits as she took the guns and slid the weapon straps over her shoulder.

Hatter turned and headed to the door, his rabbits following him. He stopped and turned smiling.

“Thank you Cheshire. You should come by for tea, we are always having tea you know.”

Jack smiled. “I will Hatter.”

Jervis nodded and walked out. The diner erupted into applause the moment the doors closed behind him.

Queenie gasped turning toward Jack. She grabbed him and yanked him against her, hugging him until Jack was sure he would suffocate. “Oh MY GOD!! Are you crazy? You could have gotten you and your girl killed!! But damn, thank you.”

The cook Allison ran over and threw her arms around Jack and Queenie. “Oh thank you, thank you!”

Jack struggled for a moment before he disengaged himself from the two women. He held his arms out not touching either of them as Harley gave Allison a sour look carrying the guns over to their booth.

Queenie motioned at the diner patrons. “Someone call the cops.”

Jack gave Allison an awkward pat on her back as Harley set the weapons down on their table with a glare.

“Okay, you’re welcome,” Jack murmured. The woman still didn’t let go, so Jack was forced to take her arms and physically move her as he looked over at Queenie. “Ah, can we get our food to go?”

Queenie nodded smiling. “Of course and it’s on the house too.”

Jack grinned. “Thank you Queenie.”

*  

Jack and Harley got themselves out of the diner with their food, all the slices of pie and even the weapons long before the police finally showed up. No one thought to take the guns from them and Jack had no intention of leaving them behind.

Jack sped through the Gotham night, while Harley held onto him, her arms around Jack’s middle, the bag of food in front with Jack and the two weapons slung across her back.

“You were amazing as always puddin.” Harley grinned into the wind, giving her husband a squeeze.

Jack grinned. “Just have to know how to speak crazy Harls, and I’m fluent.”

Harley giggled laying her cheek against his back as he drove them home.

*  

The following night somewhere in Gotham.
Jack walked over with the marker in his hand and pointed at the whiteboard. He had asked Frost to put the board in, a large white board that took up nearly an entire wall. They were all at their secret location where they were keeping Mario who was currently tied up in a chair in the corner of the room. The man looked much the worse for wear, dirty, sweaty and giving off a sour stench. Plus, he was beginning to annoy Jack on many levels.

Jack stopped at the board, his all black suit with a bright purple vest was complemented by the purple tie against the black dress shirt he wore. His black double monk strapped shoes gleamed. Jack hurriedly wrote something on the board.

Everyone was here from Alex to Bea sitting almost like students as Jack explained his plan.

“You see, right now we only have one chess piece, Mario Falcone, but I think we need a few more and so here is what we are going to do...”

Jack wrote Falcone’s name on the board with three names beneath it.

“Penguin provided me with information about the three people he thought were the next closest to Falcone after Mario. People who would make great pieces on the large chess board that is the Gotham underworld. We...” he said as he wrote, “are going to take three more of Falcone’s people: his girlfriend Gigi, his ex-wife Louisa, and his lawyer Victor Page. They are currently the people closest to him in Gotham. Trope, my darling girl, found out that while Falcone has two more children, neither of them are in Gotham at the moment so, they will simply have to wait. BUT before we have any more fun with Falcone, I have another plan.”

Jack turned from the board with a grin. “As you all know, Batman has a little partner, The Boy Wonder!!! Robin. With the help of my talented information gathering dears...”

Jack smiled at Trope and Thea; the two girlfriends beamed under his smile. “I have learned that Robin, or Richard Grayson, still has deep, deep connections to Haly’s Circus, which just so happens to still be in Gotham! I want to make that our first message to Batman and the Wonder twerp. We are going to go and visit the circus.”

Harley, who was sitting on a stool beside the board frowned and leaned forward to look at Jack. “I thought you liked the circus puddin?”

Jack grinned with a nod. “I do Harls, I do, but this is about a message, a message to Gotham, a message to Batman. Nothing is sacred Harley, nothing...and no one close to him, the Batman, is safe.” Jack giggled. “Besides, I have my own circus now!” Jack laughed and threw his arms up in the air encompassing everyone. “You are my circus, my family! My clowns!”

He giggled. “Now, let’s go to the circus kids!”

*

Haly’s circus was only planning on being in Gotham until the first week in November, then they would close up for the winter, but right now with the evenings being mostly cool, the circus was still open and the crowds were still big.

The big top had been closed for several weeks after the death of the Graysons, but had reopened a few weeks ago with some new headline performers, a lyrical acrobatic group called the Hoops that included some of the old catchers and flyers who had worked with the Graysons, along with a group of contortionists who called themselves the Dolls, led by their leader who called himself Ragdoll, a new elephant show, a group of bicycle performers, jugglers, two gorgeous ribbon dancers, and a
fresh group of clowns.

So far, Haly was pleased that they had managed to put the tragedy of the Graysons behind them.

Haly yawned. The circus had closed just a couple of hours ago, and clean up had just finished, but a few of the performers were having a party in the big top. It was Marc’s--one of the new catchers--twenty-first birthday, so they were all having an after hours birthday party for the young man. The music was blaring loudly as everyone gathered in the middle of the big top. Someone had put on some music, the sounds of P!nk’s “Get this Party Started” was loud enough that Haly couldn’t understand how anyone heard themselves over the sound. He smiled watching everyone, still in their costumes, drinking beer, and it looked like one of the clowns, he thought it might be Baily, had brought in supplies to make margaritas. There was a huge four layered birthday cake, and everyone had brought in some food. Haly had just ordered three dozen pizzas to the delight of everyone.

He smiled at his family of circus people and turned thinking he would go have a smoke before rejoining the party.

* 

Everyone was dancing, eating, drinking and laughing, so no one noticed the green “fog” that rolled into the tent. The green gas moved slowly, slithering between everyone ankles, drifting under tables and hiding in the stands. The noise in here was loud enough that no one heard the roar of one of the circus lions, or the trumpet of one of the elephants as someone opened their cages and released them into the Gotham night. They didn’t realize something was wrong until the gas had not only begun to make them laugh at nothing, but they all realized at the same time that they couldn’t move, paralyzed to the spot even as the urge to laugh became stronger and stronger even though the gas slowly began to fade.

No one noticed when the tent flap was pulled back and the Joker’s gang came strolling in.

First came Harley Quinn. She was dressed in a half-black, half-red body suit that plunged down her neckline showing off her cleavage, along with a half black and half red corset around her middle. Her white hair, with the ends still dyed pink and blue, was held up in ponytails held up with red scarves and with a tiny red top hat pinned between them. She also wore a pair of black ballet slippers that laced up her calves. Her face had been done up to resemble a clown with a red dot on the end of her nose, dark makeup surrounding her eyes like diamonds and red lips. The smile extended past her lips to make her smile seem larger. She did a cartwheel along the side and into the main circle of the tent.

She did a backflip and stopped with her arms up smiling brightly.

“And now...” she called out.

Everyone turned their eyes to look as someone turned down the music and that was when the first giggles began.

Harley smiled and continued. “I present to you. The one, the only: JOKER!!”

The flap of the tent pulled back to show Joker backlit in the frame of the tent opening.

With a wide smile Joker strolled down the aisle. He was dressed in purple equestrian pants with knee high black leather riding boots. He wore an orange shirt under a green vest, a purple military style jacket with swallowtails, large gold buttons and gold epaulettes. The entire outfit was topped off with Joker wearing a purple top hat and a large pink carnation pinned to the front of this jacket. His lips
were painted bright red, the smile drawn past his lips to curl up his cheeks. The darkness around his eyes was made deeper, allowing his blue eyes to sparkle brightly.

He walked up beside Harley, and only now was it visible that he was carrying a bullhorn. He stopped beside her and leaned over to kiss her cheek, wrapping his free arm around her waist and pulled her against him. He gazed into her eyes with a wide grin before kissing her once more, a hard passionate kiss, dipping her back while holding her against him.

Harley returned his kiss, her hands grabbing the front of his jacket as she growled and giggled against his lips. Joker pulled her back up, licking her lips before he turned and waved with the hand that held the bullhorn to the increasingly giggling crowd of circus performers.

Joker held the bullhorn up to his brightly painted lips. “Here ye! Here ye!! Good circus folk! The show is about to begin!”

The laughter spread through the crowd as Bane entered the tent, pushing a large round wheel painted red and with white knives painted on either side. Tied to the wheel was C. C. Haly. Behind Bane, who wore his mask, was Viktoria, Frost, Bea, Zsasz and Isaac (on his first mission as part of the gang), all dressed in clown makeup. Everyone continued to laugh as Haly was pushed out into the middle of the ring while the circus performers’ laughter slowly descended into manic fits.

Joker laughed. “Good evening folks. I and my girl Harley are here to entertain you and to send a message to Gotham that it's not just Falcone and Batman I’m after.”

They all laughed and Joker chuckled turning to Harley. “Aren’t they a great crowd pumpkin?”

Harley giggled. “Just the best puddin.”

“Now, lucky for you, I’m not planning on killing the lot of you...just him.” Joker pointed at Haly. Jack chuckled. “I mean what's the point of a message is no one gets to repeat it, am I right?” Everyone laughed in response.

“You will also notice, besides your jovial urge to laugh, that you seems to not be able to move. That my friends is a little twist I added to this version of my laughing gas--you are paralyzed. Don’t worry, it will wear off and you’ll be just fine, if not a little sick, but me and my clowns will be long gone by then.” Joker laughed. “You will be able to run off and tell the Gotham police of your little experience, but please, make sure you let Batman know this message is just for him and his Boy Wonder...I know everything about him, about his little sidekick and nothing--no one--is safe from me.” Joker’s laugh took on a deep, sinister tone.

Joker’s people circled around as Joker motioned at Isaac who stepped forward and handed Joker a rolled cloth. Harley held her hands out and Joker unrolled the cloth on her outstretched arms revealing ten long, deadly looking throwing knives with black handles and silver and black blades.

Joker picked one up and flipped it around easily catching it by its handle. Harley giggled and Joker leaned over to kiss her again before he waggled his eyebrows at her.

He turned and yelled. “Someone cue the music!!”

The sounds of cheerful organ music began to play. Joker laughed grinning at Harley.

“Now, let's see how good I am at this!” Joker chuckled.

Harley smiled. “Puddin, how about we make it more exciting! What if you were blindfolded?”
Joker stopped, the knife held in his hand, his arm back ready to throw when he turned toward Harley, his blue eyes bright and he smiled even bigger. “Harley, you are a genius! Mm...One of the many, many, MANY reasons I love you, sweets!”

Harley giggled and set the knives down. She reached up and pulled out one of the red scarves from her hair, then stepped over to Joker. He turned his back to her as she reached up and gently tied the scarf around his closed eyes. She leaned over his shoulder and kissed his ear.

“I love you my Joker.” Her breath caressed hot against his ear.

Joker smiled leaning into her and whispered back. “I love you my Harley Quinn.”

She giggled softly and stepped back as Joker once more held the blade up as the crowd around them giggled uncontrollably.

“All right boys and girls! Let the games begin!”
Acquisitions

Bruce sat on the edge of his chair as he looked up at the computer screen in the Batcave, which showed several crime scene pictures. He examined the photos with narrowed eyes, looking for information. Gordon had sent the photos over from the circus just moments ago after connecting to Batman on the private number the caped crusader had given him. Bruce had his cell phone tucked between his ear and his shoulder as he made some notes, his eyes quickly scanning over the pictures. It would be better if he could be on scene, but no one had found the victims or the body until morning.

He turned his chair as he asked. “So Haly was the only one killed?”

“That’s right,” Gordon confirmed grimly. “Everyone else at the party is in the hospital for observation, but every single one of them claimed it was this new guy, the one everyone saw on TV, the Joker, the one who took Carmine Falcone’s kid. I’m sure you heard about it since he seems to have a beef with you. We found a playing card pinned to Haly’s corpse with a knife. There were no fingerprints--must have worn gloves or wiped the handle--but eyewitness accounts describe a clown, white face paint, green hair, red painted smile, dressed as a ringmaster and some woman in white face paint, clown makeup, in black and red, some sort of clown acrobat who announced him, and a few other accomplices. But by then I guess the gas he was using was working to full effect, because none of them could describe much else but those two. The rest of the Joker’s gang were described as foggy shapes, ghosts, shadows.” Bruce heard Gordon snort in his ear, then the familiar sound of a match being lit followed by a few puffs...Gordon was lighting a pipe.

Bruce glanced behind him.

Dick was there, his arms crossed tight over his chest as if he were struggling to keep himself together. The young man paced back and forth, his face pale and his gaze on the floor, but not really seeing anything. It hurt Bruce to see the young man so upset, but he didn’t know how else to comfort him except to try to bring Joker--his brother--to justice. Bruce closed his eyes. It hurt to think that the Joker and Jack were the same person. His little brother, the one person in all the world that Bruce was supposed to protect. He shook the thoughts from his head and turned his focus to Barbara. Jack had made his choices and they had been the wrong choices.

Barbara sat next to Bruce, putting in the relevant data, her fingers flying over the keys as she checked traffic cams, security footage, anything that might provide them a lead as to Jack’s whereabouts, but she was coming up short. There were few cameras around the circus, only one or two traffic cams and only one or two security cameras on the circus grounds that functioned...and none of those provided any information. It was as if the Jack (Bruce corrected his thought) as if Joker, knew just where to move to stay out of the view of the cameras.

“Thank you Commissioner, I’ll see if I can learn anything,” Bruce said in his Batman voice.

Gordon sighed on the other end of the phone. “Thanks. I’m not sure what this Joker is up to, but with him, that ass the Riddler and now some other freak that people are calling The Mad Hatter showing up...I’m not sure what’s going on. It’s like Arkham let all the crazies out or there is a permanent full moon over Gotham.”

Bruce’s frown was apparent in his tone. “Don’t worry Jim, I’m sure these criminals are just some outliers, men who are in need of help. We’ll find them.”

Gordon sounded tired as he replied. “I hope you’re right.”
Bruce hung up.

As soon as he was off the phone Dick rushed over. “So what happened? Who attacked the circus? Is anyone else dead?” Dick’s voice broke, rising higher and higher with each question. Bruce stood up and noted that Dick had grown recently. He would likely never be as tall as Bruce, but he was becoming a striking young man with thick dark hair and brilliant blue eyes. With a wry realization, Bruce thought that Dick could have been his biological son. Barbara was beginning to take notice of the young man, but he was still an adolescent. Bruce opened his arms and Dick ploughed into him, wrapping his arms tight around him. Bruce felt a little awkward holding the young man and trying to comfort him, but he knew he had to make an effort.

Barbara glanced over at them, feeling a little like she was intruding so she quickly turned away focusing her attention back on the computer.

Bruce spoke softly. “We’ll find who did this.”

Dick stepped back from the man who had become his mentor, wiping at his eyes furiously. “We know who did it! It was Jack!! Your brother!!”

Bruce frowned. “It wasn’t Jack...not the Jack I knew. This...this was the Joker.”

Dick stared at Bruce before he turned and headed to the stairs. “I’m going out.”

Bruce took a step after him. “Dick don’t...”

“I’m just going for a drive all right?” Dick turned and grated back. He took a breath calming himself before he said in a calmer tone. “Haly was like an uncle Bruce. He took care of us...he was everyone’s father. He shouldn’t have died like that.” Dick swallowed a lump in his throat. “The Joker could have killed all of them. I guess we’re lucky--in a way--he only murdered Haly.” His voice had dropped to a whisper. “This could have been so much worse, but who else is he going to go after Bruce? Have you thought of that? Jac...Joker is out to punish you, me...Falcone. Who else is on that list Bruce?”

The accusation was clear in the young man’s gaze. This was Bruce’s fault, that look said. Bruce wasn’t sure he disagreed. If he had done something with Jack before this...if he had made sure Jack was dead that night...hunted him down after he had escaped Arkham...fired Harleen Quinzel when he had realized they were more than doctor and patient...Bruce pressed his lips together. All this...every life Jack...the Joker...took could be laid at his feet just as much as it could be laid at The Joker’s feet...

Bruce wanted to tell Dick he understood and he would do something about his brother, but he couldn’t. He didn’t know what he could do except to get out there, find Joker, and take him in, maybe back to Arkham, maybe Blackgate. Jack need to be somewhere where he could get the help he needed, but Bruce couldn’t promise he would fix this because he knew he couldn’t...nothing could fix the dead. Instead, Bruce just nodded at his partner.

Dick frowned slightly before he turned and quickly took the stairs. The sound of the hidden door sliding shut was the last thing they heard.

Bruce sighed and walked back over to take his seat.

Barbara glanced sideways at him before she spoke. “Why do you think The Joker went after Haly?”

Bruce frowned. “I can’t be certain,” he admitted. “But he wants to punish me. I’m thinking part of that is going to be to hurt those around me. The closest person to me in Gotham right now is Dick.”
Barbara nodded understanding before she asked. “The closest person here?”

Bruce nodded. “Alfred’s gone, though I like to think he wouldn’t hurt Alfred. Jack was as close, if not closer to Alfred than I was. There is a woman named Selina, but I have no idea where she is right now, and Talia…but she isn’t in Gotham either.”

Barbara was a little surprised that Bruce was telling her any of this and she had so many questions, but she didn’t say anything. Bruce sighed and stood back up. “You’ll let me know if you find anything useful?”

Barbara nodded. “Of course.”

Bruce smiled. “Thank you Barbara.”

She returned what she hoped was a comforting smile. “No problem.”

She watched at Bruce left the cave. After a couple of minutes Barbara pulled her phone out and dialed a number. She placed the phone on her shoulder, holding it to her ear while she worked until someone picked up.

“Pennyworth.”

“Hi, it’s me. I think you need to hear this,” Barbara said softly.

* 

Harley laid on her back, naked, her head sunk into the softness of her pillow, the sheets and blankets tangled around her hips, only partially awake. She smiled sleepily. Her hair had fallen over her face making the darkness of the room that much more fuzzy as she opened her eyes. They had bought blackout curtains for the bedroom which worked so well that she couldn’t be sure what time it was at all. She could feel Jack, his head between her breasts, his arms wrapped tightly around her, one of his legs draped over her and resting between her legs. He held onto her most every time they slept as if he was afraid she would disappear while they were sleeping, as if she was just a dream. She understood how he felt. She still had nightmares about dying, about being alone, lost, and unable to find him. Touching him in some way always helped her relax and drove the bad dreams away.

She shifted her position just a little. Jack was still asleep, his breath deep and steady against her skin, his naked body pressed against hers. He twitched slightly, tightening his grip on her as if he sensed she was thinking of moving.

She grinned looking down at his green hair, loose and falling over her chest, the color bright against her bleached skin. She tenderly brushed her fingers through his hair as she tried to push herself up on her elbow. She combed her fingers through her hair gently trying to make sure he stayed asleep as she lifted up. She reached to the side, stretching her fingers toward her phone that sat on the table next to the bed, her fingers just short of the device. She leaned a little further, trying to reach it without waking him when she felt Jack mumble, his breath warm against her skin.

“What are you doing sweets?”

Harley giggled. “I was just reaching for my phone to see what time it is.”

Jack shifted just a little kissed the curve of her breast. “Why, you have someplace you need to be?”

Harley giggled. “No, just curious.”
Jack lifted up to look at her. His green hair fell around his face as he grinned at her. “Don’t worry about the time pumpkin. You just focus on right now.”

Harley smiled, running her fingers through his hair and pushing the green locks slowly back at the same time she moved her legs to caress his thighs. Jack made a soft purr of contentment and brought his hands up to lock his fingers together over the top of her breasts. He shifted a bit more so that his entire body was lying on top of her with his pelvis nestled between her legs. He rested his chin on top of his folded hands as he smiled at her. “You look so pretty with your hair messed up like that.”

Harley giggled and pushed her tangled hair back. “You’re funny.”

He grinned. “You like it.”

Harley giggled again as her thumb caressed over his hairless brows. “You’re right, I love it.”

Jack leaned down and brushed his lips between her breasts sliding his lips over the soft hill of one breast to her nipple. He only stroked her hard nipple with his lips, just barely touching her.

Harley gasped softly, his breath was warm against her skin. She stroked her fingers through his hair arching with desire for him to touch her more aggressively, wanting to feel his lips on her skin, his tongue licking across her. She felt him smile against her skin like he knew just what she wanted and instead of giving it to her he was going to tease her as dragged his nose over her breasts, his lips sliding softly while he whispered. “We have all the time we need right now Harls...we’re dead remember?”

He wrapped his mouth around one breast and sucked softly.

Harley moaned arching her back toward him, her hands slid through his hair. Jack slid one hand down over her ribs, following the line of her body to her hips where he pulled her leg up. Harley hooked her leg around his, her foot pressing against the back of his thigh. He pressed his fingers into her skin and dragged under her thigh, his mouth moved over her breast.

She groaned softly in response, one hand caressing his shoulder.

Jack dragged his hand back up, tickling her skin, all the while sucking softly, teasingly at her breast.

Harley’s breath quickened as Jack worked his way up to her throat, now using his tongue to trace the smooth curve to her jaw. She could feel the press of his erection against her when he moved.

“All the time to do what I want with you,” he breathed softly before he dragged his tongue along her jaw to her ear.

Harley made a sound, a cross between a moan and a whimper. “Jack...”

He chuckled before he pressed his lips to her throat, followed with his teeth. He smiled against the tender softness of her flesh when he felt her jerk in response to his teeth against her. He sucked, tenderly kneading her throat with his teeth, while his hand moved over her breast to squeeze softly. He moved to catch the lobe of her ear with his teeth next before he pinched her nipple, chuckling softly. “Anything I want.”

Harley’s eyes rolled closed while her hands caressed his shoulders and back. “Yes puddin, anything.”

Jack surprised her by rolling off of her. Harley stuck her bottom lip out as Jack rolled out of the bed and up to his feet.
“Puddin.” Harley pouted. “What are you doing?”

Jack grinned dropping to his knees onto the floor. “Just a minute.”

He came back up long enough to turn on the lamp before his head disappeared again.

Harley wrinkled her nose and crossed her arms under her breasts, annoyed. He began to get her all riled up and then just stopped!

She heard Jack rummaging under the bed for a couple of seconds, her curiosity peaked despite herself. She rolled over and scooted around to look over the edge of the bed.

“How are you doing?” she asked. Jack had one arm stretched under the bed and after a half dozen seconds he sat back on his haunches.

“Ha! Found it!” He grinned holding up a bottle of almond oil. “I knew it was here!”

He stood up and motioned at Harley to get back onto her back. She giggled and rolled, doing as he said, spread her hair out on the pillow over her head.

“What are you going to do with that?” she asked with a smile, though she was fairly certain that she knew.

Jack purred. “Whatever I want, remember?”

He pumped a large amount of the oil into the cup of his hand before he set the bottle on the table next to her phone and rubbed the oil over his hands until they were thickly covered in the oil.

Harley laid on her back, her arms under her head and watched him with a growing smile. He was sitting on his knees, his rear on his ankles. She sighed with pleasure, her eyes wandering over his pale bleached, naked skin, tracing the muscles of his body, the smooth hairless lines of his figure.

Jack scooted between her legs forcing her to spread her legs wide before he placed his oiled hands on her hips.

Harley shivered in delight; his oiled hands were slick and felt warm and smooth.

Jack smiled at her and slowly pushed his hands up her stomach to her breasts, then down again, the oil allowing his hands to slide over her skin smoothly.

Harley closed her eyes with a hiss of pleasure while Jack’s hands glided over her flesh, coating her torso in almond oil. He reached over to pick up the bottle, pumping more oil onto her body, then set the bottle down so he could work the oil into her skin.

His hands moved lower, gliding over the bones of her hips and over the tops of her thighs, then back again. He smiled, watching his hands move over her, the way the oil made her bleached skin glisten. His thumbs moved gently over the soft tender skin at the joint of her hips, his thumbs teasing her sex, brushing against the lips of her sex, pressing down gently before sliding up.

Harley groaned, her body arching slightly, her hips shifted with his touch, aching for him.

Jack leaned over to add more oil to his hands before he touched her again. His hand cupped her sex first, pressing against her before he very slowly pressed his fingers just inside her, sliding his oiled fingers up against her, not touching her clitoris yet, but oiling and caressing around the bundle of nerves. While he did this with one hand, he slid his other hand up her torso to her breast, cupping
one, squeezing and sliding his oiled hand over her while he teased with the other. Harley groaned loudly. Jack smiled as he watch her for a moment, the way she moved, her head thrown back into the pillows. Her hands dropped back to her sides, fingers gripping the blankets. He stopped touching her long enough to spread her legs wider, oiling his hands again. He shifted himself down onto his stomach, using one oil slick hand to tantalize the pink flesh at the edge of her clitoris and then slid his fingers down to spread her wider. Harley hissed between her teeth, panting. Jack licked his lips and very, very slowly slid his oily fingers against her sex, caressing slowly, letting his fingers slide up and down over her, but not touching her clitoris yet. Harley whimpered and her legs jerked against the blankets. She sucked her bottom lip into her mouth and arched her hips, willing him to touch her, needing him to. She was burning up, her body taut and shivering like a violin string wound too tight, ready to break at the merest stroke.

Jack leaned close and exhaled; his warm breath fluttered across her clitoris, close but still not touching her, not yet. Harley gasped in pleasure and frustration. “Puddin!”

Jack glanced up with a crooked smile at her. She was so beautiful in her wanton agony. He wanted to both extend her torture while at the same time he wanted her to orgasm, to hear her cry out, to feel that moment of release that only made her ache more. He swallowed, turning his attention back to her sex. He ached too, hurt with the need to bury himself into her, to pound her, to slam his body up against her until they came together. Her body was so inviting, warm, the bright pink contrasted with the white of her skin and oh, how he wanted her, wanted to hear her scream, to hear the wet, welcome sounds of their fucking. But not yet. Jack moved slowly, drawing out the agony for them both as he dragged his oiled fingers over her clitoris and pressed down with the tips of his fingers, not too much, just enough to tease her. Harley cried out, her body bowing, her feet pressing into the mattress.

Jack’s fingers slid with more purpose, caressing and stroking, covering her clitoris with the almond oil. Harley arched and cried out, her orgasm washing over her quickly, her feet pressing into the bed as her hips arched toward him. “Puddin! Ah...yes!” she groaned out with a gasp.

Jack leaned down and ran his tongue over her. She tasted of almond oil and warmth. He closed his eyes losing himself in the taste of her at the same time he slipped two oiled fingers inside of her. Harley reached down to grab his hair, her fingers twisted around the green locks. Harley arched, her head tossed back and forth slowly, her body in delicious agony. Jack’s mouth on her was too much and not enough all at the same time. He pressed her teeth into her bottom lip, her fingers feeling the soft locks of his hair between her fingers. Harley threw her head back with a low moan. She moved her hips in rhythm with his fingers, gasping for breath with each thrust. Her head came up to look down her body at her husband. His eyes were closed, but, as if he sensed her gaze on him he opened his incredible blue eyes and looked up at her with a smile as his lips while his tongue caressed her. Harley groaned dropping her head back. Watching him was
almost too much.

Jack pressed his mouth to her more firmly, his tongue sliding up and down, back and forth while his fingers moved slowly into her, then out until his entire body ached. He needed to release, needed to feel her.

He pulled his fingers out of her giving her one last long lick before he was up on his knees. Harley released his hair with a grin as Jack pulled her legs up to place her feet on his shoulders.

“You ready pumpkin?” he asked, his voice of a low purr, his hand wrapped around his shaft.

Harley smiled with her teeth pressed into her bottom lip as she reached forward to drag her fingers down his stomach. She caressed his shoulders with her feet. Jack grinned as he felt her toes stroke his ear, her voice warm and sensual. “Yes puddin, I want you.”

Jack grinned and looked down to rub his hard, aching erection against her. He hissed with pleasure coating the head of his shaft with her, wet and feeling the warm slickness against him before he pushed forward slowly, delving into her. He groaned loudly giving in to his desire, his passion for his wife; his body shuddered as they joined together.

Jack leaned forward, dropping to his hands at the same time pressing her knees to her shoulders, then leaned closer until he could kiss her. He grinned gazing into her bright eyes.

“You feel so good Harley...so good,” Jack purred brushing his nose against her. “So wet.” He chuckled. “So warm and wet pumpkin.”

Harley moaned in response, blinked heavily and said, “Puddin...fuck me.”

Jack groaned with a smile, sitting back up. He rubbed his hands along her legs, his fingers spread wide as he dragged them along her smooth, pale skin. He began to move, slowly at first, taking his time and rocking his hips so his shaft moved in and out of her almost completely. The bed creaked each time he thrust forward, burying himself deeply inside her. He rested his hands at her knees, looking down at her, watching the way her breasts moved each time he thrust forward.

Harley whimpered, feeling that delightful press, the way his hard erection filled her, touching everything. He dropped his hands from her knees, leaning and reaching forward to squeeze her breasts. Harley was panting heavier, her little exclamations of pleasure growing higher in pitch as Jack’s thrusts picked up speed.

He squeezed her breasts before dropping his hands down beside her and leaned forward again to bring her knees to her shoulders, his expression one of pure pleasure. He kept moving, feeling her becoming wetter with each thrust.

Harley grasped his hips, pulling him closer as her cries became louder, her fingers pressing into his skin and urging him harder and deeper.

Jack kissed her, leaning forward, thrusting hard and fast.

Harley’s cries were muffled against his mouth when she came again, her fingers pressed hard into his hips before sliding up his sides. Her body tightened, unable to move much in this position; she just took what Jack gave her. He kissed her deeply, his tongue caressing hers, when he suddenly pulled away and out of her.

Harley gasped in surprise and frustration. “Puddin!”
Jack grinned, but he tossed her legs off his shoulder and to the side before he started to push her over. “Roll onto your stomach Harls.”

Harley was confused for just a moment, but she did as he requested, rolling onto her stomach.

Jack smiled, running both hands eagerly over her rear, exploring the soft roundness of her backside with his fingers before he grabbed her hips and pulled her up to her knees.

Harley giggled, tossing her hair over one shoulder and pushed up onto her hands and knees, her legs spread wide.

Jack licked his lips, one hand resting against her lower back while with the other he held his shaft and rubbed against her. She was practically dripping, she was so wet. He swallowed and eased his erection once more into her, eliciting a low groan from deep in his chest.

Harley’s hiss as he pushed slowly into her was replaced with an intense moan as he slid all the way into her. She pushed back, bouncing along his erection to enjoy the wet, smooth slide on his shaft and the feel of her rear bouncing against him.

Jack grunted with the effort of holding back just a little while longer. He held her hips with both hands, the back of her thighs were pressed up against his as he pulled her back, watching the way she bounced against him, his shaft disappearing into her and out again. Her cries of pleasure made it difficult for him not to cum; he wanted to hold out just a little bit longer, but she was so sexy, so beautiful. He ran one hand down her back feeling the smoothness of her skin, the way her spine curved as she arched back against him, the bounce of her rear against him, the ripple of her flesh when he thrust into her.

Jack groaned loudly. “Harley...damn...uh...”

He gripped her hips tighter, his fingers pressing into her snow white skin. He pressed her down until Harley’s arms and legs gave out and she dropped to the bed. Jack laid on top of her, thrusting his shaft into her. He reached over and laced his fingers with hers on each hand, bringing her hands closer as he held on tightly while he continued to thrust, his lips against her shoulder, kissing a ragged line to her ear while continuing to thrust harder and quicker until Harley squeezed his fingers tight, her body tensing and she cried out.

“Uhh Jack….!”

Her body tightening around him sent Jack spiraling over the edge. He came hard, bursting inside her with a loud, long drawn out cry. They squeezed each others hands, the bed creaking and squeaking with each of his thrusts until Jack simply collapsed, his panting breaths mixing with hers.

They lay there for several seconds catching their breath until Harley murmured against the blankets.

“You’re a little heavy puddin.”

Jack chuckled as he peppered her shoulder and back with kisses. “Sorry sweets.”

He pulled out slowly, both of them moaning with displeasure at being separated. Jack flopped down beside her on the bed with a grunt before he pulled her up against him.

PHarley pressed back into him, her body lining up with his perfectly. She could feel his still semi hard erection against her rear, sticky and warm. She grinned with pleasure, wiggling closer as Jack wrapped his arm around her waist. He brushed her hair back and kissed her ear, then her throat.
Harley smiled contentedly, closing her eyes. After a couple of seconds she whispered.

“So, what time is it?”

Jack made a loud groan.

*

It was a cloudy, rainy day, which made both Jack and Harley happy as they drove on their motorcycle into the heart of the fashion district on a mission. Harley had her white, pink and blue hair in a loose braid down her back. She looked trendy and young today, wearing a pair of black skinny jeans, knee-high black boots, a loose black top with a close cut waist high jean jacket where her gun was hidden along with the goggles over her eyes and a pair of black leather half palm gloves as she grinned, holding tight to Joker.

Joker was wearing goggles, his green hair whipping loose in the air as he drove. He wore a three piece light tan plaid suit with an orange silk tie and a green and brown gingham shirt with a long brown trench coat over the top, along with a pair of dark brown monk strap boots and matching leather gloves. The entire outfit was all brought together by a bright orange flower in his lapel, hidden under the trenchcoat along with his knife, gun and the tiny bombs he was carrying across his front.

They zipped along through the traffic moving so fast that the light rain stung slightly against their skin, but they welcomed it. Traveling along behind them was a black SUV being driven by Frost, with Zsasz and Jason in the passenger seats.

They were here to take the first of three people, the closest to Falcone to be currently living in Gotham, Gigi Lombardo, Carmine Falcone’s girlfriend. She kept a fairly consistent schedule, spending her Thursday afternoon shopping downtown with lunch at Chez Vous. The whole time she was being chauffeured in a dark blue BMW 7 by two of Falcone’s people, a woman and a man, the same two every time; Mary Puglia and her brother Frank Puglia.

Right now it was just past two p.m., which meant that Gigi would be heading down Maiden Lane just past 6th street. With the rain the side streets weren’t quite as busy as usual, which was perfect for what Joker had planned.

*

Gigi leaned back in her white leather seat and stared out the window with a frown. She hated the rain and the chill. She sighed uncrossing and crossing her legs in the short dress she was wearing, wishing she could have a drink. She glanced down at her hand with a smile, admiring the square emerald ring rimmed in diamonds she had just bought herself with Falcone’s money. It glittered in the dim light. At least the rain couldn’t dim the jewel.

“Mary, can you put some music on at least? The sound of the rain is getting on my nerves.” Gigi sighed, laying her hand down on her lap.

Mary glanced at her brother who was driving. The siblings looked a great deal alike, both six feet tall, black hair worn short, and both wore black suits. Frank looked at his sister and shrugged.

Mary leaned over and turned on the car’s stereo system; the CD in the car’s player came to life with the sounds of Taylor Swift. Gigi grinned and began to bounce her foot.
Joker grinned when he saw the car up ahead. He gave a hand signal.

Frost saw Joker’s hand come up. “All right boys, masks on.”

Jason, who was sitting in the front seat beside Frost picked up his red helmet while Zsasz pulled a full head covering mask over his head. The mask was black, but the front was painted with a skull face. Frost pulled out his mask from the glove compartment and, while holding the wheel, he pulled it over his head. The mask covered everything except his eyes.

Frost hit the gas as Joker twisted the motorcycle into the bicycle lane to move up alongside the BMW.

Gigi looked out the window just as a motorcycle came speeding along beside the car. She frowned at the two people on the bike. Neither of them were wearing helmets, only goggles. Idiots, she thought. She frowned as the woman on the back of the bike grinned and waved at her followed by the man who was driving the motorcycle, a man who had green hair she noticed. Weird she thought. They both had big smiles and if she wasn’t mistaken, both of them were wearing lipstick though the man on the motorcycle had his extended past his lips to curl up into a bigger smile drawn out by the red lipstick he wore and his teeth were perfect, very white, just like the woman’s. Gigi thought the couple was a little creepy, but then the bike sped ahead of the BMW.

Mary frowned as the bike came close to her side of the car zipping past them, the two people on the bike waving as they sped pass. She looked over at her brother.

“Hey, did that guy have green hair?”

Frank narrowed his eyes as the bike and its passenger whipped in front of him, coming a little too close for comfort.

“What an asshole. Who cares about his hair. There are so many people with weird hair colors anymore.” Frank grumbled as he slowed down to avoid hitting the motorcycle.

“What I’m getting tired of is bad drivers and motorcyclists who think they own the fucking road.”

Mary shrugged and settled back with a sigh.

Harley leaned forward, her hand slipping around Joker’s chest, though she dropped her hand down to give his thigh a squeeze (which earned her a laugh along with a wiggle of pleasure from Joker) before she reached up and snapped off one of the bombs Joker was carrying on a belt across his chest. She pulled it up in front of her and with a bright grin pulled the pin out with her teeth before she threw the grenade-like bomb behind her. She didn’t watch where it went before she reached around to grab another leaning forward over Joker’s shoulder and kissing his ear.

Joker grinned with pleasure.

Something came flying at the car.
Mary pointed and had just enough time to say, “What the fuck is that?”

The object was small and round, but it looked to be painted green and purple. Frank tried to avoid it, but the little object came right at the vehicle and hit the hood. Just as soon as it impacted with the hood of the BMW, the object exploded.

Frank cried out in shock. “Fuck!”

Mary yelped.

Gigi in the back screamed.

Frank lost control of the car for a moment, the front swinging wildly from one side to the other, but just as he got the car under control, another bomb hit the windshield. Gigi continued to scream while Frank slammed on the brakes, but that was the moment the SUV that Frank hadn’t noticed behind them, sped up and slammed into the back of the BMW.

All three of the BMW’s occupants were thrown forward. Frank’s face smashed into the airbag without harm, but he was dazed and his neck and shoulders radiated pain. Mary was jerked painfully forward, though her seatbelt kept her in place (and her airbag did not release.) Gigi, who wasn’t wearing a seat belt, slammed into the back of Mary’s seat with her face. She hit hard enough that she felt her nose break on impact. Gigi sat back screaming and lifted her hands to her face while blood gushed from her nose. The motorcycle had swung around, turning so quickly that Joker nearly laid the bike to the road as he squeezed the break handles and performed a quick reverse spin, dropping his foot to the street as the bike drifted for a few seconds while Harley laughed, one hand around his waist, her other hand in the air like she was riding a wild bronco.

“WOOHOO!!” Harley squealed with excitement as Joker, smiling ear to ear, did a burnout causing smoke to billow around them from the back wheel before the motorcycle lunged forward. Joker accelerated quickly, aiming for the damaged vehicle at a dangerous speed, but at the very last possible second, Joker spun the bike to the side again, twisting the bike to the side stopping within inches of the smoking vehicle.

They didn’t have a lot of time before the Gotham police would show up, but Joker wasn’t moving with urgency. Joker kicked the stand down and hopped off the bike easily, turning to grab Harley’s hand to help guide her off the bike. He tugged her close, lifting his goggles up with one hand at the same time he leaned in to kiss her, his lips puckered comically. Harley giggled and kissed him before he tucked her arm around his and strolled over to the now smoking BMW as if they were simply on an afternoon stroll. Frost leapt out of his vehicle the moment the SUV came to a stop just a few feet behind the BMW, barely stopping long enough to put the vehicle into park. He trusted his partners to follow the plan as they had discussed it. Frost hurried over to the driver side, yanked the door open, holding his weapon on the driver while Jason did the same on the passenger side. Both Frost and Jason, weapons trained on the two people, dragged the two guards out of the vehicle. Both were stunned and a little bloody, allowing themselves to be pulled from the car with little effort. Frost turned the driver slamming him up against the side of the car, yanking his arms behind his back with one hand while holding the barrel of his gun to the man’s head. He pulled a zip tie out from his jacket pocket and quickly tied the man’s wrists together. Jason did the same thing to the stunned woman he had just pulled from the passenger seat.

Zsasz rushed to the back seat and pulled the door open, grabbed a screaming Gigi out of the car. She stumbled on her heels, losing one of her shoes in the process. She was screaming and crying as Zsasz turned her, slamming her up against the car and yanking her hands behind her back.

“You don’t know who I am!! Carmine is going to kill you!!! I’m Carmine Falcone’s girlfriend and
he is going to kill you all!” Gigi, covered in her own blood, blubbered.

Joker strolled over with Harley as Zsasz flipped the confused, bleeding woman around.

Joker grinned at her. “Hi! Gigi right?”

Gigi stared at him and Harley in horror. “Who are you?”

Joker smiled with a sideways glance at Harley. “I’m really going to have to work harder on getting our name out there sweets.” He sighed and looked back at Gigi. “I’m the

Joker and this is Harley, the infamous Harley Quinn.”

Harley waved. “Hiya.”

Gigi was trembling, but she was trying to put on a brave face. “What do you want with me?”

Joker smiled. “Oh, I’m glad you asked. You my darling are going to teach Carmine Falcone that no one fucks with The Joker.” He reached forward and patted her cheek. “And you are going to teach the Batman that he simply can’t save everyone.”

Gigi’s eyes widened and she began to scream again. Joker glanced at Zsasz, who held a cloth drenched in chloroform over the distraught woman’s nose. Gigi struggled against Zsasz’s grip, coughed roughly into the cloth, inhaled. After a few more heartbeats, her eyes crossed and she went limp in the assassin’s arms. He lifted her up and with a salute to Joker headed back to the SUV. While Joker and Harley were dealing with Gigi, Frost and Jason finished binding the two guards, gagged them both and moved them to the front of the vehicle.

Joker stopped in front of them releasing Harley’s arm to step forward. “Now, you are going to send a message for me to Falcone, let him know I have his girlfriend. However, unlucky for the both of you, I only need one messenger.”

Joker pulled his gun holding it out at arm's length frowning as he aimed it at the head of one, closing one eye, then the other. The two guards made noises, but nothing intelligent escaped from behind their gags. Joker frowned, switching back and forth between them with one eye closed as he aimed, then switched targets again. He glanced at Harley.

“Who do you think I should shoot sweets?” Joker asked with a slight frown creasing his forehead.

Harley tapped her chin. “Hmm...how about eeny meeny miny mole?”

Joker frowned as he considered it before he shrugged. “Sounds good.”

He smiled starting with the woman. “Eeny meeny miny mole catch a tiger by it’s toe...”

When he finished his gun was on the man.

Joker smiled broadly showing off his perfect white teeth. “Guess you’re it.”

He pulled the trigger. The bullet ripped through the bodyguard’s head; blood, bone and brains exploded out the back bursting in a meaty red streak across the hood and windshield of the car. The woman next to him screamed behind her gag. Harley grabbed her and pulled her close.

“You tell Falcone that the Joker is coming for him, okay?” Harley smiled.

The woman nodded, in shock and horror, and Harley let her go. The blonde jumped up on her toes
and patted the woman on top of her head.

“Good girl.”

Joker smiled as he holstered his gun. “Come along sweets. Let’s take Gigi to see Mario, shall we?”

Harley giggled as Joker made a hand motion over his head. Frost and Jason headed back to the SUV where Zsasz waited with the unconscious Gigi.

Joker walked back over to the one remaining guard. “Oh, please give this to Falcone for me, will you darling?”

He pulled out a playing card with the Joker on it. He smiled and showed it to her, twisting it back and forth between two fingers before he reached over and slid it into the pocket of her jacket. He smiled and waved before walking off to follow his people.

Mary watched them go before she collapsed onto her knees next to her brother’s body.

* 

That night Falcone stood staring out the window of his apartment into the darkness filled with the twinkling lights of Gotham. He looked pale and older. He was wearing only a dress shirt, his tie thrown over the back of the couch, his hand in his pants pocket and a large glass filled to the very brim with bourbon.

Tallyman was standing behind him, his hands crossed in front of him as he waited.

“This Joker now has my son and my girlfriend, but he hasn’t made any demands. What the fuck does that clown want?” Falcone’s voice was soft, but there was a slight tremble to his words as he held the playing card that Tallyman had brought him from the scene of Gigi’s abduction.

“Maybe he is trying to scare you?” Tallyman responded softly.

Falcone shook his head. “I...I don’t know. He hasn’t sent any messages except for Mary. No demands for money, no threats...nothing. He just took her.”

Tallyman said softly. “I think you need to tighten your security sir. Get your other two children someplace safe.”

Falcone nodded, but he seemed dazed. “Yes...”

Tallyman turned to go before he turned back to look at Falcone who was still staring out the window. “I’ll find them sir.”

Falcone simply nodded.

He lifted the card back up, then angrily ripped it in half and threw it to the floor.

* 

Louisa Falcone, dressed in tight jeans and a simple black t-shirt, barefoot, her blonde hair styled in loose curls around her shoulders danced in place as she waited for the popcorn in the microwave to pop. She sang to herself as she danced in place swinging her hips side to side, lifting up on her bare feet.

“You got me feelin’ hella good
So let's just keep on dancin'

You hold me like you should

So I'm gonna keep on dancin'...

Louisa lived in the South Hinkley district in a two bedroom, one bath home paid for by her ex-husband Carmine Falcone. He kept her well taken care of, paid all her bills for her and gave her spending money for groceries and an allowance for whatever else she wanted. He had paid for her plastic surgery, her breast enhancement, tummy tuck, weekly visits to the salon to have her hair done. He still even came around once in a while to spend time with her. They would have a nice, intimate dinner; either she would cook or they would get take out, just the two of them in her kitchen, like when they were first married, watch a movie together on her couch, make love all night like teenagers.

He would either leave or spend the night, staying to have breakfast with her before he would return to his life. Louisa liked their little arrangement. It was simple and uncomplicated by the criminal life he led, plus she got her freedom, and him if she was in the mood. She didn’t mind sharing him with his latest girlfriend. Being the other woman was novel and, it was actually fun for her. She got all the benefits and none of the downside of being with “The Roman,” all in all it was a good arrangement. Louisa smiled and pulled the bag of popcorn out. “Ouch!” She giggled at herself as she pulled the hot bag open and dumped it into the waiting bowl she had setting on the counter. She grinned as she picked up the bowl and walked over to her couch carrying with her bowl of popcorn and sat, pulled a blanket over her lap before she picked up the remote and turned on the television. She was going to watch Fifty Shades of Grey again. She settled back and tossed some popcorn into her mouth.

She was watching her movie when she heard something. She frowned and set the bowl down, then sat up straight looking toward the front door. She narrowed her eyes before she shrugged and settled down again. She had just reached for her bowl of popcorn just when she heard the sound of glass shattering.

She got to her feet quickly at the same moment her front door was forced open and a man who looked like a well dressed evil clown with bright green hair, white skin, a bright red smile that showed off rows of perfect white teeth, and the bluest eyes she had ever seen, came waltzing in dressed in a bright blue three piece suit with a black vest and white shirt, with a gold chain across his abdomen. Another chain ran from the breast pocket of the suit to the lapel of his jacket. He smiled at her, his hands in the front pockets of his slacks, but she could see the tops of dark blue leather gloves as he walked closer. She even noticed the shine of his shoes, bright black oxfords with white spats...so odd she thought even as fear raced through her. She noted the weapon at his hip and felt rooted to the spot. Directly behind him a woman stepped in, her skin pale like his, too white, like it had been painted that way, with white hair, in two long pigtails, the ends of which were pink and blue. She was wearing a ruffle short purple skirt, a black sweater that hung off one shoulder, matching purple leather half palm gloves and purple thigh high boots, also wearing a shoulder holster with a pistol.

Louisa screamed.

She swung around and ran right into the chest of another man. This one was tall, bald with dead looking eyes and dressed like a mortician, all in black. She screamed again, slamming her hands into the man’s chest and knocking him back a step. The pale man with the green hair came up behind her, wrapping one arm around her waist, his other hand going to her mouth.

Louisa screamed against the leather glove of his hand.
“Calm down Mrs. Falcone!” the man said.

Louisa fought as he lifted her off her feet. She kicked and struggled before she bit down as hard as she could on his gloved hand. She was rewarded by the man yelping in surprise and dropping her. Louise fell hard on her knees, the impact rattling through her, but then she pushed herself to her feet and ran, going for the stairs and disappearing around a corner. She looked back, but they weren’t following her. She wasn’t thinking clearly as she raced into the bathroom, panic setting in.

Joker frowned. He walked over to the stairs and looked up with a curious expression. “Where does she think she is going?”

Harley frowned moving to stand next to him. “Maybe she has a panic room?”

Zsasz came to stand on Joker’s other side. “I doubt it. This place is too small for one.”

Joker shrugged and pulled his glove off to examine his hand.

Harley took his hand. “Puddin, did she hurt you?”

Joker frowned, the woman had actually drawn blood.

He pouted. “Does this look infected?”

Harley giggled. “No silly.” But then her expression darkened. “I’m gonna bust her lip for biting you.”

Joker glanced up the stairs. “Come along Harley, Zsasz, let’s go convinced the Mrs. Ex Falcone that she needs to come with us.”

Joker chuckled and headed up the stairs with Harley and Zsasz. Once they were at the landing, Joker could see there was a simple hall that stretched both ways, the doors on one end were open but the doors at the other weren’t, not that either meant anything--she could be hiding anywhere.

“Split up, let’s find her shall we?” Joker smiled.

Harley leaned over and kissed the tip of Joker’s nose. “Be careful puddin.”

Joker grinned and stuck his tongue out at her.

Harley giggled and sauntered off. Joker watched her go admiring her backside while Zsasz took off to examine the other room. Joker headed to the bathroom to clean off his bite. He walked into the bathroom looking around with a slight inquisitive frown. The bathroom was entirely white, from the tiles to the towels and shower curtain.

Joker cringed. “Boring.”

He shuddered and pulled open the medicine cabinet, glanced through the contents looking for some first aid cream. Louisa Falcone had a lot of drugs. He picked up a few of the bottles looking at the prescriptions; sleeping pills, pain pills and some he had no idea what they did. He grinned and pulled a few of the bottles out and pocketed them, not sure what he was planning on doing with them, but one never knew. After a couple of more seconds he found a tube and pulled it out. He examined the tube before he opened and spread the cream across the wound. It wasn’t bad but better safe than sorry he thought. He finished and pulled his glove back on. He opened his jacket and pulled out his lighter and a pack of cigarettes, lightly tapping out one cigarette before putting the pack back into his inside jacket pocket. He put the cigarette between his lips before he held the lighter up, flicking a
flame to life. He cupped his hand around it, holding the flame to the cigarette when he saw something in the mirror, a movement behind him that caught his attention. Joker frowned, clicking the lighter closed and taking a drag on his cigarette as he stared into the mirror. His blue eyes narrowed as he leaned closer to the mirror, smoke slowly rolling from his nostrils as he studied the shower curtain behind him. It was pulled across the tub, looking perfectly normal, but something about it, the way it was hanging seemed off. He leaned closer to the mirror, he could swear there was a shadow or maybe movement...

He turned toward the tub with a curious frown just as Mrs. Ex-Falcone came rushing at him tearing the curtain off the rod at the same time. She let out a yell like an animal, her fingers held like claws through the cloth as she tried to launch herself at him.

Joker’s hairless brows lifted in surprise, but he simply sidestepped out of the way of the attacking woman, blowing out a lazy stream of smoke as she stumbled into the wall next to the sink with a loud thud. Joker watched as the woman stumbled out of the bathroom, the shower curtain fell only to become tangled around her legs. She listed to the side and slammed into the wall. The ex-wife of Gotham’s most powerful (currently) mob boss spun around looking dazed from her impact with the wall. She took a step backwards away from the pale man. Joker thought about reaching out and grabbing her, but instead he simply watched as she tripped and fell over backwards down the stairs.

Harley came running from the bedroom she had been searching in the short hall when she heard the sound of a scream followed by a loud impact sound. “Puddin?”

Harley looked down and saw the woman, tangled in the shower curtain stumble, hit the top stairs, turn around just before she went tumbling down the stairs. She hit the floor hard and went still.

Harley made a face, followed by a whispered. “Ouch.”

Zsasz had come out of the room he had been searching, moving calmly, not in any hurry since he saw Joker and Harley looking curiously down the stairs He walked over to where Joker and Harley stood and turned to look down the stairs. He made a grunt and lifted a brow.

Joker took a drag on his cigarette before he giggled, smoke rolling out from between his lips. “How to fall down stairs: Step 1, Step 2, Step 6,7,8 9,10…”

Harley laughed and gave him a light smack on the shoulder. “Puddin, you’re terrible.”

Joker grinned and shrugged. “What can I say? Well, at least she made transporting her a little easier. Wrap her up and let’s get her in Zsasz’s car.” Joker bounced on his toes happily. “One more to go!”

Joker danced down the stairs and jumped over Louisa’s body, pulling a playing card from his pocket and with a grin he hurried over to the kitchen, coming back with a butcher’s knife. He took the knife and pinned the card--a Joker card--to the wall where it would easily be visible to anyone entering the apartment.

* * *

Victor Page came out of his office into the crisp Gotham night. He sighed and pulled the collar of his jacket up as he walked to his car. His expensive shoes made a loud clapping sound against the pavement as he moved. Even in a parking garage, the damp chill seeped through the concrete. He looked expensive with his styled blond hair, Isaia navy blue suit and his Alexander McQueen dress shoes, all bought and paid for from his work with Carmine Falcone. As the older man’s lawyer, Victor Page had gotten Falcone out of jail more times than he could count, and that didn’t include paternity suits, money laundering, and tax fraud. Victor smiled. He was good at what he did,
manipulating the system for his client. What else would any self-respecting attorney do, he often thought.

The parking garage was silent, only one of two cars scattered throughout the level he was on. He didn’t know if they were people who worked in the building or just cars that people had left for some reason and he didn’t care.

After a couple of minutes of walking, Victor saw his baby, his newest purchase, a black and white Bentley Bentayga Mulliner AWD, (a simple quarter million dollar purchase) with white leather interior and all the bells and whistles. Even Bruce Wayne didn’t have a car like this Victor thought to himself as he hurried over and let himself into the car. It was one of the many indulgences that Victor allowed himself.

He flopped down onto the seat, tossing his briefcase to the seat beside him with a sigh before he put the key in the ignition and turned the car on. The car purred to life and Victor spent a few seconds adjusting the massage and heating feature of the seat before he leaned back with another happy sigh. This was the life, he thought. Tonight he was meeting with Candy, taking her out for a fancy dinner, then some fun at his apartment. He smiled and pulled his jacket open, slipping the joint that he had hidden there out, and withdrew a lighter from his pocket. As he held the joint between his lips and flicked the lighter open, he thought he might give Mason a call and get some coke, maybe some ketamine and ecstasy, might as well make it a fun night he thought with a grin.

Victor leaned back and took a hard drag on the joint and held it, feeling the burn in his lungs before he slowly let the smoke out slowly and feeling the beginning of a buzz. He had just put the joint back to his lips, relaxing into the seat when he felt the press of metal against his temple.

"Don’t you know drugs are bad for you?" A warm, sensual voice purred at his ear at the same time pressing the barrel of the gun against his temple just a little harder. Victor’s eyes opened wider as he tensed. He could feel the man’s lips against the lobe of his ear, but the gun against his temple was more concerning. “Though I suppose nowadays marijuana isn’t considered all that bad is it?”

“No it isn’t puddin,” a soft female voice answered from behind Victor.

He could almost see the smile in her voice as she spoke to the man with the gun.

The owner of the smooth sensual voice reached around the other side giving Victor a view of a finely tailored suit jacket of deep emerald green. If he hadn’t been ready to shit himself, Victor thought, he would have asked where he got a jacket that color. He saw the sleeve of a white dress shirt and the person reaching around wore a pair of deep evergreen colored leather gloves, but what struck Victor the most was the hint of the wrist and arm he saw between the sleeve and the gloves. The skin was pure white, like chalk or snow...no color at all, like a drowned corpse.

The fingers of the gloved hand plucked the joint from between Victor’s numb lips.

Victor glanced in his rearview to see a man with chalk white skin, scarlet red lips, and green hair, and as he watched the man with the gun, he saw vivid, haunting blue eyes. Victor’s eyes widened more as he took in the man’s face while he held the joint between his thumb and forefinger, lifted it to his lips and took a drag. While the green-haired man held the smoke in, he motioned with the hand holding the joint--Victor assumed gesturing to the other person in the car.

Victor watched in the mirror as a pretty young woman with the same skin condition as the man, sat forward, emerging from the shadows like an ethereal ghost or angel. She was beautiful with long white hair that she had pulled up in two pigtails making her look younger than what she probably was and as she leaned close to the green haired man, it was clear to Victor--a man who dealt with
lust on a nearly everyday basis—that this woman lusted after the man. But there was something else in the way she held herself close to him, the looks they exchanged even as the man held a gun to Victor’s head. These two clowns shared a look of love, devotion and obsessive desire. There was just something about the way she gazed at the man as he held the joint to her lips.

She took a hit off the joint, holding the smoke in her lungs as the man slowly exhaled. He looked at the joint with a sigh and a lift of his lips at one corner. “Nope, drugs never did do much for me.”

Victor made a high pitched whine as the man put the joint out by crushing it against the back of the leather seat next to Victor’s shoulder before he brought that arm around to dangle his gloved hand loosely against Victor Page’s other shoulder, though his attention seemed to be on the woman in the car. His hand caressed Victor’s chest idly for a moment before the man used his free hand to pull aside Victor’s jacket, finding the inner pocket where he had kept his joint and the lighter. The man holding the gun to Victor’s temple easily pulled the lighter out of the lawyer’s pocket. He brought it around to inspect the lighter while Victor trembled. The pale man narrowed his eyes and mumbled, “If I’m not mistaken, a Caran d’Ache Ecaille from China, gold and with a cherry wood and lacquer finish.”

“What about you sweets? Joint do anything for you?” the man asked with a smooth tone.

The woman exhaled and shrugged. “Nah.”

Victor heard movement followed by (Victor guessed the woman) catching something. “Nice lighter,” the man said to him before turning his attention once more to the woman. “Sweets, can you wipe off the lawyer cooties for me? I think I have a new lighter.”

The woman giggled. “Course puddin, can’t have cooties on my puddin’s lighter.”

The man laughed leaning toward her. The woman grabbed his face in both hands forcing him to turn toward her and then kissed him. Victor slowly began to open the door, thinking he could make a run for it when the man pressed the gun’s barrel hard against his head. A second later, his other arm wrapped around Victor’s neck, though his grip of light.

“Oh now don’t be stupid Victor,” the man said in a smooth tone. “We were just starting to get along.”

Victor went stiff, trying not to maintain his calm, but he was trembling and he was pretty sure he had just wet himself a little. He dealt with all kinds of people, dangerous people, he had often thought...but right now, he realized he had been fooling himself.

“Who are you? Whaddaya want? Is it money? I got money. Drugs, girls...” Victor spoke quickly with a slight whine. When he said “girls” the man reached up and tapped a couple of fingers against the lawyer’s forehead. “Shut up Vic darling. I’m The Joker and this is my beautiful partner Harley Quinn. And you my friend are about to become a puzzle piece in my little game.”

“Game?” Victor shook when he spoke. He knew about The Joker within the hour that he had appeared on television with Mario Falcone. And the dangerous lunatic was right here. Victor considered praying.

Joker laughed. “Yes, a game against Falcone. I decided I wanted a few more pieces to have in play. Though I am getting a bit tired of Mario. You know, you really should speak to Carmine about how he is raising his children.” Joker sighed and shrugged, the gun never wavering from Victor’s temple. “The mouth on that kid! Shocking. Isn’t it shocking Harley?”
“Very shocking puddin. He called us names I’ve never heard of.” The woman, Harley, shook her head. “And he kisses his mother with that mouth...shame.”

Victor mumbled. “What are you doing to do with me?”

The Joker laughed. “That’s the spirit! Why worry about Mario when you can worry about yourself. Well Victor dear, I have no idea yet.” The Joker chuckled. “We’ll just have to see won’t we. Flying by the seat of our pants, as it were.” He winked at Harley. “Now darling, why don’t you hand me the keys.”

Victor, with shaking fingers, reached forward and pulled out the keys to his car. The Joker had his free hand out and Victor dropped them in.

“Sweets,” Joker said softly.

Harley moved, crawling into the front seat. Victor stared sideways at her with wide horrified eyes as she smiled prettily at him and restrained his hands with a zip tie before she leaned over with a ball gag which she forced into his mouth, wrapping it around and buckling it tight. Joker handed off the gun to her as he slipped out from the back of the car.

Between them, Joker and Harley easily got the lawyer out of the car and moved to the back where they walked him around to the trunk. Victor looked around the parking garage in a panic, hoping that someone might lend assistance, call the police, something--but it was deserted.

Joker opened the trunk and gasped. “Harley! Look at that! Isn’t it just luxurious?”

Harley, with her hand on the door of the trunk, leaned in and smiled. “Well if you are going to have to ride in a trunk I could definitely pick this one.” She leaned down to rub her hand along the interior. “Oooh, plush.”

Joker laughed. “See there, aren’t you glad you spent a ridiculous amount of money on this car so you could be kidnapped in style?” Joker gave Victor a shove. “In you go darling. Harley and I have places to be, so chop chop!”

Victor crawled in and laid on his side looking up at Joker and Harley as Joker reached up and grabbed the back hatch. Harley waved her fingers at him.

Joker smiled. “Now you get to join the fun.”

The hatched snapped down leaving Victor Page in darkness.

* * *

Ashley Doorman yawned as she shoved her hand deep into the pocket of her old red coat. This early in the morning there was no one up on the street where she lived. It was that weird eerie morning quiet in the big city, hard to find, but even though she was dead on her feet, she did like this time of the morning. She shivered under her coat as she walked. She was going to have to purchase a new one she thought, but damn, she didn’t want the expense. Winter was coming, though, and winter in Gotham could be brutal. She sighed and kept walking; her dog, a mix breed named Bart, stopped and sniffed at some trash cans.

“Come on Bart.” Ashley groaned giving his lead a half-hearted tug. She wanted to have enough time to have some coffee before she had to catch the bus for work, but Bart could be super picky about where he wanted to piss. She had never seen a dog so particular.
Bart sniffed for a few more seconds before he began to walk again.

Ashley yawned hard enough to crack her jaw and continued letting her dog lead her along when Bart stopped and began to bark.

Ashley cringed and tugged on his leash. “Shut up Bart!! You’re gonna wake everyone!”

Bart was jumping up and down at something, barking his head off. She tugged again at her dog’s leash, but he wouldn’t be distracted. Ashley looked up and her eyes widened in horror.

Hanging from the light pole in front of her was a man, dead clearly if the wide unblinking gaze was any indication. His mouth was pulled back into a too wide smile--no one smiled like that Ashley thought in horror, no one. The body was wrapped in plastic with a large cardboard sign hanging from around the man’s neck that read in large purple and green letters.

“YOUR MOVE!”

The glass flew across the room and shattered into a hundred pieces against the wall and leaving a wet stain. Falcone’s face was a mask of rage. It was late morning, but the shirt that Falcone wore had a wet amber stain on the front from the alcohol he had been drinking. Judging by his look, wearing only black slacks and his stained, white shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and the nearly empty bottle of whiskey on the living room table, Vito figured Falcone had been drinking since he got up that morning.

The man turned and snarled looking on edge and dangerous. Falcone turned the full force of his angry on his employee. “WHAT?!”

Vito Savellini flinched. “Sorry sir, we just found out this morning, a call from one of your guys in the area, but we just got the report that your ex-wife Louisa is missing. There appears to have been a break-in at her apartment. And ah, Victor Page, your lawyer–his car was found totaled against a light pole in the upper east side, though no one was in the car. It had been spray painted with “Ha Ha Ha” and “Joke’s on You” written all over it in purple and green. The interior had been spray painted too. Someone dumped water in the oil...locked up the engine, so I had it towed, but the car is totaled sir.”

Falcone was about to say something when there was a hurried knock at the door.

Carmine turned toward the door with an angry glare. “COME IN!”

The door opened and Cristian Romano, one of Carmine’s soldiers came in. The young man was dressed in a police uniform, one of Falcone’s men who worked at the GCPD keeping tabs on anything to do with Falcone, stopped for a second looking stunned, his mouth hanging open as he looked around. It was clear this was the first time he had ever been in The Roman’s apartment.

Falcone hissed. “What the fuck do you want?”

Romano swallowed. “Ah sir, we ah...we just got a report of a body hanging from a light pole nearly Cape Carmine in Robbinsville...”

“I know where the fuck Cape Carmine is stronzo! Why do I care?” Falcone snarled.

The young policeman walked over pulling out something from his breast pocket and handed it to Falcone while Vito watched. Falcone took the photo. He stared down at it and wobbled backwards to drop into a chair.
He looked up at Romano, his voice hushed. “When did they find him?”

“Early this morning sir. Someone will be coming to see you this afternoon,” Romano said softly. “But when I realized it was your son, I came right away. I thought you would want to know.”

Carmine nodded mutely, touching the image of his murdered son gently. He had gone deathly pale before he turned his attention to Vito. “Was there anything else about the wreck, my ex-wife?”

Vito nodded. “Yes sir, there was one more thing. There was one found at your ex-wife’s house and in the car.”

He pulled a card from his breast pocket and handed it to Falcone.

Carmine took it and stared. It was a playing card.

The Joker.
Jack revved the bike’s engine and darted between vehicles, weaving in and out of the Gotham traffic. He was headed toward their destination, a small intimate party of their closest family members at a club called Lovecraft’s Horror in Coventry near the university. One of the few places in Gotham where his hair along with his and Harley’s complexions should blend in.

Jack grinned, his goggles in place as he leaned forward, the bike zipping along at a speed that would surely get them pulled over if a cop saw them, but he didn’t care. Tonight was about celebrating their success and one more step toward taking down Falcone. Jack chuckled to himself. Falcone, then the Owls, and during the entire thing, he was going to play with Batman, show him that he could control nothing, fix nothing. Jack and his real family would show the caped vigilante what his actions had actually created. But right now he was just interested in some drinks, food and dancing with Harley; his thoughts about Gotham and Batman were on the back burner for now.

Tonight Jack was dressed all in black, a black and grey pinstriped Carlo Pignatelli suit, black silk shirt and black tie, but the vest was white and grey, decorated with black flower print. He wore a pair of comfortable, black lace-up boots. Harley was behind him, her arms wrapped around his middle. She looked gorgeous—as usual he thought—dressed in a short, bouffon style leather dress with a sweetheart neckline and belts as straps over the arms, though Jack was very interested in the zipper that ran between her breasts. She wore some black fishnets, a biker style leather jacket to keep her warm and some black combat boots. Her white hair was worn in soft pigtail boxer braids. He grinned; they would fit right in tonight. Though Jack’s mind was preoccupied by the thoughts of pulling that zipper down to release her breasts, or running his hands along her fishnet covered legs, he still managed to get them to the bar without drawing any unwanted attention from the Gotham PD.

After a little over an hour of navigating the busy highways and streets of Gotham City, Jack pulled up in front of the bar and pulled the bike around the corner to park. The bar wasn’t much to look at on the outside, just a plain black facade with the name of the bar over the top in red neon and a doorman who looked like doormen outside every bar in Gotham—big, bald and dressed in black. The man checked their ids without comment. If he recognized them at all, he gave no indication as he ushered them inside.

The sounds of some kind of dark electronic music greeted them when they walked through some black curtains and into the club. The place was crowded with patrons, forcing Jack and Harley to shoved their way deeper inside. The inside of the bar/club was dark; the dim lights cast everything in an what Harley thought of as an eerie glow. The bar that ran along the left wall was the first thing that Harley noticed with a large cut out painting of tentacles that ran along the top of the bar and down the side, which gave the illusion that the bar with its mirrored back wall and shelves of colorful liquor bottles were being held in the embrace of a giant octopus. There were fairy lights strung all around the bar and continued along the wall mixed with fish bones, animals skulls and strange symbols. The walls of the club were decorated with framed images, eerie black and white photographs of monstrous looking people surrounded by skulls and other bones. The bottom half of the walls were decorated with a line of skulls that ran all the way to the stage and dance floor. The dance floor—where a few people were currently dancing—was a smooth, shiny black while the ceiling above the dance floor and stage had a large, strange looking symbol painted over it. There was a smoke machine somewhere that was blowing out a steady stream of smoke that ran along the floor of the club, looking as if fog was rolling in. There were booths with black or red leather seats, as well as tables and chairs where people were sitting, drinking, eating and enjoying the music and atmosphere of the place.
Jack, his arm around Harley’s waist, chuckled. “Oh, now this is a fun place.”

Harley leaned against Jack. “We definitely don’t stick out here.”

Jack laughed looking around until he saw their family sitting at a table near the dance floor. At the table sat Frost, wearing his typical suit and looking (perhaps also typical as of late) uncomfortable, nursing a beer. Next to him was Agatha, wearing an tailored old fashioned tuxedo with tails without a tie, her hair styled with a 1920’s bob inspired flair and smoking a cigarette. She looked perfectly at home, though Jack suspected his Aunt could fit in anywhere she wanted. She had a green drink in front of her that Jack guessed, knowing the sort of person his aunt was, and the color of the drink, it was probably absinthe. Next to her was Jason dressed in black jeans and a snug fitting red t-shirt that showed off the young man’s muscles, with a beer and some sort of sandwich. Next to Jason was Zsasz, all in black and holding what might be a cup of tea. Next came Bane dressed in black slacks and dress shirt minus a tie, the sleeves of the shirt rolled up to show his biceps. He also seemed to be drinking tea with Viktoria (being the only new member of the gang here tonight) who sat beside him. The doctor kept one hand resting on Bane’s thigh. Of the group, she looked the most out of place in her pencil skirt and white blouse. Trope and Thea were on the dance floor, each with their hair dyed a different shade of blue. The two young women danced intimately together as if no one else was there watching them, and lastly was Alex, with a glass of something dark brown with a burning piece of rosemary in the glass, dressed as he usually was in jeans, t-shirt and an outrageously colored hawaiian shirt.

When Agatha caught sight of Jack and Harley, she waved before saying something to Frost who stood up and retrieved a couple of chairs for them. Everyone called out greetings as Jack and Harley came over and sat with them.

Jack smiled. “I’m so glad to see you all.”

Jason grinned. “Thanks for inviting us Boss, Harley. Been a good few days.”

Jack laughed. “So, our guests are doing well?”

Frost snorted, dropping his voice though with the volume of the music it would be a surprise for anyone to hear them. “Gigi is surprisingly vicious. She has a mouth on her and she’s bitten me twice.”

Frost pulled up the sleeve of his jacket.

Jack looked at the marks and grimaced. “Ouch.”

Agatha frowned picking up her drink and taking a sip. “I think perhaps I might have to visit your guests for a lesson in manners.”

Jack chuckled in response. “How are the other two? Do any of them know about the others?”

Jason spoke up. “Nah. Louisa just keeps telling anyone who will listen how Falcone is gonna make sure our bodies are never found and that lawyer is sure he can buy us off. If he has the kind of money he keeps offering, Falcone would be pissed because that dude is clearly skimming off the top.”

Jack put his arm around Harley’s shoulders. “Mm...I think I might have to come by and talk to Victor Page a bit...he might have some useful information.”

Zsasz spoke, his voice low and soft. “So how long before you turn them into...warnings?”
Jack frowned in thought while his fingers idly stroked up and down Harley’s arm. A waitress, carrying her pad and pencil, came over dressed in shorts, striped leggings and a corset, her hair reminiscent of Lily Munster. “What can I get you to drink?”

Jack smiled at her, looking at her name tag before he asked. “So Rachel, what’s your house special?”

The young woman cocked her hips, giving Jack a seductive smile and a very obvious once over. “For you, our Baba Yaga drink. It’s absinthe, vanilla rooibos cream soda syrup, and soda.”

Jack grinned and held up his hand. “Make it two darling.”

The young woman grinned and nodded before she walked off. Harley smacked him in the shoulder. Jack yelped. “What?” His expression immediately changed to sly as he took in Harley’s expression. “Oh--jealous?”

Harley narrowed her eyes only slightly, but there was a playful smile on her lips and Jack laughed. “Come on pumpkin, let’s go dance while we wait for our drinks.”

He smiled and nodded to the rest of their table as he stood and took Harley’s hand.

Bane frowned in thought before he glanced at Viktoria. “Wanna dance?”

She beamed. “I would love to.”

Agatha stood up too. “Well, if everyone is dancing…”

She grabbed a startled Frost by the hand and pulled him out to the dance floor.

Zsasz, Jason and Alex watched them go.

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The music that began to play, Siouxsie and the Banshees’ “Face to Face” was slow and dark.

Jack smiled taking Harley into his arms, one arm around her waist holding her firmly against him, while with the other he held her hand. He brought her hand to his lips and brushed them against her knuckles softly.

“You don’t have to ever be jealous Harley. I only have eyes for you, forever and always my love.”

Jack’s voice was a warm purr. “You are my girl, forever and always. Remember, you and me against the world Harley.”

Harley smiled, her cheek lightly pink under her snow white skin. “Only you Jack, only you forever, until death do us part.”

Jack smiled, kissing her knuckles once more. “Until death do us part.”

He spun her around slowly.

“Tango with me Harley?” Jack asked softly. “Dance with me my sweets.”
Harley giggled, a soft small smile on her lips. “You know I don’t know how puddin.”

Jack purred brushing his nose against hers. “Just follow my lead my sweets. I’ll move slowly.”

He used his leg to gently push her left leg out. “Put that leg out behind you, lean back and wrap your right leg around mine.”

Harley did as he instructed. Jack slowly titled her back, his hand pressing into her back as he raised the hand he held up twisting his body slightly.

His voice was warm. “Now, just follow me pumpkin...you know I will never steer you wrong.” Jack replied brushing his nose against hers. “My sweet girl.”

Jack grinned as they moved together across the dance floor, their bodies naturally arching and flowing against one another.

Jack held her arm up, his body arched, his left knee pressed against her right as they both arched, stretching their opposite legs out behind them. Harley grinned, pleased with herself when she duplicated his stance. She tossed her left arm out, holding it in a pose she had seen before in movies or tv, her body’s natural grace made her movements agile and elegant. Jack waggled his hairless brows at her. He matched her in gracefulness, his body lean and tight.

They slowly flowed up from their shared stance. Jack gently pulled her closer, his forehead rested against hers for a moment as he stared into her eyes. Harley felt a shiver run through her staring into his hypnotic blue eyes. He held her gaze, the smile on his lips was slow, both beautiful and predatory.

He moved in a circle, guiding her with him, their eyes never leaving each other. He moved swiftly, surprising her as he spun her around. Harley responded by lifting her right leg up and wrapping it around him as he moved smoothly across the dance floor.

Neither of them were aware that they were drawing a crowd, people stepping out of the way to watch the two of them. Jack spun her around, then stopped and dipped her back. He leaned down and blew his breath along her breasts watching with delight when her skin goosebumped. He grinned and brought her back up to her feet. He spun her around once, then did a series of hip sways leading Harley to one end of the floor. Harley followed along with him swaying her hips in time to his until they reached the end of the floor. Once there, Jack spun her body in toward him, her back coming up against his chest, their hands and arms still intertwined. He slid his hand up her side to her ribs, spreading his fingers just under her breast while holding up her other arm out, his hand just under her wrist. They moved sideways, their legs seeming to elegantly and gracefully twist and untwist as they made their way to the other end of the floor.

Once there, Jack spun her back around to face him, smiling brightly at her as Harley did the spin on her toes, grabbing his shoulder with her free hand once she was facing him again. He swayed in place with her, they bodies moving back and forth together perfectly as if they had been dancing like this forever. Jack surprised her by spinning her out again, twisting her around until her back was against his chest. He dropped her hand and slowly glided his hands up her hips to her waist, his hands naked around her torso, wrapping his arms tight around her.

She could feel his breath against her ear, his hardness pressed against her backside as he once more swayed back and forth with her, his lips traveled down her throat to her shoulder, then back again not quite touching her skin, just a breath above, but it was enough to send goosebumps racing over her skin.
Jack set her out just a little and kissed the back of her throat as he released her and walked slowly around her, his back straight, his legs moving gracefully as he turned around to face her. He reached out, wrapping his arms around her and slowly brought both hands up her back, caressing her tenderly, his fingers spread as he once more gazed into her eyes. He dipped her hand, sliding one hand around, his other balancing her as his fingers stroked down her throat, his fingers tickling down over the tops of her breasts.

He lifted her back up smiling at her.

“I love you,” he said softly. “You are the most beautiful girl I’ve ever seen Harley.” He walked around, his fingertips just barely caressing her shoulders as he glided around her. “You are my world Harley. I would do anything for you.” He leaned close and whispered in her ear before he came back around to face her, wrapping his arms around her.

Harley reached out and stroked the fingers of one hand through his hair, the fingers of her other hand caressed his throat and shoulder. “I love you puddin. I love you more than anything in this world. You are my everything, Jack.”

Jack pulled her close, covering her mouth with his at the same time he dipped her back just slightly, his tongue sliding into her mouth. Harley reached up to grasp the back of his head sliding her tongue against his with a soft sound of pleasure. The world fell away leaving just the two of them.

*

The evening had grown chillier as Jack drove the bike through the late night streets of Gotham. Harley yawned, leaning her head against his back, a soft happy smile on her face as she watched Gotham’s buildings zip by. After a few minutes, she could tell they weren’t heading back to their park, their home, but looked to be heading toward the Bowery area.

“Puddin? Where are we going?” Harley lifted her head up and looked around, a little confused. She couldn’t see anything around here that would have drawn Jack’s attention until she remembered what was here in the Bowery. Crime Ally.

Jack turned his head just a little to make his voice heard. “I need to stop and pay a visit.”

Harley frowned slightly, but she didn’t say anything. She knew exactly where he was going. This would be the first time that Jack had taken her to the place where his parents died. She wasn’t sure if this was the anniversary or not. She knew Jack would never say and she wouldn’t ask.

She laid her head back down against his back and hugged him. Jack reached down and laid a hand over one of hers as he drove through the night.

*

When they arrived at Crime Alley, the place was dark. There were a couple of street lights that worked, one or two sputtering, struggling to stay alive while most of them were dark. The little light that was provided was weak and watery, as if even the streetlights had given up on this area. Harley could see trash along the street and piled along edges, down alleyways, and in doorways. The buildings looked not just old, but worn, as if the weight of the world, of despair, was bringing them down. The buildings looked as if they were sagging, the facades faded, years of posters stuck to their surfaces peeling and flaking away, like old whores with cracking makeup and sagging breasts still struggling to make it through a day, still working to shelter those who depended on them.

As Jack pulled the bike up along a cracked and broken sidewalk, Harley could see a couple of
working girls huddled in the doorway of a condemned building, the weak streetlight making the two women look like phantoms. There were a couple of the homeless sleeping in doorways, or along the sides of buildings and the distant sounds of sirens followed by the barking of dogs. Other than those few unfortunate souls, there was no one else about except the two of them.

Jack slipped off the bike and turned to help Harley off, taking her hand and lacing his fingers with hers once she was standing beside him. He didn’t say anything, just began to walk. They walked up a short flight of stairs and into a wide alley. Jack continued to walk, took a right turn, followed by a left until they arrived at a spot just past a three way cross section of paths.

There was one weak light here from an ancient looking light post. Jack stood just outside the thin, weak circle of light and stared down at the alley’s cracked, wet, and dark asphalt. There was--of course--nothing there, no chalk outlines, no warning tape, no sign...nothing to indicate the tragedy that had happened here so many years ago to two young boys.

Jack’s voice was distant when he spoke. “Sometimes I still dream about it, that night.”

He let go of her hand and took a handful of steps forward before he dropped down to one knee and reached out his fingers, to lightly place them on the asphalt.

“I remember the color of the blood,” he said softly. “It was so red, so bright in the street light. I remember crying and Bruce...the sound their bodies made when they fell…”

Jack choked as he spoke. “That night changed everything Harley.”

Harley hurried over to him and dropped to her knees beside him putting an arm around his shoulders. “Oh puddin.”

Jack leaned against his wife. She put her arm around his shoulders and held him, though he didn’t make a sound, he didn’t cry; nothing. After a few seconds, Jack turned to look at her and she saw he was smiling. He opened his mouth to say something, at the same time reaching over to caress her jaw when they both heard the faint echo of footsteps. Whatever Jack was going to say to her was lost as they both stood up to see two shadows approaching them.

Harley felt Jack tense next to her, his hand moving slightly to his side where she knew he carried a knife, but he didn’t draw it yet, waiting as the two shadows stepped into the light.

Harley jerked in surprise swallowing a gasp when she saw Bruce and his ward, Dick Grayson. Bruce looked as he always did, a wall of impeccable taste in a dark blue Armani suit, over which he wore a simple black coat. The young man next to him, who had clearly grown even taller since the last time she saw him, wore simple black slacks, a blue dress shirt and a leather jacket over that, but he still mirrored Bruce’s aura of brooding self-righteousness.

Bruce stopped in his tracks and stared when he saw his brother, or the man who had been his brother. This was the first time that Bruce had seen him in the flesh since Jack’s return from the dead, seeing his transformation. Bruce was horrified by the changes in his brother’s physical appearance. It wasn’t just the bleached white skin or the green hair, but the missing brows and his eyes--something had definitely changed about his brother’s eyes. Seeing Jack...No, he thought to himself, Joker...this man was the Joker now. That was what he was calling himself. Bruce pressed his lips into a thin line as he thought that this person wasn’t Jack Wayne any longer. But seeing this man who had been his brother here, at the site of their parents’ death, even with his transformation made Bruce wonder how much of his brother was still in there.

Jack laughed. “Well, well, well, lookie who it is Harls? Bruce Wayne himself, or should I
say...Batman?” Jack’s brow wrinkled as he continued to laugh softly.

Bruce didn’t bother to keep the snarl out of his voice. “What are you doing here?”

Jack chuckled at the other man’s anger. “What? Am I not allowed to mourn too? You think you were the only one hurt that night, Brucie?”

Bruce’s jaw flexed as he gritted his teeth, uncertain how to respond. Jack turned his attention to Dick. “Well, well, look at you! I think you are actually taller than the last time I saw you...when was that? Oh yes--I remember, the night my dear dear brother killed me.” Jack chuckled darkly. “Did it make you feel good brother, to watch me die at your hand?”

Dick stepped forward, but Bruce put a hand on his shoulder stopping the young man from going further. “You killed Haly you sonofabitch!” the young exclaimed.

Joker laughed, his voice pitching a fraction lower. “I did, didn’t I?” He tapped his finger against his chin. “Well, you do know accidents at the circus, happen quite frequently actually. I mean, look at what happened to your parents…” He grinned wider when he saw Dick jerk against Bruce’s hand. “I guess we’re all orphans here, ain’t we Brucie?”

Joker giggled.

Dick hissed and tried to break free of Bruce’s hold, but Bruce’s fingers dug into the boy’s shoulder and yanked him back. “Not now Dick; not here.”

Dick gave Bruce a furious look, but he didn’t try again to break free from Bruce’s hold on him.

“Oh yes, not here where our dear parents were murdered, turning my big brother into a flying Bat. You know Brucie dear, under all the stern expressions and batarangs, you are just a little boy in a playsuit crying for Mommy and Daddy. Ah, Brucie, it would be so damn funny if it wasn’t so pathetic.” Joker dropped his tone from light to something darker as he emphasized the word “pathetic.”

Joker slid his arm around Harley’s waist pulling her close. “Don’t you think it’s funny Harls?”

Harley leaned into Joker as she spoke. “Hilarious puddin. In my professional opinion, he has anger management issues, he is unloved, empty, looking to fill a void left by the loss of his parents. Mr. Wayne has a deep need for conflict, a compulsive need to control and fix things that don’t need fixin’ and obsessive narcissism. Oh, and he is jealous of his better looking, more intelligent, funnier, younger brother.” Harley grinned and stuck her tongue out at Bruce.

Bruce hissed. “Stay out of this Dr. Quinzel. This is between family.”

Joker hissed right back. “Harley is my family Bruice. She is my wife and my friend. She cares for me! More than you ever did, obviously, or ever could. If anyone should be staying out of family business it’s him, your little mini-me in progress there!” He pointed an accusing finger at Dick.

Dick took a step forward, but once more Bruce pulled him back.

Bruce sighed and tried to bring himself under control. “Jack please. It doesn’t have to be like this. I can get you help. Just turn yourself in to the police and let me help you. I’m sure you would be found unfit to stand trial, then I could get you the best help money can buy. I can find someone to fix your...” He paused as if he were unsure what to say before he continued in a quieter tone. “Your disfigurement.”
Joker snorted. “Oh, as if I haven’t heard that song and dance before…” Joker’s voice rose in pitch. “Just let me help you Jack. I love you Jack. I’ll be there for you Jack…I have no secrets from you Jack…I’m your brother, trust me.” Joker said the last few words with so much bitterness that Bruce could almost taste it on his tongue.

Bruce cringed slightly as Jack threw his words back at him.

Joker snarled. “I’m not disfigured Bruce, I’ve just shed my skin to be who I really am. A clown...someone who you laughed at all the time, but now i at least look the part. Why would I want that fixed Brucie? Hmm...oh yes, I forgot...gotta fit in!” Joker laughed. “Be part of the status quo…a carbon copy of the perfect Bruce Wayne!”

Bruce sighed and ran a hand over his hair. “Jack, I tried to help you. I did. But you were always so resistant.”

Joker snarled. “Of course I was! You weren’t trying to help me! You never cared about helping me! You just wanted me quiet, wanted me to conform, conform, conform--to be like you. You never cared who I was--who I really was--except the family embarrassment. Are you really that insane that you thought you were the only one who was in pain Brucie?” Joker snarled and stabbed a finger against the side of his head. “Your words, your actions Brucie, were like a cancer in my head, always trying to eat away at who I was, always trying to change me! You never cared to know the real me, who I really was! You never cared about my pain, what I was suffering! You only cared about yourself!”

Bruce narrowed his eyes when he spoke. “Keep your voice down Jack.” Bruce took an unintentional step forward. “You know Jack, under all that makeup, you’re in just as much pain as the day our parents were shot right in front of us. I know you are hurting...and despite everything you’ve done, I still want to save you.”

Dick looked up at Bruce in shock. “But…how could you want to save him? He’s a monster!”

Bruce shook his head, telling Dick without words to keep silent. The younger man glared at Bruce, but said nothing else, turning a hateful gaze on Jack and Harley instead.

Joker laughed. “Yes, I’m the monster!”

Joker tilted his head forward and down a fraction while staring at Bruce and his ward. His voice soft and sinister. “Oh yes, don’t listen to him Bruce, he’s too young to know what he’s talking about—or does he? Maybe I am a monster? Maybe you’re just as much a monster as I am Brucie. Hiding behind a mask and telling yourself that beating the shit out of people is justice. You think you’re some sort of saint under that mask you wear, but you really are a devil under that mask Bruce. A sinner...just like me.” He took another step closer to his brother. “You can’t save me Bruce. I’m a monument to your failure! You can try to save as many people as you want, but you couldn’t save...
your own brother.” Joker laughed and pointed at Dick. “Remember that Dickie, when the cards are down, neither Batman nor Bruce are going to be there to save you. Just you watch; when you need him the most he is going to let you down, just like he let me down.”

Bruce released his hold on the young man’s shoulder and took another step forward so that they were only a few steps from each other. “I’m still your brother Jack, I still love you.” He put his hands out to the pale man and stopped. “I’m still here for you Jack. Let me help.”

Jack stared at his brother, then at his outstretched hands.

Harley frowned. She wasn’t sure what she should do. She didn’t trust Bruce. If he had truly wanted to help Jack then he would have never have let him go…but he did drop him, he dropped Jack into the acid knowing full well that the chances were he would die...a horrible death, yet he had let him go. Now here he stood, trying to convince Jack that he loved him and wanted to help him?

Joker didn’t move. He just stared at his brother. Harley sensed that Jack wanted to trust Bruce, wanted to take his hand, but she knew Bruce was lying. She reached up to take her husband’s face between her hands, turning Jack to look at her. “Don’t believe him puddin. He has never had you or our best interest at heart. You know that. He just wanted you out of the way, taken care of while he did...whatever he wanted. He lied to you, lied to you this whole time, keeping Batman from you.” She glared at Bruce. “Your miserable life is going to swallow you whole Bruce and you are going to be alone with nobody to blame but yourself.” She turned back to her husband. “You can’t trust him puddin. I know deep down you want to, but you can’t.”

Jack stared at her as if trying to process her words. Harley held his face, her thumbs gently stroked his cheeks, her eyes pleading with him. “Puddin, please--you can’t trust him, he’ll put us both back in Arkham...or try. He could try and kill us again...he can’t be trusted, but you can trust me.”

Bruce hissed. “Harleen, stay out of this. You are half the reason he is like this! I brought you in to help him and look where that got him!! You betrayed your profession to hurt my brother!”

Harley opened her mouth, her eyes wide in shock. Tears sprang to her eyes and flowed down her cheeks, her voice was a choked whisper. “I would never hurt him, I love him. I love him more than my own life.”

Bruce almost growled. “You have a funny way of showing it.”

Jack’s head had snapped around, breaking Harley’s hold on him. His eyes flashed dangerously as he glared at his brother, his voice low and venomous. “Don’t you talk to her like that.”

Bruce gestured at his brother. “But Jack it’s true. There was hope until I made the mistake of bringing her into our home. She twisted you more, played into your sickness instead of helping you. She used you to make herself feel more important. She tricked you into falling for her...I blame myself and I’m sorry, but...” Bruce stopped short when he found himself staring down the barrel of a gun. He took a step back; the gun was steady between both men as Joker giggled.

He moved slowly, his long legs and trim body made the moves graceful. Joker, kept the gun on Bruce as he walked around, forcing Bruce and Dick back.

Joker frowned at Bruce, his expression painfully sad Bruce noted. He could see traces of Jack mixed within the face of the Joker.

Joker’s voice was barely a whisper. “You never did understand me Bruce. Never. I admit, I have always been a little fragile, but really Bruce, you hurt me like no one could.” He smiled and his eyes
flashed in the dim light, a chilling, mad glow to them. His voice changed slightly becoming a little higher, slightly sing song as he spoke. “Wouldn’t Mom and Pop just love this little reunion? Just look at the two of us, no longer brothers, no longer Bruce and Jack, but something more profound, perhaps even more enduring than brothers? We are now Batman and The Joker...it’s simply poetic don’t you think? We’ve become what we have always been, adversaries, polar opposites in all things and here, on the spot where it all began.” Joker’s voice dropped low. “The spot where both our lives changed forever brother.”

Joker sighed. “Ah, this is the stuff that makes a classic story or movie.” He waved the gun. “All right, you two move over to that wall, turn around and put your hands against it.”

Bruce frowned. “Jack, I thought…”

Joker’s voice trembled with barely contained rage. His arm shook, his eyes flashed with hatred. “Don’t call me that name anymore!!! It’s Joker to you and if you don’t do as I’m so politely asking, well, I just might have to damage your little sidekick there.” Joker gestured at Dick. “Clip his wings for you as it were.” Joker laughed. “Let’s see if you can save him or is he doomed to die at your hands too...brother?”

Dick gave Joker a deadly look, but after a silent exchange with Bruce, both men turned and put their hands up against the wall.

“Good. Now I’m sure we’ll be seeing each other again soon. Until then, sleep tight Bats!” Joker’s laughter was followed by the sound of running.

Bruce turned, but Jack and Harley had disappeared. He slumped against the wall defeated. He closed his eyes. He promised himself that he wasn’t going to give up on Jack.

He had to find a way to save him from himself...there had to be a way to save his little brother.

*

The drive home had been quiet. Jack remained utterly silent the entire time. His focus was on the road, pushing the bike to its top speed, driving as if he were running from something. Perhaps he was Harley thought, running not just from Bruce, but from the memory of his parents, of what might have been. There were so many twists and turns in his life that might have changed the current outcome of it, but none of those had happened. What had happened was that his parents were murdered in front of him, his brother had tried to destroy what happiness he found and finally...Bruce threw Jack away, to a certain death. Only it hadn’t been certain death. Jack had come back as The Joker and now Bruce--Batman--was going to pay for everything he had done to his brother, Harley thought with a satisfied smile. But she could still tell that Jack was hurting, despite his words, his actions--he hurt. Some small part still wanted Bruce’s love and approval no matter how much Jack defied it. Harley frowned wishing she could help him, wished she could make that small part of him that wanted Bruce’s love to vanish. Bruce didn’t deserve Jack she thought, didn’t deserve her husband’s love.

Harley frowned. She would have to be the one to find a way to destroy Bruce, to destroy Batman once and for all. Once Bruce was gone, really gone, Jack could heal. At least that was what she hoped, and they could take Gotham, fully take it over and save it like her puddin wanted.

She didn’t say a word and she didn’t expect Jack to either as he drove, so she simply held on, her head resting against his back, closing her eyes and hoping her presence gave him some comfort.

*
Jack pushed the door open to their home, having still not uttered a word since leaving Crime Alley. Harley stepped inside, quietly pulling the door closed behind her. She had just slipped her jacket off when Jack suddenly turned. He grabbed her wrist and immediately hauled her up the stairs. Harley made a small squeak of surprise as she stumbled on the stairs behind him struggling to keep her feet under her as he dragged her up the stairs without once looking behind him. Jack didn’t stop to wait for her to make the steps; he hauled her with him taking the steps two at a time, a man on a mission. He continued to drag her behind him, pulling on her wrist as he made his way up the stairs and into their bedroom.

Once they were past the threshold of the room, Jack turned and slammed the door shut. Jack spun her around and practically threw her up against the wood of the door, pressing his body up against hers. Her yelp of surprise was smothered in the next breath by his mouth crashing down on her lips in a bruising kiss. It wasn’t a gentle kiss, but rather one of desperation, born of a need for closeness. Harley knew exactly what was wrong. He felt abandoned, feared that maybe his brother was right. Doubt made him desperate to know that she really did love him, that she was here for him. Harley whimpered back in response, kissing him with just as much desperation, wanting him to know he wasn’t alone, that she did love him, more than life, more than she could tell him, that everything Bruce had said to him was a lie.

She started to grab a hold of him, to wrap her arms around him, but Jack grabbed her hands by the wrists and lifted her arms up, pinning them over her head. He continued to abuse her mouth, kissing her hard, desperately. Harley responded in kind, her mouth moving over his, her tongue sliding along Jack’s with just as much desperate need as his tongue. His grip on his wrists was almost painful. She could tell he was probably going to leave bruises, her fingers were tingling with numbness, but she didn’t fight his grip.

He held her tight for a few moments. She could feel a tremor in his body that very slowly began to ease, his kisses becoming more tender than hurting. Gradually, he eased his hold on her. His hands released her wrists and glided up to her hands. The blood immediately rushed back along with feeling in her fingers just as Jack’s fingers slowly laced with hers. Jack’s kisses became more gentle, tender, loving though the underlying desperation was still there; he could feel it in the way he held himself, as if he were struggling not to tremble. He dragged his teeth over her tongue, his lips moved from her mouth to her jaw down to her throat.

Harley moaned softly, her head back against the door, her eyes closed while Jack’s tongue traced the line of her throat. He released her hands, his fingers slowly dragging down her arms. He wrapped his arms around her tight, pulling her up against him, at the same time he bit her throat and sucked, tugging at the silky skin of her neck, making little noises of want, of desperation, soft moans followed by desperate growls. His mouth moved to her ear, his teeth catching her earlobe between the white straight rows, a low growl deep in his throat.

Harley responded by wrapping her arms tightly around him, begging him with her body for more. Jack lifted her up off her feet. He dragged his lips across her cheek back to her mouth where he kissed her once more with barely contained fever of need.

He turned and Harley brought her legs up, wrapping them around him as he carried her to the bed. Holding her with one arm wrapped around her waist, Jack slowly crawled onto the bed and laid her down, but once he had her on the bed his need intensified once more. He reached between them, grabbed the zipper of her dress and yanked it down, nearly tearing it. Once the dress was unzipped Jack grabbed the straps and yanked them off her shoulders.

Harley gasped. His fingernails dragged across her skin as he scooted down her body, taking the dress
with him. He yanked the dress down her legs. Harley tried to help by lifting her legs, but Jack moved too quickly, ripping the dress the rest of the way off of her and threw it behind him. She heard it hit the door.

Harley made a small noise, now wearing only her bra, panties, fishnets and boots, but Jack ignored her for the moment. He crawled backwards off the bed; standing he lifted one of her legs and yanked at the laces of her boot, tearing it off of her and throwing it to the side where it thunked to the floor loudly. He followed that boot with the other.

Once her boots were off, Jack wrapped his fingers around the fishnets she wore and tore, ripping them off of her. The sound of the netting tearing filled the room. Her husband yanked her panties painfully down her legs followed by tearing off her bra.

Harley gasped as she was exposed to the sudden cool air of their room, but she didn’t move to grab a blanket; instead she brought her legs together and her arms up, pressed against her breasts to ward off the chill. Jack stared at her for a half second before he started to work at his own clothing. Harley watched Jack strip out of his clothing. He moved quickly, kicking off his shoes, yanking off his jacket, tearing the buttons of his shirt, stepping out of his pants and kicking things out of his way until he was naked. He crawled quickly back onto the bed and over her. He stopped, a hand on either side of her head, his body raised above her. He stared down at her, his eyes catching the ambient light from the window. The blue glowed eerily for a moment from under his lashes.

“Do you love me?” he asked softly speaking for the first time since they had left Crime Alley. The emotion in it was raw, the pain an open, bleeding wound. Harley realized that he feared that his brother was correct, that she didn’t love him, a dark whisper of doubt. She was going to kill Bruce Wayne if it was the last thing she ever did, kill him for hurting her lover, her friend, her husband that way.

She reached up slowly, almost afraid he would pull away from her. She cupped her hands against his snow white cheeks. “I do. I love you puddin, with all my heart. Only you, ‘til death do us part. I’m yours, always and forever,” she said gently her voice broke with emotion.

He reached up and stroked his hand over her head, gazing at her tenderly.

“I love you,” he whispered. “I loved you from the moment you walked through the door of Wayne Manor, Harley, from the moment I saw you, I knew that I needed you. I loved you.”

“Oh puddin…” Harley said quietly.

Jack kissed her hard again, pressing his body down against hers. Harley wrapped her legs and arms around him, holding him close and taking comfort in feeling his naked body against hers. One hand slid into his hair, her other hand pressing into his back. He made soft breathy noises, his lips gliding down over her chin, his teeth pressing into her flesh as he explored her exposed throat. He pressed his teeth into her flesh, biting down hard, though not enough to break the skin. She gasped arching her head back, dragging her nails up his back leaving bright red marks on his skin.

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Jack rolled off her just enough that his hand could snake down and squeeze her breast, pinching her nipple hard enough that she cried out, a mix of pleasure and pain. He moved his mouth from her throat, leaving a red, bruising mark behind on her collar, once more biting into her skin as if he was torn between hurting her and pleasuring her. She hissed when his teeth pressed down, followed by his sucking on her flesh. At the same time his hand snaked down her torso, stroking along the flat plains of her stomach to her groin. His fingers slid between her folds, searching for her clitoris. His fingers were met with wet heat and he smiled against the top of her breast.
Harley gasped when he touched her, sliding his fingers up and down against her then in a slow agonizing circle, followed by his light pinching of her clitoris. Harley’s yelp was both from shock and pleasure.

Joker grinned and chuckled, his fingers diving into her at the same moment that his mouth found the nipples of her breast. His fingers were demanding, pressing deep into her at the same time he took a bite of her breast, his teeth pressing into her, sucking hard while three of his fingers thrust hard. He reached up with the arm he was leaning on, positioning his hand above her head. He grabbed one of her braided pigtails and wrapped it around his hand and forced her head back. One of Harley’s hands pressed into his back, the other grabbing a handful of the comforter, her body arching off the bed, her legs wide as his fingers thrust harder, his hand ramming up against her until she screamed out with an orgasm.

Joker grinned sliding his wet fingers out of her. He positioned himself on his knees over her, holding one of her legs up, positioning himself before he slid into her slowly. He groaned as her wet warmth enveloped him. He grabbed her other leg, his hands pressing into the softness of her thighs, holding them up and out so she was spread wide in front of him. Joker’s lids were lowered, the blue glowing from under dark lashes. His eyes moved to graze over each red, purpling bite he had left on her porcelain skin, each a brand of his ownership, his possession of her. He pressed his lips together as emotion welled up hot and fast in his chest. He didn’t own her, he thought, but rather she was simply part of him, he belonged to her just as much as she belonged to him. No one was going to take her from him, no one.

He held her legs wide and thrust into her slowly. His eyes moved from her face, down her body to watch as his shaft disappeared into her, slowly pressing in, followed by the slow pull back.

Harley licked her lips gazing back at him. She reached up and dragged her nails down his stomach, pressing hard enough that she left red marks on his ghost white skin.

Joker hissed, arching into the sweet, mild pain, his fingers pressing hard into her thighs. He thrust harder, breathing harder, watching her breasts bounce with each thrust into her.

Harley groaned loudly, caressing his stomach, tightening her muscles around him to hold him tight. She whimpered, arching her body toward him. “Harder puddin.” A smile spread across his face, his perfect teeth shining in the dim light against his red lips. He leaned into her, thrusting harder until Harley and the bed were rocking, the headboard slamming against the wall. She cried out arching as a wave of warmth rolled over her.

“Yes puddin!! Uh...yes...” Harley grabbed his hips, arching her back off the bed with the pleasure of her orgasm.

Jack released her legs and dropped down pressing his body against hers. He leaned on one elbow, his fingers stroking the top of her head at the same time he kissed her, a tender, deeply passionate kiss, his tongue sliding tenderly along hers while his thrusts became slower. He arched his hips upward, moving at a rate that allowed Harley to feel every inch of him.

Jack groaned, his eyes fluttering. “Harley...”

Harley wrapped her legs around the back of his, her hands caressed his shoulders then along his sides, nipping at his lips with her own.

Jack took his time to feel her lips, soft against his, to taste her tongue on his lips. He felt overwhelmed with his emotions, his love for her. He dropped to his elbows, his hand cradling her head as he kept up a rhythm, slow firm thrusts into her.
Harley wrapped herself around him, kissing his lips, his chin until she felt it once more, that warm tickle that built slowly, slowly rising, her body tensing in anticipation until the warm ripple burst like a wave on the shore, washing over her entire being. She cried out, arching into him, desperately wanting to share her orgasm with him, wanting her lover, her husband to feel how he made her feel.

Jack thrust a little harder, faster when he felt the wash of her orgasm over him, the warm liquid sweetness, until a tremor rolled through his body, beginning small then picking up speed until he suddenly released.

“Uhh...Harley...” Jack cried out and Harley caught his cry with her mouth.

They continued to move for a few more moments, riding their shared orgasms until they were both spent. Jack collapsed on top of Harley, but he wrapped her tight in his arms and buried his face against her shoulder.

His voice was muffled against her neck, a warm tickle of breath. “You were all I ever wanted Harley when I saw you that first day... All I’ve ever really wanted in my life was you.”

He kissed her ear. “I tried to change, to be someone else until the day you arrived. You showed me I didn’t have to be someone else, I could be me and still be loved. I know this is who I really am...I found my true self because of you Harls. You rescued me Harley...Because of you…”

He lifted up and looked down at her. “I love you.”

Harley smiled gently, tears at the corners of her eyes rolled down. “I love you puddin. You made me complete...I need you. You saved me too.”

Jack kissed her until all her thoughts were clouded except for the feel and taste of him.

* * *

They laid in bed, Harley with her head resting against his chest, his arm around her shoulders. His long pale fingers stroked slowly down her arm, idly tickling her skin. He spoke softly into the dark room. “I don’t want to do this every time Harley, every time I see him I don’t want him to hurt me anymore. To make me doubt...” His voice dropped. “To scare me. Did I tell you, Bruce always scared me when we were kids, even before our parents murder? He was always so fucking dark, brooding.”

Harley stroked her hand over his hairless chest. “Do you want to leave, to leave Gotham?”

He giggled and squeezed her close. “Never Harley, I never want to leave Gotham.”

Jack’s giggles turned into full laughs. “Oh no, I’ll simply have to think of something else to distance myself from Bruce...from the Bat. But I think I have a very fun idea.”

* * *

Bruce sighed doing his best not to look bored as he glanced out the large windows onto the Gotham evening skyline. The board of directors of Wayne Enterprises were having their annual October cocktail party, but this time with an added celebration since Wayne Enterprises closed on several deals at once in the last week, nice big profitable deals that would make the company billions more this next year. Wayne Enterprises had just become the proud owner of a private energy company here in Gotham that would offer Gothamites a choice of where to buy their electricity. They had also come into ownership of a small robotics company that had made advancements in AI research that Bruce found to be both exciting and interesting, as well as closing on the purchase of a new
passenger train company that had the latest in transportation technology designed by one of the field’s top engineers in the design of bullet trains, Hideo Berger. Getting Hideo Berger had been a major plus. With three such big deals closing, Wayne Enterprises was looking to close the year on a very high note and thus, the cocktail party.

Dick was home, doing homework and waiting until Bruce returned so the two of them could head out on patrol. The young man was still seething after their encounter the other night with Bruce’s brother Jack. Bruce understood how the young man felt…what Jack had done…the Joker, what the Joker had done to Haly was horrible. But underneath that bleached skin and lipstick was Jack…Bruce’s brother and while the Joker was Batman’s enemy, Jack was still Bruce Wayne’s brother…he just wasn’t sure what he was going to do about either of them, Jack or the Joker.

The board of directors had gone all out for this party. A live band was playing some light jazz. Bruce glanced over where the woman playing the piano sat in front of the rest of the band. She was attractive with long black hair, smooth dark skin and great legs. He frowned slightly in thought. He might try and ask her out, Bruce thought to himself. Bruce’s attention moved away from the piano to the rest of the party. There was plenty of a champagne being carried around on trays by the hired wait staff, along with glasses of expensive wine…which he should know was expensive since he had provided it from his own wine cellar, the bottles having been imported from the vineyard he owned in France.

No expense had been spared on the food either. Trays floated around carried by servers, containing bite size portions of Beluga Caviar, light verrine with shrimp, baked brie cheese appetizers, and pate served with baguette crostini, just to name a few that Bruce recognized. As Bruce let his eyes wander over the party, he took note of everyone in attendance. He spotted Molly Mathis, a young woman who had skyrocketed to her position on the board and while she had money from a trust fund, she had proven herself to be a hard worker. She was speaking with Ferris Boyle and Lucius Fox; they seemed to be having an animated conversation. Bruce’s gaze wandered over to the other side of the room. There he saw Roland Daggett deep in conversation with William Earle and just little away from them he could see the Wayne Enterprises newest investors, Troy and Tiffany Randall. Bruce pursed his lips as a wry expression crossed his features, looking at them thinking to himself that Jack would have been thrilled to know the Randells had bought enough stock in the company to earn a place on the board.

As Bruce watched them, he saw Troy’s eyes wandering over a particularly lovely server and Tiffany, who had recently had another breast job and some more surgery on her face, making her look as if natural smiling was not impossible, smacking her husband in the shoulder and leaning in to hiss something. From the look on Troy’s face, Bruce speculated that whatever she had said had something to do with losing his manhood. Bruce smirked then, his attention shifting to the rest of the party. Bruce was dressed in one of his most expensive suits, a Tom Ford charcoal Windsor Base Sharkskin Three-Piece Suit and a pair of leather oxfords, handmade for him while in Italy. He had chosen this suit for tonight as an illustration of wealth, the carefree playboy with expensive taste.

He made his way around the room, grabbing a glass of champagne from one of the waitresses who walked by wearing a pair of tight black slacks and an equally tight shirt. She was blonde with a bright smile and very pretty. When Bruce had grabbed the champagne off her tray before she could walk pass, the young woman had given him a saucy wink and a bright smile, at the same time slipping a piece of paper into his breast pocket.

Bruce had raised an eyebrow in surprise at her, but he turned to watch her walk away, giving her a very obvious up and down examination that anyone watching could see before he slipped out the paper she had given him. Opening it with just his fingers on one hand Bruce looked down. The note read: “Call me,” with a number private before.
Bruce looked back up to see the young waitress watching him with a smile. Bruce winked at her in response and slipped the paper back into his breast pocket.

He turned around and stopped short in shock. Across the room Bruce saw someone he didn’t expect to see again. Selina smiled and held up her glass of champagne. Her hair was styled differently, curling under her ears, the black bangs were swept to the side across her forehead. She was wearing a long black evening dress with a slit up the side that came all the way to her waist. She smiled at him, giving him a wink. Bruce began to move across the room toward her when a crash sounded throughout the room.

All eyes turned toward the front of the room where two oversized large wooden doors had suddenly burst open.

Several men wearing clown masks and dressed in black rushed into the room all armed, a couple of them shooting their weapons into the ceiling, which was followed by a few startled screams as the intruders rushed around the room and began to push everyone back, forcing the guests to the edges.

Bruce hurried backwards along with everyone else. He couldn’t take any action, not yet with so many armed intruders. One of the bigger men shouted. “Everyone back, back against the wall!!”

There was a sound, like a child’s horn being blown and drawing everyone's attention back toward the double doors where a woman cartwheeled into the center of the doorway followed by the sound of tiny chiming bells. She came into the room doing several well executed backflips that were also accompanied by the sound of little chiming of bells. She flipped high and landed with her feet together, threw her arms into the air with a big smile on her snow white face. She was dressed in what Bruce could only think of as some sort of jester or harlequin outfit. Her clothing consisted of a tight fitting black and red top with card diamonds of the opposing color on each side. She wore a jester's collar, the long white ends of which held tiny dangling bells. Over this she wore a long sleeved black and red jacket with long tails that fell down to the back of her knees, the tails also ending in bells. Her long, femininely muscled legs were clad in skin tight black and red leggings that held a red and black diamond pattern, the sides of which had white stitches that ran up the side of her thighs all the way to her hips. The young woman also wore black and red gloves with white ruffles at the wrists; even her shoes Bruce noted, looked like some sort of boot which had bells on them too. Every movement she made chimed. She wore a black mask over her eyes and her white hair was done up in pigtails.

She grinned at everyone, her lips painted a matte black which made the white of her skin that much more noticeable as well as the white of her teeth as she smiled broadly.

Bruce starred, there was something about her that was familiar...

The clown grinned and threw her arms up in the air as she said to the crowd. “And now, for tonight’s entertainment I present to you, THE JOKER!”

She bowed and threw her arms out toward the doorway.

All eyes were riveted to the door as a tall, lean man came strolling in. He wore a tailored black suit, a blood red shirt with a matching pocket square, a dark purple tie and matching purple gloves. He held a walking cane, also dark purple with a gold handle, and a pair of dark purple and red oxfords. His green hair was slicked back and his lips were painted the same shade of red as his tie. “Good evening everyone!” Joker stopped and smiled.

“Now, where can I find Bruce Wayne?”
Before Joker moved further into the room, one of the masked clowns hurried forward and set a device down. The device was small, hexagon shaped, and silver. Then the clown pushed a button on the contraption. What followed was a low hum that rose in sound becoming so high pitched that everyone in the room (excepted the masked people, along with Joker and Harley) gasped and grabbed their ears. Just as suddenly as the sound had risen, it quickly faded away.

Joker grinned, seemingly pleased with the result before he walked further in, tapping his cane against the floor, coming up alongside Harley and put his arm around her waist. With a cheerful smile, he strolled over to the crowd of people. He grinned with delight when they all leaned back from him and Harley; the fear in their eyes made him chuckle. He tossed his cane to one of his masked clowns before he reached out and picked up a glass of a champagne from the tray of a trembling waitress. Joker smiled at the young woman, his eyes filled with humor before he turned and handed the glass to Harley. “There you go my sweet. I’m sure Bruce Wayne has the best champagne money can buy.”

Harley took the glass and Joker leaned close, placing a gentle kiss to the side of her mouth. Harley giggled and blushed with delight.

Joker grinned, picking up a glass for himself.

Joker made a show of tasting the champagne. He held the glass up with a smile. “Ah, now see this is exactly how champagne ought to be served, in a white wine glass instead of a flute. I’m sure all of you knew that of course.” Joker’s eyes roamed over his captive audience as he continued. “You want that so the drink will open. Now, you also want the glass wide like this so that when you put your nose in it to sniff the drink, you get the concentration of aromas. Oh, and remember, don’t move the contents too much, you want to capture the subtle scent of flowers.” Joker demonstrated, smiling as he sniffed the wine. “Ah, citrus, very floral.” He grinned at the audience. “Next you want to tilt the glass for the second sniff...or nose as it is called. Now doing this you’ll catch different aromas.” Joker tilted the glass taking another sniff of the liquid inside. “Ah, very nice. Now to study the color.” He held the wine glass up to the light. “The color can tell you a lot about the flavor, but nothing beats just taking a sip.” Joker took a sip of the champagne and grinned wider. “Ah, from Wayne’s personal cellars...if I'm correct this was made in that vineyard he owns in France. I believe it was a fairly recent purchase too.”

Harley sipped her drink with a soft smile watching Joker as he swallowed the champagne.

“Mmm...not surprising, only the best for a Wayne, am I right?” He looked over the group of people and frowned. “Quiet bunch aren’t you? No one has a comment?”

Everyone was silent.

Joker sighed.

He placed the glass down and stopped to inspect another tray that held hor d'oeuvres. The young man that held the tray was shaking so badly that the tray was shivering.

Joker smiled at him and picked up one of the hor d'oeuvres. He held it up, looking it over before he took a sniff. “Mm...Beluga Caviar. Wow, Wayne Enterprises must have really hit the jackpot on some business deal if Brucie is dishing out Beluga Caviar. Very posh I must say. Wanna try some Harley?”
Joker held the cracker with the tiny round, black eggs toward her.

Harley made a face. “You know I don’t like fish puddin, eew!”

Joker laughed. “I had almost forgotten sweets. I’m so sorry, forgive me?”

Harley giggled leaning in close. “Oh, you know I’ll forgive you anything puddin.’”

Joker leaned in to her, kissing her passionately, his tongue sliding into her mouth. Harley moaned, and her hands moved up to cup his face before sliding along his shoulders. She leaned into him, kissing him deeply while Joker negligently tossed the cracker into the crowd of people. All of them gasped and scrambled away as one to avoid the hor d’oeuvres as if it might explode on impact.

Joker wrapped his arms around Harley, lifting her off her feet as he continued kissing her. His hands ran down her back to her rear which he grabbed, spreading his gloved fingers wide and squeezing. Joker’s mouth moved from her lips to her chin, slowly following the curve of her throat. One hand moved up to cup the back of her head, his other hand moved to her waist to hold her more firmly as Harley leaned back. Joker ran his tongue along the front of her throat to the edge of her collar. He stopped, a low growl vibrating in his throat that only Harley could hear, but he sighed in frustration giving her chin one more peck before he stepped back and took her hand.

Joker returned his attention to the crowd. As his eyes wandered over the terrified people he frowned.

“You all seem nervous. Is it the bleached skin? The green hair? My lack of eyebrows? I’m a little sensitive about that.” He pointed to his brow with his free hand and nodded as if he understood their discomfort. “It was quite the adjustment for me, you might imagine, but let’s not focus on looks shall we? I mean…” Joker motioned to the crowd of hostages. “…you lot aren’t all members of the elite in terms of looks are you? I mean, money can buy you a new face, but can it really make you look better? Clearly, some of you are giving plastics a go, but really…” He shook his head. “Anyway, I’m not here to talk about looks. So, now, where was I?” He snapped his gloved fingers with a loud crack.

“Oh yes, Bruce Wayne. Come out, come out Brucie…where are you? I know you’re here.” Joker stood on his tip toes and looked over the top of everyone’s heads.

* 

At the back of the crowd Bruce snarled silently. He had tried his phone, but it wasn’t working, no service. Nothing. He had noticed a few other people trying their phones as well with similar results. He had also hoped that maybe he could slip out and return as Batman, but Joker wasn’t going to give him that chance. He glanced around looking for some inspiration to help him when he saw Selina again. There were several people between them, but he had a relatively clear view of her. She motioned with her head toward Joker and Harley and mouthed at him.

“What the hell is that?”

Bruce mouthed back. “Explain later.”

That was when he heard the Joker’s gleeful laugh as the crowd around him parted, leaving him exposed.

“There you are! Bruce Wayne, Gotham’s number one billionaire playboy! The Golden Child, the head of Wayne Enterprise and man about town, head of the Wayne family and a handsome devil on top of all of it. Wow.” Joker grinned and shook his head in amazement.
Bruce turned to see Joker and Harley standing at the end of a path made for him by the crowd. Bruce looked around at everyone. All of them stared back at him in fear. No one wanted the Joker’s attention on them and they were willing to sacrifice Bruce if it meant that got them out of here alive. He supposed he couldn’t blame them. Not only was Joker a new unknown element, but none of these people were really Bruce Wayne’s friends. They were all business acquaintances. There were only two people here who…

No sooner had Bruce thought about his friends here than Lucius Fox stepped forward.

“I don’t know who you think you are and what you hope to accomplish here, but leave Bruce Wayne alone. Just tell us what you want.” Lucius was a tall man, brown skinned, his hair was cut close and he had a well trimmed beard and mustache. Lucius wore a simple dark brown suit, tailored, but it was clear the man didn’t have the kind of wealth that most of those in attendance had—or didn’t care to flaunt it.

Joker smiled. “Oh aren’t you adorable! Hey Candy, can you come over here dear and take Mr. Fox over to that end of the room please?”

Fox looked shocked that Joker knew his name as one of the clown masked criminals hurried over. He grabbed Fox by his upper arm, the barrel of his gun pressed against the man’s side and moved him over to the left side of the room.

Joker smiled. “Now, where were we...oh yes. Bruce!! You look good. It’s a pleasure to finally meet you.”

Bruce glared back at him. “What do you want?”

Joker glanced at Harley. “Hmm…what do I want pumpkin?”

Harley shrugged. “To make a statement puddin?”

Joker nodded with pursed lips. “Maybe, maybe…”

He kissed Harley on the cheek releasing her hand and walked slowly over to Bruce. “You know Bruce, you and I, we have so much in common. I used to be just like you...at war with my true nature.” Joker put his arm around Bruce’s shoulders. Bruce shrugged him off, but Joker simply put his arm around his shoulders again and held on firmly, his hand pressing painfully into Bruce’s shoulder making it almost impossible to dislodge him. Bruce was surprised. He had always known that his brother was stronger than his slender frame made him appear, but the grip with which Joker had a hold of him was surprising in its strength; Joker might even be stronger than him, Bruce realized with some discomfort.

Joker forced the billionaire to walk with him over to Harley. She had just danced back several steps doing a round off to a back flip. The soft sound of jingling bells sounded as she followed that with a full turn, a graceful leap and lastly, Harley did one more impressive leap forward, turning when she landed and sliding into the splits.

Joker laugh and hooted, applauding her, his arms coming around to press Bruce close as he clapped his hands.

Joker laughed with delight as he whispered conspiratorially to Bruce. “Can you imagine what she is like in bed?” Joker’s grin widened and he waggled his non-existent eyebrows. “Ooh, lala…” He giggled. He grinned at the frowning Bruce and continued to make his way over to Harley who now stood waiting, a bright smile on her masked face. Joker spoke loud enough that everyone could hear.
“You know Bruce, I think you and I are destined to be best friends. I understand what it's like to be fighting your true nature, to have a darkness inside you.” The smile that Joker gave him was more of a smirk, a smirk just for Bruce. “I know exactly what it’s like to fight that darkness, to fight who you truly are, to live two lives.” Joker’s smiled knowingly as he gazed sideways at Bruce. “You need to truly embrace that dark inner nature, that part of you that’s your true self. And you know what Brucie? I’m going to help you.”

Joker turned around when he came up to Harley, placing Bruce between them. Harley smiled at Bruce, a smile that didn’t quite reach her blue eyes.

Bruce hissed. “You may be right, but I know how to control mine.”

Joker tilted his head grinning at Bruce. “You do, do you? Really? I think you might want to rethink that answer, Brucie my friend.” Joker sighed and patted Bruce on the cheek. “Anyway Brucie, I’ve come to a realization. In order to help you really embrace who you really are...that dark...knight shall we say? I need to transform Gotham. I need to make her into something new and different. To make her into something that your true dark soul can really appreciate. Now, part of that is going to be getting rid of some of the old...baggage that the poor old city has. And I promise, I’ll help with that, but the other part is making Gotham into the dark paradise you need in order to be your true inner self Bruce Wayne. Let’s see how much, how far I’m going to have to take this before you reach the same point I’m at. So...for starters…”

Joker stepped away from Bruce, only for Harley to slip up next to Bruce and press the barrel of a gun against Bruce’s side. She leaned in close and whispered. “Don’t get any fancy ideas Brucie. You’re lucky puddin has plans for you or I would shoot you right now and happily watch you bleed out for what you’ve done to him.”

Bruce glared at her, but he didn’t move or say a word. The look in her clear, blue eyes told him that she would murder him happily.

Joker clapped his hands as he took long steps toward the cowering people. (Selina slipped around to the far side, trying to stay out of the way and out of sight.) Joker walked in front of the crowd, tapping his chin. “Now, let’s see...I think what I’m going to do is a little separation of the Wayne Enterprise upper crust from the rest of you poor unfortunate souls...so...let’s see.” Joker moved into the crowd, inspecting people before he would push them out of the way.

He stopped in front of a man who looked ready to wet himself. “Ah...you are...Ferris Boles…”

Ferris’s eyes widened. “How...how do you know my name?”

Joker grinned. “Let’s just say I’m psychic, shall we? Now…” Joker shoved Boles away from the group and toward a masked clown who moved the frightened man over to stand with Fox.

Joker made his way through the crowd pointing at people and calling them out by name: Molly Mathis, William Earle, Roland Daggett, to name a few, but when Joker came across Troy and Tiffany Randell he stopped short, his eyes going almost comically wide.

“And why on earth are you two fuckfaces here?” Joker took a step back, his hands against his lips as he asked in surprise.

Troy hissed. “We’re stockholders in Wayne Enterprises and we are both on the board of directors, you fucking freak!”

Tiffany hissed and grabbed a hold of Troy’s sleeve. She tugged him hard toward her, trying to pull
her arrogant husband away from Joker who stared at Troy in amusement, a smirk dancing across his red lips.

Her voice was pitched high, threatening to turn hysterical. “Troy! Shut up!”

Troy turned and gave his wife a dirty look while at the same time pulling her hand off of him. “You shut up Tiffany! I know what I’m doing! You don’t let scum like this intimidate you! People like this are the bottom of the barrel! In real life they wouldn’t even be here talking to us, fucking clowns! Who dresses like a goddamn CLOWN! I’m sure that woman…” Now he pointed at Harley who had a hold of Bruce’s upper arm, the barrel of the gun next to his side. “Is just some streetwalking slut and this clown is some druggie with a habit who thinks he’s someone important!”

Joker snickered. “Oh my goodness. Aren’t you just a special toy?” Joker reached out and patted Troy on the chest. Troy yanked away and Joker snickered. “You know Troy, you’re a cunt, you’ve always been a cunt. You’re a cunt now and you’ll always be a cunt and your wife’s a cunt too. But besides being a cunt, you know what your biggest issue is?”

Troy glared at him.

Joker shook his head. “You’re an idiot.”

Joker reached down and opened his jacket. He reached into his inside pocket. Troy and Tiffany tensed but Joker pulled out a package of cigarettes and tapped one out. He held the package out to Troy.

“I don’t smoke cheap cigarettes,” Troy hissed.

Joker blinked and shook his head with a self-mocking grin. “Of course you don’t Troy old man. I’m so sorry I insulted you.”

Joker smiled as he pulled out his lighter and flipped it open, taking a moment to light the cigarette. The crowd held their breath watching him, waiting for something to happen to the man who so brazenly insulted the Joker, but he simply lit the cigarette and flipped the lighter closed, slipping it back into his pocket. Joker took a drag off the cigarette letting the smoke out through his nostrils as he smiled at Troy. Troy glared back at him while Tiffany looked equal parts angry with her husband and scared of Joker.

“You know Troy, since you are such a cunt, I have something I want to show you.” Joker smiled and pulled his jacket open once more.

Everyone tensed again and everyone around the trio moved back as Joker once more pulled something from his inside pocket, but he only pulled out an ink pen.

Joker held the pen up examining the pen as he took another drag off his cigarette. “Now this, this is something new I’ve been working on. I think it has real potential to be fun.”

(While this exchange was happening, Selina moved closer to the back of the crowd. She could still see Bruce, but she didn’t see anything she could do to help him. She had come here tonight thinking to reconnect with him, apologize and maybe...she didn’t know what ‘maybe’ was, but she was certainly hoping to find out. But this was not at all what she had hoped for…)

“This is a new and improved Joker product. One of several lines of products I’m working on.” Joker chuckled. “Who knows, maybe after tonight Wayne Enterprises might want to look into investing into my little device here. It will certainly put a smile on a lot of faces.” Joker grinned as he rolled the pen between his gloved fingers. “Now I know it looks like a simple ink pen, but it is far more than
that!” He spun the pen between his fingers performing a series of finger-passes quickly and elegantly, alternating with a few spins around his thumb so quickly that it was almost hypnotizing. Joker smiled and continued to talk. “This little device holds a secret that will have your friends laughing and is guaranteed to put a smile on that face.” Joker spun the pen one more time before he twirled it with a flourish of his wrist and hit the button at the top; instantly a puff of green gas burst from the pen right into Troy’s face, then Tiffany’s as Joker brought the pen to her face and another puff of green gas burst from the pen.

The crowd of people let out a startled gasp; as one the entire group took a step back from Troy and Tiffany.

Joker smiled taking a step back from the Randells holding his cigarette to his lips between his fingers as he watched them. The couple began to cough which quickly turned into wheezing with a trace of laughter mixed in. Immediately following their loud struggling breaths, both Randells’ skin began to turn pale, not as white and bleached as Joker and Harley’s, but paler than their current spray tanned looks. Their lips brightened, the skin burning a strange shade of red visible even under Tiffany’s lipstick, mixing with the spittle that began to burst from their mouths with each laughing cough, laced with flecks of blood that was beginning to color their lips further. The couple’s breathing became more and more labored. It was clear that Troy and Tiffany couldn’t breathe.

Bruce yanked against Harley, but she kept a firm grip on him. “What did you do to them?!” Bruce snarled.

Joker laughed. “Just watch Brucie!” Joker laughed holding the cigarette between his lips and clapped his hands. “Look at that pumpkin! It worked better than I expected!”

Harley giggled. “Oh puddin! It’s fantastic! Don’t you think it’s fantastic Brucie?”

Bruce only glared at Joker, straining against Harley’s--also surprisingly strong--grip.

Joker chuckled. “Well, now that we know it works like a charm, I just might have to get these little pens on the market. Need a way to lighten up those boring, stuffy meetings? Why not try one of Joker’s pens?” Joker turned to grin at Bruce. “Whaddaya think Brucie? Wanna invest? Joker pens, sure to leave your friends laughing!”

Bruce snarled in response as Joker giggled. “Grumpy aren’t you? Geez Bruce, lighten up!” Joker turned to the crowd smiling, the smoke that floated softly around him created a strange halo in the dim party lights.

“Okay boys and girls, that was fun, BUT let’s finish up here. I plan on getting home early so I can do a little wink wink nudge nudge with the Missus.” Joker winked and made a nudging gesture with his elbow.

“All right, now let’s see.” He looked over the people he had divided from the main body of the party, all members of Wayne Enterprises board of directors Bruce noticed. Joker strolled back and forth in front of the board of directors his lips pursed, tapping his chin. “Mm...I feel like we are missing some people...let’s see...Where is Bob from accounting?”

Joker spun around to look back into the main body of the party. To his surprise the crowd parted to reveal a man in glasses wearing a nice, though not very expensive suit. Joker stopped pacing and looked genuinely surprised as he studied the bespectacled man. “Oh there is one? Wow. Where is Dick from legal?” Joker stood on his toes and looked around the room then giggled. “Oh what I’m I thinking, there’re all sorts of dicks in legal!”
Joker, Harley and all his clowns laughed while the hostages just stared.

Joker frowned. “You really are a tough crowd. Okay well…” He flicked the butt of his cigarette into the crowd–eliciting a startled yelp from a few hostages–and motioned at one of the clowns.

The clown hurried over to Joker. He was carrying not just the AK 47 in his hand, but he had another weapon slung over his shoulder. He lifted the weapon off and handed it to Joker who smiled as he held it. Bruce paled. The weapon was an FN P90.

Joker smiled and petted the weapon as he walked over to Bruce and Harley. “This thing is a real beauty, wouldn’t you agree Brucie?”

Bruce said nothing.

Joker laughed. “This weapon is fantastic. Now granted, Samuel L. Jackson’s character was speaking about an AK 47, but this little baby will do that same thing… “When you absolutely, positively have to kill every motherfucker in the room, accept no substitutes.””

Joker leaned close to Bruce, his voice dropped low so that only Bruce and Harley could hear him. “I wanted us to be brothers, to be friends, but you ruined it Bruce, like you ruin everything. But you know what? That’s okay because now I am going to do everything in my power to bring out the real you...the you behind the mask of Bruce Wayne…” He giggled. “Just like you did for me when you let me go...when you tried to kill me Bruce...when you let me die...or should I say…” He dropped his voice lower still, a hoarse whisper. “Batman.”

Bruce looked angry enough to spit which only made Joker laugh more. “Oh don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone here...no one is going to know but me and my family and we aren’t going to share that tasty little tidbit. Oh no...now where would be the fun in that?” Joker reached up with one hand and grabbed the back of Bruce’s neck forcing him closer until his forehead was resting against Joker’s. Harley kept her hold on Bruce, her gun still pressed hard against his side as she watched Joker, ready to defend him if she needed to, ready to kill Bruce Wayne at the drop of a hat.

Bruce stared into Joker’s eyes. He could see his brother in them, the hurt little boy crying for comfort that Bruce had never given him, now twisted with the man who was before him.

Joker whispered, his fingers kneading his brother’s neck. “Two threads in the same stitch Bruce, bound together, forever by blood.”

Joker continued to speak softly so that only he, Bruce and Harley could hear. “So now I’m going to be your enemy. I’m going to be your best enemy Bruce because no one knows how to press your buttons like I do. No one knows all your little secrets, knows all your faults like me, big brother.” For a moment Bruce saw his little brother smiling back at him. His little brother, small, weaker than him, terrified and asking to be saved. The brother he had failed on so many levels.

Jack smiled. “Be my best enemy Bruce...Batman, be my very best enemy.”

Jack kissed his brother on the lips, pressing hard, holding Bruce there for several seconds before he let him go with a grin and a wink.

When he spoke again, it was loud enough for everyone to hear. “Now Mr. Wayne, I’m going to be nice here and let you save one of these people right here.” Joker pointed to the group of board members he had separated from the rest of the party. “Just one. And you only have a minute to choose, time’s a wastin!”

Harley forced Bruce around the face the group of people that Joker had separated from the main
group of party-goers. All were people Bruce knew, people he had dined with, talked to on both personal and business levels, people he knew had lives, families of their own.

Joker laughed and put one finger in the air which he waved back and forth like a clock.

Joker grinned at Bruce. “Dun Dun Dun Dun, Dun Dun Dun Dun...ta dum dum dum...ta ta ta dun…”

Bruce stared at Joker, then at the terrified members of the Wayne Enterprise board of directors. They weren’t all nice people, but they weren’t all bad people. None of them deserved to die, deserved what Joker had planned, but Bruce was helpless, so he called out the first name that came to mind as his gaze moved swiftly over the people in front of him.

“Lucius Fox!”

Joker grinned. “Lucius Fox it is! Come on down Lucius Fox!”

One of Joker’s clown masked men walked over and grabbed Fox from the group and shoved him back with the other party-goers.

Joker’s smile was wide, his perfect white teeth, red lips and blue eyes looked slightly manic as he hissed. “Well, there ya have it folks!”

Joker unloaded the weapon into the group of directors, taking careful shots to make sure that he killed every one of them. The other hostages screamed as they watched all of those people, every last member of the Wayne Enterprises board of directors shot down. The weapon was deafening in the room, drowning out the sounds of terrified screaming and death cries until the only sound was the sobbing and whimpering of the remaining people.

Joker laughed. “Oh well now, that was far more fun than I thought it would be.”

He leaned close and whispered so only Bruce heard him. “You have no idea how long I’ve been wanting to do that.”

Bruce snarled, his voice low and deadly. “I’m going to bring you to justice Joker.”

Joker giggled. “Oh Brucie...you love to hide behind that word don’t you? Think it will forgive all your sins...well guess what? It doesn’t.” Joker turned and hissed. “Just remember, I can get you anywhere, anytime Bruce...I know you like no one else.” The pale man’s lips curled into a derisive grin as he repeated, “Anywhere, anytime…”

He turned to the rest of the party of now sobbing and terrified people. “Aren’t you all glad you weren't them? I mean I know I am, because brother! The cost in bullets alone would have been staggering. Hehe…” He smiled. “Okay, well this has been fun. The food was great and the drinks were splendid, but as I said, I got things to do with the Missus that shouldn’t be done in front of an audience. Toodles!! Enjoy the rest of your party!” She pushed him toward the others, at the same time yanking the blade out. She felt it catch, scraping against bone, forcing her to pull with more effort. The knife came free and Bruce hit the floor with a pained grunt. Most of the people got out of the way, but Selina couldn’t, she rushed over and dropped to her knees beside him as Harley hurried along with the rest of the clowns for the elevator.

Joker grabbed Harley with a laugh, lifting her off her feet and into his arms.

Harley giggled with delight wrapping her arms and legs around him, both of them turning to wave.

“Bye bye!” Joker and Harley called out together...but they both saw Selina, recognizing her as the
doors shut.

* 

The gang quickly split up after leaving Wayne Tower, all of them disappearing into the night. Joker and Harley headed home as well. They rode on their motorcycle, weaving their way through Gotham, arriving back at the park just as it had begun to rain. They made it inside, wet, but before either of them became drenched.

Jack laughed with delight while facing Harley. “Well, that should make an interesting story on the news.”

Harley smiled untying his tie and dropping it to the floor. “Feel better?”

Jack smiled as he slipped out of his jacket, tossing it across a chair in the corner of their bedroom. “I do so love it when a plan comes together!”

Harley smiled as she worked at the buttons of his shirt, tugging the dress shirt out of his slacks to finish unbuttoning the rest of the buttons before she pulled the shirt over his shoulders.

“I think we deserve a little celebration puddin.” She smiled up at him before she leaned in and kissed the hollow of his throat. Jack closed his eyes enjoying the warm press of her lips while she dragged the shirt down his arms.

Jack reached around, finding the zipper of her jester’s collar, pulled it down and let the collar drop from around her throat. He reached for her shoulder, slowly pulling the back down, the soft sound of jingling bells followed. He smiled at her, reaching forward to gently tug the jacket down her shoulders, letting it fall to the floor.

“I do like celebrating with you,” he murmured. “My sweet harlequin.”

Harley gave him a sweet smile. “I love you puddin.”

Jack reached up and pulled the mask off her eyes. “My girl.” He ran his fingers gently over her hair and very gently tugged her hair down smiling as he watched it fall in thick white waves of snow. He ran his fingers through her hair smiling as he watched it fall like white silk through his fingers.

Harley closed her eyes enjoying the feel of his fingers through her hair. She smiled leaning toward him, her body and soul drawn to him as always. She dragged her fingers down his chest and along his stomach her smile becoming a smirk of pleasure when he twitched. She licked her lips when she reached the top of his slacks and eased the button through the hole, before she grasped the zipper, slowly tugging the zipper down. Her knuckles brushed against the cotton of his boxers feeling the heat of his constrained erection against the back of her fingers. She ran her fingers along his hips, sliding her fingers under the band of his boxers. His skin was smooth, warm, she could feel the places where the boxers had pressed into his skin, leaving impression marks that would fade soon. Her hands gilded along to his back and up along the curve of his spine, her fingertips bracing the bone. She tilted her head up and smiled into his eyes.

Jack stepped out of his shoes before he began to work her top off, sliding his hands under it and pushing up her body, gliding along the flow of her ribs and up, pushing the top up at the same time until he could pull it over her head and off her arms, tossing it away. He dragged his fingers along the top of her breasts, caressing the soft silk of her skin, tracing the upper curve of her each breast.

“Undressing you is like unwrapping my presents at Christmas, only better,” Jack murmured at the same time he reached around her and with quick deft fingers, Jack unlatched her bra. He smirked at
the amused expression on her face as he reached up for the straps and slid them down her arms.

Harley shivered slightly; the room was cool, almost downright cold.

Jack dragged the back of his fingers between her breasts, his gaze taking in the hardneses and deep pink color of her nipples.

His voice was husky as Jack whispered. “Cold sweets?”

“Mm...yes puddin, but you’ll warm me up, won’t you?” Harley teased reaching up to run her fingertip over his lips, stopping briefly on his bottom lip. She caught her tongue between her teeth as she pressed down on his lower lip, pulling the lip down, smearing his lipstick before she continued to drag her finger down over his chin leaving a red mark on his white skin.

She smirked.

Jack purred softly. “I wanna watch you take the rest of your clothes off Harley.”

He took a step away from her. She watched hungrily as he pushed his pants and boxers down his long, lean legs, taking his socks off at the same time before simply stepped out of his clothing. Jack moved over to the bed and sat on the edge, leaning back on his hands. His erection was hard, and she realized, he looked to be throbbing to his heartbeat, awaiting her. She swallowed heavily, her eyes taking in the man she loved, his legs out in front of him, crossed at the ankles, leaning back on his hands, his body long and lean, his penis hard, hot, making her groin ache with a need so intense she wanted to throw him on the bed and ride him into the mattress.

Instead she leaned down and began to untie her boots.

Jack watched her. Like the song by the Police, every move that she made…

Oh can't you see
You belong to me
My poor heart aches
With every step you take…

Harley slipped out of her boots, grinning at her man as she turned around, hooked her thumbs in her leggings and pulled them and her panties down her legs before she slowly stepped out of the legs. She looked over her shoulder, tossing Jack a saucy wink.

Jack grinned in appreciation and let his gaze roam over her, taking in every curve. She turned around slowly weaving her hips back and forth. He smiled broadly in appreciation of his wife’s body, her agility, and her seduction of him.

Harley slowly walked toward him, grace and sensuality in every motion. She moved her hips and legs like a predator stalking her prey, the smile on her lips spread slowly, her eyes seductive, wanting.

Jack grinned as a shiver of anticipation traveled down his spine; his groin ached as he watched her.

She widened her legs over his crossed feet, and dropping her hands onto the mattress on either side of his narrow hips. She licked her lips, gazing at her husband. Her pale skin caught the dim light of the room. Jack thought she looked to be made of moonbeams, her bleached skin seemed to glow
making her into an ethereal creature made of light. Her smile was sweet, soft. She slowly placed a kiss on his chin, followed by the hollow of his throat. She made her way down his chest, taking the time to kiss the middle of his chest, followed by pressing her lips to each nipple.

“Now spread your legs puddin,” Harley purred, her voice deep with desire.

Jack did as he was told, uncrossing his ankles with a grin. Harley slipped down between his legs, dropping to her knees. She gently wrapped one hand around him tilting her head forward very slowly, tenderly to nibble up the side of his erection, sliding her tongue against him at the same time.

Jack groaned deeply, closing his eyes and dropping his head back. A fire began to burn where her lips had touched him, a fire that felt as if it would consume him. The feel of her teeth, the brush of her lips and the slide of her tongue against his shaft pulled at him. Her attentions fed the burn in his groin, causing a quickening sensation that rolled over him, feeling the pleasure, but also pulling at the ache that had spread through his body. He didn’t just want to fuck her, he wanted to hold her, to feel her body pressed against his, to smell her, taste her, to be enveloped in Harley, in all of her. When he felt her roll her tongue slowly over him, exploring the head of his penis, her tongue finding every curve, every spot of sensation, Jack moaned loudly, his body being pulled toward her while a shiver ran up through his core. “Uuhh…Harley…”

Harley smiled when she felt that shiver through her lover. She loved to hear his moans, to feel his body quake because of her, knowing that not only was she making him feel good, but that he trusted her, loved her enough to let himself go with her, to enjoy her attentions, to let her know how much she pleased him.

Harley licked her lips and slowly lowered her mouth down on him until her nose brushed against his groin. She pressed her lips down on him, her tongue snaked back and forth along the underside of his erection before she began to pull her lips up, alternating with the gentle friction of her teeth. Her tongue continued to lather the underside of his penis while she slowly pulled and sucked.

Jack looked down at her, his mouth slightly open, watching her, feeling her, not just the warmth of her lips, the wet, slick feel of her tongue on him; all of that was combined with the brush of her silky soft hair against his thighs, the smile in her eyes when she glanced up at him. Jack thought briefly there was a good chance he would die like this, a sensual overload from his Harley Quinn’s attentions. The thought made him giggle.

Harley looked up when she heard the soft giggle from Jack. He was watching her intently, resting on his elbows, a few locks of his green hair had come loose and now framed his ghostly pale skin and his hypnotic blue eyes. She licked him, smiling.

Jack moaned. “Come to me Harley.”

She smiled kissing the tip of his penis before she stood slowly.

Jack smiled and scooted back further onto the bed and put his arms out. “Come here.”

Harley giggled and crawled on top of him until her face was over his. She smiled and brushed her nose against his. She lowered her hips down to rest on her knees, his erection warm against her stomach.

“You okay puddin?” she asked tenderly as she held herself up on her hands, her white hair falling down around them to create a curtain of deeper seclusion.

Jack reached up and dragged his fingertips down her sides to her hips, tickling her as he did so. She
giggled and wiggled in response.

He wrapped his arms around her and tugged her down on top of him.

Harley dropped to her elbows smiling as she rubbed her nose gently with his, her breasts pressed against his chest, her stomach warm against his as he held her close to him snuggling her. He kissed her gently, tenderly, the kiss drawn out so that they both could enjoy the pleasure of their tongues entwined. After a few long seconds of kissing

Harley, he pulled back just enough to speak, but he didn’t say a word, he just looked up at her, his gaze soft. There were so many emotions behind his blue eyes that Harley reached out to tenderly stroked a thumb under his eye.

“Puddin?” Harley murmured looking into his eyes. “Puddin, are you sure you’re all right?”

“Yes my sweets. I’m fine.” He smiled and kissed the palm of her hand. “You’re my pumpkin--as long as you are always with me I’ll always be fine.”

He wrapped his arms tighter around her, his face buried against her throat. He squeezed and rocked her gently back and forth, his voice muffled.

“I love you so much pumpkin.” Jack voice caressed her skin.

Harley giggled rubbing her nose against his. “I love you too puddin.”

Jack grinned and turned, rolling Harley over onto her back and settled over her, between her legs. Harley squeaked in surprise which quickly turned into a laugh.

He growled softly, teasingly in the back of his throat when he felt the warm, damp heat of her sex against his erection. He didn’t enter her, though he wanted to desperately. Instead, he nibbled her chin. They both laughed as his nibbles made their way down the column of her throat, finding the soft sweet spot that made Harley shiver when his teeth or tongue tickled her skin. He licked and nibbled that area grinning when she laughed and squirmed.

“Ahh! Puddin!! Stop!! That tickles!!” Harley squealed and wiggled in a way that turned him on even more, making his groin throb with need. The way her legs moved against him, the press of her breasts against his chest, but her laugh made him feel like he was home.

Jack stifled her laugh with his mouth against hers, his smile pressed against her smile. He kissed her soft, slow and passionately, wanting to communicate just how much she meant to him with only a kiss.

Harley caressed his hair, feeling the thick green locks between her fingers. She dragged her feet along the back of his calves while her fingers caressed his cheeks, slowly gliding down along his shoulders until she could once more wrap her arms tight around him. He smiled and Harley traced the smile softly with her lips.

“Puddin, I love you so much,” she whispered. “I love you more than anything in this world.”


Harley giggled as he reached down between them, holding himself steady and stroked the head of his erection against her, warm and wet.

Harley moaned, spreading her legs wider inviting him inside her.
Jack rubbed back and forth a few more times, enjoying the tension in their bodies, that moment of need so tight, so hot, that ache was so exquisite that it was intoxicating. Part of him wanted to prolong the tension, the building excitement, but he wanted her badly, wanted her wrapped around him, holding him, tugging...his body thrusting into hers...he held off just a few more seconds, drawing out that moment...

Harley whimpered with need and just a little annoyance because Jack was fooling around, teasing instead of…

Jack plunged into his wife.

Harley gasped, the sound quickly turned into a groan loud and pitched high as the delicious feeling of him inside her, thrusting into her body, rolled over her.

Jack hissed, growling his pleasure as he buried himself into her; Harley’s warm wetness surrounded his shaft and sent shudders rolling through his body. He pushed himself up to his knees, tugging her hips upward with him. Harley smiled, panting and throwing her arms over her head as she gazed up at Jack. He thrust slowly, moving with a sensualness that Harley delighted in as he rolled his hips to slide into and almost out of her, his fingers pressed against her skin. His gaze raked across her body, enjoying the way her breasts moved, soft mounds of sensitive flesh that jiggled just slightly when he rose up on his knees and thrust into her. Jack licked his lips looking down, watching his shaft move in and out of her, glistening with her fluids, her juices covering him. He hissed with pleasure grinding his hips up, using his knees to give him more power, but still keeping the thrusts slow and controlled.

Harley squeezed and pressed her feet against the mattress so she could meet his thrusts with small ones of her own.

Jack reached down and gathered her up so he could kiss her, once more shifting his legs into a sitting position. Harley returned his kiss, at the same time wrapping her legs and arms around him, devouring his mouth, her groans and pants of pleasure muffled against his lips and tongue.

Jack thrust up at the same time that Harley met his thrusts by rolling her hips, pressing her body against him. Harley moaned, leaning back harder into the mattress. She held onto his shoulders and Jack dipped down to caress her breasts with his lips and tongue, pressing her hips down on him, wanting to be as deep into her as he could, to feel their bodies connecting.

Harley smiled at him as she lifted back up, cradling his head in her hands, kissing him tenderly, pouring herself into the kiss just as much as she poured herself into their love making.

She smiled leaning back again and Jack ran a hand between her breasts, marveling at the beauty of her while he thrust into her at the same time.

He lowered her onto her back again, his legs spread wide as he came up on his knees, his arms tight around her as he thrust harder, deeper, pressing her into the mattress.

Harley held on, her nails dragged across his snow white skin leaving bright red marks against the white plains of his back. Her legs were spread wide, her feet off the mattress. Jack grabbed one leg and pressed the limb back as he leaned heavily into her before he released her leg in favor of leaning more firmly on his hands above her. She brought her feet up and pressed her heels against his rear, rocking her body into him, holding him as close as she could, her breath ragged, building slowly, slowly until she felt the heat racing, pooling in her groin.

Jack bit into her shoulder, thrusting harder, just a little faster, his groans muffled against her skin.
Harley gasped as suddenly something broke; she was flooded with sensation, pleasure burst over her putting every nerve ending on alert.

She threw her head back and cried out as she came. “Uuh...puddin...Oh...I love you…”

Jack gasped, continuing to hold her tight against him as if he were afraid of losing her. He thrust just a little more frantically as he raced to his orgasm and he pressed his mouth to hers. Harley held on tight groaning as another orgasm rushed over her.

Jack’s hiss of pleasure dissolved into a deep moan, washing over him as he came hot and fast, his pleasure pulled from him at the same moment Harley’s body tightened around him, her third orgasm bubbling and exploding like bubbles, leaving tickles of sensation across her skin. Their cries of ecstasy mixed together, peaking and fading as they each struggled to catch their breath.

Jack held her tight against him, his face buried in her hair, his cheek against her throat.

Harley gently caressed his back, her fingertips moved gently up and down his spine, then over his shoulders, her legs still wrapped tightly around his waist.

They stayed that way as long as they could, their bodies a tight ball of slowly cooling passion.

Jack gradually pulled out of her, reluctant to leave the warmth of her body. He collapsed on the bed beside her, a goofy grin on his pale face.

Harley laid sprawled beside him for a few seconds, her own goofy grin on her face. Her body felt warm and liquid, her muscles so relaxed she wasn’t sure she could move if she wanted to.

Jack pulled her closer, wrapping an arm around her shoulders.

Harley snuggled up next to him, laid her head on his shoulder, with her arm slipping around his waist. They breathed deeply together, their breath finally easing into a normal rate.

Harley giggled. “That was fantastic.”

Jack grinned, giving her shoulders a squeeze. “That was a pretty decent reward.”

“Decent?” She smacked him lightly on the chest.

Jack chuckled. “Oh I see how it is, gonna beat me now? Hmm...see what I get for fucking your brains out.”

Harley snorted. “Fucking my...oh well if that was what you were going for, you are going to have to do better than that.”

Jack pushed up on one elbow and looked down at her with the most comical affronted expression that Harley began to giggle. “Oh puddin!”

“Don’t you ‘oh puddin’ me!” Jack laughed rolling on top of her and began to blow raspberries against the crook of her neck and shoulders. “Have to do better than that!! HA!” He wiggled down and blew another raspberry between her breasts.

Harley screamed and laughed struggling to buck him off, but Jack refused to move, continuing to blow raspberries against the side of her breasts.

Harley squealed. “Aahh!! Stop!!”
Jack, resting his chin between her breasts, giggled, his voice going deep and sounding for all the world like a carnival hawker. “Never!!! The clown prince of crime will now go for for round two pumpkin! The clown against the harlequin!!! You put out a challenge--well, the challenge has been accepted!! You shall have your brains fucked out tonight until you cannot walk in the morning if it is that last thing the Joker ever does!!”

Jack laughed and began to nibble on her breasts, alternating with tickles and raspberries.

Harley squealed and laughed with delight.

*

A week had gone by since the death of Wayne Enterprises’ board of directors.

The murders had been all over the news with varying reports on the Joker’s involvement. Bruce sat in his office; the floor where the murders had taken place had become an ongoing crime scene making everyone uncomfortable, which had forced Bruce to simply shut down the building, except for security and maintenance, until further notice. He sighed, closing his eyes as he sat behind his desk, a copy of the local paper rested open in front of him. He had been keeping up with the news reports on the story, but clearly eyewitness accounts were faulty, fear and shock making nearly every witness account unreliable as each person wove a story that was slightly different, but all had one thing in common--they were turning Joker into Gotham’s boogieman.

In addition to the murders, Wayne stock had taken an unhealthy plunge. Bruce was certain that the company would survive, but it would definitely be different now...

Bruce turned and stared out over the cityscape of Gotham City. The pale sunlight made everything look fresh and...normal. He sighed again wondering where Joker and Harley were out there, what were they planning next? And where was Selina? She had been gone when the police arrived...he shouldn’t have expected anything less he supposed. Perhaps she would contact him again later once things calmed down.

He could hope at least.

On top of everything else, Bruce Wayne and Lucius Fox were both under federal investigation since he and Lucius Fox were the only surviving members of the board. Bruce rubbed the bridge of his nose. He wasn’t sure how much more he could take. His brother had gone down the rabbit hole and Bruce knew he was beyond bringing back, but something in him just couldn’t quite let go. He had to capture Joker, had to capture Jack and get him to Arkham...it was the only way that his brother could get help. Bruce rubbed both hands over his face thinking to himself...if only Jack had died that night at ACE Chemical...if only...

*

Later that night, in a small pool of light that was surrounded by pitch darkness, Joker sat in a large, purple velvet wing back chair. A simple round wooden table at his elbow held a package of cigarettes, a plastic ashtray and his newly acquired expensive lighter. There was also a crystal decanter of amber colored brandy with three crystal glasses beside it. A golden rust colored floor lamp sat just behind the table and chair, providing the only light in the room.

A thick, round carpet in shades of golden brown and honey yellow lay on the floor where the chair and table sat. Across from the chair where Joker sat, another purple wingback chair currently sat unoccupied.
Joker was dressed in a three piece black suit, the lapels of which were trimmed in dark red. Under the vest and jacket he wore a matching dark, blood red shirt with a tie that was several shades of red darker than the shirt he wore. The tie was threaded with black so that there was a pattern of crisscrossing lines in the tie that could only been seen with close scrutiny. The gloves Joker wore were a perfect match for the tie. The tie had a gold stick pin in it that caught the dim light in the room. Joker also wore a dark red rose in the lapel of his jacket, his lipstick and the rose perfectly matched in color.

His legs were crossed, the ankle of his right leg rested against the knee of his left, the slacks he wore riding up to reveal dark green paisley socks and a pair of red and bordeaux colored brogue shoes with a flower pattern on the captoe.

Joker himself couldn’t quite be seen as the moment as he held a newspaper in front of him, a lazy trail of smoke drifted above the top of the paper. He seemed engrossed in some articles he was reading.

He heard four sets of footsteps coming toward him on the concrete floor. Joker smiled folding the paper and laying it across the table next to him. He grinned when he saw Harley, dressed in a strapless red dress that ended just above her knees. The dress skirt puffed out with a layer of black tulle underneath. She wore black fishnets and a pair of black stilettos with ankle straps that had large bows on them. Her white hair, which still had the pink and blue dye in it, was pulled up in an elegant high ponytail. He grinned watching her walk across the concrete with Oswald Cobblepot beside her. Harley had her arm through Ossie’s, the two of them chatting as they walked into the room. Joker tensed for a moment, his eyes narrowing as jealousy raged white hot through him. He didn’t like Harley touching anyone or for anyone that wasn’t him to touch her. He took a drag on his cigarette letting the burn calm him. He trusted her like he trusted no one else, she was playing a part, his bubbly, airheaded girlfriend...

Oswald, who was clearly flirting with Harley, looked good, thought Joker. He could tell Cobblepot had put on a little weight recently, but he still looked good. Ossie was dressed in a tailored black suit, the jacket with green lapels, a purple vest and green paisley tie. He was leaning heavily on his cane, his limp more noticeable as he moved. Behind Penguin were his two female bodyguards, both women dressed in tight black leather. Joker smirked and wondered if Ossie had to rub both the ladies down with leather polish to keep them shiny. Joker chuckled to himself as he stood up waiting for Harley to escort Penguin closer.

Frost and Jason walked in behind Harley and Oswald looking casual. Joker could see they were both tense, though no one would have noticed but Joker.

Harley smiled beautifully as she stopped at the edge of the carpet. “Oswald, let me formally introduce you to the Joker.”

Joker put his cigarette out and stepped forward with his hand out. “Ah, at last we meet in person.”

Oswald took Joker’s hand, doing a good job of not looking uncomfortable as Joker stared at him with his browless eyes, the intense blue was almost hypnotic. “Ah, a pleasure. Your...lady, said you wanted to speak with me, that perhaps we might be able to benefit one another?” Cobblepot did this best to look confident, but Joker could tell the shorter man was uncomfortable.

Joker grinned. “Yes, yes, but first, have a seat. Can I offer you a drink?”

Joker turned and picked up the crystal decanter, wiggling it. “Brandy?”

Penguin sat in the other purple chair, his two guards moving to stand behind him. “That would be
nice, thank you.”

Joker smiled pouring Oswald a drink and handing it to Harley who walked over and handed the drink to Cobblepot. “Thank you my dear.”

Harley grinned at him and walked back to Joker who took his seat having filled the other two glasses with the amber liquid.

Joker crossed his legs again and patted his lap. Harley stepped over, picking up the package of cigarettes and the lighter, taking her seat on Joker’s lap as Joker smiled.

“Now, for business. I believe you are unhappy with your current business arrangement? Are your balls caught in a mobster shaped fist Ossie?”

Cobblepot sipped the brandy, raising a brow in appreciation and taking another sip. He stopped to glare at Joker before he answered a little disturbed by this Joker’s familiarity with him. “Maybe, what are you offering?”

Joker grinned as Harley held the lighter to the cigarette in her mouth. She cupped her hands around the lighter as she lit the cigarette, taking a couple of puffs before she pulled the now lipstick stained cigarette from between her lips and placing it in Joker’s mouth. He grinned at her, taking a drag.

“Thank you pumpkin,” he said in a smooth voice, smoke slowly flowing from between his lips as he spoke before he turned his attention back to Cobblepot.

“You give me information on Falcone’s inner dealings and I will take care of Falcone. You get the fight club all to yourself, no partner.” Joker grinned, smoke flowing slowly from his nostrils like a dragon. Joker giggled. “Oh Pengie!! Chaos! I get chaos!”

Harley and Joker laughed together. Joker grinned. “Oh, come on now Ossie. I’m a man of simple taste. I like dynamite, gunpowder, gasoline, poisonous gases, explosions, and sexy women named Harley.”

Harley giggled.

Joker smiled taking a drag on his cigarette. “I just want to remove Falcone and you benefit, nothing more complicated than that...all I need from you is information.”

Joker leaned back, his arm sliding around Harley and her arm around Joker’s shoulders as he leaned on his elbow, the cigarette dangling behind his fingers. Joker lifted a hairless brow, smoke drifting around him and his girl.

Oswald got the impression that he was about to make a deal with the devil himself…

*

Professor Irving (he name Crane had chosen to live his new life under and also a little literary joke he found amusing) frowned as he turned from the chalkboard where he had been writing notes while he lectured, to look out at his class. He sighed, dusting off his red and black plaid suit glancing down at the wad of paper that lay on the floor at his feet.

Several of his college age students snickered behind their hands. Others had the good sense to look upset. One or two young ladies whom Crane knew had a sort of crush on him, looked disgusted. Crane picked up the paper and unfolded it to read the note on the inside that read: You’re a turd-like fascist brainless pencil-necked conceited smelly-assed bastard.
Crane sighed and tossed the note into the trash can next to his desk.

“If you are quite done,” he said to his students. The handful of young women who were enamoured with their professor made a point of drawing his attention to a particular set of students.

Crane followed the young women’s intense gaze and saw several male students, all snickering together, each one a member of Delta Sigma Alpha, but the main three, Eric Lydecker, Gunther Charles and Adam West were the head of the fraternity, the instigators, the class clowns and the all around pains in Crane’s side. Crane frowned at them, but said nothing; there was nothing he could do. These three young men were protected by the fact that their fathers were all wealthy men, who supported the university with large donations. Those three men were untouchable.

He turned back to the board when another paper hit his back. Crane narrowed his eyes, his jaw tensing, but this time he did not bend down to pick up the paper.

He smirked. Perhaps, it would be a good night to test his new formula.

*  

It was Friday night and the Delta Sigma Alpha was having their annual Oktoberfest fraternity party. Everyone was supposed to come in costume. The fraternity house was decorated for the holiday season with pumpkins, ghosts, orange lights and anything else they could nail or tape to the house that was related to Halloween. The music was playing loudly; Russ “The Flute Song” was playing so loudly that the entire block could hear the rapper as more cars pulled up.

Adam, dressed as Julius Caesar and standing on a picnic table outside on the front lawn, was directing Eric, who was dressed as a cowboy, and Gunther was had decided to come as Batman, as they brought in the fourth keg.

“Come on you two, stop acting like a bunch of girls! Lift!!”

Eric yelled back. “You know Adam, you aren’t really Caesar, so shut the fuck up!”

Adam laughed. “Stopped being such a wuss. Hey Missy!! Love the outfit!”

A young woman in a very short toga danced by and winked at him. Adam laughed before he turned back to his friends. “Is that the last one?”

Gunther nodded. “Yeah, George and Ed are bringing some wine coolers and Maggie is making mixed drinks in the kitchen.”

Adam jumped down. “Anybody bring the bongs?”

Eric frowned. “I thought that was your job?”

That was when someone tapped Gunther on the shoulder. The young man turned and jumped a foot when he turned around a saw a tall slender man dressed like a scarecrow. The guy’s mask was the scariest shit he had ever seen, burlap with a stitched up mouth, the eyes behind the mask were wide and brown.

“Fuck man!! You’re lucky I didn’t deck you!” Gunther snarled.

Eric laughed. “You are such a fucking wimp Gunther. Hey, is that Joe?”

The scarecrow didn’t say a thing, but he held up a ten inch beaker bong and a bag of weed. Eric
grinned. “Fuck yeah! That is what I’m talking about!”

He hurried over and took the bong and bag from the scarecrow and put his arm around the tall man’s shoulders. “Come on buddy, it’s time to party!”

*

The next morning a statement was released to the local news.

One of the morning news anchors, Linda Park, looked at the screen with a solemn expression as she reported.

“Two students, Adam West and Gunther Charles have died of unknown causes at a fraternity party at the Delta Sigma Alpha house. Another ten students have been hospitalized with extreme fear reactions that were accompanied by hallucinations. None of the students affected by what the police are thinking was a bad reaction to some tainted party drugs were coherent as of this report, but the Gotham City Police Commissioner James Gordon had released a statement in the hopes that someone with information would come forward.

“One student, Eric Lydecker, son of renowned ornithologist Armand Lydecker, claimed to have been given a message by a masked man calling himself the Scarecrow.

Lydecker was noted as saying--and I am told this is a direct quote:

“Harleen, You are my obsession
You are what I need, I desire.
There is something about you
Of which, I shall never tire.
I will find you again…”
Several nights later, Bane made his way toward the parking lot outside of the fight club with his mask stuffed in the pocket of his jacket and Viktoria on his arm. It had been a decent night; he hadn’t had to kill anyone in the ring, much to the disappointment of the crowd. Tonight didn’t lessen the weight on his shoulders, but it made him feel good when he didn’t have to take a life because some fool decided to get in the ring with him. Viktoria held his hand as they made their way to her car. Bane smiled. She was close enough that he could easily smell her perfume, a blend of orchids and something uniquely her, and it excited him. He sighed happily as they made their way to their car, a Honda Fit, nothing special, but it was a car they had purchased together--so to Bane, that made the little blue vehicle special.

He had never really thought he would fall in love, real love, like this, like what Joker and Harley had, but here he was, in love and thinking about asking Viktoria to marry him. He had a ring picked out and if she said yes, he wanted Joker to be his best man. He smirked to himself. He had a whole wedding planned out. Him, Bane, thinking about weddings. He pushed these thoughts aside for the moment and focused on getting to the car and home to their apartment.

Viktoria, wearing wide leg navy slacks and a loose white blouse under her long navy jacket, looked beautiful Bane mused. Her hair, as usual, was styled just so, simple yet lovely. When they had grown closer she had been so afraid to tell him the truth about her, but it hadn’t made the least little bit of difference to him, who or what she had been before he met her. All that mattered to Bane was right now and right now she was Viktoria October, his doctor and girlfriend.

She smiled, giving his hand a squeeze. “Joker offered to let me work in his lab--did I tell you that?”

Bane smiled. “No you didn’t. How do you feel about that?”

Viktoria frowned faintly in thought. “I think it might be a good idea. Working with him will get us out from under Falcone. And he is extremely smart, the few times we’ve discussed chemicals and my Titan formula, he has proposed some interesting ideas, some modifications. I haven’t seen his lab yet, so I’ll have to wait and make a decision then, but I find it an intriguing offer. And getting away from Falcone...” she let the sentence drop, but Bane knew exactly what she meant. It was what they both wanted.

Bane grinned. “In the meantime, what do you want to eat tonight? I’m starved!”

Viktoria laughed, leaning into Bane, her shoulder bumping his arm. He looked down at her and his heart skipped a beat. She was beautiful, smart, funny, everything he had ever looked for. He was still shocked that their relationship had changed from doctor and test subject to lovers. He grinned laughing lightly with her when suddenly Viktoria’s laughter died off. He frowned in confusion looking down at her, to see her staring ahead. He followed her gaze and saw a dark skinned man in a white suit leaning against their car smoking, the weak yellow streetlight haloed around him and the car, looking like a spotlight designed just to highlight him. The smoke drifted around him lazily as he watched them walk closer.

Bane growled low in his throat. “Stay behind me Vik.”

Viktoria moved behind Bane without a word as they walked closer to their car.

Bane stopped. “So what do you want?”
Tallyman smiled as he took a deep drag on his cigarette. When he spoke, the smoke drifted from
between his lips. “I’m here because I think you know more about Mario Falcone’s disappearance
and death than you have let on. Something just hasn’t set right with me.” Tallyman frowned tilting
his head as he spoke to Bane. “You were at the club where he was taken. I saw what you did on the
tapes and something about all of it just never seemed on the up and up. Mr. Falcone is blind, he
thinks he has you over a barrel, and you make him a lot of money. Money can blind men to a lot of
things, but a man like you--I know you probably have options, and I have this feeling…” Tallyman
pushed himself away from the car and tapped himself in the middle of his chest with two fingers of
his left hand at the same time flicking his cigarette into the darkness. “I have this feeling you know
more than you’re saying…if you are being used, just tell me. But if you are indeed working against
Mr. Falcone, it’s better to just confess now and I will make sure that your death is quick.”

Bane narrowed his eyes. “I told you all I knew the first time we spoke. I can’t help what you
believe.”

Tallyman shrugged. “Sure, sure,” the suited man admitted with a bob of his head. “I could be
completely wrong, but I’ve been in this business long enough to trust my gut and my gut says you
and this Joker have a connection. So, I’ll tell you what: you simply tell me what I need to know and
I’ll say nothing to Falcone. You can just keep on earning your keep and your cute little doctor can
keep you supplied with your drug until she figures out a way to give you more control. She can also
help Falcone get the drug ready for street use, or, I can simply beat the information out of you, give
you over to Falcone and let him finish the job in any fashion he sees fit. And if I understand him, that
could be very painful--for you both.”

Bane felt his anger rising and snarled. “I ain’t answering any more of your questions you chalado--
now get out of my way. I’ve had a long night.”

Bane began to reach past the other toward the car door, but Tallyman grabbed his wrist. “This would
go a lot easier if you would just give me honest answers to my questions.”

Bane tried to yank his arm back, but while Tallyman was much slimmer and was less muscular than
Bane, he showed surprising strength, holding onto Bane’s wrist. Bane reached behind him and
touched the place on his back that activated the device that supplied him with Titan. (He knew that it
was a bad idea since he had been high on Titan all evening, quickly approaching his limit. He hadn’t
allowed himself to overdo it, raging out of control on a severe Titan high, but at this moment, he was
on the edge. He could go over and and lose control, or he could OD…each time he came close to
overdosing, Bane had suffered chest pains. He didn’t want to find out what happened if he pushed
himself beyond what he had previously experienced. If he upset the delicate balance he and Viktoria
had been working toward…) At the same time that he activated his Titan regulator, he shoved
Viktoria back from him as he suddenly grew in size. Tallyman narrowed his eyes, but Bane moved
quickly yanking his arm up pulling Tallyman off his feet just before he slammed his fist into
Tallyman’s chest. The impact was enough to break Tallyman’s grip on him and send the smaller man
tumbling backwards, head over feet, but the man broke the fall, hopping to his feet with an amazing
display of agility.

Bane snarled through clenched teeth, turning to face the smaller man. “Leave now and I won't tear
your arms from your pitiful body!”

Tallyman smiled with a little roll of his shoulders. “All right, well I guess you want to do this the
difficult way.”

Tallyman shrugged out of his jacket.

Bane hissed at Viktoria. “Get the car started.”
She nodded and without a word, she rushed around to the driver’s side of her car.

Tallyman rushed forward. Bane threw his fists with a quick one-two punch. Tallyman weaved extremely quickly before dropping onto his right hand and swung his legs up, kicking Bane across the face before he dropped back to his feet. Once Tallyman was on his feet, Bane’s hand snapped out, grabbing the smaller man by his shoulder and yanked the man closer. Once Bane had his opponent close enough, he switched his grip to the back of Tallyman’s head, forcing the man to bend, while at the same time holding him, preventing Tallyman from moving away from him. Bane brought his knee up to slam his knee cap hard into Tallyman’s side, followed by a quick thrust of his hip into Tallyman’s stomach. Bane was rewarded with a breathless sound of pain from the shorter man on impact.

Bane kept his grip on Tallyman, kneeling the other man once more, but Tallyman, his head caught in Bane’s grip kicked Bane in the ankles hard enough to throw the big man off balance. Tallyman twisted his head out of Bane’s grip and once more dropped to one hand and swung his legs up, kicking Bane across the face a second time. The big man stumbled back a couple of steps, then backed up a few more steps. Tallyman turned and swiftly did a quick series of somersaults coming in close to Bane before he threw a couple punches that Bane easily blocked.

Bane was impressed despite the situation; the man was moving far more swiftly than he had ever seen anyone move except maybe Harley Quinn, but that was all he had, each punch that Tallyman threw held only slightly above average strength and as pumped up as Bane was with Titan, he felt virtually nothing. But Bane knew he was only running on fumes, despite the drug. He had been fighting all evening, he was weakened and needed food and rest. It would only take one wrong move on his part to give Tallyman the edge the man needed to possibly win this fight. Bane cursed to himself. If this had happened at any other time during the day, he would have won easily, but right now, strung out on the drug from over use over the course of the day, tired and hungry, Tallyman had the advantage and would soon realize that. Bane either needed to end this quickly or run.

No sooner had Bane come to this conclusion than Tallyman surprised him. The man rushed Bane, slamming his shoulder hard into Bane’s diaphragm. The pain from the actual hit wasn’t that bad, but combined with Bane’s over use of the drug today, the strike sent a twist of pain through his chest and heart. Bane gasped, taking a step back, but at the same time he lashed out with a kick. Combined with the drug and Bane’s building rage gave the kick a great deal of power. The strike sent Tallyman flying backward, his hip clipping the car and his back slamming into the brick wall near the car.

Inside the car, Viktoria cried out in surprise as the entire vehicle rocked with the impact.

Tallyman, surprisingly, picked himself up and came rushing toward Bane again. The impact with the car and wall seemed to have done nothing to phase the man.

Bane cursed as he raced forward to try to grab the man. “Fuck!”

Tallyman dropped to one hand, twisted his hips to bring up both feet and slammed them into Bane’s stomach knocking the big man back several steps. Bane took the hit, kept moving and shifting to the side, leading Tallyman away from the car, trying to put some distance between him and Tallyman, but the man rolled, doing a sort of sideways somersault at lightning speed, hopping up in front of Bane. Bane threw a punch, but Tallyman dropped down to his right hand, throwing his legs up and hooked his legs around Bane’s arm, locking tight around the muscled limb. Tallyman then flipped himself backwards, taking Bane with him, both men crashing to the asphalt.

Bane gasped for air as the impact with the ground knocked the air from his lungs. Tallyman grabbed Bane’s fist which was trapped between his thighs and pulled back with all his strength struggling to break Bane’s wrist. Bane surprised the smaller man when, in a feat of agility Tallyman didn’t think
the bigger man had, Bane brought his left leg up and kicked Tallyman in the side of the head hard enough to break the man’s hold on him. Both Bane and Tallyman rolled to their feet, taking several steps back from each other. Tallyman narrowed his eyes, blinked away the daze that his opponent’s strike had left him with, and took a step toward Bane when suddenly Viktoria--her car screeching as she slammed on the gas and sent the car barreling backwards--rammed into Tallyman. The impact dented the little car, but it also sent Tallyman flying through the air to crash onto the parking lot asphalt.

Viktoria had her window down and yelled on the verge of panic. “Bane!! Get in!! NOW!”

Bane didn’t hesitate, he raced over, yanked the door open and shoved himself into the car. It was difficult with his size nearly doubled as it was, his shoulders and head scraping across the metal of the car, burning as skin was ripped away as he forced himself inside. He had barely gotten himself into the seat, the door still hanging open when Viktoria spun the car around, her hands moving quickly as she spun the steering wheel and hit the gas, once more sending the small vehicle hurtling forward and out of the parking lot.

Tallyman stepped out of the shadows panting as he watched the car disappear into the night. He narrowed his eyes in frustration.

*

Warm, dim yellow lights chased back the darkness under the non-functioning roller coaster. Jack walked slowly around the bright green croquet ball which was right next to Harley’s red ball, chewing on his bottom lip in concentration, his mallet on his shoulder as he studied the ball. His blue eyes drifted from his ball to Harley’s ball and the wickets, his browless eyes narrowed slightly. He was still wearing his bright blue and black checked slacks, purple and green striped socks, suspenders and dress shirt. His tie, vest, dress shoes and jacket lay in a pile next to another pile with Harley’s shoes, her leggings, her panties, hair ties and her jacket. She still had on her skirt, top and bra, but she wasn’t doing well at strip croquet. Jack wasn’t just winning, he was dominating and she was pretty sure the only reason she had managed to win his jacket, tie, vest and shoes was because he let her.

Jerk, she thought with an affectionate smile.

Harley wasn’t sure how yet, but she knew was going to be forced to resort to cheating in order to win.

Jack walked slowly around then stopped in front of the brightly colored green ball, placing his foot on his ball. Harley knew exactly what was going to happen.

Jack grinned at her and winked. He was definitely being obnoxious she thought, and then he hit his ball with the mallet. The smart smack of the mallet struck his stationary ball and set Harley’s ball flying across the croquet field they had set up, rolling to the edge of the gaming field and stopping at an odd angle to the wicket, thus making it difficult when her turn came up to hit her ball through the wicket.

Harley muttered, “Damn it.”

Jack laughed. “Mm...I think that deserves your top Miss Quinn.”

Harley stuck her tongue out at him as she pulled off the red t-shirt she had been wearing and tossed it to him. “I think you’re cheating on the scoring puddin.”
Jack laughed catching the shirt out of the air. “Don’t be such a sore loser sweets!”

Harley gave him the finger as she stomped over to her ball, leaving Jack laughing at her. She had to search for a couple of seconds, her ball having rolled past the circle of light instead of staying in its position by the wicket. She had to bend over and look with squinted eyes until she saw it, under a scraggly looking bush. She nudged the ball out just a little with her toe, glancing over at Jack.

Jack had pulled his phone out, resting his mallet against his leg and was checking something; his attention seemed to be squarely on the phone. Harley smiled, a sneaky glint in her eyes as she reached down and rolled her ball with just enough force to get it back onto their little field and through one of the wickets.

Jack looked up as Harley giggled and walked back into the light, her mallet on her shoulder, her hips swinging in a manner that Jack found distracting and tremendously sexy. The tightness that had been in his groin since he had watched her shimmy out of her panties early now intensified. He was entranced, gazing at her while she walked over to her ball, her long white hair flowing down her back like a cascade of snow ending in snowcone colors of pink and blue, wearing just the little flouncy skirt she had on, the black lace bra and nothing else. The light danced along the porcelain perfection of her skin, her long lean muscled legs, her cute bare feet, the slope of her breasts cupped by the black lace, hints of white skin showing through the lace in a tantalizing way that had his lips tingling with the thought of brushing his lips across her breasts…

But her little trick hadn’t gone unnoticed.

Jack chuckled and tilted his chin down as he looked at her from under his hairless brow. “You cheated.”

Harley turned to glare at him, her hip cocked to the side, one hand resting on the cocked hip, her mallet still on her shoulder.

“No I didn’t,” Harley maintained with a smile.

Jack tossed his phone casually onto the pile of his clothes as he walked closer, leaving his mallet behind as well. “Oh, and fibbing too? I think some cute little minx is asking to be punished.” Jack’s grin was slow and seductive on his lips. Harley felt a little shiver of delight rush down her spine. She didn’t move as he stepped closer, doing her best not to smile at him when he stopped in front of her. His brilliant blue eyes made her insides turn to butterflies and her heart hammered inside her chest. He was so handsome that sometimes it hurt to look at him, his milk white skin, the lock of green hair that fell loose, begging for her to brush it back, the red of his lips, his smile. He was different now than when they had met, but he was no less fascinating, no less handsome. She wanted nothing more than to push him down and have her way with him, but she enjoyed playing games just as much as Jack did, so she didn’t move, giving him a cocky grin instead.

“Hmm...so what shall the punishment for lying and cheating at the old, sacred game of croquet be?” Jack crossed his arms over his chest and tapped a finger on his chin.

Harley giggled and whispered. “You can’t prove I cheated.”

Jack purred in response. “I don’t need to prove it. In a minute, you my sweets, will admit everything to me.”

He stepped closer, the tip of his nose touching hers, his blue eyes boring into hers, but he hadn’t touched her yet and her body was responding, heat pooling in her groin, her nipples tightening, wanting to be touched by him. She pressed her lips together against the warm brush of his breath,
struggling a little to keep her aloof cockiness in her expression.

Harley dropped her mallet to the grass, her eyes on his, her smile teasing as she whispered. “How are you going to make me do that?”

Jack purred, his voice quiet, warm, seductive. “Like this.”

Jack grabbed her sides, pulling her closer before his fingers began to tickle her.

Harley squealed. “No!”

She tried to pull away, but Jack hooked his leg behind one of hers, tripping her and forcing her backwards. Harley squealed again, but Jack cradled the back of her head, turning the fall into a guide as he forced her down to the ground carefully setting her head down to the grass as he gracefully lowered them both down. Once she was down safely, he straddled her, sitting on her hips and began to tickle her without mercy. Jack lightly caressed behind her ears, along her neck and not quite under her arms. He leaned down at the same time and licked her ear, using the tip of his tongue to tickle her ear lobe with light flicks.

Harley squealed and giggled as she wiggled underneath him, both trying to protect herself from his tickling fingers by squeezing her arms together while at the same time trying to catch his hands. “NO!! This isn’t fair!!”

Jack laughed, continuing to find ticklish spots while Harley, holding onto his hips, tried to buck him off. “No one said anything about fair sweets!”

Harley laughed and squealed. She tried to push up and wiggle out from under him, but Jack tightened his legs around her, keeping her in place.

Jack tickled her sides. “Oh no you don’t missy!! You take your punishment!”

Harley threw her head back laughing so hard, her heels kicking against the grass, that her eyes were beginning to water as she gave up and simply wiggled and jerked back and forth trying to stop him tickling her, but unable to do anything but laugh.

“You’re evil!!” She cried out while laughing hard.

Jack grinned and laughed as well. “Yes I am! Now admit you cheated!”

Harley giggled. “Never!”

Jack laughed, leaning in to blow against her neck followed by a whispered. “Admit it.”

Harley giggled, kicking her legs. “Nooooo!”

Jack nibbled on her neck, his tongue flicked along her ear, his tickling fingers slowed to soft caresses. “Admit it.”

Harley purred. “Nope.”

Jack responded by catching the lobe of her ear with his teeth, tugging lightly which made her giggle. Now that he had started to tickle her, she was ticklish all over!

“I guess I’ll have to make you submit another way.” He brought his hands up from her sides and grabbed the cups of her bra, yanking the lace down over her breasts exposing her nipples to the slightly chilly evening air. Harley made a soft gasp when the air hit her, but that coolness was
quickly replaced by Jack’s mouth, his lips and tongue warm as he covered one of her nipples and sucked deeply.

Jack slid down her body, pushing her legs open so he could nestle between them. He switched breasts, sucking deeply on her other nipple while he reached between them, grabbing her skirt and pulling it up, his hand sliding under her stroke her hip and thigh.

Harley widened her legs, bending her legs to rest her feet on the grass, her hands sliding down over his back, grabbing at his shirt and pulling, tugging at the cloth. Jack released her breast shifting his body up slightly so he could kiss her. Their kisses were passionate, hot, the feel of his lips on hers, his tongue in her mouth sent heat racing through Harley’s body, the chill of the outside air forgotten as the heat of his tongue and his body warmed her. She pulled desperately at his shirt, needing to feel his skin against hers.

Jack sat up on his knees between her legs and his eyes grazed over her. Licking his lips as he looked down at her, spread and waiting for him while he pulled his dress shirt over his head, he tossed it aside before dropping back down to kiss her. His body rocked naturally against hers, though his slacks were still in the way.

Harley moaned softly, her hands tracing the muscles that moved under the ghost pale skin of his arms, her fingers caressing and tracing the line of his sides, the curve of his back. He ground his pelvis against her, the material of his slacks sliding against her sex, making her body ache. She kissed him hard, reaching up to run her fingers through his hair.

Jack’s breathing became ragged with need, his mouth and tongue traced a wet trail down her throat and between her breasts. He moved further, sliding himself down her torso, his lips skating over her porcelain skin, his tongue lapping at the soft planes of her stomach, moving lower. He shoved her skirt out of his way to nip at her belly before dipping down between her legs where he planted a soft, gentle kiss. He sat back for a moment, glancing up to smile at her before he grabbed her leg, setting her heel on his shoulder while he bit and kissed her calf, slowly making his way down to the soft creamy skin of her inner thigh. He slowly rubbed his lips along the sensitive skin, his tongue following in tender licks that ended in gentle, sucking kisses. He moved down further until he came to her sex. He rested her legs over his shoulder and opened his mouth wide.

He kissed her, his tongue snaking slowly over her clitoris and parting her inner lips as he delved deeply, using his tongue to cover as much of her as he could. He wrapped his lips around her sex and sucked tenderly pulling at her with his tongue and lips.

Harley gasped, her fingers sliding into his hair, her body arching with his attentions. His mouth and tongue felt so good against her, the heat of his breath and the gentle sucking a delight.

Jack slid his hands under her rear and lifted her up just a little, opening his mouth wide over her once more, his tongue moving in a slow back and forth motion. Harley gasped and arched her hips, her foot pressing down on his back as the building pressure climbed. Her clitoris felt swollen against his tongue, her breath came faster and faster until she threw her head back with a loud wail of pleasure as she climaxed and her fingers dug into his hair, pulling.

Jack smiled and chuckled, enjoying not just her orgasm, but the sensation of her pulling his hair. He continued to kiss her for a few more moments, alternating with tender sucks on her followed by long, deep licks before he lowered her leg and crawled up her body, grinning like a cat, his smile shimmered with liquid.

Harley giggled reaching for him. She slid her hands along his shoulders then down his back, pushing his slacks and boxers down, her fingers caressing his rear, squeezing as he reached down and
struggled to get out of his pants while at the same time trying to never break contact with her mouth.

She moaned softly when she felt him; his erection was hot, pressed against her, caressing her thigh, the skin warm, satin soft. His shaft teased her opening when she suddenly placed her hands on his shoulders and shoved Jack over.

Jack made a soft sound of surprise, but he rolled without resistance onto his back.

Harley quickly straddled him, holding her short skirt up with one hand while reaching down between them with the other to hold his erection until she could cleave herself on him. Together they gasped as their bodies joined together.

Harley dropped her skirt at the same time that she dropped down to kiss him, her hands on either side of his head, her body rocking back and forth, sliding herself up and down his length. She kissed him with every ounce of passion and love she felt for him as her hair dropped around them, shielding them like a soft curtain of winter, trapping them in a gentle fall of snow.

Jack grinned at her, reaching up to gently caress her face, his smooth fingers traced her cheeks, caressed her jaw and then sweetly, his fingertips caressed her lips.

“My sweet pumpkin,” Jack whispered as his finger traced her bottom lip before gliding down to her chin. “My sweet, sweet girl. You saved me Harley...you saved me from the darkness, the loneliness.” He purred which turned into a groan of pleasure when she moved, pressing down on him, tightening around him, her legs squeezing against his sides. “You are all I ever wanted, Harley.”

“My puddin,” Harley murmured then moaned, biting her bottom lip before she smiled down at him. She rocked back and forth slowly, taking her time to not only feel him inside her, but to enjoy the expression of abandon on Jack’s face. She pushed up, pressing her hands down on his stomach and began to move with more urgency, rocking and thrusting against him, her fingers pressing into his stomach before sliding up to his chest. She arched her back, squeezing him before she reached back behind her to grab his knees continuing to thrust and rock against him.

Jack hissed with pleasure and a warm intensity swept over him. She looked glorious in the pale light that danced over her snow white skin, and her hair brushed tantalizingly against his thighs as she leaned back. He reached up to cup her breasts, brushing his thumbs over her nipples. Her entire body moved in a graceful undulating motion that was driving him crazy, watching the way she slid up and down. Jack hissed again, his hands sliding down her smooth torso, enjoying the soft delicate lines of her body before he grabbed her hips, squeezing. His pale fingers pressing into her soft flesh, holding her down on him while she ground her pelvis against him.

Jack moaned, arching his back. The pleasure was so intense he wasn’t sure how long he could last. At the same time he watched the way her body slid up his erection, the grace of her movements, the light dancing across her skin. She was his: his girl, his lover, the only one in all the world he could trust, love, give himself over to completely, only Harley, only her.

He slid one hand down over her stomach, his fingers dragged along her smooth skin moving lower until his thumb slid over her clitoris. Jack began to rub his thumb over her in slow and agonizing circles. At the same time he thrust his hips upward, continuing to roll his thumb over her.

Harley moaned, thrusting harder, faster. She pushed herself up and dropped down again covering his mouth with hers, panting faster and harder, climbing the mountain of her building releasing, her body rolling in waves over her puddin until she suddenly gasped, her back arching, muscles tightening, her mouth crushed against him, her cry of orgasmic pleasure trapped between their lips.
Jack wrapped his arms around her and pulled her down as he thrust his hips up to meet her, grunting when she came, feeling that warm flood of her orgasm over him, coating him, his shaft slipping in and out of her until his mind seemed to go white, a blank that was quickly filled with overwhelming pleasure as his body released, the bubble of building delightful tension broke like a dam and he was flooded with feeling as he flooded his wife.

Jack groaned heavily against her mouth. Harley wrapped her arms around his head, her fingers tangled in his green hair, her kisses both smothering and full of passionate love for him. Jack held onto her like his life and his soul depended on her.

* *

They were lying on top of a pile of their clothing, still naked, but the chilly air didn’t bother them as Harley laid on her side, Jack curled against her back. He traced his fingers down her arm smiling softly to himself as he caressed her pale skin.

Harley smiled, content when Jack whispered against her ear. “You still didn’t admit to cheating.”

Harley didn’t open her eyes as she giggled. “Oh, I never will.”

Jack was about to turn her onto her back, thinking that she needed to be tortured again when they both heard the sound of the front gate being opened.

Jack was on his feet before Harley had fully processed what had happened.

“Jack?” She looked up pushing herself up to a sitting position.

Jack reached down, grabbing his clothing. “Get dressed sweets--something’s wrong.”

* *

Half an hour later Bane and Viktoria were sitting on the couch in Jack and Harley’s living room, each holding a steaming cup of hot chocolate piled high with whipped cream. Bane had a few bandages on him for a couple of minor cuts and scrapes, a first aid kit lay open on the living room table. He was back to normal size, looking tired and a little strung out. Viktoria sat next to him looking pale. Her usually calm exterior looked cracked. Harley noticed that there was a slight tremble in her hands.

Jack sat in one of the chairs facing Bane and Viktoria, his elbows on his knees, the tips of his fingers mirrored, touching to tips. There was a steaming cup of coco next to him on a small table that he hadn’t touched yet. Harley came back from the kitchen and took a seat on the footstool next to Jack, her own cup of coco in her hands.

“So, Falcone will know for sure you are with me after this.” Jack didn’t ask it as a question, more of a simple statement of fact.

Bane nodded. “I mean, I never answered him directly, but I’m gonna say yes. It won’t take a genius to make that leap, though Falcone might think I am just acting on my own. He knows Viktoria and I aren’t pleased with being shackled under him.” Bane shrugged. “Either way, I can’t see us going back to the club…”

Viktoria spoke softly to Jack. “I can continue my research if you can provide me the equipment…”

Jack nodded, but it was clear his mind was going over details by the far away look in his eyes.
Jack dragged his teeth over his bottom lip in thought as he said quietly. “I need to pull Bea out of there too.”

He pouted. “Oh well, I had plans for the fight club, but I will have to put those off for another time. Right now I think I just might have to put our pawns into play, at least one of them...but first…” Jack smiled. “Penguin gave me some interesting information about Falcone’s holdings in Gotham as well as several events coming up that involve our favorite mafia leader...such as a little party for Gotham’s favorite crooked mayor and the man in the back pocket of Falcone...Mayor Hamilton Hill.”

Joker giggled, “Harley how would you feel about dressing up for a formal dinner?”

Harley giggled grinning at him. “Mm...are you going to wear a tuxedo?”

Joker laughed. “Oh I have something a little different in mind my sweets.”

* *

Carmine took a sip of his old fashion as he leaned against the wall watching the party. The restaurant was owned by the Falcone family, a beautiful classy joint with marble floors, crystal chandeliers and tables with elegant, red tablecloths. Gigi loved it here. It had started as his Uncle Bernardo’s place, a small hole in the wall serving traditional Italian food in the heart of Gotham. His uncle was able to have this place thanks to the work, the fight in his brother, Carmine’s father, Vito and their father before him, Fredo, and Carmine’s great grandfather, Angelo who had arrived in Gotham fresh off the boat and worked his ass off to come up in the mafia, creating a future, a dynasty for his family. That was what Carmine wanted, to leave Gotham to his children, a future, a dynasty.

Carmine took a drink. He felt a tug in his chest at the thought of Gigi. That stupid woman meant more to him than she should. He had people looking for her, including the expensive Tallyman, but there had been nothing so far. He had thought when he had heard about the attack on Wayne Tower that maybe that mad man, the Joker, would turn his focus somewhere else and slip up, giving his people a chance to find her, his lawyer and ex-wife included, but it was as if the Joker had simply snapped his fingers and the three of them had disappeared off the face of the earth, let alone Gotham. The one thing that brought him comfort right now was that none of them had shown up dangling from a street lamp like his son. But, the fact that the Joker had made no demands, asked for no money, nothing...that bothered him. He needed to know what the Joker wanted...every man had something they wanted, something that could be used, leveraged against them, Carmine just needed to find out what the Joker wanted. Carmine took a hard swallow of his drink letting the slow burn of the alcohol comfort him. His daughter Sophia and youngest son Alberto would be arriving in Gotham in the next week, Sophia from business in Star City and Alberto from college in Sapienza University of Rome in Italy. Carmine was bringing them here to help with the family business while the search for Gigi and the others continued, especially Sophia...now that Mario was gone, she needed to be groomed to take over when he was gone. Alberto might be able to go back to school after this business was taken care of, but Carmine figured the boy just might have to consider Gotham University instead.

Carmine had hoped his daughter would be here for tonight's dinner, to meet Mayor Hill and for Hill to meet her, for him to know that there would be no getting out from under the heel of the Falcons, even when Carmine was no longer here. But she had been delayed by her business.

Carmine sighed wishing he could slip out for a cigar to calm his nerves when the lights dimmed. He glanced over to the stage at the back of the restaurant and glanced down at his watch. He frowned. It was later than he thought, guess it was time for the night’s entertainment.

The red velvet curtains slowly parted, the spot light clicked on, bathing the stage in a warm yellow
glow with a focus on a gorgeous grand piano that sat in the middle of the stage, with an old fashioned looking (circa 1940) microphone resting in front and to the side of the piano. Carmine smiled. He had paid good money for the duet of Jonathan Browne and Silver Shannon to perform tonight for this dinner. Browne and Shannon were one of the most popular local bands who specialized in jazz, particular jazz of the 1940’s. Carmine had paid for their services tonight to bring another level of sophistication to the night’s celebration. The stage remained empty except for the piano and the microphone for several long seconds.

The audience began to murmur among themselves.

Carmine frowned.

He had just begun to walk toward the stage when a man walked out. The man was dressed in an all white pinstripe suit with a bright, shiny blue dress shirt, long white tie, and black oxfords with white spats. The man also wore a white fedora and a pair of blue mirrored aviator glasses and matching white leather gloves.

Carmine almost thought the man’s skin was the same color as his suit, but chalked that down to the lights. It was hard to tell what the man looked like as he walked silently across the stage and over to the piano. He took a seat at the piano, unbuttoning his jacket where a hint of white suspenders could be seen against the blue of the shirt. The man then took several quiet moments, adjusting the microphone that was attached to the piano, flexing and cracking his gloved fingers, running his fingers over the keys, demonstrating in those few minutes the he did indeed knew how to play as his fingers moved quickly over the keys performing a section of Cziffra’s Transcendental Etude no. 5.

The man gave himself over to the music, his whole body becoming one with his playing. It really was something to watch Carmine thought, a true musician. Carmine, however, could tell immediately it wasn’t Browne though, the man he had hired. This man was much, much taller than Browne and slimmer, but there was a compact grace to the man’s movements, something that Carmine was familiar with in the way the man had held himself as he had walked onto the stage. He moved like a predator. Carmine dismissed the thought, letting himself enjoy the music. The man at the piano was far more talented than Browne, as the man seamlessly went from from Cziffra into Rachmaninoff’s Sonata No. 2, op. 36, without missing a beat. The man in white threw himself into the piece, his entire body moved to the music as he played.

Carmine shrugged and smiled walking over to the bar to order another drink. This man at the piano was a pleasure to listen to, he really was much better than Browne and as far as Falcone knew, he didn’t have to pay him.

The man finished the entire Rachmaninoff piece, easing gracefully into the next. The man’s body flowed with the music as if the bench he sat on was barely keeping him in place, tapping out a rhythm with his foot, his long fingers dancing across the keys, but this time the strange man leaned into the microphone on the piano and began to sing in a honeyed voice.

“As he came into the window

It was the sound of a crescendo

He came into her apartment

He left the bloodstains on the carpet

She ran underneath the table
He could see she was unable

So she ran into the bedroom

She was struck down, it was her doom…”

*

That was when a beautiful woman walked out onto the stage. She had pale white skin, her hair was snow white as well, dripping pink and blue at the ends. The hair at the sides and top of her head was pulled back while the rest of her white hair fell down her back like a shimmering cascade of snow. She wore a white chiffon spaghetti strap dress with a neckline that dipped all the way to her navel, her smooth porcelain back fully exposed and a slit that run all the way up to her thigh. She wore a pair of silver and jeweled ankle strapped sandals. The dress made it very clear the woman wasn’t wearing a bra or panties. The dress also made clear the woman was wearing a gun strapped to the one exposed sexy thigh, the black and silver of the weapon stood out almost harshly against her skin.

Carmine tensed. He began to put his hand up to draw the attention of his bodyguards when he realized the mistake he had made. There were several people at each of the doors, all wearing clown masks, all heavily armed.

The woman on the stage leaned against the piano, the dress falling open along her shapely leg to show the gun. The audience, unaware of the masked people at the door began to murmur as a ripple of anxiety began to roll over the crowd.

The man at the piano sang.

“You've been hit by

You've been hit by

A smooth criminal…."

This was followed by a laugh that made Falcone’s blood run cold as the man at the piano removed his hat and glasses before he turned to the crowd…

“HAHAHAhahaha!!”

Joker leaned his elbow against the piano, his red lips pulled back in a sinister grin, his browless blue eyes danced. The spotlight show off his milk white skin and made his dark green hair look glossy and unreal.

“Welcome all to the Joker and Harley Quinn show!”
Joker grinned at the crowd turning at the same time to run his fingers over the piano keys. “This next piece is for my girl, Harley Quinn.”

He chuckled and started in on another piece of music. As he played, Joker leaned into the microphone and sang, his voice in perfect pitch, caressing the words as he looked at Harley who leaned close to the keys, her smile only for him. Both of them acted as if the rest of the people in the restaurant were simply not there.

Joker gave at her with a grin and sang.

“Show me, show me, show me how you do that trick
The one that makes me scream she said
The one that makes me laugh she said
Threw her arms around my neck
Show me how you do it and I'll promise you
I'll promise that I'll run away with you, I'll run away with you…”

*  

Harley swooned, staring at Joker with a smile. She walked around him, dragging her fingers along his shoulders as she did so. Joker followed her with his eyes as he continued to sing.

*  

Everyone stared at the at the stage, frozen in place. A few people began to murmur, not sure exactly what was going on, thinking that maybe this was some sort of joke, while others had clearly heard about what had happened at Wayne Tower, the amount of death that had occurred there, or had seen the hijacked television broadcast not long past. A few guests began to panic, turning to head toward the doors only to discover the clowns blocking the exits, each armed with a gun. A few other clowns had mixed with the crowd while the patrons’ attention had been on the stage; each of those clowns were clearly armed as well.

Carmine pushed through the crowd of guests. People reached out grabbing him.

“What’s going on?”

“Who is that?”

“Is this a joke?”

Carmine smiled tightly. “It’s nothing, please just stay calm.”

Falcone repeated this sentence over and over again as he made his way toward his man, Danny Pollard, his head of security for this party. Danny was standing off to the side with a few of his men who he was pointing and directing in hushed voices when Falcone walked up to him. Danny was tall, not quite a head taller than Falcone with the build of someone who had played football in his youth. Falcone struggled not to make a scene, but he grabbed Danny by the lapels of his jacket,
yanking the man toward him so he could hiss into the man’s ear.

“What the fuck is going on? How did he get in here…” Falcone pointed an accusing finger at the stage. Falcone looked around then, realizing that not only were the doors blocked by Joker’s men, but that there weren’t as many of his own men around.

“Where are the others?” Falcone snarled in growing agitation.

Danny was a tall, muscled man with creamy dark skin who looked as if nothing could faze him, but right now the man looked confused and slightly uncomfortable, as if fear was just now beginning to seep under his skin.

He frowned at Falcone and shrugged in clear confusion. “I don’t know sir. There are only five of us in here and that’s including me. I had the rest of the guards stationed outside. None of us reacted to the clowns because we all thought it was part of tonight’s entertainment.” Danny’s voice trailed off as Falcone’s glare turned murderous.

Falcone snarled. “How many guns do we have?”

Danny looked like a little boy who had been caught without his homework. “None sir, with the mayor here and a few civilians, we only have tasers and the few guns we did have, well, those are with the men I had stationed outside.”

Falcone hissed. “Have you tried contacting them?”

Danny nodded. “Radio’s down like I said, but no one's cell phones are working either.” He glanced at the crowd of people and Falcone followed his gaze. He could see that other people were trying their phones, only now beginning to realize that they were cut off, trapped from the outside by the two clowns on the stage. A murmur of panic rolled over the guests.

Joker continued singing, his honeyed voice was almost hypnotic, his gaze never leaving Harley’s.

“You, soft and only, you lost and lonely

You, strange as angels

Dancing in the deepest oceans

Twisting in the water

You're just like a dream

You're just like a dream…”

Joker finished the song with a wide smile while Harley clapped her hands. He grinned and stood up taking a bow even though no one but Harley was clapping. Putting his arm around Harley, Joker walked over to the main microphone.

He tapped it to make sure it was on. A high pitched whine sounded over the sound system followed by Joker speaking into the microphone.

“Good evening, good evening. Thank you so much for having us! Harley and I are here to blow some minds...literally maybe…” He giggled putting a finger to his chin and smiling innocently as he looked heavenward. “I know--so naughty. But seriously folks, we are here just to have a good time.”

He grinned at the crowd of startled looking guests. Joker noticed one man who was pushing himself
to the front of the crowd to stand in front of the stage. Joker lifted a brow in amusement as the man stood defiantly staring up at him.

The man was of average height in a typical black suit and tie. His hair was well coiffed and completely grey. He had a pair of hard grey eyes behind a pair of round glasses. The man glanced at the crowd behind them before he pointed at Joker.

“I demand as Mayor of Gotham, to know what it is that you want? You will not get away with taking hostages. The Gotham Police will be here at any moment to haul you off to jail you...you freak!” Mayor Hill crossed his arms over his chest. “We do not negotiate with terrorists or hostage takers!”

The crowd murmured in a mix of approval and shock at the mayor's boldness.

Joker blinded several times, then exchanged a look with Harley. Harley giggled and shrugged at Joker.

Joker leaned one hand on the microphone as he narrowed his eyes at Mayor Hill.

“You certainly have a big mouth, but...you are a politician in the back pocket of Falcone who we all know...no matter how much he tries to hide behind his respectability, is a mobster, a plain old, criminal, but I suppose you are too Mayor Hill.” Joker’s smile just barely hid the sneer that lurked behind it.

The mayor opened his mouth to protest, but Joker held up his hand.

“Tsk tsk, come now Mayor Hill, don’t treat me like I’m an idiot, or the rest of Gotham for that matter. We all know whose ass you are kissing. BUT lucky for you, you are not who I’m here to see tonight. Harley and I are here for a one night performance just for Mr. Carmine Falcone.”

He put his hand over his eyes and searched the crowd. “Now, come out, come out wherever you are Carmine—don’t be shy.”

Carmine frowned taking a step back. Danny moved to step in front of him.

On the stage Joker sighed dramatically. “Oh come on now, I’m not going to kill you. Geez, no, no. I have far too many plans!! Games to play with you first Carmine, no. Killing you right now would spoil all the good times I have planned ahead for us! Besides, I’ve got to give Batman a chance to play with us too.”

When Falcone still didn’t step up Joker sighed looking at Harley. “Mm, well Mayor Hill, why don’t you join us here on the stage? I’m thinking of performing another song and you could sing along with me! It’ll be fun!”

Mayor Hill took a step back. “I don’t…”

The crowd behind him stepped out of the way, no one came to stand beside the mayor or tried to protect him. Joker grinned and motioned at the mayor.

“Oh now come on Mayor Hill, don’t be such a sour puss!”

A large clown holding an AK-47 and a fanny pack around his waist, stepped up behind Hill and put gloved hand on the mayor’s shoulder. Hill looked stricken, but was smart enough not to struggle, instead he let himself be guided to the stage.
Joker called out. “Someone bring a chair for our honored mayor!”

Another clown grabbed a chair and brought it up onto the stage. The chair was set down near the piano. The clown who had a hand on Hill’s shoulder guided the mayor to the chair, pushing him down on the seat. The clown continued to stand behind the mayor, his hand firmly on the mayor’s shoulder.

Joker laughed. “Now see, that wasn’t so bad. You get to sit here and have the best seat in the house for the show!” The well-dressed clown walked over and gave the man a light pat on his shoulder grinning at him brightly before he turned that same smile out on the crowd. “Now, please make sure our dear Mayor is secure in his seat, we don’t want him falling off his chair.” Joker grinned at the mayor as the clown pulled out some duct tape from the fanny pack at his waist and began to tape the mayor to his seat. Mayor Hill’s protests were cut short as the duct tape went around the politician’s mouth. Joker’s lips widened in a broad smile at the mayor before he turned his attention back to Harley.

Joker wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her up against him. He dipped her back, eliciting a giggle from her just before he pressed his lips to hers. Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders and returned his kiss with vigor. She brought her leg up, the dress falling away as she wrapped her leg around him, revealing the long length of her pale shapely leg around Joker’s waist. He reached down and grabbed her thigh, lifting her leg higher which caused the skirt of her dress to fall further down revealing her hip. They kissed hard, both of them making soft sounds of need that were picked up by the microphone. Harley threaded her hands into the back of his green hair, wrapping her fingers around the thick locks, her mouth demanding more, her tongue caressing his breathlessly while she pressed the back of her heeled sandals against his thigh. Joker growled, the kiss becoming passionate enough that several guests turned away.

After a few more intense seconds of kissing, Joker pulled away from Harley’s mouth reluctantly, bringing her back to her feet. He smiled at her, stroking her lips, his other hand snug around her waist. “Harley my love, why don’t you go and get our special guest while I perform another song.” He turned just enough to motion at another clown in the crowd. This clown grabbed another chair from one of the many restaurant tables in the room and brought it over to the stage; the crowd hastily parted to let him pass.

Harley smiled and caressed Joker’s cheek, her fingers running down to his chin. “Sure thing puddin.”

She turned to walk off the stage, her hips swaying seductively.

Joker grinned watching her go. He looked back at the crowd of hostages as the other clown placed the chair next to Hill who had stopped struggling. The mayor’s eyes were wide in panic.

Joker leaned into the mic. “Isn’t she something folks?”

He placed a hand against his chest and swooned grinning at the audience before he turned and walked back over to the piano. He smiled, cracking his knuckles before running his fingers over the keys improvising for a moment before he began to play.

“Now…” He began to play Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 as he spoke. “I thought now would be a good time to explain why we’re here.” He looked up from the keys to smile at the crowd. “We’re mostly here just to send yet another message. The first one was for Bruce Wayne, but I suppose most of you know about that one, at least I hope you do. I’ll be so disappointed if you didn’t hear about it! I just wanted to let Bruce Wayne know that even with all his money, he isn’t safe. And I had a personal message for him that I could only deliver in person, but that is really private between
the two of us.” Joker’s fingers ran deftly over the keys of the piano. “No, this message is for Carmine Falcone. I just want to let him know that he isn’t the only shark in the water now. That changes are a coming…” Joker smiled, closing his eyes and focusing on the piece of music for a few more seconds before he changed the song into something more contemporary.

“Now, for something a little different.” He winked at the terrified crowd. “This song is an oldie, but goodie. I think you all will enjoy this. This song holds a special place in my heart,” Joker confided to the audience as he leaned close to the piano’s microphone.

“He is a hustler, he's no good at all
He is a loser, he's a bum, bum, bum, bum
He lies, he bluffs, he's unreliable
He is a sucker with a gun, gun, gun, gun
I know you told me I should stay away
I know you said he's just a dog astray
He is a bad boy with a tainted heart
And even I know this ain't smart…”

While Joker was singing, a woman stumbled onto the stage, her arms duct taped to her sides, with another piece secured over her mouth. Her hair was a mess and her face was a tear streaked mess of smeared makeup. She was barefoot, still wearing the dress she had vanished in. She stopped and began yelling behind the duct tape when she saw the audience watching her.

Harley followed behind the woman. She gave the woman an annoyed shoved past Joker toward the empty chair. The woman tried to run for the front of the stage, but Harley grabbed the captive by her hair and yanked her back, nearly pulling the young woman off her feet before the second clown on the stage grabbed the woman by her shoulders and forced her onto the chair where his fellow clown began to duct tape her to the chair.

* 

Falcone took in a startled breath when he saw Gigi on the stage, alive. He began to move toward the stage, but Danny put a hand on his shoulder.

“Sir, are you sure about this?” Danny looked nervous.

Falcone yanked his shoulder away from the security chief. “I’m not going to let a clown intimidate me.”

Danny frowned, then asked in a voice tinged with annoyance. “Sir, is she really worth it?”

Falcone froze for a moment as if the question had startled him. He frowned closing his eyes for a second before he replied.

“No, probably not, but I am not going to let this clown try to scare me in my own restaurant. Gotham belongs to the Falcones. It always has and it always will.”

Danny nodded as Falcone turned and began to push his way to the stage, the young guard following behind. Danny knew that he may only have a taser to use against guns, but he was going to try to
protect his boss any way he could.

*

Joker smiled at Harley as he sang.

“But mama I'm in love with a criminal
And this type of love isn't rational, it's physical
Mama please don't cry, I will be all right
All reason aside I just can't deny, I love the guy…”

Harley came over and sat next to the green haired man on the seat and took over singing, her voice was delicate and sweet next to his more honeyed tones.

“He is a villain by the devil's law
He is a killer just for fun, fun, fun, fun
That man's a snitch and unpredictable
He's got no conscience, he got none, none, none, none…”

Joker laughed bumping her with his shoulder which sent Harley into a fit of giggles.

*

Falcone stopped at the front of the group of guests and yelled. “What do you want Joker?”

Harley glared angrily and pulled her gun, leaning around Joker, her arm pressed along his back, the barrel of her gun on Falcone. She snarled over Joker’s singing.

“Let him finish the song, asshole.”

Falcone stopped, his mouth snapping shut though he glared at her while Joker continued.

Joker chuckled as he continued playing, leaning seductively toward the microphone.

“All I know, should've let go, but no
’Cause he's a bad boy with a tainted heart
And even I know this ain't smart…”

Joker leaned into the instrument, playing it with a fierce passion, letting his body move with the music as he sang the piece to its climax ending the number by adding a few ad-lib alterations to the music. When he was finished he stood up; the clowns throughout the restaurant all clapped.

Harley stood up and walked to the front of the stage, her weapon aimed at the audience.

“Clap!” she yelled.

The audience complied.

Joker giggled and bowed. “Thank you, thank you. Now…”
He turned his gaze on Falcone. “To business.”

He smiled at Falcone and began to pace the stage, projecting his voice as he spoke. “So Falcone—what do I want?” Joker frowned in thought and rubbed his chin. “What do I want? Mm...that’s an interesting question. What do I want?” He turned to look at the crowd. “Do I want money? Nah…” He waved a hand dismissively with a grin on his lips. He put on a little bit of an over the top Russian accent. “Opulence, I has it.”

He and Harley giggled at his joke as he continued. “Mmm...what do I want...this is such an interesting question! It really is!” He stopped and crossed his arms over his chest, tapping his fingers against his arms. “What do I want? Do I want Batman’s head on a spike? Maybe...Do I want Gotham trembling at my feet...could be? Do I want to watch all of Gotham burn? Quite possibly. Do I want revenge? Yes, no, maybe? Maybe I simply want to recreate Gotham in my image, or maybe I simply want to play a long, complicated game of cat and mouse with Batman? Or maybe this is all about Gotham’s soul? Maybe that’s what I want?” He chuckled. “Or maybe I don’t know what I want? Do I really want anything at all?”

Joker picked up his hat and with a elegant twist of his hand, placed it on his head, picking up the sunglasses and slid them into the front pocket of his jacket as he turned to Harley. “What do I want pumpkin?”

Harley giggled. “Me?”

Joker laughed grabbing her around the waist and yanking her close. “That’s so true! I always want you, anytime, anywhere.” He kissed her, wrapping his hands around to grab her rear and squeeze which made Harley giggle. He caught her bottom lip and tugged gently when he began to break the kiss. “Mm...my little murder kitten,” he whispered before he reluctantly released her and turned back to Falcone. He pulled his own gun out with a wide smile.

“You know, I’m a simple man, Carmy. I like simple things, my girl, naked and all over me. Nice clothes, knives, guns, explosions...that sort of thing. I also like getting my way.” Joker laughed. “But who doesn’t? No, no Falcone, there is nothing you have that I can’t simply take. I just thought tonight would be fun, just to let you know that I’ll always be one step ahead of you. I’ll always have the upper hand.”

He shrugged, turning just a little to bring his weapon around to point it against Gigi’s head. “And to show you who really has the power in Gotham.” He stepped closer to Gigi, but his eyes never left Falcone’s gaze. “You know Falcone, I’ve learned that madness is like gravity, all it takes is a little push to drive a sane man crazy...I wonder,” he said with a little tilt of his head to the side. “Is this your little push?”

Joker grinned and pulled the trigger.

Gigi’s eyes had been on Falcone the entire time that Joker was talking. Her eyes widened when Joker turned the weapon on her. She knew that Carmine was not going to save her.

Falcone yelled. “NO!”

The mayor screamed behind his tape as he was splattered with blood, bone and brains. The audience screamed. There was a sudden turn of the crowd as if they forgot that the doors to the restaurant were blocked by Joker’s men. A couple of the men in clown masks fired their weapons up into the ceiling of the restaurant which resulted in more screams.
Joker grabbed the microphone. “Now now, quiet now everyone, quiet down.”

Joker grinned at a stunned Falcone examining his gun. “You know, I thought the safety was on, but I guess I was wrong. Let that be a lesson to you kiddos, always double check to make sure the safety is on.”

Falcone snarled and shouted. “I’m coming for you clown! I will find you and I am going to kill you real slow. I’ll kill your bitch first, make you watch, then I am going to kill you. I’m going to drag it out for days!!”

Joker grinned. “You know Falcone, it’s a funny world we live in.” He tilted his head to the side and giggled. “Well, this has been fun, but I think my girl and I should head on home. Talking about her being naked has gotten me thinking about her being naked.” He snickered. “So, you all enjoy the rest of your evening and remember Falcone dear, I have two more hostages...and who knows where they will show up!”

Joker stepped back and made a “round up” gesture with this hand. All the people wearing clown masks pulled out canisters from which they pulled rings and rolled them across the floor. Bright green gas began to fill the room. Falcone started to rush toward the stage, but the party guests started to panic, screaming and getting his in his way as they tried to find a way out. Their screams swiftly turned into laughing as the gas filled the room so quickly that Falcone was immediately blinded. He began to cough, then laugh. He staggered finally bumping into the stage, but the laughter, he couldn’t stop, his mouth stretched back in a smile so painful that tears came to his eyes and still he couldn’t stop laughing.

Falcone fell to his knees.

*  

It was the next day that Sofia Falcone arrived. Her brother Alberto would still be another day or two. She had heard about the attack last night almost as soon as she had arrived in Gotham. She was both relieved that her father was alive and annoyed that someone, some clown, was making a fool out of the Falcone family. There was a part of her that blamed her father for this...this should not be happening, not to them.

Sofia brushed a hand through her dark hair swallowing down the pain that flared in her chest. She blamed her father for Mario’s death. Not only should their father have protected Mario, but the old man had let Mario indulge in his pleasures to the point that he had become unfit to take over the family when the time came. It was almost as if their father was purposely trying to sabotage the family himself! No one should have been able to take Mario in the first place, but to humiliate the family by leaving his body hanging in the open like that, like a damn...pinata!! It was bad enough her father had allowed that to happen, but to then not turn around and seek instant revenge? He should have put every able body on the case, they should have had that clown, The Joker’s head on a platter by now. This was humiliating and intolerable.

As her heels made a hard click against the polished floor of the airport terminal, Sofia wondered if maybe it was time for fresh blood in Gotham, in the Falcone family...maybe sooner rather than later.

*  

Bruce, dressed in simple brown slacks, his dress shirt untucked and his tie lying across the back of his chair, was at his desk in his apartment that he shared with Dick while Wayne Manor was still being rebuilt. He frowned deeply looking over the police report on his computer that Gordon had sent Batman about the attack on Mayor Hill and Carmine Falcone. Gordon believed that attack was
targeted at the mayor, though the death of Falcone’s girlfriend made Bruce suspect otherwise, especially since she was the only target in a room full of potential victims, many of them high profile, yet the Joker had only killed one person, Falcone’s girlfriend. (Not counting the two dead performers, but Bruce was certain that they were just collateral damage from Joker’s stunt, at least that was what he had gathered from the report details.)

The evidence showed that the young woman had been held captive for several weeks, though there had been no missing person case filed for her. Bruce rubbed a finger over his chin in thought. He should look into missing persons reports to see if anyone else connected to Falcone was unaccounted for. Just because no one had reported the girlfriend missing, didn’t mean that anyone else connected to the mafia leader wouldn’t have made contact with the police in regards to other missing people. He just needed to look, or have Barbara look for him.

Bruce chewed his bottom lip. Other evidence that pointed to Falcone as the intended target of Joker’s little attack was the fact that Falcone had been the target of other violence for some time now. There had been the attacks on some of the weapons and drug business that Bruce knew for a fact were Falcone’s, regardless of the fact there was no evidence drawing a line between Falcone and the sale of guns or drugs in Gotham. Bruce knew there was a connection. Then there had been the death of Panessa and Sal Maroni, both part of Falcone’s operation, but those were before the Joker...and there had been connections between those attacks and the Red Hood, which was still active after the appearance of the Joker. Bruce rubbed his hand across his cheek and wondered if there was a connection between Joker and the Hood. He would have to ask Barbara to gather some information, a timeline perhaps of reported Red Hood activity.

He wasn’t sure what it was that Joker was after by targeting Falcone, perhaps there was no reason behind it at all except to pester the man, but Bruce suspected that the Joker...that his brother...had some reason for the attack, even if Bruce didn’t yet know what that reason was…

Bruce sighed in annoyance. He drafted a quick secure email to Barbara, attaching the files and hit send before he slammed the lid of the laptop down. He felt himself growing agitated as he glanced over at a clock on the wall to check the time. Dick should be on his way home from school soon. Bruce sighed. A good hard work out in the gym would be good for them both, but especially him. Bruce needed to work out some of his aggression; Joker had him on edge.

Joker was so unpredictable, and Bruce could only guess what he would do next and he didn’t like that. The criminals he had deal with so far had been, well, predictable. He knew and understood their motivations, what drove them, but his brother...the Joker, he had no idea why he was focusing on Falcone. He understood why he was after him...Bruce couldn’t really blame him he supposed.

Bruce sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose. He wished he understood...Jack…the Joker...Bruce rubbed his hands down his face with a loud groan when there was a buzz indicating that someone downstairs at the desk needed to speak to him.

Bruce walked over to the intercom and hit the button.

“Wayne here.”

“Sir, I have a Selina Kyle down here. She says she has an appointment with you.”

Bruce’s heart leapt into his throat. Suddenly his mouth was dry. “Ah, yes, send her up Carl.”

“Right away sir.”

A minute later there was a knock at the apartment door. Bruce took a deep breath and reached slowly
for the door and pulled it open.

Selina smiled. “Hey Bruce.”

Selina looked beautiful he thought. She was dressed in long sleeved black dress with a scoop neckline. The full skirt had a color block grey strip that ran along the bottom, black tights and a pair of black boots that came all the way up her thighs. Her short hair was styled in a way that made him immediately think of Audrey Hepburn.

“Selina.” Bruce said her name softly.

She smiled. “Been a little while.”

Bruce nodded. “It has...ah...come in please.”

He stepped aside and Selina entered with a smile. She turned once she was inside. “I’m sorry Bruce, I heard about Jack and Harley. Both of them...” She looked down at her hands as if searching for the words. She knew how much Bruce both loved and...hated his brother. She looked up. “I’m so sorry Bruce...it’s all so tragic, then the explosion that destroyed Wayne Manor...and Alfred left? That’s...that’s a lot of tragedy for one person Bruce. Are you doing all right? It’s just that...that’s a lot to have to deal with Bruce on your own. How are you doing really? And I heard you adopted a young man who had lost his parents as well.”

Selina looked as if she wanted to hug him, but didn’t know if she should. She understood what it was like to lose someone close, to lose a sibling. Further, she didn’t know where she and Bruce stood after their last evening together...when Jack had caught her in the house. Selina frowned, bit her bottom lip, and instead wrapped her arms around herself.

Bruce swallowed. The urge to hug her, to give himself over to mourning the loss of his brother was strong. Even when he had truly thought Jack was dead, he hadn’t mourned, not really, not properly. He had instead wallowed in his guilt more than the loss of his brother. Now, knowing that Jack was in fact alive, but...no longer Jack...no, that wasn’t true either. Jack was buried somewhere inside the Joker and it was his duty, his quest to find a way to not just make amends to his brother, but to bring Jack back from whatever this was that was happening to him, to find a way to separate Jack from Harley and perhaps get Jack on a real road to healing. Maybe? He didn’t know precisely what he wanted to do where Jack was concerned. These questions were simply too big for him to answer right now. Stop Joker, certainly, but then...

He couldn’t say all this to Selina, it didn’t matter how much he wanted to tell her everything. He couldn’t completely trust her, no matter how much his heart wanted him to. Instead Bruce smiled softly. “I’m holding it together. The young man I took under my wing, Richard Grayson has helped. Focusing on his well-being makes dealing with my other...difficulties easier. I’m just glad he wasn’t as that party the other night.” They had both walked further into the luxury apartment as they spoke. Bruce stopped with a motion toward the couch. “Would you like some coffee, tea, water? Feel free to sit, make yourself comfortable.”

Selina smiled. “Thank you, and coffee sounds nice.”

Bruce frowned watching her as she went to the couch and sat. He made his way to the kitchen looking through the cabinets for the coffee, his mind wandering as he let his body fall into the habit of making coffee (something he did all the time now that Alfred was gone). It amazed him how much he wanted to tell her about Jack, about Batman, about everything, to share all of this with someone on the outside of everything. About how he had dropped his brother on purpose, to get rid of the family shame, to wipe off the miasma of Jack’s slowly
building madness. About how he realized he had hated Jack all these years for his weakness, for always needing him to help him, for never being strong enough, for being so god damn weak. His own jealousy over Jack and Harley’s relationship, how he hated Jack for finding someone, while Bruce felt alone--always alone. Part of Bruce felt that Jack didn’t deserve love. He had wanted that chance to pretend…that he was not the one responsible for the death of every member of his company’s board of directors. Joker may have pulled the trigger, but it was him, Bruce, who caused their deaths. Batman had created whatever it was that Jack had become, all because of his own inadequacies and prejudices.

All of that, he wanted to confess it all, but he didn’t. Instead he shoved the intrusive thoughts away and focused on Selina.

“IT’ll take just a few minutes,” he said as he took a seat beside her on the couch, close, but not too close to her, though he was keenly aware of her presence, the aura of her.

“So, what are you doing back in Gotham?” he asked crossing his legs, his arm draped causally over the back of the couch.

Selina tilted her head sideways. “Is that really an important question? What I want to know is how you are. After what happened at that party, I just…” She shook her head. “Who was that madman?”

Bruce dropped his leg and sighed, his arms dropping to rest against his elbows. “Well, I’m under investigation to see if I had any part in what happened. As far as running the company, I’m still the CEO, so the basic functions of the company are still running, though I will be meeting with my lawyers soon to decide the next step. As to who that man was…he’s calling himself The Joker. That’s as much as the police or I know about him. He made some declaration on television, announcing himself to the city. So far he has attacked me and just recently Carmine Falcone, but other than that there had been no real reason given for any of this. I don’t know why he targeted Wayne Enterprises. He made no demands, didn’t take hostages. He just came in and killed the entire board and left. He is also thought to be involved in the murder of Mario Falcone and just recently the murder of Falcone’s long time girlfriend and two musical performers.”

Selina frowned. “Mm...yes I heard about the attack at Falcone’s party for Mayor Hill, though only three people died there.” She rubbed a hand along her thigh as she spoke. “The Joker. I’m assuming that's all you know? No reasons why? Why you? Why Falcone?”

Bruce shook his head without looking at her, his gaze focused on the coffee table in front of him. “No, nothing.”

Selina noticed a slight twitch around Bruce’s eyes along with another at the side of his mouth. It wasn’t much, just a very tiny twitch both times, but it was all she needed to know he wasn’t telling her everything. She frowned wondering what it was that he wasn’t telling her. She didn’t think he was out and out lying to her, but he was withholding information. Though she supposed she couldn’t blame him, she did try to steal from him. Their relationship, what there was of it, was complicated. And Bruce was a CEO of one of the biggest companies in the world; he had to have some secrets.

Bruce stood up. “The coffee should be ready. Do you want sugar? Cream?”

“Two sugars please, and cream.” Selina stood up and followed him.

Bruce stepped into the kitchen and pulled down two cups. Selina looked around impressed. The kitchen could have been its own separate apartment, it was that big.

Bruce set about making the coffee as he spoke. “So what brings you back to Gotham and I guess I
should ask, what you were doing having snuck into my cocktail party.”

Selina leaned against one of the marble countertops. “I was there to see you.”

Bruce gave her a look that indicated he wasn’t sure he believed her. Selina stared back before she finally caved with a small laugh. “I’m here on business that has to do with one of the men that was at your party, a Max Shreck.”

Bruce frowned in thought then made a face. “Oh Max Shreck. Yeah he works in the Wayne Technologies divisions. He has some interesting ideas about a new type of power plant that he has been trying to push through. I’m not sure about it myself, but...” He shrugged.

Selina smiled taking her offered cup of coffee from him as Bruce handed it to her. “Well, I have some unfinished business with him and I thought I might get a chance to talk to him at your party, well, until things turned south.”

Bruce nodded and sipped his coffee. “So, is he the only reason you’re in town?”

Selina smiled, perhaps a bit coy. “You happy to see me Bruce?”

He smiled softly at her. “Yes, yes I am.”

“Even though I was trying to steal from you last time we saw each other, or when I called you last time…left a cryptic message?” Selina frowned softly followed by a soft chuckle. “So, how about we start over? Hi, I’m Selina Kyle and I’m a thief with a heart of gold.”

Bruce chuckled. “Hi Selina, I’m Bruce Wayne, a man with too much money.”

They both laughed.

*

A few more days had passed, a quiet week. There had been no other news of the Joker and the Scarecrow had been quiet as well, but tonight was Halloween and Halloween in Gotham was always interesting.

Jack grinned at himself in the mirror, having just finished applying his lipstick and doing a little spin, admiring his costume for the night. He had on a black top hat, coral red frock coat, a light brown vest with darker brown fleur-de-lis pattern over the form fitting vest that he wore over a white shirt that had white lace dripping from the sleeves along with a white cravat. The knee breeches he wore were white with a very light pinstripe in lighter shade of coral, and a pair of brown knee high boots with buttons running up the sides. He put his arms out and smiled at his wife.

“So what do you think my sweets?”

Harley clapped her hands. “You look divine puddin!”

Jack laughed and bowed. “Thank you my sweetness. Now, let’s get a good look at your costume.”

Harley stood up. She was also dressed as a ring master, but instead of a frock coat she wore a red and black pinstripe bolero jacket with a black and white corset which pushed her breasts up in a way that drew attention immediately toward them. Her costume also had a matching red and black skirt that was short and gathered in the front, but had a long tulle bustle in the back. She wore a garter belt that was visible, holding up the black and white stockings she work and a pair of Victorian style ankle boots and completed the outfit with her own black top hat.
Harley did a spin and stopped with a giggle putting her hands on her hips and cocking them to the side with a wink at Jack. “So how do I look puddin?”

Jack opened his eyes wide in delight and growled. “Good enough to eat my dear.”

He reached out to her, his white gloved hands making grabbing motions.

Harley squealed. “NO! I just got dressed!”

Jack laughed. “Boobies!”

Harley yelped with a giggle and raced down the stairs with Jack in hot pursuit. Waiting for them in their living room was Frost, with his face painted like a sugar skull, but instead of bright colors he was all blacks, whites and greys, and still wearing his regular suit while Agatha, who was also painted like a sugar skull, but with jewels around her eyes wearing bright reds and greens along with large red flowers in her hair. Jack’s aunt had opted for a dark red corset dress, with layers of red lace, but the corset of the dress was painted with the ribs of a skeleton.

Agatha squealed when she saw the two of them rush into the living room Jack nearly tackling Harley from behind as he grabbed her around the waist and lifted her off her feet.

“Oh my GOD, you two look fantastic!” Agatha gasped. “Oh crud, where did I put my phone? I need a picture!”

Harley laughed leaning into Jack as he wrapped his arms around her waist and nibbled at her ear, nearly knocking both their hats off.

Harley giggled as she wiggled in Jack’s embrace. “Thanks Auntie.”

Agatha smiled fluffing out her skirt. “Well, if you two are ready, let’s head to Big Mama’s. Everyone else should already be there.”

Jack kept a hold of Harley from behind as he began to sort of crab walk her toward the door. “Let us go!! Halloween partying awaits!!”

Harley giggled happily. A night of fun was just what everyone needed she thought as Jack hugged her tightly and lifted her up, carrying her out of the house.

*

Across town in the darkness of his apartment, one light glowed softly over Crane as he stood in front of his bedroom mirror, an old full length mirror attached to the back of his bedroom door. He stood in front of the mirror completely naked. The sides of the mirror were plastered with pictures of Harleen, images of her in Arkham, pictures of her in her room, eating breakfast, showering, secret pictures he had taken when he had her at his home. There were pictures he had found of her online, photos from the paper. He had even dug deeply finding pictures of her from college, high school, some photos copied over and over again as the images circled the outer edges of the mirror. He stared at himself as the sounds of Franz Liszt’s Liebestraum played in the background, his eyes darted to one of the pictures of Harleen and he reached out, his fingers caressed the image as he whispered.

“My Lady Crow.”

He smiled closing his eyes and letting the images of his first night as his beloved Scarecrow wash over him. That frat party had been like the first push of a drug in his veins. He had never felt so
energized, so alive except when he had been with her, with Harleen. He was coming for her, and she would be his again. But until then he had a whole night ahead of him. A whole night of tricks.

Crane turned and walked toward the bed where his costume lay, the Scarecrow. He smiled and ran his fingers along the fabric of the outfit before he picked up the material and began to dress.

* 

Gillian James took a sip of her drink as she glared at her husband Aubrey dressed as a fucking pirate dancing with some blonde bitch in a sexy nurse outfit. Not even trying to be subtle, she snarled to herself, the fucking turd. This fucking Halloween party was his idea. He wanted to have a big Halloween party, a party to top all Halloween parties. Well he got that, he got the fucking huge party and spent over a two hundred thousand dollars just to impress the fucking neighbors. There were smoke machines pumping smog all over their god damn lawn and into her living room, there were stupid blow up decorations on her lawn and for 200K (though she suspected it might be closer to a quarter million), there was so much cheap shit in her house it made her ulcers burn. She supposed most of the money went to all the fucking booze and her costume. She was dressed like Marie Antoinette, with the expensive dress and white wig to match.

Gillian narrowed her eyes again watching Aubrey and the blonde as she leaned against the doorway of their front door which was open, pumping music into the evening air. She was waiting for the police to show up, sure that someone was eventually going to call the cops on them because the party had simply grown louder over the course of the evening.

She took another sip of her drink when she saw the scarecrow coming up the walk. She frowned. The costume wasn’t half bad. If she hadn’t been standing here staring out the front door, the bastard might have actually scared her. He walked slowly up the walk, then up the stairs.

Gillian gave him a once over with a smirk on her red lips. “Nice costume,” she offered.

The Scarecrow turned to stare at her. She could see his eyes behind the mask and there was something cold about them Gillian could see. Looking into his eyes was like looking into a dark pit. Gillian shivered, but she was going to be damned if any of her fucking husband’s stupid ass friends were going to scare her.

“Drink and food are that way. Anything else, you are on your own. Any damage you do, you pay for, got it buddy?” Gillian warned and took another sip of her drink.

The Scarecrow smiled and spoke; his voice was surprisingly elegant. “Got it. I do like your smoke machines. May I look at one? I was thinking about getting one next year for my own party.”

Gillian gestured with her head. “There’s one in the living room and another down the hall. Feel free to look, though I’m sure my husband paid way too much for them.”

She could see the smile again behind the stitches of the man’s mask. “Thank you…” he waited tilting his head.

“Gillian. I’m Aubrey’s wife,” Gillian said a little more softly.

The Scarecrow took her hand. Gillian didn’t move allowing him to take her hand. He brought her knuckles up to his mouth. She felt a hint of soft lips between the heavy stitches on the mouth of the mask and the rough burlap.

“Thank you my dear. You are simply divine.”
Gillian blushed. “Well, ah...thank you.” Attention from a masked man was more than what she often got from Aubrey.

The Scarecrow grinned. She could see his teeth behind the mask.

“Tell me my dear Gillian, what are you afraid of?”

*

The next morning, Harley was naked except for wearing one of Jack’s dress shirts with only two buttons done up and a pair of his green and blue striped socks on to keep her feet warm against the coolness of the floor as she made coffee and some toast and jam for her and Jack. Jack was still asleep upstairs. She wanted to surprise him with breakfast in bed. They had a wonderful night last night at Big Mama’s Halloween Party. The club had been decorated in such a fun way with pumpkins, ghosts, and pretty much anything else Big Mama could think of to give the club a real Halloween haunted house feel.

Their entire family had been there. Jason came as Judge Dredd, Trope and Thea had dressed up as the twins from the Shining, and Zsasz had dressed as a mortician. Alex and Alice had been there with Alex dressed as a shark attack victim, dressed in his regular clothing but carrying a surfboard, fake blood on the stump of his arm and a stuffed shark around his neck while Alice was dressed as Violet Beauregarde from Willy Wonka the moment the character was turning into a blueberry. Jack had also invited his friends that had saved him after...the acid. Everyone they cared about. had been there last night, in costume. Even Big Mama had dressed up, wearing a red dress that was so tight Harley had wondered how she breathed in her Jessica Rabbit outfit.

There had been so much food at the party and the drinks! Big Mama had all drinks last night tailored to the holiday with candy corn shots, black widow cocktails to smoking witches heart cocktails. Harley had tried at least one of every drink available.

Harley grinned remembering dancing close to her puddin, his arms around her, his lips against hers. Jack had held onto her like he would never let her go, swaying to the music, singing softly to her in his beautiful voice. It had been such a romantic night. Harley shivered with delight at the memories of last night, especially when they came home. She giggled with pleasure as she walked over to turn the radio on the counter up a little bit. The sounds of Selena Gomez’s voice filled the kitchen while Harley pulled out the butter and jam from the refrigerator. Harley sang along, popping bread into the toaster and digging out a tray from one of the bottom cabinets, upon which she set some cups and saucers before she filled a tea pot with the hot coffee. The song had just finished when she yelped, pulling the toast up, but accidently touching the hot bread with the tips of her fingers when the DJ began to speak.

“There has been a report by the Gotham City Police of another Scarecrow attack. Eyewitness accounts describe a Scarecrow at the home of Aubrey and Gillian James. Aubrey James was one of Gotham’s top corporate lawyers. Last night James was hosting a large Halloween party at which thirteen are confirmed dead, and another thirty people are still hospitalized at this time with four of those in critical condition all suffering from what appears to be drug induced fear, though at this time, no drugs were found in the victims’ systems. As with the last attack, the Scarecrow, as the GCPD are referring to the culprit, left a message for a woman named Harleen. The message was as follows:

To My Lady Crow:

“I told my love I told my love

I told her all my heart
Trembling cold in ghastly fears

Ah she doth depart.”

If you have any information about the Scarecrow or this Lady Crow, please contact the GCPD at this number…”

*

Harley stumbled. She felt a wave of nausea wash over her. Lady Crow...Lady Crow...a sweat broke out over her. It couldn’t be him...it simply couldn’t.

Harley turned as the room around her began to fade, darkness around the edges of her vision. Her chin began to tremble. No...no it couldn’t be him...but Lady Crow… Tears began to fall down her cheeks as she sank to the floor of the kitchen. She felt so weak, scared like a child. Suddenly the shadows were so dark, she could hear the sound of crying, screaming, the sounds, the smells of Arkham Asylum came back in a rush.

Harley began to tremble harder.

*

Jack woke up slowly. His eyes fluttered as he came more fully awake. The bed was colder. He frowned opening his eyes fully only to see a curtain of green, his hair having fallen in front of his eyes. He pushed the hair aside to see that the reason the bed was cold was that Harley wasn’t in it. Jack frowned more deeply. He pushed himself up and looked around the room. No Harley.

Jack glanced toward the bathroom, but the door was open and he heard no sound of running water.

“Harley?” he called out thinking that maybe she was taking a bath, but no one answered him. Jack looked confused as he swung his legs off the bed and rose to his feet, the sheet falling away from his pale, naked body. He walked to the bathroom, but as he had already realized, no Harley. He went ahead and relieved himself, reaching down to grab his bright gold boxers off the floor as he walked past them and headed to the door. He only stopped long enough to hop into the boxers before he opened the door and headed downstairs.

“Harley?” he could smell coffee had been brewing and, as he made his way down the stairs, he heard the sound of the radio playing. His heart started to hammer against his chest as he began to feel that crawling feeling of fear up his spine. Where was his wife?

“Harley?” Jack looked into the living room, but there was no indication that she had been there. He made his way toward the kitchen, the scent of coffee growing stronger along with the sounds of the radio. He could see the tray, with toast lying partly on the plate that set on the tray, no butter or jam on them. Two cups for coffee, a tea pot, but no Harley.

“Harley?” Jack called her name again, trying not to panic. He reached over and turned the radio off looking around the kitchen. That was when he heard the sounds of crying. Not just crying, but muffled sobbing.

Jack tilted his head listening. The sounds seemed to be coming from one of the cabinets. Jack walked over to the large lower cabinet. It took up a large space on one side of the oven, with double doors under the marble counter top, big enough for someone to hide in. The crying was definitely coming from in there. He dropped into a crouch on the balls of his bare feet and grabbed the handles of the two doors. He waited only a fraction of a second before he pulled them slowly open.
Inside was Harley. She had her arms wrapped around her legs, her face buried against her knees.

Jack reached in slowly to stroke her hair. “Harley, pumpkin--what’s wrong?”

Harley sniffled, but she didn’t look up.

Jack’s long pale fingers brushed her shoulder. “Harley, sweets, tell me what’s wrong.”

Harley looked up and Jack’s heart felt like he had been stabbed in the chest. His girl looked scared, her light blue eyes were ringed in red and slightly swollen. She didn’t look simply scared, he realized, she looked terrified.

When she saw Jack, Harley launched herself at him, nearly knocking Jack off his feet. Jack dropped back onto his rear catching her in his arms at the same time. He held his wife tightly as Harley sobbed into his shoulder.

“Oh puddin, puddin, he’s back...he’s back…” Harley choked on her words breaking down into fresh sobs.

“Who’s back sweets? What are you talking about?” Jack shifted so Harley could wrap her legs around his waist and sit on his lap. She wrapped herself tightly around him, holding on as if her life depended on it. He stroked his fingers along her spine tenderly, while his other hand combed through her hair. He could feel that she was shaking. “What is it pumpkin, what happened?” Jack’s voice was soft and soothing. He leaned back a little so he could better see her face, his fingers gently caressed her hair back behind her ear before he stroked her cheek and chin. “Tell me what’s up.”

Harley looked into his blue eyes. He gave her such a sweet encouraging smile, her puddin, her Jack, her Joker. “Oh puddin…” she said softly. “It’s Crane--he’s back.”

Jack frowned in confusion, but a coldness dripped down his spine at the thought of that madman.

“On the radio, there was an attack last night at some Halloween party by a man dressed like a scarecrow. They said it was the second such attack. He left a message puddin, a message for Lady Crow.”

Jack’s voice was dangerously quiet. “What?”

“Lady Crow, he left a message for Lady Crow...oh puddin, he left a message for me!” Harley’s eyes began to tear up again. “He’s alive and he’s looking for me!” “Shh...shh...Harley...shh...it’s all right. I won’t let that monster touch you, I promise.” Jack cupped her face with both hands. “He is never going to touch you sweets, not while I’m around.”

Harley stared back at him, her voice a whisper. “You promise?”

Jack nodded slowly. “I will never let anyone hurt you. Crane has to get through me first and I promise you, I’ll gut him. I’ll rip him apart slowly sweets. He’ll suffer every painful moment.”

Harley stared back at him for a few beats of her heart before she wrapped her arms around him and kissed him. The kiss was filled with desperation and fear, but also with plenty of lust and need. She needed him, needed the safety of his arms, the comfort of his body; Harley needed to be part of him. She rolled her tongue against his, her hands threading into his green hair, wrapping her fingers tightly in his thick green locks while her kisses moved from his lips to his chin. She pulled his head back by his hair, her tongue sliding down his throat followed by her teeth pressing into the column of his throat, sucking hard on the soft skin leaving a deep purple bruise against the paleness of his flesh.
Jack groaned, giving himself over to his wife, giving himself willingly to her, whatever it was that she needed from him, he would give her. While she focused her attention on savaging his throat with her teeth and tongue, Jack reached between them and undid the buttons of her shirt, his agile fingers moving quickly. He shoved the shirt over her shoulders causing Harley to gasp. He dipped down, the shirt falling away from her breast. He wrapped his hands around her ribs and yanked her closer, his mouth covering her breasts in licks and bites. He grabbed one breast, pressing it up to roll his tongue over her hard nipple.

Harley groaned arching her back, her hands dropping to his shoulders, holding onto him as he sucked at her nipple, switching breasts to do the same, scraping his teeth over her nipple causing goosebumps to race across Harley’s flesh. She made a moan of pleasure, her fingers pressing into his shoulders in a firm grip.

He dragged his tongue up from her breast to her throat, where he latched on to the soft spot between her throat and collarbone and sucked. Harley moaned, wrapping her arms around him as Jack worried at her skin, sucking and tugging with his teeth while his hands slid up to cup her breasts, squeezing gently, his thumbs playing with her hard sensitive nipples. Harley arched her back, moaning low and deep. Jack sent ripples of pleasure through her body as he sucked against the porcelain white of her skin, pulling away to smile at the purple bruise he left shining brightly against the white of her bleached skin.

Suddenly Jack stopped what he was doing and stood, yanking Harley up with him, lifting her by her waist and placing her on the edge of the cabinet she had been hiding under. He pulled the shirt the rest of the way off of her, tossing it to the floor to leave her naked, except for the socks on her feet. He pulled her close, one hand caressing her hair, his other hand around her waist as he whispered to her.

“Tell me what to do Harley, tell me what you want.” Jack caressed her cheek with his, kissing her ear before he pulled back to look at her. “Tell me what you need.” Harley reached out and laid her hands on his waist. She stared back at him, her light blue eyes intense, the passion and lust burned in her gaze as she leaned into him, kissing him slowly. Her lips and tongue moved with his, taking her time to enjoy his kiss, the warmth of his mouth, the soft slide of his tongue. She pulled away from his mouth, leaned her forehead against his, and whispered with intensity. “I want to fuck you puddin. I want to fuck you until you’re weak. I want to fuck you hard and fast until you scream.”

Jack smiled slowly.

She pulled him close again, her hands sliding around to cup his head and kissed him hard enough that their lips smashed together. Jack could feel the slight sting as she pressed his lips back against his teeth. He tasted a hint of blood as she cut his lips against his teeth, but he didn’t care. The mix of pain and pleasure only made him harder, his body reacting with the need to bury himself inside her. She grabbed his hair again, thrusting her tongue into his mouth, all gentleness gone as her fingernails scraped against his scalp in her desperation.

Jack put his hands down on the cabinet next to her thighs, holding on as they kissed each other almost savagely. Harley yanked him forward more, kissing and biting him, making a soft little growl of need.

Harley made another soft growl before she broke the kiss releasing him briefly, which was followed by her grabbing his waist and yanking him closer. Jack went willingly closer only to have Harley bite down on his shoulder. It wasn't a soft sensual bite, but a full bite, her teeth pressed into his shoulder with a sharp sting that made Jack’s erection throb. Harley reached down between them, sliding her hand into Jack’s boxers and grabbed him, cupping his swollen member and his testicles at
once, then squeezing him. He moaned in response as she cupped him and squeezed again followed by a slow, warm massage.

Jack groaned when she squeezed once more before she wrapped her hand firmly around him. She stroked up his length, her thumb caressed the head of his erection. As she held him, Harley sucked on the bite mark at his shoulder. Jack panted in response, thrusting his hips, willing her to pull and thrust her hand up and down his length, wanting her to, needing her to rub her hand on him to squeeze him, hurt him.

Harley slid her hand up his length, squeezing the head of his shaft, enjoying the heat of him combined with the velvet softness of his skin. She slid her thumb and forefinger over the velvet soft head of his penis while she bit him again, closer to his throat. The sensation made Jack’s grunt turn into a groan. He grabbed her knees and spread her legs while being careful to keep her balanced on the counter.

He laid his hand against her, his palm pressed against her wet sex before he slowly stroked his fingers across her, feeling her wet and warm. She jerked her one arm that was around his shoulders tighter, her hand on his erection jerked upward as she bit him again, this bite a little further up from the first. The mix of pain tempered by the pleasure of her touch caused Jack to gasp leaning into her, his fingers pressing harder against her.

Jack purred. “You’re so wet Harls. So hot…” He slid a finger into her and Harley groaned. “Puddin...now...I need you now!”

Jack chuckled. “Yes ma’am.”

He pulled his finger away and pulled his boxers down. Harley released him and leaned back on her hands, her legs wide. Jack held himself, sliding the head of his erection up and down her letting the wetness of her coat the head of his shaft.

Harley groaned and gave her husband a fierce look. “Uuhh...now!”

Jack chuckled, positioning himself before he pulled her toward the very edge of the countertop and thrust into her. Together they cried out as their bodies connected. Jack leaned into her, his hands on the counter shoved into her with grunts and hisses as the pleasure of being inside her washed over him. He leaned against her, holding still for a moment just to enjoy the feeling of being inside her, to have her surrounding him. He wrapped one arm around her, holding her close. He slowed his movements, easing back before slowly diving into her again. Jack closed his eyes, resting his cheek against her head.

Harley squeezed her muscles, tightening her entire body around him, but she was becoming frustrated. He was moving too slow, too gentle. When Jack leaned into her, Harley wrapped herself around him, her legs went around his waist at the same time she grabbed his shoulders. She shoved, practically leaping off the counter. Jack yelped in surprise as Harley’s hips thrust forward, her legs wrapping tightly around his waist, her hands grabbed his shoulders and she used her entire weight to knock him off balance, riding him down to the floor.

Jack’s arms cartwheeled for a second or two, but Harley wrapped her hands around the back of his head, cradling his skull, unlocking her feet at the last moment to hit the floor first and soften the blow. Jack’s back hit the floor hard, but not so hard that it knocked the air painfully from his lungs, only a startled burst of air and a grunt Jack’s gasp was followed by a laugh that he didn’t get to finish. Harley leaned in and crushed his mouth with hers. She had her legs bent, facing forward and she ground into him, thrusting herself forward. She released his head and arched back, reaching behind her to grasp his knees, spreading her legs wide like the petals of an opening flower, allowing
her to bounce up and down and give in to her lust, riding Jack as if she was going to grind him into the floor.

Jack groaned, the pleasure was almost painful and watching her was nearly too much, she was so beautiful, her white hair down around her shoulders falling like snow, the bounce of her breasts, her smooth soft skin like unbroken porcelain. She thrust her hips and her entire body rolled, arching, beautiful he thought as he held on, letting her take everything she could from him. He reached up and placed his hands on her knees for a few moment as she thrust and bounced on him making him gasp with each of her movements, his fingers digging into her knees struggling to hold on. She was on full display for him, her swollen clitoris, his shaft inside her, wet and slick from her. He closed his eyes, clenching his jaw, struggling to hold back, but when she had said she wanted to fuck him she hadn’t been exaggerating. He slid his hands down along the tender delicate skin of the inside of her thighs down to her clitoris. He rubbed his thumbs against her while Harley thrust faster.

Harley thrust herself down on him, his stroking her clit combined with the way he felt, deep inside her almost took her breath away. She was doing all the fucking, controlling how fast, how much. She wanted, needed to take from him; take, take, take. She gasped and her grip on his legs tightened. She pressed her fingers into his skin knowing she was probably bruising him. She cried out, arching back as a quake began small, but spread becoming bigger, more intense. She groaned loudly as he pressed his thumbs against her.

He rubbed her clitoris, rolling his thumbs and watching her, reading her expression, feeling her tense, that moment when her entire body arched back and she cried out, flooding him when she came. The wet sounds of their bodies thrusting together made Jack arch, and a wave of intensity rolled over them both.

Jack groaned, his fingers pressing into her skin as he struggled to hold back, but his erection was throbbing so hard he wanted to let go so badly. He bit hard on his bottom lip, holding back watching her bounce on him in complete abandon. He smiled as he watched her, listening to her, the way her panting became high pitched, the glow of her eyes under her thick lashes. She was so goddamn beautiful he thought.

Harley dropped forward, her hands coming down on either side of his head with a loud smack, and her hair fell like a snowy curtain around them. She continued to move with a hard determination to fuck her puddin hard, thrusting and rolling her hips at the same time crushing her mouth to his, her fingers grabbing hold of his green hair, holding his head down to the floor while she moved. She kissed him again, forcing her tongue into his mouth.

Jack wrapped his arms around her, kissing her back just as hard, biting at her tongue and lips, his fingers digging into her back before sliding down to her hips. He bent his knees to allow him to thrust up to meet her rolling hips, needing to feel her cum again. Needing to have her wash over him again.

Harley ground down on Jack. she pulled back to catch her breath kissing. “Oh puddin...I love you...I love you…” She wanted to fuck him harder, to take more from her husband. She bit her way along his jaw, alternating bites with long licks of her tongue all the way down his throat, thrusting harder and faster as another orgasm came racing up from deep inside.

Jack held onto her hips, whimpering just a little as his coming orgasm built and he fought it, but it was becoming painful. His need to let go was quickly rushing beyond his control.

“Harley...uh Harley I...I can’t...I love you, my girl...” He panted holding on tightly to her hips as if he were afraid that his orgasm or hers would cause him to lose touch with her as if he might just spiral away from her if he didn’t hold on.
Harley wrapped herself around him, her legs squeezed tight against him, and her arms slid under his shoulders at the moment her orgasm threatened to split her in half. She cried out, her body rocked with the pleasure of her climax. Jack followed quickly behind her, his body set itself free and he filled her, letting everything go with a moan that came from deep inside.

* 

Joker leaned his bare back against the cabinet and exhaled, watching the cigarette in his hand burn while additional smoke flowed slowly from between his lips. Harley was curled against his side, her arm wrapped around him, her eyes closed. She was breathing slow and steady. He was sure she had fallen asleep.

He glanced down at Harley with a tender smile. His beautiful girl, his murderous kitten, his harlequin.

She was calmer now, but he knew that wasn’t going to last. There would only have to be another report of the Scarecrow and she would fall apart again. Hopefully the nightmares about Arkham would not resurface to mix with the ones she still had about that night at the factory, but he knew the chances were slim of that...now that she believed Crane was back, and looking for her. He just couldn’t have that.

Joker narrowed his eyes. He hated anyone who hurt his girl, but he had a special kind of hate for Dr. Crane, a very, very special kind of hatred that he would cultivate and release when the time was right.
Lime and Vodka

Chapter Notes

I hope my Russian is correct. Had to use several sites so I'm not sure!

The soft mellow sounds of Nat King Cole’s voice filled the bedroom as the soft golden light of a late afternoon sun filtered in through the curtains. Jack was only partly dressed, with his white dress shirt open showing off his pale, snow white skin and the dark blue and green boxers he wore stood out in contrast to the same pale skin. His green hair fell loose around his face, still slightly damp from a shower. He smiled gently down at Harley, his blue eyes bright, surrounded by rings of darkness as he gazed at her in his arms. Her long white hair curled slightly as it dried along her porcelain shoulders and back. She was dressed only in her red lace bra and panties and nothing else.

Harley had her hand resting against Jack’s shoulder, her other hand held tightly in his as he moved her gradually around the room in time to the music.

Jack smiled and sang softly along with Cole while he danced her gently around their bedroom.

“It’s very clear our love is here to stay
Not for a year but ever and a day
Oh the radio and a telephone, movies that we know
May just be passing fancies and in time may go
But oh my dear our love is here to stay
Together we’re going on a long, long way
In time the rockies may crumble, Gibraltar may tumble
They're only made of clay but our love is here to stay…”

He grinned as he spun her slowly away from him, keeping the tips of his fingers lightly against her fingertips. Harley smiled, turning back around to take his other hand, the two of them swaying together to the song before Jack pulled her back into the circle of his arms. Harley laid her head against his shoulder and Jack pressed his cheek against her hair closing his eyes. They almost looked like two ghosts dancing in the room’s shadowy light, moving in and out of the shadows, their bodies pressed together and their hands clasped. Jack held her gently, swaying gracefully back and forth with her in his arms, the music carrying them back and forth. His voice was a whisper, his lips against her hair singing gently.

“It's very clear our love is here to stay
Not for a year but ever and a day
The radio and the telephone and the movies that we know
May just be passing fancies and in time may go…”

The music came to a gentle end, but Jack kept swaying in place with Harley in his arms. He was reluctant to let her go. He closed his eyes focusing on the feel of her in his arms, the scent of her hair, her skin. His girl, his one and only, the only one in all of Gotham--in all the world--who knew him, loved him...he belonged to her just as much as she belonged to him.

He whispered against her hair. “It’s you and me against the world Harls, just you and me.”

Harley, her eyes closed whispered back, “Always puddin, always,” which made him smile and tighten his hold on her.

After a few long moments of continuing to dance, Jack sighed. “I suppose we should get dressed sweets. We have murders to plot and empires to topple.” A soft chuckle followed the statement while he turned them in a full circle.

Harley still had her eyes closed, enjoying the feel of their bodies pressed together, the gentle swaying, the smell of him. “Mm...I suppose you’re right puddin.” Though she made no effort to move out of his arms.

Jack kissed her ear and gently eased her up; he spun her out one more time stepping lightly around to pull her back, wrapping his arms around her.

“Always be mine pumpkin?” he asked with a smile, looking down on her in his arms.

Harley grinned up at him. “Always puddin. There is no force on earth, or in Gotham that could keep me away from you.”

Jack chuckled and tightened his embrace before he kissed her, the kiss long and lingering. He rubbed his nose against hers when he pulled away from her lips and softly whispered. “Always my girl and I will always be your puddin.”

Harley giggled before she pushed herself up on her toes, her lips meeting his for a deep, passionate kiss.

*

Several minutes later, Jack was sitting in the living room of his home with Harley on his lap. Frost, Jason and Zsasz sat across from him, all of them sipping hot chocolate.

Jack had his arms protectively around Harley.

Jack sipped his steaming chocolate with a grin, placing the cup on the coffee table before he spoke. “All right darlings, we have two things to discuss tonight. One: I want another attack on Falcone...we still have two pawns in play and I want to use one soon, I want to place another crack in The Roman wall. And two: I need one of you to start looking into this Scarecrow asshole. I want to know who he is and what he wants.” Jack’s eye twitched slightly. He knew exactly what Crane wanted because that was who the Scarecrow was. Crane, returned from the dead, just like he and Harley had returned...Jack’s hand that rested on Harley’s lap, slowly rolled into a fist on her thighs. Harley reached over without a word and took his hand, her gentle touch softly caressed his tightened fist until he relaxed.

Frost glanced at Jason and Zsasz, the three men sharing an unspoken communication before Frost turned back to Jack. “We’re on it Boss.”
Jack smiled, tightening his grip on Harley as he leaned back in his seat, his red lips spreading across his face in a sinister smile. “Good.”

*

Sofia waited outside her father’s office, running her hands down the silver pinstripe skirt of her business suit making sure she was every inch the professional. She ran a hand over her shining slick hair catching the attention of the bodyguards stationed outside the office. Both were very large men who were doing their best not to stare at the boss’s daughter, but Sophia didn’t pay much attention to the two men; her mind was on her father. She was annoyed that he was conducting this meeting with her, the first time they had seen each other in months, like a goddamn business meeting with any of his clients or any of the hired thugs, lesser family members, other members of the mob...and not his own daughter, the heir to his empire. She took a breath through her nose and let it out through her lips, she was not going to let her father get under her skin. He called her home because he needed her and she was going to make sure he remembered that.

She only had to wait another couple of seconds before the door was opened by one of her many, many cousins, Luca. He smiled at her as he held the door open.

“Your father will see you now.”

Sophia didn’t bother to give him a look or a smile, she just walked on past Luca like he didn’t exist because for her, he didn’t. She marched into the office, her heels making a smart click clack against the floor.

Her father was sitting behind his desk staring out at the Gotham skyline. He had been released from the hospital yesterday, but he still looked pale and she could see a slight tremor around his mouth. He took a sip from the glass he held, filled to the brim with amber liquid. She made her way across the office to stop in front of her father’s desk schooling her features into something neutral as she did so.

“Daddy,” she said with as little emotion as she could. Her father looked different, as if a small part of him had been broken. She had heard about the attack on the party that he was holding for Mayor Hill, about the rather graphic death of his girlfriend. She also heard on the news about the disappearance of her father’s lawyer.

Carmine turned to look at her. His eyes looked haunted, though his voice betrayed nothing. “I’m glad you’re here Phia. I have some news I need to share with you...and I need your help.” He gestured toward a chair that was positioned at the corner of his desk.

Sophia frowned deeper, but she stepped over to the chair and pulled it in front of her father’s desk before she sat down, crossing her legs and folding her hands, her back ramrod straight. She refused to betray herself with any sign of weakness, least of all to her father.

Falcone sipped his drink before he spoke again. “Of course I told you about your brother and I assumed you heard what happened at the party with Gigi?”

Sophia nodded. “I have. I also heard that your lawyer is missing.”

Carmine took another drink. Sophia wondered how many it would take for her father to get drunk. She wrinkled her nose in annoyance with him. Drinking in the middle of the day over some little slut he was seeing who was only interested in him for his money and power annoyed her. Sophia would never say it out loud, but she was glad the bitch was dead. Maybe now her father could put his attention where it needed to be.
Carmine sighed. “Your mother, Louisa is missing too. I think that freak, The Joker, has her. I managed to keep it out of the papers here. It helps that she didn’t live directly in Gotham.”

Sophia sucked in a breath. “What? Why did you wait until now to tell me?!” She resisted the urge to stand up, instead grasping the arms of her seat to keep herself from standing up, the momentary display of emotion on her part irritated her, but she quickly brought herself under control.

Falcone examined his drink before he spoke. “One: because I didn’t want to worry you. And two: because I was sure we would have her back before you returned to Gotham.”

Sophia said in a low and menacing tone, “Just like you got Mario back.”

Falcone narrowed his eyes at her daughter. “I brought you and your brother here to protect you, because of what happened to Mario, but also because we need to present a united front to the families. You are now the next in line Sophia. I need to show the families that the empire is safe and that you are ready to take the reins of power when I’m gone.” He took a sip of his drink and set it down on the desk; the ice in the glass made a light tinkling noise. Her father stared hard at her, the old gruff mob boss back in his eyes. “I need you to be here, learn the business, to learn everything I was teaching your brother and to help me keep our hold on Gotham. We are not going to let this clown destroy what we built.”

“Even if we have to sacrifice my mother?” Sophia’s voice was cold.

Carmine looked genuinely unhappy as he spoke, his voice soft yet firm. “Even if we have to sacrifice your mother.”

* 

Bruce was smiling. Something Dick found weird; more than weird. If the earth had opened up and swallowed Gotham he wouldn’t have been any more surprised than he was by Bruce’s jovial attitude at the moment.

Dick, who was sitting on the couch doing homework, glanced over to Barbara who was currently sharing the couch with him. She was on the phone texting with someone, looking as if she might slide off the couch at any moment, her slender legs were out in front of her resting on the coffee table, a pair of pink converse on her feet. She looked cute he thought, in her purple sweater and jeans, her short hair sticking up from the hat she had removed when she had come over (to babysit...Dick couldn’t believe Bruce had her over to watch him! They were almost the same age! What did Bruce think he was going to run off and do? Fight crime without him? Hunt down the Joker? Or was it that deep down Bruce simply didn’t trust him? Any of those options annoyed Dick.)

Bruce checked himself in the mirror by the apartment’s front door.

Dick watched Bruce from the corner of his eyes in surprise. Bruce hadn’t been on a date since he had come to live with him. He wasn’t sure why, but it made Dick suspicious of this woman Bruce was seeing tonight, Selina Kyle...or maybe he was just being a jerk. He shrugged and went back to his school work.

Bruce picked up his keys as he walked toward the door. “Barbara, remember: no video games until he has finished his homework.”

Dick glanced up from his math. “You know I’m right here?”

Bruce smiled. “I know. I’ll try not to be too late getting back.”

Barbara turned and waved. “Have fun.”
Bruce smiled. “Thank you.”

After Bruce left, Dick focused back on his homework and Barbara her phone. After a few minutes of intense work Dick asked without looking up. “You ever think of getting out on the streets in uniform instead of sitting behind in the cave stuck behind a computer screen? I asked Alfred once, but he said he was too old.”

Barbara glanced over at him and shrugged. “I’ve thought about it, but I don’t think Bruce would want more than one partner.”

Dick set his pencil down as he sat up. “What if I was gone?”

Barbara frowned. “Whaddaya mean?”

Dick shrugged. “I don’t know, what if something happened to me and I couldn’t fight crime with Batman anymore, I was paralyzed or dead…”

Barbara frowned. “Don’t be morbid Dick.”

“I’m not, just curious.” He said watching her.

Barbara frowned and shrugged. “I don’t know, I suppose if you were gone and he asked me…”

“What if he never asked you?” Dick asked.

Barbara made a face. “Then I definitely would. I think Bruce needs a partner. I mean I didn’t know him before but from what Alfred said…he needs someone around to keep him human. If you weren’t there then yeah, I would get myself a costume and hit the streets.”

Dick smiled. “I’m glad. I hate to think of Bruce alone. I don’t think he would do well...especially after everything with his brother.”

Barbara smiled then gestured at his homework. “You should finish up, especially if you want me to beat your ass on Call of Duty.”

Dick chuckled and picked up his pencil as he replied. “You wish.”

*

Across town the sounds of Jules Massenet’s Elegie for soprano, cello and piano played loud enough that Crane’s neighbors below him would occasionally strike the floor followed by muffled yells, but Crane simply ignored them.

He stood silently in the middle of his kitchen, dressed only in a pair of dark slacks with his eyes closed as he listened to the music. Crane imagined his Harleen singing, his Lady Crow finally fully formed and his...his lady. He smiled softly and opened his eyes.

Across from him sat a man, perhaps around Crane’s age, though he was duct taped to a chair. The man was naked except for the white briefs he wore and the tape which was wrapped around his entire body, but leaving his head free with only a piece of duct tape across his mouth. The man was attractive, like Crane, but while Crane was lighter, this man was darker, with dark brown hair and eyes, skin that showed this man had spent either a lot of time outdoors and in a tanning booth. He had the muscled physique of someone who spent enough time in the gym to stay fit, but not so big he could be called a bodybuilder.
Crane smiled at the man as he stepped closer. “I do so love this piece, don’t you Dr. Hammer?”

The duct taped man struggled against the tape, but to no avail; he was stuck fast with no hope of escape.

Crane nodded. “Yes, it is a beautiful piece, but the singer is only sub-par. Now once my Lady Crow is with us, she will sing like a nightingale. She is beautiful, an angel, my perfect nightmare with the eyes of a angel, her hair like the...no.” He tilted his head to the side in thought. “It was like the sun, but now...she is like a ghost, an image of beauty and death. Her soul is like mine and her wings are the black ink of a crow’s wings.” Crane smiled as he turned and walked over to the kitchen counter. “She is everything to me. I would do anything to have her for myself.” He sighed as he stopped at the kitchen counter where he picked up a bottle that contained a bright yellow liquid. Next to the bottle was a syringe. Crane used the syringe to break the seal, plunging the needle into the yellow liquid and then slowly filled the syringe. He set the bottle down and held up the syringe to examine the contents before he flicked the cylinder with a satisfied smile.

He set the syringe back down on the counter and turned toward his guest. “You really should have agreed to the drug trials Dr. Hammer. It would have been so much easier, but I do understand, being a professor of neurobiology and all I’m sure you think you know all there is to know about the workings of the brain. But you really should be more open minded to other fields, such as mine. However, you are fortunate I have seen your rejection as just a challenge.” Crane smiled while Dr. Hammer struggled, his cries muffled behind the tape. “I aim to bring Gotham to its knees with fear...to let their fears kill them...and I will do it all with my Lady Crow at my side.” Hammer continued to struggle, but Crane ignored him. “Did you know? I’m sure you do, that the brain itself feels no pain? So interesting isn’t it, but fear...hmm...fear is so different. Fear is a driving force in so much of what we do.” Crane walked back over and picked up the syringe. “Some say fear is the price of imagination, fear’s purpose was to protect us, but for many fear has become a prison. I think we should open that prison and let the fear escape!” Crane turned around holding the syringe up as Dr. Hammer began to struggle more.

Crane smiled softly. “Let us see how good your imagination is Dr. Hammer.”

*

The Gotham night was chilly.

Harley was bundled up in a plush pale pink coat and her white candy colored dipped hair spread down the back of her coat from under the flopping pink and white knit cap she wore. The colorful woman giggled as she blew out her breath watching as the warm air from her lungs turned to mist. She smiling looking up at Jack, the dark framed glasses she wore did little to distract from the light blue of her eyes as she wrapped her arms more snugly around Jack’s arm as he led her down the street. Wearing a dark grey overcoat, black gloves and a dark grey ivy cap over his green hair and a pair of tinted lenses glasses, Jack returned her smile as they strolled down the sidewalk toward an old restored theater where several people were milling about outside or going inside, talking and laughing.

They were both “in disguise” which consisted of just the glasses (while their milk white skin might have drawn attention other places, this theater had enough “odd” looking people working or coming to the show that Jack and Harley blended into the crowd) and they headed into the theater to enjoy a night together, a simple night that lacked plots to take over Gotham or thoughts of revenge; just a night together, enjoying the company of each other.

They were here to see a musical comedy call Imbible: A Spirited History of Drinking (which included three free cocktails). Alex had bought them tickets for tonight since he was friends with the
director of the little production and had helped with some of the songs since, as he told Jack, he had an intimate relationship with alcohol.

*

Nikolai Davidovitch was leaning against the wall near the bathroom waiting on his girlfriend. She had dragged him to this show, which he had only agreed to see because she had said there were free drinks involved. He sighed, running a hand over his bald head as he waited for her, eyeing a few of the other women. He grinned when he saw the one in the pink coat with the porcelain skin. She had slipped her coat off which gave Nikolai a great view of her ass. She had white hair, the ends of which were dipped pink and blue making him think of marshmallow sweets. She was wearing a pair of tight white pants that hugged her ass and legs nicely, with a pair of knee high white heeled boots, and a cute pink sweater that hugged her breasts nicely too. He grinned in appreciation as she made his groin tighten and his mouth water, a sweet little frosted package. The man the little pink confection was with, Nikolai noted, was pale like her, slim, though there was something about the way the man moved that set off his alarms. He had the moves of a predator, a man who knew how to handle himself. Nikolai recognized that in the man’s walk, the way he looked around and the possessive way he kept a hand always on his woman...Nikolai dealt with men who were predators like this man all the time in his line of work, but as the man put his arm out to the woman, Nikolai realized that the white of their skin wasn’t a trick of the light, the two were more than simply pale, their skin seemed luminous in the theater lights. And as the man and woman moved into the theater Nikolai caught sight of the man’s dark green hair under the hat he wore, the light had caught the hair just right.

“No…” he whispered in surprise. Nikolai might not have taken notice of the man’s hair since there were many people in Gotham with unusual hair colors, but that combined with the white skin....the predator vibe he was getting from watching the man...

All of them, what was left of the Odessa mob, The Hammer, the Ivgene Clan as well as all the other clans and families that fell under the umbrella of the Falcone family, had been given an image of the man that was harassing The Roman, the man who had attacked The Roman without fear of reprisal, the man who had appeared on TV threatening The Roman and the Batman. A man who clearly wished for a early death...a green haired clown named the Joker.

Nikolai could be wrong, but he didn’t think he was...this man had to be the Joker...Nikolai pulled out his cellphone and quickly brought up his brother’s number. The phone rang twice before being answered.

“Vassily here.”

“Vass--it’s Nikolai. Remember that man, the one Falcone offered a million for anyone to bring him? The one who calls himself the Joker? Well brother, I think our luck has just changed!” Nikolai chuckled watching as the Joker and his woman disappeared into the theater.

*

Jack spent much of the show simply watching Harley. The show was fun and the drinks were good, but watching his girl’s reactions, watching every expression cross her face, the sound of her laughing so hard that tears were running down her cheeks, and just the way she held his hand, turning to look over at him, that was the best show on earth. He grinned, chuckling when a particular line in a song had her laughing so hard she couldn’t seem to stop, even looking over at him had her breaking down into a fit of giggles. She pulled her glasses off trying to wipe her tears without smearing her makeup, turning to smile at him, a smile that reached her eyes. She was so damn beautiful, he thought.
Jack felt his heart speed up each time she smiled, when she turned and looked at him with those eyes. He wanted to pull her onto his lap and kiss her, to run his hands over her body, to feel that soft skin of hers under his hands, to hear her laugh while he was inside her, to feel that ripple run from her into his body, just to hold her and gaze into her eyes. She never judged, she understood him like no ever could...from the moment they met, she was his girl. She was so beautiful, every part of her and she was his...his girl, his partner, his lover, his friend. He grinned holding her hand up to his lips and kissed her knuckles. Harley turned to look at him tilting her head as he kept staring at her.

She blushed and leaned closer whispering. “What are you doing?”

“Admiring you.” Jack grinned wide at her.

Harley reached out and brushed a fingertip over his red lips. “I love you Jack. I love you so much.”

Jack kissed her finger. “Wanna go for a walk after this? I saw a late night coffee shop down the street.”

Harley giggled, blushing and feeling like she did when they first began to date. “I would love that Jack.”

Jack’s smile spread across his face.

*

Outside one of the main homes of Anatoli Knyazev, a man with a knit cap pulled low over his thinning hair, Mikey Sullivan sat in a snow frosted car chewing on the end of a cigar that he couldn’t light. He was freezing, tired and bored. He was on day five of watching Knyazev’s home, (he had drawn the short straw) waiting for any sort of movement, something that the Sullivans and Rileys could use. The only thing that gave him any comfort was knowing that Nick, Pat and Oscar were all in similar positions, sitting in frozen cars watching the main movers in the Russian gangs.

Mikey was a member of the Sullivan gang, one of two Irish gangs who were under Falcone’s thumb. The Irish families had decided they were tired of being treated like shit under Falcone, no better than dogs, made to do his dirty work, fetching and killing at the Roman’s request. The families had been treated like shit since the day The Roman took over, making himself not just head of the Italians, but of all the mob families in Gotham. He had taken control of the Irish by killing Sean Riley, the head of the Riley family, and forcing two of Gotham’s biggest Irish crime families into service to him, one by getting Michael Sullivan to kiss his ring and by making Johnny Sabatino married Peyton Riley, Sean’s daughter. The whole thing had been a mess.

The worst of it was poor Peyton. She was stuck in a loveless marriage with that fucking Johnny Sabatino when she should have been Mikey’s wife...she was his girl...but to save lives they had both given up on what they wanted.

Mikey fucking hated Carmine Falcone with a passion.

But when word of this man calling himself the Joker was messing with Falcone, threatening to take him down, well the Rileys and Sullivans sat up and listened. It meant Falcone was weak, that someone was taking a stand against him and it meant there might be a chance for some revenge. It had been Mikey’s brother Ryan who had come up with the idea that this might be the time to get themselves out from under Falcone...by starting with the Russians because it had been them, under the leadership of Knyazev, that had helped Falcone take out Sean.

So now, the Irish were looking for a chance, a chance to stick to the Russians, to Falcone, to all the
fucking families that served under Falcone...

Except so far, all they had done was sit outside Knyazev’s home and hope for something to happen.

Mikey sighed sticking his hands under his arms for warmth when he saw the front door to Knyazev home open up, the man running outside with a three of his men. A moment later a car came screeching to a halt in the driveway and Knyazev and the three men hopped inside and took off. Mikey frowned in confusion for a moment before he turned the key in the ignition and took off, following Knyazev at a safe distance. He pulled his cell phone out and hit a number. After a couple of rings the phone was picked up.

“Aidan here.”

“Aidan, it’s Mikey. The Russians are on the move, we are on Harrison Street heading south,” Mikey gritted through clenched teeth trying to keep his teeth from chattering.

Aidan sounded confused. “What’s going on?”

“Fuck it Aidan, I don’t know, just that Knyazev left with three of his men. Something’s up and I want a few of our guys just in case this is the opportunity we’ve been waiting for! That okay with you Father Aidan??” Mikey snarled into the phone.

Aidan pouted. “Geez Mikey, ya don’t have to be like that. Calling the boys now.”

“Good!” Mikey tossed the phone down and muttered. “Stupid bleeding thick Geebag.”

* * *

After the show, Jack and Harley strolled down the cold street together. A few light flakes of snow were in the air falling lazily, more like tiny bits of glitter than snow. Jack had a cigarette dangling from his smiling lips, one arm around his wife’s waist while smoke lazily drifted from the cigarette. Harley was giggling as she sang a part from one of the many songs in the show that she particularly liked, before dissolving into a fit of giggles that had Jack smiling when he had a strange sensation crawl up his back. He glanced over his shoulder, but he didn’t see anyone, just a few random people from the show spreading out from the theater as they all went their separate ways. He frowned, taking a deep drag on his cigarette before taking the cigarette out from between his red lips and letting the smoke drift lazily from his nose. His eyes narrowed as he continued to look around, unable to shake the sensation of being watched. He felt as if something slimy was oozing over his skin, but he didn’t see anything unusual.

Harley glanced up at her puddin when he stopped moving.

“Puddin? Something wrong?”

Jack took another drag on his cigarette and when he spoke, smoke oozed from between his lips

“Don’t know, just...feel like something is off.”

Harley looked around, but saw nothing usual. “Do you want to go home?”

Jack frowned tossing the but of his cigarette down, stamping it out with the toe of his shoe. “Nah, come on.”

They continued to walk, stepping past an alley when someone reached out and grabbed Harley by her arm, yanking her away from Jack and into the darkness of the alley. Harley let out a yelp followed swiftly by the sound of her breath being knocked from her as she was slammed against a
wall. Jack had moved after her in the same instant, but that was when a man stepped out, the barrel of a gun held at Jack’s head before slowly being aimed at Harley. The man smiled cheerfully.

“Privet, droog moy. You would be wise not to do anything stupid or your pretty girl will get a bullet in her chest and you will have to watch her die slowly.” The man who spoke was tall with blue eyes and not an unkind smile—despite the situation—with thinning blonde hair and wearing a simple blue suit and matching overcoat. He had causally turned the weapon from Jack to Harley then back to Jack. Jack could see Harley being held against the brick side of the building, her arms over her head as a man on each side of her held her in place. Jack could see the fury in her eyes and that the only reason his pumpkin had stopped struggling was the gun.

The Russian who spoke shrugged. “She is not necessary, no matter how lovely she is, but you--Falcone wants you alive. You are worth a great deal of money and favors for you being brought in alive.” The Russian gestured with the weapon. “I would prefer not to shoot the pretty woman, but it is completely up to you...Joker.” Joker smiled slowly removing his glasses as he glanced at Harley who still didn’t look the least bit scared, though she looked angry enough to bite the throat out of either of the men holding her. Joker smiled winking at her before he brought his attention back at the Russian.

Joker folded his arms slowly across his chest, his gaze taking in that there were at least a dozen men, maybe more, altogether. Either way, it was a lot for the two of them, mostly unarmed, to take.

Joker smiled seeming relaxed, as if this were a simple conversation between friends. “Oh so this is all about Falcone, hm? Did he put a price on my head? Fantastic. And you are?” Joker stood still looking relaxed, as if he were simply having a conversation with a friend. Joker tilted his head. “Mind if I smoke? I’ll move slowly.”

The Russian narrowed his eyes, then nodded with a smile. “Go head, though no funny business.”

Joker smiled and slowly pulled his coat open, he delicately removed the lighter followed by the cigarettes. He went through the ritual of lighting the cigarette slowly, calmly. While he lit his cigarette he noted the men behind their leader. Not good odds when he knew Harley only had a hard plastic baton clipped to her back and he only had the one punching knife in his pocket. The only two things in their favor were the element of surprise and the fact that the man speaking looked to be the only one with a gun, which made sense. Gunshots brought the police, fist fights were less likely to end up with the cops involved, especially when the numbers were in your favor.

Joker took a long drag on his cigarette, letting the smoke out with a sigh before he re-folded one arm across his chest, the other elbow resting on top of his hand. The fingers of one hand very slowly edged into the depths of his coats inside pocket where he kept his cigarettes, touching the knife that rested in the coat inner pocket.

“So who are you? Clearly Russian judging by your accent, but what do you have to do with Falcone?” Joker asked, trying his best not to look directly at Harley, but hoping she knew what to do.

The Russian smiled. “I am Anatoli Knyazev, head of the Russian mob families here in Gotham.”

Jack smiled then, blowing out smoke. “Under Falcone correct? Not really much to be proud of there.”

Anatoli laughed. “Do not think you can convince me to switch sides Joker? I and my men are loyal to Falcone. He has treated us well and is deserving of our loyalty.”
Joker shrugged. “That’s nice, though you will always be what? Number two, three…lower? I mean, Gotham is never going to be yours now is it?”

“Perhaps I do not want Gotham? Is a headache.” Anatoli laughed which caused his men to laugh.

Joker smiled. “Well I suppose someone always has to be in place to do the grunt work.”

He glanced at Harley.

Harley smiled.

She moved swiftly. Her right foot came up off the ground, she kicked up which would have been nearly impossible for someone without gymnastics training and brought the heel of her foot down just as swiftly. The heel of her boot connected to Anatoli’s wrist holding the gun with a hard smacking sound that made Joker wonder briefly if she might not have broken the man’s hand. Anatoli dropped the gun with a yelp of pain. The pistol hit the asphalt and skittered across the lightly snow covered pavement and continued to spin out into the street. Joker didn’t see where the weapon went, but it didn’t matter. The gun was far enough away that it wasn’t going to be useful to Anatoli and was thus, for the moment, out of play. Harley followed her disarming kick by swinging her leg out with a hook kick and catching Anatoli across the ear.

Joker grinned, throwing his cigarette at one of the men holding Harley, pulling his knife out at the same time and feeling a swell of intense love for his girl. She was beautiful to watch and he was proud that she was his girl.

One of the men holding her yelled at his companion, “HOLD HER!!”

He dropped her arm and rushed toward Joker.

The other man, taller than Harley, lean with a tattoo running up the side of his left temple, attempted to grab her other arm, but Harley moved quickly, twisting her body to the side, dragging the man around with her sudden shift. She yanked on the arm that he held with all her strength. She freed herself though the man’s grip caused her shoulder to feel like it was about to be yanked from its socket when he struggled to keep a hold of her. Once she freed her arm, Harley flipped herself backwards onto her hands, her body arching back in a smooth curve, her booted feet coming up and catching the man in the face, breaking his nose and bloodying his lips.

* * *

Jack rushed forward, a large wide smile on his face, his eyes flashing, slightly crazed as his coat flared out behind him. He slashed with the knife, held firmly between his gloved fingers. The Russian leaned back avoiding the quick slashes, through it almost felt to him as if the air left in the wake of the knife was sharp enough to cut through his skin. He twisted to the side and yanked out his own knife.

The man facing Joker grinned. “Hooyesos…”

Joker chuckled. “Ootebya nyet yayeesav.”

The man looked momentarily surprised and confused.

Joker grinned and shrugged. “I had a good education.”

The Russian snarled and slashed at Joker.
Joker threw his left arm up blocking the man’s knife while taking a slash at the Russian’s midsection.

* 

Anatoli stood up, blood running down from his ear and nose, holding his wrist against his stomach. He turned to his other men which were simply watching the two fights unsure what to do.

Anatoli snarled. “Govno! Chertovski Zhopy!!! GET HIM YOU IDIOTS!”

Harley threw a couple of hard punches at the man she was facing, her fist creating mush of his already broken nose, her knuckles cutting across his teeth leaving the knuckles of her right hand cut and bloody. The man howled in pain stumbling backwards only to be replaced by another Russian. This one lunged at her, throwing a right hook that caught her across the jaw and knocked her glasses free, breaking the frames. She gasped as pain exploded across her jaw, sending her stumbling back. She tasted the hot, slightly coppery flavor of blood in her mouth. She reached up with her left hand and wiped the drop of blood at the corner of her mouth with a glare that made her attacker take an involuntary step back. Harley grinned and yanked her baton out, flicking her wrist to make the weapon slide out to its full length.

The man facing her snarled. “Cuchka derganaya!”

A couple of his friends rushed over to help their friend, clearly thinking to use numbers to overwhelm her. Harley tightened her grip on her baton with a glare at her opponents. She wasn’t going down without fight and she planned on leaving her mark on every single one of them.

Harley spun, swinging her arm out with the baton as she did, the hard plastic caught two of the men, one across the face and another across the shoulder. She snapped her leg out and kicked another in the chest before she twisted her entire body around to avoid the grabbing hands of another Russian only to shove her elbow into the man’s diaphragm. She grinned, pleased with herself, swinging her body back around as they man fell away to do a hook kick. But this time one of the men was ready for her; he grabbed her calf with both hands stopping her heel from connecting with his face. He sneered at her as Harley looked at him momentarily shocked. That precious second was all that was needed for the other men to grab her, overpowering her.

* 

Joker twisted to the side barely avoiding a deep puncture, instead the blade nicked him, cutting through his vest and dress shirt leaving a thin line of red behind. He brought his elbow down on the man’s extended arm, not hard enough to cause any real damage, but enough that the blow prevented the man from getting a deep cut. Jack lashed out with his blade, aiming for the man’s neck. He missed with a killing blow, but at the same time Jack spun to the side delivering a hooked kick that knocked the Russian with the knife back.

A couple of men tried to rush Joker from the side. He thrust out without looking, puncturing the throat of one of the men, his blade slicing through flesh easily, the blade so sharp that it slid into the man’s throat like a sheath. The man’s eyes bugged out in shock at the blade that punctured the side of his throat. He mouthed a few words, but without a sound, as if the Joker had severed his vocal cords. Joker grinned viciously at the man and yanked the blade out, which allowed a waterfall of almost black blood to flow down the man’s front.

Joker chuckled having only started to turn away when a couple of Russians tried to swarm him. Joker leaned forward as he moved, at the last second dropping to a light crouch from which he spun on the balls of his feet, his arm holding the blade flung out from his body cutting through the thigh of one Russian and the groin of another. None of the cuts were deep enough to kill, but it did force
those particular men to stumble back.

Joker rose back up on his feet, but he was quickly becoming surrounded. He brought his knife down and held it ready when one of the Russians, armed with his own blade lunged, aiming for a stab in Joker’s shoulder. Joker snapped his free hand up to lift the attacker’s weapon arm up while he stabbed with his punching blade and pushed his small knife into the soft spot of the man’s armpit, burying his blade as deep as it would go before yanking it out in the same breath and shoving the knife blade into the man’s throat, pulling the blade out with fountain of blood following.

One man grabbed Jack’s knife arm and hauled backwards at the same time another grabbed Joker’s other arm and a third Russian grabbed Joker around his neck, all three hauling him backwards. The three men were struggling to keep a hold of Joker when a fourth was forced to help with the surprisingly strong target; the fourth man wrapped his arm around Joker’s waist and pulled Joker backwards. Joker snarled struggling, all four men barely keeping their hold.

Anatoli walked forward, his eyes cold as he glared at Joker. “You should know when to quit govniuk.”

Joker chuckled and said loud enough to make sure everyone heard. “Ebis’ konyom.”

Anatoli snarled and punched Joker across the face. Joker’s head snapped to the side, the impact splitting his lower lip.

Joker laughed. “My girl hits better than you.”

Anatoli scowled and yelled. “Kill the woman and bring the clown!”

Joker looked over to see Harley struggling. One man had his arms around her neck, pulling her backwards, another two held her arms. She was making the three Russians struggle to hold her. One of the men pulled out a knife and stepped toward her, brought the blade up to Harley’s throat, placing the tip just under her left ear.

Joker snarled, his eyes wide and crazed. “NO!”

The sounds of revving engines and screeching tires drew everyone’s attention. The Russians, Harley, and Joker looked to see three large cars pull up near the alley, each one a black sedan, and, almost like clown cars, several men, numbering more than a dozen in all piled out of the cars.

Anatoli muttered. “Ahueyet, what now?”

The men didn’t do anything except spread out blocking the alley from the sidewalk. A couple of them had bats, one even held a shillelagh which would have made Anatoli laugh under different circumstances. One of the men muscled his way to the front of his small group and grinned at Anatoli. He was dressed in a dark blue jacket with a dark blue knit cap pulled low over his unshaven face. Anatoli narrowed his eyes.

* *

Joker glanced over at Harley. She was still being held tightly by the two men holding her arms and the third who had grabbed her around the waist. It was clear they were just barely keeping her under control, which made him hot for her even under the circumstances they were currently in. The man who had been about to hurt her had stopped, dropping his knife and turning his attention, along with the other Russians (well, those still breathing he thought with a grin), to look over at the new arrivals.

Harley’s wide blue eyes met Joker’s and he mouthed, “Wait.”
Harley nodded, her body relaxing just enough that the three men holding her, with their attention also now focused on the newcomers, relaxed their hold. She trusted Joker with her life, and if he said wait, she would wait.

Harley kept a death grip on her baton, the men holding her hadn’t tried to take it from her yet and she noted that Joker still had his knife.

He gave her a quick grin and a wink. He wanted to wait and see how this scene would play out...he had a hunch the cavalry might have just arrived.

* 

“Annie.” The man in the knit cap stood a step out from the group of new arrivals, his Irish accent still thick enough to make his speech have a lilt to it. The Irishman smiled as he nodded toward Anatoli’s broken wrist. “Looks like you got a bit of trouble there.”

Anatoli groaned, curling his lips at the nickname Mikey Sullivan always insisted on using and muttered. “Mikey.” Then louder. “What are you doing here? We have this under control, as you can see.”

Mikey smiled, his eyes going to Anatoli’s bleeding ear and broken wrist before switching his gaze to the men who were down, bleeding on the pavement. “You sure mate? Your wrist looks broken, couple of yer men look a bit unwell there.”

Anatoli smiled and shrugged. “Ah you know friend, just a little mishap. We are fine here.”

Mikey smiled and pulled his cigar out of the pocket of his jacket along with some matches. (The Russians and the Irish all tensed, but when Mikey pulled out the cigar everyone calmed. He gave everyone a grin knowing exactly the tension his movements would have caused.) He’d been waiting all night to light this thing. Everyone watched as

Mikey lit the cigar he had been chewing on all night. Mikey look a long drag on the fat cigar and smiled as smoke leaked from between his lips.

“I see that--you look in control mate. Don’t he look in control?” Mikey looked over at his men who all laughed in response.

Anatoli narrowed his eyes. “What are you doing here Mikey? No one called Falcone so I know you are not here at his request. So why are you here my friend? Just cruising for a date?” Anatoli’s men, who were holding Joker and Harley gave offhanded laughs, though the tension in their laughter was clear.

Mikey smiled, smoked slowly flowing from his nostrils. “Nah, Falcone don’t know anything about this, and you know an Irishman never has to go looking for a date, the ladies just come to him.” He chuckled before he pointed at his group, Anatoli’s men and Harley and Joker. “We were just out for a ride.”

Mikey took another long drag on his cigar before he spoke. “You see Annie, me and the boys…” Mikey pointed at himself and his men with the cigar. “We been thinking, we aren’t real happy with how Falcone’s been treating all of us. His killing Sean never sat well with any of us.” His men made murmurs of agreement. “Then his going and making poor Peyton marry that asshole...well, we are looking for new management and we have decided to let Falcone go. We want to go in a different direction, looking for a new boss, someone we can respect.”

Joker let out a laugh. “Oh you’re funny!! I like you.”
Mikey grinned at him before returning his attention to Anatoli. “You see Annie, we’ve lost our respect for Falcone, lost it a long time ago and now, we’ve seen the way this clown…” Here he pointed at Joker. “We’ve seen how he’s made a fool of Falcone, so, since we are shopping for a new boss, Joker there seems like a good fit. He’s got the stones to do what needs doing and he ain’t afraid of Falcone.”

Anatoli looked confused. “What are you talking about Mikey? We have him, him and his woman! We are about to take him to see The Roman now! How can you respect that? He let himself be jumped. A clown and a little girl.” The Russian snorted.

Mikey shrugged. “He still killed what…” Mikey straightened up and looked deeper into the ally. “It looks like he and his girl killed, what, three--maybe four--of your men by themselves and unprepared? Plus he has the stones to just walk around Gotham without his gang constantly guardings his ass like Falcone? I respect that, I respect power...besides, Gotham needs a change, we need a change and he…” Mikey pointed at Joker. “Is it.”

Anatoli narrowed his eyes. “So, is that how it’s going to be?”

Mikey shrugged. “‘Fraid so.”

“Eede vhad e sgadie kak malinkey suka.” Anatoli muttered before he snarled. “Fine, I’m sure Falcone will be happy to have you along with this Gad!”

Mikey snarled. “Take ‘em boys!”

Chaos broke out.

Two of the men holding Joker let go to throw themselves at the Irish who suddenly rushed forward, a handful of whom moved to free Joker. Joker grinned and yanked his arms forward surprising the men holding him. They were not only thrown off balance, but they were hit by a couple of incoming members of Mikey’s gang, ripping the two Russians off of Joker’s arms. He stumbled backwards a few steps, slamming into another Irishmen who gave Joker a wide grin and a salute. Joker laughed and saluted right back.

Joker hurried over toward Harley. He could see her for a moment before she was swallowed by the crowd of people in the alley. He kicked a Russian in the knee cap and was rewarded with a cry of pain, then followed that by punching his blade downward in a vicious stab after catching the man by the scruff of his coat, yanking the man down and thrusting his punch blade down into the back of the man’s neck. Joker giggled as the man made a gasping choke before Joker yanked the blade back out in a swift backward thrust of his arm. Drops of bright red blood followed the knife blade out of the body. The liquid red jewels caught some of the lights from the street lamps before dropping down to sprinkle across the slight accumulation of snow, looking like cherry drops against the white. Joker grinned brightly turning his attention back to getting his Harley.

* Once the fighting started Harley lunged forward, taking the two men who held her arms and the one with a hold around her waist, forward with her. The man who had a grip around her throat choked her, but it wasn’t enough to stop her. The sudden shift in her weight caused all of them to stumble. Harley kept her balance only barely, at the same time she threw her elbows back trying to hit the two holding her arm in the chest though the way to two men were holding her arms she barely made any impact on them, definitely not enough to get them to let her go. At the same time she threw her head backwards, though, and she felt the sharp spike of pain as the back of her skull impacted with the man’s nose and his front teeth. The man let out a scream that was followed by a gurgling sound and
the loosening of his grip.

She didn’t get a chance to see what had happened as one of the men holding her arms was hit with a bat from a member of the other gang which gave her one focus for her anger. She yanked the other Russian still holding her arm toward her. He let go of her arm with both hands, keeping a painful grip with one hand, his fingers sinking in and pressing painfully against her biceps while he lashed out with his other hand. His fist caught her across the cheek. Harley gasped at the shock of pain.

Her head snapped to the side with a fresh taste of blood in her mouth. She still had her baton which she used to slam down on the hand that still held her arm. He screamed as the durable plastic weapon slammed against his fingers with enough force that Harley felt at least one finger break. She yanked her arm free and swung, the baton catching the man across the face. He snarled in pain, but reached out to grab her around her throat with both hands. Harley hit him hard and fast with her baton, her knuckles bloodless with the effort of keeping a hold of it this entire time and her anger at having her date night with her puddin ruined as she hit the Russian in the face again and again. Despite her vicious strikes, the man kept his hold on her.

Harley finally brought her knee up, the impact of her knee with his groin was enough for force his hands loose. With his grip weakened, Harley brought her arms up and between his to snap her forearms out, breaking his hold on her throat. With a bright sunny smile she placed her hands on his shoulders, her free hand gripping his shoulder in a painful grip as she pushed herself up and over him, landing on her feet and spinning around. She brought her leg up as she dropped down to one hand, the heel of her boot slicing across the man’s cheek. She pushed herself up with her hand, doing a back flip to her feet only to spin her body again, extending the hand with the baton and slamming it across his face again, this time breaking his nose. She grinned at her handiwork, giving him a hard kick to the chest which sent the Russian flying backwards into the crowd.

Joker started to clap. “Oh bravo!! Now that was beautiful!”

Harley spun around to see Joker and squealed. “Puddin!!”

She raced over to him and threw herself into his arms. Joker laughed catching her, wrapping his arms around her and held her close as she pressed her mouth down on his, her tongue immediately sliding between his lips. Joker chuckled, happily holding her, for the moment ignoring the fight around them, his complete attention on kissing her, feeling her body wrapped around his and tasting the blood on her lips.

“Hey, ah Joker.”

Joker sighed breaking his lip lock with Harley though he didn’t let go of her; he continued to hold her unwilling to set her down. Harley didn’t release him either, but kept her arms and legs wrapped around him, occasionally swinging her baton if anyone came too close. Joker laughed swaying a bit as he kept a hold of her.

Mikey smiled, his cigar in the corner of his mouth. He had a black eye forming and a bloody lip, but otherwise he seemed fairly happy. “So ah, Joker sir, you recruiting?”

Mikey ducked as a man, not one of his, went flying over his head.

Mikey took his cigar out and blew out a line of smoke. “You say the word and you have both the Sullivans and the Rileys on your side.”

Joker shifted Harley a bit, nearly toppling over as she hissed and swung at one of the Russians. “You have me at a disadvantage…”
Mikey took Joker’s offered hand. “Mikey Sullivan.”

“Mikey.” The pale man chuckled. “I like it. Well Mikey, you and the rest of your merry group are more than happy to join us.”

Joker and Mikey both twisted out of the way as several men came too close. That was also the moment they all hear the sound of distant sirens.

Joker laughed. “Well it seems our party is about to be broken up. Well Mikey, if you don’t get yourself arrested, get a hold of One-armed Alex, you know who that is?”

Mikey grinned. “I sure the fuck do, everyone knows One-armed Alex, best information man in Gotham.”

Joker chuckled. “He’ll get any messages to me, but consider yourself part of the gang.”

Mikey put his fingers to his knit cap and tipped an imagined brim. “Thank you. You and your lady better get going before the cops get here. I hope the rest of your evening is pleasant.”

Joker laughed. “Same to you my friend, same to you.”

Joker adjusted Harley and took off at a jog, dodging his way out of the alley. He saw Anatoli hurrying off down the street in the opposite direction and smiled, but he didn’t bother going after the man; it was more important for Harley and him to get away. He could settle his debts with the Russian another day.

“Come on Harls! Let’s go home!” Joker grinned hurrying away from the fight, carrying Harley with him. She held on tightly, smiling.

*

They didn’t make it home until late. Jack drove around a bit, taking a long way home just to be on the safe side.

Now they were upstairs, the house lit only by candlelight. Harry Connick Jr.’s voice drifted on the air, singing in a warm mellow voice.

“Yes, you’re lovely, with your smile so warm
And your cheeks so soft
There is nothing for me but to love you
And the way you look tonight.”

Harley sat in the bathtub picking up a handful of bubbles and with a sullen look she blew off them watching some of the soap bubbles float away catching the candlelight before they popped. She licked her wounded lip, and noted her jaw still smarted a bit from the fight.

“Stupid Russian gangsters,” she muttered.

Jack came into the bathroom dressed only in a pair of red and blue striped boxers, carrying a tray with two cups and a plate filled with cookies. “I made chocolate milk instead of coffee and I brought cookies for my sulky girl.”

Harley smiled. “Thank you puddin.”
He grinned and set the tray down on a small stool before he slipped off his boxers and got into the tub with her. He sat down on the other end with a contented sigh, his wound stung in the water, but it was nothing bothersome. “Oh that feels wonderful.”

Harley giggled and blew some bubbles at him. Jack smiled draping his arms along the back of the tub. “Sorry we didn’t get to go out for coffee.”

“It’s okay puddin...you got more men and that’s a good thing.” Harley picked up the soap and motioned at him to turn around. Jack did as she indicated shifting around until his back was to her. Harley soaped up her hand and began to wash his back, alternating the rubbing of soap with massaging his muscles. Jack groaned softly leaning into her touch.

“Are you going to have them come to the park?”

Jack shook his head as he gingerly touched his split lip. “Nah, that’s for family, and they haven’t proven themselves to be family yet. No, they can meet at our little guest location where Falcone’s ex and lawyer are staying.” Jack chuckled.

Harley pushed herself back and gently reached up to guide Jack’s head back. He leaned back holding onto the sides of the tub as she picked up a small plastic cup from the side of the tub and began to pour water over his green hair. She ran her fingers through his hair smiling, enjoying the way his green hair looked running between her fingers. She reached for the shampoo and poured some into her hand, rubbing her hands together before she tenderly began to run her fingers through his hair, her nails gently scratched across his scalp before pressing her fingertips against him.

Jack had his eyes closed as he groaned softly enjoying the feel of her touch.

Harley rubbed his temples. “So what are we going to do next puddin?”

Jack sighed contently. “Not sure sweets, not sure. So many people to play with…” He smiled.

Harley poured water over his hair, rinsing away the shampoo, his green hair shining brightly. She applied conditioner, once more massaging his scalp. Jack groaned softly. “But I think I want to play with Falcone a little more before Bats...I want to topple Falcone for good, make us the king and queen of Gotham...Old Batsy would have a hard time touching us when I have an army behind me.” He chuckled as Harley rinsed his hair. “Can you see him Harls? Bats trying to intimidate me knowing I own Gotham. Then we can do whatever we want...like blow up every piece of property owned in the Wayne’s name.” He chuckled.

Harley smiled caressing his throat with her fingers, then slowly tracing the muscles of his arms and back. “That would look lovey, a series of explosions going off at the same time, can you imagine?” Jack laughed. “That I can sweets, that I can!” He sat up and motioned for Harley to turn. “Your turn pumpkin.”

Harley smiled and turned, grabbing the sides of the tub and leaning back as Jack tenderly ran his fingers through her white hair. He carefully poured shampoo on the hair that he held in his hand before working it into a lather. Jack ran his fingers through her hair several times before he focused on her scalp, massaging his fingers tenderly into her scalp, smiling bright when she made tiny contented moans, always one of his favorite sounds. He repeated the process of rinsing her hair of the shampoo to replace it with conditioner.

Once that was done, leaving the conditioner in her hair, Jack took the soap himself and rubbed it over her back and arms massaging her like she had him except he slid his hands over her hips under
the water, his fingers slipping between her legs. He caught her ear with his lips, then his teeth as he
fingers slid against her clitoris. Harley leaned back against him, a soft moan escaping her lips as she
closed her eyes, enjoying the slip and slide of his fingers against her. With his other hand he grabbed
a nipple, rolling and lightly pinching the sensitive flesh, causing Harley to arch, her breathing coming
quicker. He licked her ear and whispered. “Come for me sweets, let me hear you.” Harley groaned,
her hips moving with the slide of his fingers. He stroked her nipple with the pad of his finger, licking
and biting her throat until Harley’s body jerked, tightening and released as her orgasm washed over
her in a warm wave.

Jack smiled and continued to casually caress her, grinding each time she jerked in response.

“There now, that’s better.” He whispered before removing his hands and gently began to wash out
the conditioner from her hair. He caressed her shoulders, her arms, his soapy hands followed the line
of her back.

He gently turned her back around. “There, all better.”

Harley smirked as Jack leaned back onto his side of the tub. Harley shifted over to snuggle up under
his arm. Jack pulled her close, some of the water sloshing out of the tub.

Harley gazed at him, her gaze tender and loving. “I love you so much puddin,” she whispered.

Jack smiled reaching out the caress her jaw, his thumb caressing the corner of her mouth then slowly
down, tenderly pulling her bottom lip as he gazed at her.

“Be my Queen?” he asked, his blue eyes searching her face.

Harley kissed his thumb before she moved closer, her lips playing over his, her tongue teasing,
flicking out to brush his tongue before she murmured. “Yes my King, yes.”

Jack’s hand slid along her jaw and guided her closer, his fingers wrapped around the back of her
neck, her long wet hair clinging to her shoulders and his fingers as he gently pulled her closer still.
He kissed her with a low burn that she felt flow throughout her body, his lips moved over her, his
teeth brushed against her tongue, her lips as he kissed her passionately.

Harley rolled over on top of him. Jack spread his legs as far as the tub would allow so she could rest
between them. She grabbed the back of the tub and leaned into him, sliding her wet breasts against
his chest as she leaned down to capture his mouth. Her kisses became more demanding, her wet,
soapy body sliding against him, caressing, teasing. She could feel his quickly growing erection
between them, which only encouraged her to slide against him more enjoying the fact that she was
arousing him. Jack leaned his head back against the rim of the tub, his hands sliding down to her
rear, gripping and squeezing as he pressed his hands into her soft skin. He slid his hands up and
down her back just to feel the curve of her body. She was so soft, so strong. He loved the way her
body fit against him as he wrapped both hands around her rear, pressing her down on him. Her wet
body sliding up and down on his erection had him growling against her lips.

Harley’s mouth moved over his, her tongue exploring, caressing. She glided from his mouth to kiss
his face, her lips and tongue licking the water from his cheeks and eyes. She dragged her tongue
along his throat down to his shoulder. She pressed her teeth into the back of his neck, biting with that
tantalizing mix of pleasure and pain; Jack inhaled sharply, his eyes fluttering in his ecstasy. Harley
smiled against his skin, moving lower to his nipple. She licked, tracing the hard nipple with her
tongue before she bit him again.

Jack growled once more, his fingers sliding down, seeking her intimate softness as she arched, her
breasts riding up to his mouth. He wrapped his lips around her nipple, sucking while his seeking fingers found the soft warmth of her, caressing with one hand while the fingers of his other hand slipped into her.

Harley moaned, the sound deep with pleasure, sliding against him, the heat from his erection burned against her stomach and his fingers slowly thrusting inside her had her moaning with need, with the desire for more.

Jack began to rock her against him, the long fingers of one hand sliding against her, caressing every sensitive inch of her while he pressed her body against him, her slick wet body continuing to slide up and down against his erection pinned between their bodies. The sensation made him weak, ripples of pleasure that made him want to roll her over and pound into her, to hear and feel the slap of flesh against flesh, but there was something alluring about drawing their pleasure out, teasing and waiting until he thought he would burst. She felt so good, soft, warm, wet, his girl, his Harley, the only person in all the world that he belonged to.

He licked her nipples, slowly sucking on one before switching to the other, burying his face between her breasts while Harley caressed his face, her fingers slipping through his damp green hair.

Jack growled softly. “I need you Harley.”

She ran her tongue over his lips. “I need you puddin.”

Jack pulled his fingers away and grabbed her waist, sitting himself up and lifting her while he brought his legs down. Harley straddled him, reaching down between them, her hand stroking him once as she held him ready. Jack groaned watching her, his heated gaze on her face as she lowered herself down on him.

She groaned, feeling his erection push into her, burying deep inside her as she lowered herself, feeling every inch of him. She gripped his shoulders, pressing her nails into his skin as she held herself unmoving for a moment, just feeling him inside her, the water settling around them. She flexed her muscles around him, embracing him.

Jack grunted, wrapping his arms around her, tugging her against him, followed by him dragging his tongue across her breasts which made her shiver.

Harley loosened her grip, her hands sliding down from his shoulders to his chest, caressing him gently before she began to rock her hips. She move slowly, both to extend the pleasure of having him inside her and to prevent sloshing too much water out of the tub. She forced herself to move slowly, to take her time, but it was so very difficult she thought, because all she wanted was to take from him, to pleasure herself with him, and to pleasure him with her body. She giggled at her wanton thoughts while tightening her muscles around him.

Jack’s lips glided up the column of her throat, his hands sliding up her back.

Harley caressed his throat, leaning in to kiss him deeply, her lips tugged on his upper lip before she once more plunged her tongue into his mouth while she ground and rolled her hips, the water rolling and splashing lightly over the rim of the tub.

Jack leaned back against the tub, his kisses more heated, became punctuated by groans and growls while she moved, sloshing water out of the tub as her rolling hips picked up speed.

Jack gasped her name between kisses that Harley answered with her own groans. He thrust up to meet her, the tension between them building, the water splashing until Harley broke free of his kiss to
cry out, her long white hair slicked back from her face, her plump lips parted as she moaned. She dropped her hands to grasp the sides of the tub, her rolling grinds becoming faster and harder, her body bowing as she climaxed.

Jack grabbed her hips, pressing her down on him and watching her orgasm. He groaned, furrowing his brow, locks of green hair stuck to his forehead and cheeks as he watched her, thrusting up into her until he cried out, his hips thrusting up as his orgasm broke over him. He gasped for breath, thrusting hard while at the same time holding her down on him.

Harley grasped his face between her hands, kissing him as if their lives depended on the meeting of their mouths. She moved with him until Jack seem to collapse, all the energy drained from his body.

Harley’s kisses slowed to something sweet, tender as Jack wrapped his arms around her and held her tightly. Jack returned her kisses just as tenderly, his pale fingers caressed her hair and over her back as he pulled her closer, wrapping his arms around her and held her snugly against him.

Soon, their passion cooled to its usual simmer. Jack stroked his fingers along her upper arm with a content smile.

Harley had closed her eyes, her head on his shoulder.

After a few moments of quiet Jack said softly. “You know what sweets? I think we should get crowns.”

Harley started to giggle.
The room was lit by the warm buttery glow of an overhead light. A small group of people were sitting around the large wooden table that sat in the middle of the garage where several bottles of beer sat in various stages of emptiness scattered across the table and floor. The garage was more of a shop. The walls were lined with boards that held so many tools that Harley could only guess what half of them were. Behind them sat a 1968 Chevrolet Corvette in several stages of repair. The sounds of the Rumjacks “Irish Pub Song” played in the background.

The some members of the Irish gangs of Gotham sat around the table. Mikey, dressed in a crisp white shirt and black slacks picked up his beer and took a long swig from it while staring at his cards. Next to him sat his cousin Ryan, her hair dyed bright, a neon pink and green mohawk, dressed in a black t-shirt and ripped up jeans sipping her beer and holding her cards like she hadn’t a care in the world, a very large cigar in the corner of her mouth. She shifted her cards around looking over at Alex and winking at him. Alex paled and picked up his beer. Next to her sat Shannon whose blonde hair was so light it was almost white, wearing a black turtleneck and jeans, his cards held so close to his nose that it was a wonder, Harley thought, that he could see them. Shannon also kept peeking over the top of the cards in such a way that it was taking all her effort not to giggle. And lastly was a man named Connor, who looked as if he were in desperate need of a sandwich and clearly had no idea how to play since he kept forgetting not to hold his cards so everyone could see them.

Across from them sat Jack, dressed in a dark green three piece suit with white shirt and gold tie. He had his jacket off, hanging on the back of his chair, the sleeves of his shirt rolled up his forearms (which made Harley all warm and achy...his arms were so sexy...like his long fingered hands, his chest, his stomach...she giggled but quietly lusted after her puddin.) His green hair was slicked back from his snow white face, and Harley sat on his lap, dressed in a little red knit tank dress that came to just above her knees. She had started out with black tights underneath but the pouty face that Jack had made when he realized he couldn’t touch her bare skin had made Harley discard the hose for simple black thigh high boots. Jack happily now had his free hand under the skirt of her dress while he gazed over the top of his cards at the other players. Next to them sat Frost on Jack’s right, his jacket on the back of his chair looking annoyed and Alex on his left wearing a Christmas themed Hawaiian shirt with palm trees and Christmas lights and a t-shirt and jeans, his cards currently face down so he could drink his beer. Agatha was sitting next to Frost, wearing a dress of deep blue that highlighted all her curves. She held her cards close to her chest with a small smirk on her lips. Harley had a feeling if Jack or Alex didn’t clean everyone out, it was going to be Agatha. She also noticed that Mikey couldn’t take his eyes off of Agatha, and Frost, judging by the furrow of his brow and the murder in his eyes, had noticed.

Harley giggled silently to herself. Not playing had its advantages, because watching everyone was a great deal of fun.

They were playing for money, but instead of using actual money on the table, they were using some old, beat-up poker chips that Shannon had brought with him in a cardboard box. Harley wasn’t exactly sure what the pot was at the moment because when everyone had been discussing the worth of each chips...blah blah...Harley was more interested in watching the players and had simply tuned out listening to the logistics of the game.

Conner grinned and set his cards face up on the table. “I got a pair!”

Mikey sighed while Ryan snorted around her cigar.

Shannon glanced over from his cards to Conner’s. “Buddy, you just got one pair.”
Conner frowned. “Isn’t that good?”

Shannon shrugged. “Better if you had three of a kind, two pair, anything else really…”

Conner frowned deeper. “But I thought…”

Mikey chuckled. “Conner, I think you need to let Shannon there go over the basics with you again.”

Connor sighed. “I suck at this. I’m better with guns.”

Ryan snickered and Mikey elbowed her hard in the side.

Jack grinned giving Harley’s knee a squeeze. “So, what happened at the dock again? You were in the middle of explaining?” He glanced at Conner, but with a friendly smile. Mikey took another sip of his beer. “The Russians were supposed to be picking up several crates of weapons. I heard about it from Joy--she works down on the dock but I pay her to keep her eyes and ears open for me. I got her little brother out of some trouble with the Russians and Falcone a few years ago. Anyway, she calls me, so me and about twenty others went down there and…” Mikey did air quotes with one hand. “…relieved them of their burden…and a few of them of their lives. The weapons are now at your warehouse.”

Jack chuckled glancing over at Frost who nodded. “The crates were filled with assault rifles, some light machine guns. Anything we don’t keep, we can sell.”

Alex picked up his cards again. “Yep, I have some buyers lined up already outside of Gotham.”

Ryan puffed on her cigar, her gaze directed at Jack and Harley. “We also took care of the human trafficking like you asked us to Boss, with Frost’s help…” She nodded to Frost. “And that Red Hood gang. We left a trail for the Gotham PD that even Hansel and Gretel could have followed. Got half the guys involved arrested.” She grinned. “Proud day, proud day.” She puffed on her cigar with a grin.

Jack chuckled. “Good work boys and girls, good work. Santa is going to leave you all gifts of money in your stockings! Now we just need to work on our next and hopefully final move against Falcone. I’m ready to make a major play for Gotham...take that bastard down. I have two pawns, but I’m becoming bored with having them, feel like blowing the whole wad at once!” He laughed as Harley gasped in pretend shock and smacked him lightly on the chest. Jack grinned back at her, pulling her close to cover her mouth in a kiss passionate enough that the Irish, who were not accustomed to the graphic displays of affection from their new boss and his lady, turned away blushing.

After a bit Mikey felt he should break the Boss and his girl up as he looked over at Ryan and motioned at her with his elbow. “So, you wanna tell him?”

Jack lifted his hairless brow at her. “Tell me?”

Ryan puffed on her cigar. “I met with your other associate, the Red Hood and with Alex’s introduction, we got just the thing for you. We got a hold of a helicopter, a retired UH-1Y Huey.”

Jack’s face lit up. “You what? A helicopter?”

Ryan nodded. “It’s a eight seater, and it would be more than big enough to hold a couple of miniguns…” She made a motion with her hand. “We can fly on in there and rattatatatat…” she motioned shooting with both hands. “Shoot up his windows in his office building like you suggested!! It’ll be like something from an epic gang flick!! All of Gotham will sit up!!” She grinned
and Jack laughed. “Perfect!!! So when will we have it?”

Ryan grinned sharing a glance with Alex who nodded. “Right after Thanksgiving sir,” she confirmed.

Jack laughed and clapped his hands. “Perfect!! This will be not just spectacular, but brilliant!! Put the fear of death into the hearts of every one of those dark hearted villains who are standing in my way...and Batman! Especially wanna scare Batman...gotta make sure old Batsy remembers, I’m the real threat, not some old has-been gangster!”

The Irish all exchanged a look but shrugged. This was what they had signed up for, even if the Joker was a bit...strange.

Jack’s smile was radiant as he set his cards down. “Oh, by the way--straight flush.”

Everyone made a sound as if they had been shot except Agatha who chuckled. “Oh dear, but I’m afraid my royal flush beats that.”

Jack stared at his aunt before he broke down into peals of laughter.

*

Later that night, after they had returned home, having set up a meeting with Ryan, Frost and Alex to go inspect the helicopter, Harley, her white, candy colored dipped hair pooled around her shoulders, was lying in Jack’s arms, her head resting on his chest. She smiled contently listening to the beat of his heart. A warm golden glow fell over them from the single lamp lit in their bedroom. They were both naked and cuddling under the sheets. Harley closed her eyes with a soft smile. She was never happier than in these moments, moment of quiet, just the two of them, no Bruce, no Batman, no Gotham, no gangs, no violence, just her and Jack wrapped in a bubble that held only the two of them.

She wrapped her leg around his waist, sliding the limb over him. She smiled when she felt his body respond, growing slightly hard under the caress of her leg. Jack lazily ran his fingers down her arm as he blew a soft billow of smoke into the air from his cigarette. Harley wrapped her arm around his waist and squeezed, holding him tightly. Harley kissed his chest, moving to press her lips against his nipple. Jack jerked slightly and Harley giggled before she said softly. “Tomorrow is Thanksgiving.”

Jack took a drag on his cigarette and smiled as he said around a cloud of smoke. “It is isn’t it!”

“Your aunt invited us over when she said her goodbyes tonight. If you want to go that is?” Harley asked softly, her fingers tracing the hints of his tattoo, following down his chest to his stomach. He twitched slightly at her touch, bringing a smile to her lips.

“Sure why not? It would be nice.” Jack gave her shoulder a squeeze before he leaned over to put out his cigarette on the ashtray beside the bed. “Something a little normal for a change.”

Harley smiled. She hadn’t thought of it in those words, but that was exactly what she was feeling...normal for a little while at least, though she knew normal was not something people like she and Jack got...normal was always for other people.

Harley looked up when Jack didn’t say anything else only to find him watching her with a smile.

She pushed herself up on her elbow. “What?”

Jack grinned, the light from the lamp made his teeth seem brighter. “Nothing, just thinking about you
and me...King and Queen of Gotham...wondering if I should get us a couple of thrones.”

Harley chuckled. “You are silly.”

Jack shrugged. “Maybe. I think when this is over, when we’ve put Falcone in the ground, you and I should renew our vows. I know I mentioned it before, but I think we should get married again. As Joker and Harley. We could do it here in the park with all our real family around us...no Bruce coming in to spoil everything...just you and me and our real family.”

Harley smiled as she rested more heavily on her elbow her voice slightly dreamy. “I could have all the girls be my maids of honor.”

Jack grinned. “I could have Alex as my best man and Bane and Jason, maybe Zsasz as my groomsmen.”

Harley giggled. “Means everyone at the wedding would actually be the wedding party.”

Jack laughed. “True, but it could be fun! We could go all out.”

Harley grinned. “I think we should do it puddin! I think we should have a wedding!”

Jack reached over and caressed her face. “I love you pumpkin.”

Harley smiled pressing her teeth into her bottom lip, her cheeks rosy against her pale white skin. “I love you too puddin.”

Jack pulled her close for a deep kiss, his hand sliding against her face. Harley made a little sound of want, reaching up to grasp the back of his neck, her fingers grabbing at the short green hairs there, her tongue diving deep into his mouth, her tongue gliding over his accompanied by the soft whimper of need.

Jack's hand glided down her throat, following the smooth curve to her shoulder then over her breast. He pressed her back until she laid back against the pillow. Jack squeezed her breast gently, while Harley made a soft muffled moan against his lips. He smiled, loved hearing the little sounds she made when she was pleased, when she wanted more from him, when she desperately needed him. Those little sounds Harley made did more to turn him on than anything else, made him feel needed and wanted. Jack rolled on top of his wife, continuing to kiss her before he dragged his lips over her chin, planting soft butterfly kisses along her throat, the smooth curve of her collar bone, following her smooth skin and curves down between her breasts. He held himself up on his hands so he could look at her, take in just how beautiful she was with her milk white skin, her white hair and her eyes, her incredible, gorgeous and sexy blue eyes. As he gazed at her lovingly, Harley smiled shattering everything in him; his love for her welled up and flowed over him creating a tingling warmth throughout his entire being. He was so much in love with her that he would move heaven and earth and hell to make sure she was happy. Jack kissed her nipples, enjoying the way Harley made a soft urgent moan of pleasure. He sucked at her nipple, his tongue flicking over the surface until Harley was writhing under him. He grinned and switched breasts repeating the same flicks and sucks, making her moan and hiss with pleasure.

Harley sucked in a shuddering breath. Jack’s lips were warm and soft as he kissed her sensitive nipples. He rubbed his cheek against her skin when he switched breasts, the kisses being accentuated by the feel of his tongue, warm, wet, licking her nipples slowly, carefully. His slow sucks and licks sent indescribable ripples through her, as if she simply couldn't stand any more, but then he switched nipples and started again. The feeling pooled between her legs into a throbbing ache. When he switched breasts, her hard nipples made her shiver as the saliva he left behind chilled the nipple. She

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moaned long and loud, brushing her fingers through his thick green hair. Her body shifting under him, she wanted and needed more.

Jack made his way down her torso with butterfly kisses, licking his way to her pelvis. He kissed her hip bones, then slowly down along the line of her stomach before leaving a longer, lingering kiss, his tongue rolling against her skin just above her sex before he sat up on his knees. He lifted one of her legs and grinned down at her.

Harley watched him with a smile as he kissed her ankle, his fingers caressing down the side of her leg as he kissed his way to her knee, a biting kiss at the inside of her thigh before he switched legs and worked his way back up, a sucking kiss at her inner thigh, sucking on her until he left a purple bruise in his wake before his lips traveled up to her knee. He pressed his warm lips to her knee, lifting her leg to find the tender place behind her knee where he dragged his tongue against that soft, sensitive spot.

Harley giggled, gazing up at him loving the way he looked, fully erect, the light dancing over his milk white skin. Her husband was so alluring and sensual, he made her ache so much for him. She wanted him, wanted to feel him pressing into her, to fill her, but when he kissed her behind her knee she squealed. “That tickles!”

Jack smirked. “Good...now let’s see if I can tickle you someplace else.”

Jack dropped down to his hands over her, reaching down to stroke his fingers against her clitoris. She was wet, slick and soft. Harley groaned when he touched her, rolling her hips to push against his fingers. “Oh puddin...yes...I want you.”

Jack smiled. “Mmm...I can feel that…”

Jack held himself for a moment before he pushed, feeling the exquisite sensation of sliding into her, his shaft being surrounded by her warmth, the soft firm hold of her body against his, her muscles wrapping around his erection at the same time that her arms wrapped around him, holding him, loving him, keeping him safe. He groaned as he thrust into her, driving his erection into her waiting body, losing himself in her.

“Harls…” He growled her name just before he leaned in to kiss her, his mouth moving over hers, his tongue lingering against hers while he thrust into her, each time her pelvis rose up to meet him.

Harley captured his mouth quickly, reaching to grab his rear, her fingers digging into the pale flesh of his backside, drawing his hips down to her while Jack began to thrust harder and faster, grunting with the sensation of thrusting into her. He moaned softly, licking the corner of her mouth, then across her tongue. “You’re so wet pumpkin.”

Harley dug her fingers into his rear. “That’s all your fault,” she answered with a giggle.

He chuckled while he thrust, the bed bouncing with them; e could feel the bounce of her legs as she held them up and spread wide for him. He thrust deep into her as if he was trying to bury more than simply his erection into her.

Harley groaned against his mouth, her fingers squeezing his rear tighter before she threw her head back and cried out. “Uh...Puddin!!”

Jack ground his teeth to stop himself from climaxing at that moment. He had to still his movements just a little, instead going for long slow thrusts in contrast to the hard pounding thrusts he wanted to give in to. He leaned into her as he slowed down, each thrust was a careful movement to prevent his
orgasm while still enjoying her. But the flood of her orgasm washed over him, making him want to fuck her like his life depended on it. He dug his fingers into the sheet, tightening his muscles to stop his responding climax...for now...he needed her to hear her cry out again before he would be satisfied.

Harley gasped holding on as Jack picked up his rhythm again, but then stopped. Harley wiggled in protest. “Puddin!”

Jack laughed at her pout, kissing her lips and the tip of her nose. “Roll over you silly little minx, I’m not done, I promise.”

Harley beamed at him as Jack pulled out of her with an agonizing furrow on his brow, leaving her warmth was so hard even if he was going to simply plunge in again. He moved out of her way, sitting back on his knees as Harley rolled over, coming up on her hands and knees. Jack licked his lips looking at her. He walked on his knees closer to her, running his hands over her rear and along her hips gazing at her. She was so beautiful, porcelain white, smooth rolling softness. He used his leg to make her spread her legs more which she did, gazing over her shoulder at him with a wicked little smirk on her perfect mouth. He grinned at her while he caressed her, enjoying the feel of her silky skin under his hands. He reached between her legs, sliding his fingers against her clitoris before sliding his middle finger into her. Harley gasped, her body tightening around his finger. Jack licked his lips, thrusting gently with his finger while Harley thrust back groaning. He thrust his finger rubbing his thumb over her at the same time, caressing her while he rested his free hand against her rear, watching each time his finger disappeared into the wet warmth of her body, the way she curved her back, her hair falling in soft waves...she made him hungry for her, his erection throbbed with the need to be in her again.

Harley arched as he slid another finger into her, thrusting harder. She rocked back against his fingers, her eyes screwed closed, arching her head back with a cry of pleasure.

He grinned the moment she became wetter, thrusting in time to her cries and the rocks of her body before he removed his fingers and came up behind her. His erection slid into her; she was so wet that it sent chills up his body.

Harley cried out again when he thrust into her, feeling the hard width of him inside her; she arched and rocked back against him. “Uh puddin...uh…” Harley moaned. “Yes...oh yes…”

Jack caressed her rear and hips, watching as his erection disappeared into her, the way her rear pressed up against him, the smoothness of her skin, how wet they both were as he pulled her back against him. He grasped her hips and leaned forward, brushing her hair aside to press a kiss between her shoulders with a whispered, “My girl,” tickling her skin.

Harley felt a shiver run over her when he said, “My girl.” Nothing in the world was sweeter than to know she was his girl and he was her puddin, together, forever. She glanced behind her with a smile. “I love you puddin.”

Jack beaned back a little, pulling her against him, her hips bouncing as he thrust into her. “I love you too pumpkin.”

He brushed several more kisses against her spine before straightening up and grasping her hips firmly in his hands and began yanking her back against him with each of his thrusts.

Harley dropped to her elbows, forcing her hips higher as Jack’s thrusts became harder. He pressed hard into her, holding her hips up against him when she came again. She gasped, thrusting back hard, tightening her hold around him, her fingers digging into the sheets as she dropped her head
down against the pillows. Jack pushed forward and Harley let her legs slide back and closed with Jack sliding down at the same time. Feeling his weight against her back was delicious. She brought her legs up as Jack spread his legs and thrust deeper, his hand pressed against her rear as he moved. He grunted, squeezing her rear before he dropped down to lay against her, kissing the back of her neck as he did so.

She groaned with delight, loved the way he felt, so deep inside her, his body pressed completely against her, so close their contours were perfectly matched. He reached for her hands. Harley extended her arms up and Jack’s hands flowed up her arms, reaching up to intertwine his fingers with hers. He continued to thrust at a slower pace, kissing her ear through her hair, then down to her shoulder.

When Harley climaxed with another cry, her fingers tightening around Jack’s as her body rocked with her orgasm.

Jack let himself go. He thrust in short quick bursts, drawing out her orgasm until he came, his own orgasm bursting over him, causing him to groan loudly leaning hard into her. He released her hands to wrap his arms around her, sliding them under her arms and holding her close while he pressed his cheek against ear, continuing to thrust, both of them sharing a cry, then a kiss as Harley turned to kiss him.

Jack kissed her softly, tenderly, holding her close.

“My sweet girl,” he whispered.

Harley giggled softly closing her eyes. “Mm...that was nice.”

Jack chuckled and sighed happily. “Yes it was.”

They were both quiet, just lying together, their bodies joined which Jack whispered. “I just thought of something awful Harley.”

Harley opened one eye to peer at him. “Mm? What?”

He smiled and whispered. “Whatever are we going to wear tomorrow?”

* * *

Jack stopped outside the apartment door and released Harley’s hand to run a long-fingered hand over his suit. He was dressed in a dark navy blue suit with a white and blue vertical striped shirt, a yellow double breasted vest and black tie with tiny polka dots. Harley stood next to him wearing a white tulle skirt and little bright green sweater (that almost matched Jack’s hair) with a lace Peter Pan collar and glittery silver pumps, her white hair pulled back into a high ponytail and tied off with a matching green ribbon. Right now she had a fuzzy white coat over her outfit while Jack had on a long black trench coat. Jack’s black gloved fingers brushed over his hairless brow. “You think so?”

Harley frowned. “Why so uncomfortable puddin? It's just your aunt and Frost.” Harley reached up and cupped his face between her hands. “Jack, it’s all right. I’m here. I’m not going anywhere, you will never spend a holiday without me with you, and you are never silly--except when you need to be.” She smiled into his eyes. “I love you with all my heart.”

Jack looked back at her, his eyes searching her face for something, but then his red lips pulled back into a bright smile. “I love you Harls--you’re my heart.”

He wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her close to kiss her. He kiss her deeply, dipping
her back slightly. That was the moment the door opened. Agatha was standing there in a sleeveless black dress trimmed in lace, her hair perfectly styled, diamonds in her ears. She smirked when she saw her nephew and Harley.

“I thought I heard voices out here and then I see these two young’uns making out on my doorstep...what is the world coming to?” Agatha asked over her shoulder at Frost who looked up from setting the turkey on the table.

Jack broke the kiss with Harley to reach for his aunt. “Haha, very funny.”

Jack’s aunt grinned wrapping her arms around the two of them. “Let’s get you inside before someone realizes the Joker is coming for Thanksgiving. Oh and by the way, I hope you don’t mind dear, but I invited a few more people.” Agatha smiled and stepped aside.

Jack and Harley stepped in and Harley made a little gasp of surprise. Inside the small apartment Jack saw Jason, Thea, and Trope helping Frost set the table. Bane sat on the couch with his arm around Viktoria’s shoulders watching the parade in downtown Gotham on the television. Bea and Zsasz were leaning against a wall talking together and lastly, Alex sat in a fold out metal chair next to a recliner that held his very pregnant, looking like she was about to burst, girlfriend, Alice. Everyone called out a greeting.

Agatha grinned. “I didn’t think you would mind having your family here Jackie.”

Jack was quiet for a moment. Harley turned to look at him. He was hiding it well, but she could see it, the emotions in his eyes as he smiled and murmured. “My family.” He looked down at Harley grinning. “Let’s go have dinner shall we?”

“Of course puddin.” Harley smiled at her husband.

* 

A set of drones zipped over the dark Gotham streets flying high enough up that they would not be easily detected. The set of drones turned a corner and rose up into the air going up several floors of a building before stopping near the top and hovering outside the large glass windows of an office where the curtains had been pulled back to reveal an expensively furnished office.

* 

Falcone sipped gingerly at his drink, one elbow resting on his desk as he listened to Tallyman give him a rundown of what he had learned about his son’s disappearance and murder, the murder of Gigi and his still missing ex-wife and lawyer, which was pretty much nothing...except that Bane was involved...other than that, nothing.

Tallyman stood with his arms behind his back as he spoke. “Since the trail has currently run cold I have taken it upon myself to increase security at your home and here. I have also seen to it that your regular security detail is better armed.”

Falcone looked at Tallyman over the top of his glass. “You don’t have that sort of authorization Tallyman.”

Tallyman nodded. “Agreed, but sir, you are paying me for a job and have given me free reign to perform this job anyway I see fit, and that is what I have done.”

Falcone sighed and shrugged. The man made sense. “Fine.”
The two men continued to talk though the drones couldn’t pick up what was being said. The two drones turned and headed back along the path they had approached the building, flying swiftly back across the city to the small airport mostly hidden along the edges of Gotham by overgrown trees and bushes. The airport had once been a private place where the rich would keep their personal planes and helicopters, but mismanagement and tax evasion had closed the place more than a couple of decades ago. Now the only aircraft here was a dark Huey helicopter and several members of Joker’s gang.

Trope sat next to her girlfriend Thea on the overgrown pavement just on the inside of an abandoned hangar that sat behind the helicopter, both women with matching aqua colored hair. Each held what to Harley looked like a complicated mess, but were in fact the transmitters for the drones. Trope smiled as she looked up at Joker. “He’s in there with some black dude, but he is there and drinking so I don’t think he is going anywhere right away.”

Joker chuckled and turned, running his hands down the front of his dark evergreen suit, touching the chain that ran across his stomach. His fingers, covered in dark purple gloves, touched the bottom hem on his vest before he reached up and touched the top of his purple and mustard striped tie that stood out against the light purple dress shirt he wore, his twin shoulder holsters visible. He removed his wide brim fedora and ran his hand through his green hair which was brushed back, one curl having come free of the severe hairstyle to curl seductively on his forehead. It made Harley want to run her fingers through his hair. He wore a pair of green suede and black leather oxford style boots, the green looking like spats with the large buttons that ran along the side. Harley gazed at him with a soft, loving smile. He looked so good she thought, ready to take over Gotham…ready to make his big move tonight. She was so proud of him.

Harley had dressed for the occasion in her own suit, with wide legged red slacks, a dark blue dress shirt with a red tie, a red and blue striped jacket, and her own pair of matching low heeled oxford boots. She had pulled her hair back into a high ponytail, her own twin holsters that held her guns loaded and ready. Everyone else was there as well and several cars. Everyone who was actively participating in tonight’s assassination attempt was armed, the others, like Trope, Thea and Alex were ready to do their part by watching out for the GCPD and Batman.

Joker grinned and clapped his hands together. “All right boys and girls, are we ready for some fun??”

A murmur of assent went through the gang. Joker grinned wide motioning for Harley who walked over to Joker. He took her hand and began to walk closer to the helicopter. Inside the helicopter the minigun was mounted and ready. Mikey and Ryan, her cigar in the side of her mouth, were here representing the Irish gangs, armed and on the helicopter with the two pilots. Jason was acting as copilot to a man named Boxer who had worked with the Irish in the past. Inside, bound, bloody and looking terrified was Falcone’s ex-wife, tied up tight in duct tape next to a box of grenades. The rest of the gang were heading off to various locations to cause their own kind of mischief, but Joker and the rest on the helicopter were heading straight for the serpent’s head, Falcone.

Joker tossed his hat inside just as he handed Harley up into the helicopter where Mikey handed her a Norinco Type 56. Harley grinned as she took the weapon, turning to watch Joker, who hopped inside after her, then turned to lean out.

“All right, you all have you assignments. We are going to hit Falcone hard, kill as many of his men as you can, but the most important part is that you don’t get yourself killed, or captured; if you have to choose getting out, then get out. I want everyone back alive. We are going to take care of the big
stuff!” Joker chuckled “This is going to be epic my little chicks! Just epic!”

Joker stepped closer to Harley taking her by her upper arms and pulled her close and to the side, a small area providing a tiny moment of solitude.

“You ready for this Harls?” He smiled and stroked his gloved fingers over her cheek, his blue eyes taking in every detail of her face. His fingers slide down to her chin which he lifted up, leaning in his softly brush his lips against her. Harley smiled, her eyes fluttering closed for a moment as Joker deepened the kiss from a brush of his lips to something soft and sweet. His tongue caressed hers tenderly before he pulled away.

“You know I’ll go anywhere with you puddin, to hell and back.” Harley smiled, holding his gaze.

Joker brushed his nose against hers. “I know you would pumpkin pie, I know you would.”

Harley murmured as she stared into his eyes. “I would die for you puddin.”

Joker laughed softly. “No sweets, no...live for me...always live for me.”

Harley smiled “I’d live for you puddin...always.”

“That’s my girl.” Joker kissed her again, dropping his hand to wrap his arm around her waist, pulling her up against him, pressing her body against his as he leaned her against the interior wall of the helicopter, for the moment, everything was forgotten as he kissed her.

Harley wrapped her arm and the gun around his waist and held onto him tightly with all her strength, returning his kiss with every ounce of her love for him.

*

Outside Frost turned to Agatha and gave her a deep kiss, pulling her tight against him. Agatha wrapped her arms around him and smiled. “See you soon.”

Frost grinned. “You be careful.”

Agatha snorted. “Pfft, taking out a few mobsters is nothing. Besides, I’m with Bane sweetie, that’s like having a walking mountain with me.”

Frost chucked. “Just don’t get yourself shot.”

Agatha laughed. “Oh you like the scars.”

They kissed one more time before Frost turned and headed toward the helicopter just as Boxer turned the engine over.

Joker leaned out as the blades above began to rotate. “Okay, see everyone later for our celebration party!” He waved, as did Harley. “Good luck everyone!!”

The rest of the gang scattered quickly getting out of the way of the lifting helicopter. Agatha watched with a mix of pride that Jack...Joker, was finally going to take out Falcone. She just hoped that the shift in power didn’t bring anything else out of the woodwork of Gotham.

*

Batman, with Robin beside him, was driving through Gotham. Batman’s mind was wandering a little, his mind on Selina. He was deciding whether to tell her about Batman...he felt as if there was a
large divide between them, his secret heavy, especially since he knew hers. He frowned in thought. Next to him, Robin was looking down at the small portable laptop on his knees which was connected to various cameras throughout Gotham. The system was still in its infancy and they were still having issues with connection, but the newer systems designed by Barbara were showing promise. Robin was currently scanning through some of the traffic cams that they had hacked into that were located around Falcone’s office building, an area that Batman had wanted to keep an eye on after Joker’s threat. The young man frowned and said softly. “That’s weird.”

Batman glanced sideways at Robin. “Weird?”

Robin nodded. “You know how you had us put some extra surveillance on Falcone’s home and his main office because of Joker?”

Batman nodded. “Yes.”

“Well, the cameras picked up two drones, which I wouldn’t really have normally worried about, but they were hovering around Falcone’s office and then took off. They were flying strange too, like they were trying not to be detected.” Robin looked up and shrugged. “I’m not sure how else to describe it...just felt like they were...checking.” He looked over at Batman who frowned deeper. “We need to get over there and check it out,” Batman murmured.

*

The helicopter was making its way toward Falcone’s office, the side doors open. Joker stood in the doorway, one hand up and holding one of the handholds as he leaned out dangerously, his eyes closed and a smile on his face as the wind blew over his face.

Harley was standing beside him holding onto her handhold and watching him. “Puddin, you all right?”

Joker opened his eyes slowly, his smile spreading across his face. “Yes my sweets, just fine. You ever have that feeling of contentment, that divine sense of rightness when everything's coming together the way you hoped it would, all your plans and suffering coming to a head in the most perfect way?”

Harley smiled at him as she reached over and took his free hand. “Yeah, I have.”

Joker grinned brightly giving her hand a squeeze. “I'm feeling like that right now, as if everything is working out, just like I planned.”

Harley leaned over and kissed him. Joker reached up and placed his hand against her cheek as he kissed her.

*

Falcone was alone in his office now. He had sent Tallyman off, the man doing whatever it was he was paying him to do he supposed. He filled his glass to the brim with amber liquid and frowned as he stared into the glass, wondering for a moment if he was becoming an alcoholic. This Joker was getting under his skin.

He sighed and stood up, walking over to the window to gaze out at Gotham. Gotham was his city and he was going to be damned if he was going to let some clown who had gotten too big for his britches come in and try to destroy everything he had built, and for what? Shits and giggles? For some perceived slight? He sipped his drink. He wasn’t even sure what the fuck this clown really wanted, or what he hoped to accomplish, but he was going to be damned if this asshole was going to
get to him...He sighed, then frowned slightly when he thought he heard the sound of a helicopter, which in and of itself wasn’t that unusual, but it was really close...

For a moment he wondered if someone had a television or a computer on, watching a movie or something far too loudly, but he was sure he was alone on this floor except for his guards. He stepped closer to the window turning to look up just as something large came rushing out of the darkness.

Falcone let out a startled yelp and staggered back from the window just as a body hit the glass. The window didn’t shatter on impact, but fractured, spider webbing, cracks rushed out from the impact. Falcone stared in disbelief as he saw for a moment, the bloody and terrified face of his ex-wife pressed against the glass of the now cracked window. Her eyes were wide and she was clearly alive. He only had a moment to register that she was wrapped in duct tape. When her gaze met Falcone’s she screamed.

“CARMINE!”

But in the next instant, whatever had been holding her was cut loose and her body plummeted away. Carmine dropped his drink, the glass shattering as it fell, he pressed his hands against the glass and shouted. “LOUISA!!”

He stared down, but she was gone, vanished in the darkness below, but his attention was yanked back as a helicopter lowered itself down, hovering in front of the window. Falcone stared in disbelief as he saw Joker and his woman, Harley, standing in the open frame of the helicopter waving at him.

“Hey Falcone, didn’t think you would see me again so soon did you?” Joker’s words and laughter were barely audible through the cracked window and over the sound of the chopper, but Falcone shouted. “I’ll kill you!!! I’ll fucking kill you and put your head on a spike on CROWN POINT BRIDGE!!!”

Joker and Harley laughed together. Joker yelled out. “So medieval? Are you mad at me?” He looked at Harley and chuckled. “I think he’s mad at us cupcake!”

Harley turned to Falcone and pouted. “Aww, we’re such nice people too puddin.”

Joker shrugged. “Well you know what they say--can’t please everyone.”

Joker brought his weapon up, and all Falcone registered was the barrel of a gun as Joker grinned at him with a bright smile. “Bye Camrine!”

Carmine barely had time to throw himself out of the way as Joker and Harley both opened fire on the window. The bullets hit the glass, shattering it into a million bright tinkling pieces.

Joker yelled and motioned with his weapon. “Turn her around darlings!!”

When the shooting stopped, Falcone, who had thrown himself back behind his desk, his arms over his head stood up just in time to see the helicopter turn, twin barrels aimed at his office.

* 

Tallyman was leaning against the wall not too far outside of Falcone’s office looking at his phone when he heard one of the guards yelling something about a helicopter, which was followed by the sounds of shouting and gunshots. Everything was happening so quickly that Tallyman wasn’t sure what was happening, but he did know what he was going to do. He took off, heading for the roof, pulling his twin desert eagles out as he did, shouldering a couple of men out of his way as he headed
toward the stairs.

*

Falcone cursed and ran as the helicopter opened fire, the bullets began to take out the entirety of the windows, glass imploding inward as the bullets ripped through the glass and into the office, tearing apart the desk, ripping into the floor and walls, shattering, exploding everything and anything in the office. Falcone ran for the door but was stopped short, a gasp of pain escaping his mouth as he stumbled forward and slammed into the floor; a bullet had ripped through his calf. He hit the floor hard, slamming his chin against the wood, but pulled himself up with a cry of pain and anger, limping as fast as he could toward his escape. He reached out for the door just as another bullet ripped through his shoulder, causing him to slam into the door just as one of his men pushed the door open. Heavy rounds tore into the man who opened the door, spraying him in the chest and stomach, riddling him with holes and splattering blood across Falcone and the walls and floor. The man jerked, the force of the bullets keeping him standing in place for several seconds. Carmine crawled by the man’s legs and out into the hall.

*

Joker was laughing so hard that he nearly fell out of the helicopter. “HAHAHahaha!!! Did you see him crawling across his office Harls?!”

Harley giggled. “I did puddin.”

Frost turned, he had the door open on the other side, his hands on the minigun trigger and looking down as he yelled. “BOSS!! I see the cops!”

Joker giggled. “Well Frost my love, give them a proper greeting!”

Frost frowned, but he aimed the weapon and started firing.

*

The GCPD had been called on a report of gun fire. Gary Reese and his partner Linda Dole were in the area, patrolling in their car when they got the report.

Gary grinned at Linda. “Gunfire?”

Linda smiled back. “Tense situation handled well could mean that promotion you’ve been aiming for Gary.”

Gary grinned. “That’s what I was thinking.”

She reached over and patted his knee. “Then what are you waiting for?”

Gary’s smile widened and he turned their patrol car around. They drove quickly, speeding through lights and signs headed in the reported direction of the gun fire, hoping to get there first before any of their brothers and sister in blue arrived.

Linda frowned looking out the windshield as they came closer. “Gary, did you see that? Up in the air there, like an explosion or something.”

Gary frowned. “No I…”

They came driving around the corner just in time to see the helicopter stop firing on the building.
“Oh shit!” Gary gasped.

Linda, her voice soft in shock. “Isn’t that Carmine Falcone’s building?”

Gary began to answer when bullets started to rip into the asphalt in front of them. Linda screamed. Gary knew he should back the car up, or jump out, something, but he was frozen for a second, a second too long...

*

Robin yelped, his eyes on his computer and the traffic cameras, which he was periodically moving around, checking the area around Falcone’s when he yelled. “Batman there’s a helicopter firing on Falcone’s building!”

Batman hands on the wheel tightened as he hit the gas with a hiss. “Joker, it has to be.”

Robin muttered. “Where did he get a helicopter?”

*

Joker leaned into the body of the helicopter and yelled at Boxer and Jason. “Keep firing until we’re out of ammo, I want that building destroyed!”

He turned to Ryan. “Toss me some grenades, let’s make this even more fun!”

Ryan chuckled around her cigar and began tossing grenades at Joker and Harley, who caught them, pulled the pins, and tossed them out of the helicopter toward the building.

Joker smiled at his girl. “Wanna wager on who can take out say…” He narrowed his eyes and pointed at a sculpture deep inside the office, just barely visible through the now flickering lights, that the bullets of the helicopter had miraculously somehow missed. “That!” He pointed giving her a cheerful grin.

Harley giggled. “You’re on! Better think of something good to give me when I win.”

She gave Joker a saucy wink which had him laughing.

She threw her grenade, leaning out of the helicopter, tossing the explosive weapon just as someone tried once more to open the office door, but her attention was dragged from the explosion to the ground. She gasped as she saw some movement below, something long and black...the Batmobile came rushing down the street. Mentally she snarled to herself, Bruce.

The grenade exploded, but Harley wasn’t paying any attention to it as she pointed below them, the helicopter rocking slightly from the explosion. “PUDDIN!! Batsy’s here!”

Frost had stopped firing at the police car turning to look at Harley before he looked down to see the Batmobile, anger welling up hot and fast at the sight of Batman.

Joker, leaned out, his gaze fixed downward as the helicopter shifted in the air until he caught sight of his brother’s unique long, black car. Joker grinned wide, his blue eyes slightly wild as he murmured. “Batman.”

*

Tallyman made it to the roof, stopping along the way to grab a couple of Falcone’s better armed men. They had all felt the shift as something exploded in the building, all of them stopping for a
moment to hold on to the handrails in the stairwell where they were currently located, trying to get to the roof. Whatever had caused the explosion hadn’t reached them as Tallyman motioned for them to keep moving. He could only hope the building didn’t collapse.

Tallyman hit the door to the roof, getting Falcone’s man Loubo to hold the door so that the group of five men could rush out onto the roof. Immediately they could hear the sound of the helicopter close to the building as they all rushed to the edge to look down. The helicopter was hovering below them.

Tallyman smirked. Perfect, he thought. He got to the very edge and took aim at the helicopter’s blades while the rest of the men with him did the same.

* 

Joker laughed as Harley leaned out as far as she could, a grenade in her hand ready to drop it straight down on the hood of the Batmobile (if her aim was good), when suddenly the sounds of several things hitting the helicopter could be heard over the engine and blades. For just a second it sounded like a ping, just barely heard over the sound of the spinning blades, but that sound was quickly followed by several others, slamming into the helicopter from above. The impact of the bullets caused the helicopter to begin to lose height. The sudden shift was enough that everyone in the helicopter (except the pilots) lost their balance. Joker grabbed Harley, pulling her back as she dropped the grenade. (She didn’t get to see where her grenade landed a few seconds later, but it hit one of the cars parked below, not close enough to hurt Batman, but the bright explosion temporarily blinded the Bat and his sidekick) as another set of pings hit the helicopter, raining down on them in rapid succession.

Boxer turned and yelled. “Someone is shooting at us. I think they hit the the rotor!”

Joker snarled. “Fuck, get us out of here.”

He growled in annoyance, they didn’t get to destroy the building and he didn’t know if Falcone was dead...but at least the message was clear.

His smile was followed by a laugh. Sometimes you gotta take what you can get, he thought.

* 

Down below, Batman had just gotten out of the car, giving the area a quick scan when he stood up beside the car. There was a body on top of one of the cars, the roof of which was smashed in like a pancake from the body’s impact. Batman couldn’t be sure until he went over there, but his gut told him the body was either Falcone’s ex-wife or his lawyer, the only two people still missing that the Joker had kidnapped. Logic said, if that was Joker up there in that helicopter, the body was most likely connected; but at the moment that didn’t matter. His gaze was drawn upward toward the helicopter. His gaze caught something, illuminated by street lights, something falling. At first he didn’t quite realize what it was that was falling swiftly down, but at the last second he realized what he was seeing.

The grenade hit the top of one of the cars near the body, it bounced down to hit a windshield before it rolled along the hood of one of several park cars and exploded, throwing metal fragments and glass everywhere. Batman had only just enough time to register that a grenade had fallen before he had propelled himself over the hood of his car, grabbing Dick and yanking the young man to the asphalt, throwing his cape over them both just as the explosion erupted.

*
Joker looked down with a laugh. “Damn Harley, that was great!”

A few more bullets hit the helicopter causing the pilot to lurch violently to the side.

Boxer yelled. “I’m gonna have to fly up and get us out of here.”

Joker nodded. “Go!”

The helicopter began a quick ascent.

*

Tallyman grinned. “They’re coming up, get ready.”

The helicopter rose up, shifting and turning as it lifted past the roof of Falcone’s building. Tallyman took aim, waited as the helicopter rose, turning slightly, the cockpit facing him.

There was a moment where everything slowed down. Tallyman brought his weapons up, he could see the expression of both the pilot and the co-pilot, no one he knew...he smiled as he pulled the triggers on his weapons.

*

Boxer looked up and saw the man standing on the roof with his weapons aimed at the cockpit.

He yelled. “FUCK!”

He started to pull away as Jason caught sight of the man too. Jason’s eyes widened in surprise just as fifty caliber rounds hit the windshield of the helicopter. Jason threw himself down, his arms over his head, but Boxer wasn’t as lucky. A bullet broke through the glass and slammed right between his eyes.

The helicopter spun in a crazed circle at the same time rising higher as Boxer fell forward, his body slumping over the controls.

Inside the helicopter, Joker reached out to grab Harley who was struggling to hold onto to her hand just as the tail of the helicopter spun around.

Tallyman’s eyes widened as he realized the helicopter was going to hit part of the roof, the tail spinning wildly toward them.

“RUN!” He yelled at the handful of men who were up here with them.

The tail of the helicopter hit the edge of the building, the sound of metal scraping against concrete was loud, a strange high pitched whine.

Inside the cockpit, Jason unbuckled himself, yanking Boxer’s body out of the way in order to grab the controls. The helicopter spun a few inches from the building. Mikey lost his grip and fell out. Ryan screamed. Frost was holding on, his arms aching with the effort. The helicopter swung Harley around hard enough that she lost her grip and started to fall backwards out of the helicopter.

Joker’s hand snapped out and grabbed Harley’s hand as she screamed, her body coming dangerously close to the open side. He held onto her, his hand tight enough that he wouldn’t be surprised if he had broken one of her fingers, but he wasn’t going to lose her, not again. Joker’s blue eyes were wide as he struggled to pull her back against the force of the helicopter trying to fling her out. His grip on her hand was firm, his arm locked as Harley stared back at him, her eyes filled with fear.
Joker yelled over the helicopter. “I won’t let go Harley!! I won’t ever let go!!”

Harley nodded back, though she still looked terrified.

Jason was struggling with the helicopter as the tail spun around again, a few feet lower, and smashed through glass. Jason jerked the controls and pulled them back, smiling as he started to gain altitude.

* *

By this time more police had arrived, their weapons outs, cars blocking off the area, they watched the helicopter wildly struggled for control.

Batman was the one to yell. “CLEAR THE AREA!”

* *

Jason had just gotten the helicopter under control, though how long he could keep it airborne was questionable. The helicopter had risen further above the building, Jason trying to turn her, but the controls were not cooperating easily.

Joker was still holding on to Harley who was still far too close to the edge, when another bullet ripped through the interior, hitting Harley in the shoulder of the arm that Joker was holding on to. Harley cried out in pain as the bullet ripped an exit wound out of her shoulder only to slam into Joker’s shoulder. All the strength in the arm that held his wife fled as the bullet tore through his shoulder. His fingers went numb and his hand opened, releasing Harley who fell backwards out of the helicopter.

Joker roared as his arm dropped dead at his side and he watched in horror as Harley fell backwards out of the helicopter leaving a trail of blood in the air.

“NO!!”
Heartache Every Moment

As Batman looked up, he could see the helicopter struggling for control, illuminated by the city lights and the flashes of gunfire at the top of the building. He had just begun to move toward the building when he saw someone fall from the struggling helicopter. He turned, for a brief moment thinking to go and try to catch the person, but in the same instant he knew there was nothing he could do—it happened too quickly and suddenly the body was crashing to the ground. Batman spun around fully when the body hit, saw the burst of blood as the body slammed against the roof of a nearby parked car smashing in the roof of the car and shattering the windows with an explosion of glass. He didn’t bother moving closer to see whoever that person was...he or she was dead. Instead he moved closer to Robin yelling over the sounds of the helicopter, the police and the gunfire.

“Get over to the police, see what you can do to help. I’m…”

That was when he heard a woman’s scream. He wasn’t sure what it was that made him react the way he did when he heard the scream. It wasn’t like there was something distinctly familiar about the sound. No, Batman would realize later, that wasn’t true, he would be lying to himself, there was something familiar about the sound, and his gut told him exactly who it was that screamed. Batman looked up. He saw the streetlight catch the glow of white hair, dipped pink and blue and knew it was Harley Quinn, just as he had known it was Joker--Jack--in that helicopter making his attack on Falcone.

Batman only had a moment to decide what to do or Harley was going to hit a car or the street. The chances of her surviving such an impact were zero, just like the person who had fallen only seconds before. He could only imagine how Joker would react to Harley dying, what his brother would do to Gotham if Harley died. For a moment the thought of letting her go, letting her die, flashed through his mind. It was a brief thought, barely fully formed, but it was there, let her die, let the woman that he felt had ruined his brother--who had taken his brother’s hand and led Jack the rest of the way down the path of complete madness--just let her die, be done with her. But he realized in the same breath that he couldn’t do that, he couldn’t give in to his darker thoughts, because if he did, then he would be exactly like Jack, mad, angry...lost.

Batman wasn’t sure if he was doing this for her, for Joker, for Jack, or for himself, but Batman yanked a large capsule from his belt, and threw it to the ground. The capsule was about the size of his fist and he only had the one. It was still experimental, something Fox had come up with just in case something were to ever happen to the grappling hooks that the crime fighters used. While that had never happened because of Fox’s excellent design work, there was always the possibility that Batman or Robin could fall, a bad hand hold, a cut line, a miscalculated jump, there were numerous ways that either of them could end up falling to a grisly death. The substance in the capsule had worked well in the lab, but Batman had never tested it in the field...until now and he wasn’t even sure he had activated it quickly enough to save her.

The large dark yellow capsule hit the asphalt and exploded, the sound more like the pop of a high powered air gun than an actual explosion. The white form that erupted from it spread swiftly. In the blink of an eye there was what looked like an extremely thick, dense king size mattress made of some sort of foam-like substance. No sooner had the thing sprung to life, than Harley landed on the padding, her scream suddenly cut off as her body collided with the strange foam-like substance.

Batman raced over to her and stopped for a moment in shock.

She was lying on her back, her arms out from her body, one of them, her left, at an awkward, unnatural angle. He saw a bullet hole in her right shoulder, her front torso covered in blood. Her face
was turned slightly away from him, her white hair spread out under her, a broken hair tie tangled in her hair. She looked so young, so innocent, her features beautiful, at this moment Batman had to admit, she was beautiful. She looked like a broken fairytale princess with her pure white porcelain skin and hair freckled with specks of blood, but her face looked soft, delicate, her lips slightly parted, stained red with blood. Broken and beautiful. Batman took a deep breath before he reached out and touched the exposed side of her throat. He waited silently, ignoring everything else around him and focused on the beat of her heart. After a few tense seconds he let out a sigh of relief when he felt the beat of her heart, against the tip of his gloved fingers.

Harley Quinn was alive.

*

Joker started to throw himself out of the helicopter after Harley, his hand reaching for her even though she wasn’t there. “HARLEY!!”

Frost threw himself across the helicopter and grabbed Joker, yanking him away from the open door while Jason pulled the helicopter away from the building, turning and heading away from Falcone’s tower.

Joker struggled, fighting to free himself, screaming himself hoarse. “HARLEY!! WE CAN’T LEAVE HER!!!”

Frost held on as tightly as he could, his arms around Joker’s waist, but the man was strong, maddened with fright, grief, anger, and Frost couldn’t hold him much longer. Suddenly Joker turned on Frost, the large hole in his shoulder doing nothing to slow him down. Now he was running on pure fear and raging madness. Joker slammed his elbow back, his elbow connecting with Frost’s nose. Frost cried out, his head snapping back and his grip on Joker loosening when his nose broke. Joker spun around and slammed the flat of his hand into Frost’s chest with enough force that he knocked the air out of the larger man’s lungs. Frost choked, his breath suddenly forced out of his lungs. His heart felt like it had stopped momentarily as he stumbled back, making croaking noises and struggling for his breathe. He couldn’t be sure yet what Joker had done to him, all he knew was that he was in pain.

Ryan was in a corner crying as the two men struggled.

Frost, still struggling with his breath, tried to grab Joker again, but Joker wrapped a hand like a vice grip around Frost’s arm, yanking him forward, while at the same time Joker jumped up and wrapped his legs around Frost’s waist, twisting and bearing Frost down to the floor of the helicopter. The impact made the helicopter tilt dangerously. The two men rolled toward one of the one doors.

Jason looked behind him and yelled as he struggled with the controls. “STOP IT! Someone close those doors!!”

Ryan’s head came up, her eyes bloodshot, but it was only now that she realized what was happening. She had seen Harley Quinn, the Joker’s girl, fall out of the helicopter right after Mikey fell, and by the way Frost and Joker were going at it, she was going to assume Joker was trying to go after his girl. She couldn’t blame him, but he was putting them all in further danger with his insane behavior.

Joker and Frost rolled closer to one of the open doors. Ryan was up, pulling the opposite door closed. It took all her strength, but she got the door slammed shut cutting off one way for the two men to kill themselves she thought. She looked around and picked up one of the rifles that miraculously was still in the helicopter and took a lurching step over to the two men fighting.
Joker had gotten Frost on his back.

Joker straddled his friend, his hands around Frost’s throat. Joker’s eyes were wild, the blue seemed to glow eerily, his teeth were bared in a vicious bloody smile,. His usually white teeth were now stained red while blood dripped from his nose across his lips and down his chin as he choked Frost.

What really frightened Frost was when Joker began to laugh while continuing to choke him.

Frost grabbed at Joker’s hands, pleading with him while he still had breath. “Boss, Boss please...can’t...can’t breathe…”

Joker giggled, his grip tightening, his thumbs pressing into the soft flesh under Frost’s jaw, letting a steady trickle of blood to run down Joker’s arms from the wound in his shoulder, staining his white fingers red while he giggled maniacally.

Ryan wasn’t sure where the man was finding the strength with that hole in his shoulder, but it didn’t matter, she needed to stop him. She raised the rifle, for a split second she thought about shooting him. It was his fault Mikey was dead...but her common sense quickly asserted itself, it wasn’t his fault, he had lost his girl too. She sighed flipping the weapon around and with the butt of the rifle, she slammed it down on the back of Joker’s head.

Joker didn’t react to the first hit except to blink as his head snapped forward a few inches, continuing to choke the life out of Frost, but the second hit caused him to slump forward a little, loosening his grip on Frost. Joker looked confused. “What…” Blood appeared on the back of his head, staining the green locks with red.

Joker stared down at Frost as if just seeing him for the first time, his grip on Frost’s throat loosening.

Joker frowned. “Frost?”

Frost choked struggling to breathe, his hands on Joker’s shoulders.

That was when Ryan hit him again with the butt of the rifle, this time the impact was hard enough that Joker slumped forward, dropping against Frost unconscious. Frost reached out and wrapped his arms around Joker’s unconscious body with a gasp as he sucked in air. He held onto Joker, hugging his unconscious body to him as Ryan dropped the gun and pulled the door of the helicopter closed before she dropped to her knees next to them.

Jason looked back at them with a sigh of relief.

*  

Harley was screaming, reaching for Joker, her fingers brushed against his fingertips, she could feel the leather of the glove he wore, see the panic in his eyes as he reached for her...

She was falling away, it felt like she fell forever...watching him recede into the sky away from her as he continued to call for her. She heard his voice, his roar of agony, but just as quickly the sound was gone, fading away only to be replaced by other sounds, other voices, gunfire and the feel of air rushing past...

She was going to die...the thought hung in the air around her, she was going to die...JACK!! NO!! She screamed again, tears rushing down her cheeks only to be whipped away by the wind rushing past her...PUDDIN!! She didn’t want to die, she wanted to be with Jack, Joker, puddin, her lover forever, always by his side. Harley choked on a sob, she didn’t want to leave him, she didn’t want to be without him, not again. Oh please not again, she silently pleaded. She knew the ground was
rushing up to meet her, she was going to die and there was nothing she could do to stop it. She didn’t close her eyes, she wanted to keep looking at the helicopter as it pulled away. At least he was alive...her puddin...then...nothing.

Harley woke with a start, trying to sit up in her panic. She gasped in pain, jerking her arms up at the same time. Pain grabbed hold of her, threatening to pull her back down into her nightmare, but she continued to struggle against it as her brain began to take account of her situation.

One arm wouldn’t obey her; it was too heavy. Though she tried to move it, lifting it was a chore, and it hurt, a deep ache, while the other arm was accompanied by the press of metal into her wrist and the sound of metal clanking against metal. Harley gasped for breath. She could feel the nasal canals in her nose and the sudden pain that rippled through her as she struggled, in her arm, her shoulder and her sides. Breathing was a chore and the pain made her feel for a moment as if her arm was being pulled from its socket. The pain was a brief, terrible flash before she was falling back again, once more losing the fight to stay conscious.

Later…

She had no idea how much later it was, but she could feel the difference. The room felt darker, heavier, that strange quiet that came with the night, like a comforting blanket wrapped around to keep one safe and warm. Everything in the world seemed to be muted once the sun was down.

She couldn’t seem to open her eyes, it was just too difficult, her entire body felt heavy, as if something was holding her down against the bed, but it was also strangely nice, as if her entire body was numb. She laid still, unable to move, letting that numbness wash over her, comforting in a way. After a little bit, her body began to feel as if she were floating. It was a strange combination, both being held down, while floating, but she didn’t give it much thought; everything was hazy. After what felt like only a short amount of time, she realized that she could hear voices…whispers that at once seemed distant and close. She was sure she hadn’t heard them before, it was as if they had simply come into being in the room. At first she wasn’t interested in hearing what they said, but she heard her name, she was sure she heard her name. With effort she focused on the voices.

“She has a broken ulnar, three broken ribs and a concussion. That is in addition to the bullet wound in her shoulder. I’m shocked she’s alive, after that fall she took. If it wasn’t for you she would be dead, she’s very lucky.” The voice wasn’t one she recognized. It was male, educated with the certain way of enunciating words that reminded her of her college professors. Another voice joined the first. This other voice sounded familiar, but rougher, deeper, darker.

“I want her kept away from the other prisoners. Not only is she dangerous herself, but Carmine Falcone will be after her and I know he has men in Blackgate. She needs 24 hour protection.” The voice was gruff. The speaker expected to be obeyed without question, clearly accustomed to only have to state his needs and have them fulfilled.

The professor voice sighed. “Batman, you have no jurisdiction here. I cannot go against Blackgate policies just for you, but...I will keep her separated. I can use my physician's status to say that she cannot be in the general population while she is recovering. It will work for a few days, but not forever. She’ll be in the hospital wing of the prison for at least another few days, five maybe, then we can move her to isolation for the week or two she will be with us beyond that, before she is transferred to Arkham for observation. I will talk to the warden about keeping her safe. But once she is outside these prison walls there isn’t much I can do for her Batman. Once she is moved to Arkham, she is out of my hands. You’ll have to speak with the warden of course...”

Harley tuned the voices out as her mind processed what she had heard: prison...Blackgate Prison? Batman? Harley frowned...Batman...Batman...for a few seconds she couldn’t quite grab onto why
Batman meant something more...Bruce? Bruce Wayne. Bruce!! She struggled to open her eyes, to make her body move, but she couldn’t make her body obey, she couldn’t do anything but lie on the bed and listen...but even that was beginning to fade. It was too much effort to stay focused. She was just so tired.

Harley heard Batman say softly. “Just have several guards on her. I want her under guard as often as possible. I don’t trust Joker not to try and get her once he realizes where she is and if he does come for her, it will be bloody. But Joker isn’t the only one who will be after her, once Falcone knows where she is I have no doubt that he will bend all his will to getting to her, especially since he will want to hurt Joker. To hurt Joker, the easiest and fastest means will be through Harley Quinn.”

The doctor said softly. “You really think this Joker person will risk his life to come after this woman?”

Batman’s voice was soft but firm. “I know he will. He is obsessed with her. He will do anything to get her back, of that I have no doubt.”

Harley continued to struggle harder as the voices faded away...Joker...Jack...PUDDIN!! She wanted to scream at Batman, to cry for Jack, to plead to see him. At this point she would do anything to be with Jack, even deal with the devil. She fought to get her eyes open, she had to talk to Batman, to tell him what she would do if he hurt her puddin. She needed to tell Batman--Bruce--how much she hated him, how much he had hurt Jack. She continued to struggle for what seemed hours to open her eyes, but when she was finally able to get her eyes opened, she was alone, in the dark, the room was quiet, and the only sounds were the soft beeps of the monitors in the room.

When Harley woke again she was able to open her eyes normally, though she couldn’t seem to make herself focus. Her eyes fluttered but the room she was in refused to come into focus. She pulled up but she couldn’t move and her head spun every time she shifted until she gave up and dropped back onto the pillow with a soft groan.

She lay still for a long time focused on her breathing. She could hear the low, steady beeping of machines in the room with her. She turned her head toward the sound to see a monitor that displayed the beat of her heart. There was an IV stand next to that with tubes that led into her arm. She frowned slightly in thought. She remembered the gun shot through her shoulder, the sudden burst of pain followed by seeing Joker’s shoulder burst open in a shock of red, like a flower opening its petals. They had both let go. No, that wasn’t right. They hadn’t let go, their hands were forced open, the bullet ripping through their bodies, her hand had gone numb and she lost her hold on him, then she was falling.

Harley made a soft whimper. She couldn’t remember anything after the gun shot. Trying to remember made her want to vomit. It was like her mind was blanking out what happened next and maybe that was for the best she thought. Reliving the moment of impact with the pavement probably was not something she wanted to do.

Harley laid back and looked up at the ceiling. She could see a crack that ran along the ceiling and spiderwebbed from there. She frowned in thought then bit her bottom lip to stop herself from crying. Joker...Jack...where was he, was he safe? Alive? Please let him be both she thought as tears rebelliously slid down the sides of her face.

She sniffed, trying to ignore her tears and take stock of her situation. She moved her head slowly, finding that the slow movements made focusing easier. She saw that her left arm was in a cast from her wrist to just above her elbow. She turned to look at her right arm and saw her wrist was handcuffed to the side of the bed. She was obviously in a hospital bed. As she became more capable of focusing, she looked around the room.
It was nighttime and the room was dark except for the lights given off by the monitors and some dim lighting outside the window at the far end of the room. There was a window, no curtains, and she could see that it was covered in bars. The walls were painted a dull white, there was one chair, a table, the monitors, a moveable curtain, and the bed, but nothing else. It was dark but the walls looked to be painted a light color, maybe beige (it was difficult to determine in the blue and green lights of the monitors), but it was old and dull.

She took a breath and tried to sit up a little, but it was difficult and her sides hurt when she moved. Pain lanced through her side, from front to back. Broken ribs, she realized as she sucked in a breath and felt the pain spike higher as her lungs expanded. She saw a door with a small window...which also had bars across the glass.

Harley’s bottom lip began to tremble again as the reality of her situation came crashing down on her. She was locked away from her puddin with no idea how she was going to get to him.

* 

Joker’s eyes flew open. His green hair was a mess, curls everywhere making him look crazed, some sticking to his forehead as he sat up with a snarl. “WHERE’S HARLEY!!! WHO FUCKING HIT ME??!!!”

Agatha was sitting beside his bed. She didn’t jump when he sat up, but she did reach out and laid her hand on Jack’s bare chest. “Jackie, settle down or you’ll pull your stitches.”

Jack turned to look in confusion at his aunt. “Auntie?”

She frowned reaching out to lay her hand against his pale cheek. “Jackie, you’ve been shot and you have a concussion. Now lie down.”

Jack hissed as he breathed through his teeth, in a combination of both mental and physical pain. His fingers clawed into the sheets and for a moment Agatha was scared he was going to attack her. His blue eyes looked mad, full on mad hatter type of mad like she hadn’t see before and it scared her—he scared her. She didn’t want to hurt him, but she would if she had to... In the next breath though, all the strength went out of him and Jack dropped back against the pillows. He took a breath looking around slowly to see that he was in his own bedroom, and somehow that hurt more than if he had simply been in the hospital because this was his place with Harley, his safe place with his girl, their place, their sanctuary from the world...

Harley wasn’t here.

Jack felt his heart twist in his chest. He fought the despair, the feeling of desolation. He took a slow breath and looked around the room, fighting to keep his emotions under control as he studied his surroundings again, distancing himself from thoughts of Harley so he could understand what was going on.

He could see that an IV stand rested next to his bed and connected to his arm, but other than that, there was nothing else in the room except him and his aunt. Jack turned his attention back to his aunt. He only said one word, his voice rough and dry.

“Harley.”

When he spoke her name, his voice sounded strained and hollow in the room, as if the life of the room was gone now that Harley wasn’t here.

Agatha reached out and laid her hand over his. She could feel the tension in him, he was holding
himself so tight, expecting the worst. Agatha hurt for him. It had to hurt she thought, holding himself like that, but she gave his hand a squeeze. “She’s alive.”

Jack sank back against the pillows, the tension of his entire body flowed out at the same time he let out the breath he had been holding. Tears began to run down the side of his face against his will, but he simply couldn’t hold them back any longer.

His voice cracked as he asked. “She’s alive?”

Agatha nodded. “Yes Jackie, she is alive.”

Jack made a choking sound, and at the same time he curled onto his side. Agatha moved from the chair where she had been sitting to sit on the side of the bed next to him. She gently pulled his head onto her lap and held him, stroking her fingers through the tangle of green curls. She could feel him crying, though he didn’t make a sound. She could only tell he was weeping by the soft vibrations against her lap and the dampness against her thighs. She pressed her lips together holding back her own grief. Harley was alive, but where she was...she didn’t know what they were going to do, or how Jack was going to survive without her. They had already been apart once...

After a few minutes of silent crying, Jack’s voice was soft, muffled against his aunt’s lap. “Auntie...where is she?”

Agatha gently eased him up, her hands on either side of his face so she could look him in the eyes when she told him about Harley. His blue eyes looked feverish, as if he would lose his control at any moment, madness consuming him, which was just what Agatha was worried about. Jack’s balance was precarious, had grown less steady over the last few months, especially since his brush with death in the chemical plant...Harley being out of his reach might tip him over completely.

“She’s in Blackgate prison at the moment,” Agatha said softly.

Jack pushed himself up further. “What?”

She sighed. “Let me go get you something to eat and drink, then we can talk further…” She started to get up, but Jack grabbed her wrist. Though he seemed weak, the grip on her wrist said the opposite. She could feel that it would take very little for Jack to break her wrist...

Agatha sat back down with a sigh. “Batman caught her. I’m not sure how, but he did it--that’s what everyone is saying. All the stories have said Batman caught her, saved her life. She was taken to Blackgate in bad shape, broken arm, broken ribs, a concussion plus the bullet wound. She is being held in their medical ward until she can be transferred to Arkham for a mental evaluation to see if she is stable enough to stand trial.”

Jack asked in a whisper. “Falcone?”

“Still alive. He’s at Gotham General,” Agatha replied.

Jack growled laying back on the bed and staring up at the ceiling. After a couple of seconds in which Agatha didn’t dare move, he finally asked. “How is Frost?”

“He’s fine. Some cuts, as well bruises on his throat,” Agatha said softly with a hint of tightness in her tone.

Jack sighed, dropping an arm over his eyes. “Tell him I’m sorry.”

Agatha reached out and patted his hand. “You can tell him yourself. He’s downstairs.”
Jack frowned. “He’s still with me?”

Agatha nodded. “Sweetie, he understands.”

Jack closed his eyes with a sigh. “We lose anyone else?”

Agatha frowned. “Mikey died, but the Irish are still with us. Ryan wants revenge on Falcone. She is ready to tear Gotham down to get to him, but no, we didn’t lose anyone else that night. Bane, Bea and I were able to destroy some of Falcone’s warehouses. You would have loved it Jackie, the fire was spectacular! Zsasz took out several close family members, enough that Falcone is going to feel it. Everyone else inflicted some damage that Falcone is going to be hurting. He may not be dead, but he isn’t going to recover from this quickly. He’s a dying man in the desert and the vultures are circling.”

Jack smiled then, a bitter twist to his lips, his eyes still closed as he spoke. “That’s good.”

He opened his eyes slowly to look at his aunt again. “I’m starving…”

Agatha patted his hand as she stood. “I’ll go get you something to eat.”

Jack gave her a wan smile as he watched her go. Once she had shut the door he rolled over onto his side again, pulling one of the pillows close. He could smell Harley on the sheets…his Harley.

He squeezed his eyes shut, but he didn’t cry. Instead he giggled into the pillow.

“I’ll get you back pumpkin, just hold on, I’m coming for you. There is going to be a bloody bath in Gotham until I have you back…you just hold on pumpkin…just hold on.”

*

Crane sipped his tea as he watched the news, one brow quirked in interest as news reporter, Chester King, delivered the top news in Gotham.

“Harley Quinn, known associate and paramour of the man calling himself The Joker, has been taken into custody after a dramatic attempt on businessman Carmine Falcone’s life. Witnesses state that Joker and Harley Quinn threw Falcone’s ex-wife out of a helicopter at the building where Falcone keeps his offices. A shootout erupted and Harley Quinn was thrown from the helicopter. She was rescued by none other than Batman. At this time Harley Quinn is being kept at Blackgate Penitentiary hospital wing. From there, it is likely she will be relocated to Arkham Asylum where doctors will determine if she is mentally stable enough to stand trial.

Harley Quinn, once known as Dr. Harleen Quinzel began her career at…”

Crane smiled, tuning out the history lesson on Harleen; he knew her past well. He stood up and began to pace his apartment. This was perfect, he determined, thinking quickly. He knew for a fact that Blackgate’s medical staff was always understaffed and underpaid, but most importantly, they didn’t do background checks...not as they were supposed to--too time consuming for a place that had such a high turnover rate in staff, especially in the medical wing where doctors and nurses seldom lasted more than a month or two. If you had a degree, you were hired. Perhaps he could even get himself assigned as her court appointed psychiatrist, it really wouldn’t take much at all...not much at all he thought as he paced. He would simply take some leave from the college, change his name, a few clicks of a computer and voila, he would be a new man! Getting closer to his Lady Crow would be simple from there and they were even providing him with the perfect moment to take her back...the transport to Arkham. He just needed to be able to time this...and she would be all his once again.
Crane moved over to his laptop, picking it up as he walked into the bedroom. Time to apply for a new job.

*

Falcone was sitting up in his hospital bed in his private hospital room, hooked up to what felt like a million machines monitoring everything he did, from breathing to pissing and he hated it. He was ready to go home, but they wanted to keep him for another couple of days.

He had already heard the news, Harley Quinn had been captured. He smiled. It wasn’t the Joker, but perhaps this was even better! It was perfect, just perfect he thought. He may not be able to get to that fucking clown, but he could get the next best thing--his girl. And sometimes the best way to hurt a rival was through someone they loved. Joker even knew that as Falcone’s memory flashed on Gigi’s death. Falcone smiled with a derisive curl to his lip. Every man had an Achilles heel and Falcone was willing to bet real money that this dame was the Joker’s soft spot. Killing her would be just the statement he needed to make to let the Joker know that there were no more games, this was all out war...and in war, there were casualties. He chewed his bottom lip wishing he had a drink as he contemplated what to do. Did he just want to kill her outright, or torture her? Maybe provide that punk Joker with some video of his girl getting hurt, maybe even raped? He would have to think about it. He didn’t just want to hurt the Joker; he wanted to destroy him utterly.

He glanced over as his hospital door opened and his daughter Sophia walked in. She looked lovely he thought, dressed in a black suit and heels, her hair done up high on her head making him think of Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany’s and in a lot of ways she looked like her mother, that same effortless elegance. She walked over, her heels making a crisp click against the floor as she leaned over and kissed his cheek.

“Daddy,” she said softly before moving to the other side of the bed and taking the chair. Her own bodyguards followed her in, two people that Falcone knew well, Angelo Mirti who had been with his daughter since she was quite young, and Lucia Viti, a woman a few years older than Sophia and as cold-blooded as they came. The two guards took positions near the door. Falcone smirked a little. His own guards were on the other side but his little girl had to have her own. He wasn’t sure if it was habit, or if she didn’t trust his bodyguards. He was beginning to wonder how much he could trust his own bodyguards after recent events...incompetence or failure were nearly as bad as treachery.

“So, how are you doing?” Sophia asked. Her father, oddly for a man who had been shot twice, looked robust, as if a murder attempt was just the sort of pick me up he had needed.

“I’m ready to get out of this joint,” Carmine muttered before he sighed. “I’m fine. How are you doing?”

Sophia frowned wrapping her arms around herself as she spoke. “I’m all right I suppose, though I had to go to the morgue to identify Momma’s body.”

“Oh honey, I’m so sorry.” Carmine frowned. He would have reached out to her, but he could tell that was not what Sophia wanted.

Sophia looked over at her father. “So now what?”

Carmine smiled, though the smile was cold. “We get our revenge. You heard on the news, they have that clown’s woman in Blackgate? Harley Quinn is like a spider trapped in a web now, getting to her in that prison will be easy.”

Sophia nodded. “Yes, she is in the hospital ward at the jail, but it’s only temporary. After that they
will be moving her to Arkham.”

Carmine nodded. “Yes, we are going to get her before they can move her.”

Sophia’s brow furrowed in confusion. “But how? She is under heavy guard at the moment.”

Carmine leaned back against his pillow. “I have men everywhere Phia, there is no place they can put that bitch that I won’t be able to get to her.”

Sophia’s frown deepened. She understood the necessity of a show of force, of going after the current weak link the the Joker’s family, but it still didn’t set well with her. The thought of going after a woman while she was down, injured and not in a position to defend herself made her uncomfortable. It wasn’t that Sophia wasn’t above taking advantage of a foe, but there was just something about what her father was proposing that got under her skin. She kept her thoughts to herself; if she voiced them, her father would simply say that she was showing weakness. Sophia schooled her features as she listened to her father talk about his plan to torture and kill Harley Quinn...But maybe there was a better way, she thought, a way to get what she wanted, which was her father out of the way.

*

Frost and the others were waiting downstairs for Joker. Frost hadn’t seen him since the helicopter, the loss of Harley and his Boss’s mad attack on him. Frost reached up unconsciously and rubbed at the bruises on his neck, mostly hidden by the shirt and tie. If it hadn’t been for Ryan, he had no doubt that Joker would have killed him. He frowned and reached out for his cup of coffee that was sitting on the table in front of him. He wasn’t sure he would have blamed Joker either. He understood how close Joker and Harley were, what they had been through together. It wasn’t that long ago that Jack...Joker, thought he had lost her, that she was dead. Frost could only imagine what Joker was feeling now. Harley was alive yes, she was far, far out of reach.

Across from Frost, Alex took a sip of his own drink. Frost glanced over at the one-armed man, he wasn’t sure if it was coffee with bourbon or bourbon with coffee that Alex was drinking. Frost had watched him pour what looked like half the bottle of bourbon into the mug and take a sip without flinching. Next to Alex, Zsasz leaned against the wall. The pale, bald man had a bottle of water in his hand. On Zsasz’s right, Bea leaned against the wall next to him. She was speaking quietly to the bald man, the two of them practically had their heads together. Frost couldn’t be sure, but he thought something might be going on with those two.

Frost turned to look over to where Trope and Thea were sitting on the floor with their computers. He knew the girls were studying Blackgate blueprints they had found online. How, he wasn’t sure, but the lovers had been studying everything they could about Blackgate. Both had been devastated when they heard that Harley had been taken and they had set themselves to trying to find a weak spot in the prison, something that could be used to get Harley out. As far as he knew they hadn’t found anything--yet--but the two women were working nonstop to find something they could present to Joker.

Bane and Dr. October were sitting on the couch, both quiet. Bane didn’t look too good to Frost--might be the drugs, he couldn’t be sure. Lastly Frost looked over at Jason who was worrying at a fingernail as he paced in the space between the kitchen and the living room. The young man looked angry. Frost knew he blamed himself for losing Harley, he felt that his struggle for control of the helicopter had been what caused them to lose her, but Frost knew it wasn’t his fault. It was whoever had shot Harley and Joker...that was where the blame laid, but Jason couldn’t stop blaming himself.

Everyone heard movement upstairs, and a couple of seconds later Agatha came down the stairs. Frost frowned watching her. She looked to have aged again, first when Jack and Harley were
thought dead, and now this. Frost worried that being part of the gang wasn’t good for her, either mentally or physically. No one knew just how much Agatha loved her nephew and Harley, and no one but him knew how much guilt she carried around with her for how things turned out between Jack and his brother. And he knew that Agatha did blame herself. Frost sighed quietly. It didn’t matter what he said, Agatha wouldn’t completely open up to him, about her feelings, about her past, but as her lover, the man who held her at night, he knew it was all taking a toil on her.

Agatha smiled at everyone. “He’s on his way down. I’m going to make a fresh pot of coffee, anyone need a refill?”

There were affirmative murmurs in the room with Alex piping up. “You got any more fucking bourbon in there, maybe something stronger?”

Agatha chuckled. “Why don’t you come help me?”

Alex smiled and stood to follow Agatha into the kitchen. A few seconds later everyone’s attention was drawn to the stairs again as Joker came into view.

His hair was slicked back once more, his lips were painted a bright red, the painted smile extended pass his lips slightly which made the smile look wider, slightly more sinister. The shadows around his eyes made the vivid blue eerie and hypnotic. He was dressed in black slacks, a dress shirt that was a shade of red so dark that it almost looked black itself; only when the light caught it just right was the color truly visible. He didn’t wear a tie, leaving the hollow of his throat visible where the shirt lay open, revealing a hint of the cards tattooed on his throat. He wore a pair of suspenders, dark green with a faintly visible diamond pattern, and a pair of sharp toed black ankle boots with monk straps. His underarm gun holsters were clearly visible, both held two pistols along with the four knives he was carrying along the belt at his waist.

Joker hopped down the last step and turned to the living room with a smile.

“Now, let’s discuss how we are going to get Harley back, shall we?” A couple of days had passed. The doctors at Blackgate had reduced the amount of pain medication they were giving Harley which allowed her to feel less foggy and more clear headed. Today they were going to be moving her out of the hospital wing and into a cell, but first, she was being required to have the first of several “evaluations” before she was going to be allowed to speak to an attorney.

Harley closed her eyes and let the warm water of the shower run over her. She was being allowed a shower before she was to go to her new cell. A nurse, a young woman no more than Harley’s age, along with a female guard, were here with her. The guard simply watched her bathe while the nurse helped Harley wash.

Harley sighed. Her cast was wrapped in a plastic bag and the nurse was currently helping Harley with washing her hair. Harley turned to lay her head back into the running water, glancing briefly at the guard. The guard looked back at her without an expression in her eyes. She was a large woman, with broad shoulders that would have made her a great football player and surprisingly long blonde hair that was braided down her back. Harley thought that the hair would have been a liability in the prison, but maybe no one had decided to exploit it. Harley smiled knowing exactly what she would go for when she got into a fight with that guard. Harley had no doubt at some point she would be fighting that guard, as well as a few others.

Harley sighed again and tried to ignore the fact that she was naked with two strangers (especially the fact that she was being assisted with her bathing by a stranger) as the nurse used a plastic cup to help Harley rinse her hair. The woman was being surprisingly gentle and kind, which made Harley suspicious.
The nurse, whose name tag read, Phillips, finished with Harley’s hair and had turned off the water, quickly retrieving a towel and began to help Harley dry herself off while the guard watched, still expressionless. Harley winced as the nurse dragged the towel over Harley’s bruised, broken ribs.

Phillips said softly. “Your skin is so white, it’s so strange. He has white skin too, perfect. I wonder if he’s hairless? I bet he is...I mean Joker right? That’s what he’s calling himself, the Joker right?”

Harley frowned as the nurse directed her to raise her arms.

“Yes,” Harley replied as Phillips wrapped the towel around Harley’s middle, tucked the towel’s end between her breasts.

Phillips smiled. “He’s very handsome in a weird way isn’t he?”

Harley narrowed her eyes. “Yes he is.”

Phillips smiled. “What is he, some sort of nouveau goth? You know I think I might be into gothy bad boys. I bet he is an animal in bed and now he is all alone...” Phillips chuckled. “Guy like that needs a woman in his bed all the time. I bet he is looking for someone new right now. I bet I could make him real happy.”

Harley’s eyes widened, her voice dropping to a whisper. “What did you say?”

Phillips smiled at her. “I said, I bet I could make him real happy. Since you’re in here I bet he needs a new woman in his bed.”

Harley hissed. “You bitch.”

She moved swiftly, grabbing the nurse by the front of her uniform with her one good hand, yanking the nurse forward and slamming her forehead against the nurse’s face. Phillips screamed along with the sound of a crushing snap as her nose broke. Harley shoved the nurse back and threw her fist, hitting Phillips across the face and knocking the nurse to the shower floor before the guard rushed forward to grab Harley around her waist, lifting her off her feet.

Harley screamed, struggling against the guard. “You bitch!!! Joker would never touch a cunt like you!! He’s mine!! If you try to get anywhere near my puddin I’ll cut your fucking breasts off!!”

The guard growled. “Calm the fuck down!!”

Harley twisted around fighting with the guard as the woman struggled to hold Harley while at the same time trying to grab her free arm and pin it to her side. The guard yelled at the nurse who was crying over her broken and bleeding nose.

“You stupid bitch!” Phillips gasped, staring at her bloody hands.

Harley screamed at Phillips while trying to break free of the guard. “This is where if I had a dick, I would tell you to suck it!!”

The guard hissed and threw Harley to the wet tile floor. Harley gasped in pain when she hit, landing on her broke arm. The guard yanked her taser free, aiming it at Harley as Harley tried to get to her feet. The prongs hit her and Harley cried out, jerking and dropping to the shower floor again. Nurse Phillips ran out of the shower, screaming for help.

The next few minutes were chaotic as four more guards, two men and two more women, came rushing in grabbing Harley and trying to hold her down while she fought with all her strength. She
ignored the pain in her side and the pain from her broken arm as she screamed.

“I’m going to kill all of you!!! Just you wait!!! My puddin is going to come for me!!! Just you wait!!!
He’ll come for me and you’re all DEAD!!!” Harley was tasered three more times, as well as hit with several batons before she calmed enough that the guards could get her under control.

Harley was lifted up, all of the guards had a hold of her in some way. During the fight she had lost her towel, but no one bothered to cover her as she was carried naked out of the shower. Instead of being taken back to the hospital room, she was taken to her cell. Two of the female guards roughly dressed her, putting her in a pair of orange pants, white t-shirt and orange overshirt.

She was then handcuffed to her bed, a flat shelf that extended out from the wall with a thin mattress over simple metal strip frame.

Harley laid there for a long time, long enough that her pain medication had worn off. She didn’t move, staring up at the ceiling and struggling not to cry. She wanted out of here so much, she wanted to be in her puddin’s arms. She bit her bottom lip hard, fighting not to cry until she tasted blood, but the tears came regardless of her efforts.

It had grown dark by the time someone came to her cell. She couldn’t sit up; her good arm was handcuffed to a metal hoop at the head of her bed, her arm over her head. She tried to lift her head and watch as two guards came in, both male. One had both his taser and baton out, as the other guard uncuffed her from the bed and stepped away.

As Harley sat up, she saw the other man standing in the cell’s doorway. He was a tall black man in a grey suit with an eyepatch, short cut hair and one stern dark eye. He stared at her in silence for a few moments before he spoke.

“Dr. Harleen Quinzel, I’m Warden Martin Joseph of Blackgate Prison. I’m very upset by your behavior today. I expect all inmates to behave in a responsible, non-aggressive manner. Now usually you would be put in solitary to think about your actions, but since it was requested by Batman that you be put in solitary in order to provide you with a certain level of protection, he seems to believe that Falcone would be interested in hurting you. Putting you in solitary would not serve any purpose in teaching you a lesson.”

He smiled at her. “But, I have also been paid handsomely to put you in the general population, so, after your actions today, I think I can see my way to letting you mix with the others. Everyone here at Blackgate needs to learn their place, to learn how things work, and you Dr. Quinzel have already shown that you suffer from defiant obstinate disorder--let’s see if we can fix that.” His smile was definitely unpleasant, Harley thought with a dark scowl.

Warden Joseph motioned at the two guards. “Take her to her new cell.”

Harley was grabbed under her arms, and dragged out of her cell. She didn’t struggle, she hurt too much and at the moment didn’t care where they took her.

The prison was mostly quiet, the lights were out, and as they passed several cells all she saw were dark shadows in bunks. She didn’t bother to look more and she didn’t care.

Finally they arrived at a cell like any of the others. The door was unlocked and opened with a loud bang. Harley was then unceremoniously thrown inside. She stumbled and slammed against the cement floor. The cell door was closed behind her with another loud bang of metal, followed by the sound of a lock clicking into place.
Harley lay on the floor, her white hair covering her face, when a soft voice whispered,

“Hey Harley.”

Harley lifted her head and pushed her hair out of her eyes to see Barbara Kean sitting up on the top bunk of the two beds.

Barbara swung her legs giggling. “Well, there goes the neighborhood!”
Clawing at the Edges

The first night Harley cried herself to sleep.

Barbara had been quiet when she realized just how bad off Harley was, not just with her physically injuries, but emotionally as well. Harley had simply crawled onto the bottom bunk and cried until exhaustion took her. Barbara had sat on the side of her bunk and stroked Harley’s hair gently while the other woman fell into a deep despair.

The next morning Barbara had hopped down from her bunk with a smile. “Rise and shine, time for breakfast.”

Harley didn’t answer her.

Barbara sat down on the side of Harley's bunk. Harley’s white hair was completely obscuring her face. She looked really small huddled in on herself Barbara thought. She reached out and very gently pulled Harley’s hair from her face only to see that Harley’s eyes were open, staring off into nothing. Her eyes were bloodshot and puffy from crying. Barbara could see where Harley had started to bite at one of her fingernails; the nail was torn down, bloody.

Barbara frowned. “Hey kiddo, time for breakfast, you need to get up. Believe me you want to go to breakfast willingly. It’s really no fun if the guards are forced to come and get you. They will hurt you if you give them a reason and they don't care if you’re injured…”

Barbara continued to stroke Harley’s hair. “You’ll feel better once you have something on your stomach. The breakfast isn’t great, but I’ve had worse.”

Harley didn’t say anything, just simply continued to stare.

Barbara glanced over at the cell door. Any minute they would start opening the cells and herding them all out to the prison cafeteria. If Harley wasn’t on her feet, the guards would make an example of her. There was nothing they loved more than to hurt the inmates, made Arkham look like a day spa.

Barbara tried again. “Come on Harley, you need to get up.”

Harley said nothing.

Barbara started to reach for Harley’s arm when she heard the bell go off announcing breakfast. “Shit,” she muttered. “You gotta get up.”

Harley didn’t refuse to move, she simply didn’t. It was strange Barbara thought as she tried to pull Harley out of the bunk. Harley wasn’t fighting her, but she simply didn’t seem to care.

“Come on!” Barbara tried yanking on Harley’s good arm when she heard a familiar voice that made her cringe, followed by the sound of the cell doors opening.

“Well, look here Ginty, looks like we got a prisoner who doesn’t want to get out of her bunk.”

Barbara turned to see Mike and Ginty, a couple of the worst guards in Blackgate, and Blackgate had a variety of bad guards to choose from.

Mike was a slender man with black eyes, slender in a way that made Barbara think of snakes, with
the same flat black eyes and Ginty was a big woman with hair dyed a shade of red only seen in a
crayon box. Both of them were mean and if they set their sights on you, they would make your life
hell.

“So what’s seems to be the problem Barbara?” Mike stepped into the cell with his hand on his baton.
Barbara smiled. “No problem, just getting the new girl up.”

Ginty grinned. “New girl? Oh yeah, I heard about her. Isn’t she supposed to be the girlfriend of that
clown that was on the tv? What did he call himself?” Ginty turned to Mike.

Mike sneered. “Called himself the Joker. Tried to kill Falcone from what I hear. Idiot and his bitch
got taken. Typical. He probably used this as way to get rid of the trash.” Mike chuckled. “Get
himself a new bitch maybe. Though I’m willing to bet an idiot like that got himself killed already.”

Ginty laughed along with Mike. “Yeah, stupid asshole clown.”

Mike snickered. “Yeah, I bet Batman beat the shit out of him too.”

That made Harley look up. In a hoarse voice, she asked, “What did you say?”

Mike grinned. “I said, your boyfriend is a fucking asshole idiot. You got a problem with that
sweetheart?”

Harley, her pale white complexion making her look like a fragile porcelain doll, her bloodshot eyes,
broken arm and ribs, all made her look weak, small, delicate, but the look she gave Mike was
frightening. “Don’t you ever say anything about my puddin.”

Mike grinned. “Oh, you gonna do something about it?”

Harley moved swiftly, pushing past Barbara and leaping off the bed so fast that Barbara hadn’t
realized what had happened until Harley had flung herself at Mike with a scream. She hit the slender
man hard enough with her body that he stumbled back, slamming against the bars of the cell. Harley
only had one hand, but with it she clawed at Mike’s face leaving bloody lines down his cheek as she
screamed at him.

“DON’T YOU EVER TALK ABOUT HIM!!!”

Barbara yelped and grabbed for Harley as Ginty cursed, fumbling for a moment as she pulled her
taser free and aimed at Harley, the twin prongs striking Harley in the side. Harley brushed off the
taser like it was nothing as she continued to try to claw out Mike’s eyes with one hand, using her cast
to press all her weight against his throat while she hissed.

“Don’t you ever talk about him!! My puddin will kill all of you!!”

Barbara stumbled to the back wall as Ginty yelled at her to get back. In moments, four more guards
showed up; it took all four of them shooting their tasers at Harley until finally Harley gasped, fell to
the floor, and blacked out.

* 

When Harley was conscious again, she found herself in a different cell lying on a hard metal bed
without a mattress, no pillow and no blanket. This cell was much smaller than the one she had been
in with Barbara, with only barely enough room for her to move around. There was a bed, if it could
be called that. It was more like a metal slab that jutted out from the wall, and a stainless steel toilet
with a sink. There was an overhead light that was well out of reach overhead that put out a harsh white light. The walls were a smooth uniform white, as was the door which held a small window that she couldn’t reach even if she had stood on her tiptoes.

There was a tray of food on the floor near the door. She could see what looked like a slot that could be opened at the bottom of the door near where the tray lay. The tray had a small carton of milk, a styrofoam bowl with what might have been cornflakes and a plastic spoon.

Harley looked at the food before she simply rolled over onto her side, pulling herself into a fetal position and softly cried.

A week and a half went by with Harley being left in the tiny cell alone. She saw no one, had no contact. The only interaction with anyone was when the tray of food was pushed through the slot. She never ate it. Occasionally she would pick up the food and throw it at the door with a scream, but mostly she left it untouched, lying on her side on the metal bed, unmoving, staring at the white wall. She would drink a handful of water from the sink now and again, but that was the only time she would move. Otherwise she simply lay on her side on the metal bed and stared at the wall as her despair consumed her. While she had no doubt that her puddin would come for her, she had no notion of when that would be. Until then she was in this hell, alone without him, without her puddin...her Jack...her Joker.

Harley covered her head with her arms and sobbed until she was sick.

Harley lost track of how many days she was left alone in the cell or how long it had been since she had eaten anything—not that she really cared, she was empty inside, dying. She allowed herself a small smile. At least the walls looked better with food smeared on them providing some color she thought. She had even written on the walls with the food, writing Harley and Joker, H + J, she had even drawn hearts and smiling faces, covering one section of wall with the smeared food of meals she hadn’t eaten.

Harley sighed softly, tears pricking her eyes again. She didn’t know how much longer she could stand to be without her puddin...there was nothing they could do to her that could be worse than being alone without him.

She had just closed her eyes when her cell door suddenly opened. Harley pushed herself up in surprise as two guards dressed in full riot gear rushed into the room. The two men grabbed her arms and hauled her to her feet, their fingers pressing into her arms sure to leave behind dark bruises. Harley tried to struggled, but she was weak from malnourishment and these men were trained in how to handle difficult prisoners. She was hauled to her feet and dragged from the cell to find that there were two more guards waiting outside.

Harley snarled, screaming and kicking despite her weakened state. Despite her struggles, she was unable to resist the prison guards. They slammed her down into a wheelchair that had a strange high back to it. Within seconds the four men had her strapped down, arms buckled to the arms of the chair, her legs held back against the chair with more straps, and her head was strapped tight against the back of the chair with a strap around her forehead that also came around to circle her jaw, holding her head firmly back. She screamed, struggling when one of the guards produced a ball gag. He came at her with the gag in his hand a nasty smile on his face.

“Time to submit.” He chuckled, and the other men with him laughed in response.

Harley screamed and bared her teeth. “I’m going to kill you all!!! Just you wait!! When my puddin...
comes for me you’re all DEAD!!”

She couldn’t move her head at all as the guard sneered at her and shoved the ball gag in her mouth, skinning her dry lips. He brought the straps around and buckled it in place, pushing her forehead against the straps until Harley was whimpering against the pain.

Once she was secured, the men marched on either side of her while one of them pushed the chair down the halls. Harley saw the prison cells as they moved past. She could see some of the prisoners milling about. They passed what she guessed was the cafeteria, and a room where a few prisoners were playing cards until she thought she recognized where they were heading--the medical ward.

She was wheeled into a medical room, smaller than the one she had woken up in when she first arrived here, where three people waited, all dressed in white coats; Harley assumed they were doctors. Two of them were hovering around a metal tray, one of them was preparing a large syringe on the tray while another was laying out some tubing on the same tray along with a heavy white container that looked like something powdered protein would come in. The third white coated person was an older woman, slim, bordering on skinny, her hair dyed black and pulled back in a severe bun. She had a hooked nose and wore a pair of cat eye black framed glasses. Under her white doctor’s coat the woman was wearing a long brown pencil skirt and a beige blouse, sensible shoes. She wore no jewelry, though a stethoscope hung around her neck.

The woman stepped over to Harley. She smiled but it didn’t reach her eyes.

“Dr. Quinzel, I’m Dr. Gretchen Whistler. I’m the prison psychiatrist. I’ve been told that you have been refusing to eat. I’m so sorry, but we simply can’t have that. It wouldn’t look good if one of our prisoners died of starvation, no matter that it’s self inflicted. So…” She smiled and hooked her finger toward the two other people in lab coats. One of the two people came over to Dr. Whistler pushing the tray over with her partner walking behind them.

Dr. Whistler continued to speak to Harley like she was a new patient. “We are going to insert a tube into your stomach through your nose. We will continue to do this daily until you willingly begin to eat. Even when you agree to eat we will continue the procedure until we are sure that you were not lying to us. Do I make myself clear?”

Harley glared hatefully at the woman.

Dr. Whistler smiled. “Good, now, let us begin.”

One of the technicians stepped closer to Harley, the tubing in his hands. He motioned at one of the guards with his head who came over to stand behind Harley, putting his hands on either side of her head. Harley cried out behind the gag, struggling, but she couldn’t move as the technician began to insert the tube through her nose, causing her to choke while she struggled.

Dr. Whistler sighed. “Really Dr. Quinzel, do stop struggling, that only makes this more difficult.”

Harley struggled despite the futility, tears running down her cheeks.

* 

Another week went by, and Harley had also been forced to start seeing the prison psychiatrist, Gretchen Whistler on a daily basis.

Harley hated the woman with every fiber of her being.

Today it was raining, so hanging out in the yard had been canceled for everyone. Harley didn’t care,
she didn’t care about anything.

She sat on the floor of the cell she shared with Barbara, wearing only her white t-shirt, her panties and some sloppy white socks. Her pants were on her bunk and her slippers were underneath. Barbara was playing cards with one of the other inmates, and so far Barbara owed the other woman a billion dollars, while Barbara’s opponent had bet her unborn child. It was an interesting card game, the bets becoming more and more outlandish. Harley would usually have enjoyed it, but she simply couldn’t, which was why she had left.

She was using the extremely sharp tip of a plastic spoon that one of the other women, an older lady named Maria, had given her a few days ago and some makeshift ink that Maria had put together using melted styrofoam, baby oil and some other ingredients that Harley didn’t like to think about and honestly didn’t care.

Harley’s bottom lip was trembling as she worked, tears running down her cheeks and blurring her vision as she slowly used the sharpened plastic dipped in the makeshift ink to cut into her thigh. She finished the last two letters of puddin in her Harley + Puddin tattoo, one of several tattoos that she had cut into the skin of her thighs. The pain gave her something to focus on besides her breaking heart. She had already written all over her cast, little private love notes to Jack, to Joker. She had even carved a heart with an arrow through it that held her and her puddin’s initials in her other thigh. The makeshift tattoo was healing surprisingly well, but the pain had faded too quickly, she needed the pain to make her feel something else besides her despair.

Harley finished and dropped the sharpened spoon onto the floor and brought her legs up, wrapping her arms around her knees, laying her forehead against her cast, her hair acting like a curtain. For a moment at least, it made her feel both safe and alone as she broke down. She let herself go and cried until she didn’t think she had any tears left. She cried until she couldn’t breathe and her entire body hurt. She didn’t think she would ever stop crying. That was the moment when she heard the sound of someone knocking against the cell bars.

Harley looked up to see one of the guards, a man named Ian.

“Dr. Quinzel, you are wanted in Dr. Whistler’s office.” Ian said without any inflection in his voice. His eyes went to the styrofoam bowl with ink in it and the sharp plastic utensil beside it, but he made no comment and didn’t step into the cell to take the items away from her. Ian was the type of guard that came into work, did his job, the bare minimum that his job required, nothing more, nothing less. He didn’t go out of his way to cause the prisoners any problems as long as they didn’t do the same to him. Ian couldn’t be bribed either, but he didn’t have a problem looking the other way, simply because he didn’t want to get involved.

Harley frowned. “I told you to call me Quinn, Harley Quinn.”

Ian just gave her a look that clearly indicated that he didn’t care, before saying without emotion. “You coming or do I got to get help?”

Harley wrinkled her nose at him and wiped her eyes with the heels of her hands before she grabbed her pants off the bunk and slid them on. The cloth stung where it brushed across her fresh tattoos, but she didn’t care. It was something she could feel. She stepped into her slippers staring down at her feet, her hair hanging down, hiding her features like a white curtain. She thought briefly about fighting, attacking Ian, but all that would’ve happened would be she would end up back in solitary, force fed and forgotten, alone with her thoughts.

After she dressed she stepped forward, her arms held out, wrists together. She waited patiently as Ian handcuffed her wrists then followed the chain down to cuff her ankles together to her hands.
Once he was finished, Ian turned and began to lead her toward the offices. Harley’s chains rattled softly as she walked.

They made their way through several locked gates, some that needed keys to get past them, some that needed to be buzzed by a guard sitting in a tiny booth.

They walked for what seemed forever making their way down neutral, sterile halls until they came to a door with a metal plate on the front that read: Dr. Gretchen Whistler. Harley sighed. Dr. Whistler was her court appointed psychiatrist until she was moved to Arkham and Harley hated everything about the woman. Everything.

Ian knocked on the door and waited. They both heard Dr. Whistler’s muffled voice. “Enter.”

Ian opened the door, pushing it open before he stood back and waited for Harley to enter the room. Harley shuffled inside to see Dr. Whistler at her desk, but there was someone else in the room. The man, dressed in a black and red checked suit, wearing a pair of round glasses, was Jonathan Crane. 

* 

Jack lay in the middle of the floor of the bedroom he shared with Harley, completely naked. He was on his side, his legs curled into his body, his arms over his head. His fingers were tightly woven into his green hair. He held his hair so tightly that it was a surprise he had not made himself bald.

He had ripped everything from the room until it was nearly empty, the bed that he shared with Harley was up and leaning against the wall. It had fallen to the side, the frame broken, the mattress looked torn underneath it. The other furniture was either missing, destroyed or pushed to the edges of the room. It looked as if something had exploded in the middle of the room. Jack had destroyed the walls as well. It looked as if he had taken a hammer to them, but where the holes in the wall didn’t exists, Jack had spray painted the walls writing “Ha! Ha!” over and over again. This had all happened in the first days that Harley was gone after Jack learned they couldn’t simply storm the prison and take her back. Jack had become completely unhinged, but now he was calm, dangerously calm many of the gang thought.

Jack laid still and naked on the floor. The only light came from one lamp casting a soft mellow glow over his still, milk white form, making him resemble a corpse since he barely looked to be breathing, his eyes closed. Around him in a perfectly arranged circle that surrounded his body was a display of weapons; every knife, every gun that he and Harley had accumulated in their time together, all neatly arranged around him. Outside of that circle was another circle, this one made up of drinking glasses, bottles of liquor that caught the dim light, casting it back in jewel tones along areas of the floor. Next was a circle that consisted of her shoes, all of Harley’s shoes set carefully around him followed by a layer of Harley’s clothes, each arranged lovingly around him. This row was followed by a mixed circle of Harley’s jewelry, mixed with the ties she used in her hair and her brushes mixed with her makeup, each circle spread out neatly around in an ever widening circle. At the very edge of the circle were playing cards, not an entire deck, only several queen of hearts cards repeated, over and over again...

Joker had built a shrine to the woman he loved, the woman he felt lost without.

There was a soft knock at the door followed by Frost’s voice. “Boss? Joker? We have him.”

Joker finally moved, sitting up. He had drawn a smile across with face with a deep red lipstick. The smile was over his own red lips, drawn to stretch across his face, the ends of the smile curling up the sides of his cheeks. When Joker smiled, the effect would be disturbing to his viewers.
“Where is he?” Joker growled from the dimly lit room.

Frost said softly. “We have him at the warehouse Boss.”

Joker chuckled darkly. “I’ll be right there.”

*

Frost was pacing in the living room waiting for Joker and he was nervous. The Boss hadn’t been the same since Harley was taken...he was becoming more erratic, more unstable. During the first week Harley was gone, the Boss’s violent outbursts were focused on objects. Frost had seen what had happened to their bedroom. The living room didn’t look much better. In the last couple of days, Joker’s temper was more on edge. Any little thing could cause him to lash out, drawing his weapon and snarling at whoever had upset him. Last night it had been Trope when her latest effort to get into the computer system at Blackgate prison had failed. Joker had pulled his gun on her, his arm shaking, his teeth bared, the barrel of the gun pointed at her. Bane had put himself between Joker and the young woman, trying to calm Joker. Trope had broken down crying. Last night Frost had been able to talk him down, but he didn’t know how much longer he would be able to do it before Joker killed one of them.

Hell, Frost was surprised that the gang was still together. Each of Joker’s outbursts was more violent than the last. But this group was loyal—even Trope hadn’t been angry with him, just scared. She had said she understood the Boss’s behavior, she would be the same way if Thea was out of her reach. Frost just wondered how long it would last before things were past the point of no return. He sighed. They needed a plan to get Harley and soon, or the Boss and the gang weren’t going to make it.

Hopefully the man they had picked up, Carlson Grey, would change all that. Hopefully he was the in they needed to get Harley back. Mr. Grey was the assistant warden at Blackgate. Alex had found him and it was through Alex that the Boss learned that Grey wasn’t just the assistant warden, but the man was in bed with the Russians. Grey was helping them with everything from a prostitution ring that also dealt in underage girls and using the female prisoners at Blackgate, to selling drugs, guns, and a profitable black market that ran inside Blackgate prison. Grey was a very bad man, but a man with information that they needed.

Frost turned when he heard footsteps. Joker came down the stairs dressed in a black on black three piece suit. The only variation was that Frost thought there might be a diamond pattern on the vest, a deeper black within the black. Even his shoes and gloves were solid black. The Boss had his green hair slicked back, his lips painted red, the smile painted just a little way out the edge of his lips. As he came down the stairs Frost thought that the Boss looked like death come to visit. He shuddered at the thought.

Joker smiled. “Ready darling?”

Frost nodded.

Joker laughed. “Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s go meet our new guest!!”

*

Carlson Grey sat in a chair with his hands tied behind his back while his feet were taped to the legs of the hard metal chair he sat in. His glasses had fallen to the edge of his nose, driving him crazy since he needed and wanted to push them up his nose. The room he was being held in was mostly dark, only a singular light was on directly above him, a harsh white light that made it impossible to see the rest of the room. The shadows around him felt like they were watching him, moving, but he
couldn’t tell if he was alone or not.

He had been grabbed when he was leaving a building owned by one of the Russian gangs that worked with Falcone. The building looked like a typical rundown apartment building that was littered all throughout Gotham, except this one had girls in nearly every apartment. The place was a cornucopia of sexual appetites; anything and everything was available for a price. Carlson had been leaving after visiting Trisha, a young woman who was very, very good with her hands.

“Look, if it's money you want I can get you as much as you want? Drugs? Guns? Women...something else? I can get a hold of anything you want, just tell me! I’m sure we can work out something.” Carlson looked around trying to see someone when he heard a soft laugh.

“Blah, blah blah….all that chit chat is going to get you hurt.”

Carlson looked around quickly, trying to find the source of the voice. “Look I know people…”

“I’m sure you do...I know people too.” The voice was soft, mellow, like warm honey slowly oozing down his spine. The laugh was soft, low, but there was no humor in it and something in that voice also made Carlson’s skin crawl. “But you know Carlson, I have someone very special that I’m interested in.”

A figure slowly formed out of the shadows. Carlson watched in horror as the man stepped closer, the light dancing across pale white skin, red lips and electric blue eyes.

The Joker smiled slowly as he came to stand in front of Carlson. Carlson sat transfixed, simply staring back at Joker and trembling in his chair.

Joker smiled wider before he dropped forward, his hands landing on Carlson’s shoulders with a hard smack that startled the other man so much that he let out a yelp of surprise.

Joker growled softly, leaning in close enough that his nose was almost touching Carlson’s. The growl sent a shiver down Carlson’s spine as he stared back at the softly growling man.

Suddenly Joker laughed. Carlson jumped in fright, followed by Joker straddling his lap, forcing the two men into an extremely intimate position. Joker smiled and gently caressed Carlson’s hair and face. “Now Carlson, Carlson, Carlson, you gonna be my friend?”

Joker frowned and tilted his head to the side, sticking out his bottom lip as he held Carlson’s face between his hands.

Carlson stuttered slightly when his spoke. His heart was beating hard, hammered against his sternum, making him feel as if his breastbone was going to be back bruised.

Carlson swallowed. “Uh...yeah? Sure.”

Joker chuckled and smacked Carlson on the cheek. “I just can’t wait to show you all my toys! We are just going to have so much fun together. And you are going to tell me exactly how I can get my Harley Quinn back.”

Carlson’s eyes became larger in fear. “What?”

Joker leaned in closer. “Now…” He released Carlson’s face which was followed by the sound of of metal sliding against leather. Joker smiled and held up the blade of a knife barely a inch in front of Carlson’s eye. “Let’s play.”
Joker slid off Carlson’s lap and before Carlson could respond, Joker drove the knife into Carlson’s thigh, just above the man’s kneecap. Carlson let out a scream.

Joker smiled sitting down on a chair that was produced out of the darkness by another shadow. Joker smiled, running a hand over his hair and taking a deep breath. “Now, let’s start again. You focus all your attention on me Carlson.” Carlson was crying as Joker grabbed his chin, forcing the man to look at him. “Eyes up here buddy.” Joker smiled, pulling Carlson’s face closer and kissed his forehead. “There, there sweetheart, you give me what I want and this will all be over soon.” Joker rubbed the tip of his nose against Carlson’s like they were old lovers or deep friends. “Now, you are going to tell me everything I need to know about Blackgate prison, about how my girl is being treated, and then you are going to help me by telling me the best way to get Harley out, okay?” With tears running down his cheeks, Carlson nodded. “I...I can tell you that now…” He was shaking as he spoke. Joker released his face with a smile, crossed his legs, and rested his gloved hands on his knee. “I’m all ears Carlson.”

Carlson’s chin was shaking when he spoke. “She was pretty banged up when she was brought in, concussion, broken ribs, arm...they had her in the medical ward for a while. I heard Batman even showed up to look in on her. He wanted her kept out of the main population, but they put her in general first. But...but then she attacked some guard and they stuck her in solitary. She didn’t handle it well...she refused to eat and they ended up force feeding her. Last I heard she was back in the general population again…”

Joker listened and his eye twitched slightly. His smile became flat, frozen on his face as Carlson spoke. Joker pressed his lips together before he asked his next question. “So, she is all right?”

Carlson shrugged. “I guess so.”

Joker’s hand came out so quickly that Carlson didn’t see the man move until Joker’s hand was holding his face in a painful vice like grip. “You guess so?”

Carlson whimpered. “I don’t know okay! I just know she was put back in general a few days ago!”

Joker narrowed his eyes. “So how do I get her back?”

Carlson stared back at Joker trembling. “I don’t know…”

Joker again moved with the speed of a striking viper, wrapping his hand around the hilt of the knife in Carlson’s knee and yanked it forward, the flat of the blade riding against the man’s kneecap. Carlson’s scream was high pitched and painful to hear, though Joker didn’t react at all, his blue eyes continued to stare at Carlson expectantly, his hand wrapped around the knife hilt.

“Your best chance is going to be when they transfer her to Arkham!!! They will have her in a meat wagon!! It’ll just be her and maybe a handful of guards, three at the most, the driver and her psychiatrist!!!”

Joker tilted his head with a smile. “And when will this be?”

Carlson was sobbing. “I don’t know!!! She has to show up in court first!! It’ll depend on the psychiatrist at the prison and whoever it is they send from Arkham!!!!”

Joker frowned, releasing his hold on the knife. “When will she appear in court?”

Carlson was panting, tears and sweat rolling down his face. “I...I don’t know...I would think soon...”

Joker smiled as he stood. “Thank you Carlson, you’ve been a very big help.”
Carlson giggled hysterically. “I...I’m glad I could help...you...you going to let me go now?”

Joker smiled. “Of course.”

Joker snatched the knife, yanking it out of Carlson’s knee and across the man’s throat so swiftly that Carlson didn’t realize his throat had been sliced opened for a few long seconds. He made a gurgling noise as he stared at Joker in confusion. Red lips smiled sweetly at the dying man.

“See how nice I was...gave you a quick death Carlson old buddy.”

Joker began to laugh softly, just a giggle that slowly grew and grew until his laugh was echoing off the walls.
Fear and Loathing in Blackgate

When Harley saw Crane, her eyes widened in shock; the glasses he wore did nothing to hide his identity from her. She remembered every little thing about him, the way he combed his hair, the suits he wore, the twitch around his mouth when he was angry, the way something dark lurked behind his eyes...Harley saw him in her nightmares. Every so often Crane would be lurking in the shadows of her dreams, standing on the sidelines, watching, observing, taking notes, all while whispering to her. She didn’t have the nightmares now as often as she did after her escape from Arkham, but Harley knew Crane was always lurking, waiting.

She began to shake with a combination of fear and rage, a burning anger that this man who had tried to take her from Jack, who had tried to hurt her, dominate her; he tried to change her into something for himself, treating her like an object, a doll to be dressed up for his pleasure. He had tried to scramble her mind, tried to twist her away from Jack in order to fit his delusion of who and what she was. The memories of everything that he had done to her in the asylum, those horrible moments in his house...Harley wanted to scream, she wanted to tear this man’s throat out, to rip out his heart and stomp on it. She wanted to make him hurt the way he had hurt her, the way he had hurt her and Jack. She had never wanted to hurt someone more in her life. This monster had wanted to destroy everything she had, everything that made her who she was, he had wanted to destroy her life and turn her into someone, something else entirely. The rage and adrenaline made her limbs tremble and override the fear Crane had instilled in her. She knew exactly what he was here for! He was here to take her from Jack, from her puddin, from herself! Nothing and no one was going to do that...never again was she going to let herself be a victim...

The scream that issued from Harley’s mouth was startling, filling the small office space, echoing off the walls, laced with an almost animalistic rage that, if Harley had been more herself, would have shocked herself by the sound that issued from her throat. It was pure rage fueled by fear and hatred that ran deeper than she would have thought possible before this moment. Jack would have been both shocked and thrilled with her if he had been there to hear and see her; not that he wanted his girl in pain, but because she could let go of convention and embrace the violence. Harley raced away from Ian and threw herself at Crane, her fingers bent like claws and her mouth open, giving the impression that given a chance, Harley would rip Crane’s throat out with her bare teeth. Crane clearly had been expecting a response like this and easily caught her, grasping her one good wrist, surprising her when he yanked her forward, then spun her around. The feel of his hand wrapping around her handcuffed wrist, the press of his fingers against her skin surprised her enough that she didn’t respond in time before he yanked her toward him, released her wrist after he twisted her around, and wrapped one arm around her throat, the other around her waist, pinning her already cuffed arms against hers sides and her back against his chest. She felt a mild jolt of pain from her still healing ribs and her broken arm, but it wasn’t enough to distract her as he pulled her up tightly against him. She struggled against Crane’s grip, but he had her caught, his strength surprising, perhaps even equal to her improved form after the acid bath and Ivy’s particular brand of aid. Regardless, he had her pinned and at his advantage.

He leaned close, pressing his lips and nose to her hair. His voice was soft, melodic, almost hypnotic and terrible as he whispered for only her to hear.

“There, there my little crow, don’t hurt yourself. I’ve come to bring you home.”

Harley growled followed by a scream of frustration while she struggled against him, angry that she was so easily caught, angry that he had his arms around her, and angry that she was starting to cry. She couldn’t stop the tears of fear, anger, and frustration that rolled down her cheeks as she fought
against Crane’s hold, but the man was surprisingly strong despite how he may have looked.

Dr. Whistler stood in shock and to Harley’s dismay it was clear that she hadn’t heard Crane’s whispered words to her. “Dr. Sykes, are you all right?”

Crane smiled looking up. “I’m just fine Dr. Whistler.”

Whistler looked shocked at Harley, but hurried to her door pulling it open and yelling. “I need a couple of guards and a sedative!”

Harley struggled. “Let me GO!!! I know who you are!!!” She turned her attention to Dr. Whistler while Crane continued to hold her against him. “He isn’t who you think he is!!! He’s Dr. Crane!!! Dr. Jonathan Crane!!”

Whistler stood by the door turning to look at Harley with a frown, her voice contemplative. “They didn’t say you were delusional too--or this violent.” Her eyes moved from Harley to Crane. “Dr. Sykes can you hold her? I’m…” Whistler didn't finished her sentence before Harley attacked again; she wasn’t going to let them sedate her!

She threw her head back trying to break Crane’s nose, to hurt him any way she could so she could get free. She tried to stomp on the bridge of his foot at the same time, but the man was ready for her. Having worked for a long time in Arkham Asylum had helped Crane’s reflexes and his abilities to handle unruly patients. His use of various formulae on himself had also lent him additional strength and faster reflexes; the Scarecrow had to be a step above the common people. Crane smiled as he held her, deftly avoiding her attempts to hurt him while Dr. Whistler stepped out into the hall and continued to yell for help.

Crane purred against her ear. “It’s so nice to see you again Harleen. You look more beautiful than the last time we saw one another. I do like the change, the porcelain white skin, the starlight hair. It’s like you took another step toward becoming my Lady Crow without my help. I’m quite pleased.”

Harley snarled and screamed, fighting with renewed vigor, and this time her thrashing was rewarded when she flung her body back with all her strength, surprising Crane with the strength of her renewed attack. They both stumbled backwards, slamming into Whistler’s desk with enough of an impact that Crane’s hold on her loosened. Harley flung herself forward breaking out of the cage of Crane’s arms.

She stumbled away from him a step or two before Harley spun around and attacked again. This time she thrust her arm with the cast to the side, using the cast as a weapon and smacked Crane in the face with it. She grinned with wicked glee when the impact of her cast struck his face with the sound of a crunch. She was sure she didn’t hit him hard enough, restrained at she was, to break his nose, but she did some damage regardless. Crane gasped in shock, blood flowing from his nose. The vibration of the impact made Harley’s arm flare with pain, but she ignored it; her chance to hurt Crane was far more important to her than simple physical pain.

The handcuffs made it difficult for her to move, she couldn’t lift her legs or move them more than a shuffle, or bring her arms up higher than her chest (the only reason she could move them that much was because Ian didn’t bother to secure them as tightly with the chain that ran to her ankles as most of the guards did.) She came in close to Crane, ready to use her head to headbutt him, ready to do anything she could to hurt the man, when she suddenly felt the grip of hands grabbed her shoulders.

“Settled down Quinzel!!”

It was one of the guards. Harley wasn’t sure who it was, male or female, but she didn’t care--she
would be damned if anyone was going to stop her from her revenge. She dropped into a crouch, yanked herself free and spun around. She didn’t actually “see” the guards, all she saw were five shadows, five figures stuffed into the tiny office here to stop her, stop her from doing what she needed to do— to hurt Crane.

Harley let out a scream and surged forward and upward, her shoulder impacting with the chest of the guard who had called her name. She grinned when she heard and felt the guard gasp in pain.

Harley followed her shoulder strike with a head butt, bringing her head back and slamming it into the mouth of the guard. She felt the cut of teeth across her forehead, a quick, sharp pain that meant nothing to her at the moment.

Someone else grabbed her, spinning her around. She didn’t see what hit her, but something slammed across her face, her mouth immediately filling with the taste of blood as pain lanced across her face. She could hear shouting, the words meaning nothing to her, though she heard her named peppered throughout. Hands continued to try to grab for her, but she twisted and fought, refusing to let herself be taken down.

She swung herself to the other side, trying to use her body as a weapon since she couldn’t use her hands or feet effectively. She hit someone, the gasp of her impact made her smile. Another set of hands grabbed her, yanking her forward. Harley snarled and bit, her teeth sinking into the cheek and jaw of the guard unlucky enough to have grabbed her. Harley grinned when she heard an ear piercing scream and tasted the blood in her mouth. She yanked, tearing a chunk out of the guard’s face and spat, blood running down her chin, covering her teeth as she laughed. She couldn’t help it, the laugh seemed to bubble up out of nowhere!

That was when the first taser hit her in the back. Harley jerked slightly, but she didn’t fall. A second taser hit her, followed swiftly by a third.

Harley snarled, her teeth clenching when a fourth taser hit her, but still she didn’t go down. That was when the first blow came, a baton struck her in the face, and another in the side. Harley gasped as she felt one of her healing ribs snap under the impact. Another strike came from behind to smash across her back. She dropped to a knee only for someone to punch her, the hit coming from above, slamming into her cheek and forcing her down to the floor. Once she was down, the guards rained blows and kicks on her. Harley curled into as tight a ball as she could, weathering the assault, but she continued to laugh, the laughter mixed with sobs.

Whistler pushed her way through the guards. “Stop it!! Let me through!!”

One of the nurses had brought her a syringe with a sedative, a strong sedative. Whistler made herself an opening and dropped to her knees behind Harley, shoved the needle as quickly as she could into the back of Harley’s neck and pushed the plunger before she jumped to her feet and stepped back next to Crane who was holding a handkerchief to his bleeding nose.

The guards all stepped back, but Harley had stopped moving. She was bloody and beaten and unconscious, the sedative working rapidly to render her unconscious.

Whistler sighed in relief before she turned to Crane. “I am so sorry Dr. Sykes. I’ve seen Dr. Quinzel a handful of times since her incarceration and she never gave me any inclination that she would be react this way. I determined she was non-violent based on my interactions with her. Depressed yes, very depressed, but violent? I am so sorry.”

Crane smiled. “No need to apologize Dr. Whistler…” He smiled. “Gretchen, patients like her are unpredictable. They can lull us into dropping our guards. I am sure she is only reacting to the new
stimuli of another doctor. Perhaps I could have some time alone with her, to build a relationship of trust with her?"

He smiled, tilting his head slightly as he dabbed at his nose, the bleeding having stopped. Dr. Whistler smiled. “Of course Dr. Sykes. I think that would be a good idea. She won’t be appearing in court for at least another week, so we have her until then. I’m fairly confident she will be moved to Arkham on a permanent basis regardless.”

Crane nodded. “Well, perhaps before that time I can build a relationship with her in order to help her. I am sure she is not responsible for what the Joker has done. She is surely a simple victim of a master manipulator...some people have very weak minds when faced with a stronger mind,” Crane said softly, a smile dancing across his face.

* 

When Harley worked her way back to consciousness, she found herself back in solitary confinement. She was lying on her back, the thin mattress barely separating her from the metal frame underneath. Someone had changed her clothes, putting her in a clean prison uniform. Harley could feel bandages on her legs, probably covering the self-inflicted tattoos she had carved into herself. She could also feel her ribs. They ached deeply, as did her arm, and she could feel places across her body and face where she was going have bruises after the beating she took at the hands of the guards. She closed her eyes against the pain; it was a deep, bone deep ache that throbbed through her entire body. She was sure her ribs had been re-broken or at least cracked from the kicks she had received. Her arm probably hadn’t been re-broken, but it had to be at least bruised if the pain was anything to go by. She ran her tongue over her lips, worrying at the wound on her lips, though the constant touching stung. Tears slowly welled up in her eyes and gently spilled down the sides of her face. She wanted Jack so much, wanted to feel his arms around her, holding her safely in his arms, to hear his soft voice, his lips on gentle hers, his hands caressing her. She began to tremble, struggling to control her tears until she finally gave up, rolled onto her side, and held herself as tightly as she could while she began to cry, sobbing for a long time until she fell asleep.

* 

When she woke up again Harley realized her entire body was chilled. Her muscles ached, her eyes felt swollen, grainy, and her throat was scratchy and dry. She couldn’t tell what time it was, but it felt late, as if darkness had fallen. She pulled herself into a tighter ball, trying to chase sleep when she heard a voice.

“My poor love, my poor Lady Crow. I really do hate to see you like this. You should be dressed for the night, dancing in my arms while we plunge Gotham into endless nightmares...”

Harley shifted slowly, turning her head to look at the window that was in the door to the room only to see Crane looking back at her with a smug expression on his face; a smug, obsessed expression. She wanted to throw herself at the door, to try to claw her way through the window, to rip his eyes out, but she didn’t move. She wasn’t a fool, she knew there was no way she could get to him. And even the thought of moving made her tired. Harley stayed where she was glaring at Crane.
“Go away,” she hissed into the chill air.

Crane smiled. “Dr. Whistler has decided that she will give you over to me. It took a great deal of convincing after your performance this afternoon to convince the warden, but I was able to have your care transferred to me.”

Harley’s eyes widened in horror, her lips pressing into a thin line as she stared back at him fighting not to cry, fighting not to give into her fear, her rage, her desolation. She was not going to give him that part of her—she would give him nothing. He continued to smile gently at her. “Don’t worry my love, I have a plan to get you out of here so we can be together. It will be soon.” Crane smiled at her. “I promise. But for now I am allowed to come visit with you and to bring you in for private visits. I will let you rest until then. Our first session will be in two days.”

Harley growled out, “I hate you.”

Crane smiled. “I know my dear, but I have no doubt that soon that will change, you’ll see.”

Harley waited until she was sure Crane’s footsteps had taken him far away from her. She lay still for a moment, once more fighting with herself before she gave in to her tears.

*

Back in the heart of Gotham, Falcone had been allowed to leave the hospital after a few more days of observation and was now back home. Sophia was sitting on her father’s couch nursing a coffee while her father paced back and forth in front of the glass windows that let out onto a balcony that look down over Gotham. Sophia watched him as he paced, his phone to his ear. He was on a call with an hired assassin, a woman who went by the name Lady Vic, though her full name was Lady Elaine Marsh-Morton. Sophia’s father was paying a large amount of money to have Lady Vic inserted into the Blackgate prison population in order to murder Harley Quinn, as retribution on the Joker for everyone the clown had murdered to get at Falcone. Falcone didn’t want to leave the killing to a convict in the prison, opting for a professional killer.

Sophia had tried to talk her father out of this madness because there was a very good chance that the murder of Harley Quinn would be traced back to them, or at least suspicion would fall squarely on their shoulders, but her biggest fear was that the murder of the Joker’s lover might provide the psychotic clown the reason to do worse than he had already done to the Falcone family.

And no matter what her father might think, there was worse that could be done.

But her father wouldn’t listen.

Sophia sighed and took a sip of her coffee.

* 

Harley didn’t fight when the guards came to collect her to take her for her first session with Crane. She had been told if she behaved herself that she would be moved back to her regular cell with Barbara. After two days alone with her thoughts, Harley wasn’t sure she could take much more solitary confinement. Barbara at least helped her to focus on other things besides her despair. So for now Harley was going to play nice. She refused to let Crane break her. She allowed herself a little smile. She was a completely different person than the Harley that Crane had encountered in Arkham…

The four guards that accompanied her to the office walked silently, one on either side of her holding her arms, the other two in front. They walked through the plain halls at a measured pace while the
only sounds were the low rumble of the prison, the mix of voices, the sound of cells and the hum of the power that ran through the prison like blood, keeping everything going, the doors locked, protecting the world outside from the evil within.

When they arrived at the office, one of the guards knocked on the door politely. Harley could hear the muffled response from the other side from Crane. “Enter.” The guard opened the door and stood aside to let the rest of them enter.

Harley was brought into the room where Crane sat behind a plain metal desk. The place reminded her of an interrogation room in many television dramas with dull grey walls, grey metal chairs and desk, and nothing else. The only thing that was missing was the two way mirror.

The two guards that had held her arms though the halls, walked her over to the table. Her hands were uncuffed from the chain that connected them to her ankles and were chained to the desk while her ankles were cuffed to the chair.

Crane looked as he always did, calm and in control. Today he wore a mustard colored suit under his white doctor’s coat, the glasses she knew he didn’t need were perched on the tip of his nose. Crane paid no attention to her as the guards cuffed her, holding his forefinger and thumb to his glasses as he pretended to read her file. When the guards were done he looked up. “Thank you, you can wait outside.”

One of the guards, a woman named Brenda, frowned. “Ah Dr. Sykes sir, Dr. Whistler said we were supposed to stay in the room.”

Crane smiled. “She is chained down and she is one, tiny woman. I think I will be fine. Now please, outside.”

Brenda frowned, but then shrugged. “Okay doc, call if you need us. We’ll be right outside the door.”

Crane nodded as the guards left, shutting the door behind them.

Crane smiled looking over at Harley. “How are you feeling my dear?”

Harley narrowed her eyes at him, but said nothing.

He set the papers down turning to face her fully. “Your first hearing is next week. It’s a simple thing, simply me going in with you to agree with your attorney that you should be moved to Arkham. It’s a formality really. I’ll be going with you as your doctor.”

Harley narrowed her eyes. “I’ll tell them who you really are.”

Crane laughed. “Oh my dear Harleen. Do you really think they will listen to you? A known associate of this Joker person, a killer? A psychopath? Besides, there are drugs I could give you that would render you unable to speak--as you well know. Do you really want me to do that? What is that charming phrase, the thorazine shuffle?”

Harley said nothing as she struggled with her emotions. She could feel the sting of tears in her eyes and it made her angry. She felt lost and defenseless against Crane and that made her even angrier. Crane simply continued to smile at her. All Harley wanted to do was take a knife and carve that smile off his face, to pull his lips off, to stab him in the eyes. She balled her hands into fists, her nails biting into her palms.

Crane picked up her file. “I would prefer not to have to drug you Harleen. I do not want my love to be soiled with pharmaceuticals, but if you force my hand, I will.” He glanced over at her smiling as
he watched the struggle in Harley’s expression, the tears gathering in the corners of her eyes. And the fear. He could see the fear in her bright, light blue eyes. He shifted in his seat. Harleen’s fear was intoxicating and he wanted it badly. He wanted to push her, push her fear, push her over the edge until she was his...and only his. Crane felt his body react to her and he smiled. “Good, I’m glad you are seeing things my way. Now...” He opened her file. “I have written down here--and Dr. Whistler agrees with me--that you suffer from borderline personality disorder.” He looked up over the top of his glasses. “We had your file from Arkham sent over so we could look over Dr. Crane’s notes, a brilliant man,” he said with a wink at Harley as if they were sharing a secret between two friends, lovers, before he continued. “I have added hybristophilia to your list of conditions…”

Harley interrupted him. “What?”

Crane smiled. “Now please Harleen, you are a doctor, so I shouldn’t have to explain…”

Harley snapped at him. “I know what hybristophilia is, it’s also known as the Bonnie and Clyde syndrome where one partner finds the other attractive because they’ve committed crimes.” Crane smiled, dropping her files back on the desk. “I do so like that one myself...” He stood and walked around the table to her. Harley tensed when he came over to her side of the table and sat on the edge next to her. “Though I do wonder...is it still hybristophilia if both parties commit crimes?”

Harley glared at him, not trusting herself to speak. The less that she gave this man, the better. Crane reached over and ran the side of his fingers along her cheek.

He ran his finger along her jaw whispering. “My lady…”

He brought his thumb up, dragging the pad of his thumb along her lips, the look in his eyes was clearly lustful and possessive. Harley stared hatefully back at him as he brought his thumb back across her lips again, but that was the moment that Harley snapped at him catching his thumb between her teeth and bit down as hard as she could. She tasted blood on her tongue and smiled.

Crane’s reaction was swift. He snarled in pain and backhanded her hard across the face, hard enough that he reopened the wound on her lip and left a red mark on her cheek, at the same time he yanked his now bloody thumb free.

Crane stood glaring at her. “Fight me all you want Harleen, but this time you are not going to get away from me. This time you are mine! And I will make you afraid! I will teach you what real fear is and it shall free you!”

Harley hissed right back, a couple of tiny drops of blood ran slowly down her lips and chin. “I’ll never be yours and I’ll never be afraid of you! NEVER!”

Crane had backed away from her, pulling out a handkerchief from the breast pocket of his suit jacket to wrap around his thumb, but he chuckled, smiling. “Never? You’re afraid of me now Harleen, I can see it in your eyes. You think you can hide it, but you can’t hide your fear from me. I know fear--and you are afraid.” He smiled, tying off the kerchief before he put his good hand into the pocket of his doctor’s jacket and pulled out a capped syringe.

He held it up for her to see. “I really was hoping not to do this right now, right here, but I was prepared for you being difficult. You know, that has always been one of your qualities that I admired, that streak of stubborness.” He smiled as he flicked his finger against the glass of the syringe. “This is just a small dose of my fear toxin. Not fatal of course, this is only a very small taste, just a little to start you back on your path to me.” He frowned at her. “I am sorry I hit you my dear, but you really are quite rude and you simply need to learn your place.” His smile became oddly tender. “Now...”
He stepped closer. Harley started to struggle against her cuffs. She screamed and thrashed, even going so far as to call for help. She was scared and it made her angry. She didn't want him to know how much he scared her, how scared she was that she was trapped. Crane stepped around behind her, removing the cap before his other hand grabbed Harley around her forehead and pressed her head back against his stomach.

Crane cooed softly. “My dear girl, my lady…”

Harley screamed, trying to move, trying to break free, but she couldn’t move. His fingers pressed painfully into her forehead as he held her steady, bringing the needle to the side of her throat. She gasped when she felt the needle pierce her skin, going deep into her neck. Tears ran down her cheeks as she fought him. Crane smiled, holding her steady as he pushed the plunger down and she felt the sting.

He continued to hold her head against him until she stopped struggling. When he felt her relax, Crane began to stroke his hand back along her hair. He leaned down to lay his cheek against one tear damp cheek and whispered.

“There, there, my dear, have pleasant nightmares.”

He walked around to face her. Harley’s eyes were rolling, the pupils dilated, her mouth slightly open, a little bit of blood spread across her bottom lip. He caressed her face, dragging his fingertips along her cheek and along her chin before he leaned in and kissed her. He grabbed her jaw, holding her steady, thrusting his tongue into her mouth. She didn’t respond, the drug working through her system as he kissed her. He smiled, leaning back watching her.

“Soon,” he whispered.

*  

Harley was lost. Everywhere she looked was darkness, yet she felt compelled to move. She kept walking, slowly, the darkness dragging her forward—or what felt like forward—while her heart slammed hard inside her chest. She felt as if she had walked forever, following the darkness’s pull when she heard a voice, a voice she knew well.

“We really need to stop running into each other like this.”

Harley turned to see a dim pool of light where Harleen stood. She was holding a clipboard, dressed in her black pencil skirt and red blouse, her white doctor’s coat sporting a nametag with her name spelled out on the breast, Quinzel, in big letters. Her golden blonde hair was pulled back tight in a no nonsense bun, her glasses perched on the tip of her nose. Dr. Harleen Quinzel, her previous incarnation.

Harleen smiled gently. “Don’t worry, this is just a dream. I can’t stop the dream, but I thought I could help you through this, because you are not going to like what you see.”

Harley frowned. “What do you mean?”

Harleen snarled in sudden anger. “Crane, that drug he gave you, more of that fear toxin of his, though this one is a lot different than last time you encountered him. He has streamlined it.” She walked over to Harley, her heels making a sharp click against the floor. She put her arm around Harley’s shoulders. “I figured together we could handle whatever Crane threw at us. That’s why I’m here—to help.”

Harley glanced back toward the darkness that had been pulling at her. “What do you think it is?”
Harleen stared in the same direction. “I think it's something that is going to hurt us.”

She gave Harley’s arm a squeeze. “Let’s get going. Better to get it over with than to fret in anticipation.”

Together the two of them began to walk together. As they made their way through the darkness, they both heard the sounds of a beating, the unmistakable sound of a fist smacking against flesh followed by gasps and grunts of pain mixed with the snarls of someone else.

A light slowly began to bring something into focus in front of them and the two women saw Batman. He was holding Joker by the front of the clown’s ripped shirt. Joker’s face was a bloody mess, the teeth in his perfect smile were broken and missing, blood dribbling down his lips. Harley’s eyes roamed over her lover’s face. She could see that one of his eyes was swollen shut, his nose was clearly broken and his lips were split into a ruin of flesh as well. Her heart hurt. She tried to take a step toward him, but Harleen tightened her hold on Harley’s arm. Her grip was painful, her nails digging into her skin. For a delusion, everything felt completely real.

Joker had a hand on Batman’s shoulder, one finger clearly broken, the strange angle a testament to that, and he was laughing, laughing, and laughing until Harley was in shock that Joker had any voice left.

Joker laughed in a rasping tone, the sound was rough as he stared up at Batman. “Oooh look at you go Brucie!! Hit me again!! Get that anger out!! Show me how much you hate me. Bats are so small, they can only feel one emotion at a time and hate’s the only emotion you have!!!”

Batman growled and hit him again, but Joker simply laughed. “All this rage directed at me and for what Brucie?! We are more alike than you want to admit!!”

Batman hit Joker again and again. Blood flew from Joker’s mouth as Batman’s fist struck him. Joker didn’t defend himself, didn’t fight back, he simply laughed. “Who’s this for Brucie? You or me?”

Joker snickered, but Harley could see the tears in his eyes, stained pink with blood, rolling down the pale man’s cheeks. “You hate your own brother so much because you know you are just as crazy as I am!!! We were both born that night!! We both exist because of them!! Their murder created us!! Created what we are!!” Jack laughed.”Then you killed me and created me again...I rose from the dead into this and now you hate me because I am a reflection of you!! I’m a reminder that deep down you are a murderer!” Joker giggled.

Bruce snarled. “Shut up!! I’m nothing like you!!! I don’t kill!!!!”

Jack snickered. “You killed me, remember? Your own baby brother. That was the first, but who’s next?”

Bruce sluged him in the face. “You were an aberration! I never kill! I never kill anyone!”

Jack giggled. “Oh Bruce, what you do is worse...at least I end their suffering, but you--you prolong it, make it linger. You leave them in pain...you scar them Bruce, like you scarred me...like you scarred her...”

Batman snarled. ‘I’m not responsible for either of you…”

Batman grabbed his brother around the throat with both hands and squeezed. “You are not my responsibility!”
Jack laughed at the same time he grasped his brothers shoulders with both hands, his fingers digging into the cloth of Batman’s cape, his laughter slowly turned into more tears, rolling down his pale cheeks as Bruce choked him to death.

Harley screamed.

She tried again to race forward one hand stretched out, her fingers grasping, trying to reach for Jack, but Harleen held her back, preventing her from racing toward the image as Jack’s body went limp in Bruce’s arms. Bruce released his brother’s throat, dropping Jack to the floor and the nightmare began to pull away, to fade.

Harley sobbed. “He killed him!! Oh my god he killed him!!! Bruce killed him...”

She sank to the floor. Harleen wrapped her arms around Harley, pulling her close. “It’s just a dream Harley, just a dream...it’s one of your worst fears, but it’s not real. It’s just a dream,” she repeated. “I promise...”

Harley turned to look at Harleen. “But he’ll kill him...he will...”

Harleen brushed Harley’s hair back and held her face between her hands. “Harley, it’s just a dream. A terrible dream, but only a dream.” She leaned forward and kissed Harley on the forehead before she whispered.

“It’s just a dream. Go to sleep now Harley. Let me protect you for now.”

Harley stared into Harleen’s blue eyes before she crumbled.

*

Harley woke when her breakfast was shoved through the slat at the bottom of the door. She jerked awake when the metal tray clanged against the wall. She gasped, sitting up and looking around the tiny room, her heart racing. It took her several minutes to settle down, her situation slamming down around her, reality sucking the breath from her. In the back of her head she could hear the soft whisper of Harleen telling her it's just a dream...just a dream...that she was there for her, that she would protect her, help her until Jack found her again.

Harley fought back tears, wiping at her eyes angrily, wiping tears that had dried on her cheeks during the night, and banishing the fresh ones that wanted to come. She took a deep breath trying to steady herself before she tossed her legs over the side of the thin bed. She was not going to break she told herself. Crane would not break her and this place would not break her. She wrapped her hands around the edge of the bed, holding on tight until her knuckles ached and her broken arm throbbed. Her hair hung around her, hiding her face, hiding the room from her. Harley took several deep breaths, releasing the tension from her shoulder.

“I can do this,” she whispered to herself. “I can survive this.”

She had finally felt calm enough, her stomach settled enough that she might tackle her breakfast when she heard a voice that made her shiver.

“Good morning my dear.”

Harley turned, looking through the curtain of her white hair to see Crane’s cool, collected gaze on her. His eyes moved over her, making her uncomfortable, like he was undressing her with his eyes. She resisted the urge to wrap her arms around herself, but instead her grip on the bed tightened. She would rather kill herself that give him the satisfaction of knowing he was making her uncomfortable.
She glared at him without answering or moving.

“Tell me...how did you sleep?” Crane smiled at her in such a way that Harley wanted to jam her fist down his throat and watched him choke. She smiled just a little at the thought of him dying by her hand.

Harley snarled with a slight grin. “Like a baby.”

Crane narrowed his eyes at her. It was clear from his expression he thought she was lying, but after a moment of the two of them glaring at one another, he smiled. “I do like your spirit Harleen...I do so like your spirit. You are the perfect woman for me: spirited, intelligent, passionate, all the qualities I enjoy.” He smiled softly then sighed. “You’ll be moved back to your cell today, but our next session will be tomorrow. I really am looking forward to our session, my lovely girl,” Crane purred softly as his eyes moved over her in a caress that made Harley feel sick, but she didn’t move. They stared at each other until Crane blinked. Harley couldn’t stop herself from sneering at him. Crane didn’t say another word before he turned and disappeared.

Harley’s whole body deflated, her shoulders dropped, her her head fell forward, her her head once more becoming a curtain around her. She bit down hard on her lower lip, fighting the tears that threatened to flood. She was not going to cry, she told herself, but the stupid tears came anyway making her furious with herself. She stood up swiftly, walking over to where the tray lay. She grabbed it up and held it so tightly that the tray vibrated in her hand before she finally threw it across the room with a scream, but no sooner had she let herself feel, let herself give into her rage and fear, than the door to her cell was flung open.

Harley looked around in a panic looking for something, some way to defend herself, but there was nothing she could do. Four guards dressed in helmets and padding barreled into the room and slammed her up against the back of the wall of her cell knocking her face into the plaster. Harley screamed and struggled as the two men grabbed her arms and pinned her wrists against the wall over her head. She continued to struggle and scream, kicking and twisting.

“Let me GO!! LET ME GO!!!”

Her eyes bugged when she heard Crane behind her. “See gentlemen, just as I said. She would have a fit after our visit.”

One of the guards laughed. “You were right Dr. Sykes. What do you want us to do?”

“Secure her to the bed please, I’ll administer the shot once you have her down.” Crane’s voice was soft, smooth, and it made her skin crawl.

The guards lifted her up and carried her over to the small cot and flung her down. Harley fought back, but there were too many of them and she felt weak. Her arms were yanked over her head and held by two guards while the other two grabbed her ankles and held her down. Crane made his way through the small crowd to sit down near the side of her head.

“My poor dear,” he said as he held up the syringe.

Harley’s eyes widened until the white nearly devoured her entire eye. She screamed. “NOOO!!!!!”

Crane brushed her hair back only to have Harley try to take a bite out of his hand. Crane snatched his hand back with a soft laugh. “She certainly is feisty.”

One of the guard’s struggling to hold her down glanced up at Crane. “You want us to get the muzzle for her doc?”
Crane shook his head. “That won’t be necessary. Please hold her steady.”

The guard who had spoken grabbed her head, his fingers wrapping tight around her forehead as he held her head steady with one hand, the other hand gripping her broken arm until Harley was sure it would snap. Crane leaned in close, she could see the silver tip of the syringe, the liquid beading from its tip.

“Now now, Harleen, this won’t hurt a bit.” He eyed her neck for a moment, then plunged the needle into a vein in her neck, the sting of the injection burned as it entered her blood.

Harley screamed, arching her body off the bed trying her best to break free, but it was no good--she was trapped and the drug had already entered her system.

Crane stood. “Just hold her for another minute. Once the sedative takes effect she’ll calm on her own.”

Harley tried not to cry, but the tears came anyway, angry tears, tears of fear, frustration, helplessness, and pain. She wanted Jack, she wanted this nightmare to be over...she felt the warm burn of the drug take effect and there was nothing she could do to stop it.

Crane and the guards watched her for a few more seconds before Crane nodded. “She’ll be fine now. I’ll stay with her for a little while. Thank you all for your help.”

“Sure thing doc--call us if you need anything.” The guards nodded their goodbyes to the man they thought of as Sykes and left, leaving Crane alone with the prisoner. He smiled waiting until the guards shut the door, counted to twenty before he walked over and opened the the door a crack, looking out into the hall, but no one was there.

As Harley lay on the cot, her eyes rolling with the drug, Crane pulled out his phone from the pocket of his coat along with a roll of duct tape. It took him several minutes to find the perfect spot to secure the phone, angling the camera to take in his Harleen and himself.

Once he was satisfied with the phone’s position Crane moved closer to her. He reached out and lightly caressed her jaw, his fingers tracing down along her throat as Harley twitched, her body jerking, her mouth moving as fear began to manifest in her, etching itself across her delicate features. Crane’s fingers slid down her throat, along the t-shirt she wore. He dragged his fingers between her breasts and along her stomach before he snatched his hand back, not trusting himself further. He didn’t want to take her until she was fully his...

He hissed low, his voice a sing song when he spoke to her. “Tell me what you see Harleen, tell me, my lady, what is it that scares you?”

He smiled when he saw the beads of perspiration appear on her forehead, her fingers clawing at the mattress beneath her, and she began to rock back and forth. She was so beautiful he thought, his entire person in need of her. He leaned close and pulled open one of her eyes. The pupils of her eyes were dilated fully, nearly engulfing the blue of her eyes. The initial effect of the drug was fading to be replaced by the fear. He checked her pulse to find her heartbeat was rapid. Crane felt his own reaction, his erection becoming harder, unbearably hard watching his Harleen twitch, the little gasps she made as her fear washed over her.

He put his free arm around her, leaning down close, his lips nearly touching hers, his chest pressed against hers. “What do you see?” he asked in a whisper. “Tell me what scares you Harleen.”

“Darkness,” she whispered back her voice filled with fear. “There is darkness everywhere and I can hear the sounds of wings...bat wings...they are coming for me...no...please...”
Crane kissed her, his tongue tracing her lips as she fought her nightmare, while at the same time he could feel his erection swelling painfully against his slacks. He groaned against her mouth while heat and lust raced through his body in a toxic mix that made his erection press tight against his pants. He hissed, struggling for restraint as he leaned his cheek against hers, his forehead pressed against Harley’s, his lips against the corner of her mouth. His body trembled with need.

“Tell me what you see...tell me...” He moaned. He was losing the struggle. He pressed his hand against his painfully hard shaft, trying to will his desire away, but he couldn’t. Harleen’s fear, her struggle within the fear was pulling at him, exciting him.

Tears began to roll down from her eyes, her voice a soft whisper as her body twitched, becoming more and more frightened by whatever it was she was seeing. “The bats...they’re everywhere...they’re going to kill him...please...no...”

Crane groaned pressing down harder on himself, but it was doing no good; his body disobeyed him. Crane’s breath came quicker. He dragged his tongue across her mouth, his free hand grabbed her upper arm and squeezed as his orgasm built in time with the building of her stress, her fear. Harleen cried out, her hands gripping the blanket, digging into the mattress, her body covered in sweat and her eyes flew open, seeing something terrifying that only she could see.

Crane muffled her cries with his mouth at the same time muffling his own cries when he came.

Crane groaned low and deep, nearly collapsing on top of her. He bit down on his bottom lip, his hand pressed down on his confined member as wetness soaked his slacks at the same time, his forehead pressed against Harley’s as he struggled to bring his breathing under control. He sat up slowly, pulling the handkerchief from his breast pocket of his jacket, but as he looked down at himself he realized it would be no help. He was thankful that he always brought an extra suit with him to work. (There was always the possibility of a suit becoming ruined while working with volatile patients). Harley continued to cry and shudder, lost in her nightmare.

Once he had himself in order, buttoning up his doctor’s coat to hide his lack of control, Crane walked over and pulled the phone down. He checked the video, a smile spreading across his face. He brushed the tips of his fingers across the screen and whispered.

“I’ll cherish this my dear, until we can be completely together.”

With that Crane slipped his phone back into his pocket, walked over to press one last kiss to Harley’s lips before he left the room, locking the door to leave her alone with her nightmare.

* 

When Harley finally broke through the nightmare, she rolled onto her side and sobbed. She felt so lost, alone, violated. The fear serum that Crane kept feeding her pulled out her darkest fears and made her relive them...she shuddered, quickly turning to vomit over the side of the bed. She curled in on herself and laid there, waiting.

Later that afternoon Harley was escorted under guard back to her cell where Barbara sat on the floor with a deck of cards playing solitaire. When she saw Harley, the other blonde gasped, leaping to her feet, playing cards scattering everywhere as she threw her arms around Harley.

“They brought you back!”

Harley smiled, hugging Barbara in return. “Yeah, they did.”

Barbara held Harley out at arm’s length, her gaze intense, a frown playing across her lips. “Did they
hurt you?”

Harley shook her head. “Nothing I couldn’t handle.”

Barbara grinned hugging her one more time. “That’s good to hear.” Barbara glanced over at the cell door with a slight frown before she said quietly. “It’s almost lunch time--ready to face the lunch crowd?”

Harley made a face, she could stay here and refuse to eat, but her stomach made a loud sound telling her that she needed to eat. Harley chewed her bottom lip for a moment as she quickly went over her options. She could refuse to eat, but that would only mean they would tie her down and force feed her again. Besides, she needed to keep her strength up if she was going to escape. Damn it, she thought furiously at herself, she was going to find a way out of here, she had to...Harley closed her eyes on a fresh wave of despair. She balled her hands into fists fighting the wave of despair that rolled over her, crashing hard down on her. She needed Jack, she needed him soon; she felt hollow, half a person without him. At the same time she couldn’t give in to Crane, she couldn’t let Crane win...she would not let him break her.

She forced a smile onto her lips. “Sure. What’s on the menu?”

Barbara smiled putting an arm around Harley’s shoulders. “That’s my girl.”

*

The prison lunchroom was a large open space with grey walls and a cheap white tile flooring with rows of plastic tables (all bolted to the floor) not too dissimilar from the ones that Harley remembered from high school. Both men and women used the cafeteria at the same time, just like one or two of the recreational areas in the prison. The set up was supposed to encourage better behavior--Harley had read an article about it when she was in college. The idea was that the interaction would cut down on the violence, and it did. But the same article speculated that the prison had simply replaced one problem for another. Though the statistics supported the fact that co-ed areas actually reduced incidents of rape, the purchasing of sexual favors had increased in such prisons. Standard practice was to assign twice the number of guards when anyone was in a co-ed area of the prison. Blackgate was far more careful than a lot of prisons because of the co-ed rule. If anyone abused the co-ed privileges and was caught, everyone--that meant everyone on both sides of the prison--lost their privileges for however long the warden decided was appropriate, so everyone was careful, keeping an eye on everyone else. No one wanted to lose their co-ed time.

The lunchroom was crowded as usual, a sea of orange and brown prison uniforms mixed with the blue and grey of the prison guards. Barbara led Harley over to line to get their lunch. As she was being guided to the line, Harley’s eyes wandered over to the bench near the back, the place where Barbara and her friends usually sat. The bench held three women that Harley had met through Barbara and one man. There was Angie Chen (robbery), Byrna Brilyant (robbery and murder), Gemini De Mille (kidnapping, murder) and Charlie Bullock, who as far as Harley knew, was in here for a variety of crimes that he didn’t like to talk about. Harley frowned. There was someone new sitting there, a blonde woman who she hadn’t met before she had been hauled off by Crane. There was something about the woman that set Harley’s senses on alert. It wasn’t just that she didn’t know the woman, but there was something about the set of her shoulders, the line of her back...it all put Harley on alert.

Harley and Barbara picked up their lunches. (Harley made a sour face, the smell made her stomach turn, but she promised herself she would try to eat.) Today’s lunch was meat and rice, cornbread, baked beans and something that looked like a sponge, but she figured had to be a slice of cake. Harley glared at the food, her stomach both desiring it and revolted by the sight of the food at the
same time. She was going to force herself to eat, she had to keep her strength up. She knew her puddin would come for her, he would…and she needed to be ready. Harley frowned as she and Barbara made their way over to the bench where the small group of criminals were laughing about something when Byrna, a woman with short black hair that was shaved on the sides, and model good looks, waved with a bright grin.

“Hey Harley! Nice to see you back again! How was solitary?”

Harley made a face as she took a seat. “Noisy,” she answered deadpan which had Byrna laughing so hard she nearly snorted her juice out her nose. The others laughed, pointing at Byrna while Angie slid out of the way, forcing Harley to sit by the new girl.

Harley set her tray down and took her seat. “Though I will say the food is better in here.”

Angie shrugged taking a bite of her green beans. “That wouldn’t take much,” the redhead replied. “Licking the walls would taste better.”

Harley chuckled in response. “No doubt.”

Charlie smiled motioning to the woman sitting next to Harley. “Harley, this is Vic. She arrived yesterday, in for murder, kidnapping and robbery.”

Vic turned and put her hand out. “Nice to meet you.”

Harley frowned slightly, taking Vic’s offered hand. She could feel calluses and the strength of this woman. Harley wouldn’t be surprised if this Vic could choke someone with one bare hand. “Nice to meet you Vic.” Harley gave her a smile, hiding her misgivings from the other woman.

Vic smiled, turning back to her lunch, but Harley watched her from the corner of her eye. There was something about the new woman that bothered her. This close to her the uncomfortable feeling intensified. Harley shrugged it off, maybe she was just being paranoid because of Crane and his damnable drugs.

*

When lunch was almost over Harley needed to excuse herself.

The lunchtime conversation had mostly revolved around Christmas and family, which only made Harley’s chest hurt as she struggled with her emotions. The fact that she wasn’t going to be with her puddin for Christmas, that she wasn’t going to be with her chosen family and was instead stuck in here, alone with Crane at her heels like a dog in heat only made her isolation that much more unbearable. Harley stared at her food, moving bits of it around with her plastic fork, having only taken a bite or two. She simply couldn’t stomach anything more. She felt a little sick, had tried to eat, but her stomach rebelled against the food. The few bites she had taken were threatening to come back up. She wanted to be strong, but it was so difficult when all she wanted to do was close her eyes and fall into oblivion. Being without Jack…it felt like she was dying slowly.

She stood up abruptly without looking at anyone at the table and muttered. “I need to use the bathroom,” before she turned and hurried away.

Barbara watched her go with a frown. “Well, guess when you gotta go…”

Angie laughed. “Oh Jurassic Park, right?”

Barbara turned back around and winked at Angie. “You got it.”
Vic narrowed her eyes ignoring everyone else at the table until their voices had faded into the background. She watched Harley make her way across the lunchroom before she turned back to her own lunch with a smile.

* 

Harley made her way through the lunchroom crowd, pushing her way toward the bathrooms. The jail had several bathrooms, one in the showers, another for the rec areas and one in here. A few of the newer cells had toilets in them, but most everyone preferred to use the public bathrooms because the stalls had doors and no one could watch you take a pee. The pregnant inmates tended to like the new cells that had toilets in them since running to the bathroom whenever you needed to go (such as the middle of the night) wasn’t an option and a convenient toilet, despite the fact that everyone could see you use it, was better than waiting on a guard to escort you to one of the bathrooms.

The bathroom here in the lunchroom had one guard standing outside the door, a large dark skinned woman who went by her last name Meethers—no one knew her first name. Meethers was a tall woman with a hard face and heavily muscled arms, but she smiled and nodded her head at Harley when she saw her approach. Harley smiled in return and started to push the door open to the bathroom when Meethers reached out and gently laid her hand on Harley’s arm. Harley frowned in surprise and looked at the guard.

Meethers smiled. “I heard about what happened in the doc’s office, you okay?”

Harley tilted her head in surprise. “Ah...sore...I think they rebroke one of my ribs.”

Meethers glowered. “I’m sorry honey. I mean, I know you shouldn’t have done what you did, Chris is going to have to have surgery to fix what you did to his face, and attacking the doctor like that was wrong, real wrong, but...beating you like that was wrong too. Us…” Here Meethers pointed at herself then out at the other guards. “We are supposed to be better than that. I just wanted to tell you I was sorry.”

Harley frowned in confusion. “But you didn’t…”

Meethers smiled. “I know honey, but...well it reflects on all of us and I wanted to let you know not all of us guards are like that. You may have committed a crime, but you’re still a person.”

Meethers shrugged. “And while biting a hole in Chris’s cheek was gross, I can’t find any tears for that man.” The guard scowled. “Just, uh, don’t do it again okay?”

Harley gave the guard a genuine smile and nod. “Okay, and ah... thank you.”

Meethers nodded and pushed the door open for her.

Harley smiled softly and headed into the bathroom.

There were a few other women in here; a couple were smoking in one of the stalls (against the rules, though no one really cared), another couple were making out in the corner (also against the rules, but no one stopped anyone and privacy could be bought with a pack of cigarettes). Harley ignored them all and pushed open one of the stalls at the far end of the bathroom. She turned and locked the door before she sat down on the toilet and dropped her elbows to her knees, covering her face with her hands as she fought, both tears and the urge to vomit, wondering how she was going to get through this without her puddin.

She squeezed her eyes closed, trying to ignore all the sounds around her. She didn’t hear the door to the bathroom open or a low woman’s voice tell the others in the bathroom to get out. Distracted by
her upset stomach and her fear of never being free to see Jack again, Harley was unaware that she
was alone in the bathroom except for the one woman until her stall door was slammed open, proving
the locks on the stalls were flimsy. Harley’s head snapped up to see Vic standing there, her hands on
either side of the stall door. Now Harley could see just how tall Vic was, easily a few inches taller
than Harley, which wouldn’t be that big a deal, but Vic had removed the orange shirt of her uniform
wrapping it around her waist to reveal a sleeveless white t-shirt underneath that highlighted Vic’s
muscles. The woman’s arms spoke of strength and the way she held herself told Harley this was a
woman accustomed to fighting.

The other woman smiled with a dangerous look in her eyes. “Hello Harley Quinn. I was hired by
Carmine Falcone to give the Joker a message: no one messes with Falcone.”

Harley hissed. “Shit.”

Vic reached in and grabbed Harley by the front of her prison uniform and yanked the smaller woman
out of the stall. She pulled Harley out and flung her. Harley slammed up against one of the sinks.
The pain that shot through her side was intense, nearly dropping her when her ribs screamed in
protest. The pain made Harley dizzy, but she ground her teeth and turned, pushing herself away from
the sink and ducked under Vic’s first swing. The woman’s fist hit the wall hard enough that she
broke through the thick plaster, leaving a hole behind.

Harley spun around and launched herself at Vic, grabbing the other woman around the waist, both
women slamming to the floor, sliding a little against the slightly slick surface. Harley gasped in pain;
her arm in the cast protested the fall as did her ribs. Harley pushed up and Vic, who had rolled onto
her back, slammed her elbow into Harley’s chin. Harley’s jaw snapped shut hard enough that she
wouldn’t have been surprised if she had cracked a tooth. She gasped in pain, rolling herself out of
the way and getting to her feet trying to put some distance between her and her attacker. Vic had already
gotten to her feet and pulled out something from the pocket of her prison pants. Harley couldn’t see
exactly what it was, but she didn’t need to because the glimpse Harley did get told her that whatever
it was, it was sharp. Vic took a couple of quick swipes at Harley, the smaller woman scrambling
back. Vic sneered and swung again, but this time she managed to cut Harley across the cheek before
Harley was able to get out of the way. Harley brought her fists up to try to block. Vic took another
swipe at her, but Harley leaned to the side, avoiding the stab and grabbed Vic’s arm with both hands.
Even with the cast preventing her from gaining the best hold, Harley grunted and flung the bigger
woman across the bathroom and into the door of one of the stalls. Vic crashed through the door,
falling head first into the stall.

Harley turned and started to go for the door to get herself out of the bathroom, but Vic moved
quickly. The woman burst from the stall and grabbed Harley by the back of her shirt just a half step
from the door and yanked her back before fully throwing her backwards. Harley’s feet went out from
under her and she fell, slamming to the floor on her rear. The impact was jarring, stunning her and
caused Harley to bite her tongue. The sudden taste of blood in her mouth was sharp, snapping her
out of the momentary daze when Vic charged her.

Harley spun, pushing herself to her feet, but there was nowhere to go. She spun around only to see
Vic was in her face. The other woman surprised her, backhanded her across the face. Harley gasped
in surprise and pain. Harley responded back hooking her foot behind Vic’s left calf and yanking
forward, pulling Vic’s leg, not quite out from under her, but the move threw Vic off balance. Harley
followed that move by slamming her right fist into Vic’s stomach as hard as she could, then hitting
the woman again with her left fist across the cheek. She followed this by grabbing Vic and throwing
her again, this time into one of the sinks.

Vic’s head hit the sink and she slipped, falling to the floor. Her head hit with a heavy thud, but the
woman still pushed herself up partly, taking a swing at Harley’s legs.

Harley felt the cut of something slicing through her pants leg and into her skin, but it wasn’t deep, just enough to sting. Harley kicked, her foot slamming into Vic’s arm, the strike hard enough that whatever it was that Vic had been holding went skidding across the bathroom floor.

Vic cursed, hopped to her feet in an impressive move that showed her skill, but Harley was ready for her. Even though her broken arm was aching and her ribs were screaming at her, Harley grabbed the woman’s arm when her opponent took a swing at her the moment she was on her feet. Harley jumped up, spinning herself around the woman’s shoulders and down, wrapping her legs around Vic’s throat using her body’s weight to haul the other woman off her feet. Harley hit the floor in her controlled fall while Vic landed hard, the air forced from her lungs. There was a second when she looked up to see Harley’s vicious grin before Harley’s fist slammed into her throat leaving Vic choking, her hands reached to her throat as she struggled to make a sound. Harley grinned and took back a little of her lost power.

She straddled the other woman before sitting down slowly on Vic’s chest. Harley panted, her already pale white complexion was ashen looking, and the pain she was in clear around the corners of her eyes.

Still, Harley smiled down at her would be assassin. “Well, I have a message for Falcone...He can keep sending as many people as he wants to try and kill me, but they are all going to end up the same way--dead.”

Vic’s eyes widened when she saw that Harley had her knife.

Harley’s smile widened and her blue eyes looked wild when she hissed. “I’m just afraid that message is going to be fatal for you.”

Harley plunged the knife into Vic’s right eye, slamming it down hard enough that the hilt of the blade went part way into the woman’s eye socket. Harley slammed the heel of her hand down on the hilt, sending it further inside Vic’s skull. Vic didn’t fight back, her heels drummed against the floor for a couple of seconds while a strange gurgling gasp issued from her throat, then nothing.

Harley sat still glaring down at her, her own pain a dim shadow. She heard a creak and looked up when the door to the bathroom opened to see Ginty.

Ginty started speaking before she saw Harley. “Vic, you done?”

When she saw Harley sitting on the dead woman’s body, the guards eyes widened before they narrowed and she turned and yelled. “PRISONER DOWN!! I NEED HELP!!”

Five guards rushed into the bathroom in front of Ginty.

Harley stood, her arms up, though it didn’t matter. One of the guards grabbed her unbroken arm. Harley yanked the man towards her; she knew how this was going to go...solitary again. Well, she decided, if she was going into that box anyway, she was going to make sure she had earned every bit of time in it. When she yanked the guard forward, she used the elbow of her broken arm to slam down on the man’s exposed neck. The guard fell only to be replaced with another. She threw herself forward flipping on her good hand, her legs coming up to kick the guard in the face knocking him back as she landed on her feet. Harley giggled at the same time Ginty screamed.

“Light her up!”

Harley spun just as four of the guards and Ginty shot her at the same time with their tasers. She
gasped in surprise and pain as the electric shocks all hit her at once. She jerked and dropped, hitting the floor hard. At the same time, what little lunch she had eaten, finally found its way out of her stomach.

* 

Harley had no idea what time it was. After the round of taser tag with the guards, a doctor had been called in to give her a sedative. That bastard Crane had answered the call and had loaded her up with enough sedatives she was sure she had been out for hours, maybe a half day. The room had that heavy feeling that usually came when darkness fell. Of course, without windows she couldn’t be sure, but it felt late, though for all she knew it had been a few days instead of just a few hours.

She sighed as a shiver coursed through her, pulling up the thin blanket and wrapped it around herself. Every part of her ached; her entire body was sore, her face hurt, ribs, arms. The word ‘miserable’ came to mind, maybe even ‘wretched,’ she thought. She squeezed her eyes shut trying to pull up images of Jack when she heard the door to her cell open. Harley sat up quickly, scooting herself to the end of her bed as a shadow filled the doorway of her room.

For a moment her eyes widened in fear, it wasn’t Crane, but rather a monster, a huge black shadow with long pointed ears…

“Dr. Quinzel.”

Harley frowned in confusion. “Batman?”

The darkness took shape and her eyes adjusted to see that it was indeed Batman. He stayed standing in the doorway, a great looming shadow. She could barely see the soft glow of light on his mask where his eyes would be, staring at her.

“What are you doing here?” Harley asked wearily. She would have preferred to be snappy with him, throw some sarcasm and hate at him, but she was too sore and too tired to care. She leaned against the wall, drawing her legs up and wrapped the blanket around herself as best she could.

Batman frowned studying her. She looked…bad, weak, paler, a shadow of herself. He could see the fresh wounds on her, dried blood around her mouth, new bruises, the old ones along her jaw having turned dark yellow and a deep bluish purple were overlapped by fresher ones.

“What happened to you?” he asked softly.

Harley narrowed her eyes. “Like you care.”

Batman was silent, waiting until Harley finally sighed. “Let’s see, I attacked a guard, then other guards beat me up after I attacked a doctor and then Falcone sent someone to kill me, who I killed instead.” She thought briefly about telling him about Crane, but decided against it. He would probably go and talk to him which would only mean Crane would show up here and she didn’t want that if she could avoid it. No, she couldn’t trust Batman she told herself, wrapping her thin blanket tighter around herself.

Batman nodded. “That must be the reason they are moving you.”

“Moving me? Where?” Harley asked in confusion.

Batman frowned. “I received a message from the warden; they want you moved to Arkham. He told Dr. Arkham that he couldn’t have you in his prison, you were too disruptive.”
Harley giggled. “That’s funny.”

Batman didn’t say anything in response to that, but he did ask. “Where is Joker?”

Harley sneered. “Like I would tell you if I knew.”

Batman moved closer. His size was intimidating, especially in that suit, but she knew who he really was, knew what he really was, so she simple glared back at him.

“You can’t scare me,” she hissed though she struggled to control her shaking. After the dreams, the nightmares that Crane had forced on her, she was scared of Batman, scared of what he would do to Joker.

“You’re going to get him killed,” Batman said softly.

Harley laughed. “Me? You’re the one that tried to kill him.”

Batman ignored her. “You should tell me where he is, let me help him, let me help you both.”

Harley snorted. “You’re idea of helping is to ignore or to destroy. I’ll never tell you anything.”

Batman took a steady breath. “I came here to give you a chance Dr. Quinzel, a chance to try and do the right thing, a chance to save him.”

“You know what B-man, you can take your chance and shove it up your ass. Now leave me alone.” She turned away from him, her forehead against the wall.

Batman sighed. “They are going to be moving you tomorrow night. I will be following. If Joker shows up, I will stop him.”

Harley elected not to respond, but her heart began to beat faster when he mentioned Joker. Would he know they were moving her? Would he come? She pressed her teeth into her bottom lip; the pain was quick and sharp. She didn’t want to hope because the chances that Joker knew she was being moved were thin...but maybe...maybe...She struggled to control her trembling, she wanted her lover to save her because she was terrified she couldn’t save herself. She looked back at Batman, thinking to say something nasty to him, something to make her feel in control, but he was gone, vanished as if he had never been there in the first place. She shivered. Arkham. She didn’t want to go back, but she supposed it was better than here. There was no way Crane could show up at Arkham without someone recognizing him. Maybe she would be safer there, safe from Crane...

Harley laid back down pulling the thin blanket tight around her and closed her eyes trying to clear her mind of any thoughts other than Jack.

*

She supposed that the reason she wasn’t forced into a session with Crane the next day was because of the transfer that was coming up. She had to smile/ The transfer had to have thrown Crane off; now he wouldn’t have access to her. She wasn’t looking forward to see Arkham Asylum again, but if being locked away inside that nuthouse got her away from Crane, she was happy--or at least as happy as she could be...

No one came to speak to her all day. Food arrived, three meals, but she never saw who brought them. The slat under her door would open and a tray would come flying into the room. She was beginning to think that Batman had lied to her about the transfer. It was late and no one had said anything to her. She hadn’t seen anyone either. If the meals hadn’t arrived when they did, she would
have thought she had been forgotten about. She was lying on her side, wrapped in her thin blanket, staring at the wall when she heard the door to her room open. She had no idea what time it was, but she would have guessed it was near midnight, maybe later. The door was pulled open and she was surprised to see the warden himself standing in the doorway.

He didn’t look happy as he glared at her with several armed guards surrounding him.

“Dr. Harleen Quinzel, you are to be transferred to Arkham Asylum immediately. I want you out of my prison.”

Harley sat up with a giggle. “Awww...you don’t like me?”

The warden glared at her before he stepped aside. “Take her.”

The guard rushed in, only two of them could get into the room, but Harley didn’t fight them. She let them yank her from her bed and spin her around, shoving her up against the wall. She winced as her arms were pulled forward and cuffed, neither guard being careful of her broken arm as she was cuffed and chained.

Harley giggled. “You guys scared of little old me?”

None of them spoke as they finished cuffing her, yanking on the chains to make sure she was secure before she was shoved forward.

Out in the hall there were another four guards along with the warden. The warden gave her a disgusted look before he turned and set a brisk pace down the hall. Two guards turned to follow him while the rest stayed with her, shoving her forward. The chain that connected her wrists to her ankles forced Harley to shuffle as she walked, only able to take baby sets. One of the guards behind Harley was constantly shoving her in the back, pressing something hard and sharp into her lower back as they hissed at her to keep moving. Harley smiled, shuffling along as she imagined herself breaking the wrist and fingers of the guard who kept shoving her.

The prison was currently. Harley could tell by the dim lighting that it was indeed after dark, and after lights out which meant it was at least past eleven at night, possibly later. She was moved down several halls and through several locked gates and groupings of guards until their small procession arrived at what she thought might be the back of the prison. The room they stepped into was large with empty laundry carts, and several crates piled around the room. There was a large metal door at the far end of the room that rolled down from the ceiling. One of the guards moved towards that door and unlocked it before rolling it up to reveal a docking bay beyond the door. Waiting for them on the other side of the dock door was a small armored truck along with three waiting police cars. Two guards walked forward and opened the back of the armored trunk. Inside, Harley could see four more heavily armed guards on the inside of the transport waiting for her. Harley’s heart was beating hard. She was scared, but she wasn’t going to show it. Instead she glared at the guards on the inside of the truck before she gave them a sunny smile and said, “All this for me, guys. Aw, you shouldn’t have.” It sounded to her ears like something Jack would have said. The guards behind her pushed her forward nearly causing her to trip as she was shoved into the back of the trunk.

Two of the guards on the inside of the truck grabbed her upper arms, turned her around and sat her down on a metal bench that ran along the inside walls of the truck, one guard on each side. One of the guards, a young man who looked at her nervously, made sure to secure her to a metal post once they had her seated.

Harley grinned. “Hey, can we stop and get ice cream?”
None of the guards said anything in response. After she was secured, the guard stood and gave the warden a thumbs up. The warden nodded and moved out of the way, looking back behind them. “Are you ready Dr. Sykes?”

Harley’s eyes widened in horror as she saw Crane step forward with a smile. “Yes I am, thank you sir.”

Crane, dressed in a tailored grey suit, stepped past the guards giving them all a nod as he stepped into the back of the truck and sat down, giving Harley a smile. “Good evening Dr. Quinzel.”

Harley turned back to the warden and screamed. “NO!!! YOU CAN’T LEAVE ME WITH HIM!!!”

The warden ignored her and motioned. “Gag her and get her out of here.”

The doors were slammed shut and locked.

Harley yanked against her cuffs with a snarl. “Let me go!! He can’t be in here!!”

One of the guards pulled his handgun and held the weapon’s barrel in front of her face. “Go ahead and give me a reason.” The other guard pulled something that was hooked to his belt. He held the contraption up and Harley saw it was some sort of mask. The thing made her think of a medieval torture device; all she could see of it was that it was made of leather straps with metal buckles. She screamed and tried to fight, but she couldn’t move much. The guard with the gun grabbed her by her hair and yanked her head back painfully. Harley cried out in pain, but she tried to bite at the other guard as he pulled the thing over her head. A thick leather strap ran over the top of her head, while two other straps rode along her cheeks with the bottom half of the mask, which smelled of sweat and fear. It was brought tight against her mouth and chin, the leather pressing in just under her nose painfully while the guard buckled it tight behind her head. Harley’s cries were muffled, the thick leather reducing her to sounding like an animal. She thrashed her head, but it did no good. She was cuffed, virtually silenced, at Crane’s mercy, and on her way to Arkham.

Crane laughed softly glancing at the guards, the one with the gun out still held it on Harley. “Now now, gentlemen, let’s all behave ourselves. This is the reason our lovely Dr. Quinzel is being moved—she is unstable, sick. She can’t really be held accountable for her actions. If she becomes too unruly I have a sedative with me.” Crane turned his full attention on Harley. “Now, you wouldn’t want me to have to sedate you, now would you?”

Harley’s eyes were an icy blue glare over the top of the mask, but she could say nothing in reply.

*

The convoy took off from the jail without incident. Batman was waiting outside the prison for the convoy, falling in behind the police car that was behind the transport. He had come alone tonight without Robin. He needed to see Dr. Quinzel safely in Arkham, but he wanted to be here in the event Joker...in case his brother showed up to try and get his...Batman pressed his lips together. In case Joker tried to get her back.

*

Inside the truck, Crane kept smiling at Harley.

Harley shivered. Something was wrong, she could feel it. Crane looked too confident for a man who was about to lose the focus of his obsession. Arkham would put her out of his reach, but he was
acting like everything was going his way, as if this was a joyride. She just knew Crane was going to do something...but she could do nothing to warn the guards. They would never believe her if she could speak to them; hell, she couldn’t even imagine what he might do...

They were driving along when Crane said softly. “I think it’s time we find out what everyone is scared of, don’t you think Harleen?”

One of the guards frowned. “What was that Dr. Sykes?”

Harley started to thrash against her bindings, making muffled protests, her blue eyes wide.

Crane smiled. “Oh, just curious: what are you afraid of?”

The guard looked confused, but just as he opened his mouth to answer, Crane thrust his arm forward, a thick yellowish gas sprayed forth to blast the guard in the face. The other guards began to shout, to respond, but it was already too late.

Harley screamed behind her mask, the gas quickly filling the small space. Shadows were moving...something was coming closer to her. It was Crane’s face, distorted, frightening with a mouth full of razor sharp teeth as he grabbed her face one hand on top of her head, wrapping around the strap while his other hand grabbed her jaw holding her steady as he stared into her now wild eyes.

“Sorry my dear for the concentrated exposure to my gas, but it simply couldn’t be helped. You see, I can’t let you end up in Arkham. You belong to me and if you end up there, I doubt Jeremiah would understand my sudden resurrection.” He shrugged. “But that’s fine, because it just means you get to come home with me that much sooner.”

Harley screamed, struggling pointlessly against him when suddenly there was the sound of an explosion outside. The truck weaved hard enough that Crane was nearly thrown into Harley. The sound of gun shots followed, slamming into the front of the truck.

Harley, though still looking terrified, began to giggle behind her mask.
Sublimation

Frost sat on the couch downstairs in the home that Jack and Harley shared in the abandoned
amusement park. He nursed a cup of coffee that had long ago gone from hot to lukewarm, when he
jumped and winced, his frown deepening when he heard the sounds of gunfire followed by the now
familiar fall of plaster against the floor coming from overhead. Frost glanced over at Agatha who
looked upset, her gaze on the ceiling. Upstairs, Jack was in the throes of another violent outburst,
tearing the bedroom that he shared with Harley into pieces. The room looked as if a bomb had
exploded, destroying nearly everything and leaving very little for Jack to destroy, but he continued to
find things to take his rage out on.

They both shared another look before their eyes moved upward again. Jack had been increasingly
shutting himself away in the room, refusing to come out unless it was to discuss another plan to get
Harley free. He wasn’t eating much and barely drinking. He had lost a great deal of weight, looked
haunted, lost, his blue eyes wide and feverish. He was wasting away and everyone was worried.
Agatha sighed, in pain for her nephew. The worst part was that Alex had someone on the inside of
Blackgate who was keeping them up to date on Harley, but he hadn’t brought them any good news,
not about Harley’s care, which had Agatha sick with worry. (It was nothing they could tell Jack
either. If he knew what was happening to Harley, the beatings, the solitary, he would lose what was
left of his mind in a burning rage. Besides, Alex’s inside man hadn’t been able to help them with any
plan that would get her out without all of them ending up in Blackgate themselves, so Agatha had
made the decision withhold from Jack the details about the man Alex had on the inside.)

Their latest plan to break Harley out of Blackgate fell apart almost as soon as they had
conceptualized it and the boss of their gang wasn’t taking it well. Harley had been gone roughly
three weeks and Jack had become more and more unstable with each passing day. Frost was actually
worried that Jack might take his anguish out on one of them soon. It hadn’t happened yet, but he felt
it was only a matter of time.

Frost set his cup of coffee down. “Maybe I should take him out of here? Get Alex, maybe Jason, and
Zsasz, take him out for a drink?”

Agatha frowned leaning back against the couch cushion. “What about Bane?”

Frost slid the pad of his thumb along his forefinger as he spoke. “Bane’s going to be down for a day
or two. His girlfriend was going to be trying some new drug on him to break his dependence on the
Titan toxin, though she didn’t sound hopeful. Regardless, Bane insisted that they try. He’s
recovering; at least that was what Viktoria said when I spoke to her yesterday. I don’t think taking
him out to drink would be a good idea—despite how he could help us keep Jack, er, calm if things get
out of hand.”

Agatha nodded her understanding. “You sure taking Jack out is a good idea? He’s not...stable.”

Agatha wrapped her arms around herself, rubbing her upper arms. She looked as if she had aged
again, worried, with fear laying heavily on her shoulders. Frost reached out and gently ran his fingers
through her hair, tucking her blonde hair behind her ear.

“I know, but once we get Harley back...” Frost started, but Agatha cut him off. “What if we don’t
get her back? Falcone is going to try to kill her, you know he is. What if she never gets out Jonny?
What if...” She began to tear up. His tough as nails, kick ass girlfriend was breaking in her fear for
her nephew and his wife. Frost moved closer, putting his arm around her shoulder and pulled her
closer. Agatha laid her head against his shoulder.
“I’m going to lose them both,” she said softly.

Frost frowned. “We won’t let that happen Agatha, I promise.”

*

Jack came down the stairs dressed to go out. He was wearing a black suit, black vest, gloves, and even his shoes were black. The only variation in color he wore was the tie, a deep shade of crimson held in place by a silver tie clip that matched the silver chain that hung from the middle of his waist and disappeared into the pocket of his slacks. He stopped at the bottom of the stairs to pull a package of cigarettes out, taking his time to light one. The suit hung a little loose on him, slightly big, but not too much—not yet.

Jack had his green hair slicked back, his lips painted a deep, bloody red. Agatha and Frost both noticed that he had extended the lipstick past the corners of his lips to curl slightly into his cheeks making his smile look frighteningly wide. He didn’t look well, the now natural milk white of his skin looked ashen and the darkness around his eyes was deeper, shaded enough to make his blue orbs look more crazed, unstable.

Jack took a deep drag on his cigarette and slowly blew the smoke out between his lips watching the way the white cloud of smoke drifted away from him. He turned to look at Frost and smiled. The smile made Frost shiver.

“All right Frosty my love, I’m ready.” Jack chuckled. “A night to clear my head.”

Frost swallowed and nodded. This had been his idea, now he would have to stick it out. He kissed Agatha on the cheek. “See you later.”

She smiled and nodded. “Be careful. You too Jackie.”

Jack smiled showing all his teeth, bright white against the red of his lips. “Of course Auntie. I promise to be a very good boy.”

Agatha nodded though she didn’t look convinced. She didn’t think this was a good idea—not at all—but they needed to do something to calm Jack down. Another failed plan might end up with one of the gang ending up dead and that was exactly what they didn’t need. The Irish were still with them, but Agatha could tell the thread holding them together was thin. It wouldn’t take much for the Irish to leave, especially after what happened with Mikey and the attack on Falcone. They needed Jack to hold it together and that meant getting Harley back, soon.

*

While Frost drove quietly, music from the car’s stereo played softly in the background. Jack had said nothing else, only stared out the window watching Gotham’s sights go by as he smoked another cigarette. Frost frowned looking sideways at Jack’s profile, the lights catching Jack’s blue eyes making them seem almost white, fading the blue until his eyes were feverish, glowing with manic, pent up anguish and rage.

Frost turned his attention back to the road, concern pinching his features.

*

When they arrived at Big Mama’s, Frost could see Jason, dressed in jeans, t-shirt and biker jacket, was standing outside the bar with Zsasz in his regular black suit and Alex, wearing holey jeans, t-
shirt and unbuttoned Hawaiian shirt. He was the only one not wearing a jacket against the chill, the three men on the corner of the building smoking and talking, huddled against the drizzle that had started only an hour or so ago. As Frost turned the corner they all turned to look over at the car. Jason raised his hand when he caught a glimpse of Jack, but Jack didn’t respond.

Frost found a place to park, and then the two of them heading over to the others.

Alex frowned when he saw Jack. He didn’t look well at all, worse than the other day and he had looked pretty damn bad that day too.

“Hey buddy--how ya doing?” Alex asked as Frost and Jack came closer.

Jack smiled, his hands in the pockets of his slacks, his mouth a little too wide when he replied. “I’m great Alex dear, why wouldn’t I be?”

Alex frowned, but said nothing.

Jason reached out laying a hand on Jack’s shoulder. “You look good,” Jason said with a small smile.

Jack narrowed his eyes. “Do I?” Jack tilted his head, the strange smile still on his lips. “Really?”

Jason frowned removing his hands. “I just meant…”

Frost frowned. “Why don’t we head on in and get something to drink.”

Jason nodded. “Yeah, I think that’s a great idea.”

Jack smiled. “A drink sounds fantastic, just what I need to drown out the thoughts that keep dancing through my mind.” He giggled softly, the sound strange and sinister. He took off at a crisp walk toward the doors.

Their small group glanced at one another before they followed Jack inside.

* 

Eivor’s “Undo Your Mind” was playing loudly in the bar, with dancers on the floor moving slowly to the slightly eerie music when Jack pushed open the doors and walked in with his friends behind him. He frowned looking around. The place was filled with shadows, highlighted with lights in pinks, purples and greens. The lights danced and flashes throughout the room, the dancers and patrons becoming shadows, monsters, visions that moved across his vision. Jack closed his eyes letting the world fall away, letting the humanity that filled the room drift away from him. He focused on the words and the music of the song, letting that wash over him instead. A soft smile danced on his lips. He stood still, listening, his body gradually swaying to the music. (Frost and the others had fanned out around Jack in a protective circle without realizing they were doing so. Each one of them subconsciously protecting Jack, but also protecting the people around them from Jack.)

“Heard the whisper
in your ear
I’m in love
I do not fear
inside your heart
beneath your skin
it's in the dream
you're living in…
undo your mind…”

Jack smiled broader, swaying gently like a snake being charmed, his eyes closed as he whispered to himself. “Undo your mind…”

Frost touched Jack’s back, a light pressure, breaking the spell. “We have a booth over there. I had Big Mama put it aside for us.” Frost pointed along the way near the dance floor, but set back enough to provide an illusion of privacy.

Jack opened his eyes glancing at Frost and smiled wide. “Of course, dear friend, lead away.”

Frost frowned, but said nothing as he moved toward the booth with the other men following close behind.

The five men sat, with Jack on the end, when Big Mama came over with a tray. She looked nice with a beehive pink wig and a tight yellow dress covered in sparkles. She smiled as she set the tray down.

“Nice to see you boys,” she said, her voice just as gruff and deep as ever. She began setting four tall glasses on the table; the drinks were almost neon pink. “This is a new drink we are introducing tonight I thought you boys might like to try it. I call it the Pink Bottom.”

Jason laughed picking up one of the pink drinks. “Okay, now I’m scared.”

Big Mama grinned. “Don’t worry honey, if the drink’s too much for you, I’ll get you home safe.” She winked at him and Jason blushed.

Big Mama turned her attention to Jack. “I heard about Harley. I’m so sorry.”

Jack frowned, closing his eyes for a moment. Frost knew he was struggling to control his reaction, he could see the tension around Jack’s eyes, the vein under his left eye twitched as did the corner of Jack’s mouth before he spoke. “Can you bring me a bottle of Fireball whiskey and an Everclear chaser.”

Big Mama’s eyes widened a little at the request, but she nodded. “All right, I’m guessing you ain’t driving tonight?”

Jack smiled. “ Nope.”

Big Mama nodded. “Well then, all right. I’ll be right back.”

The music changed, playing some old ‘80’s song. A few people had headed out to the dance floor for the song while a few other retreated, the softer music over now. Big Mama returned with the drinks that Jack had ordered, setting them down in front of him. Jack gave her a smile that made the older woman shiver.

Jack promptly poured the whiskey into the glass and tossed back the shot without any reaction whatsoever.

Frost frowned, but turned his attention to Alex. “So how’s Alice doing?”
Alex smiled. “She’s doing good, due any day now in fact. I’m looking forward to being a father.”
He pulled his phone out and held it. “I’m on alert in case she goes into labor.”

Jack snorted and muttered under his breath turning to look away, his eyes on the dancers on the
dance floor. “So was I once--going to be a father.”

Alex glanced over at Jack, the pain he was going through was so clear that Alex did something he
knew he shouldn’t. “We’ll get her back Jack, we will.”

Jack turned back, pouring another shot and chuckled darkly, his voice was low, but clear. “I don’t
know how much longer I can last gentlemen. I can’t live without her you know--she’s everything to
me...everything...” He giggled softly. “She holds my heart, my sanity in her hands…” He closed his
eyes, his chin trembling for a moment. “I love her, I need her, and it’s breaking my heart to be
without her. Without her…” Jack shook his head and took a deep breath. “She is everything I’m
living for...without Harley, all I have is my rage…”

His voice was barely audible over the sounds of the music and the crowd in the bar, but all the men
at the table heard him. “All I have is my need to destroy, the need to tear Gotham down, to tear this
world down around me...to watch everything burn. Without her, nothing has any meaning...”

Jack turned his attention to the dance floor again, took another shot. The whiskey burned on the way
down, but it was as if his body was numb. He could feel the burn, but only as a distant feeling, as if
he couldn’t feel anything at all, nothing. It was as if his body, Jack, no longer existed. Only the Joker
remained, only Joker was awake, and he had no emotions other than anger, rage and need to make
everyone hurt like he did, to make other feel his loss as deeply and horribly as he felt it. There were
no longer any physical feelings either, no pain, no pleasure...he was a ghost, drifting through Gotham
until he had her back, until Harley was in his arms again. He needed her, she was everything to him,
his lover, his partner, his friend, the only person in all the world who understood him, accepted him.
He didn’t exist as anything but a shadow of himself without her. If he didn’t get her back, then he
was going to burn the world to the ground. As his gaze lingered on the dancers, Jack saw a shadow
move at the edges of the dance floor, a figure drifting across his vision. He leaned forward, his grip
on the glass in his hand tightened. The shadow seemed to melt into an image that made his heart
constrict--it was Harley.

The music, the voices, everything else fell away, crumbling to dust as he focused on the illusion.

When he saw Harley moving through the dancers Jack’s entire body began to tremble, a small quake
that ran through his core. She wore a short black and red halter dress that showed off her long, white
legs. Her snow white hair flowed down along her shoulders and down her back. Harley smiled at
him, her blue eyes sparkling in the shifting lights of the club. She brought a finger to her mouth, her
smile widening as she held her red nail between her teeth while with her other hand she beckoned to
him, like a siren luring him to his doom. As Jack stared at her, Harley’s smile expanded, looking
unnaturally wide, too many teeth in her grin and her eyes were too big as well, distorted. He heard
her laugh in his ears becoming unnaturally high, but then the image snapped back into place and it
was his Harley once more, his Harley, dancing, moving her body to the music with her eyes on him,
moving like a shimmering angel. She turned slowly, her eyes never leaving his while she danced.
Jack leaned forward, knowing full well he was hallucinating her even as she winked and gave him
another come hither crook with her finger.

His entire being ached at seeing her. His body tightened with need, his heart slammed inside his
chest, emotion bubbling up and threatening to send him into hysterical laughter. He was losing his
mind, bit by bit; more and more of him was crumbling away to leave only...the Joker. Madness
incarnate.
Jack knew she wasn’t here, that he was seeing something that wasn’t there, her ghost dancing at the edges of his sanity, but the sight of her made his heart ache, his chest heavy and the pain radiated through his body. His grip on the glass was becoming tighter, the glass whined in protest, when a rough, slightly drunk voice broke the spell Jack was under.

“Hey twink, what’s with the green hair? You think you look like that Joker clown the TV keeps talking about?” This was followed by a laugh. “That Joker guy isn’t so tough. You’ve seen him, skinny little shit, pasty skin freak. If the cops don’t get him, Batman is going to beat the shit out of him. Skinny freak like that won’t stand a chance against Gotham’s caped crusader, Batman. Nothing wrong with a little vigilante justice.”

Jack’s eyes snapped back into focus. He looked up to see a man, holding a bottle of beer, dressed in a t-shirt that read Gotham’s Most Wanted across the chest, standing in front of him with five other men flanking him. They all looked to be muscle heads, muscles more for looks than actual strength with the same short haircuts, the same style of clothing. They all could have been copies of each other. Idiot clones Jack thought with a giggle.

The one who had addressed him frowned looking down at Jack. “What you laughing at freak?”

Jack smiled turning to pour himself another shot. “Pasty skin freak? How original. I’m sure your mothers are very proud and your fathers, if any of you knew who they were.”

Jack downed the shot and poured another with a giggle. “Life is hard, but it’s harder when you’re stupid, so you have my sympathy.” Jack snickered taking another drink.

Frost stood up and addressed the half dozen men. “Look, just go. You’re drunk, my friend’s drunk. You don’t need to be looking for a fight for no reason.”

The man who had spoken to Jack laughed. “Hey, I ain’t picking a fight for no reason. This guy comes in here trying to look like that freak the Joker? That’s enough of a reason to kick his ass.” The man’s friends behind him all muttered their agreement. The man, emboldened by drink and his friends jeered. “So, you gonna make us go? You don’t look so tough.” The man looked Frost up and down. “You some sort of mortician? Wearing a suit to a club?” The man and his friends looked at all of them at the table and laughed. “That’s what this is, a mortician gang.” He laughed at his own poor joke, his drunken friends laughing along with him.

One of the other men in the back laughed, speaking loudly to be heard over the music. “Sorry chump, Richie here has a bucket list before he heads back to Metropolis, one is to get in a bar fight in Gotham!”

The other men laughed. “You tell ‘em Tony!”

One of the men in a bright red shirt chuckled. “Let’s see if these Gotham girls have any real fight.”

Frost sighed. “Look, you should find another group to have your little Gotham fight with. You do not want to fight with us.”

Zsasz stood, along with Jason and Alex. Richie laughed looking back at his friends. “Oh look at these guys, think they’re all tough and shit wearing suits. A bunch of mobster wannabes! And that one is missing an arm. He must be their mascot, half a man.” The group laughed more. “Hey one arm, I hope that wasn’t your masturbating arm that you lost!”

The six young men were pleased with themselves, laughing and slapping each other on the shoulders like they were comic geniuses.
Alex narrowed his eyes. “Look gorilla dick, I’ve never lost a fight.”

Jack, who was still sitting, poured himself another shot and giggled. “Gorilla dick? Hehehe…” Jack downed his shot before pouring another. “You know, stupid isn’t a crime, so you and your buddies are free to go. Why don’t you little boys go play somewhere else? You don’t really want to play with the big boys because this is a fight you won’t walk away from.”

Jack lifted his drink and smiled. “You know, being stupid is a danger to you and everyone around you, and in your case, it’s going to be fatal.”

Richie laughed again. “Oh, watcha gonna do buddy? Call your girlfriend? Or is she too busy on a street corner right now to come rescue you?”

Jack’s smile slowly fell and his entire body went still, very still.

Frost noticed the change in Jack’s entire demeanor and cursed. He snarled at the drunks from Metropolis. “Look, get the fuck out of here now while you still can.”

Richie snorted. “Oooh, I’m so fucking scared. What’s that green haired twink gonna do?” He stepped forward and poured the rest of his beer onto Jack. “There, will that get you to fight ya little pussy?”

Jack downed his shot, beer dripping from his hair and down his suit. He chuckled softly, his green hair wet and dripping down his forehead. The laugh started low, then slowly became more and more hysterical until Jack was laughing loudly, the sound sending shivers of discomfort down everyone’s spine. Frost and the others shared a look, each one of them looking slightly frightened by the sound. Before anyone could truly process the off kilter laughter, Jack was on his feet so quickly that no one had seen him move. One moment he was sitting, laughing while beer ran over his face and suit, in the next blink of an eye he was on his feet. His fist shot out, hitting the drunk that stood in front of him in the face, snapping the man back a step. Jack lunged forward, grabbed his tormentor by the back of his neck, and in a swift movement, Jack slammed the man’s face down into the table. The man cried out stumbling backwards when Jack released him, blood covering the man’s face and gushing from his nose.

Jack laughed loudly, tears in his eyes as he slapped his knees in hysterics. The man he assaulted swung and caught Jack in the face snapping his head to the side, blood smearing Jack’s lips and down his chin from the hit.

The two groups erupted into action.

Alex leapt across the table, dropping to his hip and slid to the other side to land on his feet, his fist finding the face of the nearest drunk, a man named Lee. The force of his fist drove Lee to the floor, his head bouncing with the impact. Before he could react, Alex straddled him, continuing to slam his fist into the man’s face, not giving the musclehead a chance to hit back and said, “How you like that shithead! Getting beat up by a fucking one armed man!”

Zsasz moved with the grace of a skilled predator and used his elbow to catch one of the men in the chest, a man named Lucas who hadn’t actually wanted to come out tonight, a sandy hair blond with the looks seen in a teen romance movie. Lucas was knocked back a few steps, coughed, the air rushing painfully from his lungs. Zsasz followed that elbow with a spin, his leg snapping up to catch the man across the face. Lucus’s head snapped to the side, the multicolored lights of the dance floor caught the spray of blood and a couple of teeth flying out of the man’s mouth.

Jason’s leg snapped out to smash a man named Shawn--wearing a t-shirt that read ‘Metropolis or
bust’ across the chest. Jason figured his opponent was around his age, with a crew cut and the chiseled features of someone who had money to take care of himself. The teen heartthrob gasped when Jason’s foot connected with his chest, but he didn’t go down. Instead Shawn took a swing at Jason. Jason ducked the swing, turned, used the full force of his body to slam his elbow into Shawn’s chest, followed by the fist of his other hand catching Mr. Crew Cut in the chin. Shawn took the hits replied with a couple of swings at Jason.

Jason leaned out of the way, the clumsy swings missing him. Jason reached out and grabbed Shawn by the collar of his t-shirt to yank him close, followed by several hard, quick punches to the man’s upper chest, releasing him to allow Jason to swing one fist, then the other into Shawn’s face.

Shawn dropped to the floor and stopped moving while Jason grinned.

Frost grabbed a beer bottle off the table and smashed it against the side of the head of the man that charged him. The man was tall, taller than Frost and more heavily muscled with what Frost assumed was his name across the chest of his t-shirt in big block letters that read JIMMY. The glass made a heavy thunk sound against Jimmy’s head, but the man didn’t go down.

Frost muttered, “Fuck.”

Jimmy blinked in pain, one eye nearly screwed shut, and threw a fist at Frost, but the older man ducked the fist. He wasn’t quick enough to avoid the second fist, however; Jimmy’s thick knuckles caught Frost in the mouth. Frost gasped in pain, but at the same time he caught the man’s arm and yanked the bigger man forward. The sudden forward movement caught the muscled jerk by surprise. Jimmy stumbled forward and Frost hit him in the face. Jimmy gasped and shook his head in surprise.

Frost groaned. “Please, just get your friends and leave before someone gets killed!”

Jimmy narrowed his eyes. “You fuck head.”

Frost rolled his eyes. Damn it, he thought, ducking the next swing of the man’s massive fists.

* Jack giggled as Richie in the Gotham t-shirt and one of his friends, a slender man with dark brown hair, this one wearing a shirt with a couple of naked girls on it kissing, named Tony, rushed to his friend’s side.

Jack laughed. “Oh look! It’s Dumber and Too Stupid to Live! Let’s see if I can help you with that!”

Jack threw a right hook, catching the lesbian t-shirt wearing Tony across the face. Richie took a swing at Jack, but Jack ducked under the sloppy swing to come up and grab the man’s arm. He spun around with a heavy grip on his opponent’s arm and yanked Richie over his shoulder, to throw him to the floor. Jack followed this by a hard downward punch to the drunk Richie’s face. He hadn’t broken the drunk’s face on the table when he had slammed Richie’s face into it, but this time Jack shattered the man’s nose with the punch to his face.

Jack laughed. “Oh, much better!!”

Tony jumped on Jack’s back, trying to wrap his arms around Jack’s throat in a choke hold, but Jack moved swiftly and gracefully, slithering out of the man’s grip and spinning around to face Tony catching the dark haired man by surprise. Jack slammed his hands against Tony’s chest. Tony stumbled back, but not enough to put any real distance between the two men. Tony mirrored Jack’s move to slam the flats of his hands against Jack’s chest, catching Jack by surprise with the force of the thrust.
The shove was hard enough that Jack stumbled back up against the wall beside the booth where Jack’s head hit the wall. Momentarily stunning him (though the drinks Jack had been consuming in conjunction with the fact that Jack hadn’t been eating, helped to make him less than resilient). Tony attacked Jack with a series of jabs, striking him in the chest and across the face, followed quickly by hitting Jack in the face with two solid, downward punches.

Giggling, with blood flowing from his nose, and his lip split with more blood dripping off his chin and staining his teeth, Jack blocked the third punch with his arm. As Tony’s attack went wide, Jack slammed his foot down on Tony’s instep and threw a hard left hook, catching Tony in the face and dropping him to the floor. Jack proceeded to kick the man in the ribs several times until he felt bone snap under the point of his shoe, but then he continued to kick, each kick punctuated by a laugh.

Jack was laughing loudly, gasping a few times to catch his breath. Tony had stopped moving, but Jack didn’t care. He looked like a maniac, blood dripping from his nose across his lips and down his chin as he turned his attention back on the man who had originally assaulted him. Richie was pulling himself off the floor, his face a bloody mess.

Richie, the instigator of this entire fight, put his hands up when Jack turned on him. He could see his friend on the floor, not moving, his other friends were in the process of having their ass’s handed to them. It was only now that the alcohol had burned away enough for Richie to realize what a horrible mistake he had made.

“Look man, I’m sorry! I’m sorry!! I’ll...I’ll buy you all a drink? We can call it even okay?” Richie’s eyes were huge, the whites dominating and drowning out the color of his eyes. It was clear, the man was scared, very scared.

The entire club was now focused on the fight. Big Mama was standing by the bar, holding a tray against her chest. She looked conflicted. She could stop the fight and risk upsetting Joker who had done nothing but help her. And for a person like herself, someone willing to help, willing to stand by hers, was rare. She also knew he was hurting. Harley falling out of that helicopter had been all over the news, played on a loop. Big Mama knew that the man was broken right now, and if he needed to take that pain out on a few thick-headed fools, then she was good with letting him do that. (She didn’t care about these particular patrons of her bar because they had drunkenly called her both dike and tranny. They could get hit by a car for all she cared.) No one attempted the call the police. Most of them didn’t realize who was involved and others simply didn’t care. The music kept playing and some patrons simply kept dancing, ignoring a situation that didn’t involve them. Jack laughed, laughed with so much gusto, with more than a hint of insanity, that he leaned forward grabbing his knees, tears mixing with the blood on his face. He reached up once to wipe at the blood on his mouth, smearing it across his cheek before turning his attention toward Richie. “You think I’m simply going to let you walz out of here Richie? Isn’t that what your friend said your name is-- Richie?”

Richie nodded, holding his side. “Come on man, we were just looking for a bit of fun. We didn’t mean any harm!”

Joker grinned, his smile spreading across his face. (Frost saw the transformation, that moment when all of Jack was gone.)

Joker grinned at the man and spoke, his voice holding a hint of a rasp, an unhinged gravity. “Well sweetie, you wanted to pick a fight with the Joker and that is exactly what you got. Now you have to pay for everything you said, every single word you uttered in ignorance. As they like to say, you have the freedom to say whatever it is you want, but that doesn’t save you from the consequences of your words Richie.” Joker snickered. “Part of your consequence isn’t that you picked a fight with
someone that looked like the Joker--it’s that you picked a fight with the Joker.”

Joker laughed bringing up his fists.

Richie panicked and took a swing. His fist landed, striking Joker with a dull thump in the chest, but Joker didn’t react other than to simply chuckle. Richie threw another swing, his fist hitting Joker in the face, followed by another swing that knocked Joker’s head to the side. Joker took a step back with a laugh, widening his eyes at Richie as he licked the blood from the corner of his mouth. Richie realized that the pale man before him had allowed him to get in those strikes and that frightened him.

“Oh, good one little man.” Joker sneered. “My turn.”

Richie swung in panic, missed the faster, leaner man. Joker slammed his fist into Rickie’s side with enough force that one of the man’s ribs snapped. Joker followed this by an under swing that caught Rickie in the chin and snapped his head up and back. Richie stumbled, his feet catching a wet place on the floor, damp from spilled beer. His legs went flying out from under him and Richie hit the floor, his head bouncing with a sickening thud that was audible to the nearby patrons over the sound of the music.

Joker walked over slowly and lowered himself down until he was sitting on the stunned Richie’s chest. Richie gasped in pain when Joker sat on him, pain radiating through his body, but he didn’t react to Joker. His eyes were rolling and he reached up feebly. Joker smacked his hands away with a grin, followed by smashing his fist down into the man’s nose. Richie gasped as the pain blossomed like a white flash across his vision. Joker wrapped his hands around Richie’s throat and leaned down, his blood covered lips almost touching Richie’s own bloody lips.

“The worst mistake you made my dear fool, was bringing Harley into it. If you hadn’t done that I just might have let you go, simply ignored you. But you didn’t and now you are going to die.” Richie couldn’t respond, choking while Joker’s fingers pressed in tight on his throat cutting off his air. Suddenly Richie gasped, air rushing back into his lungs when Joker released his hold on his throat, but before he could enjoy that fresh rush of air, Joker wrapped his long fingers around Richie’s head and began to pounded his head into the floor, hard and fast, laughing the entire time. Joker kept smashing the man’s head into the floor, giggling even when it was clear that Richie was dead, an ever widening pool of thick red blood spreading out under the man’s heads. Screaming started as someone realized what was happening. The first scream was followed by another, then there was a series of shouts.

Joker laughed loudly continuing to smash Richie’s head, the back of the dead man’s skull a grisly pulp when a pair of hands grasped his shoulders.

Joker released the head and spun up onto his feet, his blue eyes flashing with an unnatural shade of whitish blue, his bloody teeth exposed in a snarl, ready to kill the next person, ready to really enjoy it, but when his eyes focused on the person who had touched him, he saw that it wasn’t an enemy, but Frost.

Frost had taken an involuntary step back when Jack spun on him, but he remained still. He felt as if he moved Jack was more likely to hurt him than if he remained still. Frost’s voice was tight when he spoke. “Boss, we need to get out of here. NOW!”

Joker looked around, only now noticing the change in the people around him. Most were staring in horror, a few had gotten their phones out and were taking video.

Joker chuckled with a simple shrug and a lift of his hairless eyebrows. “Well, I suppose we have overstayed our welcome, though it’s a shame nobody’s smiling.” He shrugged again, letting Frost and
the others drag him from the bar. Joker waved at Big Mama as they moved past.

“Bye my dear!! Sorry about the mess!!!”

Big Mama stared in horror, watching them leave.

*

Agatha, dressed in a pair of wide legged dark grey pajamas with large pink flowers printed on them, was curled on the couch with a blanket around her legs and a mug of hot tea in her hands watching a movie. She wasn’t even sure what the title of the movie was, but it was something violent and romantic to distract her. She sighed taking a sip of her tea when she heard the sound of Jack’s laughter outside, followed by the door opening.

Frost came into the room with Jack at his side, his arm around Jack’s waist holding her nephew up. Agatha set her tea down and quickly rose to her feet. She could see that Jack was covered in blood, his face a mess.

Agatha looked Jack up and down. “Jackie? Oh my god, what happened?!”

Jack laughed waving a hand at her, the glove of which was missing. “Oh nothing really, just a little misunderstanding! A group of idiots were under the assumption I wasn’t the Joker! So we had to correct them.” He giggled and patted Frost on the chest.

Agatha frowned looking to Frost who looked pale and uncomfortable.

Jack chuckled, pushing away from Frost. “I’m gonna go upstairs and get as drunk as I possibly can!” he announced throwing his arms up with a grin before walking away and into the kitchen. Agatha could hear Jack moving around in the kitchen. It sounded like he was opening every cabinet and the refrigerator. There was a clattering sound followed by Jack’s giggle. A few seconds later

Jack came back into the room, a bottle of alcohol under each arm and a bottle of wine, and a bottle of whiskey in his hands.

He waved the wine bottle around. “Good night!”

Agatha frowned watching Jack go up the stairs before she turned to Frost. “What the hell happened?”

They both jumped when the door upstairs slammed shut.

Frost sighed, walking over and dropping onto the couch, looking exhausted. “Well, he killed someone at Big Mama’s.”

Agatha blinked. “What?”

Frost shook his head and waved a hand at her. “This group of guys from Metropolis came over looking to start a fight. A group of drunk idiots. They noticed his hair, the way he looked, said something to Jack about trying to look like the Joker...apparently getting into a fight in Gotham was on the bucket list for one of them.” Frost sighed. “Jack pretty much ignored them until the one with the bucket list made some crack about Jack’s girlfriend...and that was it. Jack smashed the man’s head in.” Frost closed his eyes. “In front of the entire club.”

Agatha sighed, rubbing the bridge of her nose. “I’m guessing you got out before the police arrived.”
Frost nodded before he said softly. “Agatha, he’s changed. I mean, I know we’ve seen him change before...become the Joker, take on that persona, but tonight was different. He scared the shit out of me. He really scared me, Agatha. It was creepy as hell, like he was a totally different person. He wasn’t Jack.” Agatha opened her mouth to reply, but Frost held up a hand to forestall her comments until he had this all out. “I know we’ve seen him kill people before and I know Jack has always been a little unstable, but tonight...it wasn’t Jack at all. It was the Joker, completely the Joker in a way that I can’t describe.” Frost shook his head. “I’ve never really been scared for myself before, but tonight I wouldn’t have been surprised if Jack had attacked one of us. Fuck, I’m not even sure why he didn’t.”

Agatha glanced up the stairs then back at Frost. “I’m going to go talk to him.”

Frost sat up straighter, his worry clear in his features and tone. “I don’t think that’s a good idea. I mean, he was fine--relatively speaking--on the way home, especially after I stopped to get him a bottle of rum to drink on the way back, but the way he changed...I just--I don’t know. Maybe you should let him be for now.”

Agatha frowned, folding her arms around herself and rubbing her elbows. “He is going to self-destruct Jonny. I just can't stand here and let it happen. I need to do something, talk to him.”

Frost dropped back against the couch again. “I don’t see what we can do. Unless we can get Harley...He is going to kill himself and take all of us with him.”

She started for the stairs.

Frost stood up, moved over to take her hand. “Agatha.”

She smiled. “I’ll be fine.”

“What if he...” Frost began, but Agatha patted his arm. “I’m a trained killer Frost. Don’t forget that. I might be retired, but the Owls trained me well. I can handle myself. Besides, Jackie won’t hurt me.”

Frost didn’t look sure, but he nodded.

* 

Agatha knocked on the door lightly and waited a few heartbeats before she pushed the door open.

Jack was sitting on the middle of the bed wearing only his boxers, his clothing littered across the floor. He hadn’t bothered to wipe the blood from his face, leaving the drying mess on his lips and smeared across his chin and cheeks. He had the bottles he had pilfered from the kitchen lying on the bed with him, one open and resting between his legs, a cigarette burning between his fingers. He glanced over at her, picked the bottle up and took a long drink from it. Agatha watched him with a frown, her arms crossed over her chest.

“Hey Auntie, wanna drink?” Jack grinned and waved the bottle at her.

Agatha’s frown deepened as she walked over to sit on the side of the bed. “Jackie, you have got to stop this. You’re killing yourself. You’re not eating enough, you’re drinking too much, and killing that man tonight...” She shook her head.

Jack took a drag on his cigarette and smiled. “So, I’ve killed lots of people. Who cares? And why should I not kill myself? Why? Why should I stop??” He took another drag and grinned wide, smoke flowing between his teeth. “Besides, I didn’t kill anyone important, like Falcone, the mayor...Bruce Wayne.” He chuckled at his Aunt’s shocked expression before he answered. “Besides, that man tonight deserved it. You should have heard what he said about Harley.” Jack’s eyes looked haunted.
“Harley...” He swallowed, took a quick drink, his chin trembling as he stared down at the bottle between his legs, and the jovial manner of his speech changed immediately. He wasn’t speaking to his aunt so much now as he was speaking to himself. “I can’t do this alone. I need her. You don’t understand...every moment without her is torture...”

She reached out to lay her hand on her nephew’s knee. “Jackie...”

Jack smiled and took another deep drag from his cigarette. He held it, letting the smoke burn before he let it out slowly, flowing from between his lips. “I feel like I’m buried alive...suffocating slowly without her Auntie...I can’t...I just can’t breathe.” He closed his eyes. “I can’t focus, or make sense...there is this fog that’s slowly engulfing me. I love her so much. I need her.” Agatha watched as tears slowly flowed out from under his lashes and slid down his cheeks, cutting a line through the dried blood.

“Jackie, please...You need to stop this self-destructive behavior,” Agatha said softly, but Jack rolled away from her throwing his legs off the other side of the bed and stood, taking the bottle with him.

He laughed. “Why?! Why should I?!!! She’s beyond my reach Auntie.” Jack turned toward her, squeezed his eyes shut as his entire body trembled. “She’s where I can’t get to her!!! Every plan has fallen apart!! We can’t get to her!! I CAN’T GET TO MY HARLEY!!!” His eyes flew open, the crazed, manic gleam creeping slowly into them like a film flowing over the bright blue. He glared at his aunt. “Don’t you understand?? And you want me to be a good boy?? To calm down? To not ‘self-destruct’? That’s what’ve I’ve always been doing, self-destructing, dying inch by inch–until she came into my life Auntie. She’s my everything...everything...” His voice broke, a sob turning into a scream. “I CAN’T!!! I CAN’T!!! I CAN’T BE WITHOUT HER!!” He dropped his cigarette and threw the bottle across the room where it smashed, staining the wall red with wine. Agatha jumped though she tried to control the reaction while Jack continued to scream. “DON’T YOU UNDERSTAND!! I love her!!! She’s my soul...without her nothing means anything...”

Agatha stood quickly and took a couple of steps back.

Jack screamed until his lungs had to hurt. He knocked a few things that were somehow still miraculously on the dresser to the floor, brushing his arm across it in a vicious sweep, then slammed his fists against the wall, holding his fists so tightly that his nails cut into his palm causing the already pale knuckles to turn corpse white, but he felt nothing. He slammed his fists continuously into the wall. He only felt a wide chasm of nothingness, cold emptiness along with clawing and consuming rage...and laughter. It was so funny, a fucking joke he kept falling for. He couldn’t protect her, they kept taking her...Batman kept taking her, his brother...Bruce kept taking her from him...Bruce wanted to destroy him, had always wanted to destroy him, to take anything that meant anything to him away...Bruce, the Batman wanted to tear him down, to tear Harley away from him, the only person in the world that loved him for who he was. And Bruce wanted to take that away. This time he had succeeded. The Batman had stepped in and took her away from him.

Jack screamed until he was hoarse, beating his fists against the wall, his body shaking.

Agatha watched helplessly. She wanted to take him into her arms and hold him, but she couldn’t, not yet. So she watched as Jack let all his pain and rage out before he dropped to his knees and grabbed his head, his green hair sticking up around his fingers as he held his head like it might fly apart. He screamed again and choked, leaning forward until his head touched the floor. He squeezed his head as if trying to crush the thoughts that wouldn't leave him alone. Tears streamed from his eyes, dropping onto the floor. He rocked slightly continuing to press his head against the floor while muttering to himself.

“I need her, I need her...I love her...I love her so much...” Jack took a shuddering breath. “So much
Agatha came around slowly. She eased herself down onto the floor next to him and very slowly, very gently pulled his head onto her lap. Jack wrapped his arms tight around her waist. He grabbed hold of the hem of her shirt in his hands, holding on as if he were afraid if he let go he would fall forever.

He whispered painfully, choking out the words. “What if I’ve lost her forever Auntie? What if I can never get her back? What if I’ve led her into a place I’ll never get her out of?” He choked. “What if she never forgives me for not getting her back? Auntie...I would give it all...all to have her back...my life, anything for her...”

Agatha rubbed her hand down his back while Jack’s breath stuttered. His sobs had reached a point where he could barely breathe, he was holding himself so tightly. She didn’t know what to say because she wasn’t so sure they were going to get Harley out either, but she didn’t want to voice her fears because she knew Jack couldn’t handle them. She closed her eyes, continuing to rub his back slowly, her own fear and despair at the state of her nephew falling down around her like a black cloud.

After a few minutes Jack grew quiet, his grip on her eased just a little and his breathing regulated into something more normal. Agatha continued to stroke his back gently.

“Jackie, let’s get you into bed. Things will look better in the morning,” she said softly, trying to coax him up.

Jack whispered back, his voice strangely flat after the outburst of emotion just moments before. “If I don’t get her back, you should leave the city.”

Agatha frowned, her hand on his back going still. “What are you talking about Jackie?”

“You won’t want to be here, in Gotham,” Jack said softly. “If I don’t get my Harley back, you are not going to want to be here.”

Agatha bit her bottom lip looking down at his still form while Jack whispered. “I’ll burn it all to the ground. I’ll make Gotham feel my pain.”

* 

The following night, across the city, Batman, along with Robin and Barb, were looking over the story of the attack at a small club in Gotham. Batman had learned that the bar had once been owned by a woman named Fish Mooney who had connections with the Falcone family through the now in-shambles Panessa family and Sal Maroni. The bar fight had turned into a murder, but the reports were inconsistent. The owner, a transwoman by the name of Big Mama had claimed not to have seen anything. All her employees backed up her statement. Half of the patrons agreed with Big Mama’s statement, but the other half claimed that it was the Joker who had committed the murder.

There was a poorly shot phone video which really would not hold up in a court of law, the quality bad, the lighting in the bar distorting the view, but Batman knew. It was the Joker. He had the video playing right now on the Batcave computer screens, freezing it on an image of Joker.

Robin frowned, staring at it. “Sure looks like him, but...there are a lot of people with green hair nowadays.”

Barb’s fingers flew over the computer before she shrugged. “That’s the best quality I can give you.”
Batman nodded. “It’s fine. I can see it’s him.”

Robin frowned. “Why would he kill some random guy in a bar?”

Batman frowned. “Because he’s unstable, but this is sloppy, foolish even. This killing had no agenda attached to it. These men were from Metropolis, no one of importance in Gotham, just here for a good time…” He rubbed his chin. “This was a spur of the moment, emotional killing.” He turned to Barbara. “His friends, what did they say happened again?”

Barbara looked at the police report and said out loud. “The survivors stated that their friend, Richie Rice, 24, was drunk and wanted to start a bar fight as part of a bucket list before joining the military. Richie approached the suspect and started to make comments about the man, who had green hair, was pale and thin, pretending to be the Joker. He then used homophobic language and made some remarks about the man’s girlfriend being a hooker.” Barbara looked up to see Batman sigh.

“It has to be him. He’s been lying low since Harley Quinn was arrested, which surprises me. As much as he lo--” Batman stopped himself from saying love. Instead he said, “As much as he is obsessed by her, I’m surprised he hasn’t stormed Blackgate Prison. This may be a sign of worse of come. If he is becoming even more unstable, we may stand a chance of catching him.” Batman rubbed his thumb along his bottom lip in thought.

* 

It had been well over a week since the incident at the club. Batman stayed on alert waiting for another incident, another moment of Joker losing control, a chance to take him down, but no signs were available yet. Batman was hoping to have Joker behind bars at Blackgate, maybe Arkham at least before Harley Quinn was to be moved, but Joker never appeared again in the days following the murder of Richie Rice.

Instead, Jack had taken to practically barricading himself in his lab all day and all night. He only emerged when he needed something, when he needed Frost to fetch him some chemical or weapon.

Agatha wasn’t sure if Jack’s one-minded focus on his lab was any better than his break down. He still continued to eat and drink very little, just enough to keep himself going and usually only if she stayed to watch him eat and drink. The moment she left, he would throw himself back into his work. Worse, Jack slept even less than he ate or drank. He had lost a disturbing amount of weight and his eyes had taken on a feverish focus. He had decorated the lab with images of Harley, creating a strange sort of shrine to his lost love. Agatha tried to see this as an improvement over the endless violence and drinking from the weeks before, that he had found a way to put his crippling rage and despair into preparing for something, but she also knew he was preparing for a war--a war on Batman, a war on Gotham.

Jack’s focus was on revenge now. If he could find no way to get his girl back, then he was going to torture Batman and Gotham, he was going to burn it all to the ground. He would decorate Gotham in ribbons of blood, the streets would run red because none of it mattered to him, none of it. It could all burn to ashes because nothing had any meaning...not without Harley. They would feel, they would understand exactly how he felt...Batman would know exactly how it felt to lose someone precious. While Jack focused his energy on making bombs, gas grenades and anything else he could think of, he also thought about what he was going to do to Batman, to Bruce. He was going to hurt someone special to Bruce...take them away from him just like he had taken Harley...

* 

Agatha was in the kitchen making a couple of cucumber sandwiches in the hopes of getting Jack to
She frowned in surprise, her body tensing as she went on full alert, only to relax in the next moment. It had to be one of the gang—there was no one else who would even come onto the property, unless it was a few stupid teens and they wouldn’t bother knocking. Frost was hanging out with Jack at his lab, mostly there to keep an eye on Jack. There was no one else on the park grounds but the three of them at the moment. She sighed and went to the door, but not before she grabbed a steak knife out of the drawer, hiding it behind her back as she went to answer the door.

She pulled it open and lifted a brow in surprise when she saw Alex standing there.

He was dressed in his ripped up jeans, a t-shirt with BTW in big green letters with (Bring the Weed) in smaller letters underneath and a Hawaiian shirt with loud colored parrots across it. As soon as Agatha opened the door, Alex nearly shouted. “Where’s Jack?”

Agatha frowned. “In his lab, why? What’s wrong?”

Alex grinned. “I might have some good news about Harley. My contact on the inside got a hold of me. They are planning on moving Harley to Arkham early. They are moving fast to transfer her to Arkham, so it’s going to be tomorrow.”

Agatha dropped her arm holding the knife to her side. “What?”

Alex frowned at the sight of the knife, but he kept going. “Yes. they are moving her at night hoping to get her to Arkham without a media circus and to keep anyone—like Falcone for example—from knowing. This might just be our chance to get her, our only chance.”

Agatha smiled and tossed her knife aside. “Come on.”

Frost was leaning against the wall, his eyes partly closed as the music drummed loudly from Jack’s lab. The sounds of Sympathy for the Devil was playing loudly with Jack singing along with Mick Jagger while he worked inside.

Frost barely heard the sounds of footsteps running toward him over the sounds of the music. He opened his eyes to see Agatha and Alex coming down the tunnel toward him.

Frost stood up straight. “What’s wrong?”

Alex took a breath. “I think we might have a chance to get Harley!”

Frost frowned narrowing his eyes. Alex started to move past him, but Frost stopped him with a hand on his chest. “Wait a minute…” He glanced at Agatha, then back to Alex. “Is this a real chance? Not a maybe? I don’t want you telling him anything that…”

Alex swatted his hand away. “No man, it’s real. And if we are going to take advantage of it we need to move quickly. They’re moving her to Arkham under cover of dark tomorrow night!”

Frost looked to Agatha who nodded. “He’s serious,” she added.

Frost didn’t look convinced or happy, but he nodded and let Alex hurry by him. He looked to Agatha. “Are you sure about this?”

She nodded. “If they are moving Harley and trying to do it secretly, this will be the best chance we are going to have to get her back. We have to try.”
Frost nodded turning to look into the lab.

* 

Jack, wearing nothing but a pair of dark purple slacks and some green suspenders, shirtless, his feet bare, was grinning while he worked. The liquid that was boiling in a beaker was a bright neon green; the one next to it, also boiling, was a strange milky white. He chuckled bouncing his head to the new song that was playing as he wrote something down on the paper in front of him, which already had a series of calculations and graphs on it.

Alex hadn’t seen Jack in a few days and frowned in surprise. Jack’s usually perfectly groomed hair was loose, falling around his face, some of it tucked behind his ears. He could see how thin his friend had become, his eyes looking slightly sunken in his deathly white skin, his cheekbones standing out, the shadows making his cheeks look hollow. The slacks he wore hung on him, a little too big on him and his ribs were beginning to show. It pained Alex to see Jack this way.

He stepped closer, being careful as he said his name. “Jack?”

Jack frowned turning in surprise, but followed by a wide smile. “Alex, what are you doing here?”

Alex smiled. “I got news buddy, good fucking news.”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “News?”

Alex nodded. “I think we have a way to get Harley, tomorrow night.”

Jack stared at him, his eyes widening. “Are you serious?”

Alex nodded. “Yes, we are going to have to move fast, but yes.”

Jack reached out for his friend, wrapping his long fingers around Alex’s shoulders. The strength in Jack’s grip hadn’t diminished as he squeezed hard. Alex winced (in no small part from the constant pain in his right shoulder) he could feel a slight tremor in Jack’s grip.

Jack stared at him for a long time, his blue eyes looked frantic, circled with shadows, searching Alex’s face before he started to laugh. Jack’s laugh gained volume becoming louder than the music as he reached up and grabbed the side of his head with one hand, holding onto Alex with the other as his laugh echoed through the lab and tunnel.
Detours

Alex, Frost, Agatha and Jack all sat at the kitchen table back in the main house, a pot of coffee between them, and each of them holding a mug filled to the brim with the rich dark liquid. Jack sat with his arms through a rumpled, dark mustard dress shirt that hung on his thin frame, the buttons only haphazardly fastened. He nursed his coffee, both his hands wrapped around the mug as if trying to ground himself in reality. He only occasionally took a sip of the dark liquid, more an automated response to the mug in his hand than any desire to drink the coffee. Otherwise Jack seemed strangely out of focus. His blue eyes looked dull, he never looked any of the other people gathered here in the eye, his focus somewhere else entirely even when he spoke to them. Agatha frowned watching Jack. Her heart sank a little lower every day, worried that she would never have anyone resembling her nephew back. The longer he was without Harley, the less of Jack there was with them. She pulled on her bottom lip with her teeth, feeling completely helpless.

Since Alex had told him about the plan to transfer Harley to Arkham, Jack had been quiet after his initial reaction, shutting down like a wind-up toy with stripped gears. Alex wasn’t sure what the silence meant—if Jack was thinking of a plan, or if he was too far gone to really compute what moving Harley meant. Either way Alex went ahead and gave their small group the details as he had received them, and although they were not as much as he would like, after weeks of little to nothing, this information was a bounty.

Alex looked around the table, his one hand wrapped around his cup of coffee before he continued. “My source says that they are going to use a fucking armored truck to move her! Which tells me they are a little scared, and not just of us either.”

Agatha snorted. “They should be. Falcone wants her dead, or at least in his hands. I wouldn’t put it past him to try to take Harley. And if Falcone wants her, he is going to bulldoze through the GCPD.” Agatha looked thoughtful for a moment before she added. “She would be a valuable hostage and not just to use against us, to use against Joker’s gang. I think she would be valuable to Batman as well.”

She glanced at Jack as she spoke, but he didn’t react. He was staring into coffee cup, his gaze as unfocused now as it had been for a while now—even with the mention of Batman. Here was a chance to get Harley back and he only seemed to be half-listening to the information that Alex was giving them. Agatha’s frown deepened as she sipped her coffee.

Alex continued. “They’re not just using an armored truck, they are going to have a fucking police escort consisting of at least four cars. My source wasn’t real sure, but two in the front and two in the back is pretty standard, and the more fucking cars they use, the more fucking attention they are going to draw to themselves, though there is a rumor that the fucking Batman will be tailing behind the entire thing.” Alex took a sip of his coffee. “Guess the police are in bed with the Bat now.”

Frost shook his head and muttered, “Batman?”

Alex glanced at Jack, who still wasn’t reacting, before he continued. “Yeah, not sure if he is coming the fuck along on their request or he is just fucking bullying in on the transfer, but that’s what my source says he heard.” Alex shrugged. “Though I’m gonna say it’s a fact. I can see that fucking Bat wanting to make sure Harley gets to Arkham.” Alex made a face. “They are moving her in the middle of the night, or really early morning; I’m guessing in hopes of avoiding the press and a possible attack from Falcone and probably from the Joker. I think one of the doctors from Blackgate is coming with her in the back, and some guards. I’m not sure what we can do to get her, but…”

Alex trailed off looking around at everyone, waiting for ideas.
Jack stared at the table surface though it was clear to anyone watching him that he wasn’t actually focused on the table. His blue eyes had a far away look, his gaze vacant. It seemed to the three of them that Jack was working on a plan.

Agatha glanced from Jack to Alex. “We are going to need at least a couple of cars…”

Jack spoke up. “No, we are going to need our own armored truck and a semi.”

Frost frowned, sharing a look with Alex and Agatha. “A semi?”

Jack looked up, a smile spreading across his pale face, his attention turning to Alex. “How fast can you get me a rocket launcher?”

Alex frowned in thought. “I’ll get a hold of Anderson, but I think I can get you a fucking rocket launcher by tomorrow night, maybe sooner.”

Jack grinned. “Good. This is going to take the entire gang and I want the Irish with us too. We are going to need to make the cops follow our route.” Jack looked up, his blue eyes meeting each one of them. “We have to make sure they follow our route…” He repeated. “Which means we have to direct the GCPD until we get them into the place where we are going to take the truck. Kill every single one of them and bring Harley home.” His voice was quiet, but all of them could feel a sort of vibration emanating from Jack, as if his body was being held tight, ready to spring forth into violent action at any moment. Agatha glanced at Frost, then Alex--they all felt it and it was unsettling.

Jack continued, his voice softer. “We are going to bring my Harley girl home.”

A smile spread further across his face as a violent, manic twinkle appeared in his eyes. He whispered. “Oh, this is going to be so much fun!” He laughed out, but in the next moment he dropped his voice, it was filled with so much emotion that hearing him speak was almost too much for any of them sharing the table with him, the emotion was too raw. “Then Harley will be back in my arms...my girl will be home and all will be right with the world again.”

*

Across Gotham, that same evening, secure in his apartment, Falcone sat with his family eating dinner. He had a chef brought in special tonight to make Caponata, just like his grandmother in Sicily used to make. He had even opened one of his prize Antinori Marchese Antinori Chianti Classico Riserva to share with his daughter and youngest son.

Across from Falcone, his daughter Sophia sat, dressed in a dark evergreen stereo flower, sleeveless, tulle evening dress, her hair done up in a soft, but elegant bun. She looked ready for a night out in one of Gotham’s best restaurants followed by a play or the opera instead of having dinner with her father. Next to her was Falcone’s youngest son, her little brother, Alberto, wearing a pair of black skinny jeans with suspenders and a short sleeve dress shirt, buttoned up to the collar with a bow tie in place of a regular tie. Their father had glared at his outfit, but had said nothing about his son’s attire; had not said anything to his son at all, in fact. Sophia had thought her brother looked adorable. He looked innocent, free of Gotham’s claws instead of dragged into the muck like the rest of them.

Carmine had insisted on a formal dinner tonight. He had the best silver was out, the table set as if they were planning to have a large party, table cloth, center piece; the whole nine yards. Their father had even gone so far as to have a violinist, who was currently playing some Vivaldi, stand in a corner of the dining room and play while they ate. Sophia thought the entire enterprise was just her father flexing his muscle for no other reason than for show that he was still in control. She wasn’t sure who the show was for exactly, though knowing how things worked in Gotham, word of
Falcone’s dinner would make the circuit of the families and everyone would know that Falcone was unfazed by the attempt on his life, the murder of his girlfriend and ex-wife. Falcone had it all under control.

Sophia sighed and glanced up from her plate to look at her father. He still looked pale and he had lost some weight recently, a lot of weight. Someone else might not see the shadows under his eyes or the way he had aged around his mouth and the corners of his eyes. The Joker had taken something from her father and she didn’t think it was something he was going to get back, no matter how many people he killed, no matter who he destroyed. That core of strength that her father had always possessed had been shattered.

Her attention moved from her father to Alberto who looked sullen as he moved his fork around his plate. Alberto had done his best to separate himself from this life, from the family, from all of Gotham and its stink, even moving away from Gotham. But father had insisted he return after Mario died. Sophia wasn’t sure why, but she had a feeling Alberto wasn’t going to like it; she didn’t think she would like it either. She hoped her father wasn’t foolish enough, or stuck in tradition so much, that he would try to make Alberto the head of the family. She narrowed her eyes in thought. She would fight him if he tried. It wasn’t just that Alberto was not suited to the job, oh no. Sophia had earned it. She had worked her ass off to show her father that she deserved the position of heir even over Mario, but because she was a daughter, her father hadn’t given her any consideration, until now. Except she didn’t trust him to make the right decision. He was still ruled by his old prejudices, his old misogynous way of looking at the world. She didn’t think her father was that foolish, but now that she really examined the idea, she began to get this sinking feeling in her stomach that maybe, she might be wrong about her father.

She knew a lot of the families wouldn’t except her as the head of the Falcone family. A woman could not be the head of a family, especially not THE family of Gotham. It didn’t matter that the Russians, that the Odessa family was led by a woman, the Falcone family was different. She glared at her father from under her lashes. If he passed her over in favor of Alberto, she was going to make him pay. If Carmine Falcone thought the Joker was bad, he hadn’t seen bad, not yet.

She schooled her features despite her growing irritation, her own dark thoughts distracting her while she took a bite of her steak, chewing thoughtfully when they all heard the knock at the door.

Carmine glared at the two men standing on either side of the door. There were two more guards on the other side, along with guards scattered throughout the building, guarding entrances into the building, windows, stairways, elevators. In a lot of ways, Sophia thought, this place had more guards than Blackgate. Her own personal bodyguards were outside, her father having refused to let them stand in the dining room. She picked up her wine taking a sip. She knew why he had been so insistent on them standing outside--again, it was a show of power, of disrespect to her. She was the daughter--just the daughter--and he was the father, he was letting her know that she had a “place” in the scheme of things.

Sophia watched as her father glared at the guards, but completely unaware of her own glare, the slowly developing hate in her gaze.

“I thought I said that I was not to be disturbed?” Falcone set his silverware down with a narrowed gaze.

The two guards exchanged a look before one of them, a tall blond that Sophia knew was named Reno swallowed nervously. “I’ll check sir.”

He turned and opened the door to slip outside to leave his fellow bodyguard alone in the dining room under the intense glare of Carmine “The Roman” Falcone. After a couple of minutes, Reno stepped
back in.

“Sir, there is a man out here calling himself Tallyman who wants to speak with you. He says he has information about Harley Quinn.” Reno looked nervous as he delivered his information.

Falcone’s eyes lit up and his tone changed. “Send him in.”

Sophia sighed taking another sip of her wine. She had thought going after Harley Quinn was a bad idea. She knew her father was all about revenge, but she just didn’t think killing off the Joker’s lover was the correct course of action. Killing the woman in Blackgate would immediately throw suspicion on the family. Who else could have gotten to her in prison and who else would want her dead? Her father. That was trouble they simply didn’t need. She had felt it was best to let the little blonde get her ass locked up on Arkham, of which she had no doubt would be the outcome of all this, but Daddy had insisted on revenge, on sending a message to the Joker. Of course that had ended with the assassin dead by Harley Quinn’s hand. A complete waste of time and money as far as Sophia was concerned.

A few seconds later Tallyman entered. The man was dressed in a entirely in white, which looked quite handsome against his dark skin she thought as Tallyman stepped over and stopped at the corner of the table next to her. He glanced down at her and inclined his head toward her. She smiled at him with a small nod of her head as well. Sophia smiled taking a sip of her wine watching this man who called himself Tallyman. He was very interesting, and not just physically. She glanced sideways at her father and settled back in her seat to listen.

Alberto ignored everyone slouching in his chair drinking more of his dinner than actually eating it.

Falcone examined Tallyman quietly before he motioned at the man with his glass of wine. “So, what is so important that you had to disturb my dinner with my children?”

Tallyman smiled. “My source inside Blackgate just informed me that Harley Quinn is going to be moved, under cover of night, to Arkham, tomorrow.”

Falcone went still. “What?”

“After her killing of your assassin she has also been causing trouble for some of the doctors, the guards. She has made herself enough of a nuisance that the warden wants her out of the prison. So they are moving her, tomorrow.” Tallyman smiled. “I thought you might like to know that, sir.”

Falcone grinned rolling his glass between his hands. “Is that so?”

Tallyman nodded.

Falcone grinned. “I think we need to arrange a pit stop for Miss Quinn.” He smiled at Tallyman. “We are going to arrange a roadblock.”

Tallyman smiled. “Good idea sir.”

* 

The streets of Gotham were quiet as the caravan entered the city limits. This late, the traffic in Gotham was usually still light, but here the streets were unnervingly quiet as the main lanes of traffic through this particular section of the city were blocked off and redirected along other routes. A few ‘detour’ signs and indications that road work was being performed cleared traffic better and quieter than a massive police escort. The evening air was chilly and no sooner had the vehicles left the prison than a light drizzle had begun to fall. The two police officers in the first vehicle of the
transport group frowned into the darkness as they kept the caravan moving at a steady forty miles an hour as they cruised into the city limits.

Chloe Decker, a well-built blonde with a buzz cut, was sitting in the passenger seat next to her partner, James Barnes who looked like he should be a librarian more than a cop with his slicked back brown hair, doe brown eyes and a smattering of freckles over his nose. Chloe glanced at James, than back out the window, a slight glower on her face. James gave her a sideways glance before he asked. “All right, what’s got you making that face? And I know it can’t just be because you quit smoking.”

Chloe frowned at him crossing her arms over her chest. “Just all this...this special treatment that we are giving that bitch just to move her to the nut house. Who cares if Falcone offs her, it ain't like she is some special witness or anything even remotely important. I say let him take a crack at her.”

James chuckled. “She’s the Joker’s girlfriend, that makes her important. She is a link between us and stopping that clown.”

Chloe snorted. “So, he’s a whackadoo who is taking out mob types. I mean who cares? Let them kill each other I say, makes our job easier. Besides, I’m sure Batman will have him tied up and on our doorstep in no time, and if not him, Falcone will take him down. Better the criminals you know than the crazy clowns you don’t.”

James sighed. “Chloe, we are police officers, our job…”

Chloe snorted again. “Yeah, yeah I know…”

James frowned. “Huh?”

Chloe, who's attention had been on him and not in front of her frowned. “What’s…” She turned to look out the window where James had been staring to see a road block ahead of them.

Chloe frowned in confusion too. “I thought…”

James muttered and shrugged. “Me too. Maybe it was a last minute change...you know, in case any of us gave out the information they decided to switch it up at the last minute. I just thought we were going to stay on the single lanes, not any of the double lanes. This route is going to force us closer to Robinson Park rather that around it. I thought they couldn’t block off the streets by the park...but what do I know?”

“I guess.” Chloe said then yawned. Briefly, she wondered if she should call it in, but then dismissed that idea—if they were to keep their potential trouble to a minimum, then giving out information over the radio would be counterproductive. With a small mental shrug, she completely dismissed James’ worry. “I hate night shift.”

James smiled. “How are your boys?”

Chloe giggled. “All of them are fine. Roger got that promotion.”

James shook his head. “I bet he wouldn’t like being grouped with your sons as one of your boys.”

Chloe smiled. “He loves it.”

*

In the last police car of the caravan, Johnny Kitch frowned, following the car ahead of them, turning to the right.
“Weren’t we supposed to go straight ahead?” Johnny asked looking at this partner Willy Ferrazo and glancing at the roadblock sign and fence.

Willy shrugged. “Last minute change to the route maybe?”

Johnny chewed on his bottom lip. “I don’t like it.” He glanced at his rearview where he could see the Batmobile following behind them. Johnny’s frown deepened as a light fog began to roll in with the rain. He sucked on his lip glaring at the car.

Willy turned to look out the rear window. “Still think it’s weird they let the Bat follow.”

Johnny nodded. “Yeah—he gives me the creeps.”

Willy turned back around with a shrug. “He’s fine. I mean yeah he’s a criminal, technically, but he helps us out.”

Johnny shrugged. “I suppose. The commish likes him well enough. I heard he was going to put some sort of signaling device on the roof of the precinct.”

Willy frowned. “They gonna let him do that?”

Johnny shrugged again. “I guess, I don’t know.”

Willy sighed. “Gotham is getting weird man.”

Johnny laughed. “Getting weird?”

* Batman was keeping his distance, close enough that the police could see he was following, but not so close that any of them would get upset. It was frustrating that he did not have a better working relation with law enforcement. He was on high alert, ready for anything (he hoped) because he was certain something was going to happen.

Robin sat next to the caped crusader, quietly watching the police car in front of them when he glanced sideways before he said softly. “I heard she got attacked in Blackgate.”

Batman grunted in response.

Robin frowned feeling the need to explain where he had gotten his information. “I read up on the stuff that happened at Arkham, I mean before she and your brother became criminals.”

Batman turned to look at him with a deeper frown. “How did you get…” This was followed by a sigh. “Barbara.” Batman turned his attention back to the road, the annoyance clear in the set of his jaw and the thin line his lips became.

Robin nodded. “Yeah. Just...I don’t know...you put him in Arkham over something kind of minor and then she…”

Batman cut him off. “It wasn’t minor and Jack had been heading that way for a long time. What Dr. Quinzel did after my brother was committed was her own doing…”

Robin murmured quietly. “It just seems like all of this could have…”

Batman held up a finger to stop the young man. Robin’s jaw snapped shut, his eyes glued to Batman. Batman had his eyes on the car ahead of him, focused on the turn signal followed by the police.
cruiser turning.

Batman said softly, more as if he were speaking out loud to himself than talking to Robin. “The route just changed,” he said softly. “We were suppose to continue straight, head through Old Gotham but we just turned and are now heading closer to the Fashion District which will bring us closer to the park…” He was speaking out loud trying to figure out why there had been a change in the route and with no communication from above, Batman’s suspicions were nearly in overdrive. Robin didn’t reply, instead staying quiet and letting Batman work out the problem.

Batman frowned, his eyes narrowing behind the mask. “Something is wrong…”

He looked over at Robin. “Be prepared, I think we are going to have a problem.”

Robin nodded, shelving his discussion about Joker and Harley for another time.

* 

James frowned in confusion. Up ahead he could see what looked like a dumpster fire. Someone had moved a dumpster out into the middle of the street, the insides burning a bright, cheerful yellow and orange in the damp Gotham night. He sucked on his bottom lip. Dumpster fires in Gotham weren’t that unusual, they got a call on one or two a night, usually redirected the callers to the fire department, unless the caller reported anyone in the vicinity. The fires were usually caused by some bored teenagers, sometimes a rival gang would start one in a neighborhood that didn’t belong to them, or sometimes someone was trying to hide a body. Every once in a while a homeless person would hide inside a dumpster to keep warm during the winter and do something stupid like start a fire, which they could swiftly lose control of. He had seen more homeless burned up in fires they had started than he cared to remember. James recalled that he had even seen dumpsters pushed out into the middle of the street when they were burning to fuck up traffic. Shoving burning dumpsters into the streets usually occurred during riots (such as when the Gotham Knights lost that big game last year, or when the trash collectors went on strike a couple of years ago), but tonight, a lone dumpster burning along the path they were taking to transfer a dangerous prisoner to Arkham was just too much of a coincidence for him not to think that something was up.

“Chloe, can you put a call in to headquarters and ask about the change in the route for me?” James glanced at his partner who was staring at the burning dumpster with a frown on her face. The turn they had taken to avoid it had forced the caravan to make another, bringing them even closer to Robinson Park.

“Sure thing.” Chloe reached out for the radio, picking up the handset and pushing down the button just as a dump truck pulled out in front of them. The truck didn’t stop, but was going at a fairly fast clip down the street. James immediately noted that there was no plate on the six wheel dump truck, nothing unusual about it except that it was on a street where it shouldn’t have been. There was no nearby road construction, no reason for such a truck to be out here at this time of night, especially on this route.

Chloe jumped in surprise when the truck rolled in front of them. “What the fuck?”

James hissed. “I have a bad feeling about this.”

He turned to look over his shoulder at the police car that was following them, then back ahead. “We are going to be hitting regular traffic soon…” James muttered.

Chloe looked confused. “But I thought the route was blocked off?”
James glanced in her direction. “It was, but I think we’ve just been fucked with…”

* 

Agatha grinned as she spun the wheel, driving the Gotham City dump truck like it was a slick sports car. Bea was riding beside her, a strange little device that resembled a walkie talkie in her hand with a long, thick antenna sticking out the top. She had just put in the combination on the front buttons that Trope had made her memorize, followed by a series of dim blue lights rippling across the black surface of the device.

“Okay, their radios and cell phones should be jammed.” Bea held up the device. “At least for the next few minutes.”

Agatha grinned. “All right, let’s give our boys in blue a bit of a bumpy ride shall we?”

Bea laughed and reached forward to hit the button that made the dump chassis rise and dump its contents—a full load of big rock gravel—onto the street.

* 

James was driving close behind the truck while Chloe cursed. “I can’t get through!” she snarled. “That damn radio isn’t working!”

James opened his mouth to make a remark at the very moment that the dump truck’s chassis began to rise.

“What the hell?” James eyes widened in surprise as the chassis rose, the back beginning to open. He hit the brake, tires screeching on the pavement only to have the police cruiser behind them slam into their rear end just as the gravel came flying out of the back of the truck. He tried to swerve around the oncoming gravel, but there was too much of it coming too quickly. The wheels of the police car hit the gravel and spun, at the same time the bouncing gravel slammed into the windshield causing the glass to spiderweb. The car spun even as James struggled to control it. The car behind them, which held two more officers, Martin Land and Randell Moses, slammed into Chloe’s side of the vehicle, their front already crushed from James slamming into them. The additional crash had Randell’s head bouncing against the glass leaving red smears in his wake. James was thrown into his door hard and looked over only to see that Chloe was out or dead, her face a bloody mess from smashing into the dash. The window of her door was shattered, glass was littering her lap and face like twinkling stars. The police car spun and slammed into the back of the dump truck; James’ head smacked against the steering wheel, then door window, then the back of the seat. The last thing James was aware of was the splitting pain in his head he had before he passed out.

* 

Martin Lane was driving the police car behind James Barnes when the dump truck in front of James started to dump gravel. He saw James’ brake lights flare, his rear of the police car slamming into the front of his car. James then gunned the gas, pulled away and spun. Martin was struggling to keep his car out of the way as he watched James try to stop himself from plowing into their car, but Martin hadn’t been able to react in time, plus being pinned between the armored car and James gave him no room to maneuver. He had tried to spin the car out of the way but the front of his police vehicle still slammed into the passenger door of James’ car, giving him a perfectly clear view of Chloe Decker’s head slamming against the glass leaving a splatter of blood against the cracked glass before he lost control. His cruiser spun, fishtailing into several parked cars along the sidewalk. He caught a glimpse of his partner covered in blood before their car slammed into the parked vehicles and flipped, turning to land on its roof, but by then Martin was unaware of anything.
Agatha looked in her side mirror with a grin and a mock wince of pain. “Two down.”

Bea smiled with a chuckle.

Joker, his green hair slicked back except for one stubborn curl that stayed lose along his forehead, was dressed in a traditional black and white tuxedo looking perfectly groomed, even down to his black and white oxfords, purple and black striped socks with a white carnation in his lapel. He turned out onto the road the minute he saw Agatha in the dump truck go barreling by, followed by the caravan. He giggled spinning the wheel of the purple long nose Kenworth easily. He shot out onto the two lane road with a laugh running alongside the police cars following the armored truck.

“Here we go!” he yelled with delight, his grin nearly maniacal.

Frost was beside him holding the promised rocket launcher that Alex had gotten for him only hours ago. Frost sighed, and not for the first time tonight. The rocket launcher was the last thing he thought Joker needed, but who was he to judge the man? And he had to admit—at least silently—the damn thing did look like it might be fun to shoot.

Joker grinned at Frost. “Hold onto your butt!”

He hit the gas and the truck shot out, slamming into the side of the police car that was directly behind the armored truck, sending it careening off the road and onto the sidewalk. The two cops inside, Lisa Murphy and Helen Mock, both long time members of the Gotham police force, screamed in shock as the truck barreled into their side, shoving them out of the way and taking their place in the caravan line.

The police car went head first into a lamp post, the front caving in, the front of the car wrapping itself around the pole in an intimate hug. The two officers were either dead or unconscious, it was hard to tell.

Joker laughed loudly before he suddenly let go of the wheel. “Frost take over!”

“What?” Frost lunged for the wheel at the same time that Joker crawled over him grabbing up the RPG before it fell to the floor of the truck. Joker held up the weapon and leaned out the window, pulling the weapon with him. Frost gasped, seeing Joker practically falling out of the window. Frost leaned over and grabbed the tails of Joker’s coat, pulling back trying to pull the Boss back inside, but when that didn’t seem possible, Frost simply held onto the clown’s coat tails for dear life and prayed the material didn’t rip.

Joker laughed, grinning brightly at the police cars behind him. He gave him a cheerily before he shot the weapon.

“WOOHOO!” Joker yelled with delight.

The police car carrying Johnny and Willy was cutting the distance between them and the truck. Johnny wasn’t sure what they were going to do when they were close enough, but he had his police issued weapon on his lap, and his partner, Willy Ferrazo had his weapon in his hand. Johnny thought that maybe they could shoot the tires out, or get off a lucky shot; firing while driving wasn’t standard procedure or part of their training.
Willy had dropped the radio handset, which wasn’t working anyway, when he saw Lisa and Helen crash into the lamp post only moments ago. Their car zipped past the crashed police car, Willy caught a glimpse of the women inside, neither of whom were moving.

“Shit! You think the girls are…” Willy started turning around to look back at the crashed police car as they zipped by when Johnny hissed. “Oh fuck me!”

Willy turned his attention back to the front to see not only had the semi truck cut in front of them, but his gaze focused on the clown leaning out of the passenger window.

Willy gasped. “Is that…”

Willy’s eyes widened in horror as he realized not only was it the Joker leaning out of the truck window, but that the clown was holding a rocket launcher. Johnny was cursing up as storm as he tried to turn the car out of the way, but he just wasn’t quick enough. Joker, his mad laughter audible over the sound of the car engines, fired the rocket at them. Willy cursed just as the rocket hit the front of their car.

* 

Joker let out a triumphant laugh as the rocket slammed into the police car and flipped the entire front of the car up into the air.

He spun around giggling at the same time as he yelled at Frost. “Where are the others rockets!?”

Frost, his face having gone completely pale, pointed to the floor. “Down there Boss!”

Joker chuckled reached down to the floor of the cab to grab another.

* 

Batman hissed, gripping the wheel and spinning the car out of the way as the police car was blasted up and rolled out of the way flipping several times before it landed against the side of a building.

Robin cursed. “Oh hell!”

Batman growled with annoyance and said in near disbelief, “He has a rocket launcher.”

* 

Two more cars came running out of the darkness to take up positions alongside the armored car. In one car was Jason, driving a grey and red trimmed Dodge Challenger GT while in the vehicle on the right was Alex in a jeep with Bane in the passenger seat next to him.

Jason grinned as he aimed his weapon, an Uzi, and began firing at the driver of the armored car. The bullets were only denting the door and window; the armored car, being bulletproof, wasn't taking much damage.

The driver inside, Toby Mountain, a heavily muscled bald man snarled. “I did not fucking sign up for this!!”

His partner, Leon Rhodes, a black man with close cropped hair, winced when bullets slammed against his side of the truck. He looked out his window to see a one handed man in a jeep driving with his knees while shooting at his door. Next to the one armed man could only be what Leon would describe as a fucking giant! The man was huge, with skin just a little lighter than Leon’s, and as Leon stared at the large man, he would swear that the man’s veins were glowing green under the
man’s skin.

“What the fuck?” Leon hissed.

*

Joker grinned, sticking a hand of the truck and waved Batman. “HIYA BATS!!!”

He giggled while he rearmed the RPG again. “Let’s see how good that little toy of yours is…”

He leaned back out the window, smiling at the Batmobile as it approached closer to their rear. He wrinkled his nose with a whispered. “Here’s a great big hug big brother.”

Joker aimed and fired the rocket at the Batmobile.

*

Robin gasped. “Oh shit!!! He is going to hit us!”

Batman snarled. “Not if I can help it.”

Batman tightened his grip on the wheel, his eyes narrowed in concentration.

Batman swerved just as the rocket hit in the space where the front of the car had been only a moment ago. Chunks of asphalt and pavement flew into the air with the explosion, momentarily cutting off their view of the truck, reducing visibility to smoke and dirt.

Joker, who was still leaning out the window to watch the Batmobile explode, blinked in surprise. He turned back to Frost the look on his face incredulous. “I can’t believe it! I fucking missed!!!”

Frost looked confused. “You missed?”

“He fucking dodged!!! Can you believe that? How do you fucking dodge a rocket?” Joker narrowed his eyes before he asked. “How many more do I have?”

Frost glanced at the floor. He wasn’t sure right now how many of the rocket he had brought with him and he couldn’t see what was down on the floor near Joker’s seat.

He counted in his head trying to remember what he had brought with him. “I think you have two, maybe three more Boss.”

Joker felt around on the floor, his white gloved fingers brushing across one of the rockets. “He can’t dodge them all,” he muttered as he reloaded the weapon before leaning out of the window again.

He narrowed his eyes, smiling and taking aim at the black car behind him. “Let’s see how good you are Brucie.”

*

Inside the Batmobile Batman flipped a cover off the gear stick to expose a small red button. Robin looked over and gasped. “What is…”

Batman hit the button and flares shot out from the front of the Batmobile. The flares were bright red, bursting into a flash of color so bright that Robin had to shield his eyes.

*
Joker yelped in surprise as his view was filled with red. He squeezed his eyes shut seeing bright spots against his lids, suddenly blinded by the bright light and ducking back inside as the flares zinged off the sides of the truck. The sudden sound of the flares coursing along the truck’s sides, along with the burst of light had Frost wrenching the truck to the side for a moment before he brought the truck back under control.

“He shot flares at me?” Joker looked over at Frost blinking several times as he tried to clear the sudden bright spots from his eyes. “He shot flares at me!”

Frost made a face. “I’m surprised he isn’t shooting at us.”

Joker grinned, his bright red lips emphasizing his perfectly straight white teeth. Joker had drawn the smile past the corners of his lips giving his grin a wider, more menacing appearance. Right now in the light dancing across his too white smile, Frost felt a shiver run down his spine.

Joker laughed. “Remember, the Bat supposedly doesn’t kill! I’m just going to have to see how far I can push him before he breaks his one rule. Oh, won’t that be fun!!”

Joker leaned back out of the window, his eyes narrowed while he continued to talk to Frost. “See, the only problem with the Bat’s one rule is that I don’t have that rule. I do like to kill people!!”

He giggled manically leaning out the window with the reloaded rocket launcher. This time he didn’t bother to aim before he let the rocket fly at the Batmobile.

Even with the flares still making his vision spotty, Joker’s shot raced directly at the Batmobile to strike the front of the car before Batman could swerve again. Robin yelped throwing up his arms even as the rocket burst across the hood, doing little damage, though Batman swerved anyway (he couldn’t be certain how effective the vehicle’s armor was in the field, even with all the testing that he had performed.) The rocket and Batman’s overcompensation forced the vehicle to the side, almost losing control and careening off the road.

* 

On the passenger side of the armoured truck, Alex, his one hand spinning the wheel with the expert experience of a man who drove with one arm all the time, muttered while bringing his knees up to hold the wheel as he reloaded his gun and shot at the armored truck. “I can’t fucking believe I’m fucking doing this! I’m going to be a fucking father soon!”

He fired off a couple of more shots, at the same time trying to get the jeep as close to the armored car as possible. He glanced sideways at Bane who was laughing softly.

“You are going to make a great father.” Bane grinned.

Alex sighed. “Well if I don’t fucking die doing this fucking shit.” He glanced at the truck beside them. “I don’t think I can get any closer without wrecking!”

Bane grinned. “It’s close enough.”

The jeep had a canvas top which Bane simply shoved off, his large hands becoming larger by the second as the Titan pumped through his veins. Alex tried not to be distracted as the man grew in size, standing up in the seat of the jeep. With a roar, the large man launched himself at the armored car.

Alex yelped, dropping his gun to the floor and grabbing the jeep’s wheel with his one hand when Bane jumped, shoving the entire jeep to the side. Alex barely pulled the jeep back before it would have crashed into a parked car.
Bane slammed into the side of the armored truck. The truck tilted for a split second, but the driver somehow righted the truck before they spun out of control.

The man in the passenger side of the truck looked out at Bane, his eyes going wide in horror. (The fear gas had started to leak into the front of the truck, slowly making its effect felt by the passenger and driver.) Leon saw a man hit the side of the truck at first, but as he looked out of his window the man twisted and morphed into a gorilla-like monstrosity from his nightmares. Bane grinned back at Leon and grabbed the handle of the door. He pulled his arm back and began to hit the window with his unnaturally large fist. Bane hit the bulletproof glass, one, two, three times. Leon scrambled to Toby’s side of the car. Toby yelled at him, the gas not quite affecting him yet and shoved his partner back to his side of the truck.

“Fuck Leon!! What the…” Toby turned to see the frightening large man slamming his fist into the glass, which was holding, but only barely.

Bane gave up on the glass and with a hiss grabbed a hold of the door’s handle and pulled, only to nearly fall off the truck when the handle completely ripped off—but not the door.

Bane frowned in confusion, staring at the handle in his hand. “Well...shit,” he muttered tossing the handle away. He flexed his fingers before he reached back and touched the pump that sent even more Titan into his bloodstream before he reached up and began to dig his fingers into the small space between the door and the truck.

Inside the armored truck, Crane’s fear gas was seeping into every open space. The guards in the back with him and Harley were screaming, trapped in whatever nightmares Crane had plunged them into, while the rocking and gunfire outside made the guards’ nightmares even more terrifying. One of the guards had already clawed his own eyes out and was lying in a pool of his own blood, twitching as the nightmares continued to plague him despite his eyes being nothing more than ruined balls of jelly on the floor of the truck.

Crane grabbed one of the three remaining guards in the back by his neck. Crane spun around to stand behind the man, at the same time with a flick of his wrist, he produced a thin blade in the palm of his hand. He wrapped his fingers around the fine blade and brought it across the guard’s throat, slicing a deep, clean line along the front of the throat.

Harley watched with a strange fascination when Crane stepped back. For a moment nothing happened; the guard’s throat even looked intact, but in the next instant dark blood poured out and soaked the front of the man’s shirt and vest. The other two guards seemed quite unaware of their counterpart’s death. One was sitting in the corner whimpering while the other was screaming at the wall next to Harley.

Harley was fighting the fear; she felt nauseous and weak. She kept see dark, bat-like shadows that flickered at the corners of her vision making her want to scream behind her mask each time one of the shadowy bats revealed its face to her, showing a mouth full of fangs, but she fought the urge as her will struggled with her fear. She would not give Crane what he wanted, even if it killed her. Her eyes stung with tears that rolled down her cheeks and along the edges of the mask where it pressed hard against her face. Her body was trembling, but she wasn’t going to scream. She wasn’t going to scream. She repeated that over and over again closing her eyes against the nightmares only to see the flicker of shadowy wings against the lids of her eyes.

The sound of bullets hitting the side of the truck sounded like the banging of a great hammer against the side of the truck. The guard that had been staring at the wall shrieked, a high-pitched sound that
hurt Harley’s ears and forced her eyes open in time to see Crane puncture the guard’s throat. In the
next instant, the truck was hit with something hard. The entire truck felt as if it tilted onto two
wheels, threatening to tip over. Crane slammed into the wall along with the remaining guard. Harley,
still cuffed to her post, fell to the floor her arms wretched tight, feeling as if they were going to be
pulled from the sockets. The pain shot up her arms and cut across her wrists.

Harley’s blue eyes were wild and too wide. She laughed, giggled behind her mask, yanking her cuffs
against the pole she was attached to making a loud clanking noise. Jack was here….it had to be him.
Her puddin had come for her!

Crane got back to his feet, and the expression on his face showed a hint of fear for the first time.
When Harley saw the fear in his eyes, she smiled behind her mask. He was scared! Crane was
scared!! The master of fear was scared!!

Harley began to giggle like a maniacal animal, her eyes following Crane when he moved past her,
weaving and lurching as the truck threatened to topple over again. Crane stopped next to the last
guard huddled in a corner. The guard had been sprawled across the floor when the truck lurched, but
had quickly scrambled back to the corner, trying to make himself small.

Crane dropped down next to

the terrified guard and whispered.

“Here, let me provide you with a way out of your nightmare.”

He took one of the guard’s hands, pulling the fingers free from where the man was pressing them
into his upper arms as if he were trying to hold himself together. Crane placed the knife he had just
used on the other guards into this one’s hand.

“Now, you can escape,” Crane said with a soft, caring smile.

The guard looked up at him with such gratefulness that Harley wanted to vomit. The guard took the
knife and immediately stabbed himself in the eye. He managed to pull the knife out and stab himself
in the other eye, but he fell back, his body convulsing with the knife still embedded in his eye.

Crane searched the guard’s body and after a few seconds he stood up and held a set of keys up,
jingling them for Harley.

“There now, let us get out of here my dear.” Crane purred.

That was the moment they both heard the sound of metal ripping, followed by something slamming
into the back of the truck. Crane was knocked against the wall behind the cab of the truck.

Harley was yanked around, her cuffs cutting into her wrists, though she didn’t stop laughing. Crane
pushed himself quickly to his feet and moved over to Harley.

He crouched down next to her, shoving his hand into the pocket of his jacket and pulled out a
syringe. He sighed in relief when he saw it was intact.

He smiled at Harley. “Well, seems that some things are working in our favor dear.”

Harley’s eyes widened when she saw the syringe. She started to struggle, but Crane easily jabbed her
in the neck. “Don’t worry dear, this isn’t my fear toxin. This is just something to make you more
compliant with my wishes.” Crane stroked his fingers over her hair watching her while the drug
quickly too effect. Harley went limp, her eyes fluttering. She was clearly having a difficult time
focusing. Crane smiled and put the key into her cuffs.

“Now, let’s stop this truck my dear,” Crane purred, lifting her to her feet and putting his arm around
her, holding her close.

Robin was breathing heavily. The rocket launcher had done little damage, but the hood was burning.

“What are we going to do?” Robin asked, trying not to yell.

Batman snarled. “We need to take out the tires.”

He leaned forward and touched something on his console before putting his hand back on the wheel. He didn’t look at Robin when he spoke. “Be ready.”

Robin nodded.

Batman hit the gas and the black car leapt forward. When he was close enough, he shot off one of several grappling hooks he had hidden around the large vehicle. He aimed for the wheels; if he could just blow out enough of the wheels to force the truck to a stop. He pushed the button and a large hook with a hard wire shot out from the Batmobile to slam into one of the tires. The tire was instantly punctured.

Batman smiled.

*

Joker looked out the window again and cursed. “SHIT!! He’s gaining! He shot out one of your tires out Frost. Ram it!!”

“Ram it? Ram what?” Frost looked over at Joker. “What?!”

“RAM THE TRUCK!! We have to get it off the road so I can get to Harley!! I can’t do that while that damn truck is still moving!!! RAM IT! THEY CAN’T GET AWAY!!!! I CAN’T LET THEM TAKE HER FROM ME!!” Joker’s voice was hysterical. He beat his fists on the dash willing Frost to move.

Frost slammed his foot down on the gas, twisting the wheel at the last second cutting to the left, clipping into the rear right corner of the armored truck. The force spun the armored truck to the side. Whoever was inside the armored truck was trying to compensate, but the Frost twisted the wheel the other way to smash the front of the semi against the back of the armored truck against the other corner, sending the vehicle spinning.

*

At the front of the armored truck, Bane ripped the door off, tossing it over Alex and the jeep. Alex cursed loudly. “FUCK ME!!” His eyes followed the armored door for a split second before he saw the passenger fly out and slam around the hood of the jeep before the man rolled away into the darkness.

Alex yelled again in surprise. “FUCK ME!! SHIT SHIT!!”

This was followed by the loud crash of metal hitting metal and the armored truck began to spin toward him. Alex frantically spun his wheel away from the truck, thanking whatever god was watching over him that when he was forced up on the sidewalk where there were no cars in his way, but he couldn’t keep control and the jeep clipped a trash can sending the plastic can into the street while Alex spun the wheel of the jeep trying to avoid hitting the steps leading up to a building. Alex
overcompensated when he spun the wheel, causing the jeep to turn away hard from the building but in the next second slammed into a bike stand. For a moment, a split second, Alex thought the jeep might tip onto its side or flip over, but instead it bounced on its tires and stopped, a trail of smoke slowly oozing from the hood followed by what sounded like a hissing snake under the hood.

Alex gasped for breath watching while the semi that he knew held Frost and Joker spun the armored truck around, pushing it down the street before slamming into its other side and forcing the vehicle off the road toward the park where the armored truck went over a hill and vanished, while on the other side—barely missing being crushed—Alex saw Jason’s car zip out of the way. Jason turned, the tires of his car squealing loudly on the damp asphalt. In the next second he saw Jason hop out of the car.

At the same time, hot on the heels of the semi, was the Batmobile. Alex stared in wonder and horror as the slick black vehicle sped just past him, a shadow to the semi. Alex pushed his door open, stumbling out and grabbing his weapon. He wasn’t going to let Jack face his brother without backup damn it, he thought rushing across the street following the signs of destruction.

* 

Inside the cab of the truck, the driver was screaming bloody murder when he saw Bane (or rather the nightmare that Bane resembled in the driver’s now fear drug addled mind, a great hulking monster with long, deadly claws and a mouth too wide for its face full of razor sharp teeth) crawling through the cab toward him. The man spun the wheel, but was too late, the semi slammed into the back of the truck sending Bane into the windshield with enough force that the bullet proof window spiderwebbed while the driver’s head struck the steering wheel hard enough that he blacked out.

Bane pushed off the windshield, practically into the lap of the driver, unable to get a hold of anything though his current size didn’t really give him much room to be tossed around. Bane gritted his teeth and rode out whatever was happening.

* 

Inside the back of the truck, Crane and Harley were tossed around like rag dolls. Harley was only dimly aware that something was happening; the drugs that Crane had pumped into her system not only made her brain fuzzy, but her body felt disconnected from the rest of her. She knew she should be fighting, but it was so difficult to make her body obey her. She could hear Harleen’s voice in her head, screaming at her to move, to stop him, to do something, but she couldn’t obey no matter how much she wanted to. She just couldn’t seem to focus, to find her body or will herself to do anything. She blinked several times, struggling to focus, but her thoughts and will wanted to drift away.

An impact sent her flying into one of the benches, the air being knocked form her lungs as her world turned in several nauseating, dizzying circles, her body and head slamming against the interior of the truck and the bodies of the dead guards. She could do nothing as her drugged addled body wasn’t hers to command. She simply spun with the truck that came to a stop so jarringly sudden, with Harley and Crane slamming against the wall, that when the motion stopped, she didn’t immediately feel as if she had stopped moving. She lay against the cool metal of the wall of the truck’s interior, the drug and the impact making her unable to move. She could taste blood in her mouth, feel it rushing from her nose and some dripping into her eyes, but she was unable to do anything to stop it.

Crane came to his feet, wobbling for a moment, struggling to push the disorientation aside. Blood was oozing from a deep cut across his forehead. Blood stained his suit and his hands from unknown injuries or maybe simply from his victims, but he got to his feet and hurried over, grabbing Harley by her arm and yanking her to her feet. He wrapped an arm around her waist pulling her to the back of the truck, now on it’s side, reaching out to unlock the doors.
Harley’s head lolled to the side, her mind and Harleen screaming at her to do something, anything, but she did nothing as Crane dragged them both, stumbling out of the truck.

He looked around. It was very dark, but he could just make out that they were surrounded by trees.

Crane smiled and looked over at her. “Soon my love, soon my lady, we’ll be together again, alone…”
Crane began to drag her into the trees while Harley and Harleen screamed at herself to stop him.

Frost swung the truck to the side, following the armored truck as it rolled down the hill. He slammed on the breaks just before the truck would have followed the heavy, armored truck down the hill. He had turned to Joker to ask him what to do, but the Boss had already pushed the door open and was gone, Frost catching just a glimpse of green hair before Joker vanished.

Frost cursed, shoving open his own door and dropping out just in time to see Joker disappearing over the embankment.

“Shit!” He turned to look behind him, catching a glimpse of a long dark car as it sped past knowing full well that Batman would be hot on their trail. Frost pulled his gun and hurried down the wet grassy hill after Joker.

Joker raced down the hill, slipping and sliding in the damp grass. His heart was pounding so hard his chest hurt, the sound of his heartbeat drowning out everything else as he heard only the rush of blood in his ears. She had to be all right, he told himself, she had to be all right…

He saw the truck on it’s side down below, stopped by a large tree. As he approached, he saw Bane pulling himself free from the front of the truck.

Joker yelled. “WHERE IS SHE?”

Bane frowned shaking his head to clear it. “I don’t know.”

Joker rushed to the back fo the truck where one of the doors hung open. He stumbled, nearly falling as he grabbed one of the doors and pushed it up to look inside. It was hard to see the interior of the truck as there were no lights down here, but he caught glimpses of four bodies and lots of blood, but no Harley.

Joker stood there for a second staring into the truck. Tears slowly fell down his pale cheeks from his too wide, maniacal gaze as he stared wide eyed at the corpse-filled, bloody truck. He didn’t see or hear Frost coming up behind him or Bane coming around to the side.

Joker stood there taking a step backwards letting the door drop. “No...no no no no no! NO!!” he said in a harsh whisper. “No, no no no...she has to be here, has to be…”

Suddenly he screamed, his voice filled with rage, with deep unending anguish. “NOOOOOOO!!!”
Nestled in an alley close to where the police caravan was supposed to pass, sat a black Mazda 3 sedan with two heavily armed men in the front seat while two more sat in the back seat. They were not the only people on alert, watching for the police caravan; they were one of two carloads, put here by Falcone.

One of the men in the back was a large man, a wall of muscle, bald head and a face that had once been handsome before he had suffered several broken noses, lost all his front teeth and was forced to have reconstructive surgery on his left eye socket after the bone was shattered in a fight. Little Mario was currently drinking out of a fast food soda cup, sucking through the straw loudly enough that the driver, a man with thick black hair reminiscent of a young John Travolta, whose name was Roberto, was about to turn around and shoot him. He didn’t care whose cousin Little Mario was--the man was pure annoyance!

Roberto glanced at Stefano, a slender blond man with a ridiculous soul patch on his chin who sat beside him, his full concentration not on watching for the caravan, but on doing tricks with a lit cigarette, trying to suck it into his mouth while lit without hurting himself at the same time lighting another cigarette and...well Roberto wasn’t sure what the hell Stefano was doing, only that he was being an idiot as far as Roberto could see. Stefano claimed to have seen some comedian on YouTube, some guy named Tony Mullica doing these sorts of tricks, but Roberto was of the opinion that Stefano had been snorting drugs.

The last occupant of the car was Luigi, Little Mario’s younger brother and keeper. Luigi, his weapon resting on his lap, was chewing on one of his fingernails like a zombie trying to pull that last bit of flesh off a piece of bone, his eyes having that far away look, clearly contemplating something.

Roberto sighed thinking about calling the other car and speaking with StellaD for some intelligent conversation. StellaD was in the other car, parked further up the caravan trail with that rat Giulia, Jake and that scary bitch Valentia with the shaved head. He smiled resting back in his seat thinking about StellaD. She was a gorgeous woman, tall, wide shoulders and huge breasts. He smirked, thinking she was also a damn good shot with a gun--better than him--and she had a tendency to leave one button too many unbuttoned on her shirts. He secretly hoped she did that little maneuver for him because he had made it crystal clear that he liked her, even if he hadn’t asked her out yet. He hated to admit it, but he wasn’t as charming with the ladies as he pretended to be.

After tonight, however, he had promised himself he would ask her on a date, a real date.

He was lightly tapping out a tune on the steering wheel, unaware that he was tapping out the rhythm of song he had heard at a bar a few days ago, “I Love You Like an Alcoholic.” He couldn’t remember who it was by, but the song stuck in his head.

“Hey Roberto?”

Roberto sighed rolling his eyes slightly before he turned around to see Luigi looking at him with wide, slightly scared eyes. He knew he shouldn’t ask, shouldn’t engage Luigi because the dude was known for getting all weird during stake outs, asking weird questions, thinking about...stuff. But Roberto was bored, so…

“Yeah Luigi, what is it?” Roberto yawned giving Luigi an expression that conveyed both infinite patience and irritation.
“Do you believe in multiple universes?” Luigi asked, his face completely serious and his eyes slightly wide. “Like, do you believe there is a universe where we are the good guys, or like one where I’m a woman or you’re a woman? You know, stuff like that?”

Roberto sighed with a slow blink, turning back around and laying his head against the back of the seat. “I don’t know, maybe? Why does it matter?”

Luigi leaned forward. “Well, because. Don’t you wonder sometimes, like, about decisions you made in life where, like you had a choice? What would have happened if you had taken the other choice...and what if there is a you out there that did make that other choice?”

Roberto sighed glancing sideways at Stefano who currently had three cigarettes lit in his mouth and was trying to suck them into this mouth while not burning himself. Roberto narrowed his eyes. He had been about to tell Luigi that he was an idiot, but he had to wonder if there was a version of himself that wasn’t sitting in a car in Gotham waiting to attack some police caravan to grab some blonde bitch for a gangster. Did that other Roberto decide to go to college instead of working with his dad. Did that Roberto get the girl, get Angela to marry him? Roberto frowned deeper as he thought about it and it pissed him off to know that there might be a version of himself who got the fucking girl.

“No Luigi I don’t, because you know what? I don’t give a flying fluck what other Roberto is doing because other Roberto ain’t here helping with this job. Instead I’m stuck in a car with you bozos going after some blonde that I think Falcone should just leave in Arkham.”

Little Mario took that moment to suck hard on his now clearly empty soda cup causing a loud, rumbling squeak of a noise. Roberto bit down hard on his bottom lip to stop himself from yelling in frustration.

Luigi didn’t look satisfied with Roberto’s answer. He sat back crossing his arms over his chest. “I think about it all the time Roberto. Like, did I make the best choices in life?”

Roberto snorted. “Maybe in one of those multiple universes you’re Batman Luigi.”

Luigi gasped. “You think so?”

Roberto chuckled. “Sure Luigi, whatever…”

Roberto had glanced out the window just as he saw a large dump truck go speeding by, followed by two cop cars, then the armored truck, and two more cars.

“What the…” Roberto turned the key to the car starting the engine just as a semi came racing after the two police cars. By this point everyone in the car was leaning forward in shock.

Luigi hissed. “What’s going on? Are they with us?”

Roberto started to pull out, slamming on the breaks just in time to see the Batmobile speed past the alley. “Fuck me,” Roberto hissed and jammed his foot on the gas, the car leaping out of the alley. “I think someone else is making a try for the blonde!”

* 

The second car full of Falcone’s people sat near Robinson park, a black BMW M5 sat, darkened and cold, waiting. StellaD was behind the wheel, her knit cap pulled low over her dark hair, her cigar in her mouth, but unlit since she knew Jake was trying to give up smoking. Jake sat beside her, his own knit cap over his white blond hair while he stared intently out the window. In the back seat, Giulia
was filing her nails; the woman was more vain than anyone StellaD had ever met. Beside her sat
Valentina, her bald head catching the streetlight and shining enough that StellaD worried someone
would see them from one of the buildings. She had tried to convince her sister to wear a wig, but
Valentina loved the bald look and had pouted like she would when they were kids. StellaD chewed
on her cigar glancing in the rearview when she saw the dump truck race by. She turned fully in her
seat looking behind her in confusion.

Jake frowned turning with her in time to see the police car flying off the street after the second car hit
it, followed by the armored truck zipping past, but swerving in such a way that made her wonder if
the driver was drunk. The cars moved by so quickly she saw the other two cop cars fly by with two
other cars...wait...a jeep? She would have sworn she saw a man, a monster of a man, standing up in
the jeep, but then they were gone. Just as she was wondering if she should follow now, a semi
appeared that was in hot pursuit followed by the sound of a weapon being fired. Was that a fucking
rocket launcher?!

The next series of events happened so quickly that StellaD wasn’t sure exactly what had occurred,
only that she saw the armored car was slammed into by the semi, she saw the Batmobile (on fire) and
then Roberto’s car sped by in pursuit of the Batman.

Valentina frowned watching the cars go by, the explosion from the fired rocket launcher all followed
by the sounds of a crash that sounded for all the world like a fucking bomb had been dropped.

Valentina yelled at her sister, hitting the back of Jake’s seat. “GO!! WE ARE GONNA MISS
OUT!! COME ON!!!”

StellaD started the car and roared out of the their parking space, accelerating up behind Roberto,
following behind him. She gave her lights a quick flash to let him know it was her. He flashed his
parking lights while he raced to the edge of the road, slamming on the brakes at the last minute
before the front of his car would have been pitched over the hill after the armored car. StellaD pulled
her car up close beside his, jumping out and looking over her roof. She could easily see the
Batmobile, still on fire and much further away from them now. She guessed the old Batman wasn't
as fast on the brakes sometimes, which was good for them.

By that time Roberto was out of the car. He glanced over at her then followed her gaze over the hill
while the rest of their group piled out of their cars to the haunted sound of a man screaming.

“NOOOOOO!!”

*

A few seconds after the armored truck crashed, Crane got to his feet, swayed for a moment as he
tried to orient himself. He reached up to gingerly touch a bloody gash across the middle of his
forehead and he could taste blood in his mouth. He sniffed, reaching up and wiping blood from his
nose and upper lip, blinking several times to clear his head. He looked around, his vision slightly
fuzzy. His ears were ringing, but he was quickly regaining his faculties as he took in the scene. The
guards were all dead, the last of the fear gas leaking out into the night from the doors at the back of
the truck, which had been forced open with the crash.

He felt something in his hand and looked down. Crane smiled in surprise; he still had the keys to
Harley’s cuffs.

Crane turned to see Harley was lying on her side, blood staining her face, smeared across her lips,
chin, and hair. One hand was still attached to the cuff, pulled at an awkward angle still attached to
the metal pole she had been cuffed to. He hurried over to her and dropped down to check her pulse,
letting out a breath he didn’t realize he had been holding. Harleen was alive. He gently pushed her hair out of the way to see a long cut that ran from the edge of her hairline to her temple, shallow, but it seemed to be the source of the blood on her face.

“My poor Lady,” Crane said softly. “Let’s us get you home where you belong and I shall nurse you back to health my dear.”

He frowned as he checked her arm that was still cuffed to the truck, but it didn’t seem to be broken, though the skin on her wrist was torn and bloody. Otherwise she seemed intact, though he was sure she had a concussion—as he knew that he had as well. Crane worked quickly not sure how much time he had, but he knew he had to work swiftly to get her free and to get away from the crash with her before whoever attacked them showed up. He uncuffed her, picking her up and propping her enough that he could recuff her hands in front of her. He checked to make sure she couldn’t easily get free. He began to reach for the mask, but then stopped, his fingers inches from the buckles. He frowned, then checked his pockets for the syringe he had been carrying. Crane smiled in relief. The syringe had survived the crash!

“Ah, good luck seems to be with the Scarecrow tonight.” His lips twitched in a crooked grin, looking at the liquid still safe in the syringe.

He pulled the plastic cover off the end of the needle before he leaned forward, piercing her skin with the needle before pushing down on the plunger. He tossed the syringe then examined the mask covering her mouth. He thought again about removing it now that he was sure the drug in her system would keep her calm, but decided to leave it on her. He didn’t want her waking and calling for help, or biting him, even with the drug and the fear gas pumping through her system. Harleen was devilishly stubborn and strong willed, two things he liked about her very much. Additionally, with the chemical changes of her recent evolution he didn’t have any idea how she would react. Better safe than sorry, he decided.

Crane lifted her up, and carefully carried her out of the truck. Once he was outside of the truck he tossed her over his shoulder. Sparing a glance up toward the road he swiftly vanished into the park’s woods.

* 

Harley regained consciousness only a few seconds later. The sedative that Crane had given her wasn’t strong, but rather it was supposed to be just enough to make her relax. She woke confused. She had been dreaming she thought, dreaming of Jack. Her husband had smiled at her, his green hair kept falling loose, framing his face and he continued to push his fingers through his hair, brushing it back. Her fingers itched to run through his hair, to feel the thick silk of his locks, to smell him, to feel him, taste his skin. He looked over at her, his blue eyes bright, his red lipped smile spreading across his pale face. He pulled his tie lose and the sound of the cloth sliding against the fabric of his collar made her shiver. She enjoyed that sound...He took a step toward her, slowly undoing the buttons of his shirt exposing more and more of his pale, lean-muscled chest. Harley felt her heart beating quickly. She licked her lips, but oddly, she tasted blood.

She reached up to touch her nose and her fingers came back bloody. Harley frowned in confusion, looking up again at Jack, who was now covered in blood.

Harley gasped. “Puddin?”

He smiled at her and continued to speak to her, continuing to walk closer, removing his shirt. She could see wounds criss-crossing his body. His voice sounded odd, muffled. She couldn’t understand the words he was saying. It was almost like they were speaking underwater. She couldn’t focus.
Just when Jack was within reach of her, she put out a hand to touch him when his chest suddenly exploded in a burst of blood and flesh, a bullet, bright silver, burst through his chest. Harley began to scream when she heard another voice...Harleen’s voice.

Harleen screamed. “WAKE UP HARLEY!! WAKE UP NOW!”

* 

Harley jerked back to consciousness, her blue eyes wide and frantically rolling in their sockets. She blinked, but her vision refused to focus. Everything was bouncing and shifting in a way that made her head hurt and spin slightly. She felt nauseous and her entire body ached, but she couldn’t recall why. She tasted blood in her mouth, drying on her lips. She frowned, could feel the leather of the mask on her face rubbing against the skin of her cheeks, chin, burning where it had rubbed against her skin. The thing smelled of sickness, fear, but for a moment she couldn’t recall why she was wearing it or what had happened to bring her here—wherever here was. The nausea grew worse as she bounced against someone’s shoulder, all of which confused her more. As Harley tried to look around and focus her vision, she saw shadows all around her, darkness so deep she was scared she would become lost in it, lose herself and never been found as the darkness swallowed her up whole. The shadows began to move and shift along with the bouncing she was experiencing, morphing into nightmare shapes, claws, teeth, hideous faces that moved in and out of the shadows, at once becoming visible before they were swallowed again by the shadows. Harley’s eyes widened as the fear coursed through her, her heart pumping fast. She wanted to scream, but she couldn’t seem to gather enough effort or air to scream.

“You need to fight Harley...you need to get away from him or you’ll never see your puddin again.”

The voice startled her out of her building panic. She knew that voice...it was in her head...a voice she hated, but also had learned to trust...Harleen.

Harley whispered, her voice dry, small and strained behind her mask. “Puddin...my Jack...my Joker…”

Everything came rushing back to her. She knew what had happened; a crash...Joker...he had come for her...she just knew it, it had to have been him. But then she recalled...Crane!

Harley snarled behind her mask.

She began to fight and twist, trying to get free. Her hands were cuffed, but her legs weren't. Though her position was awkward, she began to struggle. Harley swiftly twisted her legs trying to bring her right leg up in order to force her knee into his chest or face while at the same time she reached down with her cuffed hands, grabbing a handful of his shirt, jacket and slacks, whatever she could get a hold of and pulled with all her strength. Her position wasn’t very stable and it didn’t give her enough balance or space to move, but Harley’s sudden shift brought her thigh up under Crane’s chin, knocking the surprised doctor’s head back.

Crane was so focused on making his way quickly through the dark park that he wasn’t paying attention to the shift in Harley’s body that would have told him she was no longer unconscious. When she moved, he was caught by surprise, letting out a startled grunt and stumbled, but he didn’t fall right away. He struggled to keep her steady on his shoulder.

“Harleen! Stop!” Crane hissed in a panicked whisper, but his captive yanked on the back of his jacket and pants at the same time.

Crane cursed as Harley’s shifting weight and her struggling made him stumble again. His foot came
into contact with a rock, branch, something he couldn't see in the dark, pitching him forward, sending both him and Harley crashing to the ground.

Harley rolled away from Crane with a gasp, slamming up against a tree. The air wasn’t completely knocked from her lungs, but it was enough to stun her slightly along with her other injuries. She struggled to push herself to her feet, stumbling back and leaning against the tree when her eyes widened in terror. Crane stood up, but it wasn’t Crane she saw; it was something else entirely. He was too tall, too thin, his arms and fingers elongated in front of her. Where his face should be was blackness, oily, shifting features, a mouth too wide filled with razor sharp teeth, the eyes long, narrow slits. The shadows around him shifted too, twisting creatures that seemed to be waiting for him to command them.

Harley’s chin trembled and she pressed herself back against the tree.

Crane stood up with a slight groan, rubbing his hip. He turned to see Harleen pressed against a tree. Her blue eyes behind her mask were wide and looked feverish.

He smiled. “My Lady, come to me.”

He reached out for her, walking toward her.

Harley was so terrified she was rooted to the spot.

Harleen whispered to her. “Harley...it’s not there, that isn’t what you are seeing...it’s Crane...you can see him...”

Harley, her voice trembling, whispered. “I can’t…”

“You can...you have to...for him...for your puddin...see Crane...for Joker…” Harleen pressed.

Harley screwed her eyes closed, hissing to herself. “See him...see Crane...please.”

When she opened her eyes again, the rest of the creature was still there, but now she could see Crane’s face surrounded by the oily darkness.

Harley inhaled unsteadily and narrowed her eyes.

Crane saw the expression in her eyes change from fear to something else. He frowned, confused. She should have been so full of sedative and fear gas that she shouldn’t be able to...he didn’t get a chance to finish his thought before Harley moved.

Harley screamed behind her mask and charged him, but at the last second before she would have slammed into his body, she pulled up and did a little hop, her right leg coming up for a hard snap kick, her foot connecting with Crane’s chest.

Crane gasped in pain as the kick knocked the air from his lungs as well as pushing him back several steps. Crane coughed, his hand going to his chest.

Harley lost her slip on shoe when she kicked Crane. She kicked her other shoe off so that she was barefoot, her eyes blazing with hatred.

Crane narrowed his eyes. “Harleen, you don’t want to fight me. You are my Lady, remember.”

“I don’t belong to you! I don’t belong to anyone but myself,” she hissed, her voice muffled behind the mask.
Crane smiled. “You know that isn’t true my dear, you belong to me. You were always meant to be mine.”

Harley snarled. “Never!”

She rushed him again, wrapping her hands around each other forming one fist and swung her hands upward, the cuffs cutting into her skin. Crane wasn’t fast enough, unprepared for fury and speed. Her fists connected with his chin, knocking him backwards again. He hit a tree, but he rolled around the trunk disappearing out of her sight behind it.

Harley looked around in confusion. The shadows that had been moving and shifting along the edges of her vision seemed to swallow him whole, while the trees and bushes took on strange shapes. They seemed to move, shifting, stalking like monsters ready to pounce. She whipped her head around trying to find her foe, at the same time trying to keep the monsters that seemed to only pop into existence at the edges of her vision in sight. But the darkness that pressed in on Harley was almost complete despite the ambient glow coming from the lights outside the park and the various buildings that ran along the outside of the park that had given the wooded park some semblance of light only moments before.

She started to shiver as the fear toxin that still moved to her system began to reassert its control over her.

Crane purred, his voice coming from nowhere and everywhere. “Now, now my Lady Crow, this is really unbecoming of you...you are mine. You know you are mine...from the moment we met in Arkham, you have belonged to me...I just simply need to finish what I started there and then your transformation will be complete.” Crane’s voice lowered a half-octave and seemed to possess a whispering echo in the darkness. “You will be whole, you will be as you should be, don’t fight my dear...just come home…come home.”

Harley twisted around, her heart pounding in her chest until it hurt while she tried desperately to see him before he hurt her. She couldn’t figure out where he was, where his voice was coming from and the shifting monsters at the corners of her vision continued to move closer, the sounds of shuffles and whispers only adding to her building fear. She turned fully around just as Crane formed out of the shadows. He moved surprisingly quickly, his fist snapping out to catch Harley in the masked cheek, his knuckles leaving a small cut on her face. She gasped in pain, stumbling back bringing her cuffed hands up to her face. She could feel the bruise forming where he had hit her, followed by the sticky wetness of fresh blood. The mask burned against her skin where it had cut into her from the impact. Crane melted back into the inky darkness again.

Crane chuckled. “I really do hate to do this Harleen, my Lady Crow, but you really are not leaving me much of a choice.”

Harley spun around again, trying to lay eyes on the mad doctor, but the shadows were moving, shifting confusing in their roiling chaos. She was sure she could see “things” moving in the darkness, avoiding her direct gaze, but they were there, she was sure of it, terrifying things moving just out of her sight. Her eyes darted everywhere, but she couldn’t find him again. Panic was setting in and her heart was beating loud enough that she could hear the beat and rush in her ears, pounding, pounding, pounding...

Harleen’s voice whispered in her head. “Harley, come on, you can do this...don’t let him win...don’t let him win...don’t let him take you from Joker...”

Harley spun around just as Crane came out of the darkness behind her, surging toward her, the darkness washing away from him so that she could see him clearly. She snarled, bringing her cuffed
hands up to her chest, throwing herself at him, slamming her entire body into him shoulder first. The
sudden force of Harley’s weight slamming into him knocked Crane off his feet with Harley on top of
him. Crane grabbed at her, both of them dropping to the ground. Harley snarled, spitting like a cat as
she twisted herself around, reaching for his face. She wanted to hurt him, wanted to make him
scared. She reached up with both hands and clawed at his face with her fingernails, struggling with
her cuffed hands to hurt him in any way she could. Harley’s nails broke his skin, digging deep into
his flesh. She felt the warmth of blood against her fingers and smiled with vicious glee.

Crane cried out in surprise as Harley’s fingers ripped across his cheek, gouging and tearing. He
grabbed her upper arms, his fingers digging in painfully as he tried to yank her back. When that
didn’t work, Crane slammed his forehead against hers.

Harley gasped in shock and pain and the wave of dizziness that dazed her allowed Crane to push her
off. He got to his feet, his hand going to his face. He hissed in pain and his hand came back bloody.
Harley had left three deep marks down each of his cheeks.

Crane glared down at Harley who was struggling to her feet, gasping in pain, blood dripping from
her nose and her now split upper lip. Crane felt his control slipping, his anger building. Why couldn’t
she just cooperate?! Why couldn’t she just see that being with him was for the best?! Crane’s body
shook with his barely contained rage before he kicked her hard in the side. Harley cried out in pain,
falling back down to her side.

“You will learn your place!!” he snarled. “You will be mine!! It’s meant to be! You are to be the
Lady Crow to my Scarecrow!!” Spittle flew from Crane’s mouth, his rage spilling over though he
kept his tone tight and controlled. He didn’t want their fight to be heard by whoever had caused the
crash.

Harley reached out with her cuffed hands, wrapping them around his ankle. She was trying to hurt
him in any way that she could, then pulled with all her strength surprising the thin man when she
almost succeeded in yanking him off his feet.

Crane hissed, kicking himself free before he dropped down on her. The two of them struggled,
Harley kicking and snarling behind her mask while trying to break free of his grip. Crane pulled back
and hit her across the face again. The thick leather once more burned where it rubbed against her
face, his fist causing her vision to spin. The taste of blood in her mouth was sharp, but she didn’t top
fighting him. Crane pushed himself up, straddling her. He grabbed her cuffed hands and forced her
arms over her head. He adjusted his position pushing himself up so that he sat on her chest,
straddling her, cutting off her air. Harley gasped; his weight against her chest hurt, all of it hurt. She
struggled to pull air into her lungs, but Crane was pressing his weight down on her, holding her in
place.

Crane wrapped one hand around her throat holding her down, his other hand holding the chain
between her cuffed wrists. Harley tried to whip her body back and forth to break free, but she didn’t
have enough leverage and she was worn down. She couldn’t get a full breath of air between him and
the mask, the beating she had already taken, all of it conspired to bring her down. She could feel
tears burning her eyes, but she fought against crying. She didn’t want Crane to see her break, didn’t
want him to win, but the tears ran down the sides of her face regardless of her struggles.

Crane’s fingers pressed against her throat, making her already difficult breathing even more of a
struggle. He hissed as he held her down. “Why are you fighting me??!!”

He looked at her with genuine confusion mixed with his anger.

Harley choked, her breath wheezy. She looked up at Crane and her eyes widened. With her defenses
failing, Crane’s fear toxin was taking over once more. She stared in horror as Crane’s face melted, twisting and morphing into more and more monstrous forms. Tears flowed down the sides of Harley’s face, tears of fear and pain...

Harleen kept screaming at her in her head to fight, to not let him win.

Harley squeezed her eyes shut tight, listening to Harleen’s voice. She couldn’t let Crane win, she could die here or let him take her because she needed to get back to her puddin. She knew, deep in her heart, she knew if she failed here, she would never see Jack again. Harley swung her hips to the side, pushing Crane up. The movement startled him so much that he didn’t react in time before Harley--her gymnastic skills giving her the strength and flexibility--twisted her entire body, breaking Crane’s hold on her throat and tossing him off of her. She rolled away from him with a glancing kick to his temple and pushed herself up to her feet to break into a run. She ran as fast as she could into the devouring shadows.

Crane wobbled to his feet just in time to see her disappear into the darkness of the park with a hand held to his head. He wanted to yell, to scream her name, to demand that she come back, but he knew that would only draw the police or whoever had attacked the caravan to them. He hissed in frustration and took off after her.

*  

Joker took a step back, his eyes wild. He continued to stare into the back of the truck as if somehow she would suddenly be there, that he had simply missed her somehow. But Harley didn’t appear; the truck remained empty except for the dead.

She wasn’t here...no, no, no, his Harley, his heart, his life...she had to be here, this was his chance to get her back. She had to be here!! He couldn’t fail...he couldn’t!!! Alex had lied...no...no. Joker shook himself, grabbing his head in agony, stumbling back from the truck. No, no, something was wrong, she was here...somewhere. He couldn’t lose her again, not now, not like this...he needed Harley. She needed him.

Joker held his head as if he were trying to prevent the thoughts that ran rampant through his mind from blasting his head apart. Voices were screaming in his mind, whispers that sounded like Bruce, like his father, hissing at him. “You failed her. You failed her again. You always were a failure, always the broken one, always causing trouble. No one wanted you, no one loves you. She won’t love you after this, after you let them get her...you let the Batman take her. You let the Batman take the only thing that mattered to you. The Batman will take, take, take until there is nothing left of you, of what you love...nothing for you, little Jack.”

Joker squeezed his eyes shut as if he were in pain, his voice coming out in a agonized howl. “NOOOOoo!!”

Frost reached out and hesitantly touched Joker’s shoulder. “Boss? Maybe she wandered into the woods. If she has a concussion, she might be disoriented...she...”

Frost didn’t finish. He heard voices. The big man turned to see the shadows of eight people, highlighted by headlights, coming down the hillside toward them. Frost felt a coldness in the pit of his stomach. He knew, without a doubt, these were not their people.

“Boss! We gotta move!” Frost was frantic.

Joker turned around and grabbed Frost’s arm, his grip tight as the voices in his head began a buzz of sound that suddenly receded when he saw the shadows coming towards them. He frowned and Frost
hissed. “They ain’t ours Boss.”

Joker smiled glancing toward the shadows coming towards them.

Frost tried again. “I don’t know who they are, but we need to move Boss, now.”

Joker smiled watching the shadows. “I need to hurt someone.”

Frost frowned in confusion, but then it was too late. The group was on top of them.

Roberto, holding his gun loosely in one hand, was nearly down the hill. The lights that had been making it difficult to see now gave way to more shadows, but he could see the two men standing by the armored car that was lying on its side; it’s headlights were dim and shone into the woods of the park. Roberto frowned. He could have sworn one of two people down there had green hair. He couldn’t quite put his finger on what it was about green hair that was nagging him, and there was something about the guy, his pale skin and his stance, but at the moment the reason why green hair should be important was eluding him.

Roberto held his weapon up. “Step away from the truck,” he yelled.

The green-haired man put his hands up. “Oh, now who might you be? And I should warn you, I’m having a really bad night.”

Roberto was slightly confused by what was going on. This simple crash and grab wasn’t going as planned and it wasn’t just making him annoyed. In fact, it was weirding him out a bit. Plus, he wasn’t sure how long they had before Batman showed up; he wanted to get the bitch that Falcone had sent them for and get out of here.

“Where’s the woman?” he yelled.

The green-haired man narrowed his eyes. “Woman? Who might you be looking for friend?”

Roberto’s gut told him not to answer, but his mouth wasn’t listening. “We want that Harley Quinn chick--you give her to us, we’ll let you walk away.”

A laugh was what answered Roberto’s offer. “Well I have bad news, she isn’t here. Why are you lot after her?”

Again Roberto’s gut moved slower that his mouth. “Look buddy, Carmine Falcone wants her.”

The other man’s voice became softer, deadlier. “You don’t say.”

Roberto gestured with the gun. “You best get out of the way before you get yourself hurt.”

The pale man snickered. “Did you hear that Frosty. We might get hurt.”

Frost paled, but said nothing in reply.

StellaD came up alongside Roberto with the others, but Valentina rushed forward, looking for a fight.

“He said get away from there ya stronzo!!” Valentina grinned as she approached the pair. Unlike the others, Valentina didn’t carry a gun. She didn’t like the distance, the sterile kill. She liked to be up close and personal when she took someone down.

Joker laughed. “Asshole? Me? You just met me. People usually wait a few minutes before calling me
an asshole, isn’t that right Frost.” (Frost just grunted.) “I think the stronza is you my friend, because I’m just here to get my girl and your little group is getting in my way.”

Luigi stopped short. “Did he just say he was here for his girl?”

Jake hissed. “Fuck me--that’s the Joker.”

Roberto turned to look at Jake, his eyes wide, a smile slowly showing. “You sure?”

Jake nodded. “Green hair, pale, red lips...fuck man, that’s him.”

Roberto grinned looking at each of his people. “Then we take him alive.”


“Can’t you see how happy The Roman would be with us if we brought him not just that bitch Harley Quinn, but the Joker too?” Roberto was practically giddy with the idea of having Falcone pleased with him, giving his Boss the best gift ever.

Giulia answered with a shake of her head. “I don’t know man…”

Roberto grinned. “No guns. I want him alive.”

Luigi mumbled. “This is a bad idea.”

Roberto turned, growling at the younger man. “Luigi, shut the fuck up.”

Valentina grinned happily. “Can I beat the shit out of him?”

“You can beat him as much as you like; just keep him alive.” Roberto smiled.

Valentina let out a yell half bloodthirsty cry, half gasp of joy as she went racing down that last few feet to meet Joker. Her companions decided to let the bruiser of a woman have her fun before they jumped in.

Joker stood still, waiting for the large woman with a wide smile across his face, his hands out at his side, loose, ready. He shook his arms a little, loosening them up, a giggle low on his breath. Once she was within range, Valentina swung her fist at him. Joker easily ducked, Valentina practically broadcasting her moves over a loudspeaker. He dropped to a knee, following that move by bringing his open palm up for a hard strike to the large, bald woman, catching her in the side of the knee. The blow knocked her off balance, pain radiating from the impact.

She cried out in surprised pain, just as Joker, in one smooth movement, was on his feet again standing in front of her and snapped his arm out. He grabbed her by her jaw and jammed his long fingers into her mouth to grasp her front bottom teeth, his thumb pressing painfully into the soft flesh under her chin. The move surprised her enough that she didn’t react quickly enough to stop Joker from using her jaw like a handle. Valentina’s eyes widened in surprise at the sudden pain. Joker yanked her forward using her jaw to fling her to the ground.

Valentina’s face hit the ground hard enough that her nose broke with a loud crunch. Her gasp came out more as a gargle, blood rushing from her nose. Joker dropped down on her back, wrapping both hands around her bald head and began to smash her face into the ground in a quick series of hard thrusts. The others yelled, rushing down the hill toward Joker and Frost. Joker laughed, getting his feet, his arms out as if he were about to embrace them. Frost pulled his weapon, but he was a half second too slow before Stefano barreled into him, the two men going down to the ground, rolling
into the shadows. Frost rolled on top of Stephano, getting the upper hand for just a second and also realizing in that same moment that he had lost his gun in the struggle.

Frost grabbed the slimmer man by the throat, pushing himself up to his knee while at the same time choking Stefano, but just as he was about to stand, Stefano delivered a quick, hard snap of his fist, catching Frost in the throat. Frost gasped in pain, automatically grabbing for his throat, and stumbled off the gangster. Stefano surged to his feet, grabbing a hold of Frost by the front of his suit. Frost, still coughing, grabbed hold of Stefano and the two men spun in a circle, locked together.

* 

Joker let out a bright, manic giggle, let a shiver run through his body and down his arms, glancing down once at Valentina’s now still form. “Oh that felt good!! A good way for me to work out my pain.”

Roberto, who was still a few steps away, hissed. “Someone get him!! Come on you assholes!”

Little Mario with Giulia and Jake, rushed down the hillside cutting the short distance quickly as they headed straight for Joker. Jake broke off to help Stefano while Luigi rushed to fill Jake’s spot next to Giulia. At the last second Giulia stepped ahead of the others, pulling a knife just before she was right on Joker. Joker saw the glint of metal reflecting light in the woman’s hand. Giulia led with the knife hoping to catch Joker by surprise with a fast, a quick stab to the chest or stomach that would make beating him easy after that. A good stab wound always put the odds of a fight in her favor. But when she stepped closer, she saw the Joker wink at her just before he moved, a graceful almost dance like maneuver, sliding out of the way of her extended arm. He easily grabbed her arm with both of his hands and spun Giulia around, twisting her arm up so that her knife was facing her. He forced her back a few steps before he flung the woman into Luigi. The man gasped when she hit him, both of them tumbling backwards.

Luigi grabbed Giulia’s shoulders tossing her out of the way before pulled his own knife. He thrust the weapon at Joker, the tip of his knife nicking the clown’s left cheek, leaving a thin, bloody line. Joker laughed and lashed out with his fist, caught Luigi across the chin. Luigi gasped in pain, but he followed with his own swing, landing a solid hit across Joker’s right cheek, snapping the clown’s head to the side. Joker snarled, responding by bringing his right elbow up for a hard crack to Luigi’s chin.

Giulia rushed forward, trying again to stab Joker. She came in low, trying to cut him across his stomach, but Joker responded by kicking her hard in the thigh with a pivot of his hips and throwing his weight behind the attack, then lunged toward her, using his elbow to hit her across the throat and chin. Giulia hissed as pain blossomed across her chin and throat. Joker turned his attention back toward Luigi, kicking the gangster in the side of his leg with his knee while slamming his elbow down on Luigi’s shoulder. Giulia tried to stab him again while he was turned away from her, but Joker snapped around, catching her from the corner of his eye. He lunged forward, dropping to a knee at the same time that he grabbed her around her waist throwing her and himself to the ground. Giulia hit hard enough that the air was knocked from her lungs in a burst of air. She gasped in pain, struggling to catch her breath.

Joker sprang to his feet, a bloody grin on his face, twisting around just in time to catch Luigi who slashed at him. Joker brought his right arm up, the blade cutting through his suit and into the flesh of his forearm, though he didn’t react to the pain. Instead he swung his fist to smash Luigi across the face with a hard right hook followed by a left hook that sent the man sprawling to the grass.

Giulia had regained her feet and lunged with her knife. Joker spun just in time to catch her arm with both hands in a vice-like grip. He grinned at her, his blue eyes too bright in his pale, blood spattered
“I really appreciate the dance my darling, but I have eyes for only one girl.” Joker spun her before he flung her to the ground, never letting go of her arm, and falling on top of her. He forced her hand back. Giulia’s eyes widened in horror. She brought her other hand up, grabbing at Joker’s face, before she tried to grab his arm as he forced the knife back.

Joker leaned in close. “Say nighty nighty.” He giggled before he forced the knife through her eye. Giulia screamed in agony. Joker let go of her arm and with his fist the slammed the blade the rest of the way into her eye socket, cutting off her screams.

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Frost gasped, blood gushing from his nose. He glared at Stefano, whose nose was also bleeding freely and one eye was already swelling shut. Frost brought his foot up, kicking the other man in the chest, but Stefano only stumbled back a step. He lunged toward his opponent, his fist catching Frost across the jaw, following it with a hard backhanded fist that snapped Frost’s head to the side. Frost gasped, but kept his footing, grabbing Stefano’s next swing, holding the man’s arm while he punched the man in the face with three very quick punches. Stefano pulled himself free to kick Frost in the chest, followed by a right hook.

Frost stumbled, blood covering his face when his back hit against another man.

Jake wrapped his arms around Frost, pinning him as Stefano grinned.

“Roberto didn’t say anything about you coming in alive; just Joker.”

Frost cursed.

*  
Joker turned his attention to Little Mario who had finally joined his friends. The man was big, but after seeing how big Bane could get, Joker wasn’t impressed. His face, teeth, and smile were a bloody mess; drops of blood were dripping from his chin.

He giggled. “Well, how did you get here? Did someone leave your cage open?”

Little Mario snarled and rushed Joker.

Joker threw a punch, but the big man twisted his torso to take the strike to his shoulder. Joker’s eyes widened in surprise followed by a laugh as Mario grabbed him, lifting him off his feet.

Joker’s surprise turned into a bright laugh. “Oh, I guess you aren’t as stupid as you look!!!”

He brought his hands down on Mario’s arm trying to break the big man’s hold on him while Mario began to squeeze his throat. Joker’s smile never faltered while he struggled for breath, blood running more freely down his lips and chin. Mario yanked Joker close, slammed his forehead against Joker’s with a hard ‘thwack.’ Joker’s blinked, slightly stunned. He didn’t get his arms up in time to block Mario from punching him in the face; a fresh bout of blood burst from his nose. Joker giggled manically as Mario threw him to the ground.

Joker gasped, but started to push himself up on his hands and knees. Mario grabbed him, beginning to yank Joker to his feet, but the pale man grabbed two handfuls of grass and slightly muddy dirt and threw it into Mario’s face. The big man let out a roar, his hands going to his face. Joker chuckled manically, slamming his fists into Mario’s gut several times, driving the big man back when suddenly
a shot rang out.

Joker gasped in surprise more than pain as something hard and fast ripped through his right thigh in a burst of blood. Joker fell to the ground, his right leg giving out. He hit the grass hard, landing on his shoulder. He turned to look at his leg, at the same time seeing the man he had fought, Luigi, with a .22 in his hand, staring at him with a bloody face and wide, scared eyes.

Joker quickly turned back to Mario.

Mario chuckled. “Ora sei mio, pagliaccio.”

That was when everyone heard a roar.

Roberto turned to see a giant on the rise behind them. There was no other word to describe the shadow that was swiftly bearing down on them; it was a monster Roberto thought in shock. Three--no five times bigger than Little Mario and it was moving fast when the creature suddenly launched itself into the air with a roar, fists raised over its head.

Roberto pushed StellaD away from him just as the monster landed on him, crushing him with a shattering of bone and organs, killing him in an instant. StellaD screamed, but Bane simply backhanded her with his fist, breaking her neck and skull at the same time.

Racing down the hill behind Bane came Alex, Jason, Bea, and Agatha, all armed, with Bea holding a ball of fire in one hand.

Jason yelled. “JOKER!!”

He fired his weapon and several shots hit Mario in the back, ripping out through the man's chest. Joker threw his arms over his head, blood showering down on him before he rolled quickly out of the way as Little Mario fell like a dead tree.

Luigi turned his weapon on Jason, but before he could fire off a shot, a green ball of fire splashed against him. Luigi screamed as the hellish green fire consumed his flesh swiftly. Bea grinned in satisfaction.

Jake threw Frost to the ground and Stefano turned to run, with Jake following, but they didn’t move quickly enough before Agatha yelled. “Not so fast!!”

Two gunshots rang out, the two men falling to the ground for the last time.

Alex dropped down next to Joker. “Fuck!! You’ve been fucking shot!”

Joker groaned, grabbing a hold of Alex. “Help me up! Harley wasn’t in the truck!”

Alex stood, his one hand grasping Joker by the arm to help him to his feet. Joker limped, his right leg throbbing, but also partly numb and refusing to let him stand on it.

Alex hissed. “Fuck me. You think she got out? Maybe she is in the fucking park somewhere?”

Joker pulled away from Alex, forcing himself to stand (with most of his weight on his left leg) though the effort caused a flesh flood of blood to seep down his wounded leg.

“We have to find her!” Joker started to limp into the darkness.

Alex scowled with a shake of his head. “Fuck, fuck, fuck,” he muttered taking off after Joker.
Harley was lost.

The drugs continued to flow and linger in her system. Darkness and the shadows shifted around her, moved and undulated like living creatures. Sounds echoed around her, whispered voices, and Harleen continued to yell at her to keep moving. Sometimes she thought she heard her puddin, other times she was terrified when she thought she heard her stepfather yelling at her, all mixed with the soft whispers of Crane’s voice calling her ‘Lady Crow’ and ‘my dear one.’

Harley shivered. The night was cold and her prison outfit was thin; her bare feet felt frozen and every part of her was beginning to ache. Her mouth tasted like blood and her lips hurt. She kept worrying with her tongue at a large split in her lower lip.

Her head felt like it was spinning slightly, quick movements made her dizzy, and everything seemed to wobble slightly. While she moved, trying to keep up a run, the tree branches reached for her, pulling and tugging at her hair, tearing holes and rips in her clothing. She ran barefoot through the park, that to her still drug-rattled mind, looked like the vast, dark forest from a fairy tale, with a hideous monster on her heels. The only thing that Harley could keep straight in her mind was her prince, her lover, her friend... Jack...Joker...her puddin. She did her best to focus on him as she ran while tears that she wasn’t aware of ran down her cheeks, making her face even colder when suddenly her cold, wounded feet slipped on something and she stumbled forward, unable to stop herself with her hands cuffed. She tumbled headfirst down a hill. It felt as if she hit every rock on the way down until she plunged into ice cold water.

Harley went under the surface of the frigid water that seemed to swallow her. The mask felt like it was suctioned to her face, cutting off what air she had. The cold water surrounded her, swallowed her whole. She wanted to scream, but bit down hard, catching her lips. The water was black and she couldn’t see a thing for a heartbeat, but as she struggled, the drugs in her system showed her things lurking in the water--nothing concrete, just more shadows moving in the water around her. Harley’s eyes widened in panic, fear pumping through her hot and fast, but just when she was feeling that pressure building in her lungs, her body starving for air, begging her to open her mouth, she burst to the surface gasping in lungfuls of air. She coughed and sputtered, standing up, only to realize that the water only came up to her chest.

She couldn’t see much in the dark, but she thought she saw the edge of the lake she had fallen into and slowly trudged her way toward the shore, shivering uncontrollably. She dropped to her knees, struggling to get her breathing under control. Now her senses were filled with the scent of wet leather when she heard more voices, moving closer to her.

“Well, well, what have we here?”

Harley looked up, her wet hair falling into her eyes, combined with the drugs, made it difficult for her to see who or what was approaching her. At first they looked like long, too-thin shadows, but as they came closer the shadows shortened into more human shapes.

She thought she saw a man...no...two men? And a woman, forming out of the darkness. She frowned, confused and not trusting her eyes.

The man who approached her was dressed in grimy clothing--several layers of grimy clothes. His hair was dirty blond, half of it shaved away, the rest matted to his head. He wore a thin, wispy mustache and spotty whiskers spread across his face. He was dirty and missing two front teeth. He grinned, dropping down in a crouch beside her. Harley scrambled back a step or two away from him and her blue eyes were rounded in fear and pain, her pupils dilated.

He looked from Harley to the other two people with him. “Thought we heard something unusual. Hey my friends, look what the old lake gave us! A new friend.” The man who spoke tilted his head gazing at the woman on her knees, her cuffed hands pressed against her shivering body. She glared at him through the thick locks of her wet blonde hair sticking to her face.

The man chuckled. “Look, she even comes muzzled and cuffed! We are going to have fun with you, ain’t we Hardwood? Chelsea?”

The other two laughed. “Sure thing Bone.” Hardwood snickered and elbowed his companion. Chelsea laughed. “Hey, can I have first try? Last time it was Hardwood!”

Bone stood. “Get her up and let’s take her back to our camp and sure Chelsea, you get first go.”

Harleen hissed in Harley’s mind. “Kill them! They are monsters, here to take you away like Crane. They want to hurt you, keep you away from your puddin. They don’t want you to ever see him again. We can’t let them keep us from our Joker.”

Hardwood approached Harley first.

Harley was on her feet, moving quickly despite the cold, slippery mud, and her already weakened condition. Her rage burned through her, hot and savage. She kicked Hardwood as hard as she could in the middle of the man’s chest.

“Get away from me!!” Harley screamed behind her mask, her voice weak, rough, and with angry tears in her eyes. She kicked him again, hitting the man hard in the chest with her foot, hard enough that he was gasping and stumbling back away from her. The woman named Chelsea had moved as well, coming up on Harley’s side rather than a frontal assault while Harley’s attention was on Hardwood. Chelsea darted forward quickly, trying to get close enough to wrap her arms around Harley’s already restricted arms. Harley saw movement from the corner or her eye, a dark shadow darting behind her. Harley put all her power into throwing herself backwards into a mid-air somersault and at the same time her legs snap out, catching Chelsea in the face with her feet.

Harley landed easily despite the slippery surface of the mud. Bone let out an angry cry, rushing toward Harley. Harley, her hands pressed against her chest, threw herself sideways into a handless cartwheel, using her legs to smash the man in the face. Bone stumbled back with a pained grunt.

Harley landed, spun around, brought her elbows up, using her left elbow to smash Bone in the face when he tried to grab her again. She broke the man’s nose with a loud snap followed by the man’s almost hysterical scream.

Harley spun around just as Chelsea tried again to grab her. Harley grabbed the filthy woman by her chin, wrapping the fingers of one cuffed hand around the woman’s jaw. Harley pulled and pivoted at her hip to throw Chelsea forward and to the ground, spun around to use her balled hands to slam down in the middle of Chelsea’s back. Harley screamed, a savage almost mindless cry of rage, dropping down on top of the downed woman to continue beating at Chelsea with all her strength. Harley slammed her balled hands down on the woman’s head, hitting the side of her face with both fists and the metal cuffs until her hands became covered with both her own blood from the cuffs cutting into her wrists, and Chelsea’s blood. The cuffs split the woman’s cheek, shredding skin while Harley’s continued pounding at the woman’s cheekbone, eye socket and jaw.

Bone yelled. “You BITCH!”

He raced toward her, his face covered in blood, but Harley jumped up just as Bone was behind her. She again used her elbow to slam it back into Bone’s face. She quickly spun around him to bring her
hands up and over the man’s head. She yanked back with all her strength and the chain between her cuffs cut into the man’s throat. Harley screamed behind her mask while Bone’s hands reached back trying to grab her, but switched tactics and struggled to yank on the chain that was cutting off his air. Harley snarled, pulling back until her muscles trembled, holding Bone against her.

The man kicked and fought, but Harley was angrier, mad with rage and fear, overpowering the man until he finally went still.

Harley dropped him and stepped back.

She heard a noise and turned to see Hardwood, staring at her with wide eyes. He turned and started to run, but Harley hissed, racing after him. He didn’t get far before Harley was on him. She leaped high into the air to land on Hardwood’s shoulders, wrapping her cuffs under his chin and pulling up with a grunt of effort. She leaned down, her voice frightening behind the mask.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Harley purred with savage delight.

She pulled back again with all her strength, the chain of her cuffs cutting into his jaw as she forced his head up and back. Hardwood stumbled around for a few seconds, reaching up until he finally managed to get a hold of her. He fell forward a bit, but he pulled her off of him, throwing her over his head. Harley rolled off, but landed on her feet. Hardwood stood up just as Harley kicked out, her foot coming up to catch him in the throat with enough force that she broke his adam’s apple. The man choked and stumbled, falling to his knees.

Harley let out a muffled scream, throwing herself at him, knocking him flat on his back. She straddled the man and began to beat him in the face with her joined, balled fists, screaming and pounding his face, over and over again until she only saw a red haze, aware of nothing around her as she continued to beat on the man’s face until there was nothing recognizable, cutting her hands on bone and teeth, but even then she didn’t stop.

* 

Joker stopped and leaned against a tree, leaving a bloody handprint when he pushed away. His heart was slamming against his sternum and his breathing was shallow. He couldn’t have missed her!! She had to be here in the park somewhere, but the trees seemed too thick, as if the very trees were against him, causing themselves to become thicker, the darkness heavier. He could hear his people moving behind him.

Alex’s voice was a whisper. “Anything?” he asked.

Joker shook his head. “We need to split up—we have to find her!” he ground out between clenched teeth. “We have to find her before anyone else does….”

Alex looked back the way they had come. He wasn’t sure where Batman was, but he knew the vigilante couldn’t be far behind them, and more cops had to be here soon. (He could only hope that the Irish, who were supposed to be keeping any other police busy and away from them were doing their part of the plan.)

Alex frowned. He needed to get his friend out of here before they became trapped. It wouldn’t do anyone any good if they were all arrested. “We need to fucking hurry before the Bat or more cops show up.”

Joker pushed off from the tree, ignoring Alex. His limp from the bullet wound was becoming worse. He walked a few steps (Alex looked back at the rest of the gang) when Joker stopped in mid
stride….he had heard something, he was sure of it. Picking up speed, Joker disappeared into the darkness.

Alex frowned, having not heard anything except maybe the sounds of sirens in the distance, and hurried after Joker.

*

Joker pushed his way through the park, following what he was sure were the sounds of a fight until he broke through into a clearing. He could see the city’s ambient light reflecting off the water of one of Robinson Park’s three lakes. His eyes looked over the water, and there at the side, near the edge...a figure...Then he saw her...

Joker’s eyes widened, his body began to tremble. He murmured softly, barely above a whisper. “Harley?”

His eyes focused more fully in the darkness (a gift of his acidic wrought reincarnation.) He could see her blonde hair, the way she moved. Louder he said her name, pain choking his voice. “Harley.”

Joker began to run as fast as his wounded leg would allow toward her. “HARLEY!!”

Harley had just pushed herself to her feet, leaving Hardwood dead under her, weaving a little as she stood up when she heard a familiar voice call her name through the darkness.

Harley turned toward the precious sound, the shadows at the edges of her vision still trying to get her attention, moving and shifting, but now, the fear she had been feeling started to recede as her focus zeroed in on a limping figure. The ambient glow brushed over green hair, pale skin... Joker...her puddin…he was here...he was here!

Her voice was rough and she was overcome with a mix of joy and fear that her mind was lying to her, her voice a whisper as tears spilled over to race down her cheeks under the mask. “Puddin?”

Joker lips trembled, tears cutting through the blood on his face.

“Harley…” His voice choked when he whispered her name. “My Harley…”

Harley was sobbing. “Puddin….PUDDIN!” she shouted from behind her mask.

She rushed toward him, Joker rushing toward her. Within seconds they slammed into each other's arms.

Joker wrapped his arms tight around her, lifting her off her feet. “Harley! Harley!!”

Harley sobbed, unable to speak. Her hands pinned between them, she curled into him, wrapping her legs around his waist. Joker held her close, slowly sinking to the ground, breaking down.

“Harley...my pumpkin pie...my girl.” His voice was deep with emotion as he held her tight, his face buried against her shoulder.

Sitting on his knees with Harley on his lap, Joker loosened his grip on her, reaching up to take her face between his hands, only now really seeing the mask that the Blackgate guards had strapped on her. More tears spilled over as he gazed into her eyes. “Oh Harley, what did they do to you?” His
long, bloody fingers ran over the mask until he found the buckles. He moved as quickly as he could, fighting only a little with the buckles until he had them loose. He pulled the masked gently from her face, tossing it aside.

Joker hissed, seeing the places where the leather had cut into her face.

“Oh my girl,” Joker whispered touching her face tenderly, his eyes roaming over her features, his fingers caressing her cheeks, her lips, and around her eyes. “My precious, precious girl. I’m so sorry I was late.” He brushed her hair back tenderly.

Harley’s lips trembled as she stared into his eyes. “Are you real?”

Joker smiled, brushing his fingers across her split lips. “I’m real Harley. I’m real and I’m here.”

He cupped her face, his fingers brushing along her jaw guiding her close, his eyes never leaving hers, before he kissed her.

Harley choked on her tears when his lips touched hers.

That was the moment they both heard a deep, familiar voice.

“Joker, Harley Quinn.”

They both turned to see Batman and Robin standing at the edge of the trees.
Stitches

Batman took a step closer to Joker and Harley.

He moved slowly, taking careful steps. He held his hands out, showing himself to be unarmed (though Joker had no doubt Batman was, in fact, armed, but was simply trying to show he wasn’t ready to attack, yet.) The caped vigilante moved with the caution of someone approaching a wild animal. (Joker supposed he should be flattered that Batsy recognized that he was dangerous.) Next to Batman, one step behind the dark knight, was his sidekick, Robin, who was watching with his lips held in a thin frown. The eyes behind his mask darted from Batman to Joker.

“Jok…” Batman stopped moving, his hands at his sides, and stopped himself from finishing the name. He pressed his lips together on the word ‘Joker’ before he switched to what he hoped was a name that the Joker still recognized, a name that Batman hoped was still part of Joker’s psyche. “Jack…” Batman’s tone had switched from caped crusader of Gotham to older brother. “…turn yourself in. Let me help you…” He took a breath forcing himself to think of this man before him, this Joker as Jack, not solely as the Joker, though it was difficult. Looking at the man with too pale skin, green hair, blood red lips, and manic blue eyes, all Batman saw was Joker, the man who had killed too many already, the man who had killed just now to get that woman back.

Batman’s gaze shifted to Harley. He found it was an effort to speak when his gaze settled on her. He glanced over her, seeing that she had been beaten, hurt, her hands bloody and cuffed and he found that he had little sympathy left for the good doctor. His anger at this woman was intense, this woman whom he blamed for dragging his brother so far down the rabbit hole that Jack could no longer see the top. She had twisted his broken brother into a murderer. Bruce...Batman was sure of it, sure that with the right help, Jack would have been fine...His rage at Dr. Quinzel burned in him, deep in the pit of his stomach. He wanted to hurt her. He was ashamed to admit it, but he did. He wanted her to pay for what she had done to his brother, his fragile little brother.

When he had come to see her in Blackgate there was a part of him that hoped she would abandon his brother, give Batman the fuel he needed to break her hold on Jack. Batman’s jaw clenched. She had been meant to help, but now look at Jack...he was no longer Bruce Wayne’s brother, but some mad clown...someone that Bruce didn’t know or understand. A stranger. Batman thought of their parents, of how disappointed they would be in him for not protecting Jack like he was supposed to, for letting this happen. If only Jack hadn’t been so stubborn all these years, if only Jack had listened to him, obeyed him instead of constantly testing him, pushing against him, always being so damn unpredictable, unstable...why couldn’t Jack have just been normal?!

Batman cut off his train of thought. It would do him no good to go chasing that thread of regret, hate, and anger. He needed to focus on right now because there was nothing he could do about the past, about the mistakes that were made, when he had a chance to save Jack right now. If only Batman could get him back into Arkham, get Dr. Quinzel’s hooks out of the younger man, then maybe there was a chance to save Jack Wayne. Jack could never lead a normal life now, but maybe he could live a better life Bruce hoped.

Batman pushed past his own feelings to focus on what he could do now to save his brother. He took a deep breath through his nose. This was going to be hard, but, if he could get Jack to agree to Arkham, once there, separating him from Dr. Quinzel would be easier. Not like last time--this time would be different. Bruce would be there more, help his brother on his way to recovery, but first he needed to get his brother away from his drug of choice, Harley Quinn, the former Dr. Quinzel.

“Let me help you both. Get you to Arkham to get the help you need. Maybe you can find some
semblance of a normal life Jack? You can’t keep living like this…” Batman stopped exactly halfway between the trees’ edge and his brother. He didn’t want to get too close, just in case things went sideways. Batman dropped his voice low, clearly trying to keep the conversation between the four of them.

“You are still my broth…” Batman hesitated for a second before he continued. “…my brother, let me help you. You are sick Jack, you are clearly sick and hurt. Let me help you, let me be your brother.” Batman stood still, his hands out. “Please, for our parents’ sake, you don’t need to be alone, let me get you both help. I will be there for you this time.” It was clear that these two had taken a beating tonight. Batman knew that if it came to a fight, he and Robin could probably overtake them considering the state they were in, but he hoped he could avoid an all out physical fight.

Batman watched his brother, his mask automatically changing the way he saw them in the darkness of the park and the ambient light from the city. He could hear the gentle hum of the tiny built in computer (thanks to Barb) that shifted the way his mask lenses absorbed and distributed the light, allowing him to see more clearly. It wasn’t much of a change, but it did allow him to see the discarded leather mask (he recognized it from Blackgate. The masks were used for particularly difficult patients.) He saw the wounds on his brother’s face and knuckles, the fact that Joker looked unhealthy, too thin for Jack’s slight frame, but Batman’s attention was drawn to Jack’s leg, the way he was awkwardly holding it out where he and Harley sat on the ground. There looked to be fresh blood there, soaked through the pants legs and continuing to run slowly down his brother’s leg, probably a bullet wound Batman surmised, though he was too far away to see what the injury was exactly. Batman transferred his gaze to Harley, noted that she looked to be just as broken and battered, maybe even more. She was thinner than when Batman had visited her in Blackgate, her skin grey-tinged and there was a strange light in her eyes. If he had to hazard a guess, Batman would assume she was high on something. It was clear she had been in a fight; several of her wounds did not look consistent with a car crash, but more like someone had punched her in the face. He noted that she was still handcuffed, there was evidence of fresh and dried blood on her wrists, along with ragged, painful looking wounds where the cuffs had cut into her skin.

Joker stood slowly with Harley’s help. He stared at Batman as tears slowly ran down his cheeks, cutting through the blood and revealing trails of snow white skin underneath. He wrapped an arm around Harley, holding her close to him, but, Batman noted, she was also helping him stand; Jack was favoring his other leg. Batman transferred his gaze once more to his brother’s leg...a bullet wound, now he could see it more clearly, a dark, nasty looking spot in his brother’s thigh was clearly caused by a gunshot.

Batman watched him, his eyes slightly narrowed behind his mask. He saw the wet glistening fresh blood on Jack’s leg whenever he moved in what the little light was available. His brother was hurt more than he had thought. Jack kept his hold on Harley who leaned against Jack, but her eyes were on Batman, her gaze cold. She was angry at him, maybe as angry as Batman was at her. She looked pale, drained, and on edge. For once she looked more insane than his brother...Batman closed his eyes, finding it hard to acknowledge that this man, this Joker was still his brother Jack. Joker stared at his brother for a long moment before he spoke, his voice pitched just as low. “You know big brother, it’s far too late for that--we crossed that bridge and blew it up!” He laughed softly adjusting his grip on Harley as if he were afraid she would vanish if he let go of her.

“Help me? By locking me away in that funny farm? Get me pumped full of drugs to keep me under control and compliant? Just like you always wanted--a good, quiet little brother who wouldn’t get in your way. Especially now that I know you are just as crazy as I am, but…” Joker lifted his hairless brows at his brother. “Your crazy is better than mine, isn’t it?” Joker shook his head. “Even when it comes to insanity, your brand is the more acceptable, isn’t it?” Joker’s brows lowered as he glared at Batman. “You are always trying to lock me away Brucie, like I’m the only one who needs help in
this fucked up family of ours. As if getting rid of me would cure what ails the Waynes.” Joker leaned a little more heavily on Harley, his leg aching. “Anyway, haven’t we had this conversation before? You claim to care, claim you love me, and only want the best for me.” Joker laughed while he gestured with his free hand putting on a high pitched voice laced thick with sarcasm. “Oh Jackie, please stop hurting people and just being an all around bad guy. Let your big brother, who is just as crazy as you, help you get better while never admitting that I have a problem too. Because of course I’m always right and I would never be as unhinged as you.” Joker rolled his eyes. “You are such a sanctimonious bastard Brucie. Always were.”

Robin hissed loudly having walked to stand next to Bruce and pointed a finger at Joker and Harley. “Batman, you can’t help someone like him! He’s beyond help! They don’t need Arkham, they need prison. You need to send him to prison, you need to send them both to prison, lock them in a hole deep enough they can’t hurt anyone ever again. You can’t help people like that. They don’t deserve your help; they are a waste of time.”

Joker narrowed his eyes at Robin. “People like that? Wow, judgy much? At least I’m not the one running around in tights.” Joker grinned with a curl to his lips, but his eyes were cold. “You aren’t family kid, so shut the fuck up.”

Robin snarled back. “Well I guess I’m more family than you since he chose me over you.”

The moment the words were out of his mouth, Dick paled beneath his mask when he saw the way Joker’s face changed. It was a gradual shift in expression, like a ripple on the surface of water, but there was no mistaking the expression of pure hatred that crossed over Joker’s face. His blue eyes had a feverish cast, piercing the younger man. Robin sucked in a startled breath, as if Joker’s hate filled gaze was an attack.

Batman growled a command that was simply the young man’s name. “Robin.”

Joker’s tone was soft, with just a slight sing-song quality to it, but what made Robin’s blood go cold was the smile that spread across Joker’s face. The smile showed off all his teeth, stained with blood, the lips bloody red, and stretched almost too wide in a smile that didn’t reach Joker’s icy blue eyes. Joker laughed, a low, frightening sound that Robin could feel in every bone. Robin felt a shudder move through him, cold settling over him as he stared back at Joker, unable to break eye contact.

Joker sneered. “Oh, he did, didn’t he? Chose you over me, made you his little sidekick, made you the little brother he always wanted--obedient, compliant, docile. I bet you follow every order, every little command don’t you? You are such a good boy.” Joker laughed. “Well…you just remember that little Robin, because there is going to be a day when he isn’t there for you, when you don’t perform properly, when you fuck up, and he has no use for you.” Joker turned his attention back to Bruce, but this time it was Jack looking back at his brother, not Joker. The pain in Jack’s gaze was only there briefly, however before it was buried deep. Harley saw it, close enough to see the pain in Jack’s gaze, the hint of sorrow in Jack’s voice that quickly became Joker’s voice again.

“Brucie...or I guess maybe you’re more Batman than Bruce, hm?” He laughed, his grip on Harley tightening. “Though I suppose I’m more Joker than Jack too.” He chuckled lightly tilting his head, gazing at his brother, his enemy. “I will just have to work on my tactics, eh?” Harley felt a twist in her chest looking at Joker. She could see the hint of unshed tears in his blue eyes, but Joker smiled wider. “If you can’t love me Batman, if you won’t love me, I’ll just settle for hate.” Joker’s chin trembled slightly, though only Harley saw the tiny movement. “I’ll make you hate me so much that you won’t be able to control yourself Batman. I’ll make you want to kill me. I’ll make you lose control and really show me some emotion Batman, make you show me how much you really care.”

Joker giggled. “What’s hate but love with a little friction?”
Batman growled. “Joker…”

Harley had been fighting the fear toxin and the sedative’s effects to make her run when she saw Batman. The only thing keeping her from losing her control was Joker’s hold on her. His presence helped her fight the drugs in her system, but Batman still looked as if he were shifting from a black demonic monster, then into Batman, while Robin looked like a twisted creature with a mouth full of fanged teeth wanting to tear out their throats; the young man that he actually was would shine through the monster, but the images were becoming twisted in her drug-fogged mind. She shuddered, fighting the drugs’ effects, but when she saw the hurt, the pain in her lover’s face, that made her furious. No one, no one was allowed to hurt her puddin! She moved surprisingly quickly, so fast that even Joker didn’t react, his attention divided between Robin and his brother, when she reached under Joker’s jacket with her cuffed hands and grabbed the pistol she knew would be there from its harness under his arm. She spun around, shivering almost uncontrollably, but her focus was such that when she fired three shots in quick succession from the pistol, her aim was good. The sound of the gunshots was loud, shattering the silence. The bullets slammed into Batman’s chest, knocking the dark knight off his feet.

Joker started to laugh. “Oh you pissed her off good Batsy!!

Robin yelled. “BATMAN!!”

The young man spun around, smoothly pulling out and throwing his own version of a batarang, but while Batman’s were bat shaped, these, while similarly shaped, were rounder, more disc shaped. The edges were just as sharp and could wound just as effectively as Batman’s. He threw out three in quick succession, one cutting across Harley’s fingers, hitting the gun while at the same time slicing a deep wound across the back of her hand, knocking the weapon out of her shaking hands to send the gun flying away from her. The second disc-shaped weapon struck Harley in the forehead, cutting deep across her temple and into her hairline. Blood bloomed red across her pale skin.

The third was aimed at Joker.

Harley cried out, staggering back two steps. The impact of the disc weapon slicing deep into her head spun her slightly before she dropped to the ground.

Joker snarled, turning his attention on Robin, catching the third weapon out of the air before it struck him. Even with Joker catching it, the sharp edges of the weapon cut into his palm. But with a grin that would give Dick Grayson nightmares for a long time afterwards, Joker threw the ‘birdarang’ back at him. Robin attempted to duck out of the way, but his own device hit him in the thigh, buried deep into the boy’s flesh.

Robin cried out falling to the ground just as Batman got to his feet.

Batman yelled. “ROBIN!!”

Joker had dropped to the ground, nearly falling over as he fell to his knees grabbing at Harley. He gathered her up, tugging her onto his lap, pulling her against his chest. “Harley??!!”

Harley’s head rolled, her eyes glazed, blood covering the side of her face. “Puddin?”

Batman snarled. “That’s it Joker! You…”

Batman didn’t get to finish what he was about to say because at that moment everyone heard a voice yell from behind Batman.

“JOKER!! HARLEY!!”
Joker looked up, cradling Harley against him, quickly becoming covered in blood from her head wound. He knew that voice—it was Jason! Joker looked around trying to find Jason in the darkened wood just as two gas grenades flew over Batman’s head to hit the ground between Batman and Joker. The canisters exploded into twin bursts of thick green gas, dropping what little visibility there was in the small clearing to almost zero. The grenade attack was followed by the shadows of moving figures rushing onto the scene. A second later Bane’s roar rang out, recognizable to Joker, but sounding like some gargantuan beast to Batman and Robin. The sound of trees being knocked aside and breaking accompanied another furious roar.

Batman held a hand to his chest. Pain radiated throughout his chest despite the bullet proof weaving in his suit having absorbed much of the impact. He looked around trying to get a bead on who was attacking, but for the moment, the gas was obscuring his vision. He tried to adjust his mask’s visual properties, but nothing worked as he moved, reaching out for Robin. His hand connected with the younger man’s outstretched arm. Robin reached up and wrapped a hand around Batman’s wrist. Batman reached out with his other hand, wrapping it around the young man’s arm.

“Robin, can you walk?” Batman pulled the younger man to his feet. “We need to move!”

Robin groaned. “I think so Batman.”

Batman hissed, deciding he needed to pick up Robin when a fist the size of a medicine ball came out of the thick green fog. Batman almost didn’t move in time, but he heard something and turned, moving just a fraction of an inch; but it was enough to save his life. Instead of a possibly fatal blow to his already bruised chest, the massive fist made a glancing strike across Batman’s shoulder, though the impact was enough to throw Batman back several feet, ripping his arm out of Robin’s grasp.

Robin let out a startled cry.

Joker was struggling to get to his feet while pulling Harley up with him at the same time. Harley moaned softly, her head rolling on his shoulder while he tried to support her weight, but his leg was refusing to obey him. Joker tried not to panic, but he couldn’t get this close and lose her again. He couldn’t lose her. Not again. His heart pounded hard, the sound filling his ears. If he lost her, coming this close to bringing her home, he didn’t think he could survive it.

Joker got Harley and himself standing, barely, kept struggling to stay on his feet, his arm wrapped possessively and fearfully around her waist while shadows swam out of the smoky fog.

Jason came rushing toward Joker; the gas seemed to separate from him as he appeared breathing hard. Jason looked simultaneously happy to see them and a little scared when he saw all the blood covering both Joker and Harley. Jason looked back the way he had come before he reached out to lay a hand on Joker’s shoulder. “Joker! Come on, the cops are on their way.” Joker nodded with a smile that didn’t last but a moment. “Jason! I’m glad to see you! Help me with Harley. I’ve been shot in the leg—I don’t think I can move very fast and support her.” It pained him to say he couldn’t support her, as if he was failing her again.

Jason nodded, moving to take Joker’s right arm, putting the limb over his shoulders while Joker struggled to hold Harley up against his side just as Alex came rushing forward with Frost beside him. Frost moved with purpose, rushing to help with Harley without a word as Alex grimaced seeing Harley’s face covered in blood. “Fuck me. She okay?”

Harley made a soft moan, leaning into Frost.

Agatha’s voice could be heard yelling somewhere in the smoke. “Come on guys—this way! Get
Joker and Harley and come on!!"

Joker sagged against Jason just as Bane appeared, the veins just under his skin glowing a soft emerald green clearly visible in the darkness and smoke. The big man was breathing heavily through his teeth, his eyes wild. He looked to be just barely keeping himself under control while he knotted his hands into and out of fists. A green flare sprang to life just off to Bane’s left showing Bea holding a small green flame in the palm of her hand allowing Joker to now see the faces of his gang, ghostly and haunted looking in the green fire’s glow against the equally green smoke.

Agatha motioned with her pistol. “Come on! Viktoria and Trope are waiting for us, but we need to move before the cops find either of them!”

They all looked up when they heard the beat of a helicopter. It sounded as if it was right overhead.

Alex put his arm over his face, looking up. He could see the helicopter. “Oh fuck me, it’s the press!! Worse than the fucking cops!”

That was the moment a spotlight started to erratically sweep over the smokey area.

Agatha hissed. “A police helicopter won’t be far behind--we need to move people!”

Jason narrowed his eyes. “Good thing I’m always prepared.”

Agatha hissed. “Jason, no!”

Jason let go of Joker, stepping aside and pulled a weapon that he had been carrying on his back, a Beretta PMX, and began firing at the helicopter. The aircraft wobbled in the air for a moment. Clearly the pilot was panicking.

Agatha yelled. “LET’S GO!!”

Bane stepped forward, and before anyone could protest, he grabbed Joker with one arm and Harley with the other, lifting them both off their feet. Agatha stared for a split second before she took off running, the rest of the gang following close behind, Jason periodically firing at the helicopter.

* 

Agatha led them quickly through Robinson Park, clearly knowing the layout of the park better than anyone else here. She led them through the trees until they suddenly came out onto a street.

Joker looked around in surprise from his position in Bane’s arms. “The Diamond District?”

Agatha grinned and nodded at her nephew before she motioned for everyone to follow. “This way.”

Their small, unusual looking group raced across the street, Bane shrinking noticeably the entire time, but still able to carry Joker and Harley easily. Agatha led the group down an alley while the sounds of police sirens filled the night air. They could hear several helicopters overhead as she guided them down a few more streets until they arrived at an alley where two vans waited, one that was painted with the name of Funny Business Laundry, while the other van had Harlequin Floor Cleaners painted on its side. Behind the wheel of one van was Dr. October and behind the wheel of the other van was Trope, her hair streaked blue and green, sitting beside Thea, with matching blue and green streaked hair, in the passenger seat.

Joker laughed. “Hey, I didn’t know about these!”
Agatha smiled. “I thought an alternate escape plan might be a good idea. Come on, everyone load up. Meet back at the amusement park in an hour. I probably don’t need to remind you to make sure you are not noticed or followed.”

Agatha pulled open the back of the van with Trope and Thea, motioning for Bane to put Joker and Harley inside before he moved to get in the van with Viktoria. Bea and Jason got into the van with Bane while Alex, Frost and Agatha got in with Joker and Harley; Agatha turned around and slammed the doors shut.

“Go!” she yelled at Trope who nodded, giving Joker and Harley a look of concern before she focused her attention on getting them out of there before the police—or anyone else—found them and started asking questions. She knew it wouldn’t take long for the entire area to go under lockdown.

The two vans pulled out of the alley, first one, then a minute later the second. The plan was for them not only to drive away from the area, from each other, heading in two different directions, but to drive around for an hour or so before heading back to the amusement park where all of them would lie low. The Irish had their own escape plan, but they were supposed to send someone over to the park sometime tomorrow to report in and let Joker know what had happened on their end.

Trope turned the radio on inside the van, flipping through the music until she found something she thought would be soothing; the cheerful sounds of “Daydream Believer” by the Monkees started to play over the speakers. She also turned the music on as a way to keep herself calm. The amount of blood she had seen on Joker and Harley had scared her. The thought of something happening to either one of them frightened the hell out of her.

She glanced at Thea, who reached over and laid a hand on her girlfriend’s knee giving her an encouraging smile. Trope smiled back, her white-knuckled grip on the steering wheel loosening slightly. Joker and Harley, Thea, and the rest of the gang were her only family. They were the people she counted on, loved...she would do anything for Joker or Harley, anything they asked of her. Seeing them like this hurt her. Trope took a deep breath and focused on her driving and the music. Now that they had Harley, she would get them home safe, all of them.

Inside the back of the utility van that Trope was driving there were no seats; the entire space was open, but the floor had a cheap beige carpet laid down throughout the interior which was now quickly becoming stained a dark red as Joker bled all over it. Alex had taken a seat on the floor behind Trope, his head back against the wall. In his one hand, he still held his gun resting on his bent knee. He let out a loud sigh, his eyes closed. “God, I need a drink.”

Frost sat down on Joker’s other side. The big man looked at Alex, his lips bloody and slightly swollen, and he sported a nasty pressure cut along one cheek. A dark purple bruise was forming along his cheek mixing with the purplish swelling around one eye.

Frost muttered. “Several drinks.”

Joker glanced up at Alex, then at Frost, and chuckled weakly. “You look how I feel Frosty.”

Frost chuckled. “You look worse than that.”

Joker giggled. “Oh thanks.”

Frost grinned though it was clear smiling hurt him. “You’re welcome Boss.”

Thea looked around her seat at their little group. “You all look like you just got back from hell.”

Alex laughed. “I think we were just on the fucking toilet seat of hell. One wrong move we would
Thea shared a grimace with her girlfriend. “Well that’s a charming analogy.”

Alex grinned. “Only the fucking best from me.”

Joker’s laugh turned into a cough, making it difficult to speak for a moment. “That’s Alex, the keeper of the gang’s class.”

Alex snorted setting his gun down to give Joker the finger.

Agatha was rummaging around a small chest that sat behind Thea’s seat, her nose wrinkled as she pulled various things out: ropes, more gas grenades that Jason must have stored in here, she found one of Joker’s laughing gas canisters, and a package of cigarettes. “God damn it! I know I put a first aid kit in here…” she muttered. “Ah, here it is!”

Joker sat on the floor, his back against the side of the van between Alex and Frost. Harley rested between his outstretched legs, curled against him, her head on his chest. The wound across her temple was a mat of bloody hair and congealing blood making it difficult to see that side of her face. Her pale skin looked like Joker’s, ashen, with dark circles and some purplish bruising under her eyes. She had her eyes screwed shut, her cuffed hands resting against Joker’s chest. Joker had one arm wrapped protectively around her, holding her close, his lips and nose pressed against the top of her head; he kept kissing her hair. With his free hand, he glided his fingers over her back gently. Harley’s eyes were closed, though she was muttering so softly, and somewhat incoherently.

“No more monsters...yes Harleen...I know...yes...the Scarecrow…” She shuddered and Joker tightened his hold in her even more. He looked down at her with a frown, his blue eyes dark with concern as his fingers moved through her blood soaked hair to gently pull the bloody strands away from her face. She looked so small and frail in his arms, but he knew she had fought to be back with him. His sweet pumpkin...his girl. Joker closed his eyes as he pressed his lips against the top of her head. A gentle smile settled on his red lips; he had her in his arms, he had his girl.

Agatha moved over to crouch on her knees in front of Joker and Harley. She frowned looking at the two of them. They both looked too thin, like haunted figures, ghosts of themselves, with Jackie’s already unnaturally pale skin looking ashen, his eyes looked to be set in sunken sockets of darkness when he looked at his aunt. Agatha’s eyes looked over Harley, who didn’t look much better than Jackie, though it was hard to see with the amount of blood covering her face and clothing. Her cuffed hands were ripped up at the wrists, caked with dried blood.

Agatha reached forward and gently pushed some of Harley’s hair back from her face. She shook her head; the older woman could see bruising on Harley’s face, bloody lips. Someone had hit her more softly, and somewhat incoherently.

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Agatha reached forward and gently pushed some of Harley’s hair back from her face. She shook her head; the older woman could see bruising on Harley’s face, bloody lips. Someone had hit her more than once.

Joker’s voice trembled as he looked at his aunt. “Auntie?”

Agatha looked up into Joker’s eyes. She frowned slightly reaching out to stroke his face. “She’ll be all right. We have her now.”

Joker nodded laying his cheek against the top of Harley’s head.

Agatha pressed her lips together. She felt like she had aged in the last few weeks, sure she was going to lose Jackie, the way he was wasting away without Harley, worried they would never get Harley back. The thought of Harley languishing away in prison, or Arkham, she shuddered at the thought. Then there was Bruce...she loved him too, but...God he was so much like his father, a righteous,
pompous ass with no idea how the real world, the real Gotham worked. Instead, he charged around like a goddamn hurricane trying to force things into the way he saw them. Bruce had just taken that attitude one step further by putting on a cape and running around Gotham supposedly righting wrongs. Agatha felt a momentarily sick feeling in her stomach. She and Thomas had been a lot like Bruce and Jack...but...Agatha pushed those thoughts away. She needed to focus. She couldn’t fix the past and it didn’t look like she could fix the future either. She glanced over at Frost. “You think you can get the cuffs off of her?”

Frost glanced over at Joker who nodded before the former cop reached over to gently pick up Harley’s hands, examining the cuffs while Agatha gently pulled back one of Harley’s eyelids. Harley didn’t focus on her, her eyes moving back and forth clearing seeing something else. Agatha frowned, studying her pupil before glancing up at Jack.

“She’s been drugged. No idea with what, but I think it's wearing off--and she’s fighting it. She’s exhausted, probably dropped her defenses now that she’s with you.” Agatha smiled and gently stroked Harley’s face. “Good night's sleep is what she needs most, and some painkillers, but I think she’ll be fine. She’s tough, a real fighter.” Agatha smiled at her nephew. “Being with you will probably be the best medicine for her, Jackie.”

Joker smiled kissing the top of Harley's head. Agatha reached out and brushed back locks of Jack’s green hair that had fallen across his face. She kept her fears and concerns to herself and she said quietly. “You’ll both be okay.”

Jack’s chin trembled as tears slowly rolled down his cheeks. “Thanks Auntie.”

“Now, let’s look at that leg.”

Jack opened his mouth to protest, but Agatha immediately pressed a finger against his lips. “Shush, I know what you are going to say, but you need that leg looked at first. I’m sure Harley would agree with me. She’ll be fine for the few minutes it takes me to get that bullet out of your leg.”

They both heard a quiet voice, rough, but determined whisper. “Damn right I would.”

Jack broke down, tears rushing down his cheeks, but his smile was wide when he looked down at Harley to see her eyes blinking as she tried to focus on him, a little smile on her lips.

“Harley!” Jack gasped, smiling down at her.

Harley pushed herself up. (Frost released her still cuffed hands he had been steadily working on getting off of her with a small wire. He noted to himself that he ought to keep a key for cuffs on him at all times.) She smiled looking like a victim of a slasher with the blood coating her face, but her eyes were a little clearer. She was still struggling with the remnants of the drugs in her system, but Jack’s eyes were on her smile, which was perfect, just like her.

“Puddin…” Harley looked at Jack. Her voice was soft as if she were still afraid this wasn’t real, tears slowly made their way down her face leaving lines through the blood on her cheeks. “My puddin…?”

Jack reached up with trembling hands to cup her face. “Harley, it’s me.” He caressed her cheeks, his thumbs moving through the still sticky blood. “My pumpkin pie.” He grinned wider still. “My girl.”

He pressed his lips against hers in a soft, tender kiss. He brushed his tongue along her lips, tasting her blood, but also tasting her, his Harley, the sweet taste of his precious wife. Harley made a soft, pained sound, tears rolling down from the corners of her eyes.
A bittersweet smile touched Agatha’s lips as she watched them for a moment before taking out the scissors from her kit and began cutting off the leg of Jack’s slacks to examine his leg while they kissed. Agatha pursed her lips, examining the wound before she removed a sterile razor from the kit at her side and began to expand the wound, cutting gently around the entrance to widen it enough to extract the bullet. Jack hissed only once while his aunt worked, but he was distracted enough with kissing Harley that he didn’t care what his aunt did to him. Agatha worked the bullet free slowly and carefully using the small razor and her fingers until she had eased the bullet out, dropping the spent bullet into a little plastic container meant to hold pills. She then worked slowly and carefully, cleaning the wound before stitching it up.

Harley opened her mouth against her husband’s lips, her tongue sliding into his mouth, caressing his tongue. She tasted blood and sweetness on Jack’s tongue and lips. She tasted Jack, her lover, her friend, her puddin. Jack lifted her cuffed hands and ducked his head between her arms, pulling her closer. The pain of his aunt working on his leg was numbed, not just from his acid dipped condition and shock, but because Harley was in his arms again. He held her closer, deepening the kiss further, his mouth moving over hers, trying to take in every part of her and the kiss, not wanting this to stop just in case he was wrong and this wasn’t real (he knew he was a little crazy, after all.) As long as he didn’t stop kissing her, this would last forever. Their tongues caressed slowly, twisting and turning, tasting each other. Harley moaned, leaning into Jack trying not to cry, but she couldn’t help it, she had dreamed of this moment for weeks, weeks that felt like years. She never wanted to stop kissing him, to feel the warmth of his body pressed against hers. The tears came regardless of her efforts, though they were tears of happiness and relief. Jack made a soft noise of want, need, and happiness, tugging her closer to him. The van and everyone around them, the pain, all of it fell away until it was just the two of them, in this moment. He had her back and nothing else mattered but that and the kiss.

Agatha sat back watching the two of them with a sigh when she was finished. Jack’s leg was wrapped in clean white gauze. She glanced at Frost with a smile. Frost looked bad, his face bruised, his lips bloody, but he grinned at her, his eyes light. He reached out to run his hand down her arm. Agatha caught his hand, bringing his knuckles up to her lips and kissed his hand. Agatha gave Frost his hand back before she silently took Jack’s injured hand from off of Harley’s back. She had expected him to fight her, but he didn’t; Jack simply held on tighter to Harley with his other hand. Agatha smiled a little at the way Jack didn’t react. He simply let his aunt take his hand, before her smile turned into a frown as she studied the deep cut that ran the length of his palm. It was far deeper than she had thought and it too would need stitches. She felt a little intrusive as she scooted closer, almost against Harley’s back in order to clean and awkwardly stitch up Jack’s hand and bandage it, but she was proud of herself when she accomplished her task, and all of that in a moving van.

“Okay you two, I need to look at Harley’s head,” Agatha said while cleaning off her hands. Jack gently nipped Harley’s lips, pulling away from her just a little. “Okay, but when you’re done…” He smirked at Harley.

Harley giggled and Jack was sure he had never heard a more beautiful sound. Jack reluctantly lifted her arms over his head, and they gazed at each other with such love and longing that it nearly broke Agatha’s heart.

She motioned at Harley. “Just lay your head against his chest, dear.”

Harley nodded, scooting to lay her head against Jack’s chest so that Agatha could examine the wound on her head. Agatha moved in closer and studied the wound with an experienced eye. She gently eased the bloody, matted hair back. Harley winced and inhaled a little sharply, but Jack’s hand was on her back, rubbing tenderly.
Agatha dabbed at the wound using some antiseptic to clean away the blood and get a better look. Alex glanced over and went pale as his eyes widened. “Why’s that fucking white like that?”

Agatha glanced up at Alex, then back down at Harley. “You doing okay?”

Harley nodded. “Hurts, but I’m okay.”

Agatha glanced at Jack, then Alex. “Okay, this is going to need stitches; the white in the wound is bone. Whatever cut her, cut right to the bone. It’s a clean cut, but it’s going to scar into her hair.”

Alex paled further and he swallowed hard. “Bone?”

Agatha nodded.

Jack’s eyes narrowed, the blue going cold as he hissed low and threatening. “That sidekick of Bats scarred her?”

Agatha frowned and nodded. “Now both of you be still while I stitch this up. I’m going to make the stitches as small as I can to reduce the scarring, but no jiggling, all right?”

Trope gritted her teeth, concentrating on driving as carefully as she could.

Harley simply frowned because while it hurt, the cut didn’t feel like it hurt enough to be open to the bone.

“Robin,” Jack whispered through clenched teeth.

Agatha said nothing more, but rather simply went to work, cleaning the area, and stitching up the wound. She did her best to make the stitches small before cleaning it again when she was done. Agatha counted mentally as she worked, counting sixteen stitches. She frowned as she placed a bandage over the wound. Agatha next examined Harley’s hands, stitching up the back of her hand—another five stitches—followed by cleaning Harley’s wrists and bandaging them as well. (Frost had finally removed the handcuffs while Agatha worked on Harley’s head.) When she was finished Agatha smiled, satisfied with her work under the circumstances.

“I got some painkillers back at the park. I want you both to take them and sleep. Lots of sleep, all right?” Agatha looked between them with a semi-stern look.

Jack nodded as did Harley. Jack held Harley close as he whispered. “Thank you auntie.”

She smiled turning to Frost. “Your turn big guy.”

Frost wrinkled his nose. “I don’t have anything that needs stitches and no bullet wounds.”

Agatha narrowed her eyes at him. “You let me be the judge of that. I’ve had more injuries than the lot of you combined in my career; you just let me examine you and shut up.”

Alex chuckled. “Yeah Frost, shut the fuck up.”

Jack chuckled holding Harley tight. All was right with the world at the moment.

* * *

By the time they had returned to the amusement park they called home, Agatha had Frost cleaned up and bandaged, and a few of their small group dozed in the back of the van. Everyone was exhausted. Trope sang as she drove, having left the radio station on the Oldies. Her voice was light and sweet,
with Thea singing along softly on a few songs, lulling Harley to sleep against Jack’s chest. Jack remained awake watching Harley and listening, waiting for trouble, still not quite able to let himself relax. He wanted to make sure he had his wife home before he gave in to exhaustion. Frost was sleeping beside him. The big man looked strangely child-like while he slept. Alex was snoring like a freight train and Jack’s Aunt was resting between Frost’s legs, much like Harley was between his, but her eyes were open, watching Jack.

She smiled when he glanced over at her. Jack returned her smile, neither of them saying a word.

A few moments after they had arrived back home, Viktoria turned into the amusement park with the rest of the gang.

Harley, still a little groggy from having dozed off on his chest, helped Jack out of the van, wrapping her arm around his waist so he could lean on her. He winced, going a little paler for a split second as he adjusted himself on his feet.

Agatha frowned watching them. “I’ll be back in a bit with the pills for the two of you.”

Jack nodded. “Thanks.”

“You both should eat something too.”

Trope put her hand up. “Why don’t Thea and I go grab everyone some take out?”

Harley grinned. “That sounds great.”

Bane, now his normal size, looked tired, but grinned happily. “I could eat an entire restaurant.”

The group laughed with Viktoria patting Bane on the stomach. “I do love to watch you eat baby.”

Jack smiled, but his blue eyes were serious as he looked at everyone. “Thank you, all of you, for helping me bring Harley home.”

Bane smiled, his arm around Viktoria. “We’re family.”

Jason nodded, his hands resting in his front pockets, the gesture making him look years younger than his mid-twenties. “You guys mean the world to me. I’ll do anything for you, any one of you.”

The rest of the group murmured their agreement.

Jack shared a smile with Harley. Harley said softly. “You’re all our family.”

Agatha stepped forward and hugged them both. “Now—rest, get cleaned up, and I’ll bring the pills and food.” She turned and looked at everyone else. “Okay guys, let’s eat and get some rest.”

Jack grinned turning with Harley and looking at their little house on the park grounds. “Home sweet home.”

Harley blinked several times doing her best not to tear up, but she failed. “I almost didn’t think I was going to come home.”

Jack frowned, giving her shoulders a gentle squeeze. “I’m sorry Harls.”

She smiled at him, making his heart flutter. “Don’t be sorry puddin--you came for me. I’m home,” she said softly before she helped Jack to the door.
With her hair wet from washing it in the sink, Harley sat on the floor of their room on a blanket she had spread out. She was completely naked except for the bandages she wore on her wounds. Jack, his hair also wet from Harley washing it for him in the same sink in their bathroom, sat across from her, completely naked as well except for his own bandages. They both looked paler than their naturally ghost white skin usually was, stained red and brown with blood, a kaleidoscope of bruises on both of them. Their bedroom was dark except for the one bedside lamp that cast a soft glow like starlight into the room. Between them sat a large bowl of soapy water and a couple of washcloths.

Jack’s gaze wandered slowly over Harley’s naked body. She had lost weight and there looked to be a few new scars on her milky skin. He saw a haunted look in her blue eyes. He knew they needed to talk about things, things he needed to know about while she had been gone, but not tonight.

He had missed her so much. It wasn’t just the sex, the intimacy, but he had missed everything about Harley—the smell of her skin, her smile, her laugh, the feel of her hair against his cheek, talking to her, the sound of her voice when she spoke or laughed, watching her brush her hair, holding her, sharing the parts of himself that he would share with no one else other than her. Part of him was terrified that this wasn’t real, that somehow he had cracked completely and she was simply an illusion brought on by his need for her. But he had noted the tattoos on her legs when he had helped her undress, black inked messages binding them together. She had written their names on her legs, etching her pain into her own skin. It hurt him to see how much she had missed him, had marked on her skin like that...but if this was a dream, he would never have done that do her. He had brushed his fingers along the marks which made him almost blind with the desire to kill everyone in that prison...but he would find out each one, each individual, guard, prisoner or administrator who had hurt her, and he would skin them alive, every damned one of them for hurting Harley. He placed those thoughts aside for now, his attention fully on Harley.

Harley felt a twist in her chest when she saw how thin Jack had become while she was gone. There was a haunted look in his eyes (that she didn’t realize was also reflected in her own) that hadn’t been there before. She was also scared that he wasn’t real, that Crane had somehow won and broken her until she had fallen into a delusion. After the things she had seen while under Crane’s thumb, she doubted herself. But this felt real...it had to be real. She didn’t think she could cope if it wasn’t. She would break because she needed Jack to be real, to be here with her. She didn’t think she could live another day if this wasn’t real, if her puddin wasn’t here with her...she wouldn’t want to live another day without him.

Both of them were silent, not needing to speak. She smiled and pushed her doubts aside, picking up one of the cloths, soaking it in the soapy water before she got up on her knees. Harley scooted next to him, sitting on her knees beside him and began to caress his skin with the cloth to wash away the blood, the grime, and the pain of their separation.

Jack smiled at her too, doing the same, (though he remained sitting, unable to sit on his knees at the moment) by picking up the other cloth and slowly, tenderly, ran it over her skin. They were quiet while they worked, cleaning one another, soaking in each others presence while washing away the weeks of their separation, washing away everything until they were clean.

Jack resoaked his rag and brushed the cloth against Harley’s throat, watching the water run down her breasts, slowly skating down her stomach. He dragged the rag down over her breasts, brushing tenderly over her stomach, caressing her, worshipping her, his harlequin.

Harley washed the cloth over his shoulders, dragging the damp cloth over his chest and down his stomach, washing away their time apart. She trembled a little as complete exhaustion washed over
her, but it was also mixed with relief. She was finally home with her puddin, her husband.

Jack put his cloth down and pulled her closer, wrapping his arms around her waist and laid his head against her chest. He needed to feel her against him, to know she was here, she was whole, that she wasn’t a ghost. His voice was soft, filled with pain when he spoke, his eyes closed as he leaned against hers.

“I’m so sorry Harley. This was all my fault. I failed you.” Harley could feel the tears against her skin, a warm dampness against her cool skin as he pressed her harder to him.

Harley wrapped her arms around him, her fingers in his green hair cradling his head against her chest. “No you didn’t puddin. It just happened--it wasn’t your fault.”

Jack held on tightly to her, his arms trembling slightly. “My decisions brought us here. I took too long to get you back. When I saw Batman take you…”

She felt his body tighten, Harley stroked his hair trying to ease some of the tension. His voice was rough. “I couldn’t find a way to you…”

Harley kissed the top of his head. “But you did come for me puddin. The first chance you got, you came for me.” She smiled kissing his hair. “You brought me home.”

Jack shifted to look up at her. Harley stroked his hair back from his face, staring into the depth of his blue eyes, losing herself in his gaze. “You came for me puddin,” she said softly, smiling down at him, her own tears gathering in the corner of her eyes. “I knew you would. I always knew you would find a way.”

She leaned down and kissed him, a deep, tender kiss, trying to tell him how much she loved him, how much she missed him in action where words failed her.

Jack’s hands reached up to cup her face, pulling her down to return her kiss with all the passion, love, and loss he felt, to communicate what his wife meant to him.

Harley pulled away slowly, kissing his nose, his eyes and forehead before she stood and gently pulled Jack to his feet, helping to hold his weight off his wounded leg. She led him over to the bed, pulling the comforter and sheets back. They crawled into the bed together, Jack easing down to the middle of the bed before lying on his back, holding his arms out to Harley. She crawled to him and he tugged her up against him. She laid her head against his chest, her body pressed along his side, fitting perfectly against him, skin to skin.

Harley closed her eyes, her body going almost instantly limp, relaxed for the first time in many weeks. The sound of his heartbeat in her ears calmed her, soothed her like nothing else. She wrapped her arm around his chest, pressing in as close as she could, relaxing completely against his side.

Jack pulled the blankets up over them both, holding her close, one arm around her shoulders while his other hand rested against her hand that was on his chest. Jack wrapped his hand around hers when he laid back against the pillows. He stared up at the ceiling for a few moments, letting himself relax, feeling her body against his, the warmth and scent of her all around him. He held her, listening to the sound of her breathing. Finally, after weeks of being unable to sleep, Jack drifted off, falling into a deep sleep with Harley against him, a smile on his red lips.

* 

Agatha arrived later with the pills and food. She had carefully made her way upstairs, calling out to her nephew and niece, but when they didn’t answer the door which had been left open, she hurried
up the stairs and opened their bedroom door worried that something was wrong. She stopped in the
doorway with a smile. They were both asleep, Harley curled tight against Jack’s side and Jackie was
sleeping--really sleeping--something he hadn’t done since Harley had been gone.

She tiptoed in and deposited the painkillers and a bag of Chinese food on the bedside table before
she slipped out, leaving them to sleep.

*

Across town Batman yanked his cowl off as soon as he exited the damaged Batmobile and threw it
in the direction of a wall. Barb frowned watching him stalk back and forth in anger.

She glanced over at Robin. “I saw on the news, complete fuck up, eh?”

Robin’s leg was bandaged and held out in front of him, his mask dangling between his hands when
he spoke. “You might say that. Joker showed up, and so did some of Falcone’s men, and we heard
the Irish gangs were there too. But it was Joker and his gang that really caught us off guard.” Robin
glanced over at Batman, dropping his voice when she spoke to Barb. “Joker had a god damn rocket
launcher and a semi.”

Barb grimaced. “Wow, I would not have seen that coming.”

Robin nodded. “Yeah, tell me about it. We managed to corner them, but...well, it went sideways.”

Batman turned around. “What he is trying to say is that it’s my fault everything went south. I...I tried
to talk to Joker...as my brother, as Jack, instead of the crazy psychopath he has turned into.” Batman
winced rubbing his chest and side. He was sure a couple of his ribs were cracked. Harley had been a
surprisingly good shot even in her compromised state.

Bruce closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. “I don't know why I thought any of my
brother was still in him...”

Bruce leaned against the wall next to the computers with a tired sigh.

“I don’t think there is anything of Jack left in him at all…”

Robin and Barb exchanged a look, but said nothing.
Jack’s eyes opened slowly. He frowned, blinking away the sleep that clung to him. He couldn’t clearly remember the last time he had slept through the night, not since Harley had been taken. It felt a little odd now, but he smiled; he felt whole, complete again. Jack smiled wider feeling his wife’s body pressed up against his side—warm, real, alive, her body firm and simultaneously soft against him felt like heaven. Jack very slowly stroked her skin with the fingers of the arm that was pinned under her, partly just to caress her, but there was a small part of him that wanted to make sure she was real, that this wasn’t some fever dream or madness trying to pull him under. But Harley was real, she was here in his arms. He could feel her, smell her hair, hear her breath. Harley’s breath was slow and warm against his chest, her hair was silk against his shoulder and arm. Jack sighed happily through his smile; all was right with his world, his Harley was back at his side. He could take on anything now.

He shifted just a little looking down where her head still lay against his chest, her arm flung across his stomach and one of her legs up across his hips. He could partially see her face (her hair was tangled around her face), but he could see a hint of her lips were a light brush of pink and her was mouth open just slightly. He could see her closed eyes through the soft white tangle of her hair, dark lashes against her pale cheeks, but he could also see the hint of bruises on her face, the discoloration on her perfect skin. He could see the white of the bandage on her head, and there was angry red flaring out along her skin, easy to see because of her acid bleached paleness.

He frowned slightly, anger beginning to replace his good mood as he thought of that bird that belonged to his brother. The bird that had hurt Harley, scarred her...

Jack felt a tight twist in his chest glancing down at Harley again. Her face was so angelic as she slept, peaceful and happy. Looking at her chased away the ill humor that threatened to overcome him. His girl, his pumpkin lying against him was safe. He felt a sting of tears in his eyes, but he blinked them back. No more tears, only smiles he thought. She was hurt—they were both hurt, but they would heal. None of that mattered right now, however, because they were together again. There were no words to describe how he felt, to describe the depths of his happiness let alone to describe his love for her...the moment he had realized he was in love with her, all those emotions wrapped up into this moment, the first moment in his entire like that he felt whole. Harley loving him made him whole, made Jack Wayne—and now the Joker—into a whole human beings, with goals and purposes that only revolved around her. No one else in the world truly mattered to him. He may have a new family, but his wife, his Harley was at the center of that, the core of what made him who he was now.

He reached over and with gentle care, pushed her hair back from her face. She was so beautiful he thought with a soft smile, so very beautiful and she was back in his arms. Jack kissed the top of her head.

Harley made a soft sound, her body shifting, her left leg moved down, and Jack hissed as her leg brushed against the bullet wound in his leg. Harley’s eyes popped open in surprise.

“Jack?” She pushed up, moving her leg off of him quickly. He inhaled sharply again.

“Oh my god Jack! I’m so sorry!” Harley gasped and tried to pull away from him, but Jack grabbed her.

“It’s fine Harls! Come back here.”
He tugged her back against him with a small laugh. Harley giggled softly, relaxing once more against his side before she pushed herself up to look at his face. She gazed at him, taking in every detail of his features, his milk white skin that now was covered in a variety of bruises, his perfectly shaped lips, his intense blue eyes, framed by locks of dark green hair that had fallen around his face in that sexy, slightly tousled way only Jack’s hair could achieve. Harley gazed with loving concern at him and reached up to gently stroke back some of his hair.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” she asked, gazing into his blue eyes and feeling a whirlwind of intense emotions. She was home, back in Jack’s arms...home. He’d gotten hurt coming for her. She sniffed, tears stinging her eyes, her chin quivering just a little, but she smiled. “I missed you so much puddin, but I knew you would come for me, I knew you would.”

Jack reached up to caress her face, the bruises and cuts fading away, he only saw his beautiful wife. He brushed his thumb across her cheek wiping away the hint of tears on her skin. “I missed you too pumpkin. I'm so sorry it took me so long...”

Jack drew his fingers along her jaw to her chin, the tips of his fingers light against her flesh, but he easily drew her close. His lips brushed against hers, careful of her wounded lips, before he kissed her.

Harley’s eyes slipped close, losing herself in the feel of his lips, the touch of his skin, the taste of his tongue. Her fingers on his chest tightened, pressing her fingers against his skin. She kissed him deeper while leaning up onto her elbow, her hand reaching up to caress his throat. Harley ran her tongue over his to deepen the kiss, pressed herself closer to him.

Jack ran his fingers into her hair, cupping the back of her head, holding her to him while kissing her with more passion. His tongue danced against hers in a delicate caress, his desire for Harley spiking. It wasn’t just about sex, it was more than wanting her physically—it was about needing to feel her, to know she was alive and in his arms, to know they were together and to be part of her.

He had been so lost without her, so alone, on the edge of losing more of himself without her there. Harley held him together, his only light in the storm of his rising insanity. He needed to show her how deep his love was for her.

Harley felt her own rush of desire spread through her, hot and needy. She wanted to be part of him, to share herself with him, to wrap herself in his scent, to feel him inside her and all around her. It was so much more than sex for her as well. It was a bonding of their souls. She needed him now more than ever. After being apart for so long, she felt shattered, broken, and she needed Jack to be whole again.

Jack lightly tugged at her lips, careful not to hurt her before he pulled back enough to whisper against her mouth. “I want you Harls. I need you.”

Harley stroked his hair back from his face, her eyes bright. “I need you too puddin.” Tears continued to slowly run down her cheeks. “I was so lost without you puddin.”

Jack smiled rubbing his nose against hers. “I don’t exist without you sweets.”

They kissed again, Harley leaning into his kiss, and wrapped her leg around him. Jack jumped when her thigh pressed against the wound.

Harley yelped and pulled back. “Oh puddin! I’m so sorry!”

Jack winced, but chuckled. “Don’t be--it's fine.”
Harley pouted a little. Jack grinned at her reaching up to stroke her hair back, but when he did the hair pulled against the bandage and stitches. Harley yelped, drawing back.

Jack paled. “Oh Harls! I’m so sorry!”

Harley winced a bit, but laughed. “We’re a mess.”

Jack chuckled with a small nod. “We are…”

He more gently caressed her face, tucking her hair behind her ear. He continued to smile softly, cupping the side of her face and drawing her down for another kiss. Harley willingly fell into him, Jack’s mouth moving tenderly over hers before he whispered. “Let me taste you.”

Harley blushed, and a soft giggled bubbled up. “Jack…”

Jack caressed her jaw. “Please pumpkin…”

Harley moved carefully, crawling on top of Jack with her back to him. His excitement grew seeing the expanse of her smooth, creamy snow white back. He followed the curve of her spine with his eyes, the way her smooth back sloped down into her round hips. He reached up with both hands--careful of his bandaged hand--to run his fingers down her back, watching the way Harley arched and curved her back into his touch. She was the most beautiful woman in Gotham, the most beautiful woman in the world. He felt the swelling of his erection intensify as he licked his lips, waiting to taste her on his tongue. He gently tugged, drawing her hips closer.

Harley scooted back slowly, her damaged hand making it a little difficult to move, but she ignored that pain and instead focused on the feel of Jack’s body beneath her, the way his skin felt when her thighs brushed against his sides, her groin brushing against his chest, wet, hot and aching for him.

She felt goosebumps rush across her skin when Jack ran his fingers down her back, but when he grasped her hips and pulled her closer, she shivered while a smile spread across her lips. She gazed down at his stomach, brushing her injured hand along his stomach, smiling when he twitched at her touch. Her eyes traveled to his erection, her mouth watering as she looked at him, thick and erect for her. Her lips itched with the need to run the head of his shaft against her lips, to feel that soft satin skin, to taste him on her tongue, to feel him throbbing inside her mouth. She swallowed, her eyes following down his hips then along his thighs. She winced in sympathy for her husband when she saw the slightly bloody bandage around his thigh, but then all thoughts except her thoughts of pleasing him were rushed from her mind when she felt Jack lick her.

Jack pulled her hips over his face, his hands brushing up along her tight rear with a smile. Her skin was so soft, like cream and silk. When she was over him, he gazed at her sex, his mouth watering. He wrapped his arms around her thighs, pulling her down to him at the same time he brought his head up to brush his tongue across her clitoris. He groaned, tasting the sweetness of her sex on his tongue, surrounded by her unique scent. Jack angled her a little more to press his mouth fully against her, sucking and brushing his tongue back and forth, her little gasps and moans exciting him further. He was lost, surrounded by his Harley and nothing else mattered. He dragged his tongue over her and whispered. “You taste so good pumpkin.”

Harley moaned her eyes fluttering, her body tensing when he licked her, followed by his lips sucking gently on her, followed by the smooth back and forth of his tongue on her. Harley responded to the intensity by wrapping her undamaged hand around his erection, holding him gently while she ran her tongue over him, closing her eyes with pleasure, feeling him against her lips. She loved him so much it hurt, deep down in her spirit, hurt in a way she wanted to never stop feeling. She gently pressed her teeth against his skin before slowly sliding her lips down around his length, her tongue moving back and forth to coat him in her saliva. She ran her lips down the side of his erection again, sucking
tenderly, making her way down, then slowly back up again, running her tongue over the head of his shaft, pressing her lips against him before she gradually circled her tongue over the smooth, soft skin of his member. She loved the way he felt, the sweet, soft skin and firm length of him, stroking her hand up and down while she ran her tongue over him, feeling the little jerks of his body that she evoked in him.

She moaned when Jack flicked his tongue back and forth against her clitoris; the sensation and pleasure sent ripples all through her.

Jack groaned against her when she took him into her mouth, the feel of her tongue sliding back and forth, coating him in her saliva, the soft tickle of her long hair against his skin had his legs tensing; a flare of pain radiated from the wound in his leg. His leg jerked in response, but he ignored it, sliding his tongue inside Harley instead.

Harley moaned around his member, her moans muffled with him in her mouth. She sucked hard on him, dragging her lips up his length, her tongue swirling around the head of his erection, flicking across the tip, tasting his excitement when Jack’s leg jerked. Harley gasped pushing up.

“Jack, are you…”

She didn’t get to finish because she felt that slick wet twist of his tongue sliding inside her. Jack moved his tongue back and forth, followed by a twist that made Harley almost collapse against him, it felt so good. She groaned loudly, countering by sucking hard and deep on him, taking his entire erection into her mouth, her tongue playing back and forth against the smooth skin. Jack squeezed her backside groaning into her before he caressed her skin, his hands running over her rear end down her thighs. He moved his head to the side, gently biting the soft flesh of her thigh, sucking as his fingers pressed hard into her hips. He sucked until he left a faint purple mark. Jack dragged his tongue against her skin, returning his attention to her clitoris, tasting deeply of her.

He flicked his tongue across her again before pulling her down to suck, burying his face against her, his eyes closed, a smile of absolute pleasure and pure happiness on his face while he pleasured Harley, and thereby pleasured himself. He opened his mouth wide to lick her, feeling her shudder over him. But when Harley dragged her teeth teasingly up the length of him, Jack threw his head back and cried out, grasping onto her hips, and panting as he fought back an orgasm.

Harley gasped when she heard him, feeling his breath against her and heard the sweet, erotic sound of his pleasure, his grip on her hips tightening along with his body tensing in pleasure. She tasted him, the salty sweet stickiness of his cum beading at the head of his erection, smearing against her tongue. Her brow furrowed with the erotic pleasure of it all, but when he dragged his tongue across her clitoris again, she came with a cry.

“She...Puddin!!” Harley arched, her eyes closing, and any pain that came with her body tightening was washed away by the pleasure and complete happiness of being with her husband again. Jack growled with pleasure, wrapping his arms around her tight, his hands pressed against her lower back to pull her down to drink of her, to lap up her orgasm. Harley’s head dropped down against him, stretching her hands out along his legs, her back curved while Jack held her close against him, his mouth moving against her sex. He slid one hand along her leg, wrapping his hand around her ankle, his other hand pressed against her lower back, his mouth moving slowly over her clitoris, his tongue lapping slowly, tenderly over her.

Harley moaned low at the same time kissing his knees, rubbing her face against him needing to feel every inch of him. The desire to rub herself around his skin, to wrap herself in him was nearly overpowering any other thought--she simply couldn’t get close enough to Jack.
Jack squeezed his eyes shut, feeling the same as Harley. He needed to be inside her, it wasn’t just a physical need, but a need to be connected with her after so long apart.

“Come here pumpkin,” Jack whispered kissing her thigh before rubbing his his cheek and nose against her silky skin. “I need you Harls.” His voice was rough and deep with desire.

Harley moved slowly, pulling away and turning around to face him. She gazed at him, thinking to herself that he was so beautiful. The acid bath had done nothing to take away from his beauty, the intensity of his eyes; if anything the acid had only enhanced him, making him more beautiful in her eyes. She delicately caressed his cheek with her fingertips, brushing along his jaw, then his lips.

“I need you puddin,” she whispered. “I need my husband so much.”

Jack smiled at her, reaching up to caress her face, running his hands through her hair. He frowned when she winced slightly. That damn cut on her head...put there by that little bird of his brother’s...Jack quickly banished the thoughts of what had happened to focus on the now. Harley was here in his arms, he could taste her on his tongue. She was alive and here with him now. Jack cupped her cheek staring into her light blue eyes. “I love you,” he stated plainly. The three words were laced with such emotion, his eyes begging her to understand just how deeply he felt for her.

Harley kissed the palm of his hand. “I love you puddin, always.”

She slowly lowered herself on top of him, groaning when she felt his erection push into her, feeling the hardness of him enter her. She had never felt anything as good as this, as her puddin inside her, filling her. She arched her back, pressing her hands against his chest, spreading her legs wide so that she could take every inch of him into her body before she dropped back down to kiss him.

Jack grabbed her hips, hissing slightly as the movement stretched the stitches in his palm. Spreading his legs wide also aggravated the wound in his thigh, but he didn’t care. He ran his hands up her back, feeling the smooth sensual curve while returning her kiss. Harley dragged her tongue along his mouth, tracing the line of his jaw, then along his throat. Jack groaned dropping his hands down for a moment, but Harley grabbed his hands moving them over his head slowly. She snaked her fingertips down his arms, feeling for a moment just how thin he had become--like a mad ascetic--while she was gone. Her fingers glided back up his arms wrapping around his wrists while she moved her hips in a tantalizing and erotic wave, rolling her pelvis slowly in a combination of thrust and pull, her body pulling against his erection while thrusting down, feeling him deep inside her before she pulled up again.

Jack panted, giving himself over to her completely. He held his legs bent despite the pain in his thigh, watching while Harley slowly sat up again, her hands wrapped around his forearms while she thrust, picking up speed, her hair tickling his skin. She groaned pushing herself up completely, her hands on his chest again while she thrust, arching her back, throwing her head back with a loud cry. Jack groaned, watching her climax, feeling her body hold him while she came, while the sensation of being flooded washed over him. He had never seen anything more beautiful than watching Harley orgasm.

Harley hissed dropping down again and grasped his upper arms, keeping them pinned over his head while she rode her orgasm, feeling every inch of him inside her, wet and slippery. She panted harder releasing Jack’s arms, which he immediately wrapped around her, pulling her body close to him, meeting her thrusts with his own rhythmic movements. They kissed, tongues sliding against each other while Harley thrust down on him, Jack thrusting up to meet her. The tension was building high, higher between them, both of them gasping, panting, until Jack cried out, his orgasm ripping through him, tearing him open, spilling everything into Harley. He held her tight, holding her to him and muffling his cries against her mouth.
Harley whimpered, his orgasm setting off another climax for her. Her cries muffled against his as they peaked, their shared orgasm had both of them losing themselves in each other until finally they both collapsed, the breath short and fast.

Harley took a deep breath as she nuzzled the side of Jack’s throat, her arms wrapped around his head holding him close. She didn’t want to move, didn’t want to lose her contact with him. Jack held her tightly, his eyes closed, enveloped in her scent, the warmth of their bodies connected together.

He whispered against her ear. “I love you so much Harley...my girl.”

He swallowed down his tears at the same time fighting the small dark part of himself that was scared, terrified of losing her again. He knew he couldn’t function if something happened to her, that if he was ever parted from her again, he would destroy Gotham, he would destroy everything to get her back. He had been ready to burn the world down this time...if he was parted from her again, he would...Gotham would tremble in fear of what he would do to them. But for now, all those thoughts were washed away as he held her, gazing into her eyes, her scent, her body, all of her surrounding him, safely back where she belonged, in his arms.

Harley smiled and whispered back. “I love you puddin...I love you always.”

She could hear Harleen in the back of her mind, a soft whisper telling her to hold on to him, to not let go. She smiled, closed her eyes, and lay her mouth and nose against his skin. She was home, Jack was home. She would never be away from him again...but Harleen’s small voice whispered...what about Crane? Harley snarled, shoving Harleen down--she was not going to think about Crane, about the fact that he was once more lose in Gotham. She would tell Jack...later. But for now she didn’t want to think about Crane, about Blackgate...she wanted to only focus on the fact that she was with her puddin again...and her world had been set right once more.

They stayed connected to each other as long as they could, but when Harley was forced to roll off of him, Jack simply pulled her close again, turning his body to face hers. Harley smiled, resting her forehead against his, their legs intertwined, their arms wrapped around each other and looked into each others’ eyes. They were both tired again, but happy.

Jack smiled at her, rubbing his thumb across her cheek, staring into her eyes. “Nothing is going to keep me away from you again, nothing.”

Harley smiled tenderly. “Nothing puddin...nothing.”

They fell asleep again, comforted in each others’ arms.

* *

Sophia, dressed in tailors navy blue slacks with a matching short jacket and white silk blouse, slipped out of her father’s office. She doubted he would miss her in the rage he was in. She felt only a little bad for leaving her little brother in there, but he needed to learn to defend himself, and when to leave their father to his rages. If the little boy couldn’t figure that out, it wasn’t her problem.

Their father had lost Harley Quinn as well as eight of his people. He was not happy and he was making sure everyone within earshot knew it. Sophia sighed, glancing at the bodyguards that waited outside her father’s office and motioning to her own, Angelo and Lucia, who both looked irritated from being made to wait out here in the hall. She motioned with her fingers at them before she started to walk down the hall away from her father’s office, not waiting to see if they would follow, her heels making sharp clicks against the polished floor as she headed toward the elevators. Well trained and loyal, her people fell into line behind her without a word.
Her mind raced as she walked into the elevator. She didn’t think her father stood a chance against the Joker, not really. If she were in charge of the family, instead of going after the clown, she might try another tactic, seducing him to her side. As the old saying went, keeping your friends close and your enemies closer. The Joker represented something new in Gotham, an element like they had never seen before, no family connections, no old ways and mafia laws keeping him in check. He was a loose cannon, but a cannon that she might be able to aim at her enemies if used correctly.

The Joker could help keep the Falcone family on top of the Gotham underworld, but the way her Daddy was behaving, he was going to let the clown drag him and the rest of them down. The elevator arrived on the ground floor, and Angelo stepped out first, leading the way toward the garage with Lucia bringing up the rear. They headed toward the garage where Sophia’s car was waiting, a silver Rolls Royce Ghost II, her newest purchase. It had been a little gift to herself for all that she was putting up with--her father and this entire mess. As far as she was concerned, the current problems were her father's creation.

Angelo checked the car before opening the door and holding it open for Sophia. She slipped into the back, settling in as Angelo and Lucia took the front seats. She had just settled back, thinking about stopping someplace for lunch when the door next to her opened and a young woman slipped inside before anyone could react. The woman had a gun, a small pistol, pointed right at Sophia.

Sophia’s bodyguards turned, their own guns aimed at the woman.

The woman was beautiful, with creamy dark skin, and long curling black hair. The woman was dressed all in black, a black suit tailored to her trim body, but her most startling feature was the blue of her eyes. She smiled showing off perfect teeth.

“Now, now, don’t anyone make a move they might regret. I’m just here to chat for a moment.”

Sophia narrowed her eyes. “Who are you and what do you want?”

The woman grinned. “Oh I like you, right down to business. I’m here representing a client who would like to extend you an invitation.”

Sophia frowned. “From who?”

The woman smiled wider before she spoke again in a sing-song whisper.

“‘Beware The Court of Owls, that watches all the time, ruling Gotham from a shadow perch, behind granite and lime. They watch you at your hearth, they watch you in your bed, speak not a whispered word of them or they'll send The Talon for your head.'”

Sophia’s eyes widened and felt herself shrink back from the woman, not really intending to have moved like she did, but the rhyme was one anyone growing up in Gotham City knew. Most thought of it only as a silly ghost story, but Sophia knew it was the truth because her father had told her so, though the Court hadn’t been heard from in over a generation. She stared at the woman as if she were seeing a ghost.

“What do you want?” Sophia asked, her voice hushed.

The woman smirked. “We think it’s time that the Falcone family had a change of management--don’t you?”

Sophia gasped. It was one thing to be thinking about it herself, it was something else to have someone come to her and suggest removing her father.
“What do you mean?” Sophia growled.

The woman laughed, the sound deep and pleasant. “Oh please, don’t acted so shocked. The Court is always watching.” The woman showed her teeth again in a grin. “Anyway, I’m here to tell you that you have the Court’s full support, but also if a change isn’t made soon, then the Court will be forced to take matters into its own hands, and we doubt that you would want that.”

Sophia narrowed her eyes. “What does the Court care about my family?”

The woman shrugged. “The Court is concerned about Gotham. Your father has been a vital element in keeping Gotham running…” She paused and added. “...in his own way.” The woman tilted her head, giving Sophia a pleasant smile. “The Court looks the other way where the mob is concerned because it suits their interests, but the escalating conflict between dear old Daddy Falcone and the Joker has raised some concerns. The Court feels that the Falcone family would perform better under a different head. Let’s be clear: they are offering to throw their support behind you. I suggest, for your own good, you accept it Sophia Falcone, or you may find that the Falcone’s are no longer welcome in Gotham.”

Sophia opened her mouth to respond, but the woman leaned forward quickly, surprising her as she pressed her finger against Sophia’s lips followed by a hissed. “Shhh...Think about the offer Miss Falcone. We’ll talk again later.”

With that, the woman slipped out of the car. She leaned down and waved through the tinted window before strolling off.

Sophia frowned, her heart was racing. Angelo and Lucia exchanged a look before Angelo asked softly. “You okay Miss Falcone?”

Lucia added. “Sorry about that Miss Falcone. I don’t know how she got in. We had the locks engaged.”

Sophia waved her off. “It’s not your fault,” she assured them, trying to keep the nervous tremors from showing in her movements. “She represented the Court, and they always find a way.”

She frowned chewing her bottom lip while her guards watched her before she said softly. “Say nothing of this to anyone.” She looked at her guards who both nodded. Sophia smiled softly. “Now, I need a drink. Let’s head over to Belmonte’s shall we?”

* 

Harley woke first, her eyes fluttering open to find that she hadn’t moved from her position, her forehead against Jack’s, her arms and legs tangled with his. She smiled watching him sleep; he looked so peaceful. She could see the light color of his veins under his skin, only marred by the bruises on his face and the split across his bottom lip. She sighed happily, but her stomach made a noticeably loud rumble. She had no idea how long they had slept, but her stomach was telling her it had been a long damn time.

The sound of her stomach growling prompted Jack’s eyes to open. As soon as he focused on her, a huge grin spread across his face.

“Hey pumpkin,” he said softly.

Harley smiled. “Hey puddin.”

Harley’s stomach growled again, louder than before. Jack laughed at the sound and it was the
sweetest sound Harley had ever heard. Jack reached over and cupped her face with his hands tugging her close and kissed her, all with a smile on his face. Harley melted into his kiss.

After a few seconds, Jack grinned “I could eat too. I’ll see if I can get someone to bring us breakfast.” He waggled his brow at her and Harley laughed.

“You don’t have to do that.”

“Why not? I’m the Joker, if I can’t get someone to bring us breakfast, then what am I doing with my life pumpkin?” Jack laughed again, pushing himself up. Harley smiled watching him. Even with the amount of weight he had lost, Jack was so amazingly sexy she thought. The way he moved, the ghost white paleness of his skin, the way his green hair fell around his face. Harley caught her bottom lip while watching his rear, her eyes trailing up his back then down again. There was nothing more beautiful than her puddin naked. She was grinning like a schoolgirl with a crush watching him, but when Jack stood he had to grab a hold of the table beside the bed when his leg began to buckle.

“Puddin!” Harley jumped up, stopping momentarily when the pain from her head wound made her slightly dizzy before she rushed over to wrap her arm around his waist.

Jack frowned with a hiss of pain. “Stupid leg.”

“You’ll be on it in no time--you heal super quick now puddin, but you still need to take it easy, at least for today.” Harley helped him to the bathroom.

“My cane should be at the back of the door…” he muttered.

Harley kissed his cheek (which made Jack grin) before hurrying off to get his cane. She came rushing back with the cane in hand while Jack used the bathroom. When she brought the cane to him, Jack smiled and kissed her cheek. “Thank you sweets.”

Harley smiled tenderly. “Anything for you puddin.”

Jack smiled before he began to move, using his cane to help him work his way across the floor. Since his acid bath, pain hadn’t been that big of an issue, but he supposed a bullet wound though the leg was pushing the limits of even his new pain tolerance.

Jack made his way across the room, moving slowly. “I’m going to see if my Auntie can bring us breakfast,” he said before he walked over to where he had left his phone. He picked the phone up and walked over to flop down on the side of the bed.

While Harley used the bathroom dialed his aunt’s number. He glanced toward the bathroom with a smile. He had an idea for tonight, a little celebration...a gift for Harley. Hopefully she would be in the bathroom long enough for him to set everything up with his aunt.

* 

An hour later, sitting in bed together, Harley in a pair of panties and one of Jack’s dress shirts with Jack next to her in a pair of gold colored boxers, they snuggled together on the bed. They had the blankets pulled up over their laps, each with their bandages freshly changed. (Agatha had insisted she was changing their bandages when she arrived carrying a tray full of breakfast foods, from muffins, to waffles, even two large plates piled with bacon and sausages, along with a pot of hot tea, orange juice and milk, all of which she had Frost purchase hot and fresh from a local diner that served breakfast twenty-four hours a day.)

Harley was curled against Jack’s side feeding Jack a slice of bacon watching him with a silly, but
happy grin on her face. Jack smirked, letting her feed him, his arm around her shoulders, partly just holding her to hold her, but there was a little darker part that was scared, scared of losing her all over again. Jack squeezed her shoulder, laughing softly as Harley nearly shoved another piece of bacon into his mouth.

“You need to put weight back on.” She smiled and wrinkled her nose at him.

Jack laughed. “Yes ma’am.”

Harley kissed his shoulder, picking up her juice to sip it slowly. “Puddin?”

Jack smiled content and chewing on his bite. “Mm?”

“So what are we going to do now?” Harley asked softly. She knew what she wanted to do--she wanted to hurt Batman, but she didn’t want to force Jack into anything he didn’t want to do. She knew he still loved his brother, probably would always love his brother, but her hate for Batman had only grown deeper, darker...

She felt Jack go still next to her. She glanced at her lover with a slight frown. Not only had he gone still, but his blue eyes looked as if a shadow had fallen over them. His usual smiling lips were set in a frown.

“We are going to hurt him,” Joker replied with a soft chuckle. “Two can play that game and I think it's time for Batsy to feel exactly what it's like to lose something you love.”

Harley shifted next to him, a little smile tugging at her lips. “How puddin?”

Joker grinned at her. “He tried to take something of mine Harley, he tried to use you to hurt me, and that is really a low blow.” Joker scowled, but his demeanor quickly turned; he chuckled as his plan began to form. “His little bird...birds are such delicate creatures...I wonder how Batsy would feel if his bird that he loves so much more than me was suddenly unable to fly?”

Harley smiled, her voice soft. “Why stop there puddin, what about his Cat?”

Joker smirked looking over at Harley, lifting a brow at her. “His Cat?”

Harley nodded. “Selina. Why hurt him just once--why not twice? Hurt Batman and Bruce Wayne. If Talia was in Gotham, I would say go after her too, but Selina would be good, don’t you think puddin? We can find everything that Batsy or Brucie cares about, anything and anybody, really show him how much it hurts to have someone you love taken from you.” Harley’s voice had gone low, a darkness creeping into her words that even she wasn’t aware of. She knew she hated Batman and Bruce, but until this moment, even she wasn’t aware of how much she hated him. She wanted him to suffer like he had made Jack suffer, she wanted to hurt him deeply, in a way that he would never recover from.

Joker laughed, nearly knocking their tray off their laps with his laughter. “Oh Harls!! You are so dark and devious!! I love it!!” He grabbed the tray dropping it off the side of the bed to the sound of clattering dishes and spilling liquid, jumping on to of Harley, grabbing her hands and pinning them over her head.

Harley squeaked in surprise, but that turned into a giggle when Jack straddled her. His smile was wide showing off his perfect white teeth. “Hmmm...this viciousness is making me horny Harley, whatever am I going to do about it?”

Harley wiggled under him, licking her lips with a grin. “Mm...I think the best medicine would be for
you to find an outlet for this surge of sexual energy...that’s just my professional opinion as your doctor, that is.” Harley grinned and wrinkled her nose at him.

Jack smirked. “Well, you are the doctor.”

He scooted down, dragging the tips of his fingers along with him, caressing her skin while taking playful nips against the shirt she wore until he was between her legs. He looked up at her. His blue eyes were heated as he slowly began to peel her panties down. Harley watched him, her heart pounding. Jack brushed his nose against the cotton of her panties, his breath hot, seeping through the cloth to her sensitive skin beneath. He pressed his mouth against her, his breath caressing her, followed by a shiver as he pressed his tongue against her panties and into her. She tossed her head back with a groan, her arms still over her head and grasping at the pillow. She felt Jack’s words against her, his breath brushing through the cloth before he pulled her panties to the side and ran his tongue over her in one long lick.

Harley gasped, the feel of his warm wet tongue against her had her seeing stars. She reached down to grasp his hair while Jack pressed his lips against her, hungrily moving his lips over her, sliding his tongue slowly back and forth while he snaked one hand up her torso, gliding over her smooth skin, under her shirt to grasp her breast. Harley bent her legs, pressing her feet into the mattress, her fingers caressing his green hair while he sucked on her, licking slowly, followed by his fingers sliding into her at the same time he brushed his fingertips over her nipple. Harley moaned, pressing his lips against her, hungrily moving his lips over her, sliding his tongue slowly back and forth while he gently pinched and brushed his fingers over her hard nipple. Her desire and pleasure built up like a bubble ready to explode until Harley cried out as her orgasm burst over her.

Jack groaned against her, pulling her, thrusting his fingers into her while she came until his fingers were soaked and slick. Harley fingers in his hair spasmed, her entire body jerking with each brush of his tongue. He pushed up onto his knees, quickly pulling his underwear down. He licked his lips, holding his erection with one hand to brush the satin soft head of his shaft against her. Harley whimpered. “Puddin...please...”

Jack grinned at her, brushing against her one more time, watching her groan and jerk before he swiftly thrust into her. Harley mewled with pleasure feeling him inside her, that perfect beautiful feeling of him thrusting into her. Jack dropped to his hands over her, kissing her hard. She moaned, tasting herself on his mouth while he pushed hard into her, pounding their bodies together. Jack kissed against her lips reaching down to pull one of her legs up and over his shoulder, leaning into her, his kisses desperate, heated.

Harley grabbed his shoulders, holding on, her entire body bouncing with his thrusts. She cried out when another orgasm ripped through her hot and fast, washing over her before she knew what had happened. Jack hungrily kissed her, thrusting into her hard and fast, the sounds of his body slapping against her filled his ears, the sounds of her cries, her fingers pressing into his skin, that delicious wet, tight feeling of his erection thrusting into her body...Jack groaned loudly, spilling himself into her, thrusting until his entire body felt weak and he collapsed on top of her.

Harley kissed him, covering his face in soft, sweet kisses.

Jack smiled nuzzling against her neck, pressing deep inside her, giving in to a few more gentle thrusts, which made Harley whimper and squirm with pleasure.

Jack sighed happily, nibbling her ear, making her giggle before he whispered. “We have plans to make, my sweet.”
Across town, early evening, Bruce winced slightly as he took off his jacket after getting off the elevator at the apartment. Having to show that he wasn’t in any pain while at the meeting in Wayne tower had been difficult and again when he had driven to the manor to see how rebuilding was progressing. His chest hurt like a son of a bitch and the bruises were awful looking, having turned a deep, dark purple.

When he walked into the apartment he was greeted by the sounds of a video game along with Barbara’s laughter and Dick’s cursing. He thought about saying something about the cussing, but considering the young man had to be off his leg for a few days, he decided to give his crime fighting partner a break.

He walked into the living room with his jacket over his arm to see Barbara and Dick on the couch together, Dick’s leg on a pillow across the coffee table bandaged up (with a handful of stitches beneath.) There were at least four empty pizza boxes, cans of soda and a large bowl of M&Ms on the table, mostly gone. Bruce smiled a little. Dick was going to have to work all that off if he kept up eating like that...but he supposed Dick had the metabolism of a young man whereas Bruce was getting old enough that he needed to watch his intake a little more diligently. Between the two of them, Jack had a metabolism that allowed him to eat anything and never gain a pound while Bruce had to work a little harder...Jack had always been either skinny or instantly muscular depending on how much effort he put in while Bruce had always had to work extremely hard on improving his body.

Bruce frowned in surprise that his thoughts had gone to Jack so easily. No...Jack was dead, his brother was dead and only Joker remained. He had to remind himself of that. He quickly banished thoughts of his brother and the confrontation they had just had, but he knew deep down he would never be able to look at Joker and not see his brother lurking under the pale white skin of that green haired fiend. Jack was still in there somewhere; Bruce wanted to give up on him, but he wasn’t sure he could.

Bruce started to walk by when Barbara smiled at him over her shoulder. “Hey! Dinner will be ready soon.”

Bruce frowned in surprise. “Oh?”

“Yes sir--I have taken the liberty of making crown roast of pork with mushroom dressing, some garlic and herb buttered potatoes, and a nice merlot.”

Bruce turned toward the apartment’s kitchen to see Alfred wearing his usual uniform minus the jacket, instead wearing an apron.

Bruce stared, his eyes wide “Alfred?”

Alfred smiled. “Indeed sir.”
She had nearly had a fit, not wanting to be without him, not even for a moment, but Jack had kissed her in a way that had her melting on the spot, caressing her jaw as he whispered to trust him.

But now she was about ready to go looking for him. She was doing her best not to panic, but he still hadn’t come back…

That was when there was a knock at her door.

Harley frowned; Jack wouldn’t knock. She got up and hurried over, walking a little oddly because of her freshly painted toenails, and pulled the door open to see Agatha, Trope, Thea, Viktoria, and Bea all crowded around her door. Agatha was holding the most beautiful vintage red ball gown that Harley had ever seen.

Agatha grinned. “Surprise! Time to get dressed, dear!” She held up the dress.

Harley looked confused. “Dressed, what’s going on?” She stepped back to allow the ladies into her room.

Trope giggled. “Joker has a romantic evening planned for the two of you!”

Thea was carrying a large makeup case and Harley saw that Bea had a curling iron in hand while Viktoria had a bag of hairspray along with other hair tools, and was carrying a pair of red heels.

“What?” Harley looked confused, but Agatha smiled. “Strip, we’re here to get you ready.”

Harley giggled with a shake of her head. “Jack planned this?”

Thea nodded as she set the makeup bag down and started to go through her things. “Yep, not before you strip…” She gave Agatha a mock glare. “Let’s do your makeup. Bea, you have the earrings?”

Bea, who was wearing capri pants and a Rolling Stones t-shirt, put her hand in her pocket and pulled out a pair of simple, yet gorgeous, teardrop diamond earrings. “Got ‘em right here.”

The women all smiled at Harley and Thea grinned crookedly. “Okay girls, let’s play barbie!”

* * *

When Harley emerged from her room she looked amazing, if she said so herself. The girls had managed to hide her bruises and cuts with makeup (though there was only so much that could be done with the bandage on her head. Between Trope and Viktoria, they had managed to style her hair in a way to hide some of the bandage.) Harley wore a vintage, strapless, pleated silk chiffon evening gown with pieces that crossed over her breasts, and going over her shoulders to drop down her back like a cape. Thea had parted her hair on the side and styled her white blonde locks in long curling waves to her shoulders reminiscent of the actress Eleanor Parker. She had the diamond drop earrings in her ears, and wore a pair of ankle strap peep toe red heels (that incidentally matched the nail polish she had chosen.)

Agatha took her hand and led her down the stairs with the other women following behind her. Trope clapped her hands as they made their way to the living room. “Oh Harley, you look so beautiful!! Joker is going to die!”

Thea, her arm around Trope’s waist, beamed. “You are gorgeous.”

Harley giggled and spun around slowly. “I feel like a princess.”
Agatha smiled. “Jack picked the dress out himself, and the shoes. That boy has good taste, learned it from his aunt.”

Harley giggled happily. “So where am I going?”

Agatha smiled and motioned toward the door. “Just follow me.”

* 

Outside the house, just a short walk away, Frost sat in the driver’s seat of a 1951 white Rolls Royce Wraith. Harley gasped in surprise.

“Where on earth…” she began to ask, but Agatha smiled. “I still have a few friends in Gotham. Now, hurry up my dear. Jackie is waiting for you.”

Agatha pulled the back door open and ushered Harley inside. After she was seated, she looked out the window and waved at her girlfriends, women who she realized at this moment meant more to her than she could possibly express. They all waved as Frost pulled away and drove the car slowly, heading toward what Harley had called since they moved in, the X-files building.

The building, which was almost four stories tall with a dilapidated, old-fashioned looking spaceship sitting on the top of it, was supposed to at one time be part U.F.O museum exhibit, part spook house, with the spaceship section of the building serving as a restaurant. Jack had told her once that he was having it cleaned out so they could use it as a cafeteria for the gang. His friends--the people who had rescued him not long after his spill into the acid--had been working on it off and on along with Jason and the others. Harley had completely forgotten about the place until this moment.

Frost pulled up in front of it and put the car in park. Harley frowned. There were no lights that she could see, the building looked as dark and abandoned as she remembered it always being.

Frost slipped out of the driver’s seat, came around, and opened her door for her. Harley slipped out biting her bottom lip. “Are you sure this is the right place?”

Frost smiled and nodded. “Yep, just head on in and take the elevator up to the restaurant.”

Harley frowned narrowing her eyes at him. “Is this a joke, Frost?”

Frost laughed. “No, I promise. The Boss said to just take the elevator.”

Harley sighed. “Okay.”

She took a breath and headed inside.

When she pulled the door open, the ground floor was dark, though the lights above the elevator were on. The place was clean; it was clear that someone had cleaned the walls and floor and the debris that had been in here the very first and only time Harley had been over here had been removed. She walked swiftly over to the elevator to press the button. The doors opened immediately and she stepped inside. The inside of the elevator was clean, someone had painted the walls, and had laid a new, dark red carpet on the floor of the elevator.

She smiled, her heart beating with growing excitement as she pushed the button that would take her up to the top floor.

*
When the doors slid aside and Harley stepped out, she froze in shock.

The room was like a wonderland. The walls had been cleaned and painted a dark midnight purple with swirls of colors that she assumed represented the galaxies. Fairy lights had been strung everywhere, draping across the ceiling and along the walls, mixed with lit candles that were placed here and there throughout the room, giving the space an ethereal, enchanted quality. A little off to the side was a single round table with a white table cloth, two chairs, lit by two candles, one long and tapered the other shorter and sitting in the middle of the table.

Standing in the middle of the room was Jack.

He was dressed in a dark purple and burgundy paisley three piece suit with a black dress shirt underneath, dark purple tie and a pair of purple and black oxfords. He wore dark burgundy gloves and leaned on his cane. His green hair was slicked back, his lips painted bright red and his eyes danced with pleasure when he saw her.

Jack bowed, holding his hand out to her. “Would you care to dance?”

The sounds of Billy Eckstine singing “My Destiny” began to play, filling the entire room with music. Harley blushed walking quickly over to take Jack’s hand. He pulled her against him wrapping his arm around her waist, his hand resting against her lower back while holding the cane off the floor. Harley laid her hand on his shoulder, her other hand tight in his as Jack began to move her around the room to the music. He moved slowly and Harley could feel the way he favored his good leg, but despite the limp, he danced gracefully.

“You look incredible,” he whispered. “The most beautiful woman in Gotham.”

Harley giggled and blushed. “Puddin...you look so handsome, the most handsome man in Gotham.”

Jack laughed. “Poor Gotham, having two such gorgeous people in it making everyone else feel inferior.”

He spun her around before he pulled her in close, pressing her body up against his. He smiled at her and Harley lost herself in his gaze before Jack sang softly along with the song.

“That's how it is
And that's how it has to be
You are everything in life to me
You are my destiny…”

He dipped her back, gazing lovingly at her before bringing her back to her feet (he only jerked in pain once, but his face betrayed none of that, just his smiling at his wife.) He slowly danced in a circle with her, stepping out to hold her out at arm's length, their hands barely touching before he gently tugged her close again.

Jack sang softly along with the music, smiling at her.

“My destiny is to be in love with you
Makes no difference what you say or do
I must stay in love with you
That's my destiny…”

Jack spun her slowly around until her back was to him. He then wrapped one arm around her waist, his cane pressed lightly against her while taking her other hand tenderly. He held her close, dragging his lips along her bare shoulder, up to her ear while he moved them in a slow circle, swaying gently to the music before he spun her back out and into his arms to face him again. This time Jack wrapped his arms around her, pressing her against him. His lips brushed a kiss along her forehead (careful of her wound). They stayed in one place, swaying back and forth to the music, staring into each others’ eyes.

“You are my destiny Harley...everything in life to me.”

Harley whispered back. “I was always meant to love you puddin.”

Jack smiled, brushing his nose against hers, his lips so close she could feel his breath.

“You will never tear us apart sweets.” Jack’s words caressed her lips. “Nothing Harls.”

Harley closed her eyes leaning into his attentions, her lips begging for his kiss. “Nothing puddin.”

Jack kissed her, a slow, tender kiss filled with love and passion. Harley wrapped herself around him, losing herself in his kiss.
It had been a week since the night Jack had gotten Harley back. Jack and Harley sat in their living room on the ground floor of their house with only a couple of lights on illuminating the room in a warm, creamy glow.

Jack wore a pair of bright blue, floral printed athletic pants with a dark purple t-shirt and a pair of orange and blue striped socks. He sat on one of the loveseats, his legs crossed. He smirked and rubbed his chin, his eyes moving over the chess board that sat on the table in front of him. Harley sat across from him wearing a bright pink onesie with white polka dots, fuzzy neon pink socks, and she had her hair in pigtails. Though the bandage was gone from the wound on her head, the stitches stood out dark against her pale skin. Both wife and husband sported bruises that were now an ugly yellow-green color with a mix of purple and blue patches here and there. Each time Jack looked at Harley and saw the stitches, it only reaffirmed his anger, his need to make Bruce hurt for what he had done, what he allowed that Bird of his to do to Harley.

Jack glanced from the board to Harley. She watched with a discerning eye and waited for him to make his next move.

Harley’s eyes moved from the board to Jack, narrowed her eyes slightly. “What are you staring at?”

Jack grinned showing off his perfect teeth. “You.”

Harley giggled with a hint of rosiness in her cheeks. “You’re supposed to be making your move.”

Jack shrugged. “Maybe I don’t want to beat you and would rather just watch you.”

Jack chuckled when Harley growled at him. “You think you’re going to win?”

Jack smirked again. “I know I’m going to win.”

Harley glared at him. “You’re too cocky.”

“It isn’t being cocky if you’re that good.” Jack grinned at her and waggled his nonexistent eyebrows.

Harley snarled. “I’m going to throw one of these pieces at you.”

Jack giggled and put his hands up. “Okay, okay--I’ll be good.”

Harley giggled. “No you won’t, but that's one of the things I love about you. It's that whole bad boy mystique.”

Jack grinned and ran his fingers through his green hair and struck a pose. “What can I say, I’m irresistible.”

Harley giggled. “That you are puddin.”

Jack wrinkled his nose at her before going back to examining the chess board. He was just about to finally make a move when his phone began to chime. Jack frowned reaching over and grabbing the phone, surprised to see that it was Alex.

Jack didn’t have a chance to say hello when he pushed the answer button however; just as soon as he took a breath, Alex yelled into the phone. “It’s fucking happening!!”
Jack frowned with a glance at Harley. “What’s fucking happening?”

“THE BABY!! THE BABY IS FUCKING HAPPENING!!!” Alex screamed into the phone. “I fucking need you buddy! I fucking need you both! I need fucking everybody!! I can’t do this alone!!”

Harley was looking over with concern as Jack mouthed. “Baby!”

“BABY!” Harley jumped to her feet. “The baby is coming?”

“Alex, where are you?” Jack asked calmly.

Alex didn’t answer for a moment, Jack could almost hear the confusion as Alex struggled to figure how where he was or where he was going until he finally blurted out. “Hendershott is on his way, to my house! I fucking need you guys here now!!”

Jack frowned for a moment before he asked. “Okay, but which house?”

Alex was silent for a moment before he replied as if it took him a beat to remember that Jack didn’t in fact know all of Alex’s different home locations. “Upper West Side off B street. There’s a fucking old renovated building on the corner, it’s called the fucking Roosevelt, can’t miss it. “ Alex’s voice shook as he asked. “Please--fucking hurry.”

Jack smiled into the phone. “Will do.”

He hung up and shot a grin at Harley. “We have a baby on the way.”

Harley clapped her hands. “Goodie!!”

Jack laughed. “Let’s change, I’ll call the others. Alex wants everyone there.”

Harley gasped. “Aww! That’s so sweet!”

Jack laughed. “I think it’s more because he’s scared. He never planned on being a dad.”

Harley nodded. “Well, let’s get going then.”

* *

It took Jack and Harley a few minutes to get ready.

Jack changed into a nice, simple bright blue suit with a floral printed tie, black oxfords, and dark red gloves. He made sure his green hair was styled and his lips painted a deep red.

“First impressions are important,” he told Harley with a smile. “We want the baby to know that their Uncle Joker is a man of style.”

Harley giggled, but she had pulled on a simple black pencil skirt and light knit red sweater along with a pair of knee high black boots. She pulled her hair free and fluffed it out with a smile. “Do I look all right?”

Jack pulled her close to his wife to reach up to rub her bottom lip. His heated gaze traveled over her lips, then up to her eyes. “You look good enough to eat my sweet.”

Harley giggled just before Jack kissed her, slow and deep. Harley sighed in delight when Jack released her, then blinked as she suddenly remembered. “Oh, gifts!”
Jack frowned in confusion. “Gifts?”

Harley hurried away from him to drop to her knees by the bed. She reached under, feeling around until she grabbed a box and pulled it out. “Oh, I had bought a baby gift like...months ago just for this...” She sat back on her heels as she pulled the box open.

Jack frowned pouting slightly. “You bought a gift without me?”

Harley glanced over her shoulder at him. “Sorry puddin, I ordered it online and Agatha picked it up for me. I was going to ask for your help I hadn’t intended on buying anything at the moment, but when I saw these I knew they were perfect!”

Harley opened the box and pulled out first a bright white and yellow silicon banana, the end of which resembled a toothbrush in that it had plastic bristles. She handed the banana to Jack who grinned while examining it. Harley also pulled out a stuffed medium size clown with a bright red smile and large blue eyes, wearing a pointed clown hair and costume in bright greens, purples and reds. Harley stood up with the little clown in her hands.

“I saw this and...” Harley smiled looking up at Jack.

Jack reached for the clown and laughed. “Harley, it’s perfect, just like you.”

He leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. Harley smiled and blushed with pleasure.

*

Frost waited in his car with one arm out the window, a smile on his face. Agatha stood outside the car waiting when Jack and Harley emerged. Agatha had a colorful gift bag filled to the brim with all manner of baby related items. Next to Frost another car waited that held Jason, Trope, Thea and Bea, while Bane and Viktoria were in an old beat up looking van (the back of which was filled with balloons) while Zsasz (whom no one had seen since Harley’s rescue) sat on the step to the back of the van wearing his typical black suit.

Zsasz smiled and waved. “Hey.”

Jack laughed. “Where did you come from?”

Zsasz smiled and shrugged. “Just laying low, but heard there was a baby coming.” He held up a teddy bear which only made Jack laugh more.

Trope leaned over her window looking at Jack and Harley. “Do we know where to go?”

Jack nodded. “Just follow us.”

*

The small caravan made their way through Gotham heading toward the Roosevelt. Everyone parked in a different location (just to be safe) with Jack and Harley heading up to the building first. The building looked to have been built about the 1880’s with peaked roofs and curved balconies. The front entrance had a locked glass door with a buzzer on the side. Inside Jack could see a curved desk with a guard sitting at the desk dressed in a blue and grey uniform and a little billed hat.

Jack cupped his hands around his eyes as he peered in at the desk clerk. The man looked up then pointed with a pencil in the general direction of the buzzer. Jack pushed the buzzer, followed by the tired guard’s voice.
Harley and Joker exchanged a look, not sure what name Alex would have listed them under so Jack pushed the button by the door and simply said, “Jack and Harley Wayne…” He looked back over his shoulder at their motley group before adding, “...and friends.”

The man frowned looking over something on a clipboard before pushing the button again. “How many friends?”

Jack sighed and turned around. “Okay I need a headcount, hold your hands up.”

Harley giggled watching Jack count everyone’s hands before he turned back around. “Eight.”

The man looked once more at his clipboard before he nodded pressing a button; there was a buzz and the door popped open.

Jack grinned putting his arm around to Harley who wrapped her arm around his and they headed inside.

The man at the desk looked over their small crowd and shook his head before he pointed at a wall where there were four elevators. “That elevator on the far left, only that one. You’ll have to go up in two separate groups. Take the elevator to the six floor, make a left, walk down past two doors. The last door on your right is the one you want. Do not touch any of the other doors. Got it?”

The desk guard gave Jack a narrow eyed look. Jack grinned brightly and saluted the man. “Got it.”

The guard grunted and went back to his computer.

Jack turned to their group with a smile. “Follow me kiddies!”

* 

Jack, Harley, Frost, Agatha and Zsasz took the elevator first. They made their way down the red carpeted hall (the walls were painted a dull white and with the red carpet Harley kept thinking of the Shining) until they found the proper door. Everyone stopped sharing a startled look when they all heard the sound of a scream from the other side of the door.

Harley giggled. “I wonder if that was Alex or Alice.”

Jack snickered at her before he reached up and knocked once with his gloved knuckles. He had just begun to knock again when the door was flung open.

Alex, barefoot, in striped boxers, and wearing a sweat covered t-shirt, his brown hair sticking up in a million directions, and his eyes wide as his gaze landed on Jack, exclaimed, “YOU'RE HERE!”

Alex threw himself at Jack. Jack barely had time to grab his friend. “Alex?”

That was the moment everyone heard Alice scream. “ALEX!! Get in here!!”

Alex stepped back. “Come on! It’ll be here any minute!!”

Alex grabbed Jack’s hand and pulled, dragging the clown across the apartment with Harley and Agatha trailing behind him.

Frost and Zsasz looked at each other. “I think I’ll stay right here,” Frost murmured.
Zsasz nodded. “Yeah...someone needs to open the door for Jason and the others.”

Frost nodded and pointed his finger at Zsasz. “Exactly.”

The apartment had dark hardwood flooring throughout, the walls painted a soft grey with a few tasteful prints framed on the walls. They passed by a couple of other rooms, what looked like an office and another bedroom until Alex yanked Jack into the large master bedroom. Inside laying on a queen size bed was Alice. She was resting against a huge pile of pillows, her legs up and spread. She was covered in sweat, the t-shirt she was wearing was pushed up over her stomach—which was huge--while Dr. Hendershott stood on the other end looking down with a smile. A young woman in a nurse’s uniform stood off to the side, awaiting instructions.

“Ah, you’re all just in time, the head just crowned.” Dr. Hendershott smiled with an enthusiastic nod.

Alice looked tired, but she smiled, her eyes almost feverishly bright. “You all came!” She started to cry. “I can’t believe you all came.”

Harley smiled. “The rest of the gang are in your living room.”

Alice gasped, more tears flowing. “Oh gosh...there should be some cold cuts in the fridge and I think there....Ahh!!” She gasped in pain, dropping her head back. Hendershott smiled. “Now my dear, you need to focus on pushing. I’m sure your friends can find everything they need. Alex, please…” Hendershott motioned to Alice with his head.

Alex looked at Jack. Jack smiled wrapping his arms around his old friend and hugged him tight. “Get in there and help her, you’ll be fine.” Jack released Alex, placing his hands on the sides of Alex’s face. “Go on.”

Alex took a breath and grinned despite his panic and hurried over to sit beside Alice and took her hand in his one. Hendershott smiled. “Now--push.”

Jack put his arm around Harley while Agatha grinned. “This is so exciting! I didn’t get to be there when you or your brother were born,” Agatha said softly with a glance over at Jack. “I wanted to be, but...circumstances…”

Jack smiled and reached out to brush his fingers over his aunt’s shoulder.

Alice cried out and within seconds the room was filled with the sounds of a screaming new life. Harley watched, tears in the corner of her eyes as she remembered her own brief pregnancy, what she and Jack could have had together. She sniffed and quickly dabbed at her tears. Jack saw Harley’s expression from the corner of his eyes, the pain written on her features. He knew exactly what she was thinking about. He reached over to her and pulled his wife into his arms, wrapping her tight in his embrace, kissed the top of her head. He knew exactly what she was thinking about because the thought had crossed his mind too, how this could have been them if only things had gone differently. He didn’t say a word, he simply held her. After a few seconds Harley wrapped her arms around Jack, holding on tight to the man she loved.

*  

A couple of hours later, Alice and the new baby were both sleeping, Hendershott having given her and the baby a clean bill of health. Alex was sitting on the couch next to Jack and Harley, a beer grasped in his hand looking both exhausted and completely in heaven.

Alex chuckled. “I still can’t believe I’m a fucking daddy...me? I never thought…” He sighed, taking a sip of his beer. “Just never thought a relationship let alone a fucking family was in the cards for
Jack laughed, reaching out to touch the tip of his beer bottle against Alex’s. “There is no one more deserving my friend.”

Alex made a rude noise. “I don’t fucking know about that. I feel fucking sorry for this kid, got me as a father.” Alex sighed. “Just wish my fucking Dad could have been here.” He took a sip of his beer and sighed as he sank back into the couch.

Jack nodded and took a sip of his own beer. “So, what’s your son’s name going to be?”

Alex grinned brightly at Jack. “We decided on Michael, but we also decided to give him two middle names.” Alex kept grinning while Jack narrowed his eyes. “Frank and Jack, so his name is Michael Frank Jack...last name pending.”

Jack laughed. “You didn’t?”

Alex snorted. “Fuck yeah, we did! You’re my fucking best friend man! ‘Course he had to have your fucking name in there.”

Jack laughed. “Oh that poor kid, bad enough he has you for a father.”

Alex laughed along with him. “Yeah, he is going to be a fucking mess, but he is going to be fucking loved.”

The two men clinked their beer bottles together, drank for a moment before Alex looked over at Jack. “So, what’s your next fucking move, man?”

Jack sighed, settling back against the couch and glancing around at his gang. Zsasz and Jason were in the kitchen making sandwiches for everyone while Harley, Agatha and the rest of the ladies were looking through the baby clothes that Jason, Trope and Thea had brought over, giggling at the cuteness of the tiny outfits.

Jack took another sip of his beer before he answered. “I need to destroy Falcone.” He chuckled low, finding what he said funny. “It only makes sense that since we’ve just celebrated a new life, that an old one should end.” A balance, Jack mused running a finger along the top of his bottle of beer. “Falcone went after Harley, he tried to have her killed. I have to kill him, graphically, in front of an audience.” Jack smiled with a crooked lift of his upper lip, his eyes distant for a moment before he continued. “I need to put on a show.” He glanced over at Alex. “I was playing with him before, drawing out the suspense, making a game of it. It was fun, but I’m done playing. He needs to die for what he did.” He took a long swallow of his beer, staring off. “But not just him. I think it’s time that the mob families’ reign ended in Gotham. I know I’ve said it before, but now, I think I might have a plan, one that will allow me to destroy Falcone, and any of them that think they might take his place.” Jack nodded with a grin that Alex decided looked rather sinister. “A plan that will not just hurt Gotham’s organized crime, but will help me hurt Batman.”

Alex frowned. “Batman? But…”

Jack glanced at Alex. “I want to hurt Batman, Alex. I want him to hurt like he made me hurt...putting Harley in Blackgate...putting her out of my reach...” Jack’s voice lowered and took on a menacing tone. “I want him to feel helpless, I want him to know that his little crusade to save Gotham is pointless, that nothing he does can save anyone. I want him broken.” Jack’s eyes glowed with an inner fury that threatened to crawl out.

Alex swallowed a large gulp of his drink, watching his friend, seeing the Joker creeping into Jack’s
eyes while Jack spoke. “He tried to take her away from me...I want--need--him to feel what that’s like...to lose something you love…”

Alex frowned. “Okay, so you want to hurt him? How?”

Jack smiled, Joker bleeding into his grin as he glanced over at Alex. “Harley and I have a plan...anyway, Falcone…” Jack sipped his beer. “I want to start a war.”

Alex frowned looking a little uncomfortable. “A war?”

Jack nodded. “A gang war. I want to start a war between every gang in Gotham. I want them all after Falcone’s head.”

Alex frowned in thought, but nodded. “Make sure he has no more fucking allies.”

Jack’s grin was wide, showing off his perfect teeth. “Exactly.”

Alex worried at his bottom lip for a moment before he asked. “So, how are you thinking about doing this?”

Jack smiled. “If I kill the head of every crime family in Gotham, pin it to Falcone, there will be an all out war.”

Alex cringed. “Fuck yeah, that would do it. They’ll all be out for fucking blood, and territory. Lesser families would see it as a fucking chance to step forward and take more of the fucking pie.”

Alex yawned, tired despite the gravity of their conversation. “So, how are you planning on doing it?”

Jack sighed. “Not sure. I need to get all the heads of the families in one spot. Get Falcone to call them together, but...I don’t want him there personally. I want to pin their deaths on him and cause complete chaos…”

Alex nodded, then said in a quiet tone. “You know Falcone has two other fucking kids besides that fuck Mario. He has a fucking daughter Sophia and another son, Alberto. I might have heard that he is grooming that fuckwad Alberto to be his heir now. Though a lot of people thought it would be Sophia since she is now the eldest, and also the fucking smartest of his three kids, but Carmine is a bit fucking old fashioned. You get that fuck Alberto to call a fucking meeting…”

Jack grinned at Alex. “That’s a fucking great idea.”

They both laughed.

Jack nodded. “I just might be able to pursue this Alberto to put the word out that he wants a meeting with the heads of all the crime families in Gotham. Do you think they will come?” He looked sideways at Alex.

Alex nodded. “Fuck yeah they’ll come, if for no other reason than fucking curiosity to see who the fuck is going to take over the Falcone family. I might have heard that The Roman’s been acting a bit off his fucking rocker since you killed his people and got Harley back. The fucking Roman ain’t used to having his fucking ass handed to him like that. You have been making him look fucking bad since you started all this...Jack.” Alex said ‘Jack’ as if he wasn’t sure he was using the correct name, but when Jack said nothing to contradict him, Alex smiled--partly in relief.

“So, you know where I might find this Alberto?” Jack asked.
Alex shrugged. “A little fuck bird might have told me he’s been seen a lot at this gallery in the upper east side called Kane & Swan. Seems the little fuck fancies himself a painter. Good chance you might find him there.”

Jack smiled. “Thank you Alex. I owe you.” He chuckled. “And poor Batman would just be so busy...too busy...”

Alex frowned. Part of him wanted to ask what Jack had in mind for his brother, but he didn’t know if he really wanted to know in this case. The two men were silent for a moment when Jack spoke again, his tone light once more.

“So, I’m thinking about investing in some bullet proof clothing.”

Alex laughed. “Really, you fucking just now figured out that would be a good fucking idea?”

Jack smiled, but gave Alex the finger.

Alex laughed and finished off his beer, turning to look over the back of the couch. “Hey Zsasz, toss me another?”

Zsasz looked up from where he had been cutting sandwiches in half and nodded, opened the fridge, pulled out another beer bottle that he simply tossed across the room. Alex caught it out of the air with his one hand easily.

“You should eat something, all that beer is going to go straight to your head,” Zsasz added.

Alex grinned. “Thanks Mom.”

Zsasz smiled at him giving him double middle fingers, which had Alex laughing.

Jack took Alex’s beer without being asked and with a hard twist, opened the top.

“Thanks man.” Alex took the open beer, drank a long pull before sighing with happiness.

“I can set you up with a tailor. Man I know…” Alex began, which made Jack chuckle. Alex ignored him and continued. “Goes by the name Vangel, he’s from fucking Austria.” Alex smiled. “Got a fucking crazy accent. Anyway, I’ve sent several clients there looking for fucking stylish, but bulletproof outfits. I’ll give him a fucking call in the morning, set you the fuck up. You can go see him tomorrow night. He’s got a fucking legit business, but he does all the real fucking money making shit at night. All fucking private appointments.”

Jack smiled. “Sounds good, and thank you.”

Alex nodded drinking his beer. Jack frowned, sensing that Alex had something else he wanted to talk about. He waited, giving his friend time to center himself.

Alex sighed. “I’m gonna be fucking leaving Gotham in the next couple of months.”

Jack frowned. “Why?”

Alex sighed again. “Well, I was going to fucking do it anyway, what with the baby coming and all…” He frowned and looked at his pale friend. “But after what you just told me you wanna do…” He sighed, dropping his head back against the couch and closed his eyes. “I want Michael to grow up someplace...nice...you know? Where I don’t have to fucking worry about him getting involved with the wrong people…” He chuckled derisively. “People like me. Fuck. I want him to have a
fucking chance...and Alice, she needs to be someplace...I don’t fucking know...she needs a fucking house, a home where she and Michael can be happy. I mean don’t get me wrong, I ain’t getting out of the fucking information business. I’m too fucking far in to get out myself, but I want to know they are fucking safe from whatever the fuck I’m doing. I thought I would go and stay with them for a while...you know...make sure everything is cool before I came back.”

Jack nodded his understanding before he asked. “You sure you have to come back? I mean, if you wanted to stay away I would understand...especially with what I have planned. And you have a family now.”

Alex opened his eyes, sliding them toward Jack. “You know me man, I can’t stay the fuck away from Gotham for long. I could probably go out to see Alice and my kid every month or so, take a vacation off the grid for a few months here and there, but my fucking place is in Gotham, always has been, always will be. But...I wanted to let you know. I’m gonna be gone for a few months, though I’ll make sure you can get a hold of me...you know, just in case you fucking need your fucking pale ass pulled out of a fire or something.”

Jack laughed with a nod. “Thanks Alex, and I’m glad you are taking Alice and Michael out of here. Things are going to get decidedly ugly in Gotham.”

Alex nodded, opened his mouth to say something when they all heard the sound of a baby beginning to cry.

Alex set his beer down with a grin. “Well, be right the fuck back, going to go help Alice with my son.”

Jack grinned. “Good luck, Daddy.”

Alex’s grin was broad and bright.

* 

Harley ran her hands down her legs, straightening the short, high waisted black ruffled skirt she wore, drawing Jack’s attention to her legs, though he knew drawing his attention hadn’t been what she had been trying to do. He couldn’t help but be distracted, however, he thought with a quiet sigh. His wife had incredible legs, legs he very much like having wrapped around his waist or over his shoulders.

Harley crossed her legs, the skirt riding up a little. Jack glanced from the road back over to her legs. She wasn’t wearing hose; her legs were naked, bare. He very much wanted to run his hand up her leg, but Harley had already smacked his hand once telling him to keep his eyes on the road. She had done it with a playful grin which, now that he thought about it, might mean she was playing with her skirt on purpose. He smirked. The little minx.

He glanced at her again, his eyes moving up from her legs to her torso. She had on a little white pom blouse, see through so he could see the sweet little white lace bra she wore underneath that he knew matched the lace panties she wore underneath the skirt, a matching set. He knew they matched since he had watched her dress (one of his favorite things to do, watch her dress along with watching her brush and put up her hair or when she did her makeup. There was something so hypnotic and sensual about watching Harley. He particularly liked watching her brush her hair. Tonight she had chosen to wear her hair up in what she had called a flip twist ponytail. He had no idea what that was, but she looked adorable and sexy at the same time. He enjoyed the way her ponytail swayed. She also had on a pair little black western style booties, which to Jack only made her bare legs that much sexier. Who was he kidding, he asked himself. Every inch of her was sexy, every inch of her was his
to hold, to touch, to caress. He grinned, his eyes burning a moment. He had his girl back and no one was going to take her from him again. No one.

Jack turned his attention back to the road with a wide, red lipped grin, leaving one hand on the steering wheel of the dark purple Porsche 911 he was driving. Frost had gotten the car for him from the Irish, a gift for the Boss, though letting them go out without him had made Frost unhappy. But Jack wanted to be alone with Harley, and not just at home, but out with her, just the two of them. And going to see that tailor friend of Alex’s was a perfect opportunity.

Jack reached up and began to pull the dark purple glove he was wearing off. He glanced at Harley. He had tried rubbing her leg earlier with the glove on; maybe she would change her mind if he took the glove off. He spit the glove out and with a wicked grin, reached over, laying his bare hand on her bare knee with a happy sigh, sliding his hand down her thigh. “Ahh, that’s much better.”

Harley giggled. “I thought I said both hands on the wheel?”

Jack beamed at her. “Yes, but this is different, I took the glove off.”

Harley laughed softly scooting closer. “Oh, well, since you took the glove off.”

They laughed together with Jack settling back in his seat. Everything was right with his world at the moment. He slid his hand back down her leg to give her knee a squeeze.

Harley laid her head against his shoulder and closed her eyes, wrapping one arm around his biceps and yawned. She was still having trouble sleeping, her dreams haunted by Crane. She still hadn't told Jack about Crane being in the prison. She wasn’t sure why except maybe she wasn’t ready to talk about Crane, about what he did to her, what he tried to do…

She kept hoping that if she didn’t think about him, Crane would leave her alone, but he kept lurking in her nightmares. She knew she needed to tell Jack that Crane had been at Blackgate, but not yet...not now...she just wanted to be with her puddin right now, to banish away all the bad that had happened while they were apart and focus her attention on Jack. Harleen told her it was just because she didn’t want to deal with Crane yet...and maybe Harleen was right. Harley wanted to focus her anger on something she could affect...Batman. She closed her eyes pushing away Crane and her nightmares to focus on right now. She smiled to herself. And right now was good, so very good.

*

Vangel, the name in chunky neon red letters over the small doorway, was located in the middle of a small strip mall between a Lin’s Buffet and a Family Dollar Store. The Buffet was still open and the strong smell of Chinese food wafted from the open glass door that was propped open by a metal trash can. Jack glided past the restaurant, looking at the tailor shop. The establishment was small; the display windows on either side of the door held faceless mannequins wearing what looked to be (though hard to tell in the dark) nicely tailored suits. The place looked to be closed, though Jack and Harley noticed a soft light emanating from somewhere in the back. Jack looked around and turned, driving the purring sports car around the side of the building to the back alley looking for the door to the back of the tailor’s shop.

He parked the car and slid out of his seat with a keen eye taking in their surroundings. They had parked behind a rust colored red metal door just as Alex had told them when he had given them direction to this specialized tailor.

Jack while he pulled his glove back on, glaring at the door. Harley slipped out of the car, glancing first at Jack--who she thought looked stunning in a dark blue suit with a light grey vest. The dark
blue of the dress shirt stood out against the pale, ghostly white hue of his skin. He reached up and ran a hand over his green hair while he walked closer to examine the door, the gesture sending shivers down his wife’s spine because there were few things she liked doing more than messing up his perfectly styled hair.

Jack grinned at her. “Well, here goes nothing.”

He brought his knuckles to the door and tapped out a quick rhythm. Harley’s lips twisted into a smirk; the rhythm of the knocks sounded an awful lot like a Queen song on the metal door. She had opened her mouth, about to ask him if the knock was indeed a Queen’s song when the door popped open to reveal the head of an older woman leaning out around the door.

Both Jack and Harley were taken aback as the woman had to be pushing close to eighty. She was diminutive, maybe reaching just to Harley’s chest, and wore large, bright green round framed glasses, a matching green turban with wisps of white hair curling around her forehead and glaring, bright red lipstick. She narrowed her eyes behind her glasses as she gave Jack and Harley a quick once over.

“You Alex’s friends?” she asked, a slight accent placing her origins somewhere in Eastern Europe.

Jack grinned at her. “We are.” He bowed at the waist. “Joker and Harley Quinn, at your service.”

The woman looked at him with a frown, then at Harley before she grunted. “Vangel will see you now.”

She pushed the door open and walked away.

Jack chuckled with a sideways glance at Harley. She shrugged with a grin. He put his arm out for her and Harley wrapped her arm around his before they stepped inside; the door seemed to close of its own accord once they had stepped through into the building.

The back of the shop no more than a small, plain hallway. The old woman, who wore a brightly printed tropical muumuu in a color that matched her turban, walked briskly past a couple of doors, with Joker and Harley hot on her heels, the old woman moving with surprising speed. She pulled back a dark blue curtain and yelled in a shrill voice.

“Vangel!! They’re here!”

This was followed by a man’s light, high-pitched voice yelling back. “MOTHER!! Stop yelling!! I can’t work with you yelling!!”

The old woman yelled in return, “TACI!!”

Jack and Harley stepped through the curtain to the sound of arguing and the sound of some sort of dance music, but the singer was singing in what Jack thought was Romanian. They were both surprised to see they had entered a large work space. The walls were painted in a light taupe, the floor a nice, polished light hard wood. One wall held a large full-length mirror and around the mirror, pasted to the wall, were hundreds of images of old Hollywood stars in black and white photos all showing them in tailored suits and dresses. A large table dominated the middle of the room along with bolts of cloth, spools of thread in a rainbow of colors, along with all the tools of a tailor.

Standing in the middle of the room working on pinning cloth to a seamstress dummy was a man of around sixty years of age. He wore part of a vivid red tailored suit—the jacket of which was thrown over a chair. He wore the vest and matching tie still, while the sleeves of his white dress shirt were rolled up to his elbows. The man’s short, full, curly hair was longish, curling around his ears and
collar, and was dyed a bright pink. He had a ribbon of cloth over his shoulder, filled with pins and he held a piece of chalk in his hand.

He turned toward them when they entered with a gasp of delight. “Oh, Alex told me his friends were stylish and unusual, but I had no idea!!”

The man tossed his chalk onto a nearby table and hurried over with his arms held open wide. “I am Vangel!! I am so pleased to meet you both!” He stopped right in front of Joker and Harley looking them over with a pleased expression. “Oh my goodness; look at the two of you!! I adore your skin, so perfect, like porcelain dolls!!” He clapped his hands with joy. “And your hair, so unusual.” He tilted his head, examining Joker before he turned his gaze to Harley. “And you my dear, so beautiful! You are like an angel!!” He gasped, placing a hand to his heart. “You two are so beautiful!! You are like the perfect couple!!” He gasped again with joy before turning to address his mother. “Aren’t they mamă?”

Vangel’s mother was over in a corner pouring herself a large glass of Țuică as she muttered back at her son. “Da, Foarte frumoasă.”

Vangel smiled and turned his attention back to them. “Now, Alex said you were both interested in suits that would provide a certain level of protection?”

Joker chuckled. “Yes, I have some deadly plans that will soon be in play, a few strategic…” He frowned, though the edges of a smile tugged at Joker’s lips as he said. “…tactical pieces of clothing would be nice.” Joker smiled wide then. “Besides, a good set of tailored clothing is always a boon. I love a good tailored suit.”

Harley giggled gazing with love in her expression at Jack. “He does love his suits–always has,” she said giving Jack’s arm a squeeze.

Vangel clapped his hands. “Oh, I do love a handsome man with a good eye for clothing. All right, Joker isn’t it?” Vangel giggled with delight. “And I do love that name too. When Alex told me your names, I nearly died with delight!!” Vangel danced back to his table to grab up a measuring tape. “I’ve heard so much about the two of you in the news lately. I feel like I’m working with celebrities!!” Vangel smiled with excitement in his eyes. “Now then, my dears. Let’s get some measurements, styles, colors. Oh, and would you both like matching colored suits? Matching in style I mean, not color. I think that would look simply divine! There is nothing sexier than a woman in a suit, believe you me.” Vangel smiled taking Harley by the hand and led her over to the full length mirror against the wall.

Harley glanced at Jack who gave her an encouraging smile while he answered Vangel. “My pumpkin looks beautiful in anything. Perhaps with your expertise opinion, you have suggestions?”

Vangel nodded. “Well of course she looks beautiful in anything! Look at that figure!! Mm...an angel, yes…” Vangel placed her in front of the mirror and walked around Harley, inspecting her. “Mm...I think red would look so divine on you my dear, red and black are certainly your colors with those striking light blue eyes and that hair!! Both of you have such eyes!!” He sighed turning to glance at Joker. “Simply to die for!”

Vangel laughed with a slap of his hand against his thighs. “Now before we start, you said ‘tactical.’ I have some of the latest in microfiber kevlar, carbon fiber, carbon nanotube technology, nanotechnology, and a few surprises of my own with my work in kinetic gel.” Vangel smiled. “I can promise a suit that will not only save your life, but will make you look good doing it.”

Joker laughed with pleasure pulling over a stool to sit and watch while Vangel took Harley’s
measurements as he asked.

“How do you feel about a suit in purple?”

Vangel’s eyes danced with delight. “Well now, I do love how your mind thinks Mr. Joker.”

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Several hours later Jack and Harley were leaving Vangel’s after placing orders for several complete suits for Jack, separate vests, and jackets in order to mix and match, a couple of cute Bolero jackets for Harley, a couple of vests, two sexy dresses and a complimentary suit to one of Jack’s suits. It would take some time Vangel had told them, but that they would both be pleased, he was sure of it.

Jack smiled as they drove through late night Gotham. The streets were quiet, traffic was light. At this late hour, most of the bars were closing, nightclubs were shutting their doors and people were wandering home. For a moment Jack’s smile drooped, a shade catching his attention from the corner of his eye. He glanced over, but it was nothing...no Bat.

He wondered briefly is his brother was out and about or was he recovering still from their last encounter. He grinned at the thought that Harley had left a lasting impression on Bruce…

He chuckled as he drove.

Harley glanced over with a smile at her husband, reaching over to lay her hand on his thigh. “What’s so funny puddin?”

Jack grinned at her. “I was just thinking how happy I am right now.”

Harley squeezed his thigh. “Me too puddin.”

Jack glanced sideways at her, enjoyed watching the streetlights dance across her features, coloring her pale skin in multiple colors. He reached over with one hand and cupped the side of her face. Harley leaned into his touch closing her eyes, letting out a soft sigh of contentment.

Jack rubbed her cheek with his thumb. She was so beautiful, his heart hurt with how much he loved her. They had been so long apart, he had been so desperately lonely without her...Harley kissed the inside of his palm. She kept a light hold on his hand, slowly working his glove off. Jack shivered. It almost felt like she was stripping his clothing from him, leaving him naked. She turned her light blue eyes on him, her gaze warm, lustful as she dragged her slightly open mouth across his now bare fingers before she licked and kissed his palm, the sensation of her wet tongue against his palm sent shivers down his spine. He had a difficult time watching the road and her at the same time. He found it difficult not to watch her pink tongue against his pale fingers.

Harley slowly slid one of his fingers into her mouth, rolling her tongue around his finger, taking it deep into her mouth. She smiled, her eyes dancing with mischief and sucked on his finger. Jack sucked in his bottom lip, dividing his gaze between the street and her. Harley took her time to suck on each of his fingers in turn, her tongue and lips driving Jack to bite his lip and breath heavier. Jack continued to divide his time between gazing at her, then back to the road when he suddenly snatched his hand back and grabbed the wheel, spinning it around to turn down a side street. Harley yelped in surprise her hands shooting up to the roof to stop herself from being tossed around.

“Puddin!!! What’s wrong?” Harley looked around for the cops or Batman, but she saw nothing, no one.

Jack turned down a street only for Harley to realize they were entering a small neighborhood park.
She could see a path lit by pale lights, the shadows of a swing set, a handful of park benches, along with a thick grove of trees.

“Puddin?” She glanced at Jack as he pulled the car up to the sidewalk where the trees were thickest.

Jack turned off the engine, everything silent except for their breathing.

Jack pushed his seat back as far as it would go, yanking off his other glove before he whispered. “Come here beautiful.”

Harley giggled and crawled over onto Jack’s lap. She licked her lips cupping his face between her hands. “What’s this all about?”

Jack purred, his hands running under her skirt. “What do you mean pumpkin...I just didn’t want to wait...you little minx,” he added in a low lustful whisper.

Harley made a soft groan, leaned in to kiss him, their tongues sliding together in a slow, tantalizing kiss. Jack’s hands slid under her skirt, snaking along her thighs, feeling the coolness of her bareskin. He pressed his fingers into her flesh while at the same time he tugged her toward him—the firm mass trapped by his slacks—pressed up between her legs. He could feel the heat between her legs transferring through his trousers, or at least he imagined he did. He grunted as his hands slid around to grab her rear, pressing her down on him, his fingers digging into the softness of her, the sensation was both delightful and agonizing at the same time.

Harley groaned while she struggled with his tie, yanking it loose so her fingers could move work at the buttons of his shirt. She had gone so long without him that each time she needed him felt like she would die if she didn’t have her hands on her puddin, feel his body under her, hear his moans, the soft way he said her name. She moaned with pleasure feeling him hard between her legs; the thin lace of her panties did little to take away from the sensation of him rubbing against her. The fabric of his slacks created a thrilling combination of sensations that had her rubbing back against him while she pulled desperately at his shirt, needing to touch skin, needing to feel more of him. She gasped in pleasure once she had his shirt open enough to run her hands over his bare skin, kissing him hard while rubbing against the hard mass of his trapped erection.

Jack groaned and bit her lips. It felt so good to have her in his arms again, to hold her, love her. He pushed her back just enough that he could pull at her top, needing to touch as much of her as he could. Harley helped by pulling her top over her head. Jack reached up to grab her bra, shoving the delicate lace up over her breasts. He groaned seeing her naked breasts, full, soft, creamy, the pink of her nipples an invitation to suck and bite. He yanked her forward, bending his head to her breasts. Harley giggled with pleasure, her laugh turning into a gasp as Jack passed his tongue over the hard nipple of her breast before he sucked a nipple into his mouth, his tongue rolling and flicking over her nipple, causing an agonizing need that ripped through her straight to her clitoris. Harley whimpered, rubbed against him, her backside bumping against the steering wheel while Jack switched nipples, sucking, licking, brushing his lips over her sensitive nipples. He reached up, cupped her breasts with both hands, pressed her breasts together until he could suck both nipples into his mouth.

Harley gasped, her fingers caressing through his hair while she arched into his attentions, rubbing her clitoris against him in several slow, undulating rolls of her pelvis.

Jack smiled feeling the tension in her body building, her fingers pressing into his scalp while she held his head to her breasts. He squeezed her breasts, lavishing her nipples with his tongue until she cried out, arching her body against him when she orgasmed with a deep cry.

“Uuh...puddin!!” Harley cried out, thrusting her hips against him, rubbing her clitoris against the
fabric of his slacks, shuddering with each thrust of her hips.

Jack growled with pleasure releasing her breasts, Harley gasped in response.

He reached down between them. Harley, her hands pressed against the ceiling of the car, lifted up enough to allow him to undo his slacks, his fingers fumbling for a moment against the now damp fabric until he finally had himself free, his erection throbbing with need. He grasped himself in one hand, rubbing against her, slick and waiting, while he pulled her panties aside with his other hand. He slowly guided her down on him, dropping his head back with a hiss as Harley lowered herself down on him, the sensation of slick heat wrapping around him had Jack groaning aloud. Harley pressed down on him kissing him hard while at the same time thrusting her hips, grinding down on him before lifting up again. She cupped Jack’s head, her fingers caressing the back of his neck, her fingers playing with locks of his green hair. She rode him, slow and hard, easing up before she brought herself down in a deep grind.

Jack had his hands over her, gliding along her back then back down to her hips, hissing when she thrust or ground in a particular way that sent ripples cascading through his body. He pulled her closer, continued to kiss her, his tongue playing along her lips, teeth grasping her lips, and sliding to bite along her throat. Harley moved faster, bouncing, made the entire vehicle move with her.

Jack groaned out loud, holding on her, the sound of their fucking, their panting and moaning filled the car.

Harley cried out, pressing her forehead against him when her climax hit her. It rushed over her, a burst of hot, bright light that ran through her body, setting every inch of her on fire. She rolled into Jack, thrusting, pressing, her fingers grabbing at his hair, forcing his head back. Her cry of pleasure filled the car. The feel of her soaking him made Jack cry out, the pull of her fingers in his hair, the slight pain fed his building orgasm, his body becoming taut for an intense moment, his feet pressed hard against the floor of the car, before his body let go. His orgasm broke over him in a wave of heated pleasure that had him blacking out for a split second.

Harley collapsed against him, struggling for breath, her fingers caressed gently through his hair. “Oh...oh puddin…”

Jack’s eyes fluttered, a silly smile on his face. “Mm...Harley…”

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Nearby Batman was alone--while Robin recuperated--stopped on a nearby building surveying the park. It was one of the smaller parks in Gotham, but there was a known criminal element that liked to use the park for drug deals after dark. Usually just petty drug dealers or gang members, nothing hefty, but it was enough of a problem that Batman occasionally came this way to check, but tonight the only thing in the park was a Porsche. He frowned for a moment staring at the parked car, detecting slight movements. He thought about going closer to check it out, but decided against it. It was probably just a wealthy couple enjoying the evening…

He shook his head and headed back deeper into the belly of Gotham.
A cover band was singing live at Big Mama’s that evening, each member looking like they had stepped out of the 1980’s. The song they were currently covering, “Running Up that Hill” played through the bar, and a few people were dancing, though most seemed content to linger in the shadows or drift to the bar and let the music roll over them. The lighting in the bar was dim—as always—with soft pink and purple lights casting everything in a soft, rosy glow.

Joker, with his green hair slicked back and his lips painted a deep shade of crimson, stood in the doorway dressed in a fitted black, hairline striped suit with a dark green dress shirt. He wore a black, white, and grey tie with a style of dots that carried a definite ’70’s vibe. (It was his first of several suits made for him by Vangels, along with a matching pair of oxfords.) He pressed his lips together for a moment, his eyes scanning the bar. At the same time he tightened his hold on Harley; the dark green leather gloves he wore made a soft creak when his fingers pressed into her waist. The front half of Harley’s pale hair was pulled up in a ponytail that fell in waves down her back, mixing with the rest of her hair. She was dressed in a scarlet mini dress that looked startling against her milk white skin. The bright garment showed off her long legs, with a draped top and squared shoulders (giving an ‘80’s vibe), while the sleeves ended at her elbow. The back of the dress had a slit from the back of her neck that trailed, down her back to her tailbone, leaving a long expanse of her back exposed.

Joker resisted the urge to stroke his fingers along her pale back, but it was a struggle. He smirked with a slight turn of his lips, his gaze roving around the bar until he saw his people all sitting in one of the large booths that the bar provided for large parties. As the lights danced over them he picked out Frost, dressed as always in a suit that made him look like a hitman. Next to Frost, his arm around her shoulders, was his Aunt Agatha. She looked elegant, hair cut to frame her face, wearing a short, pink, fringed halter dress, and not looking her age in the slightest. Next to them sat Bane in black jeans, a black button down that looked as if the fabric was straining to contain his muscles. Joker could see the faint green color under the man’s skin that followed the path of his veins and his addiction. Next to him sat Viktoria October, his doctor and girlfriend, dressed similarly to Bane, all in black, but she had recently cut her hair shorter. The white streak in the front that swept along the side of her face seemed wider, as if the white had spread recently, but she looked happy leaning against Bane’s side, her hand resting on his chest.

Wearing his red and black motorcycle jacket, Jason was laughing, a beer in his hand and gesturing emphatically as he told some story to Trope and Thea. This time, the girls had turned their hair aqua green, both wearing black mini skirts with fishnets, with Trope in an old Cure shirt and Thea wearing a band shirt for the Korean band Walking After U. Next to Thea was Zsasz in a black on black suit, his bald head catching the lights while he sipped his beer and chuckled at whatever it was that Jason was going on about. Bea, dressed all in a tight green sparkling dress, looked amused as she sipped her drink though her eyes seemed to be mostly on Zsasz. Interesting, thought Joker. Hadn’t seen that little twist coming. He smirked wondering if Zsasz was aware or if he would care if was aware. He glanced down at Harley who seemed to sense her puddin’s gaze on her, and by the knowing look in her eyes, she saw exactly what he was seeing. She gave a silent giggle, bringing a smile to Joker’s face. He loved her laugh, just one of many things he loved about his Harley.

The last member of tonight’s group was here as the Irish representative, the new leader of the Irish gangs, Siobhan McDougal, or as she was known among the Irish, Silver Banshee. The woman’s solid white hair was buzzed on the sides giving her a long type of mohawk. She was dressed all in black and silver from her tight black pants to her striped black and silver top. Joker smiled. He respected people who were dedicated to their aesthetic like that. Joker didn’t know much about her except a few rumors that Alex had dug up on her, but he was interested to learn more and to see how
she worked with his gang, because what he had planned was going to be fun.

Jason noticed Joker and Harley first and called out, waving his beer bottle around. “BOSS!! Miss Quinn!!”

Harley waved. “Hey everyone!!”

Frost stood and scooted over making room in the booth for Harley and Joker. They approached the booth and slid in, Joker draping his arm over Harley’s shoulders. Within seconds of taking their seats Big Mama came over to their table, a bright smile on her face.

“How are my favorite clowns tonight?” Big Mama asked with a smile.

Joker grinned. “Big Mama, don’t you look delightful!”

Harley squealed with pleasure. “Oh my gosh I love that dress!”

Big Mama chuckled and did a slow spin. The wig she wore was done in long pink waves and the dress resembled a 1950’s tea length dress, sleeveless with a sweetheart neckline in light pink, but with a scattering of dark pink roses that trickled down from the bodice to trace the edge of the skirt. When she spun, the full skirt spun out and around in a beautiful circle.

“Oh, this old thing? My new man Maarten has a great eye for fashion and he knows exactly what would look good on me. He picked it out for me.” The expression on Big Mama’s face showed that she was happy.

Joker smiled and nodded his agreement. “Well this Maarten does indeed have good taste.”

Big Mama laughed. “Don’t I know it. He picked me! Now, what can I get you two to drink this evening?”

Joker smiled at Harley, kissing her cheek. “What would you like my sweet?”

“Mm...I feel like a Pina Colada.” Harley rubbed her lips together with a grin.

Joker nodded turning back to Big Mama. “An old fashion for me darling.”

She nodded. “I’ll have your drinks right away. It’s so nice to see you all here again.” She added, “You all enjoy your evening and there should be some dancing later. I know how you two love to dance.” Big Mama grinned and turned away; her dress swung out as she flounced off. Big Mama pulled off the maneuver with grace despite her size.

Joker turned back to the group. “So I’m assuming you are all wondering why I asked you here?”

Jason chuckled. “Oh, that sounds ominous.”

Joker laughed. “Maybe...I wanted to discuss my plan for bringing down Falcone for good and for giving Gotham a good cleansing.”

Bane reached over to pick up his beer. “Cleansing? How?”

Joker smiled holding Harley close to him; his fingers stroked her shoulder while to talked. “I want to kill the heads of every crime family in Gotham and I want to make it look as if it was under Falcone’s orders. This will start a gang war...and a gang war means that dear old Batsy will be very, very busy--maybe a little too busy. And that will allow Harley and me here to take a little revenge on the caped crusader.”
Siobhan McDougal blinked in shock. “Can you do that, Joker? I mean, get all the heads of the families into one place?”

Joker smiled at her, his grin spreading across his face in an ominous way that had her frowning. “Oh I can do anything I want darling, anything at all. But first, we need Alberto Falcone.”

Jason took a sip of his beer with his eyebrows lifted. “Alberto Falcone?”

“The Roman’s youngest and last son. Alex informed me that the word is Falcone is now grooming Alberto to take over the family business after Mario’s unfortunate early demise…”

Agatha interrupted. “Alberto? Doesn’t he have a daughter, Sophia, who’s the eldest now?”

Joker confirmed his aunt’s question with a nod and said, “He does, but it seems our dear Carmine is a bit of an old fashion sexist and is passing up the daughter in favor of the son.”

Trope muttered, “What an ass.”

Harley nodded her agreement. “Exactly.”

Joker chuckled. “Well, if we needed another reason to kill the guy…”

“So what does Alberto have to do with you killing the heads of all the crime families in Gotham?” Siobhan asked with clear concern.

“He has everything to do with it because he is going to be the one to bring them all together for me.” Joker grinned. “You see, it seems that little Alberto has been working behind his father's back. He has plans of his own and maybe he wants the reins to the Gotham underworld before dear old daddy’s death. Alberto goes missing for a few days, puts the word out he wants to talk. With Falcone’s growing list of problems and reports of his instability-- lunacy strikes the best of us, you know--I think the others might want to listen.”

Jason snickered. “Then bam! Kill them all.”

Joker showed his teeth in a laugh. “Exactly…”

He stopped speaking when a young woman in a tight latex orange dress stepped over with their drinks balanced on a large tray. She smiled, set the drinks down, and hurried off.

Joker continued. “Kill off the heads…gang war. Alberto puts out the word that his father found out about his plans and that the killings were all his doing, gangs turn on Falcone, keep him busy and weak…then I just stroll in and…” Joker made a finger gun. “Pop! Of course, after I make sure that he knows it was all me and Harley, that we finally got to him, got our revenge…” He shrugged. “Since our more direct approach clearly wasn’t working, I thought perhaps a more indirect route would work better.”

Agatha frowned before she spoke. “This is definitely going to draw the Owls’ attention Jackie…”

Joker grinned at his aunt. “Good, because I don’t like knowing there is some group hanging around in the shadows spying on everything.” Joker put his fingers in the air and fluttered them about. “Thinking they control what happens in Gotham, thinking they control my family, thinking they can control me…” He laughed. “If they don’t like what I’m going to do, then let them come on out and say their piece to my face.”
Agatha’s frown deepened, but she nodded. “Just...be careful Jackie. This plan is big...taking out Falcone was going to disturb the status quo as it was, but this...taking them all out...” She rubbed her finger against the table. “It’ll be chaos...”

Joker grinned at her. “Exactly, that’s been my aim all along, except this time, I think I can do it. This will create the chaos I’ve been after.” Joker smiled, keeping the rest of his plan to himself; his plan to use this chaos to hurt Batman, to take the Bat’s little Robin and break his wings, to make sure his pet never flew again. And to find his brother’s cat and take all nine of her lives. That aspect of his plan was even more personal than his vendetta against Falcone, going after Robin, going after Selina, hurting Batman, cutting closer to Bruce’s soul and heart...That part of the plan touched on a pain that ran deep in Jack, deeper than just his mind, but tearing into his very soul. No one but Harley understood. Harley had felt that same pain; she understood and wanted to hurt his brother just as much as he did. They both needed to hurt Batman and Bruce Wayne.

Joker pressed his lips together into a thin line as a rush of rage washed over him for what Batman had done. It was hurtful enough that his brother had lied to him for years, ignored him, cut him out of his life, but then to bring that brat in, to replace him, to give himself a new little brother, that had hurt deeply. But then to top it all off by taking Harley away from him, putting her out of his reach and into danger, giving Falcone the opportunity to hurt her, to hurt him, Jack couldn’t forgive Bruce for that. He would never forgive Bruce for any of it, for the abuse, the asylum, taking Harley—the weeks without her had nearly killed him. Batman needed to understand what he had done. His brother needed to understand what that felt like, to lose all hope. That aspect of the plan was far too personal to share here with his gang--his new family--or even with his aunt. She may have sided with him in this fight, but he couldn’t be sure she would follow him down the path he and Harley had decided to take that involved Bruce, the Batman, Wayne.

Harley spoke in a tone that the others had to strain to hear over the bar’s noise. “This will also weaken Batman since he’ll be fighting the gang war on all fronts. His crusader complex will drive him to fight until he can’t fight anymore.” She giggled. “And if he can’t win, he’ll despair, which will make him question his crusade.”

Bea frowned. “Crusader complex?”

Harley nodded and continued. “Batman is a crusader; he thinks that his cause of just and noble. Think of it like the Crusades, the religious war between Christians and Muslims. The crusaders thought they had a moral authority to run over the Muslims, an authority given to them by the Church and God. Batman is like that, except the authority was given to him, by himself.” She gave a soft snort. “Batman is his own Papal authority and since in his mind, he is right, anything that contradicts his view is necessarily wrong.”

Jason snorted as he flopped back in his seat crossing his arms over his chest. “Yeah, that sounds about right. Fucking asshole. I hate anyone who thinks they have the fucking moral high ground, so sure of themselves. What’s that saying--people who live in glass houses?”

Trope nodded. “Batman has a lot of nerve. The men in power tick me off, but someone like Batman, who thinks he has some moral superiority, that self-righteous attitude, that pisses me off even more.”

There was a murmur of agreement that passed over everyone.

“So how do we get Alberto?” Frost asked in a soft tone, setting his drink down and gave Joker and Harley a look of interest. “I’m guessing you already have a plan?”

Harley picked up her drink, smiling down at it. “According to Alex, Alberto Falcone is an art student, never planned on being in the family business. Being the youngest, he has been allowed to
pursue his own interests. He likes to frequent an art gallery called Kane & Swan, it's a place his sister bought him to not just display his own work, but to give him a chance to work at helping display other struggling artists’ works. It's a small place located in The Hills area. We just stake out the place until Alberto appears. Should be easy to pick him up.” She shrugged, leaning back into Joker’s arms. He chuckled and nuzzled her ear.

Jason nodded with a grin. “Cool. Can we destroy some of the art?” He put his hands up as Thea started to reply. “Hey don’t get me wrong. I like art, but I don’t like uppity artists who think they are better than everyone else and I’m betting poor little Alberto is one of those, got Daddy’s money--or his sister’s, same thing--to make sure he can get his shit out there for the public consumption…”

Jason muttered. “I hate rich people…”

Joker grinned at Jason. “I’m sure you can do whatever you want while we’re there darling.”

Jason grinned at Joker. “Cool.”

Joker sipped his drink before he spoke again. “I’m also thinking of bringing in Cobblepot.”

Bane frowned. “The Penguin, but why? Isn’t that little turd under Falcone’s boot?”

Joker smiled. “He is, which is why he’ll side with us. Cobblepot hates being beholden to anyone. Plus, with Alex leaving Gotham for a while, I need a new information broker and word is that Cobblepot is the man to talk to.” Joker had expressed to Harley earlier his previous displeasure with Penguin, but that was in the past. He was willing to entertain an alliance with the snide, little man. “He knows a lot about what's going on in Gotham. Not as good at the work as Alex, but who is, really?” Joker wrinkled his nose with a grin. “Besides, he knows me from way back, he’ll join.”

Siobhan sipped her own drink studying both Joker and Harley before she spoke. “I’m with you--if you can pull this off.”

Joker grinned at her, though the smile lacked humor. There was a coldness to it that reached into his blue eyes. “Good. I would hate to see you and the Irish on the wrong side of this after we’ve worked so well together.”

Siobhan resisted the urge to frown, looking between Joker and Harley. The same flatness was in the eyes of both despite the pleasant smiles on their faces. They made her shiver.

She took a measured breath and nodded. “Agreed.”

Joker laughed smacking his hands on the table. “Good. Now, let’s have a nice evening shall we?”

Everyone nodded their agreement.

The music had just changed. The cover band began playing a smooth, mellow, jazzy version of the song “It Must Be Love.”

Joker chuckled stepping out from the booth and put his hand out to Harley. “My sweet, I think that must be a sign of the dancing that Big Mama promised us.”

Harley beamed at him, placing her hand in his. “I think you’re right puddin’”

Joker tugged Harley to her feet gazing at everyone seated at the table. “If you’ll excuse us…”

He grinned, holding Harley’s hand, his touch gentle as he guided her along with him. He moved her to the bar’s dance floor in front of the stage. There were a few other people there dancing to the
music, though not many. Joker spun around, pulling Harley into his arms in a smooth, graceful movement. He wrapped one arm around her waist while taking her hand in his, but instead of holding her hand up, he laid her hand against his chest. His hand cradled hers in a tender gesture, resting both hands against his chest. His smile was softer, his eyes lighter when he looked down at her. Harley smiled back at him, her gaze filled with love for her husband as he began to lead her around the dance floor, waltzing in a sedate pace to the music.

Joker glided across the floor. He moved with the grace of a professional dancer, moving Harley with him, holding her hand and turning her in a circle before bringing her back into the embrace of his arms. He turned in a circle, spun her out again before he brought her back toward him, this time placing his hand against the side of her neck while she placed her hand on his shoulder. Joker gazed into Harley’s eyes while he reached up to lay his other hand along her forearm and smiled at Harley while they danced. Harley leaned into Joker’s touch. Feeling his fingers pressed against her throat sent shivers along her skin, goosebumps rising over her flesh. He angled her slightly while they moved; their steps flowed easily, the two of them in tune to the movements of the other. He leaned her back holding her with gentle care by her throat before he pulled her close once more. His lips hovered a breath above hers, not quite a kiss. Joker stared into her eyes, both of them becoming lost—the music, the people, the bar, all falling away until they were the only ones on the dance floor. No one else existed in the entire world but the two of them, right now, right here.

Harley’s smile was soft and her eyes danced with mischief before she whispered. “I noticed you said nothing about our plans for Robin or Selina.”

Joker smiled at her as his hand dropped back to her waist. He turned, guiding her in a slow spin. “No--I didn’t.” His smile dropped away from his lips. “That information is too personal. That is revenge that I don’t want to share, except with you Harls.” He gazed down at her. “Our revenge.”

Harley smiled and wrapped her arms around him, rested her head against his shoulder and closed her eyes. Joker held her close, their bodies moving back and forth.

His voice brushed against her hair and tickled her ear. “It will be the ultimate joke Harls, to take away everything that Bruce cares for…” Joker’s voice was low, Harley could detect the thread of pain in his words that maybe even he wasn’t aware of. “To make Bruce...no…” Joker chuckled. “...to make Batman face how unstable and fragile life is, how much of a danger he is to those he surrounds himself with. This time Brucie won’t have me around to ignore, to blame, to be better than. Brucie won’t have little Jackie to watch stumble on the edge of sanity and fall over the edge so that he can tell himself how stable he is, how much better he is dealing with all that life throws at him. No, this time it's going to be Batman that suffers, not Bruce Wayne. Brucie is going to lose his mask.” Joker chuckled. “Brucie won’t be able to say, “Oh, at least I’m not as crazy as my little brother.” No, he’ll have to face the darkness alone...no sidekick, no love interest…all of it ripped away…” Joker chuckled. “Even Alfred left him...he’s all alone and vulnerable…and we are going to take the rest of his stability away from him. We are going to bring Brucie and Batman to the edge and shove them both over.”

They both giggled before Joker kissed her.

Harley melted against him, her arms wrapped tightly around his shoulders and lost herself in Joker’s kiss.

*  

Bruce sat across from Alfred, his coffee cup cradled between his large, calloused hands. Dick was gone, currently at school while Barbara was off doing some shopping. He stared into the dark depths of his mug. Alfred was quiet, holding his cup of tea between both hands, giving Bruce the space he
needed to form his thoughts.

“Jack...he calls himself Joker now...Jack is gone. The man that’s left behind isn’t Jack anymore. He
was bad when he left, but he is so much worse now,” Bruce said in a voice barely above a whisper.
“He is so much worse,” he repeated.

“Is it true he attacked Carmine Falcone from a helicopter?” Alfred asked. “In the open?”

Bruce nodded. “He did. Failed to kill him, though he killed Falcone’s girlfriend and ex-wife. And
Falcone’s lawyer is still missing.” Bruce turned his coffee cup around between his hands, not yet
touching the dark liquid. “He’s killed a lot of people.” Bruce closed his eyes. “I can’t believe my
little brother…” Bruce choked and squeezed his eyes shut.

Alfred looked down at the untouched tea in his cup. “Did I hear correctly that Miss Harleen ended
up at Blackgate?”

Bruce nodded. “I barely saved her from impacting with the sidewalk when she fell from the
helicopter. I can’t believe as obsessed as Jack is with her, with that woman, that he let her fall.”

Alfred frowned. “Bruce, that isn’t fair.”

Bruce opened his eyes giving Alfred a frown. “I should have let her fall. All this would have ended
if I just let her…” He swallowed.

Alfred reached out to lay a hand on Bruce’s arm. “You don’t mean that Bruce. That isn’t in your
nature.”

Bruce stared at his cup. “I wonder.” He sighed and continued. “She was being kept in Blackgate,
until they determined her sanity, but the warden couldn’t wait that long and had her moved to
Arkham. Falcone apparently made an attempt on her life while she was being held at Blackgate, she
attacked some guards, and a couple of prisoners from what I’ve learned. Jack and Falcone both made
a grab for her when she was being transferred to Arkham, with Jack winning. He got her and
escaped from me.” He frowned. “I lost him. I lost them both.” Bruce rubbed his fingers along the
table before he looked up at Alfred. “I don’t know what to do now. I failed him, completely. I don’t
know if I can save them, I don’t know if I can save him…I don’t know if he is worth saving
anymore.” He closed his eyes. “My parents would be so...I don’t even know what they would say
knowing I failed my brother so miserably.”

Alfred’s voice was calm, but the emotion was there, under the surface. “You cannot give up on him
Master Bruce. You cannot give up on either of them, you simply cannot. Jack is worth saving and
Harleen is worth saving.”

Bruce opened his eyes to look at Alfred. The old man seemed older, but there was so much pain in
the man’s eyes, in his voice. “You have to promise me Master Bruce, that you will never give up on
your brother or Miss Quinzel. That you will find a way to save them--promise me.”

Bruce frowned. “Alfred I…”

Alfred squeezed Bruce’s arm. “Bruce, swear to me, you will save them.”

Bruce continued to frown, but he nodded. “I’ll do everything in my power to save them both. I swear
Alfred.”

The older man nodded and released Bruce’s arm. “Thank you Master Bruce.”
The phone beside the bed went off, the sound of a light chime waking Harley up. She frowned against her pillow before she blindly reached over for the phone, her fingers brushing against the polished wood of the bedside table before she realized that the phone was actually on the table on Jack’s side of the bed.

Harley’s groan was quiet. She rolled over and stopped, smiling at Jack who was lying on his side, the blanket wrapped around him, snug and secure. His eyes were closed, some of his green hair brushed forward over his forehead and eyes. Harley thought he looked peaceful now as she reached over and brushed his hair from his face. Jack murmured, rolling onto his back throwing one of his arms over his eyes. Harley giggled, scooting up against his side wrapping her arm around his chest and her legs around his hips.

“It’s time to wake up,” she whispered against his jaw, placing a soft kiss along the smooth line of his jaw, following it up to his ear where she kissed him again. “We have kidnappings to perform…”

Jack mumbled without opening his eyes. “Ugh, it’s too early.”

Harley responded with another giggle. “It’s almost two in the afternoon.”

Jack groaned again. “I hate sunlight.”

Harley kissed the side of his mouth. “It’s rainy out…at least I think it is--I thought I heard rain.” She continued to place kisses along his throat and down his chest before following her trail back to his mouth. “How about I give you an incentive?”

Jack shifted his arm up to uncover one eye. He opened it revealing the startling blue, but he lifted a hairless brow at her, a grin trying desperately to spread across his face. “Oh?”

Harley chuckled. “Yep.”

Harley sat up and hopped onto her knees before she straddled him to sit on his pelvis. She was wearing her panties and one of his dress shirts, a deep crimson one that she had grabbed out of their closet last night. She liked sleeping in his shirts, (especially after Blackgate) she liked the way they always smelled like him. Jack was only wearing a pair of boxers that had a diamond pattern of black and plum across them.

Harley adjusted herself, feeling his semi-hard erection between her legs, wiggling to rub herself against him as she made herself more comfortable.

Jack groaned and gasped. “Ow! Harley you’re heavy!”

Harley gasped. “What?”

Jack chuckled. “I said you were heavy.”

Harley smacked him on his bare chest. “Jerk! Take that back or no incentive!”

Jack laughed reaching down to grab her thighs and bucking. “Nope, not going to take it back. You can’t make me!”

Harley wrinkled her nose at him and began to crawl off him, but Jack grabbed his pillow yanking it from under his head and smacked Harley in the face. Harley squealed and fell backwards.
She sat back up, grabbing the pillow. “I can’t believe you did that!”

Jack laughed. “You are so cute when you’re annoyed!”

Harley hit him in the face with the pillow.

Jack laughed tossing the pillow aside and pulled her down to him. He covered her mouth with his, kissed her. Harley melted against him, wrapped her arms around his head, her fingers brushing through his green hair.

Jack’s hands slid up her back, shoving the shirt up as his hands moved, tracing the curve of her spine. He made of a soft moan of desire against her lips, keeping the kiss slow and sensual, enjoying the way her tongue felt in his mouth, and the softness of her lips against his.

Harley grabbed his bottom lip with her teeth, giving his lip a careful tug that made her puddin growl. She pulled back just enough so she could look into his eyes. They were so blue, she could become lost in his haunting gaze.

“I love you,” she whispered. “I love you so much puddin.”

Jack’s smile was tender, just for her. He brushed his hands through her long white hair, pushing it back from her face. “I love you too sweets. You are my entire world.”

Harley smiled and kissed him again, but this time Jack wrapped his arms tight around her and rolled her over onto her back. Jack tugged at her shirt, finally finding the one button that held the shirt together. He growled against her mouth as the button frustrated him, slipping in and out of his grip until he finally sat up, straddled Harley and ripped the shirt apart. Not only did Jack tear the button lose, but he also tore the shirt.

Harley giggled. “Puddin!”

Jack shrugged. “Vangel can fix it.”

He waggled his eyebrows at her before he leaned in and brushed his lips against her throat.

Harley sighed and arched her head back while Jack’s lips trailed along the sensitive skin of her neck, his lips catching her skin and tugging playfully until he came to her breasts. He moved with slow determination, his eyes closed and focused on the feel of her soft skin against his face, the smooth silk combined with the delicate scent of her, his Harley. He traveled lower, his lips caressed her skin until he neared her nipple. Jack brushed his lips over her nipples, smiling when she gasped again. His smile turned into a crooked grin when Harley made a breathy gasp, his smile turned into a crooked grin when Harley made a breathy gasp, her body arching at his touch. He lay against her, brushing his nose along her skin, feather soft and tantalizing. His fingers brushed with a light graze over her still healing wounds along with the growing number of tiny scars that marred her body, only enhancing her beauty for him. Her scars, like his own, spoke of their journey together. He smiled when he felt Harley’s hands caress his back and shoulders before she buried her fingers in his hair. Jack rolled his tongue over the nipple of one breast, cupping the soft, round mound with his hand, squeezing her breast up before sucking on her nipple.

Harley squeezed her legs together; the heat building in her groin was almost too much. Just the weight of his body on her was thrilling, the feel of his body against her and under her touch, his lips gliding over her skin and pressed against her breasts, the smell of his hair. Jack switched to her other breast and Harley groaned aloud while her hands cradled his head against her breast. Jack smiled, taking his time as he slid down her body planting kisses in his wake or alternating with long licks, dragging his tongue over her skin and feeling the goosebumps on her flesh until he had angled down...
between her legs. He grabbed her panties with his teeth, looking at her face with a playful and mischievous glint in his eyes before he sat back and tugged on her panties with his fingers and stuck his lip out.

“I need these off...” He tugged again, making Harley laughed. “...so I can play with you.” His voice dropped to a seductive whisper.

Harley smiled “Okay fine, if you put it like that.”

She giggled at Jack, raising up on her elbows so he could pulled the fabric of her panties over her rear to begin tugging them down her thighs until he stood up. Jack stood struggling for a few seconds to find his balance. He laughed as the mattress wobbled under him.

Harley laughed watching her husband playing around on the mattress. Her smile was soft, loving. She was pleased to see him happy, so happy that she was with him again and overjoyed to see him easing more toward being himself again.

“Hey, I thought you wanted my panties?” She gave him a playful mock pout.

Jack grinned down at her with a lick of his lips. “Oh, I do.”

Harley giggled again, shoved her panties down the rest of the way, then kicked them off her feet before she reached down and grabbed them, tossing the panties at Jack while he bounced on the bed.

“Hahahaha!!” He laughed, grinning like a kid at Harley as he caught her panties out of the air and wrapped them around his wrist like a bracelet.

Harley giggled and rose up on her knees. “Hey!! I thought you were going to play with me?”

She grabbed his boxers and yanked, pulling down them to his knees. Jack laughed and dropped on her forcing her back against the mattress, the entire bed bouncing. He kicked off his boxers while holding her down and sat on her.

“Now I have you right where I want you,” Jack purred pressing his hands down on her shoulders. Harley smiled, glancing down at his erection with a smirk before Jack simply dropped down on top of her using his entire body to press her down into the mattress. They both laughed, but Jack quickly muffled her laughter with his mouth, sliding his tongue between her lips. Harley’s fingertips trailed with slow grace up and down his naked sides, feeling him goosebump under her touch while she returned his kiss with equal vigor, her tongue twisting and sliding against his tongue, her fingers pressed into his skin. She groaned and bit his tongue, his lips; the kissing made her heart beat faster and her groin burn. She wanted Jack, needed him.

Harley's voice was soft. “I want to be right here with you puddin--always.”

Jack caught her bottom lip with his and pulled before letting her lip go with a grin. “You will always be my girl Harley, now and forever. You are my queen...” He smiled and brushed his nose against hers. “The Queen of Gotham.”

Harley purred. “That makes you my King...”

Jack smiled and kissed her again, but while he kissed her, he reached down and pulled her right leg up over his shoulder, wrapping his arm around her leg with his hand splayed across her knee. He leaned into her, kissing her harder while rubbing his erection against her, hissing with pleasure, feeling the flow of her juices over him, hot and wet against him. He pulled back from her lip, his brow furrowed with the intensity of the pleasure that washed over him before he thrust into his wife.
Jack leaned in heavily, his lips against her ear when he released a deep groan of pleasure, his shaft buried deep inside her. Harley’s eyes rolled, her own answering moan came from a combination of feeling him deep inside her, piercing her, but the sound he made, that deep moan on his lips when he was inside her, set Harley on fire. Their moans mixed together when Jack pulled back just enough to slide deep into her again, thrusting himself as far inside Harley as he could. He shuddered and Harley felt a wave of heat, her body responding with a gush of fluids, not just from having him inside her, but feeling his pleasure at knowing she was making him weak with ecstasy.

Harley grabbed his upper arms, squeezing while she arched her pelvis up against his thrusts. She willed him deeper inside her, wanting and needing all of him.

She whimpered; she couldn’t think of anything she loved more than being at one with her husband. “Puddin…”

Jack pushed himself up to his knees, holding her leg against his shoulder. Panting with a smile on his lips, Jack kissed her knee. His hand glided up and down her smooth leg while at the same time he made slow thrusts into her, rocking his body in fluid motions, his gaze traveling from her face to watching the rhythmic slip and slide of his erection in and out of her.

Harley dug her teeth into her bottom lip, reaching up with both hands to drag her fingers down his chest and stomach, feeling the play of muscles under his milk white skin. She liked the way his green hair fell across his brow, how intense his blue eyed gaze was when he looked at her. His grip on her knee tightened as he fucked her, with slow steady thrusts. She mewed with pleasure, arching her back; her foot dropped down to press against his shoulder. He was beautiful, her puddin, his skin like porcelain, his eyes so blue and hypnotic. She could lose herself, had lost herself in his eyes from the moment she saw him. Harley caressed his stomach, tracing the flat muscles of his abdomen. Her fingers caressed the chiseled lines of his groin, her fingers sliding down until she felt the gooey, wet slide of his erection as he moved. Each thrust had her shuddering, her fingers brushing against the slick, wet hardness of his erection each time he pulled back.

Jack playfully bit her foot while continuing to rock his hips into her, slowing down to drag himself slowly back, his erection wet and shining with her fluids before he thrust back into her, burying himself as deep as possible, reveling in the sound of their bodies, flesh smacking against flesh. He grinned when her breasts bounced with the impact, her eyes rolling closed and her fingernails pressing into his skin. She was so beautiful he thought, like an ethereal being, something beyond an angel. Being with Harley felt so good, and thrusting into her made him feel complete, whole. He swallowed and growled in pleasure. Jack loved her, loved her so completely that he knew he wouldn’t--couldn’t--live without her.

Jack licked his lips as he reached down to brush his thumb over her clitoris, gradually rubbing back and forth in time to his thrusts, his thumb slipping and sliding against her. Harley cried out, and her hands dropped to the mattress to grasp fistsful of the sheets when her orgasm ripped through her the moment his thumb brushed against her. Her toes pointed, her foot pressed hard against his shoulder. Jack grinned and bit the side of her foot, one hand sliding down her leg watching her, his body tense while he continued to rub her clitoris, watching the way she tensed and thrashed in delight under him while her fluids soaked his erection, causing his breath to become more and more ragged. He continued his slow thrusts into her, grinding his teeth together while fighting his own orgasm, but Harley made it difficult with the way she was moaning and moving her body.

Jack grinned and bit the side of her foot, one hand sliding down her leg watching her, his body tense while he continued to rub her clitoris, watching the way she tensed and thrashed in delight under him while her fluids soaked his erection, causing his breath to become more and more ragged. He continued his slow thrusts into her, grinding his teeth together while fighting his own orgasm, but Harley made it difficult with the way she was moaning and moving her body.

Harley ran her hands up Jack’s chest, hooked her feet behind his legs, and thrust her hips up to meet his with a whispered moan. “Jack...my puddin…”

Jack smiled moving her leg aside to ease himself down on her. He wrapped his arms around her
head, his hands tangles in her white hair

He brushed his nose against her forehead. “Harley, my sweet…” He chuckled and placed a kiss at the side of her mouth, another on her cheek, brushing his nose against her and kissing his way to her ear. “My one, my only,” he said with passion, his voice husky.

Harley screamed her orgasm, holding onto Jack as if her life depended on it.

Jack continued moving, his thrusts slow and deliberate, his lips kissing and brushing down her neck while she orgasmed. He fingered the nipples of her breasts, but then caressed the hard buds with his lips, pressing a deep kiss upon each while she rode her orgasm. Jack shuddered as a rush of hot liquid cascaded over his erection.

He bit into her breast with his teeth, growling. The bite wasn’t painful, just enough to convey the intensity of how she was making him feel, how her orgasm felt. He thrust faster, continuing to keep his movements in a rolling cascade of firm thrusts, but he couldn’t hold back any longer. He needed to join his wife in the ecstasy of orgasm.

Harley gasped, holding on with a whispered, “Yes puddin...harder…”

Jack’s blue eyes rolled and he bared his teeth, giving in to his need, thrusting hard and fast; the entire bed rocked with the vigor of his thrusting. Harley dug her fingers into his shoulder, holding on, watching the intensity of his expression, his green hair falling across his face. She cried out with pleasure each time he slammed into her until she felt Jack cum with a burst of hot liquid.

He growled her name. “Harley…”

The orgasm was intense, his body tensed and relaxed so quickly that if he had blacked out he would not have found that the least bit surprising. He smiled with a lazy grin that reached his eyes, making them glow in the bedroom’s dim light. “Mm...now think I could kidnap some spoiled mafia boss’s kid.”

Harley giggled. “Yeah, I think I could too puddin.”

Jack wrapped his arms around her head, tucking his hands behind her skull and showered her with tender, passionate kisses. Harley wrapped both her arms and legs around him, holding him close, content to stay just like this with her husband all day.

*  

Alberto got out of the sports car that his father had given him, a baby blue 2018 Nissan 370Z. He knew it was a bribe, but he didn’t care; the car was fantastic and better than the old Lexus he had been driving. He smiled as he shut the door, ignored the parking meter while he leaned over to look at himself in the side mirror of the car. He was wearing a light, baby blue sweater with tight black pants and a baby pink fuzzy jacket and white shoes. He adjusted the white fedora on his head, giving himself a cocky smile before he turned and headed into the brightly lit gallery. The gallery itself wasn’t located in the best part of town. On either side there were abandoned buildings, trash, graffiti, the odd homeless person for local color, but Alberto didn’t care--the place was his and his alone. The only connection to the Falcone family was him. There were no mafia ties, no illegal drugs or guns coming through here, nothing. The place was exactly what it appeared to be, a small, local art gallery and nothing more.

The gallery occupied the bottom floor of an old two story brick building that had once been a feed store back in the early 1900’s, now converted into a high end--if small--art gallery. The building still
retained the painted sign on the brick on the building’s left side that read in faded letters: Gotham Hay, Grain and Mill Feed. Alberto stepped toward the gallery, but stopped when he heard the sound of a car speeding up and then screeching to a stop directly behind his vehicle. Alberto turned around, his face contorting into an expression of annoyance as he watched two rather large men in black suits step out of a black Mazda like clowns out of a clown car.

Alberto rolled his eyes. “Could you two just take a fucking break?”

One of the men, dark, sun-kissed skin with tiny eyes...Alberto racked his brain for the man’s name...Juan, that was it Alberto thought as the man stepped forward. “Mr. Falcone, we are supposed to be keeping you safe.”

Alberto groaned, dropping his shoulders and rolling his head like a spoiled child. “Oh my GOD Juan!! It’s my fucking gallery!! What do you think is going to happen? This is my place!” Alberto gestured at the gallery. “I’m safe here--now go away.”

The other man, buzzed head, his eyes too big for his face reminding Alberto of the big eye paintings that were popular in the ‘50’s and ‘60’s (which Alberto found not just revolting, but creepy) stepped up beside Juan. The man’s name was Tiberius, which as far as Alberto was concerned, didn’t suit the giant of a man at all.

Tiberius’s voice was low, yet the tone was almost too high for his persona. “Sir, your father hired us to look after you. It’s our…”

Alberto waved a hand at the two of them. “Yeah, yeah, I know--because I’m the future of the Falcone empire. Whatever, I didn’t ask for this bullshit and I don’t want it. I don’t know why Soso can’t have it.” Alberto sighed, his sister Sophia (or Soso as he had been calling her since he learned to talk) wanted to head the family. She liked all the criminal organizational crap. He couldn’t understand why Daddy didn’t just pick her, since she was the best of the three of them...Mario, God bless his soul, had been a perverted idiot, and Alberto just didn’t care. Soso was the best of them for the job; she just didn’t have a fucking penis.

Alberto bit his bottom lip glaring at the two guards before he took a deep breath, brushing his fingers over his thin goatee. “Look, you both stay out here and try not to look like you stepped out of Goodfellas. I am going to go paint.” Alberto turned and pulled the door open to the gallery and started to step inside, then he stopped and turned to glare at the two men. “If you come in here I’ll call my Daddy and tell him that you both were being mean to me.”

Juan and Tiberius exchanged a look before they both said in unison. “Yes sir.”

Alberto gave them a smug grin. “Good.”

*

Tiberius and Juan stood outside the building watching cars go by with disinterest when two young women with matching shades of aqua green hair, both wearing tight black pants and little black lace bralettes with black leather jackets, stopped across the street, talking.

The two men both watched the young women without realizing they were both studying them.

The two women were in a deep discussion when suddenly one reached out to grab the other and they began kissing with abandon on the sidewalk.

Tiberius grinned and elbowed his partner. “You seeing that?”
Juan chuckled. “Damn.”

The two men were so distracted by the two young women making out heavily on the sidewalk across from them that neither man noticed the couple that stepped around the corner of a building on the same side of the street as the gallery. The man was dressed in a tailored suit with hat, glasses and a cane, while the woman also wore a suit and slipped into the gallery.

* 

Joker grinned, his red lips pulled up in an amused smile as he reached up to adjust his dark purple fedora that he wore to cover most of his green hair before he swung his cane around in a circle before placing it down on the floor with a soft tap. The fedora matched the three piece suit suit he wore, a shade of purple so dark that it almost looked black except in the right light. The jacket had sharp, angled lapels and was cut to accentuate his lean figure. The dress shirt was black, but with an emerald green silk tie that matched the green of his gloves and the green in his green and black oxfords, all of which complimented the shade of his hair. He looked over the top of the dark lensed round sunglasses he wore, taking in the details of the gallery before glancing over to the woman on his arm.

“What do you think, Harley?” Harley, complimenting Joker in her own three piece suit, with a black waist cut jacket, matching vest and tightly cut slacks with a blue, silk dress shirt that had a sharp, angled collar. Her white hair was pulled up in twin buns on her head with wisps of white hair framing her face with her own pair of round, dark lensed glasses. She wore a pair of blue gloves, with matching blue oxford style heels. They both cut dashing figures, but the gallery was so sparsely populated that no one noticed them except one of the women who worked there, though she was too busy on her phone at the moment to more than glance over them and return to her conversation.

Harley lifted an eyebrow and sniffed while Joker frowned. “Well, look at this sorry place.”

The art gallery was small, taking up only the first floor of the building with walls painted so white that they were blinding (which made Joker thankful for his sunglasses) with yellow golden polished wood floors. The room had several half-walls that made the place resemble a half-hearted maze. On nearly every wall space was a large painting or several smaller paintings in a variety of sizes. A handful were portraits, while others were paintings of groups of people, and others were abstract, surrealist, or impressionist style works. Here and there on pedestals were strange, twisting sculptures that reminded Harley of some of her nightmares--especially the most recent ones that contained Scarecrow and his gaping maw trying to devour her. Harley shivered and looked away from the more disturbing pieces.

Harley focused her attention on a particularly large painting that was a mishmash of colors, giving the image the look of colorful mud spread across a canvas. She frowned before she nodded, wrinkling her nose at the paintings and sculptures on display, her eyes running over them with a mock critical eye. “Pedestrian,” she muttered in a nasally voice before leaning close to examine one of the pictures and pointing to the signature. Joker chuckled to himself, watching Harley as she pushed her glasses down to the end of her nose and studied the painting with a mock snobbish expression.

She grinned and pointed at the monstrosity. “That’s our boy.”

Joker leaned closed. “Well, I suppose then we are doing Alberto a tremendous favor by saving him from himself.”

Harley giggled. “Aren’t we just the nicest people puddin?”
Joker pulled her close, giving her ear a light kiss. “That we are sweets, that we are.”

He smiled, then sighed with another look around. The two of them walked with deliberate slowness, looking around the corners of the gallery when they saw a young man, his hair slicked back, the telltale white streak currently covered by a red baseball cap. Jason looked handsome dressed in black jeans with holes in the knees, a tight black dress shirt, a black motorcycle jacket trimmed in red, and black trainers. The bad boy mystique was in full swing.

Jason was currently examining a painting that hung near the young woman on the phone, already occasionally giving her a flirty smile or sidelong look. The woman was distracted by Jason, her attention moving from her phone conversation to the attractive, fit young man who had entered the gallery a few minutes before Alberto had arrived. She had even shifted her body around so she was more or less facing Jason, her eyes wandering down his body to give him a thorough—and open—once over.

Joker grinned at Jason (though the young man didn’t see the expression as his back was to them). “Ah, look at my boy, all grown up and flirting with the girls.”

Harley giggled in response.

Joker shrugged. “Well, I suppose we should get this moving along shall we? Let’s go ask our distracted young woman if she knows where our friend Alberto is hiding.”

Harley kissed his cheek and said, “Let me puddin.”

Joker smiled and gave Harley a bow from the waist, putting his hand out toward the woman shamelessly ogling Jason. “Of course, my dear.”

Harley winked at him before she walked over to the gallery employee and cleared her throat. The brunette turned her attention to Harley, clearly annoyed with a frown on her face as she said into the phone. “Hold on.”

The young woman put her hand over the phone, but her eyes darted over to Jason who winked at her. She blushed, trying to turn her gaze toward Harley, but her eyes kept moving toward Jason who was stretching with his hands over his head. It took a great deal of effort on Harley’s part not to laugh.

“Yes, ah, can I help you?” The woman asked, giving Harley a smile that didn’t reach her eyes. In the next second, however, she turned a full smile toward Jason who had moved closer while examining one of the gallery’s odd sculptures.

Harley controlled her urge to giggle by biting her bottom lip before speaking. “Yes, I’m just looking for Alberto Falcone?” Harley searched her memory quickly before she finished. “I represent the Gotham Monthly and we wanted to speak to Mr. Falcone about his art…”

The woman was barely paying attention as the full power of Jason’s charm was being directed toward her. The young man gave her a flirty smirk and a lick of his lips. The young woman blushed again as she answered Harley, though her eyes remained fixed on Jason. “He’s in the back working. Just take that door…” She pointed at a door that was just off-white enough to be distinguishable from the white walls around it. Harley’s brows drooped in irritation. She could see the door now, but she didn’t see a knob. “...and make a right. Shouldn’t be able to miss it, it’ll be the room where you can hear the Backstreet Boys.”

Harley smiled. “Thank you.”
Just as Harley took a step away from the woman, Jason moved in. Harley gave the young man a wink, which had Jason grinning as he put his hand out to the young woman minding the gallery. “Hello, my name’s Jason.”

The woman giggled with a nervous shake in her tone and took his hand. “I’m Susie.”

*

Harley motioned Joker to follow her as she hurried over to the door. It took her a few seconds to find the odd latch that blended into the rest of the door, but when she found it, she flipped it and the door clicked before it swung open. Harley grinned, pleased with herself when she opened it before turning to Joker. “After you puddin.”

Joker smiled stepping inside. “Well, thank you my sweet.”

Harley slipped inside after him, giving the gallery a quick once over before she eased the door closed, the two of them slipping inside, unnoticed and forgotten by the young woman tending the gallery.

Joker chuckled when Harley closed the door, turning around to address his wife. “Jason is a much better flirt than I gave him credit for being. He’s usually so...” Joker motioned with one hand.

Harley laugh. “More straightforward than subtle?”

Joker shrugged. “Something like that.”

Harley stepped closer, took Joker’s hand, and they moved down the hall. “In truth, he doesn’t really have to do much. He’s pretty cute, just focusing his attention on a girl is enough to have her go all goofy.”

Joker stopped and tugged Harley close, one hand on her waist pressing his cane against her, while his other hand reached up to stroke her face. She smiled at the feel of the leather glove against her skin as he turned her and pushed her against the wall.

“Should I be jealous?” Joker asked, his voice low as he held her face in his hand, but she could see the teasing in his eyes as she whispered back, her hands running down his front until she caressed his groin feeling that telltale response of his body.

“Never puddin…” Harley whispered. “Never.” She stroked her hands over him, earning a soft groan from Joker.

Joker stole a kiss, pressed his lips against hers, his mouth moving over hers in a hard, vigorous kiss, thrusting his tongue into her mouth. Harley moaned in response and yanked him close against her. They stayed that way for a few tense seconds, their bodies pressed together, their mouths locked.

Joker pulled away from her mouth, but caught her bottom lip as he did, tugging playfully. He leaned his forehead against hers. “Good. Because I like Jason; would hate to have to kill him.”

Harley giggled and smacked him lightly on the chest. “Puddin!”

He snickered and stepped back, taking her hand. “Come along my sweet. We have a package to pick up.”

*
Alberto had a life size canvas in front of him. He had removed his hat and jacket and now stood in the middle of the sparsely furnished room and staring at the canvas. His paints littered a long utility table while the old boombox style radio next to him emitted the sounds of the Backstreet Boys “Larger Than Life” at a party level volume. He was so focused with staring at his canvas that he didn’t hear or see the two people enter until the music was cut off.

“What..?” Alberto turned to see the two people standing in his work space. “Who the fuck are you?”

Joker grinned as he removed his glasses. “Thank goodness, that was making my ears bleed!” Joker blew Harley a kiss. “Thank you Harls dear.” Joker turned his attention back to Alberto to give the younger man a shallow bow. “Harley and I are going to be your business partners for the foreseeable future Alberto.”

Alberto frowned in confusion his voice dropping to a whisper. “Wait...I know you…”

Joker smiled, reaching into the pocket of his jacket and producing a capped syringe. “Yes, my darling, we are about to get to know each other a great deal better, because you my friend, are about to help Harley and me with a particularly large, detail oriented project.”

Alberto’s eyes widened. “What...no…” The young man opened his mouth, ready to scream for help and wishing that he had listened to his father, to his sister and allowed his bodyguards into the gallery, but before he could issue another sound, Harley closed the distance them in a blur to slug the young man hard across the face. Her closed fist knocked Alberto’s head to the side, at the same time cracking one of the young man’s teeth.

Alberto folded and dropped to the floor unconscious.

Joker frowned, looking between his syringe and the now unconscious Alberto. “Well geez Harls, why did I bother bringing this?”

Harley giggled giving her puddin a shrug. “Sorry puddin, but, well, he was listening to Backstreet Boys.”

Joker shrugged. “True. Okay let me administer this--just in case…”

Joker walked over and dropped down to the floor, placed the syringe against Alberto’s throat, and pushed the plunger home.

He stood and dropped the syringe into his jacket pocket. He pulled his cellphone out next and hit a number, only waiting a couple of beats before he said with a smile. “Bane love, the package is ready.”

He smiled and returned the phone back into his pocket as he turned to Harley. “Step one complete sweets.”

Harley walked over and into Joker’s waiting arms. “Now, step two?”

Joker gazed at her with love shining in his eyes for her then draped his arms around her. “Yes, tonight we go and see a certain little bird.”

*

The fight club was going strong despite the recent fluctuations in Carmine Falcone’s other business ventures. Penguin smiled as he sat on his “throne” and observed the events below, taking a slow drag on his cigarette. He was alone on his balcony observing the fight below, no hangers-on, no beautiful
young men or women waiting to do his bidding. No, tonight it was just him and his bodyguards in
the balcony seats. The music pounded hard and heavy, washing over the people, the fighters. The
crowds were just as big as they had always been since the change over, but Penguin wasn’t satisfied,
let alone happy. Building his own criminal empire had come to a grinding halt when Falcone had
butted his head into Cobblepot’s business, and while he was still making money, Penguin was
paying a hefty sum of it to Falcone. And that just burned his ass.

He blew out a long ribbon of smoke, watching two new fighters below; a man who was calling
himself Drakon and a young woman named Cassandra. The two were performing well against each
other, but Penguin’s money was on Cassandra.

He was so interested in the match that he didn’t realize someone had come up to the balcony until
one of his men stepped forward and hesitated a moment before tapping his shoulder. “Sir, a Sophia
Falcone is here to see you.”

Penguin took a breath and rolled his eyes before he muttered, “Fine.”

A few seconds later, Sophia Falcone was standing beside him. Penguin looked up at her. “And what
can I do for you this evening Miss Falcone?”

Sophia’s gaze was on the fight as the young woman Cassandra had just performed a maneuver that
would have made Batman proud. “I’m just here checking on my Daddy’s investments.”

Penguin snorted. “Or are you looking for some loyal followers to help you convince your daddy that
you should be the one sitting in his chair and not Alberto?”

Sophia glanced down at him. “Would that really be so bad?”

Penguin shrugged. “I don’t really care myself--one Falcone is like another Falcone. Unless you
sweeten the pot for me, I don’t see what my support one way or the other would make a difference.
Your father is old school my dear--he is not going to change his mind. If anything, if he finds out
you’re out recruiting to your side, he might take that the wrong way and decide you are too
dangerous.”

Sophia nodded, but added. “I’m not like my father, and my Daddy would never hurt me. And I
would never hurt him.”

Penguin sighed and turned to give her his full attention. “What is it you’re looking for Sophia? You
want my support in taking out your father? Is that what you’re planning? Or is there something
else?”

Sophia sucked on her bottom lip before she spoke. “Word has it you have information on anything
and everything going on in Gotham.”

Penguin shrugged. “There is at least one man better than me,” he admitted. “But yes...I have my ear
on the pulse of Gotham. So?”

“I need to know what you can tell me about the Court of Owls,” Sophia said.

Penguin had taken a drag on his cigarette, but at the mention of Owls he started to cough. “What?”

Sophia glared at him. “The Owls. I need to know about the Court.”

Penguin laughed then and took a drink of some clear liquid in a small glass that Sophia thought
might be scotch. “Oh, do you now? Look, I’m already between a rock and a hard place with your
goddamn father. I’m not going to start giving you information on the Owls, because up to this point
their eyes haven’t been on me and I intend to keep it that way.” He took a hesitant drag on his
cigarette, but didn’t start coughing again. “Besides…” He let the smoke drift out between his lips in
lazy puffs. “The thing is, I don’t really know anything more about them than anyone else. They’re
likely a myth.”

Sophia snorted. “You know that isn’t true Oswald.”

Oswald turned his eyes back to the fight. “Take my advice Sophia, don’t go poking into places
you’re not welcome.”

Sophia hissed. “Oswald…”

Cobblepot turned back to her with a smile before he added. “Sophia, I like you, I always have in
fact, but you need to let this thing with your father go and you need to stop asking questions about
the Court. The Roman isn’t going to let a woman take over for him. If he retires, it will be Alberto. If
he dies, you know he will have a plan in place to secure your brother’s position as his heir, but you
know what? When your father is dead, you can try and form a coup and take over, but I can tell you,
not all the families will support you. The Roman isn’t the only one to hold such antiquated ideas.”
Cobblepot sighed. “Hell, knowing what I do of Alberto, maybe you’ll get lucky and he will hand the
family business to you when your father is dead. You don’t rock the boat, the Court won’t lift a
finger to stop you. That’s what you want--trust me--to stay out of the sights of the Owls. But keep
me out of all of it. Unless you are going to cut my ties to your family, then we have nothing to talk
about. I just want to make my money in peace.”

Sophia opened her mouth to argue, but Cobblepot had turned away from her.

“You’ll regret this Cobblepot,” Sophia hissed.

Oswald shrugged. “I’m sure I will at some point--maybe…”

Sophia turned and left with a curse.

Cobblepot waited, saying nothing, his attention seemingly on the fight, but the moment he saw
Sophia Falcone emerge back on the floor below, his eyes followed her until Sophia Falcone and her
bodyguards had disappeared through the exit before he muttered to himself.

“I hate the Falcons...I hate the entire Gotham mob.”

“ Well that’s nice to hear, because I think I have an idea for a beautiful partnership.”

Cobblepot’s eyes widened and he turned around to see Joker and Harley standing at the entrance to
his private balcony.

Joker smiled, the lights dancing off his snow white skin. His green hair shone and his lips were a
dark, blood red. “Evening Cobblepot!”

Harley was next to him, her arms wrapped around Joker’s arm, her own pale skin looked smooth like
porcelain, and her lips matched Joker’s with their blood red shade. Her white hair and skin lent the
impression of a delicate doll as she gave Cobblepot of beautiful smile. “Hey Ossie!”

Joker chuckled. “I have some plans I would love to discuss with you, old friend. Just might change
your life!”

Cobblepot rolled his eyes. “Oh, fuck me.”
Penguin lips drooped into a frown as he narrowed his eyes at his visitors. He had no idea how they had gotten up here; there should have been several levels of bodyguards between them and him, but he was smart enough not to allow anger to get the better of him. If Joker had wanted him dead, Oswald was confident he would be dead.

Penguin sighed and leaned back in his chair; he glared at Joker and Harley. “What are you talking about?”

Joker pulled Harley into his arms and grinned at her as they began to dance. Their movements were slow on the small balcony area, but graceful.

Joker spoke to Cobblepot, though his blue eyes never left Harley’s face while he moved with her in a slow circle.

“Well Oswald, Harley and I have plans to finally, once and for all, eradicate the mobsters that have been plaguing Gotham.”

He spun Harley under his arm and turned her in a full circle before he wrapped his arm once more around her waist. “And, since you were there for Harley one night when she needed you, I am willing to make sure that you get a piece of the Gotham pie.”

Cobblepot sighed and crossed his legs. He motioned with his hands. “Sit down and we’ll talk.”

Joker grinned, his eyes on Harley, turning her so that her back was pressed against his chest, his arms wrapped around her waist. Harley smiled and rested her hands against Joker’s where they rested across her stomach.

Joker chuckled. “I knew you would be interested.”

The green-haired man stepped back from Harley, holding her hand as he took the empty seat next to Cobblepot. “So where’s your keeper?”

Oswald glared at him. “If you’re going to be cheeky, I’ll have you thrown out. Harley can stay, but you’re gone Joker.”

Harley giggled giving Joker a light smack on his chest as she sat down on his lap. “Puddin, be nice.”

Joker rolled his eyes. “Fine, I’ll be nice-ish.”

Cobblepot looked out over the fight club, the money being exchanged, his little empire that had been stifled by the interference of Falcone. “So, what are you planning clown?”

“A gang war.” Joker rested his hand across Harley’s lap. “You know the saying: to kill a snake you have to take it’s head? Well, I want to snap the head off this many headed monster, this…” His laugh was soft. “…this hydra. And to do that I have to take all the heads at once.” Joker drew his finger across his throat with a grin. “No more family heads, the families fall into chaos and we pick them off, one by one.”

Penguin rubbed his chin while he gave thought to Joker’s plan. He pulled the end of his spent cigarette from the holder and tossed the still burning ember into the crowds below before he pulled out a cigarette case and replaced the cigarette. Joker and Harley waited patiently as Oswald lit his
next cigarette and took a deep drag on it before he finally spoke.

“Sophia Falcone was here to see me earlier. She was asking about the Court of Owls. I also know she is angry that her father wants her little brother to take his place.” Cobblepot blew smoke out in a slow stream. “She wants the chair, wants to be the head of the Falcone family.”

Joker nodded. “Makes sense. Alberto, like Mario, is poorly qualified for the position. Do you think Sophia is dangerous?”

Oswald shrugged. “No. If she could create a power base, get some of the families behind her against her father or brother, maybe, but she’s a long shot. The mob families are old, with old fashioned ways. She might be able to get a few on her side, but not enough to make her dangerous.”

Joker nodded, then asked. “Why is she asking about the Owls?”

Cobblepot shrugged. “No idea. I told her they are a myth, but…” He glanced at Joker. “The Owls are interested in running Gotham, but they are the old families of Gotham, old bloodlines, old money, and old ideas. I’m not sure how much control they have over Falcone or the other mob families, but I wouldn’t doubt if they have an interest. The mob, like the Owls, helped grow Gotham and they continued to be part of Gotham’s life blood even if no one likes to admit it—at least those who know about the Owls.” Oswald took a drag on his cigarette and let the smoke drift from his nostrils as he spoke. “Sophia would be dangerous if the Owls support her, though. Unlike her siblings, she is like her father—smart, shrewd, capable.” He smirked. “You might want to watch out for her if she can find allies outside of the old mob families.”

Joker smiled at Cobblepot. “Do you support her?”

Oswald’s smirk was open. “I support whoever is going to make me the most money and that is not Sophia Falcone.”

Joker narrowed his eyes with a soft grunt as Cobblepot continued. “So, if I agree to throw my lot in with you, what do I get?”

Joker leaned back in the seat while stroking Harley’s legs and enjoying the feel of his wife’s legs under his fingertips.

Harley smiled and reached up to let her fingers glide through Joker’s hair.

“You…” she said to Penguin. “...get to be part of our growing family and this...your club...is yours, full control.” Harley smiled. “And before you ask, no protection fees, no kick backs. All we want is your loyalty and your word that when the time comes, we can count on you to have our back.”

Penguin smiled. “And you get?”

Harley smiled while Joker reached up, his attention focused on her. His fingers lightly caressed the side of her face while Harley spoke. “We get control of the underworld. All of it.”

Penguin took a drag on his cigarette. “You get all of Gotham and I get...this.” He motioned at the club below. “Not sure if that sounds fair.”

Joker chuckled with a small shrug. “True, but life isn’t fair.” He winked at Penguin. “However, the offer is this: you throw in with us and I’ll make you my partner.”

Penguin turned to look at him fully. “Partner?”
Joker nodded. “Running something as big as the Gotham underworld is going to be difficult and in order to ease the burden, I’ll need people I can trust--well, sort of--someone at my side to help, someone with a mind for business, making deals…” Joker giggled. “Think of it as a junior partner in the bigger scheme.”

Penguin smirked. “Can I trust you?”

Joker laughed, this time a full belly laugh. “Oh course not! But I can’t trust you either!”

Cobblepot narrowed his eyes at Joker. “What about Batman?”

Joker chuckled. “What about him?”

“I don’t think he is just going to let a gang war rage on without interfering…” Oswald shook his head. “He has been making himself more and more of a nuisance. I’m sure if he found this place…”

Joker humfed. “Batman Schmatman. You let me worry about the Bat.”

Cobblepot laughed. “All right, Joker…” He stressed the name in a way that made sure Joker and Harley knew he would never forget who they had been. (Penguin doesn’t know who Joker is does he?) “I agree to your terms...for now.”

Joker reached out a hand and Penguin took it. “Perfect. And if you betray me I get to cut your wings off. If I betray you...well...sorry.” Joker chuckled.

Cobblepot paled. Joker’s grip was tight and for a moment he wondered if he had just traded one devil for a worse demon, but it was too late now he realized.

*  
  
Two days after she had gone to see Cobblepot, hoping for some real information about the Owls, Sophia was on her cellphone, pacing back and forth as she tried for what had to be the fiftieth time to get a hold of Alberto. Usually she didn’t really care what her brother was doing as long as he stayed out of the way. She knew he was usually at his art gallery that she had bought him, or out partying or shopping, but she had realized this morning that she hadn’t seen or heard from him in the last two days, and that was strange. He usually contacted her at least once each day, if for no other reason to complain about his bodyguards and to try to get her to get them off of him.

She glared at her phone when the number went to his messages again. She chewed her bottom lip in agitation. She stared at her phone for a long minute before she walked over to drop her phone inside her purse. She snatched up her purse, did a quick check to make sure her gun was in it before she yelled.

“Angelo!! Lucia!! I’m going out to see my father!”

Her heels snapped against the floor as she stormed out of her bedroom and headed through the living room where Angelo and Lucia were already waiting for her at the door. She gave them a curt nod as Lucia opened the door for her.

*  
  
Carmine Falcone was busy at his desk looking over some records for an import of wine from Italy that was a cover for the import of some art, a rare statue of Demeter, some rare coins and other priceless objects from an excavation site in Sicily. Falcone had paid handsomely for the pieces, a few of which were going to be part of his private collection, while the rest would be sold on the black
market of Gotham and other cities for a profit. The paperwork he was looking over involved the legally imported wine, but there was a code hidden within the paperwork that told him what items were with this shipment. It was time consuming and grueling work that only he and a few other trusted men in the family could do.

Falcone’s concentration was focused on the paperwork when he heard voices outside his office door. He frowned, trying to ignore them, but after a few more seconds he heard the sound of someone getting punched followed by his office door opening.

Carmine reached under the desk for his weapon, then sighed with exasperation when he saw it was only his daughter walking in. She marched in like a storm dressed in a tight grey pencil skirt with matching tailored jacket, matching heels, and a white blouse. Her dark hair was piled on her head in a soft, feminine bun. He frowned at the sight of her; she looked a great deal like her mother.

“Sophia, what are you doing here?” Carmine glanced toward the door. He could see one of his bodyguards on the floor, a victim of Sophia’s bodyguard Angelo. He frowned with narrowed eyes; that man would have to be replaced.

“I haven’t been able to get a hold of Alberto for two days, Daddy,” Sophia said without preamble. “Something is wrong.”

Carmine’s attention was back on his paperwork. “He’s probably just busy Sophia. Alberto is a grown man. He doesn’t have to jump because you called.”

Sophia groaned. “Daddy. Alberto, unlike Mario, doesn’t disappear for days. If he isn’t at his apartment, he is at his gallery, but he hasn’t answered his phone, and he hasn’t answered any of my messages. Alberto never ignores me.”

Carmine snorted without looking up from his paperwork. “Maybe he has finally grown some balls and doesn’t feel like he has to answer to his big sister. Maybe he’s more seriously taken to the idea that he will be head of the family when I’m gone.”

Sophia glared daggers into the top of her father’s head. “I think you should send some people to look for him.”

Carmine looked up, his movements slow and precise as he stood up. Sophia tensed, realizing that she had just crossed a line.

Carmine placed his hands on the desk as he addressed his daughter. “Phia, I appreciate your concern for your brother but, you do not tell me how to run my business or my family.” His voice was cold, all emotion gone as he spoke to his daughter. “You need to learn respect.” She watched as his fingers balled into fists. “I blame myself. I’ve been too indulgent.” His voice had just a hint of sadness in it, but Sophia could tell he was more angry than upset.

For a moment Sophia thought about the gun in her purse, about pulling it out and shooting him in the chest, ending all of this, releasing her father’s control of Gotham, starting the beginning of a new age in Gotham with her as the head of the The Roman Empire, the Falcone Family…

There would be a fight, that was certain. She would have to fight for her position, grinding her little brother under her heel, but she would have the support of the Owls—they had said as much by sending her that messenger. She could kill her father, take over the family, take over Gotham, end this Joker obsession of her father's...maybe do something her Daddy had never thought of like bringing the Joker into the fold, make him and his gang part of the family. The man was crazy, but the Joker had shown he was daring and had the means to be a real issue for Gotham, unless that sort
of crazy could be kept on a leash, directed at her enemies...She knew she could do it. She could solidify her power, get the Joker to work for her, then nothing would stand in her way, not Batman, not the Joker, and not her father...

But as she pulled her purse around, her hand pressed against the fine black leather, staring back at her father who held her in his icy gaze, she knew she couldn't do it. As angry as her father made her, angry at his old fashioned viewpoint, the way he treated her, the way he focused his attention on her brothers, the old fashioned, dated way he ran the family business...he was still her father and she loved him. She wasn’t ready to betray him or his trust. As much as she wanted the family and Gotham under her thumb, she wasn’t ready to sacrifice her father or her brother for that power...yet.

Sophia swallowed, lowered her purse, and bowed her head a fraction. “Sorry Daddy.”

Falcone stared hard at her for a few minutes, which made Sophia wonder if he knew what she had been thinking, if he had some idea of the thoughts that were roaming her mind, but if so he gave no indication before he sat back down. “If we don’t hear from Alberto by the end of the week then I’ll send some people to retrieve him, all right? I’m sure he is just doing something…” He motioned vaguely with his hand.

Sophia nodded. “Thank you Daddy.”

He grunted, moving his papers back in front of him. “Why don’t you go do some shopping? Isn’t that Gotham Spring Gala coming up? You used to love going to that. I have tickets…” He glanced up and smiled at her. “We’ll go to that together, a father and daughter date, so pick up something pretty all right?”

Sophia nodded. “All right Daddy.”

He went back to his work and Sophia walked toward the door. She had just reached for the handle when her father said, without looking up. “Phia, you tell Angelo that if he hits one of my men again, I’ll kill him.”

Sophia stiffened, but nodded. “Of course Daddy.”

Sophia walked out of her father’s office, a burning rage slowly building in her chest.

*

Somewhere in Gotham, Selina Kyle waited, holding perfectly still, her whipped wrapped around a metal beam that was part of the Gotham Museum of Art’s ceiling, but was also great for her occasionally slipping in and out of the museum whenever they had something sweet for her collection, or when she needed to make a quick buck. They kept upgrading the system but for some reason they simply couldn’t make that skyline impenetrable. It was pretty amusing she thought.

She was waiting, counting the seconds until she knew it was safe to move, her eyes on her prize--a single yellow diamond in the display case in front of her, when her cell phone vibrated. It was silent, barely noticeable. She frowned, reaching into the pocket of her black pants and loosened the phone.

“Jade, I’m working,” she hissed low into the phone.

Jade’s child-like voice answered her. “I know, but someone wants to hire you to steal ten million dollars in diamonds from some man named Joe Kerr. The details for the job sound right up your alley Selina! This could be it! The payday is gonna be great!”

Selina smiled at how excited Jade sounded. “Fine, I’ll look at it when I get back all right?”
She could almost see Jade nodding. “All right, hurry I’m ordering pizza!”

“Oh my way.” Selina said with a smile before ending the call. She returned her focus to the cat’s eye diamond she had decided to steal. “All right lovely, let’s break you out.”

* 

Alberto blinked, confused. His eyes opened gradually, his head aching. The first thing that Alberto realized was that he had been stripped of all his clothing except his pants, leaving him chilled. The floor felt slick slick under his bare, aching feet. He couldn’t decide if the floor was damp or just that the room was chilly. Goosebumps were raised all over his skin and his hands felt the tingling of partial numbness. He sniffed, his nose stuffy and caught a hint of a something sweet, though he couldn’t put his finger on what the smell was. For a moment Alberto was happy that at least the smell wasn’t something disgusting, like a rotting corpse or something else just as hideous.

Alberto tried to focus his attention on where he was being kept. The room was illuminated, but the color was all wrong. It felt like late evening, or twilight. Still bleary eyed, he looked around trying to get his bearings and realized the light shining down on him wasn’t white or yellow, but purple. That was why it looked like early evening to him and made the room look abnormal. Alberto realized that he was tied to a chair, his ankles strapped against the legs, his arms behind his back, wrapped around the back of the chair. He could feel that whoever had him captive had used plastic zip ties. He struggled for a few seconds, but he was a secure as he had been moments earlier—not that he expected anything to happen, but he had to try.

Alberto squeezed his eyes shut, then blinked a few times, trying to clear his vision—and then regretted his decision. The purple bulb that dangled a few feet above his head created a strange otherworldly effect on the objects in the room, casting deep shadows that made every corner in the room seem alive with darkness.

The next thing that drew his attention was the piped in music. It was low, more like a whisper in the background; it was one song played on repeat. It sounded old, reminding him what might be played on an old radio from when his father would have been a toddler, or even before. The song, he guessed from the lyrics, was probably called “Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries.” The man’s voice was low and mellow like an old fashion crooner with a big band in the background.

* 

“Life is just a bowl of cherries.

Don’t be so serious; life’s too mysterious.

You work, you save, you worry so,

But you can't take your dough when you go, go, go”

* 

Alberto frowned, closed his eyes, and took a breath. The music made his skin crawl—making horrible situation even worse, he thought. He tried to ignore the music as he took in more of the room’s details. The walls had been painted purple and green and there were spray painted words across the walls in glowing spray paint written haphazardly. It took Alberto several seconds to realize that the words read “HaHaHa!,” “Smile!,” “Let’s Put a Smile On that Face!,” and “Why So Serious?” Along with words were spray painted smiley faces, spray painted knives, cards, balloons, and depictions of clowns. The walls also had clown masks that hung on nails or hooks that decorated the room along
with what looked like old posters of circus attractions, doll heads, and real playing cards stuck to the walls with throwing knives. The decoration gave Alberto the impression that a scary clown had gone on a decorating rampage in the room. As Alberto’s eyes roamed over the room, he thought that if his circumstances were a little different he would have found this to be a rather interesting interactive art exhibit. But right now it was downright creepy.

Alberto took several deep breaths, performed his breathing exercises that his therapist had taught him to keep himself calm. This must be a kidnapping for ransom or else he wouldn’t be alive; at least that was what he was trying to convince himself. If that was the case, if he played along Daddy would give them the money his abductors wanted, get him back. And then the eldest Falcone would have the kidnappers killed. Albert would be free and he would get his revenge, he just had to play along with whatever these nutjobs wanted until his father came through.

Alberto allowed himself a small smile. It would be all right he told himself.

That was when the door—which he hadn’t seen--opened.

He watched, his eyes wide as a man and woman entered the room.

The man was dressed in an old fashion black and white tuxedo with tails, white bow tie, white gloves, and white flower pinned to his lapel. The woman wore a long, sparkling, sleeveless red dress with black criss cross halter top and with a slit on the side that ran up to her hip. She wore a pair of dark red shoes and sheer black hose that ended at her thigh. As she moved Alberto could see the garter belt that held her hose in place. Both of them had ghost white skin. The man had green hair that he wore slicked back except for a stubborn green curl that fell over his forehead. The woman had her hair pulled up in a soft bun, though some white curls fell around her pale face. Both of them had striking, brilliant blue eyes.

Alberto stared and he remembered them. At the gallery they had come to the back to speak to him...but after that his memory of what happened became fuzzy. He felt as if he should know who these two people were.

“Hello Alberto--comfortable?” The man’s smile was broad, his lips were a deep blood red, and there were dark shadows around the man’s bright blue eyes, making them stand out in an eerie way that made Alberto shiver. The man’s expression made Alberto have real doubts about his walking away from this situation.

“Who are you? What do you want? Do you know who my father is?!” Alberto tried to be aggressive like his sister, but his words lacked the conviction and power that Sophia could command.

The man laughed. “Well I’m insulted! Aren’t you Harley? I mean, I would have thought that you would at least know who we are!”

Harley’s bottom lip jutted out in what might have been a pretty pout in another situation, Alberto thought with a shuddering breath. “I know puddin’! I mean I like to think we are his father’s number one enemies.”

Alberto stared and whispered in shock. “Joker and Harley.”

Joker laughed and motioned with finger guns at the young man. “Bingo!”

Alberto felt a deep chill settle into his bones as the gravity of his situation pressed in on him. “What do you want?”

Harley answered the man with a sweet smile. “What we want is to kill your father as painfully as
possible, but what we are going to do, with your help, is to start a gang war like nothing Gotham has ever seen and your dear old dad is going to be the reason for it.”

Alberto looked confused. “Gang War? What are you talking about? My father would never do that!”

Joker walked over and straddled Alberto’s lap, draping his arms over the young man’s shoulders, his face mere inches from Alberto’s while Harley walked around behind him and leaned down, and the fingers of her hand slipped into his hair. Her fingers moved through his hair grabbing a handful to prevent him from moving his face out of the Joker’s way while she leaned down close, her face close enough that her lips could brush Alberto’s cheek. He could feel the brush of her breath warm against his skin, and the feeling made him shiver. This close, he could smell her skin, that smelled like vanilla and flowers.

Joker smiled, his eyes flicked toward Harley; his smile was only for her before his blue gaze snapped back to Alberto. His voice was a seductive purr, and at the same time he caressed Alberto’s face almost affectionately. His blue eyes roamed over Alberto’s face while he spoke, his fingers reached out to caress a lock of the young man’s hair. “Let me repeat myself, which I should let you know…” Joker tapped Alberto on the lips. “…I hate doing.” Joker chuckled. “So please, don’t make me do it again dear.” Joker ran a gloved finger across Alberto’s lower lip and tugged it down a little before letting the other man’s lip go. “You, Alberto, are going to help us start a gang war, you are going to help us plunge Gotham into chaos, AND, you are going to help us not just kill your father, but utterly destroy him so that when he dies, he’ll be thankful for it.”

Joker stroked his fingers across Alberto’s face while Harley giggled in Alberto’s ear. “Isn’t that going to be grand?”

Alberto hissed between his teeth, a flicker of anger creeping out through his fear. “I’m not going to help you do anything!”

Harley’s lips tickled his ear when she spoke. “Oh see, that’s the beauty of this plan, little boy. You don’t actually have to DO anything...your disappearance is helping with that.” She ran a finger down the side of his face, turning her eyes toward Joker while she spoke. “You see, you disappear for a couple a days, followed by the heads of every one of the organized crime families in Gotham who answer to Falcone getting an invitation from you, because little Alberto has decided he doesn’t want to wait for dear old daddy to kick the bucket. You want to get the families on your side and overthrow your daddy...like a government coup.”

Harley and Joker shared a laugh.

Alberto looked confused. “But I don’t want to take over! Everyone knows that! I just want to do my art! Sophia is the one who should take over!”

Joker laughed. “Oh Alberto, do you really think anyone believes that? The Falcone family has ruled over the Gotham Underground for decades, no one believes that a Falcone doesn’t want power…”

“Sophia wants it, but I don’t!” Alberto’s voice was pleading. “Really!”

Harley pressed her cheek against Alberto’s, glancing at Joker with a loving and mischievous look in her eyes while she caressed Alberto’s scalp.

“No one is going to believe that.” Her voice was soft, sweet. She turned her gaze to Alberto who was looking at her from the side, his expression just beginning to look terrified. Harley smiled at him. “You see Alberto, you are going to be trying to consolidate your power, you are going to be bringing
the heads of all the families together to give them your pitch, except, we are going to set it up to kill
them all and frame dear old Daddy. Then you are going to let the remains of the families know that
dear old Pops found out about your plan and tried to kill them all...and since he is going to be the
only one alive...and poor old Alberto will have to go into hiding…” Harley smiled and batted her
eyes. “See, you won’t really have to lift a finger.”

Alberto looked frantically between the two of them. “Then why are you keeping me alive? You need
me don’t you!! You need me…” His voice trailed off as Joker sat back and laughed. “Oh sweet,
sweet Alberto, we are not keeping you alive because we need you, we are keeping you alive because
we are planning on having fun with you. Aren’t we Harley?”

Harley giggled standing up and patting Alberto on the head. “That we are puddin, because…”

Harley walked around to face him just as Joker stood up.

“You are going to be our last present to your father. Our last message so he knows exactly what we
did and exactly who did it.” Joker purred as he took Harley’s hand and gracefully pulled her into his
arms. He slid a hand around her waist, with his other hand he reached into the pocket of his slacks
and pulled out a small, black remote. He aimed the remoted into the shadows of the room and pushed
a button with his thumb. The music that had been playing changed. It still had the grainy, old sound
like the music before, but this time it was a softer song, the smooth crooning of

Frank Sinatra began to play as Joker slipped the remote back into his pocket and took Harley’s hand.

Sinatra’s voice cooed softly:

“Embrace me, my sweet embraceable you
Embrace me, you irreplaceable you
Just one look at you
My heart grew tipsy in me
You and you alone
Bring out the gypsy in me”

* 

Joker and Harley began to dance around the room to the music. They stopped in front of Alberto,
Joker spinning Harley across his body then along his arm. She moved with the grace of a dancer, her
dress falling aside to reveal the long, pale length of her leg. Harley gazed at Joker, her eyes filled
with love, her smile soft and sweet. Joker returned her gaze with just as much love as he pulled her
back close to him, wrapping his arms around her.

Alberto watched them with wide astonished eyes. “You two are crazy!”

Joker swung Harley around and stopped when he heard Alberto. He looked at Harley who was
frowning. “He called us crazy puddin.”

Joker nodded with a lift of one hairless eyebrow. “He did pumpkin.”

Joker stopped and kissed Harley’s knuckles before walking back over to Alberto guiding Harley by
her hand to stop once more in front of their captive.
Joker sighed with a look of a parent dealing with a particularly trying and dull child. “We do not appreciate being called crazy. That’s just rude...and besides…” Joker pulled Harley against him, his arm slipping around her waist. “…that’s between me and my doctor.” He winked at Harley who giggled.

Alberto looked confused before he exclaimed. “She’s your doctor? What the fuck! What the fuck is wrong with you people??” Alberto thrashed in his chair, but was secure in his chair.

Joker’s eyes narrowed at Alberto, his eerie blue eyes cold, before sliding a quick glance to Harley. “I don’t like the way he is speaking to us, do you sweets?”

Harley gave Alberto a look just as cold as Joker’s with her light blue eyes Alberto pulled himself back in his chair as much as he could, wishing neither of them were as close to him as they were at the moment because he was certain he could feel the deranged energy coming off of them, raking against his skin.

Joker’s voice was cold and his blue eyes held Alberto in place as well as any bonds. “I don’t like the way you were speaking at all.”

The backhand slap that came from Joker was swift and sudden, snapping Alberto’s head to the side. But as surprising as the backhand was from Joker had been, the one from Harley was even more surprising. No sooner hand Alberto brought his head back around, the sting of the slap almost numbing his cheek than Harley’s hand snapped out. Her slap was worse, striking his mouth in such a way that his cheek and lips cut against his teeth. Alberto gasped in pain. Harley’s slap felt like his skin has been seared.

Harley growled. “You need to learn to show some respect.”

Joker laughed pulling Harley away. “Shh now sweets, you know he isn’t going to get a chance to learn much of anything you know...since we aren't going to keep him alive.”

Harley glared at Alberto, but within a few heartbeats her glare turned into a slow smile. “True puddin.”

Joker caressed her face. “Let’s leave Alberto to contemplate his life choices shall we? Remember, we have a dinner date, just the two of us...”

Harley smiled, her entire demeanor shifting to being sweet once more. “That sounds nice puddin.”

Alberto screamed. “YOU CAN’T LEAVE ME HERE!!! MY FATHER WILL COME FOR ME!!”

Joker and Harley stopped at the door to Alberto’s prison, Joker already having switched the music back to the song that had been playing before they came to visit. The song picked up, the volume just low enough to be heard echoing around the tiny room.

“Life is just a bowl of cherries.
Don't be so serious; life's too mysterious.
You work, you save, you worry so,
But you can't take your dough when you go, go, go.”

Alberto screamed again.
Joker and Harley turned, both of them laughing as Joker smiled. “Oh, go ahead and scream Alberto, get all the aggression out. No one can hear you here.”

Joker and Harley turned to leave when Harley stopped. “Puddin, we almost forgot!”

Joker looked at her in confusion “What did we forget sweets?”

She leaned close and whispered in his ear and then Joker laughed. “Oh, you’re right…” he said with a snap of his gloved fingers.

Alberto watched as Joker disappeared into one of the dark corners of the room only to reappear a moment later holding Alberto’s coat. Joker grinned (a creepy smile, Alberto thought) that spread across the clown’s face.) “Put this on.”

Alberto struggled while Joker draped the coat over his shoulders and stood back. Joker pulled out a gun from the shadows of his jacket and held it out with a whispered: “Make sure to smile my dear and remember, life is just a bowl of cherries, don’t take it serious.”

The sound of a gunshot filled the room.

*

Dinner that night was a simple table set with a white table cloth, candles, some roses, and the gentle sounds of a string quartet playing at Big Mama’s club. The club had closed early for the night with Big Mama cleaning up the place and making it look as romantic as she could for her two special guests.

Big Mama had arranged for the quartet, a couple of her boys and two of the bar’s waitresses who happened to be music students (though one played an electric guitar), forming them into Big Mama’s Quartet. They occupied the stage near where Big Mama had set up the small, intimate table for Joker and Harley. They were now on the stage doing a few last minute adjustments to their instruments while Big Mama yelled out orders to the kitchen in the back.

“You almost have the steaks done Wallace?” Big Mama walked hurriedly over to the door that led to the kitchen and pushed it open to lean in as she yelled. Wallace--whom Big Mama recognized as a very attractive older man--looked over at the door. “Almost Big Mama. Don’t worry--it’ll be perfect.” He winked at her, giving the large woman the shivers.

She wrinkled her nose at him and winked back. “Handsome devil.”

Wallace grinned and continued to cook.

Big Mama turned and walked back to the table to make a few last touches, adjusting the wine glasses, making sure the bottle in the ice bucket was still chilled when she heard Martell yelled. “They’re here!”

Big Mama’s lips curled into a happy grin. This romantic dinner was a thank you for everything that the two of them had done for her. The dinner had been her suggestion, a romantic moment before all hell broke loose. (She wasn’t clear on the details, not being an official member of Joker and Harley’s gang, but she knew enough to know something big was going to occur soon and they had already guaranteed her protection.) And because this was a gift, she wanted everything to be perfect.

She arrived at the door just as Frost pushed it open, holding it for Joker and Harley who stepped into Big Mama’s establishment holding hands. When she saw them Big Mama beamed. The couple looked elegant and sophisticated in their clothing, Joker in a tuxedo and Harley in a snug, sexy dress
Joker grinned and winked at the tall woman. “Well thank you for this Big Mama. Harley and I haven’t been on a date in ages, have we sweets?”

Harley nodded, her voice soft as she squeezed Joker’s hand. “Not for a very long time.”

Big Mama gestured and her thrown together string quartet began to play, blending well together as they began to play. (Big Mama was relieved for their competence in playing.) She turned motioning for her guests to follow her.

“This way.”

Harley gasped when she saw the table set up in the middle of what was usually the place’s dance floor. “Oh Mama, it's so romantic!”

Big Mama smiled, pleased with Harley’s reaction. “I’m so glad. Now, you two make yourselves comfortable--your food will be ready momentarily. And if you need anything at all, I’ll be over at the bar.”

Joker smiled at her. “Thank you Mama, this is perfect.”

“Oh yes Mama, it’s fantastic!” Harley let go of Joker’s hand to throw her arms around Big Mama. The large woman looked a stunned, but also pleased.

“Anything for you two,” she said, returning Harley’s hug before she stepped back and turned to hurry to the kitchen.

Joker pulled Harley’s seat out for her, making sure she was comfortable before he took his own seat. Once seated, he reached for the wine, uncorking it and proceeded to pour them each a glass. Harley picked hers up once he was finished. The wine was dark red, almost black in the dim lighting of the club. She took a sip, smiling at Joker.

“This is so nice,” she said with a glimmer in her eyes.

Joker nodded. “It is. I thought a quiet night together before our plan starts to unfold would be nice.”

Harley giggled. “You are such a romantic, Jack.”

Joker shrugged, giving Harley a smile. “You bring out the best in me sweets.”

They both laughed softly before Harley set her wine down. “Have there been any bites from Selina yet?”

Joker sipped his own wine. “Yes, just this evening in fact. Agatha informed me the bait we set for her, a job to steal some diamonds from a Mr. Joe Kerr, was taken. I knew she would...that thief couldn’t resist a reward that big, nor could she resist that much in diamonds. I expect she thinks she will double-cross the client who hired her for the job.” He laughed. “Won’t she be surprised to find out it’s us?!”

Harley giggled. “And won’t Bruce be surprised when we hurt his little kitty.”

Joker picked up his wine holding it up for a toast. Harley picked hers up and held the glass next to his. Joker grinned at her, his blue eyes dancing. “To well-executed revenge!”

Harley laughed. “To well-executed revenge!”
They sipped their wine when Big Mama appeared with their plates.

“Fresh off the grill and just like you ordered!” she said with a bright smile, setting their plates in front of them.

Joker groaned with pleasure. “That smells heavenly.”

Harley nodded. “Oh, yes it does!”

“Take a quick bite so I can tell Wallace, my chef, what you thought. He is so sensitive about his work, just like any artist.” Big Mama grinned followed by a giggle. “And he is so attractive.”

Joker laughed cutting into his steak as Harley did the same. They both took their bites followed by a series of hilarious sounding moaning as they enjoyed the taste of the excellently cooked steak.

Harley groaned. “Oh my god, this is the best steak I have ever had!”

Joker nodded his agreement. “Our compliments to the chef!”

Big Mama winked. “I’ll take a great deal of pleasure in telling him.” She hurried off as Joker and Harley dug into their meal.

They ate in silence for a few minutes until Harley glanced over at her husband, picking up her wine. “Puddin? I was wondering...I mean Alberto and you talking about me being your doctor and all. I know we haven’t really talked about...Bruce...your plans...” She motioned with her glass in a vague sort of way. “I just...” She took a breath. “How are you doing?” she asked, her brow furrowed with concern.

Joker lifted his hairless brows at her in amusement. “Harley Quinn, are you trying to doctor me right now?”

Harley made a face. “No puddin, I just...” She frowned and took a large gulp of her wine. “Never mind.”

Joker set his utensils down and picked up his wine. “It’s all right sweets, though I have thought about asking you the same thing. You are still having nightmares about Blackgate, aren’t you?” Harley paled at the mention of the prison. They hadn’t spoken about Blackgate since her rescue. She knew he noticed her bad dreams; it wasn’t exactly like it was something she could keep hidden, but she had yet to mention Crane to him. There never seemed to be a good time to do so. And, as she thought about it, she worried about telling her husband...she worried about herself, talking about Crane terrified her. Knowing he was still out there in Gotham somewhere waiting...like a spider...She suppressed a shiver. Even now she didn’t want to talk about what had happened at Blackgate. She didn’t want to think about it at all and she didn’t want to burden Joker with the knowledge that Crane had been in there with her, that he had access to her and...Harley took a large swallow of wine. She wasn’t ready to talk about it, not yet. She looked up at Joker to see him studying her face. He had to realize something was wrong, but he didn’t push, just like she didn’t push about discussing his feelings toward Bruce, toward Batman. They were a complex, twisted ball that her picking at would...Harley frowned staring at her wine glass. She didn’t want to let Bruce or Batman ruin their dinner date.

They were both quiet for a long few seconds before Joker said in a quiet tone. “The past is the past sweets and whatever doesn’t kill you, simply makes you stranger.”

He grinned at her and held his hand out. “Shall we dance, lover?”
Harley gazed at him, her eyes filled with longing, with lust, and with a love so deep she knew it would kill her. She knew it just as surely as she knew that he felt the same way.

“I would love to puddin.” Harley smiled and took his hand. Joker led her out onto the dance floor.

He took her hand, laid it against his chest, covered her hand with his while his other hand went around her waist. He tugged her close, her hips flush with his while he spread the fingers of his hand against the small of her back. Harley wrapped her other arm around his shoulders, her fingers gasped the cloth of his jacket as she laid her cheek against his, their bodies so close that nothing could come between them. Joker moved her in a slow circle, his nose pressed against her hair, their hearts beating in time together while they moved.

Harley closed her eyes and let herself relax into her husband, letting all her fears, her worries, thoughts of their plans for Gotham, for Batman—all of it—for the moment, was washed away. Her mind, her heart, filled only with thoughts of Joker, her Joker. Harley only wanted to think about the man she loved and this moment she was sharing with him. The beat of his heart against hers, the feel of his body pressed against her, the tickle of his breath, warm across her hair, and the feel of his arms around her; she wanted to stay in this moment forever, she wanted to forget about Gotham and Batman. Harley only wanted him, Jack, her Joker.

The connection between them flared hot and passionate at the same time that it twisted and turned, bending them closer and closer together. Harley felt so interwoven with her Joker that she doubted one of them could exist...no she knew it...one could not exist without the other. She loved him with every fiber of her being. She could never be without him, her puddin was more than simply the man she loved. She could’t find the words, so she tightened her hold on him. She squeezed her eyes shut against the tears that threatened to spill over. He was her drug, her obsession, her partner, her lover, her everything and she would go wherever he led her.

Joker squeezed his eyes closed as he held her close and the music washed over them both, lost in a world where no one but them existed. He stroked his fingertips along her spine brushing his lips against her hair. He loved her, loved her more than anything in the world. She was his everything, his only reason...his only madness, his only true obsession.

Joker brushed his lips against her ear. “I love you,” he whispered his voice low and husky. “I love you Harley. You bewitched me, enchant me...you are everything to me Harley, everything.”

They danced in a wide circle around the room while his thumb brushed against her knuckles where he held her hand against his chest. “I can’t live without you. I don’t want to live without you.”

He brushed his lips against her brow. “I won’t live without you.” He closed his eyes laying his cheek against her head and his hold on her tightened a fraction more as he repeated. “I love you.”

They moved together for a few more moments, letting the music guide them when Harley lifted her head to look into his eyes. “I love you. I can’t live without you puddin, I don’t want to live without you.”

Joker smiled, brushing his nose against hers. He reached up to caress her cheek with the back of his fingers. “I love you, Harls. I loved you from the moment you walked into Wayne Manor, the moment I saw you, my little doctor. I knew I had to make you mine, and that--in turn--made me yours.”

Harley smiled brighter, her hand grasped in his tightened. “I love you. I loved you from the moment you smiled at me.”
Joker chuckled, his laugh soft. His gaze were light and one lock of his green hair fell against his forehead, bright green against his milk white skin. She could feel the brush of his warm breath against her cheek as he ducked down and brushed his lips against her brow. “Well, I guess it's a good thing we got married.”

Harley’s laugh was soft. “Puddin…”

Joker tightened his hold on her, continuing the slow circle of their dance when he ducked his head and kissed her. Harley made a soft moan, his lips warm and soft against hers. She opened her mouth, her tongue gently brushed his lips to then be caressed by his tongue. Every part of her melted against him like she was kissing him for the first time again, his lips sweet, his tongue gentle. He didn’t stop dancing while they kissed, continuing a slow and graceful circuit around the room, and his hand holding hers against his chest tightened a fraction more. Harley’s fingers caressed his throat before sliding into his hair, her mouth moving in a slow dance of its own over his lips, their tongues gliding and twisted together, all of Gotham forgotten in this one perfect moment.

*

Three more days had passed since Alberto Falcone had gone missing, though only his sister realized—or cared—that he was gone, though there was a smattering of questions, others noting that the young Falcone seemed MIA, but nothing and no one seemed overly concerned.

Manuel Escobedo, head of the Penitente Cartel—one of the major crime families in Gotham who answered to Carmine Falcone—was sitting down at his dining room table for his morning coffee in the home he owned. He could hear his wife in the kitchen cooking and his two year old son playing with some pots and pans. He ran his fingers through his dark, greying hair and pushed the hair back from what some would characterize as a rough handsome face, when his brother, Jesús dropped an envelope in front of him before taking his seat next to him.

“That was at the front gate,” Jesús said before he turned his attention to his phone, his sharp profile lit by the electric light of the phone.

Manuel picked it up. “Who from?”

Jesús shrugged. “Don’t know, just had your name on it, so I brought it straight to you.”

Manuel turned the letter over, but there was no return address, no stamp, just his name on the front. He frowned and opened it, pulling out a pale white card which simply had printed on it in purple letters:

You are invited to a meeting of the minds. It’s time to bring about a new era in Gotham. If you feel the same, come to the Barr Wharf at midnight tomorrow night, near the old Barr Fish Market.

Alberto Falcone

Manuel narrowed his eyes reading over the invitation a second time before he handed it to his brother. “What do you make of this?”

Jesús took the note and read it before looking over at his brother. “You think Alberto is going to try and unseat his father?”

“That’s what it sounds like.” Manuel grinned. “I think we might have to go down there.”

“You fine with another Falcone being in charge?” Jesús asked as he set the card on the table.

“New blood means new ideas, new management, new bargains...so yeah, I think we should go.”
Manuel smiled.

Jesús shrugged. “You’re the boss.”

*

In another part of Gotham, Kwan Lin, her long dark hair pulled back from her face and braided down her back in one long braid that brushed the floor where she sat on the floor of her apartment, was dressed in simple black yoga pants and a black t-shirt. She ate her breakfast of tofu pudding and watched the Gotham local morning new program when Lu Yen, a tall slender man with sharp, angular features and a bald head (freshly shaved) that reflected the morning light, came in with an envelope. The man (who was her bodyguard and her lover) bowed, holding the note out to her, his expression—as always--giving away nothing.

“This was left outside with your name on it. I have checked it thoroughly and it is safe,” Lu Yen said in his low, flat voice.

Kwan Lin frowned and took the envelope as she set her breakfast aside. She opened the envelope with a manicured fingernail. Inside was a plain white card with writing on it. She slid it out carefully before she read it. Her dark eyes scanned over the script and a small frown marred her pretty face. She glanced over to Lu Yen who stood in silence, his hands behind his back, waiting for her orders.

“It seems that Alberto Falcone is going to make a move against his father and is looking for support.” She handed the note to Lu Yen.

She watched silently as he read the note. His dark brown eyes popped up to meet her steady gaze. “It might be a trap,” he said.

She nodded. “Or it might be an opportunity.”

Lu Yen nodded and handed the note back. “As in all things I shall follow where you lead.”

Kwan Lin smiled at him. “Good.”

*

The Gotham night was cold and wet; it had been raining since early evening and had continued all through the night. The wharf was quiet, with only the sound of the rainfall and the movement of the water providing any real noise. The street lights were scattered, many of them out, but the few that remained lit threw pale yellow light that reflected off the water and made the shadows deeper than usual.

The brick building that had once been the Barr Wharf Fish Market was now abandoned, covered in several decades worth of graffiti. At the top of a nearby abandoned warehouse, Joker was dressed in a black on black suit and stood by Harley who wore a black bodysuit (that Joker found to be distracting) her hair in pigtails. They watched through the night vision binoculars they both had as the gang heads began to arrive.

Joker chuckled. “Oh there’s Drago Ibanescu, head of the Ibanescu family.”

Harley turned to look in the direction Joker had his binoculars pointed. “You mean that guy who looked like a bad Elvis impersonator?”

Joker nodded. “That’s the one. Get a load of the gold sparkle jacket. I think I want one.”
Harley pulled her binoculars away to glare at him. “No.”

Joker glanced over at her and winked.

They both heard Agatha behind them laugh quietly with a muffled chuckle from Bane.

Joker stuck his tongue out at Harley before putting his binoculars back in place. “Okay, there is Alexandra Kosov, new head of the Odessa gang…” He muttered in a low voice. “How many Kosovs are there?”

Harley murmured. “Wow, everyone’s got a bodyguard or two…talk about a lack of trust.” She giggled and Joker playfully elbowed her when Harley frowned still looking through her binoculars.

“Hey, isn’t that Lew Moxon? I thought he was dead?”

Joker turned his binoculars and grinned. “In the wheelchair? Yeah that’s him. This is perfect!”

Jason, in his full Red Hood costume, came over and dropped down to a crouch next to Joker. “Okay, everything is ready. Just saw Galante and Enrico Inzerillo pull up. That’s the last of them. Frost and Zsasz are in place for the drivers. I’ll be joining them at your word Boss.”

Joker, still looking through his binoculars at the gathered group below, whispered. “The gas is in place.”

Jason nodded even though Joker wasn’t looking at him. “Yeah, you just have to trigger them.”

Harley, who was also still watching through her binoculars, giggled. “They are going into the market building.”

Joker lowered his binoculars with a wide grin. “Let’s get on with the show then, shall we?”

*

Inside, Manuel Escobedo growled looking around. The inside of the abandoned market was covered in graffiti, the smell of old rotten fish clung to the walls of the place making the air heavy and putrid. The lights were on, but there were no chairs or table and no Alberto Falcone, just trash and the remains of a once thriving fish market with shredded posters on the walls, the empty cold display cases, and the crumbled remains of an old chalkboard.

“What the fuck is going on here?” Manuel glanced over at his brother who shrugged. “Don’t ask me hermano.”

Enrico Inzerillo shrugged. “Maybe he is like his father and likes to make an entrance.”

Lew Moxon muttered. “I don’t know why I’m even here.”

Junior Galante sighed. “Could at least have some drinks.”

Kwan Lin was about to respond to that when she began to feel strange. She looked over at Lu Yen. “I don’t feel right…”

Lu Yen looked dizzy and shook his head. “We should…”

But before he could say any more the tall, bald man dropped to his knees and fell over. Kwan Lin moved toward him, his name on her lips—that had gone numb--when she fell on top of her bodyguard, unable to move, or speak.
Everyone else gathered in the building began to feel the effects of something they could neither see nor smell, a clear, toxic gas that made them feel dizzy, nauseous and paralyzed them. Each of the gang leaders and their bodyguards or seconds fell to the floor.

Each of them could see and they could hear, but none of them were able to move. The group laid there, unmoving except for their eyes and breathing, for many minutes, silent and helpless. After what must have been at least ten minutes, Drago Ibanescu watched as a man with green hair and wearing an expensive, tailored black suit stepped in followed by a sexy young woman in a form hugging black bodysuit. Next came a man, a large, muscled man wearing a mask...a Lucha libre mask that covered his face. The mask was white and black with demon red eyes.

Drago watched as the three people moved through the group, the woman and man systematically shooting everyone in the head. Drago’s eyes followed them as the walked over people, shooting one after another until the man with the green hair and face, white as death, stopped in front of him.

“Oh lookie you, watching the entire show!!!” Joker crouched down and smiled, a bright red lipped smile at the man. “I bet you are wondering what is going on aren’t you? Well…” Joker tapped his chin with one finger, his gun dangling between his legs. Drago could see the woman checking for pulses behind the Joker.

Joker grinned. “Well my friend, this isn’t about little Alberto taking over for dear old daddykins. No, this is about revenge, about war, and about giving Gotham exactly what it deserves.”

Drago tried to move his mouth, but he couldn’t. Not only did he hear gunshots inside the building, but he would swear he heard the echo of gunshots outside. Joker laughed. “Sorry darling, but I mixed this little gas myself, part nerve agent, apart Succinylcholine…” He gestured with his gun. “And part a few more things. But I know, you’re asking “But Mister Joker, I thought Succinylcholine had to be injected and I thought nerve gas made you vomit.” Joker chuckled. “They do and they could...on their own, but these…” Joker held up his hands. “...are the hands of an artist.”

“Yes they are.” Harley came up behind Joker and wrapped her arms around his shoulders before she kissed his cheek. “Monologuing puddin?”

Joker laughed. “Maybe a little sweets, seems like old Drago was watching even though he can’t move.” He looked up at Harley as she rested her chin on his head. He brought his free hand up to caress one of her arms. “All done?”

Harley nodded. “Yep. The boys are nearly done outside.”

Joker purred. “Perfect. You have the coat?”

Harley nodded. “Bane is fetching it.”

Joker stood and wrapped an arm around Harley’s waist, then pulled her close as he once more smiled at Drago. “Any last words?”

Drago could barely make a sound. Joker laughed. “That’s what I thought…”

He held his gun out, Harley doing the same. Drago could only stare at Joker and Harley as they both grinned and pulled the triggers of their weapons.
Arturo Rodriguez was the first on the scene, at least among Gotham’s many reporters. He had a man on the force who he paid to call him whenever a crime scene was called in that might be newsworthy. In Gotham a person had to pick and choose what was covered. Not every crime story made the local news—there were too many—and people just didn’t care if John Smith’s grandma got mugged, because everyone’s grandma got mugged in Gotham. No, Arturo wanted the big stories. If he was the one to cover all of Gotham’s really big stories, especially anything to do with the Bat, then one of the major cable networks was bound to call him and get him out of Gotham so he could start making some real money.

The van pulled up to an area where Rodriguez and his cameraman, Charlie Woods, a large man who Arturo had never seen in anything but jeans and a Gotham Knights jersey, could see that the entire warehouse had been cordoned off with yellow police tape. There were at least a handful of police cars at the scene, an ambulance, and forensics vehicles. Arturo grinned at the sight. Judging by the size of the police presence—and approaching sirens—this was something major.

Charlie parked the van and leaned on the wheel. “So what did your source say happened?”

Arturo had pulled down the mirror on the sun visor and was inspecting his thick black hair, pulling at the skin below his eyes to make sure his eyes weren’t bloodshot. “He didn’t say, just that they had been called in because someone had heard the sound of gunfire.”

Charlie frowned, wrinkling his nose. “Fuck, you can hear gunshots in Gotham every damn night. I don’t think I could fall sleep if I didn’t hear the gunfire lullaby.”

Arturo glanced over at Charlie. “True, but apparently this sounded like a lot of gunfire.”

Charlie did not look impressed.

Arturo rolled his eyes. “Come on, get the camera and let’s see if we can make some news.”

Arturo and Charlie moved like a well-oiled machine, the two men having worked together for almost two years. Within minutes, they were ready and hurrying toward the crime tape where a lone cop stood watching the scene. Arturo could see a few civilian cars out here, the windows of which looked to be shot out—and he saw there were bodies in the cars. Several members of the Gotham forensics lab were going in and out of the warehouse, then a few seconds later the first body was being pulled out.

Arturo grinned and waved a hand at Charlie who was behind. “Get the camera on.”

Charlie did and aimed the light at Arturo.

Arturo knew he looked good. He had the good looks of a movie star, wore tailored suits, and expensive shoes. Arturo made sure he hit the gym every day to keep his figure trim for the camera. He was going somewhere, somewhere big, and Gotham was going to get him there, one way or another.

He turned toward the camera. “This is Arturo Rodriguez reporting from…”

“Hey!! You can’t be here!”

Arturo turned to see the lone cop, a large man, though not fat, with a red face and mustache that
would have been in style in the 1970’s porn industry, racing over to him. “This is an crime scene, you can’t be here.”

Arturo glanced at the man’s badge before he replied. “Officer, would you like to comment? Witnesses have reported hearing gunfire and…”

The officer growled. “Look Rodriguez…”

Arturo looked surprised at being recognized, but the officer continued. “Yeah, I know who the fuck you are. This is a police investigation and we don’t need you clowns down here reporting on shit and fucking up our investigation. Now get your ass and that camera out of here or I’ll throw you both in jail.”

Arturo pulled himself up to his full height, just an inch shy of six feet. “You can’t do that! Freedom of the press!”

“Freedom of my boot up your ass! Now get out,” the officer snarled.

That was when they both heard someone yelled. “Hey, I found something!”

Arturo and the cop turned just as an officer walked out of the warehouse delicately holding a coat by his gloved fingertips.

* 

The following night after their plan had gone off without a hitch, Joker was excited, nearly dancing off the walls from the moment they had left the warehouse. Every leading member of every important crime family in Gotham serving under Falcone was dead and the trap had been sprung. Now all they had to do was watch for the next few days or weeks to see Gotham dragged into a war. Joker had been all smiles, his blue eyes bright with anticipation for what lay ahead for Gotham and for Batman.

Step one in their revenge plot completed.

But tonight was just for the two of them.

* 

Harley giggled while Jack tugged her along behind him, his hand in hers, and a blindfold over her eyes. He was moving a little too quickly for her in his excitement, making it a little difficult for her to keep up with his long-legged strides. Making it worse, she was wearing heels and while she could run in them if she needed to, trying to keep herself from blindly stumbling over Jack while he dragged her behind him was a lot more difficult than simply running. (The situation also told her that she might consider learning how to run blindfolded in heels. Never knew when the skill might come in handy.)

“Where are we going?” she asked again, her smile dancing across her red lips as she stumbled along behind him, her heels clicking on the asphalt and echoing in the deserted park.

Jack didn’t stop, continued to move swiftly, though he was careful to make sure she never tripped, or that he pulled her into anything. He kept his eyes darting back to Harley to make sure she was all right while he pulled her blindly along.

“You’ll see--stop asking!” Jack chuckled giving her hand a squeeze.
Harley laughed. “Fine, I’ll stop!”

Jack laughed. “Good, now hold on and be careful.”

Harley let him continue to pull her through the park, her smile never wavering. She loved it when Jack was excited like this, excited to share something with her. When he was really excited like he was right now, Jack was almost childlike in his need to share whatever it was with her, in his need to have her experience his excitement and enjoyment. That excitement was one of the many things she loved about him.

* *

Harley had woken up earlier in the evening to find a note on the bedside table and Jack nowhere to be seen.

The note, written in his elegant script had read: Put on a pretty dress and come down stairs.

Harley had frowned at the note, wondering what he was up to, but she had done as Jack had asked, dressing in a simple, short sleeved red dress, the skirt of which fell to her knees. It had a low v-neck that showed off her cleavage and little tiny cut out details along the ends of the sleeves and the skirt. She had paired the dress with a little white bolero style sweater (against the early spring chill in the evening air), no stockings, and red heels. She had left her white blonde hair loose, parting it on the side and styling it similar to the actress Veronica Lake, a little old fashioned, but she knew Jack liked that era and style. She had done her makeup in a similar style with a bright red lipstick, and wing-tipped eyeliner.

After dressing, she had hurried down the stairs to find Jack waiting for her, his green hair slicked back, his lips a deep, dark red and a smile on them showing off his perfect white teeth. He was dressed casually, wearing a pair of dark plum-colored slacks with thin, light pinstripes, suspenders of dark red. His shirt was an evergreen dress shirt, no tie, unbuttoned to just below the hollow of his throat that showed a hint of the white t-shirt he wore underneath and visible against his pale white skin. Harley’s heart and desire for her husband went into overload at the sight of him waiting for her.

Jack had grinned, holding out a single red rose in one hand and waving a black silk scarf at her with the other. “Come on down sweets--time to play a game.”

Harley had giggled, hopping down the last few stairs and took the offered rose. “Uh oh, why do I think I’m in trouble?”

Jack spun her around gently, facing her away from him before he held the cloth up and covered her eyes, his voice was low and sexy against her ear. “Because you are married to the Joker my sweets, you are always in some sort of trouble.”

* *

Now they were outside and Jack was tugging her along somewhere in the amusement park. Her smile was broad while followed Jack in eager anticipation.

She knew they were in the amusement park since they had simply walked instead of taking a car, but she had no idea where in the park. It was late in the evening and she felt a light sprinkle in the air, just enough to make the asphalt damp, but not enough to really warrant an umbrella. She had lost track of where they were once they had left the area around their home and made several turns. She suspected Jack had made the twists and turns on purpose so she couldn’t guess where he was taking her in the park. The jerk, she thought with an amused crook to her smile. After a few more minutes
Jack stopped and released her hand. She felt his hands on her upper arms in a light grip.

“Okay Harls, I’m going to move you, take a step up…” Jack said while he gently moved her to the side, then turned her around. Harley put her foot out, feeling around for a moment before she felt the step and stepped up.

“Okay Harley, now I want you to turn to the right, then walk backwards four steps.”

Harley smirked, but she did as he asked, turning and took four slow steps backwards. Her heel hit a step, which caused her to stumble back trying to walk backwards up said step, while blindfolded. She did, barely, just in time for her legs to bump against something and she fell back onto a metal seat with a gasp of both surprise and the slight sting of abruptly falling onto her rear.

“Ouch!” Harley yelped.

She heard Jack chuckle and she felt him drop down beside her. “Okay, put your arms up over your head for a moment, sweets.”

Harley did as he instructed and she heard a creak of metal. Then Jack hollered. “Okay Frost!! Let her rip!”

Harley frowned as she heard the sounds of something metallic moving and then the strange sensation of being lifted. She gasped in surprise reaching out to grab onto something, dropping her rose in the process. Her hands landed on a metal rail.

“Puddin! What’s going on?!” Harley asked, her hands on the metal bar tightened.

Jack laughed and pulled her blindfold off.

“Tada!!” Jack laughed as he revealed that they were in the air.

Harley gasped in happy surprise while looking around. “You got the ferris wheel working!!!”

She looked down and saw the giant wheel glowed with carnival lights of purple and yellow.

Jack grinned at her. “Yep, Frost, Bane, Jason and I have all been taking turns getting the old girl going because I wanted to surprise you.”

Harley giggled as the ferris wheel rotated slowly, bringing them up to the top where it stopped with a loud clunking sound of metal and hydraulics. The seat they were in swung a little. From here Harley could see all of the amusement park spread out around her. Most of the park was dark, but here and there she could see smatterings of lights, some dim such as the lighting around where Jack kept his lab in the haunted house ride, while others were brighter, such as where the carousel was located. She could see beyond the park into sections of Gotham around them. There were streetlights, wet sidewalks, old buildings--some lost to the years of neglect and decay and vandalism--while others struggled to survive, their old glory still visible under the smog and dirt. Farther away, she could see the twinkling lights and high rise buildings that was the heart of Gotham. She heard the dull sound of vehicles, a train, and the occasional tram or rail in the distance as well as the occasional sound from a boat on the dark water of the bay or harbor. From here, the city looked beautiful, like a fairy tale kingdom. From this distance and height it was hard to imagine that Gotham had a dark underbelly where crime ruled, that Gotham was a place where a Bat roamed the rooftops while a clown tried to burn the city, both related by blood and differing passions.

Jack watched Harley’s expression with a tender smile on his red lips.
Harley murmured as if speaking too loud might break the spell. “It’s so beautiful up here.”

Joker smiled and caressed her upper arm with the back of his fingers before he brought his arm up to drape across her shoulders and look out at Gotham with her.

“Yes, it is. But it is so much more beautiful with you here.” He reached around to brush her hair aside and kiss her ear.

Harley blushed, glancing sideways at him. “Are you trying to seduce me, puddin?”

Jack grinned at her with a mischievous glint in his bright eyes. “Is it working?”

Harley laughed. “Yes, of course it is!”

Jack took her hand and kissed her knuckles. He stared at her, his blue eyes strange in the flashing lights of the ferris wheel.

Harley smiled at him with a slight tilt of her head. “What?”

“You know I would give you the world Harley,” Jack said softly.

Harley rubbed her thumb against his fingers. “I know you would puddin.”

“I’ll give you Gotham,” he said with intensity. “I’ll make a Gotham where no one can hurt you.”

Harley’s smile faded into a frown. “Puddin…”

She could feel the tension in him when he spoke, his fingers holding her hand tightened almost painfully. “I’ll make the Bat pay for everything he has done to us, past and present. I’ll make him sorry for every moment he tried to keep us apart and I’ll destroy his precious Gotham, rip his noble crusade to shreds and remake Gotham in our image. He wants to made amends for what happened to us, to our parents. I’ll show him that he is working toward nothing but emptiness. We will be the things that go bump in the night and everyone will be scared of us. Not the Bat, never the Bat.” He laughed. “Old Brucie’s crusade will be for nothing...just like everything he has ever done...all his life’s goals will be like ashes on the fire of his Gotham.”

Jack’s laugh turned from light into something dark, echoed out over the evening breeze.

Harley bit her lip before she squeezed his hand. “Puddin?”

Jack’s eyes had a far off look in them, the blue taking on the strange glow as he focused on the view of Gotham. It was as if he were gazing into some future that she couldn't see, but then his gaze snapped back to her, and Harley saw that her puddin had returned.

She smiled. “Let’s not talk about Batman.”

Jack nodded, kissing her knuckles again. “Sorry Harls--of course. Tonight is for us.”

He dropped her hand, reaching up to cup the side of her throat and gently tug her toward him, a gentle smile on his lips. Harley gazed into his eyes, brushing her nose against his hand and reached out to grasp his side just before her lips touched his in a gentle kiss.

Harley fell into Jack’s kiss, letting everything fall away until it was just the two of them. Jack’s mouth moved gently over hers, his kisses long, passionate and deep.

Jack’s hand glided into her hair, feeling the soft, thick waves between his fingers, the taste of her
tongue, sweet in his mouth. He stroked his tongue against hers, kissing her as if her breath, her touch, were the only things that kept him alive, that he needed her, needed her touch to ground him in reality.

Harley reached up to lay her hand over his, her other hand reaching up to grab his shirt; her fingers pulled at the fabric until she popped one of the buttons.

Jack brushed his nose against hers, pulling away only slightly from her lips, his forehead resting against hers. “I love you Harls.”

Harley smiled, brushing the tip of her nose against his in a soft caress. “I love you puddin.”

Jack smiled, a light dancing in his eyes. “My Queen,” he whispered.

Harley giggled. “My King.”

Jack pulled her close, pressing his mouth to hers, kissing her with more passion, his tongue brushing against her teeth. He dropped his hand to her waist and pulled her closer (which caused the seat to swing for a moment) until she moved to straddle his lap, hampered for a moment by the safety bar.

Jack pulled her skirt up, his hands sliding along her legs to her hips.

Harley wrapped her arms around his shoulders, leaning over him, her hair dropping down around them like a soft shelter as she kissed him, her tongue gliding against his tongue in a slow, sensual dance. Jack groaned and spread his fingers wide to gasp her rear.

Harley giggled while caressing his pale white jawline with her fingertips, brushing her nose against his, her forehead pressed lightly to his forehead. “Was this your grand plan puddin? Just to get me up here and fuck me?”

Jack grinned at her, his smile spreading across his face, his eyes dancing with mischief. “That obvious, am I?”

She giggled rubbing her fingers along his dark red bottom lip, tugging his lip down just a little. “Well, it worked.” She purred. “You get a cookie.”

Jack grinned wider if that were possible, she thought, the rows of his perfect white teeth against his red lips made a hot flash of heat burn through her. He reached down between them where she could feel him undoing his slacks, already hard and waiting for her.

Jack hissed as he pulled her panties to the side, and his fingers stroked between her legs feeling the wet heat of her excitement. He grinned wider still when his stroking made Harley gasp and groan.

Jack purred, his smile still wide, his fingers sliding inside her. “I do love cookies, pumpkin.”

Harley giggled kissing him, her hand sliding down from his jaw to his throat where she wrapped her fingers around his neck gently, pressing her fingers against his skin in a way she knew he liked. She reached up with her other hand, grabbing a fistful of his green hair. Not too hard as she didn’t want to hurt him as she forced his head back, grinding herself against his fingers while at the same time she attacked his throat. Harley dragged the flat of her tongue along his adam’s apple and up to his sharp chin. She brushed her lips back down his throat, licking him before she gently pressed her teeth into his pale skin.

Jack’s eyes rolled with pleasure with the feel of her tongue on his neck, his fingers sliding into his wife, greeted with a deep moan from Harley, then out to brush along her clitoris with his middle
finger, which got him another moan from her that he felt deep, as if her moan of pleasure were a vibration that he could feel within his very center. He held her hip with his free hand; his grip was strong enough that he was going to leave bruises on her, but that only made him smile. Seeing his mark on her gave him a deep satisfaction, just as seeing any marks Harley left on him.

Jack groaned, rubbing her slowly. “You’re so wet.” He purred enjoying the feel of her; slick, hot, and his.

Harley didn’t answer him, but instead she rolled her hips. She kept her movements slow, sensual, rubbing against his fingers as her grip in his hair tightened. Jack inhaled a sharp breath, but he smiled at his wife’s attentions. Harley’s movements caused the entire seat to swing gently. She focused her attention on his throat, alternating between bites and long, sensual licks with a little bit of sucking against his neck. Her hand around his throat slid down to his chest where she tugged at his shirt. Her fingers wrapped around the top of the t-shirt he wore underneath at the same time she ground herself on his fingers, and her breathing became more and more ragged, the breath of someone needing more.

Harley pressed her mouth to his throat, just at the soft, tender spot where she could feel the beat of his heart under the skin. She sucked hard alternating her sucks on his neck with bites; she wanted to leave a mark of her pleasure on his pale, milk white skin. Jack bit his bottom lip with pleasure. The tight pull of her fingers in his hair, the brush of her nails against his chest where she tugged on his t-shirt combined with her biting at his throat, along with her thrusting, caused his erection to throb with need and release, but he enjoyed this tension, the waiting while he focused on her. He wanted to hear her cry out, needed to hear her scream. Harley let go of his hair, dropping her hand to his shoulder, her other hand pressed against his chest as she arched her back, grinding herself on his fingers, the tension in her body building fast, higher until she crested with a cry.

Jack laughed with delight as the ferris wheel car swung wildly.

*

Down below near the ferris wheel controls Frost cringed. He could see the car above him swinging like crazy and he heard Harley cry out. He frowned, hoping this damn ferris wheel stayed intact, the damn thing was at least a decade old, maybe twice that and it had been repaired by people who were not engineers...

Frost rubbed the bridge of his nose. If anything happened to the two of them up there, Agatha would have his hide.

*

Harley crumpled, it was as if her entire body had turned to jelly.

Jack chuckled, kissing her ear. “You’re not done yet Harls,” he hissed.

Harley giggled and pushed herself up. She could feel the warmth of his erection against her skin. She moved, pushing her weight up while ignoring the way the ferris wheel car swung as she grabbed the back of his seat behind Jack and lowered herself down on him with agonizing slowness.

Jack grabbed his bottom lip with his teeth, a deep groan in his chest, feeling her slowly slide down on him, warm and wet. The sensation of his wife wrapping around him forced him to press back against the seat while his other hand grabbed her hip holding her down on him. He didn’t want her to move yet; if she moved, he would orgasm and he wasn’t ready, not yet. She felt so fantastic on him, he had to wait, wanted them to climax together.
Jack hissed. “Don't move pumpkin.”

Harley nodded, folding herself around him and her arms cradled his head as she pressed his face to her breasts.

Jack didn’t move his hands from her hips, but simply held her down on him, his eyes closed and waited. The seat’s swinging slowed, and the squeal of metal settled. In the distance, he could hear the sounds of cars, the occasional lonely sound of a boat on the dark water around Gotham. This was perfect, Harley and him up above Gotham, soon to be their Gotham. He grinned. He was making love with his only and greatest love, surrounded by the city he both loved and hated.

Jack licked her throat, moved his lips back along her jaw to catch the lobe of her ear with his teeth.

“My pumpkin pie, my frosted cupcake,” he whispered.

Harley giggled. “Puddin.”

Jack purred. “I do like all the food nicknames sweets, just makes me want to eat you up.” He playfully growled while snapping his teeth at her.

Harley laughed and kissed him. She loved these moments, just the two of them; no wars, no gangs, no Batman, no Bruce...just her and the man she loved.

She sat back up and ran her hands down his face, then through his hair squeezing him tightly inside her, staring into his haunting blue eyes, as the carnival lights of the ferris wheel played over his ghost white skin. She arched her back, moving with slow and deliberate moves. Jack held her hips, his legs spread, feet braced against the footrest of the ride’s car, gazing up at her with a wide, red lipped smile. Harley braced her hands behind him and started to grind her hips against him, letting the swing of the seat work with her grinding thrusts, the tension in her body rising higher and higher. She groaned, giving herself over to simply feeling Jack inside her.

Jack groaned, his eyes closing part way so that she could see a thin glow of his blue eyes through his dark lashes. He held on to her tighter and giggled as the seat swung more. The combination of sex and danger made the act that much more thrilling.

Harley let go of the seat to grab Jack’s face, pressing her lips hard to his mouth, her tongue sliding between his lips at the moment she climaxed.

Jack wrapped his arms around her, her moan vibrated through his body from where her lips touched his, a vibration of pleasure from the point where their bodies were connected rolled through him, seeping deep into him, to his very essence. Jack felt her pleasure like a wave crashing over him and he was defenseless to stop his own body response to her. The seat swung along with the motions of their bodies and the metal squealed, but he didn’t care. Jack arched back, pressing his feet against the floor of the seat as his own climax ripped through him, tearing him down making him weak. At the same time he clung to her, his Harley, the only person in the world that he loved.

He cried out.

Harley cradled his head kissing him, swallowing his cry of pleasure.

* 

Frost lit a cigarette leaning against the ferris wheel’s mechanism. He glanced up, but the lights of the ferris wheel were bright, preventing him from seeing anything. Thankfully, he thought. He smirked taking a deep drag on his cigarette, wondering if Agatha would be up for a ferris wheel ride.
Jack laughed and held onto Harley with a tight grip while the seat swung back and forth, though the wild swinging was gradually settling down. Harley let out a happy sigh and laid her head on Jack’s shoulder, in no hurry to get off his lap.

Jack relaxed, running the fingers of one hand through her hair while he stroked her back gently with the other. “Hmm...that was fun.”

Harley giggled, nuzzling his neck. “I love you.”

He kissed her cheek. “I love you too.”

“So..” He smiled and reached down to grab her rear and adjusted her with a grunt. “How about we go big game hunting this week?”

Harley laughed.

Two nights later, Batman stood in Commissioner Gordon’s office looking over the photos of the crime scene and the one piece of evidence they had found, a coat with a bullet hole in the shoulder that had been traced back to the now missing Alberto Falcone.

Gordon leaned back in his chair, his pipe smoking in his hand, his glasses slid to the end of his nose, and his white hair a mess.

“Have you questioned The Roman?” Batman looked up from the images of the dead men. So far nothing had happened in response to the massacre, but he knew it was only a matter of time before the shooting began.

Gordon shook his head. “No, not yet, just got that information about the coat this morning. I was hoping that maybe you had something I could use before I approached Falcone.” Gordon rubbed the bridge of his nose, pushing his glasses up to his forehead as he continued. “I’m not sure what the fuck is going on. Alberto’s body wasn’t found, so he might have escaped the slaughter, but I can’t see a reason for any of this, unless the rumors on the street are true.”

Batman finished for him. “That he is trying to overthrow his father.”

Gordon nodded. “Yeah, but it doesn’t make sense.”

Batman frowned rubbing his chin. “It might. Sofia Falcone can’t inherit the business since her father is old school. What if she is using her brother to make her father look bad? If she can get the other families on her side, or as the case may be, her brother…”

Gordon nodded. “Maybe, but killing the heads of all the families you want to follow you? Doesn’t make sense to me.”

Batman nodded. “True, we’re missing some piece of the puzzle.”

Gordon nodded. “I’m just worried about what’s going to happen if we don’t find that piece, and soon…”

* 

Gabriel Santo glowered. The eye patch on his left eye didn’t diminish the hatred in the man’s brown
eyed gaze as he picked up the shot and drowned the golden yellow liquid inside without making a
face, which always impressed Rodney. Rodney, a small man with a pencil thin mustache and
thinning hair, could barely take a sip of soda without the carbonated drink making him hiccup.
Drinking wasn’t something Rodney Fidget did often as his job was to keep the Penitente cartel’s
books, and it didn’t do anyone any good to have a drinking problem if you were dealing with
numbers, especially if a screw up could end with a bullet in your head instead of a pink slip.

Gabriel lightly touched the edge of the glass with one finger and Rodney filled it again without being
asked from the bottle that sat at the table. Seated at the table were Romeo and Eduardo, the
remaining heads of the Penitente cartels. With Manuel's death, they were left without a leader.

“We can’t let this go without a response,” Gabriel said in a tone filled with anger.

Eduardo frowned. “But we don’t…”

Gabriel snarled, slamming his finger onto the table. “I know exactly who it was--it was those fuckers
the Inzerillo family. That asshole Enrico has been looking for a reason to kill Manuel ever since he
took over the cartel. When The Roman let Manuel step in as head when his father died and keep our
territory intact instead of letting Enrico take it, that little shit’s been looking for a way to take what is
ours.”

Rodney frowned. He hated to speak up at these meetings, but… “But sir, Enrico Inzerillo was killed
too. It doesn’t make…”

Gabriel reached up with lightning quick reflexes and grabbed Rodney by the front of his shirt and
hauled the shorter man down so that they were face to face. “Last time I looked Rodney, you were
paid to keep the money straight, not give your opinion.”

“Yes sir.” Rodney nodded.

Gabriel released him. “I say we hit the Inzerillo family now, take their territory, show the Roman that
we deserve more influence, more respect. That we answer fire with fire. This is a test and we will
succeed.”

The other men shared a look before Eduardo spoke up. “So…”

Gabriel smiled. “We hit them while they’re down, before they have time to recover. I want the
Inzerillo family wiped off the face of the earth. I want Gotham to forget that the Inzerillo family ever
existed.”

* * *

In another section of the city Timur Nayfield, a hulk of a man with a shaved head, slammed his fists
against the table in the kitchen of Alain Goldberg’s kitchen.

“They killed her! They murdered Alexandra! My Alexandra!”

Alain, a slender man with an expensive haircut who favored expensive suits, frowned and laid his
hand on his friend’s back. “Timur, are you sure it was Galante?”

“Who else could it have been? I told her not to go to that fucking meeting, that it was a trap,
something felt off. I knew it was a trap!” Timur snarled. “I knew it. I told her over and over again not
to go or to at least take me, but she wouldn’t listen! It was Galante, I know it!”

Alain frowned. Galante and Timur had been rivals forever. He knew that Galante and Alexandra
Kosov had dated briefly, almost a Romeo and Juliet thing, two rival families serving under Falcone, but it hadn’t lasted long. Afterwards though, Galante had always been an ally to the Odessa Mob. Alain was sure the only reason Timur was blaming them was that he hated Galante for stealing Alexandra from him.

Alain sighed. “Did she tell you who the message was from?”

Timur shook his head. “No, she didn’t.”

Alain’s frown deepened. He knew Alexandra and Timur had been having issues after she caught Timur cheating on her. The only reason she hadn’t had Timur killed was because he was the brother of her best friend Zoya.

“Then you can’t know for sure…” Alain began, but Timur wasn’t listening. “I’ll gather the men and make a hit on Galante, he’ll never know what hit him…”

Alain sighed with a shake of his head. “Timur, Galante died that night too. All the heads…”

Timur snarled. “I don’t care! Probably died in his own trap, but now every member of the Galante Mob is dead!! Dead!!”

Timur turned and stormed out of the apartment slamming the door behind him. Alain frowned and closed his eyes. This was going to be bad, very bad for everyone. He needed to get a hold of Carmine Falcone…

*

Day three.

Arturo Rodriguez stood outside the burning remains of three older apartment buildings. The police and fire department had cordoned off the area as they tried to get the fires under control and rescue any survivors.

Arturo looked into the camera while he spoke.

“I have been told that this was a hit carried out by the Penitente Cartel. According to reports, a rocket launcher was fired into the home of what remained of the Inzerillo family, killing sixteen members of the gang and their extended family, as well as collateral damage suffered by the two apartment buildings that had flanked the building owned by the Inzerillo family. It is unclear what the civilian death toll is…”

*

The following night, Batman arrived at the remains of another shoot out. This one was on a smaller scale than the one that had occurred earlier this week that took the lives of the mob heads.

This shootout occurred between the Odessa gang and the remains of the Galante family.

There were at least a total of seven dead, and three of those were innocent bystanders.

Batman walked the crime scene slowly. Off to the side he could see Robin inspecting one of the bodies with a slight frown.

The young man stood up, looking over at Batman. “What’s going on? I mean I thought the Galante and Odessa worked together…sort of.”
Batman rubbed a finger across his chin in thought. “The murder of the mob leaders has left not just a power vacuum, but these families are looking for someone to blame. I think they are falling back on old rivalries as the answer.”

Robin frowned. “That doesn't make sense. I mean, everyone lost a leader...except the Falcones.”

Batman nodded. “Except for the Falcones.”

“I think it might be time to visit with The Roman.” Batman narrowed his eyes behind his mask. “Before this gets out of hand.”

*

Over the next two days more and more fighting broke out.

Someone torched a city block in the upper east side. Several small shootouts occurred between members of the Lucky Hand triad and the Neon Dragon triad that included the Ibanescu family.

There were several dead, more wounded, including innocents caught in the crossfire.

Smaller gangs with no connection to the mob started to make pushes into territory usually under the control of the bigger families. The Deacons gang in the Hills had gone after the Free Man gang, which had resulted in several deaths, mostly innocent civilians, once more caught in the middle. Able Crown and his gang completely wiped out the Dragon’s Claw gang, killing every member, while The LoBoys and the Sprang Bridge Soldiers completely took over the area around the Sprang Bridge and nearly all of Robbinsville was under their control and protection after they joined forces with the Batboys. The three gangs together were not just “protecting” Robbinsville, but they were shooting anyone to come close—including police officers, which meant that section of the city was being held hostage.

Along with all of this, a new menace had shown up in Gotham, a new crime boss who was slowly beginning to consolidate a little bit of power, a man named Roman Sionis.

*

Catwoman frowned, concentrating on slowly lowering herself down from the roof to the office window. She stopped with a look around, but it was late at night and despite all the fuss the mob and all the little wannabe gangs were causing in Gotham, this particular street was quiet, containing a few office buildings, one or two apartment buildings, and a few old, struggling restaurants—all of which were closed at this hour. From the angle she was lowering herself down from the roof no one would see her unless they were specially looking for a thief. (She had to swing over to get to the building’s roof, which had been a little further than she liked. The downward jump hadn’t been too bad, but she wasn’t going back that way. Turning her ankle had been a real possibility, but she had made the jump. Hopefully getting down would be easy, just take the rope and slither to the street and vanish into the dark.) She smiled and turned back to slowly lowering herself down to the window of the office she was breaking into in order to hit the safe inside where the prize lay. Ten million in diamonds.

The man she had been hired to rob, a man named Joe Kerr, had an office on the top floor of one of Gotham’s older buildings, originally built around 1910. The building had been refurbished into an office building. A little research had told Selina that this would be a fairly easy break in as several of the floors were unoccupied and the ones that were only had one or two offices on them, a dentist, a chiropractor, and a real estate office. The job should be easy then, with a really nice pay off Selina thought with a smile, big enough to invest into some new equipment, maybe some infrared goggles
since she broke the last pair after a recent heist that went sideways. She wrinkled her nose in annoyance at the thought of losing that pair. They had been specially designed for her and they weren’t cheap.

The job had seemed almost too easy and she had almost turned it down because of that, but Jade had been excited by the idea of ten million in diamonds. Jade had suggested they take all the diamonds and the person who had hired them, a man who was Kerr’s business partner, a man named Jerome Napier, would have no recourse to go after them. Jade had argued that he couldn’t go to the police or his partner because then the finger would turn on him for knowing too much. Selina had pointed out that this Napier guy could simply hire someone to go after them. No, it was easier to do the job, maybe bargain for a better deal once she had the diamonds in her possession.

She grinned and tried the window; it was unlocked. That was a mistake made by many people who lived or worked on the top floors of buildings, they all thought that they were too high up for someone to break into the place through the window, and so they didn’t lock them. Amateur mistake, but that also made things very easy for her.

Selina slid the window up carefully, thankful that even though the building had been refurbished, whoever had done the job had kept the old window design, something that made her work even easier for her.

Selina slipped into the office, landing on the carpeted floor without a sound.

She stood up slowly with a look around. The room had a desk...and she stopped. She saw a shadow at the desk sitting there, a trail of smoke drifting up from the faint orange glow of a cigarette. Her eyes widened when she saw the end of the cigarette burn brightly.

Selina cursed to herself and started to turn back to the window when she heard the sound of movement, the soft rustle of cloth as the figure at the desk began to stand. She caught a hint of movement to her left and Selina turned just in time to see a figure dash toward her. She saw a woman with white hair pulled up into a ponytail, wearing tight black pants that looked painted on, a black half top shirt and black, heeled boots, and she held a baseball bat that was swinging her way.

“Here pretty kitty!!” The woman giggled.

Selina only had a moment to take in yet another bad heist as she turned toward the window thinking to throw herself out, but the woman moved fast and she was already too close. Selina didn’t have enough time to respond before the woman swung the bat. Selina leaped upward to avoid the attack, but the pale woman adjusted midswing. She was so fast, Selina thought in that split second before the sturdy, wooden bat caught Selina in the side of her left knee. Selina let out a cry of agony as the bat cracked against her and her knee made a snapping sound. She felt the impact knock the knee out of joint, and at the same time she knew without a doubt that her kneecap was shattered. Selina dropped to the floor and slammed up against the wall just under the window she had, only moments before, slipped through into the office.

“Harley giggled. “Oh puddin look at that, the kitty doesn’t wanna play anymore.”

Harley swung her bat like a baton while smiling down at Selina. “Poor kitty.”

Selina looked up at Harley. Now that the light from the street was on her, Selina though the woman looked like someone from the party at Bruce’s--Harley Quinn. She frowned in confusion. The woman looked familiar, not because Selina had seen her at the party, but Harley looked like someone she had seen before, she just couldn’t think of where, but god she couldn’t focus through the pain that was flaring in her leg.
Harley crouched down next to Selina. “How ya feeling kitty?” Selina thought about lashing out with her clawed gloves, but resisted the urge. Maybe she could talk her way out of this. The shadow at the desk stood up and walked into the light from the street, light that reflected off a gun. Selina felt a chill, a knot of cold in her stomach that was stretching out, chilling all of her. The pain from her knee was subsiding a little, she was still aware of it, but it wasn’t hurting in the same way. She realized she was going into shock. The shadow smiled down at her and Selina felt that cold spread as the light danced across the green hair, red lips, and pale white features of the Joker.

He was wearing a suit of dark purple. The only reason she could tell it was purple at all was that the pale street light caught some of the color, but it was so dark it almost looked black. He wore a double breasted vest of dark gold, an emerald green dress shirt, and a purple tie. Selina could even see that he had a flower the same shade as his vest in the lapel of his jacket.

Joker chuckled. “Look what the cat dragged in.”

Harley giggled standing up to wrap her arm around his waist, leaning the bat on her shoulder. “Looks like the kitty has a boo boo, puddin.”

Joker laughed. “Looks like she does pumpkin.”

Selina hissed. “What do you want?!”

Joker grinned, glancing sideways at Harley. “I don’t think she recognizes us sweets.”

Harley frowned. “You know puddin, I think you’re right.”

Joker smiled down at her, a smile that sent shivers through Selina. That mad smile accompanied by the strange blue shimmer in his eyes made her--for the first time in a long time--fear for her life. “I wonder if old Brucie will be upset when he finds out I’ve killed his pet?” Joker tilted his head smiling at her with a show of perfect teeth. Harley leaned her head against Joker’s as their twin smiles oddly reached their blue eyes, though it wasn’t humor she saw there, but something darker.

Joker’s voice was a low purr as he spoke. “Remember when you broke into Wayne Manor and Brucie was so in love with you that he couldn’t bare for Harley and me to hurt you? Even though you were trying to steal from our home? Remember how he chose you over his family? Even though you betrayed his trust?”

Selina stared at them, her eyes darted back and forth between the pair, widening as slowly she realized who Joker and Harley were…

Joker smiled as he saw the realization settle over Selina’s features. “Bingo Kitty Cat.”

Selina’s voice was soft with astonishment. “What do you want from me?”

Joker glanced sideways at Harley. “What do we want?”

Harley kissed the corner of Joker’s mouth. He smiled at her, rubbed his nose against Harley’s, though his gun never wavered before Harley turned her attention to Selina. “We want to hurt Brucie Selina, we want to hurt Batman, and you are going to help us do that.” She giggled. “You’re on our to do list!”

Selina reached up to grab the window sill and hauled herself to her feet, her mind racing. Bruce Wayne, Batman...Joker, Harley...Jack Wayne...Harleen Quinzel...she couldn’t move as fast as she wanted with her knee messed up like it was, but she knew she needed to get away, now, or she wouldn’t be leaving this office building.
She nodded slowly, opened her mouth as if she were about to offer something to the mad pair and then flexed to move. Just as she was about to pull herself through the window Joker fired.

Selina gasped, felt the bullet rip through her middle at the moment she threw herself through the window.

*

Joker and Harley exchanged a look when Selina disappeared out the window. They both raced to look out the window; first down, then up, just in time to see Selina disappear over the edge of the roof.

“Fuck.” Joker snarled. “Did I get her?”

Harley frowned, but then grinned as she stepped back from the window. “Look puddin.”

Joker followed her pointing finger. He saw blood staining the window sill, dripping over the edge and as they both leaned out the window to look they could see blood on the side of the building. A lot of blood.

Harley giggled. “Well, she may have gotten away, but I don’t think she is going very far.”

Joker chuckled with a shake of his head as leaned on the window sill with a smile. “This reminds me of a joke.”

Harley’s eyes sparkled. “Oh?”

He nodded. “A sadist, a masochist, a murderer, a necrophiliac, a zoophiliac and a pyromaniac are all sitting on a bench in a mental institution.

"Let's have sex with a cat," said the zoophiliac.

"Let's have sex with the cat and then torture it," says the sadist.

"Let's have sex with the cat, torture it and then kill it," shouted the murderer.

"Let's have sex with the cat, torture it, kill it and then have sex with it again," said the necrophiliac.

"Let's have sex with the cat, torture it, kill it, have sex with it again and then burn it," said the pyromaniac.

There was silence, and then the masochist said: "Meow."

Harley stared at him for a beat before she burst into peals of laughter.

~~ I have disabled anon comments because I have received a handful of comments that were attacks not just on my writing but attacks on myself. AO3 is free, you do not have to read works that you do not like and if you don't like them, then simply do not read them. Attacking the writer is not just mean, it's petty. There is no reason to leave an attacking comment, and there is no reason to leave more than one.~~
Bruce hurried down the hall of the hospital, his shoes making a slight squeak against the polished floors. The sterile light blue and white walls, accompanied by the sounds of beeping instruments, murmuring doctors and nurses surrounded by the smell of bleach, disinfectant and death set his nerves on end. He hated hospitals; it reminded him of disease and death, two things that he could never prepare for or fight against, no matter how hard he tried. He hated anything he couldn’t control, understand, or solve. Disease was a puzzle, but it was chaotic. Sometimes it didn’t matter if he had all the parts to solve it, sometimes sickness could still win. Death was worse, however. Death came from everywhere, from all sides with no rhyme or reason...death was pure chaos. Bruce remembered the night his parents died, the random act of violence that destroyed his life and his brother’s sanity. Their death had destroyed everything the Wayne family had been. Just like that, death had swept in—chaotic, terrible, random, unreasonable...like Jack was now...complete chaos with no rhyme or reason.

Bruce’s frown deepened. Thinking about his brother brought back the memories of Alfred being in here after his heart attack. That moment of pure terror that his one tie--no...Alfred wasn’t his only link to his parents there since Jack still lived, except, he supposed in all the ways that counted, Jack was dead too. That thought left a dull ache in Bruce’s chest. All that was left of his younger brother was that “thing” going around with the ghost of his brother’s face calling himself the Joker. That thought led Bruce to another thought, remembering when Harleen miscarried, and how devastated Jack had been.

Bruce wondered if that had been the moment that had sent Jack over the edge, the moment where everything had gone wrong with Jack along with the thoughts of what might have been, if Dr. Quinzel had carried a baby to term, if his brother was a father, now would things be different? Would Jack have gone down a different path? There was no point in him letting himself travel those dead end roads because there was no baby and his baby brother was dead.

Bruce’s brow wrinkled. Hospitals were not places of joy as far as Bruce was concerned. Hospitals were endings.

Bruce turned a corner and saw the nurse’s desk like a strange oasis in the desert of the hospital. He hurried over, noticing the startled look on the face of the young nurse manning the station as he came closer. He knew he looked a fright. Bruce Wayne was not playboy perfect at the moment, probably just this side of nuts. He had been out on the streets as Batman when he had received the call from Alfred telling him that the hospital was calling on behalf of an Irena Dubrovna, and that there had been an accident. Bruce knew exactly who it was. The name was a joke that Selina had told him, the main character from a 1942 movie called Cat People, about a woman who turned into a panther if touched by a man. Selina thought it was funny, which was why she used the name as one of her aliases.

Bruce had rushed back to the Batcave as soon as he could, pushing the Batmobile to its limits. Selina in the hospital? It had to be serious because she would never had contacted him otherwise. When he arrived at the cave, Bruce had stripped down, throwing on whatever clothing he had available before he took off to the hospital without combing his hair or checking his face. He hadn’t seen or heard from Selina since the party that Joker crashed months ago. He had hoped to hear from her, hoped that maybe they could connect again, but she had remained silent. The only reason he knew she was still in town was the series of robberies that all had her signature on them, a signature only Batman would recognize.
Alfred had told him over the phone that Miss Dubrovna had been admitted to Gotham General and that she was in intensive care after having surgery, though the hospital had refused to give any more details than that.

Bruce had fought the rising feeling of panic. He couldn’t understand why Selina was at the hospital or why he had been her emergency contact, but it didn’t really matter--she needed him and he would be there for her.

“I’m looking for Irena Dubrovna?” Bruce asked.

The nurse frowned at him, but nodded. “She’s in room 407.”

“Thank you.” Bruce turned and hurried away.

The nurse watched him with a quirked eyebrow before she pulled out her phone to text her friend that she had just seen Bruce Wayne--looking quite rough right now, but Bruce Wayne nonetheless.

* *

When Bruce found Selina’s room, the door was opened just a crack. He knocked once before pushing the door open to see Selina lying on a hospital bed, her eyes closed. Monitors beeped a steady rhythm while an IV dripped into her veins. She was alone, no other patients in the room and no hospital staff.

Bruce glanced out into the hall, but he saw no one, though the nurses’ station was not far back down the corridor. He stepped inside the room and quietly closed the door before he walked over to Selina. She didn’t open his eyes as he moved the chair that was in here over to her bedside and sat down. He would sit as long as he needed to.

He had just settled himself in to wait when Selina opened her eyes and smiled, her voice weak. “Hiya Bruce.”

Bruce sprang up. “Selina!” He exclaimed, reaching over to take her hand. “What happened?”

Her smile was as weak as her voice. Bruce could see the shadows under her eyes and her skin was deathly pale as if all the blood had been drained from her.

“It seems I did something monumentally stupid. I walked into a trap.” She chuckled followed by a grimace of pain.

“A trap? I don’t understand…” Bruce frowned down at her in concern.

Selina sighed. “I was on a job, a real easy job with the potential for a really big payout.”

She let out a small laugh until the pain stopped her, then she frowned at the expression on Bruce’s face. “Don’t be such a fuddie duddie Bruce, you know what I am.”

“I know, it's just…” He shook his head. “Nevermind, continue.”

A crooked smile touched her lips again. “Anyway, it was a trap set up by the Joker and Harley Quinn.”

All the blood rushed from Bruce’s face leaving him ghostly pale and feeling cold. “What? But why?”

“They said they wanted to hurt you, to hurt Batman…” Selina frowned at him. “What’s going on
Bruce ignored her question with one of his own. “What did they do?”

She sighed. “It was a job to steal some diamonds from an office safe. I should have known it was too easy. Harley broke my knee cap, then Joker shot me.”

Bruce inhaled sharply. “What?”

“The Joker shot me,” Selina stated plainly while she stared at him. “He shot me as part of their revenge plan...your brother shot me.”

They were both quiet before Selina said again, “They said they wanted to hurt you, to hurt Batman...”

Bruce frowned, his eyes meeting hers, not sure what to say, but Selina whispered. “Dr. Elliot said there is a good chance I’m paralyzed. The bullet clipped my spine...”

Bruce swallowed. “Selina...”

Selina shook her head. “Don’t...I’m not planning on being in this damn bed more than I have to be. I just want to know why. I want to know what’s going on. Why do Jack and Harleen look the way they do? Why does he want revenge? Bruce...what is going on?”

Bruce opened his mouth than snapped it shut again, only to open it again, but this time he was saved from trying to answer by a familiar voice.

“Bruce Wayne? As I live and breathe.”

Bruce turned around to see a doctor entering the room, his eyes widening in surprise. “Tommy?”

Selina watched as Bruce stood and walked swiftly over to her doctor, taking the man’s hand, but the tall, red headed doctor yanked Bruce in for a hug instead. The two men embraced.

Tommy shook his head. “I’ve been meaning to get a hold of you since I’ve been back.”

Bruce took a step back, his hands on the doctor’s shoulders. “When did you get back into Gotham?”

“It’s only been a few months, though by the state of my apartment you would think I was still trying to move in.” Tommy Elliot laughed. “I’ve been working at Gotham General, putting in some time before starting my own cosmetic surgery business. Besides, I enjoy my work here, Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.”

Bruce smiled. “I still see you like to quote Aristotle. Well, it’s nice to know you’re back. When you left Gotham to travel I wasn’t sure if you would ever come back.”

Tommy laughed. “I think Gotham never completely gets its claws out of anyone. We all come back here in the end, for one reason or another. So, are you a friend of my patient Irena Dubrovna? Or something more?”

Selina growled. “Boys, I may be bedridden and on some heavy pain killers, but I’m still here, so don’t talk about me like I’m not here.”

Bruce turned around. “Sorry Se...Irena. Tommy--sorry--Thomas and I were friends as children. Our parents were friends, we practically grew up together.”
Selina gave a sick smile. “Oh, well, goodie.”

Tommy frowned. “I’m sorry Irena. How are you feeling?”

“They from the waist down, nothing,” she snarled.

Bruce frowned looking from her to his old friend. “So…”

“The bullet that hit her tore through her abdomen and nicked her spine. I did what I could, but it looks like there is the strong chance that’ll you will be paralyzed from the waist down.” Dr. Elliot sighed when he looked at Selina. “Now that’s not to say it’s permanent, Ms. Dubrovna. With advances in medicine, physical therapy…”

Bruce spoke up. “I’ll provide Irena with everything she needs. I’ll get the best…”

Selina cut him off. “Bruce, I appreciate you wanting to help, but…”

Tommy cut them both off. “Look, Irena has a long road ahead of her.” Tommy looked between them, addressing them both. “I think if Bruce wants to pay for treatments, get other doctors to look at you, I think you should consider it Irena.” He gave her a sympathetic look. “I know right now, this information, the acceptance of your injury is difficult, but…”

Selina sighed. “Look, I just want to sleep right now. We can talk about this again another time? Please.” She stressed the word, her gaze shooting between both men.

Tommy nodded. “Well, I came to see how you are doing…”

Selina gave him a sour look indicating that she was clearly not in the mood to talk about how she was doing.

He nodded turning his attention back to Bruce. “It was nice to see you again Bruce. We should get together soon, have dinner and catch up.”

Bruce smiled. “That would be great.”

Tommy gave a nod to Selina before he stepped out.

Selina sighed and was proud of keeping her eyeroll small. “Is there anyone you don’t know?”

Bruce shrugged and moved back to the side of her bed. “The Elliot home was close to Wayne Manor…”

They were both quiet again for a few long seconds when Selina took a deep breath. “Bruce, I don’t understand what is going on with your brother, with…the Joker…” She said the name as if it tasted odd on her tongue. “Or…Harley…but… I would be scared Bruce. They are coming for you and I may not be the only one they are after…” She reached out and laid her hand on his arm. “They want to hurt you, really hurt you.”

Bruce frowned as he took the seat by her bed and took her hand, holding it tightly.

* 

Over the next few days, the fighting in Gotham between the now leaderless gangs had worsened. Entire sections of the city had become war zones. A rash of fires had broken out in the Bowery District driving people from their homes, businesses were destroyed, and a handful of deaths were related to the fires.
On the evening news, Caitlin Callahan stared at the screen trying to maintain her news perfect smile balanced with being serious as she reported the latest on the fighting.

“Six police officers are in critical condition tonight after attempting to arrest the arsonist believed to be responsible for the blazes in the Bowery District. It is believed these fires are related to the killing of several high-ranking members of Gotham’s crime families. The fires sparked a rash of violence throughout the city, including a shoot out in The Hill District that left two dead and a dozen injured.”

Carmine Falcone sat in the living room of his apartment that night watching the evening news. He narrowed his eyes at the television screen before he picked up the remote to turn the set off. He had been trying to make contact with the families, but hadn’t been able to connect with any of them. He had sent men out, but that had only ended up in shootouts. He had already lost several good men because of it. It was as if the families didn’t want to speak with him. It was as if they were avoiding him, which was troubling, though he tried not to dwell on it. There had been infighting before. As long as the Falcons came out on top, the others could kill each other for all he cared. His focus was on taking care of The Joker, that was all he really cared about at the moment. Once that menace was gone, then the rest—cleaning up Gotham, solidifying his control once more—would be easy. The Joker had made a fool of him and Falcone was determined to answer that with the Joker’s head on a spike.

On the other end of the couch, his daughter Sophia glared at him. She had arrived to tell him again that there had been no word from her brother Alberto for the last week or more. Carmine refused to believe that there was any trouble with Alberto. He was sure his youngest son, like his late elder brother, had vices that he would rather keep private. He would worry if Alberto didn’t show up in the next month, but until then he had told her that his attention needed to be on this quickly rolling out of control violence among the families. It wasn’t good for business and it wasn’t good for his control. Except Sophia knew that wasn’t where her father’s attention was; it was on the Joker.

Sophia snarled from her position on her father’s couch. “We need to find out who did this, who is trying to take you down Daddy.”

Carmine lit a cigar from where he sat. “No one can take me down Phia.”

Sophia frowned. “This has to be some sort of attempt Daddy. Why kill off the heads of all the families under you if not to sow chaos and dissension?”

Her father took a long drag on his cigar. He watched the smoke drift up from his lips, annoying his daughter before he answered. “Could simply be a coordinated effort to establish control in the families. Underlings getting annoyed with their positions; it’s not that unusual.”

“But all at once?” Sophia asked. “It seems strange and deliberate.”

For just a moment she considered whether this could be the Owls’ doing. She hadn’t forgotten about the visit she had received, conveying to her their displeasure with her father, and the undisguised message that they wanted her to do something about it—or they would--but the past week’s violence seemed too messy for them. Causing rampant violence in Gotham didn’t seem like their sort of strategy. Of course, she didn’t really know the Owls, but the stories had always been that they moved Gotham from the shadows. This, what was happening right now, was not from the shadows. This was chaotic, open, and deliberate. She had just opened her mouth to tell her father once more that they needed to get the situation under control when her father’s phone rang. While her father had a cell phone, he still liked to use a landline. The phone, an old fashion black rotary, had its own table by his chair. It’s first loud ring started Sophia.

Carmine put his cigar down in the ashtray at the corner of his desk and picked up the phone.
“Falcone.”

He listened to whoever was on the other end, his face going from ruddy with anger to pale as Sophia watched.

Her father finally spoke. “Are you sure?”

Whatever the voice on the other end of the line told her father, it was clear from the patriarch’s expression he wasn’t happy about. Her father hung up the phone and stared at his daughter.

“That was my contact in the force. He says there was a coat they found at the scene of the slaughter…”

Sophia didn’t need to ask which slaughter her father was referring to as he continued. “It seems they traced the owner of the coat to your brother Alberto.”

“What?” Sophia asked in confusion. “He was there?”

“Yes, it looks like he may have actually organized it,” Carmine said softly.

“Organized it? I don’t understand?” Sophia asked, but Carmine shook his head. “The cops’ working theory is that your brother was planning to overthrow me…”

“What?” Sophia stood up in shock. “Alberto would never!”

Carmine still seemed in shock himself when he spoke. His voice had a faraway quality, as if he wasn’t quite in the room with her. “All they found was the coat, a gunshot in the cloth, blood, but no body and information from one of the members of the Odessa family who said that their head had received a message from Alberto. He was the only other one who knew about it and he didn’t go to the meeting…”

Sophia shook her head. “I refuse to believe it. Something isn’t right here…”

Carmine frowned and shook his head. “You’re right. Your brother would never betray me!” He turned to his daughter. “Find your brother, get Tallyman. I want your brother here, now.”

Sophia nodded. Finally, her father was doing something.

*

Caitlin Callahan looked at the camera. Only someone who truly knew her could see the stress around her eyes as she reported the news that evening.

“In the last two weeks, gang violence had rocked Gotham like never before. There have been reports that in the last two weeks of at least twenty shootings with another six deaths and eight injuries associated with these shootings. Police have stated that they have transferred six more officers and six detectives to the Gotham Tactical Operations Division to help respond and investigate the shootings, using the model of their Gun Violence Response Team, formerly the Gang Violence Response Team in a hope to get this violence under control. There have been reports of looting in areas around Old Gotham…”

*

Jack leaned forward on the motorcycle, letting the cool evening air whip though his green hair, his blue eyes protected by a pair of motorcycle goggles. He grinned into the night as drove without a
helmet, daring Gotham to try to take him out, to try to kill him again. He had survived once, he was sure he could survive whatever Gotham had in store for him. Tonight he was dressed unusually for him, wearing black jeans and a black henley under his jacket. He had several things strapped to the bike; a baseball bat for Harley, a tire iron (because one never knew), a bag of regular smoke bombs and a few flash grenades. That wasn’t counting what he carried under his jacket, the long hunting knife, or the two guns. It was always wise to be prepared, he had thought to himself while readying for the ride.

Harley was on the motorcycle behind him, her arms wrapped tight around his waist and enjoying the night air as well. She was dressed similarly, all in black, but her white blonde hair was braided in a crown with a few hairs lose to frame her face, her eyes protected by her own set of goggles. Jack smiled at the feel of her behind him, her arms snug around his waist. His lover, his wife, his security, the only person he needed, Harley Quinn. His smile increased a fraction as he pushed the bike to go faster.

They were going to a meeting with Jason, Frost, and Bane for a little recreational vandalism and murder. Their plan was to head into the part of the city controlled by The Triad and their associated gangs. The group hadn’t been participating in the gang violence occurring throughout Gotham, at least not on the same level as some of the others and Joker thought it would be fun to give them a little encouragement by attacking some of the buinesses in their area of the city, a little vandalism. One or two gang members murdered just might get them a little more involved. Besides, while that was part of the plan, to sit on the sidelines and watch the chaos in Gotham build, it was also a little boring. Jack needed something to do until it was time to attack and this was just what the doctor ordered, a little anarchy. Besides, if he was going to wear Batman down, everyone in Gotham needed to participate.

Jack smiled just a little broader thinking about Batma, about the next steps to tear Batsy down...

Jack had been paying close attention to Batman’s movements over the last two weeks. The news had reported on his appearances throughout Gotham as Batman tried to help the police get the gang violence under control. Batman would show up, sometimes with Robin, and sometimes not, to help evacuate burning buildings, or dropping in to subdue gang members who were shooting up blocks of the city. You name it, Batman was there trying to help, sometimes with his little sidekick, but sometimes alone. The violence in the city was progressing to the point that the news had even reported sightings of some of the other masked “heroes” who liked to skirt the edges of Gotham. There had been a report of Huntress being seen, which Jack was sure pissed off old Batman to no end. Batman was not a very good team player, Jack surmised. The only reason he had the little sidekick was because Jack was sure the boy ate up whatever bullshit Bruce fed him.

Jack made a sour face. That was what Bruce had always wanted. He hadn’t wanted a brother, he had wanted someone who worshiped him, a lapdog willing to do whatever Bruce wanted in order to please him. Jack frowned in thought. There was a point when they were growing up that Jack would have been that to his brother, a time in which Bruce could do no wrong.

Jack shook the thought out of his head and focused instead on his plans for breaking his brother by starting with the second thing that he was sure Bruce held dear--the little brat. First the kitty and next, the bird. Which meant things in the city needed to get worse. Much worse. Jack wanted Batman to be so tired, so overwhelmed that he divided himself, sending the kid to handle something on his own...

Jack smiled at his thoughts. By splitting Batman and Robin up, Batman was hobbling himself and putting Robin exactly where Joker wanted him, in his cross hairs. Jack smiled at the prospect. His brother was going to start making more mistakes as the constant violence continued. In turn, the more
violence rocked the city, the busier Batman would be, and the busier Batman was, the more tired he became, the more mistakes he made, the easier it was going to be for the next step in their revenge plot.

But right now Jack wanted to do something else, something he hadn’t done in ages. He wasn’t exactly sure why he felt the need to drive out to Wayne Manor (the house was still under repairs because of the fire. No one living out there yet, but it wouldn’t be long now before Brucie could return to their childhood home, albeit remodeled.) This might be the only chance that Jack had to come out here alone. Jack’s frown turned into a scowl. He felt compelled to drive out to his old home and pay a visit to two people he hadn’t allowed himself to think about in a long time.

They arrived at the gate to Wayne Manor, locked with chains. Jack pulled up to the gate and turned off the bike. The dual headlights, set next to each other just below the handle bars, illuminated the lock and chain.

Harley frowned. “How we going to get in puddin?”

Jack slid off the bike, Harley following suit. He walked to the back of the bike where he had a black bag strapped and unzipped it. Inside were several toys, but he was after the crowbar. He pulled the metal bar out.

“Our skeleton key.” He held it up with a smile before he walked over and with a surprising amount of strength (though Harley knew where his increased strength had come from, just as hers had), he quickly broke the chairs. Jack pulled the gates open just enough to walk the bike through, with Harley following.

The estate was dark. A few lights on at the construction site provided scant illumination to reveal portions of the manor. From where they stood by the front gate, they could both see the scaffolding that covered the manor. Harley frowned staring in that direction. The house looked sad. It almost pained her to look at it, the ghost of Jack’s life before…

She jumped when Jack put his hand on her shoulder. “Come on Harls,” he said softly.

Harley nodded and turned, hurrying over to hop onto the bike behind Jack.

* 

The Wayne Family cemetery was set a mile or more from the manor. Over the months since the manor had been unlivable, the grass had grown tall, making the cemetery look like a vast, unkempt field. There was a fence around this section of the estate with an arch, the name Wayne written in iron over the threshold that led into the cemetery.

Jack pulled up to the arch and stopped, turned off the bikes engine, though he left the light on. This section of the estate, like the rest of the uninhabited property, was dark. Harley could see the strange spooky shapes of trees in the darkness via the ambient light from a few stars that peaked out from behind the clouds overhead. A light breeze made the trees’ leaves rattle and the long grass swayed, creating a sound like whispering voices. It was faint, but it made her skin crawl. The shadows were accompanied by the silent, unmoving sentinels of the tombstones littered through the grass, their shapes darker shadows in the darkness.

Harley wrapped her arms around herself once she had stepped off the bike. She wasn’t cold, but like most people, a graveyard gave her the creeps, especially late at night with no lights.

Jack had stepped off the bike, but he was staring into the darkness of the cemetery.
“Jack?” Harley’s voice was small, almost lost in the darkness.

He shook himself and smiled at her, the light from the motorcycle’s headlights made his sharp, pale face look like a death mask. “Come on Harls--let’s go say hi to the parents.”

Jack walked over and took her hand. She could feel the heat of his skin through the black leather gloves he wore, transferring from him through her gloves to her.

Harley squeezed his hand and silently they stepped into the cemetery.

*

The two of them moved through the overgrown graveyard, both of them looking like ghosts in the darkness. The grass was thick and high, but the ground was soggy, their feet sinking and making sucking noises in the water saturated ground. The sensation gave Harley the shivers as she thought of coffins in wet graves, her foot bursting through and cracking through a water damaged casket. She made a face at the thought.

Jack didn’t need the light to know where he was going; he knew the way to his parents graves as well as he knew the back of his hand, as well as he had known the Wayne Manor’s many corridors. He didn’t need light to find the mausoleum where his parents lay.

In the middle of the cemetery that had been here since the first Wayne had died in Gotham, was a large marble mausoleum. Unlike the rest of the cemetery, someone had made sure to keep the area around the great marble monument clear of weeds and overgrown grass. Harley thought it strange, like someone was so obsessed with this one structure that they couldn’t see the other stones in the cemetery, or they didn’t care.

The mausoleum that dominated the middle of the cemetery was a classical design with Doric columns and a laurel wreath carved into the pediment. Though it was dark, Harley could see the carved friezes and cornices that continue the classical trend, reminding Harley of ancient Roman buildings, stately and cold, which made her wonder why mausoleums were nearly always based on ancient Roman design...Was it something to do with dead cultures or the hope that the underworld was a real place? She didn’t understand the fascination. There were small openings in the walls, darker shadows, indicative of Romanesque design and there were lions (at least that was what she assumed they were, it was hard to tell in the dark) flanking the columns and at the very top, engraved in large Roman style letters was the name Wayne for all to see.

The white marble structure looked ghost-like in the darkness, while the faint ambient light made the perspiration on the stone glitter. Jack had finally pulled a flashlight from the pocket of his jacket. He clicked in on and shone the light on the mausoleum, giving Harley a better view of the name engraved above the ornate doorway set in the stone, the stone lions, the columns. The place was cold, lacked warmth, as if there was a distance between the people entombed here and the people that mourned their loss. The entire thing made Harley uncomfortable. This was a monument of opulence rather than a place of fond remembrance.

Jack stood, unmoving, one hand in the front pocket of his jeans, the other held the flashlight steady on the structure in front of him. Jack stood on the steps of the mausoleum looking up at the family name. Harley couldn’t read his expression, as if his ghost white face was actually made of the same white marble. She saw no emotion in his blue eyes as he stared up at the building and the engraved name: WAYNE.

“Jack?” Harley asked in a soft voice. She reached out and laid her fingers against Jack’s shoulder.
Jack didn’t answer her or look at her, simply stared at the mausoleum for a long time. His red lips were a thin line, his blue eyes cold, his skin smooth and pale. Harley stepped back with a frown on her pale features. She wasn’t sure what to do, and felt trepidation at her husband’s behavior.

When finally he spoke, Harley jumped. “When they were first buried, there were only a couple of headstones in this spot. I remember them because I would come out here every chance I got. I would play on their graves, talk to them, spend time with them. I felt closer to them. They were simple headstones with their names and photos embedded in the marble. But when Bruce got older, he wanted something more elaborate. He wanted a monument to them, something large and grand. I was against it, hated the idea. I felt it would take them away from me.”

Jack turned to look at Harley. Some of his now permanently green hair had fallen across his forehead. There was so much pain in his gaze when he turned to speak to her, she felt her breath catch.

“I felt like Bruce was placing them beyond my reach. We fought about it. Nothing happened for years, but then one day...this was here.” Jack turned to look at the monument to his parents’ death. “Bruce hadn’t asked me again, hadn’t said a word to me. He just fucking built it. Only Alfred had known, but Bruce had ordered him to say nothing because of my instability. Besides...” Jack let out a humorless laugh. “I hadn’t been out here in ages, I wouldn’t even notice, he probably thought...until I did.”

Harley stepped closer and put her arm though Jack’s. He closed his eyes and Harley tightened her hold on his arm leaning her head against his shoulder.

Jack’s voice grew quiet. “This...” he gestured with the flashlight. “Is just one of the many ways Bruce has tried to pretend I don’t matter. His connection with our parents was always more important than mine.” Jack frowned glaring at the tomb. “He was their first, he would always be the first Wayne born to Thomas and Martha. I was always the mistake.” Jack’s voice was tense. “I wanted to come out here and tell them what I’m going to do. Tell good ol’ mom and dad that their little boy was going to destroy Gotham, but you know Harley? I think I have an even better idea.”

He broke free of her and started to run back the way they had come. “Puddin?” Harley started to follow, but he yelled back. “Stay there! I’ll be right back!”

Harley wrapped her arms around herself as darkness fell over her, leaving her alone in the dark next to the tomb of the people who might have been her in-laws if Gotham hadn’t been as cruel as it was...

A few seconds later she heard Jack coming back, the light from his flashlight bobbed in front of him. When he came back into view Harley saw he had one of the bags he had strapped to the motorcycle with him. She frowned in confusion as Jack set the bag down and began rummaging through it.

“Puddin?” Harley asked, but then Joker looked up at her holding a bundle of dynamite. Harley gasped when she saw the explosives. “Puddin? Why do you have dy...”

But Joker was on his feet, having pulled out several rolls of silver duct tape. He was giggling as he raced up to the mausoleum.

“Come on Harley. Help me!” He continued to giggle, motioning her over.

Harley frowned, but she hurried over to stand beside her husband. Joker shoved some of the dynamite into her hands along with a roll of tape. “Tape these around the building,” he said with a giggle.
Harley frowned looking at the dynamite that he was taping to the door of the tomb, then the dynamite in her hands. “Puddin, are you sure you want to do this?”

Joker laughed. “Well I hadn’t come out here with this intention, but you know sweets, it’s a great idea! I hate this thing. I’ve always hated it and what better way to give a punch in the tenders to that dolt Batman than to hurt something he loves...his dead fucking parents.” Joker tittered, taping more dynamite to the marble walls.

Harley’s voice was soft as she replied. “But puddin, they’re your parents too.”

Joker stopped with a piece of tape in one hand, the other against the cold marble wall of the mausoleum. He didn’t say anything for several minutes before he turned to look over at her. His eyes were sad, so sad that it caused a spike of pain in Harley’s chest.

“They haven’t been mine in a really long time sweets. I sometimes wonder if they ever really were my parents too...they’ve always been Bruce’s parents. Bruce Wayne lost his parents to violence, Bruce Wayne built buildings and created charities in their name...Bruce Wayne, the tragic hero of the story…”

Jack chuckled glancing sideways at Harley, and the pain in his blue eyes was vivid. “What have I ever done in their name Harley? Nothing except be the crazy son, the one who couldn’t hold it together, the burden that poor old Brucie had to bear...I’m a shadow Harley, the son that doesn’t exist.”

Harley could see the tears in Jack’s eyes as he stared at the tomb and spoke more to his dead parents than to her. “And as far as Gotham, as far as Bruce is concerned, I’m dead...I died...they don’t even know or care how, but at least poor Bruce Wayne doesn’t have the burden of his crazy brother anymore, tarnishing the Wayne name.” He glared at the monument to his family. “These aren’t my parents Harls...I don’t think they ever were...They were always the parents of Bruce Wayne, the dead parents of Bruce Wayne.” His voice became a whisper. “I’m just a shadow…an afterthought…” He frowned looking both sad, confused, and hurt. Tears began to rumble down his cheeks, but he continued to taped the dynamite to the walls.

Harley wanted to say more, wanted to do more for him. She understood on some level how he felt. She had become a ghost in her family as well; there, real, but unwanted, unloved...and forgotten. Harley didn’t say anything. She didn’t really have anything to say that would make him feel better. Instead she leaned over and kissed his cheek. Joker smiled at her, reaching out to quickly grab her chin in his long, strong fingers; he kissed her more thoroughly, taking the time to enjoy the feel of her warm lips, the slide of her wet tongue against his, the scent of her, so close to him, chasing away all the evil thoughts that bounced around his mind. Harley made him real, she gave him purpose, she filled in the spaces left hollow and bare by his family, by his brother. She completed him, healed him in a way no one else could. Joker stepped closer to her, his heart, his soul, his other half, the only thing in Gotham worth saving was Harley. She was the only person, his only reason for living...well, he thought, that and hurting his brother.

They stood together, both holding dynamite, kissing, two lonely souls having found one another in the darkness.

Harley made a small, soft noise, her free arm going around his waist to pull him closer as her lips moved over his mouth, her tongue diving deep between his lips. Her fingers balled into a fist against his back, hanging onto his jacket as if she were afraid of being blown away from him. He was her anchor, her life, her breath, her everything. When the world made no sense, her puddin was there to hold her regardless of the chaos around her. He wasn’t a shadow to her, he was the sun, the moon—he was her world.
After a few tense seconds of them kissing, Joker pulled away, his cool fingers still held her chin. He gazed into her eyes with a smile on his lips.

“I love you, only you Harley...only you,” he said softly before he stepped back.

Harley watched him as he quickly linked the sticks of dynamite until there was one cord. He dropped the cord; it wasn’t very long and once he lit it, the explosion wasn’t going to take very long.

He pulled out a lighter from the inside of his jacket, a grin on his lips as he held it up.

“Get ready to run.” He warned with a laugh.

Harley frowned. “Puddin, that isn’t a very long fuse.”

Joker chuckled. “Then we better run fast!”

He leaned in and lit the fuse, turning at the same time. He grabbed Harley’s hand and with a laugh he ran, pulling her along with him. They only made it halfway when the first of the dynamite exploded.

There was a loud booming sound, Harley let out a startled scream, but Joker never let go of her hand. Instead, he ducked, laughing the entire time as a few splintered pieces of marble came flying past them.

Harley burst out laughing with Joker as two more explosions occurred, then another and another. The two of them ran and dodged as more explosions rocked the small cemetery until they arrived at the archway, skidding to a stop in the wet grass. They both turned, still holding hands to watch as the remaining explosions lit up the night sky. The explosions were followed by the burning of the mausoleum, a bright, beautiful fire that burned brightly, lighting up the night sky. The fire slowly began to spread to the overgrown grass, superheated by the initial blast of fire, but petered out a few yards from the core of the explosions; the grass too wet from spring rains to really catch fire.

Joker’s smile was wide and he laughed. The laugh started low in his chest then slowly rose, bubbling out until he was in tears from laughing so hard.

Harley giggled, but she kept looking around wondering if anyone heard the sound and would call the police. Of course, with the way Gotham was right now, entrenched in the throes of a gang war, she wasn’t sure someone could bother to come out to an estate where no one was currently living, even if the owner was Bruce Wayne. Besides, the estate was large enough that any neighbors were quite some distance away.

Joker was still laughing watching the remains of his parents’ tomb burn. Harley stepped closer catching his face between her hands.

“Puddin?” She searched his face, saw the traces of Jack were becoming fleeting. She wondered if there would be anything of Jack left, but just as swiftly as the thought occurred to her, she dismissed it. Like her and Harleen, Jack was always a part of Joker...and the four of them were always together, intertwined so deeply that neither could function without the other.

Joker grinned back at her, his blue eyes danced with mischief and madness. He grabbed her around her waist and pulled her closer, kissed her, a kiss that was almost punishing, slightly painful and demanding. Harley responded, wrapping her arms around him and returned his kiss with equal fervor. Joker growled, his hands moving under her shirt, stroking her bare skin with a desperation. He needed her, she was the only person who loved him, who had always accepted him as he was, who didn’t expect him to be anything but who he was...Harley...he had finally cut the last string of destiny that tied him to Bruce, to the Wayne family name, and now his string was wrapped tight.
around Harley.

Joker growled again, his voice rough. “Harley, my Harley...you’re my everything Harley...only you...live together, die together...”

Harley blinked back tears as she stroked Joker’s face, gazing into his eyes. “I love you puddin, only us...no one else in the world but the two of us...only the two of us puddin...I go where you go...I’ll be by your side until I die puddin.”

Joker kissed her again, his kiss hard and demanding, wanton. He needed her, no matter what else happened, he needed her with him, his girl. His hands moved over her, grasping her breasts, squeezing, finding her nipples through the cloth, pinching, squeezing until Harley gasped.

Harley clung to him, returning his kiss with as much desperation and eagerness for him as her husband felt for her. She couldn’t live without him, wouldn’t live without him. Her hands moved down from his hair to drag her fingers down the front of his shirt before she yanked his shirt up and ran her hands over him, her fingers spread wide to touch his skin, to feel the play of muscles under the pale satin smooth texture of his skin. Heat raced through her, burning and fast, she needed him now, the ache was all consuming.

Joker’s lips moved down from her mouth to skate along her throat. He squeezed her breasts again, his thumbs brushing over her hard nipples before he released her and spun Harley around to wrap his arms around her waist, pressing her body against him. He ground the mound of his erection against her backside, pressing into the round softness of her while nuzzling her throat. Harley panted, arching her back while thrusting her rear against him. She felt like a fire was burning inside her, threatening to consume her if he didn’t take her, and right now. She needed to feel him inside her, for the ache in her groin was growing.

Joker growled in the back of his throat feeling that intense heat of her rubbing her rear against him. He wanted to thrust into her, needed to or the need would consume him. He walked her toward the motorcycle. Harley pressed herself back against him, reaching back to run her hands through his hair until they were at the bike. He bent her forward reaching around to unfasten her jeans, pulling them down past her hips.

Harley grabbed the seat of the motorcycle and held on. She moaned when she felt the heat of his bare skin against her rear. She arched her back as he grabbed her hips to yank her close. Joker rubbed the head of his erection against her, made his wife hiss with want, and spread her legs as much as her jeans would allow. Joker pressed close, felt her wet and ready for him, and slid into her, burying himself deep inside her.

They moaned together.

Joker gripped her hips, but when Harley reached back he grabbed her wrist, pulling her arm up and pinned it against her back. Harley arched, inhaled sharply with pleasure that burned in her.

She arched her back as he thrust into her, moving hard and fast.

Joker groaned and looked down at Harley’s back. The fire’s light danced across her pearl white skin, as he watched his erection disappear inside her, enjoyed the loud, wet sound of their fucking, the smack of their flesh coming together, the sweet sounds of pleasure she made each time he slammed into her. His hand around her wrist tightened, his hand on her hip gripped her soft skin knowing he was going to leave bruises behind.

Joker growled. “Uuhh...Harley…”
Harley whimpered and gasped. “Oh puddin...yes...harder...”

Joker smiled, his red lips spread across his face showing off his white teeth in the fire’s light. He tightened his grip on her and thrust hard, fast, slamming into her, giving himself over to his desire to be one with her. Harley screamed out her pleasure as her climax rocked through her, hard and swift, bursting through every part of her body in a hot and cold, dizzying rush. Her eyes rolled as she moaned, and she orgasmed again so swiftly it was almost pleasurably painful. She wobbled a little, gasping his name. “Puddin...Jack...Joker...”

Joker hissed, his own pleasure was building hot and fast, his body ached to release, but at the same time he didn’t want to stop, he wanted to bury himself in her, to stay inside her...his girl. Harley cried out again and her body tightened around him. His groan turned into a cry as his climax hit him fast, flooding her with everything he had. He let her arm go to grip her hips with both hands, leaning over her as he emptied himself into her, his knees growing weak.

Harley whimpered and her breath was ragged. She held onto the motorcycle for support. Joker wrapped his arms around her, laying his cheek against her hair. He panted, gasped for breath; they both did, staying still while the fire crackled behind them.

Joker whispered. “I love you Harley, I’m yours forever pumpkin.”

Harley closed her eyes, a smile on her lips. “I’m always yours puddin...my Joker...cross my heart and hope to die.”

Joker laughed licking her ear before he whispered. “Cross my heart and hope to die Harley.”

Chinatown was located near the Dixon docks and close to the upper west side. The Triad and all the Chinese gangs under them all worked with Falcone, not for Falcone. They prided themselves on that point. It had always been a tenuous partnership, but as long as Falcone had treated them well, the gangs had been content. Now with the head of the Triad dead, Alberto Falcone having disappeared--along with his promise of changes--everything had fallen into chaos. Carmine had tried to reach out to speak with Dai Lo, but Dai Lo, the head of the Lucky Dragon gang had stepped up, trying to bring the rest of the Chinese gangs under him. The others, however, were not taking to this new change in leadership...at least not yet.

Because of the chaos in Chinatown, a few of Gotham’s minor gangs had been trying to edge in and take some of territory for themselves, as in the case of the Lords of the Avenue gang.

The conflict between the two groups had resulted in some minor skirmishes, some fires, but nothing that the Gotham city police couldn’t handle...Until tonight.

Joker, with Harley riding behind him pulled down an alley near Chong’s Tea House. Jason pulled up beside him, and behind the two motorcycles was a van that held Bane and Frost who was behind the wheel.

Joker smiled glancing sideways to Jason who had his helmet on, hiding the young man’s face from view. “You ready?”

Jason nodded and Joker could sense the young man’s smile more than see it.

Joker chuckled. “Good. I want no building left untouched. If you don’t set it on fire or blow it up, I
want it spray painted with the tags of rival gangs. I want this place in chaos, I want them to think they are being attacked on all sides by enemies they know, but can’t see. And I want Batman swooping in to try and save the day.”

Jason’s voice sounded a little hollow from inside the red helmet. “What if he comes along?”

Joker smiled and shrugged. “Then we leave and do this over again in another part of Gotham. At some point he’ll be in over his head and need the Boy Wonder with him. I’ve been paying attention to the news; he’s been all over Gotham since this started, and it has to be wearing on him. I’m willing to bet money he shows up with a bird in tow, so be ready.”

Jason nodded.

Joker smiled. “Good, now go.”

Jason revved his motorcycle and took off. Joker and Harley both turned as one to look over at the van behind them. Joker gave a hand signal.

Bane exited the van, he hit something on his personal equipment, and within seconds a bright green fluid began to pulse through his veins. They both watched with grins of delight as Bane’s size multiplied.

Bane pulled his mask over his face, stepped away from the van and stretched his arms before he roared.

Harley and Joker both squealed with excitement.

Joker yelled. “Go get ‘em, big boy!”

Bane roared again before he took off, eager to cause some destruction.

Frost stayed behind the wheel of the van, though Joker and Harley could both see him in the windshield of the van. His face was grim, but Frost gave them a quick nod letting them both know he knew his part in the plan.

Joker grinned and revved his motorcycle’s engine. “Ready for some fun Harley?”

Harley giggled, pulling the bag that held their grenades and the remainder of their dynamite ready. “I’m ready puddin.”

Joker chuckled. “Let’s go see if we can’t attract a Bat and his little bird.”

* * *

“This is Arturo Rodriguez reporting live from Chinatown. Reports coming in right now claim that there have been two deaths, and at least another seven injured tonight. Entire streets are currently burning and there have been reports of explosions. At this time, it is unclear who is behind the sudden violence here, though reports have mentioned gang tags, though there has been no confirmation from the authorities.” Rodriguez started to say something else when he stopped and placed a finger against the earbud in his ear that connected him to another reporter for his news station, a young woman who was working as his assistant. She mostly did detail gathering for his reports. Her voice came over his earbud. Rodriguez looked at his cameraman, then the camera. “I’ve just received a report of a possible hostage situation. A busload of people is being held by members of the…”
Batman landed on a nearby building, Robin beside him a heartbeat later. They could both see the fires below when their building and other nearby were rattled by an explosion.

Robin gulped. “Shit!”

Batman hissed with no real heat in his voice. “Language, Robin.”

“Sorry sir,” Robin replied, but he frowned looking over Chinatown. Batman watched the young man’s profile. He could see Dick was tired; they were both tired. They had been running around Gotham from almost the moment the sun set. There had been shootings, looting, fighting all over Gotham. Each night seemed worse than the night before. Batman was sure that everything would be coming to a head soon--this couldn’t keep going. He was actually surprised and disappointed that Carmine Falcone hadn’t tried to step up and bring an end to the fighting, not that he supported the crime lord, but Falcone had a way of keeping the peace...And that meant that something wasn’t right. After finding evidence that Alberto Falcone had been at the massacre of the gang lords, the police had a working theory that Alberto had been plotting behind his father’s back and that Carmine had found out...but there had been no body for Alberto. Batman didn’t think the theory made sense. From what he knew about Alberto Falcone, the young man didn’t have the will or the means to plot against his father. Something didn’t add up, but with everything going on in Gotham, he hadn’t had time to really look into Alberto Falcone.

Another subject that bothered Batman was that his brother had been quiet during all of this. He knew Jack--Joker--was out there somewhere, but he hadn’t seen or heard anything about his brother in weeks, not since his attack on Selina, and that worried him, deeply. The attack on Selina had been a deliberate trap. Selina was convinced that Joker was after him, but he had heard nothing, seen nothing...it unnerved him.

Batman’s thoughts were disturbed when Robin said in shock. “This is the worst yet Batman.”

The caped crusader nodded. “Agreed. It’s concentrated in this area…” Batman tilted his head as Barbara’s voice came over the radio in his cowl. “Batman, you might want to hear this…”

She switched the radio over, Batman could hear Arturo Rodriguez reporting. “The bus contains tourists who became trapped when the fighting began. It’s not clear why the bus was here in Chinatown at this late hour…”

Batman hissed, turning his attention to Robin who was listening intently. “We have a hostage situation…” He was about to add more when Barbara interrupted him. “Batman...I just picked up a call from the fire department--there’s a fire out at Wayne Manor!

“What?” Batman stood up straight, his brow furrowed. An image of Joker rose up in his thoughts, though with Gotham City right now, anything was possible.

Barbara sounded slightly distracted. “I don’t know how I missed it...yeah, someone reported a fire. They have it contained, though it wasn’t the manor. Strange...it was in the cemetery....” her voice took on that distant quality that meant she was reading something, he could hear her mumbling as she read over details before she spoke more clearly. “The Wayne family mausoleum was destroyed.”

“What?” Batman shouted before he brought himself under control. “Destroyed--what are you talking about?”

Barbara sounded upset and unsure as she said softly. “They are reporting that it looks like someone
might have purposely...they aren’t sure but it looks like someone used dynamite...and it’s...it’s gone. They have an ambulance out there...they found the remains of bodies…”

Batman paled...the bodies of his parents...ripped apart by an explosion? But why? By who? Surely even Jack wouldn’t...

Batman shook his head. He didn’t have time for this. “Tell me what we know about the hostages.”

Barbara was quiet for a moment as if the switch in subject threw her off, but she quickly recovered. “They don’t know yet,’s but they said there are at least two gunmen around a tour bus and one of the officers reported seeing people inside...someone reported seeing a monster ma..” That was when there was an explosion followed by several screams. Batman and Robin’s heads both whipped around to see an apartment building enveloped in flames. The screams were coming from that direction.

Batman snarled, turning to Robin. “Go to see what you can to do help at the apartment building. I’ll go help with the hostages.”

Robin nodded. “On it Batman.”

The young man took off, leaping off the building as if gravity was nothing to worry about it. Batman watched for a moment for the young man to reappear, which he did, swining through the night toward the burning building. Despite everything, he was proud of Dick. The young man had a good heart and someday, if that day ever came, Batman knew he could leave the cowl of Batman to him, but that day wasn’t today. Batman launched himself into the night toward the hostages that needed his help.

*

Robin landed in a run on the asphalt, sprinting toward the building. He heard the sound of a young woman’s scream. Robin cursed to himself as he ran toward the building, stopping when he hit the stairs that led up to the front doors. The building looked to be engulfed, and he was surprised anyone was still alive inside, but he heard the scream again.

“I’M COMING!! HOLD ON!” Robin yelled taking a step back to look around.

He thought he saw movement in a window on the third floor, that was when he heard another scream. “HELP ME!!” It was definitely a woman, he decided.

Robin took several steps back and pulled out his grappling hook again. He aimed for the third floor window that looked clear enough for him to get through. The hook grabbed the edge, within a second the wire snapped taut, the mechanism yanking the young man up to the window. He turned his body, hitting the window with his shoulder and burst into the room. He hit the floor and rolled to his feet with a yell on his lips.

“WHERE ARE YOU? I’M HERE!! TELL ME WHERE YOU ARE!!”

He heard another scream and a young woman’s voice yell. “IN HERE!! HURRY PLEASE!!”

The room where Robin had entered the building was burning. The heat was nearly unbearabale, sweat was already running down his face, but the fire was still on the edges of the room slowly working its way inward. He rushed through the room’s door out into a hall that was engulfed in fire that was working its way up the walls. Robin heard the scream and ran down the hall toward a door that was untouched by the fire. They only had moments to get out of here, if they were lucky.
He kicked the door open and rushed into the room only to stop short at the sight waiting for him.

There was a large man in a luchador mask—bigger than any man Robin had ever seen—with green, glowing veins under his skin. In front of the large, masked man were two people he did recognize, both dressed in black. But the green hair, the tall, slender figure, bright blue eyes, a grinning red smile that made his blood turn to ice with the perfect white teeth, his arms folded over his chest told Robin exactly who the man was, The Joker. Next to him stood a beautiful woman, shapely, just as ghostly pale as the Joker with white blonde hair, her smile though was just as cold, and just was frightening.

Joker chuckled. “Well lookie what we have here Harley, a little birdie just flew in our window.”

Harley giggled. “He did puddin!”

Joker grinned at Robin and laid his arm around Harley’s waist as he said happily. “Bane, be a dear and fetch the bird for me.”

Robin spun around for the exit, but Bane, despite his size was faster.

Bane grabbed Robin, lifting the boy off his feet. Robin twisted around in Bane’s grasp, kicking out, his foot landing solidly against Bane’s chest, but the massive man gave no indication that the attack had affected him. Robin followed the kick with a punch that landed on Bane’s face, but it was like throwing his fist against a solid wall; the impact hurt him more than it had Bane. Bane’s head didn’t even move with the impact, but the big man snarled and before Robin could react to defend himself, Bane’s fist connected with his face, blooodying the young man’s nose, and knocking Robin out cold. The young man slumped in Bane’s grasp.

Joker and Harley strolled over while Joker laughed. “Oh careful there Bane dear, we have some plans for him.”

Harley nodded. “Yep, birdbrained plans.”

Joker laughed giving her a kiss on the cheek before surveying their surroundings. “Well, I suppose we should get out of here while the getting’s good. I don’t think this building is going to stand much longer.” He smiled, heading toward the door, following Bane, who had tucked Robin under one huge arm. “I do so hope Batsy is having fun.”

Harley nodded as they strolled toward the door, neither of them looking the least bit worried about the burning building around them.

“Let’s go home puddin,” Harley said cheerfully.

Joker nodded. “Home it is.”
Caitlin Callahan stared into the camera from behind her news desk the following morning as she delivered the news. Her expression verged on sad, that strange fake expression of sympathy so many news anchors were practiced at projecting, yet she had seriousness in her gaze. She struggled to keep her expression balanced and neutral. Callahan was here to deliver the news, not interject her opinions into the coverage.

“In breaking local Gotham news, with Batman's help, the hostage situation in Chinatown was resolved with no injuries. The hostages were all transferred to Gotham General for observation and released just this morning with no physical injuries. There were no arrests and no idea who had taken the bus hostage. It was discovered later than the bombs that had been rigged to the bus were in fact dummy bombs. Since there was no ransom request, no threats issued, the only clue that local authorities have is a description from the hostages of a very large man wearing a mask and stopping the bus while several other assailants, all masked, installed the bombs.” Callahan turned, switching to another camera as she switched stories. “There were also two arrests made last night in connection to a gang shootout in Chinatown. Also in Chinatown last night, several fires broke out in surrounding buildings, all caused by explosions. There is no word on a possible connection between the arson and the hostages at this time…”

Bruce sat in a wingback chair wearing simple black pajama pants and a white t-shirt, though he had yet to sleep as he stared at the screen. He felt exposed, as if someone had opened his chest and left his heart vulnerable. It had been hours before he had noticed that Dick had never returned or checked in. He had tried to radio the young man, but received no response. Bruce had called Barbara to ask her to track Dick. Bruce had installed a tracking device in Robin’s belt, a safety measure in case something like this happened, but...nothing. The device hadn’t activated...he had nothing. Bruce had no idea if the young man was hurt, missing, taken...it was as if Dick Grayson had simply vanished.

“Master Bruce, your tea is getting cold.”

Bruce’s head snapped up to see Alfred standing by the corner of the chair where Bruce sat staring at the television screen. Bruce relaxed. Having Alfred back was like having a part of his exposed heart healed, if only slightly.

Bruce shook himself and reached for the cup of tea that sat on the table beside him; it was lukewarm at best.

“Sorry Alfred, I just...where could he be?” Bruce picked his tea up, but didn’t drink it.

Alfred frowned. “I’m sure he is all right Master Bruce. You have trained him well, he is resourceful, and young. It isn’t like Master Dick to not communicate like this. Perhaps he is still working, caught up in helping with all the chaos…” Alfred frowned. His words were flat and hollow even to his ear. It was clear something was wrong with Dick. The young man would never have made Bruce, or any of them worry like this.

Bruce sighed before he stood and walked over with the tea to where Barbara sat, her fingers moving at a frenzied pace over the keys of the computer she utilized. Bruce had stayed at the site as long as he could, looking for any clue to Dick’s whereabouts. He had searched the building where he had initially sent the young man, but the fire had destroyed the building leaving little more than rubble. He had had to leave when the sun had come up, allowing the firemen and police of Gotham to get to their work.
Bruce stopped behind Barbara’s chair. He saw her screen flashed with information and images. She had been at it for hours, looking thorough traffic cams, police cameras, scouring radio signals and messages, trying anything she could to find some evidence of where Dick had disappeared, if he had been taken, if he had been hurt—anything.

“Barbara?” Bruce asked wearily.

Barbara stopped, let out a sigh before she spun her chair around and looked up at Bruce.

She shook her head. “Nothing. I’m sorry Bruce, but it’s as if he vanished into thin air. If someone took him, they covered their tracks really well, they knew where the cameras were and how to use them. It’s like with the bus— whoever stopped the bus and rigged it with those fake bombs knew what they were doing. I would swear they had to have a hacker or someone like that working with them to pull this off. I have images from the bus stopping, but after that…” She shrugged. “Nothing.”

Bruce decided to change topics. “Anything about my parents’ graves?”

Barbara sighed. “Not much. The police sent someone out there this morning. The report said there was evidence of dynamite and it looked like someone had come in on a motorcycle, but there was no break in, and with no security footage except at the site of the mansion, there really isn’t anything to go on. I’m sorry Bruce.” Barbara frowned before she turned back around to her computer.

Bruce sighed and muttered. “It had to be him, Jack…Joker.”

Alfred frowned. “Master Bruce, I…”

Bruce shook his head to stop Alfred from speaking further. “Who else would it be Alfred? Jack hasn’t just cut ties with me, this is him cutting ties with the Wayne name. That isn’t Jack running around out there…” Bruce pointed toward the apartment window, thrusting his finger at the skyline of Gotham visible through the window. “He’s cut ties with everything. That isn’t Jack anymore Alfred, that is a ruthless, insane criminal calling himself the Joker and the Joker has no conscience, no love, no honor, nothing. He is about murder and power and madness. The sooner you accept the fact that the Jack we knew is well and truly dead, the sooner we can bury him and move on.”

Alfred frowned. “Bruce, you don’t really mean that.”

Bruce narrowed his eyes at Alfred, his voice cold. “I do Alfred. I do mean it. My brother is dead. He died that night our parents were killed. The person that was left behind was hollow and broken—it just took a few years before he realized Jack was dead too and became what he is now, the Joker. I no longer have a brother.”

Bruce turned and stalked out of the room.

Alfred looked pale and felt weak. He and Barbara exchanged a look before Barbara said, “I ah, never met Jack…but…” She pressed her lips together, not sure what she was asking.

Alfred sighed. “Jack was troubled after their parents’ murder. He never recovered, just like Bruce really, but where Bruce focused on his crusade, Jack slowly crumbled.” Alfred glanced in the direction that Bruce had stormed off in. “I don’t think Bruce ever knew what to do with Jack, how to handle him. He wasn’t ready for the responsibility of a little brother who desperately needed him. I did what I could, but I wasn’t a replacement for their parents, or each other.” Alfred turned back to face Barbara. “They are both broken men. I’m not sure how much of what Jack has become is what he always was, or what his relationship with Bruce pushed him toward.” He shrugged. “I don’t think I’ll ever know the hows or whys, but no, I don’t think Jack is dead. I think Jack is inside the Joker,
still scared…”

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Bruce decided to make his way to the gym. There was nothing like bleeding off his anger by punishing his body.

Bruce grabbed some weight and began working his arms, building up a sweat in a short time as he punished himself with pushing his body. He was angrier than he had ever recalled being, maybe more angry than the slow fury that settled in him after his parents’ murder. This was not just anger, but what he felt bordered on a cold fury. Joker had hurt Selina, paralyzed her, his parents’ tomb lay desecrated and destroyed, and now Dick was missing. He knew they were all connected to the man who used to be his little brother. He didn’t know what Joker wanted, except to hurt him. Maybe that was all this was, Joker with Jack’s knowledge, hurting Bruce, hurting Batman, any way he could. A small trickle of cold ran up his spine. What would Joker want with Dick Grayson? Was it a simple kidnapping or had something else happened to the young man?

Bruce ground his teeth and began adding squats. If it was kidnapping, where was the ransom, where were the demands?

Bruce hissed in anger when his phone rang. He dropped the weights, the metal slammed to the floor with a loud bang as he walked softly over and picked up his phone. He blinked in surprise at the name that appeared. Talia.

Bruce hit the button. “Talia?”

“Hello Bruce,” Talia’s smooth and accented voice came over the line. “How are you?”

Bruce turned to put his back against the wall and slid down to the floor. “Are you coming back to Gotham?”

“Yes. My plane is arriving this evening. I...I need to see you. It’s important. It’s about my father and someone I need you to meet.” Talia sounded upset, her voice strained.

“I can pick you up…” Bruce started to say, but Talia cut him off.

“No, meet me at Gotham’s Wayne-Cobblepot Botanical Gardens. Remember our date there?”

Bruce smiled as a memory resurfaced. He did remember that date. It was one of those few nearly perfect days…

“Yes, I remember,” Bruce said in a quiet tone.

He could hear the smile in her voice. “Meet me there Bruce, around midnight.”

Bruce nodded. “I’ll be there.”

Bruce grimaced. Talia was in town with information about her father, Ra’s al Ghul. The man was an international business man, hadn’t been pleased about the young Bruce Wayne being with his daughter, but then, almost overnight al Ghul had changed his mind. Bruce had never understood why Talia had been tight lipped about it, but then life had gotten in the way forcing her back home. Bruce frowned, thinking about Selina in the hospital and now Talia was arriving. Robin was missing and he couldn’t shake the notion that the young man was possibly held by his brother. What more could happen? He shook his head. He probably should not ask that question.
Later that night, somewhere on the grounds of an abandoned amusement park, Dick came back to consciousness. His head felt heavy and he could taste old blood in his mouth. It took the young man a few seconds to realize he was sitting in a chair, his arms bound behind his back with what felt like a zip tie; his ankles were bound to the legs of the chair too. He was still in his Robin outfit, the mask he wore over his eyes was still in place too.

Dick squeezed his eyes open and shut, trying to clear his vision. There was a single light on him, like a spotlight, bright enough in his eyes to leave the rest of the room in shadow so that he couldn’t see anything beyond the pool of yellow light. What he could pick up about the room was that the floor was concrete, grey, but with what looked to be the remains of color, as if it had once been painted, but he couldn’t determine the color. He noted a smell of dust, mildew and...cotton candy? His nose itched from the scent, which he realized was still mixed with the scent of smoke from the burning building he had been looking for that person who needed...help. Dick’s memory came back in a flood, the Joker, Harley Quinn, the others with them...

“Oh lookie there Harls, our guest is awake.”

“He sure is puddin.”

Dick looked toward the sound of the voices and watched as Joker, with Harley Quinn on his arm stepped forward into the light.

Joker smiled, his lips a perfect slash of red across his ghost white face, his blue eyes electric, startling and his green hair was slicked back from his face. Dick had to admit, even in his current state the man who had once been Jack Wayne was a handsome man despite his coloring. Joker was also dressed well. The suit was tailored to his tall slender figure. The suit was black, all black, with a black vest, shirt, jacket, even his shoes, perfectly pointed oxfords, were black. Joker even wore black leather gloves. The only color was the tie Joker wore, red, like blood, like a bloody slash down the Joker’s chest. Dick was so focused on Joker’s clothing that he almost missed the tire iron the clown carried over his shoulder. His head still felt fuzzy.

Harley Quinn, who had her arms wrapped around one of the Joker’s arms, was also dressed in a black suit with her own vest and black, tailored short jacket. Instead of oxfords, she wore a pair of wickedly sharp heeled red shoes and instead of a tie, she wore a red blouse underneath her black jacket. This close, Dick could see she was a beautiful woman. Her white blonde hair hung in low pigtails; the white thick locks fell in soft waves across her shoulders like snow. Her lips were just as red as Joker’s and her smile was just as beautiful, and just as sinister. She carried a baseball bat with her that she rested over her other shoulder. The two of them walked into the light looking like two well dressed ghosts, hungry and vicious ghosts.

Dick watched them and felt a knot of cold fear that cleared his mind right away.

Joker smiled, showing off his perfect white teeth as he stopped in front of the young man.

“Now, little Robin--it is Robin isn’t it?” Joker grinned. “The first thing I want to make very clear is this...” He motioned at the room with the crowbar, then back at Dick. “...you, my dear boy, are not the cause of what is about to happen. This has nothing to do with you. Really, if I had a choice, you wouldn’t be involved at all. I mean, you are sort of just...” He waved his hand with the crowbar in the air looking for the correct word. “Mm...not exactly in the way, because you do have your uses, which is what is going to happen right now. You are going to serve a purpose. You are a message...” He shrugged and looked over at Harley who shrugged too. Joker lifted his chin a fraction as his gaze bored into Robin’s. “You’re a step in the chain toward our goal.”
Joker nodded with a smile and gave Harley a kiss on the cheek. “You see, what is about to happen here is just a symptom, and treating a symptom is part of the healing process, or part of euthanasia in this case. Harley and I are like doctors and we are going to treat Batman by working on the symptoms first. Batman needs to be cured of his crusader’s complex, to be shown that his complex has casualties. I was the first.” Joker’s hairless brow knitted into a scowl as he threw his arms out to the sides. “The first victim, the first corpse!” He laughed and spun around before he stopped turning to face Dick again. “Catwoman was the second, and you are going to be the third…” The green-haired man smiled as he pointed at the young man with the tire iron.

“You see, I want to hurt Bruce like he hurt me. He has tried time and time again to take away from me the one person who loves me, who accepts me, and who understands me. The one person in all the world that I love, who I would do anything for, who I would kill for...my wife.”

Joker strolled over to Harley who was smiling at him. He reached for her, running his gloved hand along her throat in a gentle caress and pulled her close.

“My one true, only madness,” he whispered staring into Harley’s eyes.

Harley smiled, brushing her nose against Joker’s nose. “Puddin.”

Joker kissed her, held her by the back of her neck and pressed his mouth to hers, hungry for her. Harley reached out and grabbed him with one hand, her fingers balling his jacket as she closed her hand into a fist, kissing him back with a slow, burning desire.

Robin snarled. “Batman will find me!”

Joker didn’t hurry to finish his kiss. He held Harley a moment longer, kissing her until they both felt warm desire pulsing through them both.

Joker caressed her lips with the tip of his tongue before he stepped back from Harley.

“Have you heard the quote, find what you love and let it kill you? I don’t know who said that…” Joker shrugged. “But I like it. Harley is going to kill me.”

Harley chuckled. “And you’ll kill me.”

“What are you doing to do me? Are you going to kill me?” Robin asked, trying to keep the tremor out of his voice.

Joker laughed. “Oh, I’m not going to kill you. I’m just going to hurt you, really, really bad.”

Robin paled and felt his breath catch, but he said again. “Batman is going to find me and when he does…”

Joker laughed. “And when he does? What? He won’t avenge your death…”

Robin’s stomach twisted into a knot. He hadn’t really considered that Joker would kill him. He thought Batman would find him or that because Joker was Batman’s brother, then maybe…

“Batman is going to save me,” Robin repeated, but this time his voice had a tremor, because he wasn’t sure.

Joker smiled. “Well, this will definitely be a test to see how far old Batsy is willing to go...to see just how far I can push him.”
Robin narrowed his eyes and spoke with anger. “He’ll never fall to your level Joker. He’s a better man than you’ll ever be, a better man than you ever were. You’re just mad because when it came to it, he chose me over you. He cares for me more than he ever did you. You’re just jealous because he loves me like a brother.” Robin smiled when he saw by the expression on Joker’s face that he had hit a nerve.

“Batman will come for me,” Robin hissed.

Joker’s eyes were dull for a moment. Robin frowned. There was something in his expression that made him feel...bad for what he had said. He’d never felt abandoned by his family and when his parents died, Bruce was there to help pick up the pieces, but Jack Wayne had only had his brother who had been suffering too. Maybe...no. He refused to think that Bruce had done anything wrong. Jack Wayne was a bad seed, and he had become a monster. Some people were just broken from the beginning.

Robin said it again. “Batman will come for me and make you pay. He cares about me.”

Joker’s expression changed once more. He chuckled, glancing over at Harley. “Ah, the optimism of youth.” He turned back to Robin. “This is going to be a valuable lesson for you my lad, something I learned a long time ago--Bruce won’t save you. He won’t be there when you need him.” Joker stepped closer and grabbed Robin around the back of the neck, yanked the younger man’s head close to his. Joker laid his forehead against Dick’s in an intimate gesture, as if they were brothers, as he hissed in a low voice. “Bruce will only love you for as long as you obey him, as long as you are useful to him. The moment you think for yourself, or the moment you show anything resembling what he considers a weakness, ol’ Brucie will toss you aside, hide you away, forget you exist.” Joker stroked the back of Robin’s neck with his fingers, brushing the short hairs with a gentle touch. “You think because he’s Batman that he’s a hero, that he’ll swoop in and save you.” Joker chuckled with a raspberry that left flecks of spittle on Robin’s face. “He can’t even save himself.”

Harley stepped closer. “I think we need to teach him a lesson puddin.”

Harley held her bat ready. Joker let go of Robin and stepped back beside his wife with a smile, hefting the tire iron over his shoulder.

He shrugged at Robin. “This is going to hurt you a lot more than it’s going to hurt us.”

Joker began to laugh, loud and long.

* * *

Outside the storage warehouse where Joker and Harley were holding Robin, Frost stood with his ears and eyes open. He wasn’t really guarding them or watching out for anything since they were at the amusement park, though he was keeping an eye out for the Bat. He didn’t really think Batman would find them here, but better safe than sorry. The vigilante had proven himself to be resourceful.

He frowned as he paced in front of the warehouse. He wasn’t sure how he felt about them kidnapping the kid, not that Robin was some snotnose pre-teen--more an unruly teenager--but still, this whole thing felt a little uncomfortable while at the same time he understood where Joker was coming from. Batman, or Bruce Wayne, had been hurting his brother for years. It was only natural that Jack...or Joker wanted to hurt him back. Joker had said he had no intention of killing the kid, he was only going to use him to send a message, that it was all about hurting Batman...

Frost sighed, in for a penny, in for a pound he supposed. Joker would always have his loyalty; he and Miss Quinn were his family, along with Agatha. And besides, Frost thought with sniff, Batman
did need a message.

* 

That same evening Sophia and Tallyman were in a car being driven by her bodyguards Angelo and Lucia in the front. Sophia was heading to her brother’s favorite club, Electric Dreams. The place was an abandoned auto warehouse that had been turned into a two-level dance club and bar. She knew a lot of Gotham artists hung out in the place, as well as Salvatore Inzerillo, a second cousin or uncle or some sort of relative to Enrico Inzerillo, the now dead head of the Inzerillo family. She hoped to find her brother there, but with the gang murders and fighting she wasn’t sure. If things had been “normal” she would simply have gone to see the Inzerillos, presenting herself as The Roman’s daughter and they would have been falling all over themselves to help her in the hopes of winning favor with her father, but with the way families and gangs were acting now...No, this was probably better--a neutral setting, lots of people and some alcohol.

Tallyman sat in silence next to her with a scowl on his dark features. He had suggested that she allow him to kidnap Salvatore and let him get any information from the man his way, but Sophia didn’t want to alienate any more members of the other crime families than were already out for Falcone blood. And she wanted to find her brother. Forced information was never reliable information. The club was crowded when they arrived, forcing them to park further away than Tallyman or her bodyguards liked, but they made their way down the sidewalk to the club without incident.

Once inside, Sophia looked around with a grimace. The place wasn’t too big--for an old warehouse--but the sea of humanity inside was shocking. She supposed with all the fighting on the streets, many Gothamites were heading to the club to blow off some steam, to be somewhere they felt safe, and probably to get high, drunk or both to forget about what was going on outside. She supposed she couldn’t blame them. She would give anything for a moment in which she didn’t have to think about the future of the Falcone family, but some people did not have the luxury of forgetting.

Their small group stopped a few steps inside the club. Tallyman frowned, his eyes narrowed. Something displeased the man. He turned his attention to Sophia. “We’ll split up. I’ll take the second floor.”

Sophia nodded. “Fine.” She was happy to get away from the man. He may be good at what he did, but he made Sophia feel on edge with his presence.

She watched as Tallyman, his dark black skin against the white suit he wore (which was soaking in the purple and blue lights of the place) made him stand out against the sea of young people dressed in shorts and t-shirts. To Sophia he looked like a deadly shadow playing at being human. Within seconds, even as she stared at him, Tallyman was gone. The man simply disappeared into the crowd, an impressive feat since only a moment ago she had thought he stood out too much to blend in and ask questions. She shook her head and turned her attention to the crowd.

Sophia turned toward her bodyguards. “Give me some distance--I can’t really ask questions with the two of you hanging so close.”

Angelo and Lucia shared a look.

Angelo spoke up. “Miss Falcone, I don’t think that’s a very…”

Sophia turned to glare at him. “I don’t care what you think! I want you and Lucia off my ass for a few minutes while I try to get information on my brother. Got it?”

Angelo and Lucia both looked taken aback by the venom in her voice, but Lucia nodded. “All right
Miss Falcone. We won’t be far away.”

Sophia nodded, followed by a sigh. “Thank you. I’m sorry, I just--I just really want to find Alberto.”

Lucia nodded. “We understand Miss Falcone. We’ll be close, but not too close.”

Sophia nodded. “Thank you.”

She took off toward the bar. The best place to start, she reasoned, was with the bartenders. She received a few looks from the club patrons. Sophia wasn’t exactly dressed for a night dancing in a tight black pencil skirt and white silk blouse with black stilettos, but she was striking as she made her way to the bar, with people moving out of her way without her having to lift a finger.

She arrived at the bar, the other patrons making her a space. She slipped into the space and leaned on the counter. It was only a beat later before a bartender, an older man with short greying hair and a ready smile hurried over.

“What can I get you?”

Sophia smiled. “A pisco sour and can I ask you a question?”

The man had turned away to make the drink, but turned back to face her. “Sure, what do you need?”

Sophia smiled her most charming smile. “I’m looking for information about my brother. Alberto Falcone.”

At the mention of the name Falcone, the man lost some color. “Alberto Falcone? Honestly I don’t recall the name. I mean, I know the name Falcone, but I don’t remember an Alberto.”

Sophia nodded. “Do you know Salvatore Inzerillo?”

The bartender nodded. “Yes, he’s actually here tonight.”

The bartender pointed and Sophia turned in the indicated direction to see Salvatore Inzerillo on the dance floor. Salvatore, Sophia noted with a critical eye, was not an attractive man. He was heavily built, already developing a “beer gut” from his excessive drinking and partying. He had thick black hair that seemed to be trying to envelope his entire body. He was dancing with a couple of women on the dance floor, at the same time holding a drink in his hand.

Sophia smiled at the bartender. “Thank you.”

The bartender nodded. “I’ll have your drink in just a minute.”

Sophia turned to watch Salvatore when someone took the space next to her.

“I thought you were going to take care of your father for us.” The voice was soft, smooth, and feminine and cut through the music for Sophia’s ears only.

Sophia turned to see an exotic looking woman with what she would call perfect dark beige skin and oval blue eyes. Her dark hair lay slicked back from her face and she wore all white. Sophia didn’t know why, but she knew this woman represented the Owls.

“I...I’m looking for my brother,” Sophia said as way of explanation.

The woman nodded. “We know. Is Alberto really trying to take over the business from your father?” she asked with interest.
Sophia shook her head. “I don’t believe it.” He could inherit anyway--being The Roman’s remaining male offspring--so making a move wouldn’t make sense, Sophia thought, but she kept that to herself. The Owls could probably draw that conclusion themselves anyway. “He’s been missing…”

The exotic woman smiled. “Word is he organized a meeting of the family heads to try and win them to his side. Your father heard about it and had them all killed.”

Sophia turned to look at the dancers again, her attention on Salvatore. “That’s not true.”

The woman in white frowned. “The Court does not like the war that is going on. It is bad for Gotham, bad for the Court. We do not like wars that we did not start for a particular purpose. This war had no purpose. Your family, all the criminal families have been tolerated by the Court because they serve a purpose, to the function of the Court and the city. If you do not take care of your father, then we will step in. The Grandmaster has been most generous giving you this opportunity to serve the Court and you are wasting it.”

Sophia swallowed trying not to show how nervous she was, unnerved by this woman and the power she represented.

“I will take care of it, I swear,” Sophia said with a calm she didn’t feel.

The woman smiled. “I hope so, because if not then we will have to bring the criminal underworld under new management.”

The woman stood up, but with her back to Sophia, she said. “You have forty-eight hours. After that, a Talon will be sent. We have been more than understanding with you, but this issue has become a problem that is now affecting all of Gotham. Forty-eight hours is far more generous than you deserve. See that you do not disappoint.”

With that, the woman vanished into the crowd.

Sophia let out a breath she had been holding. “Damn it.”

*

That same evening Agatha, dressed casually in a pair of jeans, t-shirt, tennis shoes and a light jacket, was walking home from a quick trip to the local deli. Frost was with Jackie tonight, but he was supposed to be home later. She smiled as she made her way down the sidewalk when she felt something, like she was being watched. Agatha stopped in her tracks, turning to gaze down the alley she stood next to.

At first all she saw was shadows; the streetlight didn’t penetrate the darkness of the alley, but as she stood still watching, searching, a shape formed within the shadows. Agatha narrowed her eyes and rolled her shoulders, ready. The figure seemed to sense that it had been spotted and proceeded to pull itself away from the shadows.

“Agatha.” The voice was deep and smooth, surprising Agatha as she replied. “Jonas?”

She looked down the sidewalk in both directions before she stepped into the shadows of the alley to see a tall, slender man standing by the wall. His body was covered from head to toe; the black outfit he wore resembled a crisscross of thick black leather straps that wrapped across his body giving him a slick look. The shoulders of his outfit were heavily padded, the leather gloves he wore extended to his elbow, covered by a thick gauntlets studded with metal. Every part of the man was covered in protection, including a mask he wore, part of a helmet that covered his head. His eyes were covered by strange, black lensed goggles leaving only his mouth and chin exposed showing the strong chin
and firm mouth of an attractive African American man.

As soon as they were deeper into the shadows, the man named Jonas pulled the mask away revealing a smooth shaven head and dark blue eyes. He smiled when he saw Agatha.

“Long time no see, Agatha. You look good.” Jonas grinned, showing off rows of perfect, straight white teeth.

Agatha frowned in surprise. “What are you doing here Jonas? I thought...I thought you weren’t currently active.”

Jonas frowned. “I wasn’t until a day ago. I was awakened along with a handful of others, but I was mostly brought back to find you.”

“Me? But...oh no…” Agatha frowned taking a step back, her hand moving to grab a weapon she had concealed on her body, but Jonas smiled and shook his head holding his hands up to show her he held no weapons. “No, you are not to be terminated. Quite the opposite. The Court wishes to reactivate you. They want to welcome you back into the nest Agatha, want you to be one of us again.”

Agatha, who had been looking nervously down the alley snapped her head around at Jonas’ words. “Reactivate me? Bring me back into the nest? I don’t understand. I was let go when the Court and I came to an agreement. No Waynes would be part of the Court. I don’t understand.”

“The Court has reconsidered their position. They see Bruce Wayne as a much needed surge of new blood, but…” He smiled at Agatha when he saw the expression of horror on her face.

“But...they have decided to extend an olive branch to you. Return to the nest, perform a special task, and Bruce Wayne will be left as he is.”

Agatha dragged her teeth over her bottom lip. She had feared that returning to Gotham would put her in their sites—her or Jackie or Bruce, but she didn’t think the Court would call her back. She should have known. She had let herself become too comfortable, let herself feel too safe when she should have known better. Maybe she was getting too old for this.

Agatha pressed her lips together before she answered. “What do they need from me?”

Jonas nodded his approval before he answered. “The Court has become concerned about this Joker person. He has caused many deaths and has had a hand in the destruction of several important deals. The Court has decided that the Joker and the chaos that follow him cannot be tolerated in Gotham any longer. They feel that you are the best candidate for handling him.” Jonas smiled. “Isn’t that good news? You could come back to us. They have said they will forget all past ills and will reinstate you to the Court. You will resume your work as a Talon…” He smiled again. “You and I could work together again.” Jonas seemed pleased by this news, but Agatha’s thoughts were swirling with anxiety. Did they know who Joker really was? Was this a trap or a test? But if it were true, she might be able to control things within the Court if shefooled them, if she agreed.

Agatha looked at Jonas who smiled back at her. His expression held no malice, no anger, and he seemed to really want her back…

*  

Bane held his cards close to his face. Only his eyes were visible over the tops of them. He studied everyone at the table. The group of them sat around a small round table set in the middle of one of the displays that had been part of the amusement park’s Tunnel of Love ride. The water that ran through
the ride had long since dried up. The mechanisms that allowed the water to create a small flowing river were rusted shut.

For some reason the tunnel of love ride had a large diagram of dinosaurs as part of its several displays that the “lovers” in their little boats could see as they rode by, along with a Japanese tea ceremony scene, and a stereotypical African tribal scene. The place was low budget and racist. None of them could figure out the “love” angle of the place. Either way, except for getting the electricity going again in the building, no one had bothered with trying to get the actual ride working again. Instead, tonight, Bane had carried a table down to the first display and set the large wooden table down among the plastic dinosaurs while Jason, Trope, and Thea brought the chairs. Zsasz brought two cases of beer with Bea and Viktoria bringing two brown bags of snacks with them.

They had a CD player in the corner playing some soft jazz. Jason had come down here and switched the lighting from the red bulbs that were in most of the wall sockets to some soft white bulbs, along with strings of lights that he hung from the ceiling and around the dinosaurs so that the strange plastic dinosaur display was now bathed in white light rather than red. Bane reached, looking over his cards while he did so, and picked up his beer bottle from the table next to him. He took a sip, watching everyone with hawk eyes.

Viktoria grabbed a handful of cheese puffs from a nearby bowl and tossed a few into her mouth with a grin before feeding Bane some.

Jason studied his cards. “Okay, I’ll raise you another ten.”

Zsasz lifted a hairless brow at Jason. “You sure about that?”

Bea chuckled, elbowing the bald man in the side. “Zsasz, stop.”

Zsasz grinned at Bea and waggled his eyebrows, making her laugh. (Everybody else exchanged knowing smirks. It was obvious that Zsasz may have found someone he actually enjoyed speaking to besides Joker.)

Thea glanced at Trope who shrugged before she tossed in her own couple of chips into the pot in the middle of the table. “You are all going down.” Thea grinned. “I’m gonna clear you all out and then I’m going to buy that 8K TV I’ve been looking at.”

Jason pouted. “You should have something like that for the club house.”

Thea laughed, adding. “We have a clubhouse?”

Jason gestured at the faded plastic fossils of strange tunnel of love dinosaurs and badly painted jungle backdrops. “Does this look like a clubhouse? Besides, if you clean everyone out and buy one of those super fancy TV’s, I think we should all benefit.”

Thea laughed. “Fine, if I win, I’ll purchase one and install it someplace for us all to use, but not in here. It still smells like mildew in here.” She wrinkled her nose in disgust.

Jason did a fist pump. “Awesome! Hey, could we convert that old food court building, the one that looks like a big top tent? The inside is large enough. It pretty much just needs a good cleaning, some chairs, a couple of couches...”

Bane folded his cards against his chest. “Is there a kitchen?”

Jason nodded. “Yeah, there is. I would have to look at the appliances ‘cause I’m sure most of them are shit now, but replacing them would be easy. I think Joker and Harley would be all for it.”
Trope nodded. “Oh we could have parties!! And dancing! Joker and Harley love dancing!”

Bane grinned. “I could make you all my famous ropa vieja.”

Viktoria smiled at the big man. “This sounds like a great plan.”

Jason nodded. “Joker and Harley are gonna love this idea.”

*

Joker smiled, standing back, leaning back on his right leg, his left out in from of him as he examined the young man tied to his chair. He frowned, tilting his head one way and then the other, as if trying to determine something important. He held his hands up, the tips of his thumbs together as he created a frame with his hands while looking at Robin. He grinned as he framed the young man between his hands, gazing with pleasure at Robin’s bloody, beaten face.

Dick’s nose was broken, his lips bloody, and one eye looked to be swelling shut.

Dick looked up at Joker, speaking through bloody lips. “He’ll never love you, you know that? As far as he’s concerned, you’re dead to him. You’ve been dead a long time.” He spat blood. “And what’s worse is you’re jealous! You so desperately want your big brother to love you...” Dick’s voice became sing songy. “...that you’ll do anything to get his attention, even try burning down the city, but it won’t matter. Bruce hates you, he always will.”

Joker stopped and stared at Dick, his smile fading. “Who says I want him to love me? I’ll take the hate--hate is just love gone bad.”

Dick wheezed and said with venom. “He’ll never care for you the way he does me, Joker! He’ll never even hate you as much as he’ll love me.”

Joker’s smile dropped completely, his blue eyes became cold, and his voice matched his gaze. “I guess I’ll just have to try harder then, hmm?”

Harley frowned, looking between them. She could see the pain hidden behind Jack’s gaze. She felt a rage boil up in her at Robin. She moved without thinking, anger driving her, and shoved the head of her bat at Robin, striking him in the stomach with enough force that he coughed out an explosive burst of air.

“Shut up Birdbrain,” she ground out between clenched teeth. ”He doesn’t need Batman or Bruce--he has me.”

The young man gasped in pain, but he smiled knowing he had landed a strike on Joker; not physically, but emotionally. He could see it in the clown’s eyes. “That’s what all of this is. You lost your mind and Bruce stopped loving you. He had to find a replacement brother. He found me.”

Harley hissed in fury, her hand snapping out to grab Robin by his ear twisting and yanking down hard. The young man yelped.

“Shut up,” Harley snarled.

Joker narrowed his eyes at Robin. “You may just be a replacement for me in Bruce’s eyes, but you know what little birdie, you’ll never be me. Try as you might, you’ll never been a Wayne, you’ll never be his brother.” Joker stepped closer. “But then again, I don’t want to be anyone’s brother either...” Harley moved out of the way to allow Joker to get closer. He dropped forward to lay both hands on the back of the chair around Robin’s shoulders, his nose nearly touching Robin’s. This
close, Robin could see the mad wildness in the Joker’s blue eyes, the simmering explosiveness like a hissing snake ready to strike. The man’s eyes were beautiful, but in a deadly way.

Joker smiled, but the grin never reached his eyes. His bright red lips framed the rows of perfect white teeth. “You will always be the replacement, and you know what little bird? You will be replaceable by another bird, and another. I predict that you are going to be replaced my little, little bird...think about that. If he can replace his own brother, what makes you so special, little orphan?”

Robin glared at Joker, his left eye swelling shut as he whispered. “He’ll never love you.”

Joker pushed back and backhanded Robin, snapping the young man’s head to the side.

Joker stood still for a moment, glaring at Robin before he shook himself, the tremor running through his entire body as if reclaiming a calm he didn’t feel before taking another step back.

“Well, that was unpleasant.” He wrinkled his nose as if he had smelled something rotten.

Harley stepped over to him, letting her bat drop to the floor with a loud clatter as she pulled Joker closer. “Puddin, you all right?”

He smiled at her and reached up to caress her face. “You are the only family I need Harley. You were correct in what you said--I only need you. You are all I’ve ever needed, all I’ll ever need. I love you, only you.”

Harley smiled brushing her fingers over his lips. “I know puddin. I love only you, I need you..”

Joker caressed Harley’s cheek, let his fingers trace down to her throat to wrap his hand around her neck in a tender hold before he turned back to Robin. “You see, I have a new family, and most importantly, I have her.” He turned to look at Harley again, his smile soft when he gazed at her. “My moonlight, my madness, the moon that I howl at.” Joker’s eyes wandered over her as he whispered to her, his voice soft.

“Love is merely a madness; and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punish’d and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too.”

Harley giggled gazing at him. “I love it when you quote Shakespeare puddin.”

Joker smiled and rubbed his nose against hers before he grabbed her sides and pulled her against his body, kissed her with rising heat. He tilted her back, supported by one hand on her lower back while his tongue played against hers. Harley held him close, giggling as she caressed his tongue with hers just before Joker pressed his mouth fully to hers in a kiss that made her insides turn into a spiraling twister of butterflies. He reached up to cup the back of her head, his arm tight around her waist. Harley made a small whimper of pleasure and her hands gripped him with desperation. She loved him so much, loved him with every fiber of her being. She returned his kiss as if this would be the last, taking her time to enjoy the feel of his lips, his tongue in her mouth, his hands on her, until it was time to breathe once more.

As Joker smiled at her, his blue eyes twinkled. “Probably should see about sending our little message, then I want to take you upstairs and have my way with you.” Joker gave her a wicked grin before he released her.

Harley giggled again, letting him step back. “I’m looking forward to it puddin,” Harley purred as Joker pulled out his phone to turn his attention to Robin. “Now, smile for the camera Boy Blunder.”
That night Bruce drove out to Wayne Manor, not as Batman, but as Bruce Wayne. He had an hour or so before Talia’s flight landed, maybe another hour or more before he would be meeting her at the botanical gardens. He wanted to see the destruction of his parents’ gravesite. Just thinking about the fact that Jack (he knew with certainty that it had to have been his brother) had gone so far down the rabbit hole that he would destroy their parents’ final resting spot, made him sick to his stomach.

Bruce pulled his car up to the cemetery where several generations of Waynes lay buried. He parked and slipped out of the vehicle, leaned in to retrieve the flashlight he had brought with him. He clicked it on with a frown, shining the light toward the family grave site only to see yellow police tape across the entrance to the graveyard.

Bruce sighed before he stepped closer and pushed the tape up, crouched under it, and headed into the cemetery. He didn’t have to walk far before he saw the destruction. The mausoleum looked as if a bomb had gone off. The center was completely gone, a gaping hole was left in the middle looking like the cracked open chest of a heart patient, exposed, weak, bits of marble flashed white in the flashlight beam where they lay on the ground, like the bones of an exposed grave, were scattered throughout the cemetery. The explosion had destroyed several other headstones as well. Jack--Joker had treated his family memories with so little regard that Bruce wanted to strangle him. How could he do this? Bruce wondered to himself, how could Jack be so callous toward his own blood?

For a moment, Bruce felt a spike of hatred so intense for Dr. Harleen Quinzel that his chest hurt. He believed that her arrival had started this, her presence had taken his fragile brother and twisted him further. Bruce had tried to help Jack by bringing her to their home only to have her presence destroy Jack rather than heal him.

Bruce stopped himself from thinking on that any more. He saw no point in dwelling on who was to blame. He knew where the blamed lay.

The bodily remains of his parents had been gathered up and moved to the Gotham City coroner until Bruce decided what to do with them, but he just couldn’t bring himself to think about it right now...not when the living needed him so much more. With Dick missing, Selina paralyzed, his brother running around as a crazed, murderous clown…

Bruce closed his eyes.

He stood still in the quiet of the cemetery when his phone buzzed. He opened his eyes, startled by the sound cutting through the quiet darkness. He removed the phone from his back pocket.

Maybe Alfred or Barbara had some information on Dick, but when he looked at the number it was unknown.

For a moment he thought seriously about dismissing the call, but…

He tapped the answer button only to be greeted by a video image of Robin, his face bloody and beaten, a gag in his mouth, and tied to a chair.

The video was live.

“Robin!” Bruce yelled into the phone, but the view turned away from the wounded young man to reveal Joker and Harley. Joker waved at him through the phone.

“Hey there Brucie. How’s it hanging?” Joker laughed.
Harley put her head next to the Joker's and waved. “Hiya Brucie!”

Joker took Harley’s hand and the two of them skipped back, the phone image jumping as they both skipped over to Dick. They stood behind the young man while Joker held the phone out so that Bruce could see all three of them.


Harley reached around from behind and grabbed Robin’s face in her hand and squeezed. Robin struggled, but she held him firm and kissed his bloody cheek. “Poor little bird,” she cooed before laughing into the camera.

“So Brucie, I wonder…” Joker turned the camera toward his pale face. “How far I can take this before you break? Hmm? How long before you fall off your moral high horse? Come down here to the level of us crazies and undesirables?” Joker rubbed his chin, his eyes in the air in thought before he shrugged. “I guess we are going to find out.” He put his head down next to Dick’s and waved again. “Bye, bye, Batman...Harley and I are going to have some more fun with your pet bird.”

The call disconnected.

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Joker laughed as he slid his phone back into his pocket. “That was fun.”

Harley giggled. “He is going to go nova.”

Joker laughed. “Brucie has always had a really terrible temper, even when we were kids, he never could take a joke.” Joker shook his head. “I ever tell you he beat that crap out of me once? Before you and I met?”

Harley frowned and shook her head. Joker simply shrugged. “We’ll have to talk about it later, right now…”

He turned his attention back to Robin. “So my fine feathered friend, Harley and I have a date, so we are going to leave you to contemplate your current position, your life choices…” He smiled tilting his head. “Do you wanna die? Or maybe you want to switch sides? Come play with me and my family?”

Robin struggled, his words muffled by the gag.

Joker laughed touching the tip of Robin’s nose with his finger. “I don’t need an answer now, you just think on it.”

Joker and Harley turned to leave. They stopped as they felt something, as if the very ground rumbled under their feet.

Harley’s eyes widened looking over at Joker. “Did you feel that puddin?”

Joker nodded with a look around, as if he would see the reason for the shaking they both felt through the floor. “What was that?”

Even Robin looked confused when the sensation came again, stronger, strong enough that Joker and Harley both swayed on her feet. The walls of the building shook. The shaking and rumbling were followed by a violent tremor through the floor, strong enough that they both dropped to their hands and knees. They heard a building sound, like a creaking sound from below. The warehouse walls
shook as vibrations raced up the wall and shattered the old glass windows. Robin’s chair fell, the young man landing hard on his side with a gasp of pain muffled by the gag. Next followed another sound like the roar of some great beast.

Harley turned to look at Joker, her eyes wide. “What’s happening?”

Joker frowned, his voice filled with disbelief. “An earthquake?”

As if giving voice to what they realized, the strongest tremor hit. The entire building swayed, the walls of the warehouse wobbling and warping as if they were made from jelly, followed by the more startling sound as more glass from the old windows shattered. A strange yawning sound of cracking, breaking concrete resounded. Dust filled the air, the warehouse shuddered, and swayed, tilting to their right as it began to fall. A large crack appeared in the floor, racing straight for them.

Harley reached out for Joker. “Puddin!!”

Joker lunged for her, his hand grabbing onto her just as the ground opened. Her hand was ripped out of his. Harley screamed, falling, the large hole swallowing her.

Joker yelled. “NO!!”

He leaned down to look for her, his eyes wide with fear and desperation, his heart hammered as panic threatened to overtake him. Joker roared in pain. “HARLEY!”

As her name left his mouth, the concrete melted away beneath him and he was falling...

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End of Book II

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End Notes

The Nursery rhyme is Originally from Gammer Gurton’s Garland, 1784 (No title.)

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