

The Killing Joke

Written by

Cassiel C. MacAvity

Adapted from the graphic novel

The Killing Joke

by

Alan Moore, Brian Bolland, John Higgins

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Final draft

BLACK

Out of the silence, the JOKER speaks.

JOKER
(amused tenor)
There were these two guys in a
lunatic asylum . . .

Thunder grumbles, and there is a rattle of rain.

FADE IN

EXT. ARKHAM ASYLUM GATES AND DRIVEWAY---DARK AFTERNOON

Water is pooling on the ground. Twin beams of headlights shine across the puddles as a car growls out of the darkness. The batmobile rolls up to a large set of gates. A sign is on a pillar on one side of the gates:

Arkham Asylum
For The
Criminally Insane

THE BATMAN climbs out of the batmobile, walks through the gates, and starts down the long driveway. At the asylum main building, a pair of men are standing by a police car.

As the Batman stalks by them, a wide-eyed POLICEMAN stands "at ease" as Police Commissioner JAMES GORDON drinks his coffee, then hands the cup to the policeman.

INT. ARKHAM ASYLUM LOBBY---DARK AFTERNOON

The door swings open and the Batman sweeps in. The RECEPTIONIST looks up from her desk and her eyes widen. She points down a hallway. Gordon follows the Batman in, closing the door behind him. As the receptionist watches the Batman disappear down the hallway, Gordon raises his hat and continues after the Batman. On the receptionist's desk is a sign:

You don't have to be crazy to work here---but it helps.

INT. ARKHAM ASYLUM HALLWAY---DARK AFTERNOON

There are doors here, metal ones, every ten feet. The Batman pads along the corridor, Gordon pacing along after him. As the Batman goes past one such door, a FACE appears over a set of hands grasping the bars of the window.

Evenly divided by the center pole of the bars, one side of the face is normal, with an inquisitive eye peering out below dark colored hair. On the bar's other side is a scarred, grey-green snarl with an insane glare and a mess of greyish hair. One normal hand has a neatly clipped thumbnail, one greyish-green set of scarred fingers has an extended claw. Under the window is a nameplate:

DENT H.
0751

Gordon looks at Dent as he passes.

A GUARD is standing by a door with a different nameplate:

NAME UNKNOWN
0801

The Batman appears around the corner and walks towards the door. As Gordon steps around the corner, the guard pulls a ring of keys off his belt and unlocks the door.

INT. ARKHAM ASYLUM CELL---DARK AFTERNOON

The Batman enters the dim cell as Gordon watches from the corridor. The door closes behind him. A pair of chalk-white hands continue a game of solitaire. A tall thin FIGURE in asylum greens is placing cards on a fold down table. Reflected glow from the lamp's partial light shows green hair. The Batman picks up a chair, carries it to the other side of the table, and sits down.

BATMAN
(bass from hell)
Hello. I came to talk.

A shadowed black void speaks from over a brightly lit gold shield and black insignia. Opposing it, a shadowed ghostly white face glows from over a brightly lit chest breast-pocket I.D. ribbon; 0801. A white hand snaps a card onto a stack.

BATMAN (cont'd)
I've been thinking lately. About you
and me.

(MORE)

BATMAN (cont'd)
 About what's going to happen to us in
 the end. We're going to kill each
 other, aren't we?

A white hand snaps a card onto a stack.

BATMAN (cont'd)
 Perhaps you'll kill me. Perhaps I'll
 kill you. Perhaps sooner. Perhaps
 later. I just wanted to know that
 I'd made a genuine attempt to talk
 things over and avert that outcome.
 Just once.

A white hand snaps a card onto a stack. Midnight blue
 gauntlets clench into fists. One snaps forwards and slams
 onto the hand, grabbing it.

BATMAN (cont'd)
 Are you listening to me? It's life
 and death that I'm discussing here.
 Maybe my death . . . Maybe yours . .
 .

The white hand gets yanked back.

BATMAN (cont'd)
 I don't fully understand why ours
 should be such a fatal relationship,
 but I don't want your murder on my

The Batman's palm is smeared with white.

BATMAN (cont'd)
 (fading with shock)
 hands . . .

The Batman leans across the table, grabbing for the neck of
 the opposing outfit. He pulls the figure into the light,
 reaching for the chalk-white of the face.

FIGURE
 (nasal whine)
 Hey . . . Hey! Wait a minute! Don't
 you touch me! I got rights! You're
 not allowed to

The Batman's hand scrapes across cheekbone, leaving smears
 of skin under white makeup.

FIGURE (cont'd)
 (fading)
 touch me . . .

BATMAN
 (infuriated roar)
 Where is he?

FIGURE
 (screams)
 Aaaaaaah! Oh God, no . . .

INT. ARKHAM ASYLUM HALLWAY---DARK AFTERNOON

Gordon spins at the screams coming from the closed cell.

BATMAN
 (O. S., roar, inside
 cell)
 Do you realize? Do you realize what
 you've set free? Where is he?

FIGURE
 (O.S., screaming)
 Get him offa me!

GORDON
 Dear God, he's gone berserk.

Gordon turns for a guard.

GORDON (cont'd)
 Open that door, man!

INT. ARKHAM ASYLUM CELL---DARK AFTERNOON

Gordon slams the door open and charges into the cell. The
 Batman is shaking the figure.

BATMAN
 Where?!!

GORDON
 Okay, that's enough! You know the
 laws regarding mistreatment of
 inmates as well as I do! If you harm
 one hair on his head . . .

The shaking stops suddenly.

BATMAN
 Commissioner, if you're concerned
 about it, it's yours. Take care of
 it.

. . . and the Batman rips loose a green wig and thrusts it at Gordon.

BATMAN (cont'd)
Now, you whimpering little smear of
slime, I'm going to ask you politely
just one more time.

EXT. FAIR OUTSKIRTS---DARK AFTERNOON

The OWNER is stumbling around in the dark.

BATMAN
(O.S., roar)
Where is he?

The Owner finally finds a tall figure with a walking CANE looking over the fair from its edge.

OWNER
Ah! There you are! Have you had a
chance to inspect the property and
decide if it's what you were looking
for?

CANE
(amused tenor)
Well, it's garish, ugly, and
derelicts have used it for a toilet.
The rides are dilapidated to the
point of being lethal, and could
easily maim or kill innocent little
children.

OWNER
Oh, so you don't like it?

The JOKER spins, on his cane, with a wide grin.

JOKER
Don't like it? I'm crazy for it.

He marches off onto the fairgrounds, with the Owner staggering behind.

OWNER
(incredulous)
You . . . ? You really want to buy
it? And the price I mentioned, it
isn't too steep . . . ?

JOKER
 Too steep? My dear sir, as I look at
 it, I'm making a killing

He stops before a wall and an old poster for "The Fat Lady."
 It faces him as he stands, hat in his hands, behind his
 back.

JOKER (cont'd)
 . . .and anyway, money isn't a
 problem.

INT. APARTMENT---DARK AFTERNOON

The COMEDIAN enters, hat in his hands, behind his back as
 JEANNIE, several months pregnant, faces him, sitting by a
 table. Outside a window, it is raining.

JOKER
 (O.S.)
 Not these days . . .

JEANNIE
 Well? How did it go? Did they like
 your act?

The Comedian is tall and thin. He goes to the near side of
 the table, sits.

COMEDIAN
 Well, they, uh . . . They said they
 might call me. I dunno. I, I got
 nervous and messed up a punchline.

JEANNIE
 Oh.

COMEDIAN
 What do you mean, oh?

JEANNIE
 I . . . I didn't mean anything . . .

COMEDIAN
 Yes you did. The way you said it:
 Oh. Like that.

JEANNIE
 Jesus, all I said was . .

The Comedian jumps up.

COMEDIAN

You said, oh. As in, oh, so you didn't get a job? As in, oh, so how are we going to feed the baby? You think I'm not worried about that? You think, you think I don't care, that it's all a big joke to me or something? . . . Jeez, I have to go, I have to go and stand up there, and nobody laughs, and you think, you think I . . .

The Comedian collapses in her arms.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)

Oh God. Oh God, I'm sorry . . .

JEANNIE

Oh baby . . .

COMEDIAN

I don't mean to take it out on you, you're suh--suffering enough, being married to a loser.

JEANNIE

Honey, that's not . . .

COMEDIAN

It's true. I can't support you. Oh Jeannie, what are we going to do?

JEANNIE

It'll be okay. Junior won't be here for another three months, and I think Mrs. Burkiss will let the rent go a little longer. She feels sorry for me.

COMEDIAN

She hates me. She comes out into the hallway to scowl at me every time I go upstairs. This house stinks of cat litter and old people.

He glares out the window.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)

I've got to get you out of here before the baby comes . . . I just want enough money to get set up in a decent neighborhood.

(MORE)

COMEDIAN (cont'd)

There are girls on the street who
earn that in a weekend without having
to tell a single joke.

Jeannie laughs. He turns back towards her. Behind her is
mirrored cabinet with a clock on top. The clock is
streamlined, made of plastic.

JEANNIE

Honey, don't worry. Not about any of
it. I still love you, y'know? Job or
no job, you're good in the sack . . .

She reaches out to him, and he reaches for her hand, his
face reflected over her shoulder, behind her.

JEANNIE (cont'd)

. . . and you know how to make me
laugh.

EXT. FAIR---DARK AFTERNOON

A screaming laugh bursts raucously from a mechanical clown
as the Joker pulls a hand back from its on button. His
reflection appears on the glass of the clown's case, the
image seemingly over the clown's shoulder, behind it. He
turns to look at the Owner, who is riding a mechanical pig.

OWNER

Y'know, I'm positive you won't regret
this purchase. The place isn't that
dilapidated. Some of these rides are
still pretty sturdy . . . Really,
this place could be one hell of a
carnival.

The Joker goes over to the Owner, who is still on the pig..

JOKER

Oh, you're so right. Thanks to your
smooth salesmanship and your silver
tongue you've completely sold me on
the place. Let's shake hands on it.

OWNER

Uh . . . Well, sure, it's my
privilege . . .

JOKER

Indeed it is.

They shake hands, thoroughly.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Naturally I won't be paying you anything. My colleagues persuaded your partner to sign the necessary documents just over an hour ago.

The Joker begins removing a spike strapped to the palm of his glove.

JOKER (cont'd)
 The property's mine already. You're happy with that I take it? I can see that you are. I'm so glad.

He tosses the strap and spike away.

JOKER (cont'd)
 You know, when you see the improvements I have planned for this place, I guarantee you'll be absolutely speechless! And incidentally, that's a lifetime guarantee . . .

He starts walking off into the rain as the Owner sits on top of the pig.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Well, I must dash. There's equipment to hire, plus workers who'll suit the general tone of the establishment . . .

The Owner is still atop the pig.

JOKER (cont'd)
 . . . and then, of course, I've yet to secure my main attraction. Do feel free to stick around.

The Owner sits atop the pig, with bulging eyes and a totally hysterical grin, stone dead.

INT. BATCAVE---NIGHT

The Batman is holding a joker from the deck that had been in the Joker's cell. He snaps it down on the computer console in front of him and types in commands: Joker Classification Delta 0-2 Print file Enlargements All screens

As he starts pulling his gauntlets off, different displays light up with information on the Joker. Included is one in particular:

Name: Unknown
 Age: Unknown
 Relatives: Unknown

A door is in a far cavern wall, at the top of a flight of stairs. It opens and ALFRED PENNYWORTH walks through it, carrying a tray with food. As he walks down the stairs, BRUCE WAYNE pulls back his cowl. Alfred climbs onto the platform and puts the tray down.

ALFRED
 Your refreshments, sir.

Wayne starts undoing his cape.

ALFRED (cont'd)
 Master Bruce? Is there anything further I can assist with, or will that be all?

WAYNE
 (baritone/low tenor,
 tired))
 No, that's all.

Alfred takes the cape and cowl.

WAYNE (cont'd)
 I've been trying to figure out what he intends to do. It's almost impossible. I don't know him, Alfred. All these years and I don't know who he is anymore than he knows who I am.

Alfred leaves to return upstairs.

WAYNE (cont'd)
 How can two people hate so much without knowing each other?

INT. GORDON'S HOUSE---NIGHT

Gordon is seated in a chair, about to clip apart the day's Gotham Examiner. It has massive headlines with pictures of the Joker's cell and the Batman:

ASYLUM SECURITY UPROAR
 MANIAC ESCAPES AGAIN
 Crimefighter Unavailable For Comment

GORDON

I hate it. Whenever we jail him, I think, please God, keep him there. Then he escapes and we all sit round hoping he won't do anything too awful this time. I hate it.

BARBARA GORDON enters, carrying a tray with a pair of mugs.

BARBARA

Dad, just once couldn't you leave your work at the office and relax? I made you cocoa.

As Gordon keeps cutting, she puts the tray down on the glass table in front of Gordon, next to a book of newspaper clippings.

GORDON

Thank you, sweetheart, I'll drink it when I've pasted this clipping in.

BARBARA

You know, I found that Catwoman scrapbook you said was missing. It was behind the wardrobe. Some day you ought to let me work out a proper filing system, like we used at the library.

Gordon grunts as he smears paste on the back of the clipping and puts it in the book.

BARBARA (cont'd)

Urrgh. Look, you used too much paste! It's all squidging under the edges of the clipping. You're going to get it on your pants . . .

GORDON

Barbara, you're fussier than your mother wa . . .

There is a thumping sound

GORDON (cont'd)

Was that the door?

Barbara turns to go to the door.

BARBARA

Yeah, It'll be Colleen, from across the street.

(MORE)

BARBARA (cont'd)
 Tonight's our yoga class. C'mon, Dad
 . . . company! Put your scrapbooks
 away.

Gordon is at the front of the book with an old clipping of
 the Batman and the Joker, with headlines:

BAT-GARBED VIGILANTE
 CRITICALLY INJURES MURDERER

DISFIGURED HOMICIDAL
 MANIAC IN HOSPITAL

GORDON
 Hey, look at this one. First time
 they met. Now what year was that?

Barbara turns from the door.

BARBARA
 Well, I remember you describing the
 white face and the green hair to me
 when I was a kid. Scared the hell
 out of me.

GORDON
 I thought you'd be interested . . .

BARBARA
 Yeah, well, I had some pretty
 interesting nightmares.

Barbara opens the door and sees a trio of men standing
 outside. In the center, with a large calibre, double
 barreled revolver, is the Joker. He fires the revolver into
 Barbara's midsection, flame gushing from the side barrel.

As Gordon looks up at the explosion, Barbara staggers back
 and falls through the table. Gordon sees the blood and
 starts checking her condition as the Joker and his men enter
 the room and close the door.

GORDON
 Barb . . . ?

JOKER
 Please don't worry. It's a
 psychological complaint, common
 amongst ex-librarians. You see, she
 thinks she's a coffee table edition .
 . .

The Joker is wearing tennis shoes with red socks, baggy purple shorts, a green and white Hawaiian shirt, his purple hat, and has a camera around his neck. He pours himself some wine from the bar.

JOKER (cont'd)

Mind you, I can't say much for the volume's condition. I mean, there's a hole in the jacket and the spine appears to be damaged.

Gordon looks up, grabs for the scissors, starts for the Joker.

GORDON

You, you scum, my daughter, I'll . . .

The Joker's assistants smash him to a stop and start beating him up.

JOKER

Frankly, she won't be walking off the shelves in that state of repair. In fact, the idea of her walking anywhere seems increasingly remote. But then, that's always a problem with softbacks.

The assistants finish subduing Gordon.

JOKER (cont'd)

God, these literary discussions are so dry. When you've finished with the old boy, you know where to take him. And please . . . do be careful! After all, he is topping the bill.

The assistants start carrying Gordon out as the Joker starts getting his camera ready.

JOKER (cont'd)

You know, it's such a shame you'll miss your father's debut, Miss Gordon. Sadly, our venue wasn't built with the disabled in mind. But don't worry . . . I'll take some snapshots to remind him of you.

The Joker starts unbuttoning her shirt.

BARBARA
 (very weak)
 Wuh . . . wuh . . . Why . . . are
 you . . . duh . . . doing this . ?

JOKER
 To prove a point.

The Joker salutes, holding up the glass.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Here's to crime.

INT. BAR---DAY

The Comedian is carefully holding up a glass while reaching for a shrimp from a bowl on his table.

COMEDIAN
 Y'see . . . Y'see, I have to prove
 myself. As a husband, and, and as a
 father! I mean, I, well, I wouldn't
 be doing this sort of thing if it
 wasn't something important.

He is sitting at a table with a fat robber, JOE, and a THIN
 ROBBER.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 It's like, I began as a lab
 assistant, right? Was a good job.
 Real good job. So what I did, I quit
 to become a comedian. I was so sure.
 So sure I had talent.

The bar is, ah, picturesque. The bartender is wearing
 suspenders. Over the tops of their wingtip shoes, the
 trio's pants are cuffed. The Thin robber is wearing a
 fedora, Joe, a bowler.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 But, ha, well, look at me. I guess
 my talents didn't lie in that
 direction. So, you see, like, if I
 just do this one big crime . . .

THIN
 Hey, jeez, man, be cool.

COMEDIAN
 I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I don't
 usually drink lunchtimes . . .

Joe picks up a shrimp and starts snapping legs off it.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)

It's just, if you're sure we can get away with this thing and that nobody will know I was involved . . .

JOE

Don't worry, friend. We'll take care of you.

He stuffs the shrimp into the Comedian's mouth

JOE (cont'd)

We need your help getting through that chemical plant where you worked to the playing card company next door. We really appreciate your expertise.

The Thin Robber picks a bag off the floor.

THIN

So, like, to absolutely guarantee nobody connects you to with the robbery . . .

He opens the bag and reveals a solid red hood.

THIN (cont'd)

. . . you'll be wearing this.

COMEDIAN

Wearing . . ? B-but there are no eye-slits. I won't be able to see.

Fat starts snapping the legs off another shrimp.

THIN

There's these lenses o' red two-way mirror glass set into it. Pretty smart stuff, right?

COMEDIAN

I, I dunno. That mask . . . Isn't it the one that red hood guy wears who raided that ice company last month?

Thin puts the bag back on the floor.

THIN

Smarten up. There ain't no, red hood. There's just a buncha guys anna mask.

JOE

Right! It doesn't matter who's under the hood. We just sort of let the most valued member of the mob wear it for, uh, additional anonymity.

THIN

Sure! The most valued member. That's you, man.

COMEDIAN

Ahhhh, look, really, I don't know . . . That chemical plant's so grim and ugly. That's partly why I quit.

Thin is snapping the legs of a shrimp.

THIN

But you said there's minimal security, man.

JOE

Listen, do you really want to raise your kid in poverty?

COMEDIAN

No, no, of course not. You're right. I mean it's just this once, then I can switch neighborhoods and start a proper life . . .

JOE

That's the attitude! So . . . Next Friday night, at eleven?

COMEDIAN

Sure. Sure, why not? (laughs)
Friday it is. And then, starting from Saturday morning, I'll be rich. I can't imagine it. My life's going to be completely changed! Nothing's going to be the same . . . Not ever again.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM---DAY

A DOCTOR, a police DETECTIVE, and The Batman are clustered around Barbara's bed. She is unconscious. The Batman is holding another joker card.

DOCTOR

The bullet went through her spine.
I'm afraid her legs are completely
useless. Putting it bluntly, she may
well be in a chair for the remainder
of her life.

The Doctor scribbles on a chart, then leaves.

DETECTIVE

Some woman inna same yoga class as
Miss Gordon found her, name of
Colleen Reece. She found the, uh,
victim in a state of undress, but
otherwise the place was empty. The
Commissioner was . . .

BATMAN

Undress?

DETECTIVE

They didn't tell you? He's removed
her clothing after shooting her. We,
uh . . . Well, we found a lens cap
on the floor that didn't fit any
camera in the place. We believe
that, uhh . . . Well that he took
pictures. Of her.

The Batman is obviously about to go berserk.

DETECTIVE (cont'd)

Jeez, look, really, I'm sorry. I
thought you knew. It's pretty sick,
ain't it?

The card gets crunched.

BATMAN

Yes. Pretty sick. Please leave us
alone for a moment.

The Detective leaves. After the door closes behind him, the
Batman strokes Barbara's cheek.

BATMAN (cont'd)

Barbara? Barbara. Can you hear me?
It's me. It's Bruce.

A hand twitches.

BARBARA

(very weak)

Bruce . . . ?

Fully awake, she sits up, grabbing for the Batman.

BARBARA (cont'd)
 (hysterical)
 Bruce . . . It was him . . . took
 Dad . . . H-he . . . Oh God! Oh God, I
 remember! I remember what he did . .
 .

BATMAN
 Barbara, take it easy. It's okay . .
 .

Barbara stares into his eyes.

BARBARA
 No! No, it's not okay! He's . . .
 He's taking it to the limit this time
 . . . You didn't see . . . You
 didn't see his eyes.

She starts slumping back into the bed.

BARBARA (cont'd)
 H-he said he wanted to puh-prove a
 point . . . said . . . Dad was . . .
 top of the bill . . . Wh-what's he
 doing to him, Bruce?

She is grabbing the top of the open cape.

BARBARA (cont'd)
 What's he doing to my father?

INT. FAIR TENT---NIGHT

Gordon is on his back on the grass floor of the tent.
 Someone with spiked BRACELETS is trying to lift him by his
 open, unbuttoned shirt.

BRACELETS
 (high pitched)
 Up.

GORDON
 Unh?

A trio of dwarfs is standing over Gordon's barefoot body.

All are mostly bald with a ponytail tied in a red bow. Bracelets is wearing a series of leather straps and a set of cherub's wings, another is wearing FISHNET stockings and cherub's wings, and the third is in a checkered leotard and a TUTU.

Bracelets is holding a spiked collar and a leash which he's trying to put on Gordon's neck while Fishnet finishes pulling his shirt off. Tutu is standing by with a cattle prod.

FISHNET

Up. Up!

GORDON

Wuh . . . Wait . . . Wazziss . . . ?

Once finished with the collar, Bracelets undoes Gordon's pants and starts pulling them off.

GORDON (cont'd)

Wh-what are you doing? You can't do that! Stop . . .

Gordon tries sitting up to stop him, then screams as Tutu zaps him with the prod. Gordon collapses back onto the ground.

GORDON (cont'd)

Ouhh . . . Oh no. Oh no. Don't. Don't do this . . .

Bracelets finishes pulling Gordon's pants off.

GORDON (cont'd)

I won't . . .

Gordon chokes as Fishnet yanks him to his feet with the leash.

EXT. FAIR---NIGHT

Fishnet yanks Gordon out of the tent as Bracelets and Tutu follow.

GORDON

Please . . . What is this . . . Where are you . . . Where are you taking me? I . . .

Gordon goes staggering into the bright, garish, light of the fair.

GORDON (cont'd)

Oh. Oh dear God.

Gordon sees a crowd ahead of him, one made of an enormous FAT WOMAN, a TALL MAN at least seven feet tall, a BEAST MAN covered in fur, a CHILD who is more pipestems than anything else, a pair of SIAMESE TWINS, a WOMAN holding a two-headed baby . . .

GORDON (cont'd)

Oh God. Am I dreaming? Am I dreaming this? What happened? I was sitting in my . . .

FISHNET

Down.

GORDON

What?

As Fishnet yanks sideways with the leash, Tutu zaps Gordon in the back of the head with the cattle prod.

TUTU

Down!

The freaks start to gather behind him as Gordon winds up facing the bottom of a flight of steps.

GORDON

Uuuurgh! Somebody . . . please . . .
. tell me what I'm doing here . .

JOKER

(O.S.)

Doing? You're doing what any sane man in your appalling circumstances would do.

The stairs climb to the Joker, sitting on a throne resting on a fifteen foot high pile of babies' corpses. On either side, near the top of the pile, is a torch made from a child's head.

The Joker grins.

JOKER (cont'd)

You're going mad.

GORDON

You. Oh no. I . . . I remember.

JOKER

Remember? Ohh. I wouldn't do that!
Remembering's dangerous. I find the
past such a worrying, anxious place.
The Past Tense, I suppose you'd call
it.

He laughs.

JOKER (cont'd)

Memory's so treacherous. One moment
you're lost in a carnival of
delights. With poignant childhood
aromas, the flashing neon of puberty,
all that sentimental candyfloss . . .

Fishnet yanks Gordon to his feet.

JOKER (cont'd)

The next, it leads you somewhere you
don't want to go . . .

Fishnet starts dragging Gordon towards the Ghost Train ride.
Tutu and Bracelets follow.

JOKER (cont'd)

Somewhere dark and cold, filled with
the damp ambiguous shapes of things
you'd hoped were forgotten. Memories
can be vile repulsive little brutes.
Like children, I suppose.

He laughs.

GORDON

Barbara. Oh no. Oh no.

The Joker starts down the steps.

JOKER

But can we live without them?
Memories are what our reason is based
upon. If we can't face them, we deny
reason itself!

The dwarfs start loading Gordon into a ride car.

JOKER (cont'd)

Although, why not? We aren't
contractually tied down to
rationality! There is no sanity
clause!

With Gordon properly strapped in, a dwarf on either side, Bracelets hanging on behind, the car lurches into motion.

JOKER (cont'd)
 So when you find yourself locked into
 an unpleasant train of thought,
 heading for the places in your past
 where the screaming is unbearable,
 remember there's always madness.

With Bracelets hanging on the back, the car rolls past the Joker.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Madness is the emergency exit . . .

The car bumps into the first set of swinging doors.

JOKER (cont'd)
 You can just step outside, and close
 the door on all those dreadful things
 that happened. You can lock them
 away . . . Forever.

And the car disappears as the doors swing shut.

INT. BAR---DAY

A BEAT cop and a PLAINCLOTHES cop push their way through the bar's swinging doors. Joe, Thin, and the Comedian are seated at a table.

THIN
 So, everything's settled for tonight?
 You're still going through with it?

COMEDIAN
 Uh, well, of course! I'd be crazy to
 back out now.

The cops look around the bar.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 I mean, the worst part, lying to
 Jeannie, that's over. She, she
 thinks I have a club engagement
 tonight . . .

JOE
 No reason why she shouldn't keep
 right on thinking that.

THIN

Right, man. No reason at all.

The cops go to the bar and show the bartender a picture of a pair of people.

JOE

Listen: Tonight, wear a suit an a bow tie. It's a kinda trade-mark with this red hood business.

COMEDIAN

Of course! That's what Jeannie will expect me to wear for the nightclub. It's perfect!

Thin notices as the bartender points at the trio.

THIN

Uh, Joe . . .

The robbers carefully turn their faces away as the cops come to the table and speak to the Comedian.

PLAINCLOTHES

Excuse me, Sir, we're police officers. Could we speak to you outside for a moment?

COMEDIAN

Me? B-but . . . why? I haven't . . .
. I mean, uh . . .

BEAT

It'll only take a moment, Sir . . .

EXT. FRONT OF BAR---DAY

Beat stays by the door as Plainclothes talks to the Comedian further out on the sidewalk.

COMEDIAN

Uh, Listen, what, what's the problem here?. I . . .

PLAINCLOTHES

Sir, I'm sorry, but your wife had an accident this morning, apparently testing a baby-bottle heater. There was an electrical short, and uh . . . Well, she died, sir. I'm sorry.

Plainclothes lights a cigarette.

COMEDIAN

(very small)

What ?

PLAINCLOTHES

Listen, I hate to break it to you like this. It was a million to one accident. They have full details waiting for you at the hospital. There's no hurry. If I was you, I'd have another drink.

INT. BAR---DAY

The Comedian walks back through the doors of the bar. He sits down at the table.

COMEDIAN

My wife. She's dead. My wife . .

JOE

Gee, that's terrible. We're really sorry.

THIN

Yeah. Hey, listen, man, you probably want to be left alone right now, huh? We'll see you here tonight, okay?

COMEDIAN

Tonight? But . . . but I can't do anything tonight. Th-there's no reason anymore. Jeannie . . . Jeannie's dead. You don't understand . . .

JOE

No, no, no. No, I'm sorry about your wife, but it's you that don't understand. What's happening tonight, it's no little thing. Nobody backing out now remains healthy. No exceptions.

COMEDIAN

B-but . . .

THIN

No buts, man. Tomorrow, you bury your old lady in luxury. Tonight, you're with us. Get the picture?

The robbers start to leave.

COMEDIAN

Yes. Yes, I get the picture.

He collapses into his arms, on the table.

INT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

Gordon has collapsed into his arms, in the car.

JOKER

(through speaker)

A-a-ah! Heads up, Commissioner! No fair hiding your eyes on the Ghost Train, you old fraidy cat! Bracelets yanks on the straps.

BRACELETS

Up. Up!

GORDON

Gaaa!

The Joker appears on a large screen.

JOKER

(through speaker)

Oh, I know . . . You're confused. You're frightened. Who wouldn't be? You're in a hell of a situation! But, y'know, though life's a bowl of cherries and this is the pits, always remember this . . . music, Sam . . .

Music starts as the Joker goes into a song and dance routine outside and the car goes plowing into another room with a larger screen inside. Bracelets is holding Gordon's head up by pulling on his hair.

JOKER (cont'd)

(though speakers,
sings)

When the world is full of care and every headline screams despair, when all is rape, starvation, war and life is vile . . .

Then there's a certain thing I do which I shall pass along to you, that's always guaranteed to make me smile . . .

(MORE)

JOKER (cont'd)
 I go loo-oo-oony, as a light bulb
 battered bug, simply loo-ooo-oony,
 sometimes foam and chew the rug . . .

The car bumps its way into a room with screens all over the place.

JOKER (cont'd)
 (through speakers,
 sings)
 Mister, life is swell in a padded
 cell, it'll chase those blues away .
 . . You can trade your gloom for a
 rubber room, and injections twice a
 day!

The freaks join in with the Joker.

JOKER (cont'd)
 (through speakers,
 sings)
 Just go loo-ooo-ny, like an acid
 casualty, or a moo-oo-nie, or a
 preacher on T.V.

When the human race wears an anxious
 face, when the bomb hangs overhead,
 when your kid turns blue, it won't
 worry you, you can smile and nod
 instead!

The car goes bumping into a new room, one with huge pictures on the walls.

JOKER (cont'd)
 (through speakers,
 sings)
 When you're loo-ooo-ny, then you just
 don't give a fig . . .

The pictures are of legs, a torso, an arm, all bloodied, all of the same body. Gordon starts, tries to stand.

GORDON
 Wait! Wait a minute. That's . . .

BRACELETS
 Down.

Bracelets yanks Gordon back down.

JOKER
 (through speakers,
 sings)
 Man's so pu-uu-uny, and the universe
 so big . . !

BRACELETS
 Down! Down!

JOKER
 (through speakers,
 sings)
 If you hurt inside, get certified,
 and if life should treat you bad . .
 .

More pictures are freely swinging about with more legs, more bodies, more blood, more faces.

GORDON
 (screams)
 Barbara!

The Joker is on a huge screen just in front of the car.

JOKER
 (through speakers,
 sings)
 Don't get ee-ee-even, get mad!

The car bumps into the next room.

EXT. GOTHAM CITY ALLEY---NIGHT

A poster of the Joker is on the wall with captions of:

JOKER
 DANGEROUS
 DO NOT APPROACH

SOMEONE plows into the wall. SOMEONE ELSE gets slammed into the side of a fire escape, one arm twisted behind him by the Batman. The Batman rips the poster off the wall and sticks it into Else's face.

INT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

The car bumps its way into a new room.

INT. GAMING ROOM---NIGHT

A BODYGUARD sends chips flying as he gets catapulted through a blackjack table. People run for the walls. A nervous, MIDDLE-AGED MAN is left on a chair in the middle of several bodies. When the Batman shows him the poster, he shrugs, very carefully.

INT. GOTHAM PRISON CELL---NIGHT

A PRISON GUARD stands by the bars watching a PLUMP MAN in a prison suit with a nametag:

COBBLEPOT
9301

Besides plump, Cobblepot is balding and has a monocle and a spike nose. When the Batman sticks the poster in his face, he furiously waves it away.

INT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

The car bumps its way into a new room.

EXT. GOTHAM CITY STREET CORNER---NIGHT

It's hooker's night out, even if it is raining. ONE, next to a stoplight, looks at the poster held up by the Batman. She shakes her head emphatically.

EXT. GOTHAM CITY ROOFTOP---NIGHT

The Batman is perched on top of a gargoyle decorated corner. It is still raining. Another rooftop lights up with a searchlight, and the bat signal lights up the clouds.

INT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

The car bumps its way into a new room.

EXT. GOTHAM POLICE ROOF---NIGHT

The searchlight is sweeping the sky as a group of people huddle about it in the rain. The Batman drops in from above.

INT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

The car bumps its way into a new room.

EXT. GOTHAM POLICE ROOF---NIGHT

The Detective hands the Batman an envelope with a bat scrawled on it. The Batman rips it open and pulls out the contents. One is a ticket for a fair:

BONUS BROTHERS
Carnival and Amusement Park Admit One

The other is a business card with a picture of the Joker, with another scrawl:

With Compliments

INT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

The car bumps its way into a new room.

EXT. GOTHAM POLICE ROOF---NIGHT

The Batman looks at the tickets, then swings out off the roof.

INT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

The car bumps its way out of the building and to the end of the ride. The Joker is waiting on the tracks as the final sight.

EXT. GHOST TRAIN---NIGHT

The Joker pivots off the track as the car rolls to a stop. The dwarfs are clustered around Gordon, who is slumped over.

JOKER
Ahh! Here they are now! My
goodness, that's some Ghost Train . .
. When they went in, the chap in the
middle didn't look a day over
seventeen, and his three little pals
were professional basketball stars!

The dwarfs undo the straps holding Gordon to the car.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Look at him now, poor fellow. That's
 what a dose of reality does for you.
 . . .

Gordon falls out of the car and starts crawling towards the Joker.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Never touch the stuff myself, you
 understand. Find it gets in the way
 of the hallucinations.

Gordon collapses in the grass.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Why, hello, Commissioner! How's
 things?

There is no response. The Joker leans over, waves tentatively.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Commissioner? Hello? Anybody home?

The Joker straightens up, making a face and circling his finger near his temple.

JOKER (cont'd)
 God, how boring! The man's a
 complete turnip. Take him away and
 put him in his cage. Perhaps he'll
 get a little livelier once he's had a
 chance to think his situation over .
 . .

Fishnet starts tugging Gordon along by the leash. The Joker plants his cane into the center of a puddle and watches his reflection.

JOKER (cont'd)
 . . . to reflect upon life, and all
 its random injustice.

EXT. CHEMICAL PLANT---NIGHT

Lights are illuminating other areas, but the spillover also highlights a canal running next to the plant. The Comedian is staring at his reflection in the surface of the water. A few feet away, a large pipe is pouring out a small stream of something clearly artificial and intending to stay that way.

JOE

Hey, c'mon! Quit daydreamin'. Are we doin' this thing or ain't we?

COMEDIAN

Uh, yes. Yes, of course. I was just remembering . . . I used to along here on the way to work each morning . . .

Thin is pulling the hood out of the bag. It has a red cape attached to the back.

THIN

Yeah, yeah. Now put this sucker on, man, an' shut up.

COMEDIAN

What, right now? I mean . . . I mean, are you sure it's okay?

Thin starts putting the hood on the Comedian.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)

Will I be able to breathe?

THIN

Hey, man, everything's cool. Jeez . . . Y'know, you got a funny shaped head . . .

The Comedian sees a red double image of Thin.

THIN (cont'd)

There. You still see okay, man?

COMEDIAN

(hollow)

Wuh, well, yeah. I guess, except everything's red . . . It's kinda stuffy too, and it smells funny. Does my voice sound echoey to you?

JOE

You sound great. Now . . . how about guidin' us through this stinkin' factory to the joint next door?

They start off along the sidewalk by the canal.

COMEDIAN

(hollow)

Sure, Sure thing. Y'know . . . This feels kinda weird. Like a dream. I keep remembering Jeannie . . .

THIN

Watch out, man. Steps.

The robbers start helping the Comedian up a flight of stairs and into the plant.

EXT. CHEMICAL PLANT GROUNDS---NIGHT

The trio is in among clusters of pipes, approaching a walkway between a pair of noxious looking open tanks.

COMEDIAN

(hollow)

Okay . . . We go through here, past the filter tanks and then Monarch Playing Cards is just beyond a partition. Y'know, this place . . . It looks even worse in red. It looks like . . .

The 1ST GUARD, on a side catwalk, spots them.

1ST GUARD

Hey, you! Freeeze!

1st Guard has his pistol out and is aiming it. Everybody freezes.

THIN

You asshole! You said there was no security!

1ST GUARD

C'mon, c'mon, get 'em up!

COMEDIAN

(hollow)

They must have altered things since I left.

The Comedian waves his arms in bewilderment. Thin pulls out his pistol and starts firing towards the guard.

THIN

(screams)

Altered things? I'm gonna alter your stupid horse face, man!

The Comedian clutches at the hood.

COMEDIAN
(hollow)
AAAA! That noise! It's so loud in
here . . .

Joe sprints up the walkway, pushing the Comedian along, as
1st Guard ducks behind a wall and scrabbles for a radio.

JOE
For God's sake, run! This is all
screwed up!

1ST GUARD
(into radio)
Murph, get some men over to the rear
bays. We got the Red Hood Mob in
here.

As they run up an alleyway, the robbers get a slight lead on
the Comedian, who's hampered by the hood.

JOE
Oh, Jesus! Which way is it? How do
we get out?

COMEDIAN
(hollow)
I . . . I don't know! This mask . .
. Can't see where I'm going . . .

THIN
I'm gonna kill you, you useless son
of a bitch! When we get outta here,
I'm gonna . . .

The Guards in back, MURPH, 2nd GUARD, and 3RD GUARD, open
fire, cutting Thin down in mid-sentence and wounding Joe.
Thin's blood and brains go splattering over the Comedian as
Joe collapses. The Comedian stops, bewildered, starts
looking at his hands, feeling the hood.

JOE
Ah, hell. Aw, hell . . .

COMEDIAN
(hollow)
What? What is it? What is it, it's
all over me . . .

Joe starts pawing for his pistol.

JOE

You guys . . . You don't want me.
You want him. He's the ringleader.
He's the Red Hood . . .

MURPH

Watch out! He's pulling a gun!

As the guards open fire, killing Joe before he can get a shot off, the Comedian runs up a ladder.

COMEDIAN

(hollow)

AAAAAAA! Oh no, No, no, no, no . .
. . .

At the top of the ladder, he runs down a catwalk. The guards aim their pistols.

2ND GUARD

The ringleader's taking off across
the catwalk . .

3RD GUARD

He's still in range . .

BATMAN

No more shooting.

Murph spins around.

BATMAN (cont'd)

I'm here now. We'll take care of it
my way.

The other guards duck as the Batman goes sailing over their heads.

3RD GUARD

Jeez. What . . . ?

MURPH

It's that human bat guy, in all the
papers lately . . .

The Batman races down the catwalk after the Comedian, who stops at the corner to see what's behind him. He sees a double image, in red, of the Batman, approaching.

BATMAN

So, Red Hood, we meet again.

The Comedian screams, spins around the corner, and takes off in an absolute, panicked sprint. The Batman follows, close behind and gaining, and is heard by the Comedian.

COMEDIAN
 (hollow)
 No. No no no. This isn't happening.
 Oh dear God, what have you sent to
 punish me?

The Comedian approaches the catwalk over the canal.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 (hollow, shrill
 scream)
 Don't come closer! Don't come any
 closer, or I'll . . .

The Comedian takes a flying leap over the railing, about three inches ahead of the Batman's grab.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 (hollow, shrill
 scream)
 . . .jump . . .

EXT. CHEMICAL PLANT---NIGHT

The Batman stops at the railing as the Comedian drops deep into the canal. There is a moment of relative silence, punctuated by the guards distant voices and radios.

The Comedian explodes to the surface of the middle of the canal, still with the hood on, sputtering and choking, then disappears again. After a moment, he splutters back up again, further away from the plant, this time staying on the surface, coughing and choking, paddling for the edge of the canal.

The Comedian reaches the edge of the canal and crawls out onto the bank. The ground is wet, covered with puddles.

COMEDIAN
 (hollow, higher
 pitched pain)
 Guhh Aaaaugh. I'm
 stinging, itching, my face, my hands
 . . . Something in the water? Oh,
 Jesus, it burns . . .

He staggers into the edge of a large puddle of water, at the edge of a large pool of light. He scrabbles at the hood.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 (hollow, higher
 pitched pain))
 Get this stupid hood off, get it off
 so I can . . .

He looks down at his reflection.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 (higher pitched,
 shock)
 . . . see.

Mesmerized by his reflection, he slowly puts the hood down,
 in the darkness, slumps back on his knees. After a minute,
 he starts getting to his feet. Once up, something strikes
 him as being funny.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 (higher pitched)
 Ha. Ha ha ha. Ffnk.

Something strikes him as being very funny.

COMEDIAN (cont'd)
 (higher pitched)
 Ahoo. Ahoo hoo hoo hoo hoo.

He wanders into another pool, his white skin and green hair
 shining brightly in the light.

Something strikes him as being absolutely, insanely, funny,
 and The Joker stands in the light, shrieking with laughter.

EXT. FAIR---NIGHT

On the other side of bars, the freaks, the Siamese twins,
 everybody, stand in the light, shrieking with laughter.

TWIN 1
 That's so funny.

TWIN 2
 That's so funny.

Gordon is huddled in a ball inside the cage as the crowd
 parts for the Joker, approaching from the rear.

JOKER
 Ladies and Gentlemen! You've read
 about it in the newspapers!
 (MORE)

JOKER (cont'd)

Now, shudder as you observe, before your very eyes, that most rare and tragic of nature's mistakes! I give you . . . the average man!

The Joker reaches the front of the cage and starts pointing things out.

JOKER (cont'd)

Physically unremarkable, it has instead a deformed set of values. Notice the hideously bloated sense of humanity's importance. The club-footed social conscience and the withered optimism. It's certainly not for the squeamish, is it?

He turns back to the crowd.

JOKER (cont'd)

Most repulsive of all, are its frail and useless notions of order and sanity. If too much weight is placed upon them . . . they snap.

The Joker starts lecturing.

JOKER (cont'd)

How does it live, I hear you ask? How does this poor, pathetic specimen survive in today's harsh and irrational world? The sad answer is, not very well.

Twin lights appear in the distance.

JOKER (cont'd)

Faced with the inescapable fact that human existence is mad, random, and pointless, one in eight of them crack up and go stark slaving buggo!

The lights grow larger.

JOKER (cont'd)

Who can blame them? In a world as psychotic as this, . . . any other response would be crazy.

The batmobile howls onto the fairgrounds. The freaks scatter as the Joker stands, smiling, holding his cane in both hands.

The batmobile stops near the cage, the engine stops, and the Batman sails over the windshield and onto the hood. He bounces once, then sails through the air, towards the Joker. The Joker drops back, pulling the head off the cane. As the Batman's tackle takes him down to the ground, the Joker sprays acid from the cane head into the Batman's arm.

The Batman screams and rolls away. As the Batman grabs his arm, grabs for his belt, the Joker hops up and runs for the Funhouse. The Joker reaches the Funhouse and disappears inside as the Batman sprays something on the wound. As he starts for the Funhouse, he notices the cage isn't empty. He goes to it instead, opens the door. Gordon is curled in a ball.

BATMAN

Jim? . . . Jim, are you . . . Are you still okay?

Gordon catapults forward towards the Batman.

GORDON

(complete hysterics)
Oh God. . . . Oh Gooooood!

BATMAN

It's okay. Let it come.

Gordon slumps back onto the ground as the Batman goes to the Batmobile and grabs a blanket.

GORDON

He . . . He shot Barbara. Showed me ph-photographs . . . He tried to drive me mad.

BATMAN

Listen, the police are following right behind me. I'll stay here with you until they arrive.

He drapes the blanket over Gordon's shoulders.

GORDON

No! No, I'm okay! You have to go after him! I want him brought in . . . and I want him brought in by the book!

The Batman starts for the Funhouse.

BATMAN

I'll do my best.

GORDON

By the book, you hear? We have to show him! We have to show him that our way works!

The Batman disappears into the Funhouse.

INT. FUNHOUSE---NIGHT

The walls are covered with wide-eyed, grinning faces, fangs, glares.

JOKER

(over speaker)

So . . . I see you received the free ticket I sent you. I'm glad. I did so want you to be here.

The Batman starts running down the hallways.

JOKER (cont'd)

(over speaker)

You see, it doesn't matter if you catch me and send me back to the asylum . . . Gordon's been driven mad. I've proved my point.

Several corners and a long curve, and still no Joker.

JOKER (cont'd)

(over speaker)

I've demonstrated there's no difference between me and everyone else! All it takes is one bad day to reduce the sanest man alive to lunacy. That's how far the world is from where I am. Just one bad day.

Trap doors pop open under the Batman. He drops towards a nest of poison tipped spikes.

JOKER (cont'd)

(over speaker)

You had a bad day once, am I right?

The Batman barely catches the edge of the pit.

JOKER (cont'd)

(over speaker)

I know I am. You had a bad day and everything changed. Why else would you dress up like a flying rat?

He grabs with the other hand, swings a leg up to the floor, and starts climbing out.

JOKER (cont'd)
 (over speaker)
 You had a bad day, and it drove you as crazy as everybody else . . . only you won't admit it! You have to keep pretending that life makes sense, that there's some point to all this struggling!

The Batman rolls out onto the floor and continues off down the corridor.

JOKER (cont'd)
 (over speaker)
 God, you make me want to puke.

The Joker is racing along other hallways, speaking into a wireless microphone.

JOKER (cont'd)
 I mean, what is it with you? What made you what you are? Girlfriend, killed by the mob, maybe? Brother carved up by some mugger? Something like that, I bet. Something like that . . .

The Joker slips through a hidden door, continues down another hallway.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Something like that happened to me, you know. I . . . I'm not exactly sure what it was. Sometimes I remember it one way, sometimes another . . . If I'm going to have a past, I prefer it multiple choice!

He laughs, reverses direction, and steps through another wall.

JOKER (cont'd)
 But my point is . . . My point is . . . I went crazy. When I saw what a black, awful joke the world was, I went crazy as a coot! I admit it! Why can't you?

The Joker approaches the Hall of Mirrors.

JOKER (cont'd)
I mean, you're not unintelligent! You must see the reality of the situation. Do you know how many times we've come close to World War Three over a flock of geese on a computer screen?

As he enters the hall of mirrors, warped reflections start dancing over the walls and ceiling.

JOKER (cont'd)
Do you know what triggered the last world war? An argument over how many telegraph poles Germany owed it's war debt creditors! Telegraph poles!

He laughs. There is a distant crash of breaking glass.

JOKER (cont'd)
It's all a joke! Everything anybody ever valued or struggled for . . .
It's all a monstrous, demented gag!

He stops, stands in mid-corridor.

JOKER (cont'd)
(cont.)
So why can't you see the funny side?
Why aren't you laughing?

After a pause, he looks about, then steps, then starts in shock when a mirror right next to him explodes, the Batman plowing through it.

BATMAN
Because I've heard it before. Because it wasn't funny the first time.

He grabs the Joker by the lapels. The Joker yells, and the Batman plows a foot into his chest, smashing him through an opposing mirror. The Batman follows him through as the Joker scrabbles through the darkness.

BATMAN (cont'd)
Incidentally, I spoke to Commissioner Gordon before I came in here. He's fine. Despite all your sick, vicious little games, he's as sane as he ever was.

The Joker pulls a pin on a strap out of a coat pocket.

BATMAN (cont'd)
So maybe people don't always crack.

He kicks the pin out of the Joker's hand.

BATMAN (cont'd)
Maybe there isn't any need to crawl
under a rock with all the other slimy
things when trouble hits . . .

He grabs the Joker, picks him up.

BATMAN (cont'd)
Maybe it was just you, all the time.

The Joker smashes a hand into the Batman's face, hooks the
eyeholes of the mask, pulling it down.

JOKER
No!

He wiggles away from the Batman as the Batman grabs his
face. The Joker dives for a piece of planking.

BATMAN
Don't . . .

The Joker smashes the plank over the Batman's head, knocking
him into a wall. The Batman groans as the Joker extends a
hand, and a knife springs out of his sleeve. As the Batman
struggles to his feet, the Joker raises the knife, then
slams it down, slamming his wrist into the Batman's
backthrust palm as the Batman goes berserk.

The knife gets knocked flying in the next instant. The
Joker goes flying the instant after that. The Joker is
quickly propelled towards a rectangular shape in the outer
wall. The Batman smashes the Joker into and through the
door, out into the fair grounds, out into the rain.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS---NIGHT

Still berserk, the Batman charges out of the Funhouse,
towards the Joker, who is trying to scabble across the
grass. As the Batman approaches, the Joker suddenly spins,
grinning manically, aiming his pistol point-blank for the
Batman's midsection. He pulls the trigger and an
earsplitting explosion from the revolver propels a brightly
lettered flag out of the main barrel:

CLICK
CLICK

CLICK

The Joker slumps.

JOKER

God damn it . . . It's empty!

He turns away from the Batman, throwing the pistol into the darkness.

JOKER (cont'd)

Well? What are you waiting for? I shot a defenseless girl. I terrorized an old man. Why don't you kick the hell out of me and get a standing ovation from the public gallery?

The Batman just stands there.

BATMAN

Because I'm doing this one by the book . . . And because I don't want to.

The Batman just stands there.

BATMAN (cont'd)

(bass from hell)

Do you understand? I don't want to hurt you. I don't want either of us to end up killing the other . . . But we're both running out of alternatives . . . and we both know it.

Wearing the cape, the hood, waiting in the darkness, he stands there in the rain.

WAYNE

(baritone, low tenor)

Maybe it all hinges on tonight. Maybe this is our last chance to sort this out. If you don't take it, then we're locked onto a suicide course. Both of us, to the death.

The Joker struggles to his feet.

WAYNE (cont'd)

It doesn't have to end like that. I don't know what it was that bent your life out of shape, but who knows? Maybe I've been there too. Maybe I can help.

The Joker stands, dripping in the rain.

WAYNE (cont'd)
 We could work together. I could
 rehabilitate you. You needn't be out
 there on the edge anymore. You
 needn't be alone,

There is silence.

BATMAN
 (bass from hell)
 We don't have to kill each other. . .
 . What do you say?

The silence continues. The Joker finally turns, looks at
 the Batman, then turns away.

JOKER
 No. I'm sorry, but . . . No. It's
 too late for that. Far too late.

He laughs.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Y'know, it's funny. This situation.
 It reminds me of a joke. See, there
 were these two guys in a lunatic
 asylum . . .

Y'see, ladies and gentleman, he's standing there in his suit
 and bow tie.

JOKER (cont'd)
 And one night, one night they decide
 they don't like living in an asylum
 any more. They decide they're going
 to escape! So, like, they get up
 onto the roof, and there, just across
 this narrow gap, they see the
 rooftops of the town, stretching away
 in the moonlight . . . Stretching
 away to freedom.

The Comedian is doing another audition.

JOKER (cont'd)
 Now the first guy, he jumps straight
 across with no problem. But his
 friend, his friend daren't make the
 leap. Y'see . . . Y'see, he's afraid
 of falling.

This time, the audience is his.

JOKER (cont'd)
So then the first guy has an idea . .
. He says, hey! I have my
flashlight with me. I'll shine it
across the gap between the buildings.
You can walk along the beam and join
me! B-but the second guy just shakes
his head. He suh- says . . . He
says, Wh-what do you think I am?
Crazy?

The Joker spins back to the Batman.

JOKER (cont'd)
You'd turn it off when I was halfway
across!

The Joker snickers.

JOKER (cont'd)
Fffnff. Oh, do excuse me . . .

The Joker laughs. The Batman smiles.

Flashing lights start appearing in the distance. The Joker practically doubles over with hysterical giggles. The Batman laughs, and as sirens start howling from a distance, grabs the Joker by the collar.

The Batman and the Joker roar with laughter. Water is pooling on the ground. Twin beams of headlights shine across the puddles as cars come shrieking out of the darkness.

BLACK

Thunder grumbles, and there is a rattle of rain.

Out of the silence, the JOKER speaks.

JOKER
There were these two guys in a
lunatic asylum . . .