

SHADOW OF THE BAT

I: CAPES

113 - "On Serious Earth"

Batman and related characters were created by Bob Kane & Bill Finger and are owned by DC Comics and Warner Brothers. This is a work of transformative fiction... aren't they all?

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM, FINANCIAL DISTRICT - EVENING

The sun has already disappeared behind the skyscrapers; the sky is dark. Colorful, blinking Christmas decorations play on a snow-covered environment and contrast the falling flakes.

Among the small crowd of people going about their holiday business, Dick and Barbara walk arm in arm down a wide sidewalk. Dick has the collar of his over-coat up, his hands stuffed in its pockets. Barbara wears a loose knit cap and scarf, lacing her knit-glove-clad hands around the crook of Dick's elbow. Each of their breaths emit visible steam in the frigid climate.

DICK

You're the one who's always telling me I should use the money to enjoy myself a little.

BARBARA

Yeah, but I kinda thought you'd do something for you... something to make you happy.

DICK

Making you happy *does* make me happy.

BARBARA

That is the sweetest thing I've ever heard. So it's not about having a say in how revealing the dress is?

Dick stops to open the large transparent door of the Gotham National Bank.

DICK

You pick the dress.

BARBARA

Really?

DICK

Yes, you think I trust myself to pick a dress? Inside.

Barbara enters the bank, Dick enters on her tail. The door swings shut behind them.

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK - CONTINUOUS

The quite large bank is abuzz with activity, as busy as the sparse seasonal decorations might suggest it to be.

They walk to the main queue.

BARBARA  
You know, side-part... I give you a lot of shit-

DICK  
(interjection)  
Understatement.

BARBARA  
(continuing)  
-but I think you should know that you are an amazing boyfriend.

Dick and Barbara stop at the back of the line, standing side-by-side.

DICK  
(jokingly)  
Oh, it's boyfriend now, is it?

BARBARA  
Yup.

DICK  
It's been decided?

BARBARA  
It has.

DICK  
And the appeals process?

BARBARA  
Non-existent.

DICK  
I see.

A beat.

DICK (CONT'D)  
Guess I'll just have to make due.

BARBARA  
That's the spirit, slugger.

(CONTINUED)

As Barbara speaks she swings her arm down, grabbing a big handful of Dick-ass.

Dick SQUEALS and jumps, everyone in line looks back.

Dick leans down to Barbara and speaks quietly into her ear.

DICK

I am gonna get you so good for  
this.

JOKER (O.S.)

Oh don't mind me, everyone-

Both Dick and Barbara realize that the line was looking behind them, and they turn to face the garrulous voice.

There they see Joker, gun in hand, flanked by no less than four armed and zoot-suited goons distinguished only by the cheap conical party-hats atop their square heads.

JOKER (CONT'D)

I'm just here to make a withdrawal.

We see the whole room in a wide-shot, the music sting rises.

Instead of Rolling Credits, the sting disappears, and we return to a mid-shot of Joker. The tension deflates.

JOKER

You don't mind if I jump the queue,  
do you? I'm in an awful hurry.

**OPENING TITLE CARD: SHADOW OF THE BAT**

**ACT ONE:**

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK - NIGHT

All the patrons and staff of the bank are prone on the ground; only the five villains stand tall.

**SI: "On Serious Earth"**

Babs and Dick lay facing each other, hands behind their respective heads.

BARBARA

Are you okay?

(CONTINUED)

DICK  
Yeah. Are you?

BARBARA  
Yeah.

They stare into each others' eyes.

Joker's grinning face slowly enters frame behind them to the sound-effect of rising comedy strings.

JOKER  
Ah, young love; butterflies in the  
stomach and blood in the smooth  
muscle! (LAUGHTER) Tell me son-

Joker violently grabs Dick's chin, forcing the acrobat to lock eyes with the clown. Jovial as ever, he continues.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
-do you use protection? Your  
mother and I are very worried about  
you.

From a few feet away, a prone BANK TELLER speaks.

TELLER  
Please, I'll let you into the safe,  
just-

Without even looking at her, the Joker extends his arm and SHOTS the teller in the face, killing her instantly as well as scattering the surrounding area with small bits of skull and viscera.

Joker speaks like an annoyed film-director.

JOKER  
No, no, no! Don't you know that  
timing... is...

The bank's telephone rings out loudly. The room goes cold. Everyone waits to see what the Joker will do.

HARDY, one of Joker's goons, is the first to speak.

HARDY  
You want me to shoot the phone,  
boss?

Joker steps toward Hardy and begins flailing at him like it's a silent-film duo bit.

(CONTINUED)

JOKER  
You stupid idiot...

The two disentangle themselves and Joker straightens his suit-jacket, exhaling. He steps to the phone and lifts the receiver to his ear.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Ahoy-hoy, Clown Prince of Crime speaking.

VICKI (THROUGH THE PHONE)  
Hello your highness, I was hoping you'd answer a few questions. I think it would benefit both of us.

JOKER  
And whom, may I ask, is calling?

VICKI (THROUGH THE PHONE)  
Vicki Vale, Gotham Gazette.

A hollow KNOCKING, as if on glass, echoes through the bank. Joker turns to the front doors to assess the source.

Vicki stands outside the doors, cell phone held to her ear with one hand, waving with the other.

Barbara can't hold back a muttered exclamation

BARBARA  
Jesus Christ...

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM, OUTSIDE GNB - CONTINUOUS

Vicki peers through the door as she speaks into her cell phone.

VICKI  
I want to hear your vision. I think the *world* wants to hear your vision.

The street behind Vicki is abruptly inundated with sirens and flashing lights, followed quickly by several squad cars.

Jim Gordon exits his civilian vehicle before it has completely finished lurching to a halt, making a b-line for Vicki.

(CONTINUED)

GORDON

Lady, you got some God-damn nerve!

Vicki still speaks into the phone.

VICKI

No, of course I didn't call them!  
I-

Jim grabs the phone out of Vicki's hands. Renee Montoya approaches from the line of squad cars.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Unless you have a warrant, I  
suggest you hand me back my phone,  
Commissioner, otherwise-

Jim violently hurls the phone at the nearest mailbox; on impact, pieces of it fly in various directions. Montoya is startled by the unexpected outburst.

Gordon turns back to Vicki.

GORDON

Oops.

VICKI

Gordon, I swear to God-

GORDON

(interrupting)

Leave.

Vicki stares, agape. She seems to be debating with herself whether or not to respond.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Now.

VICKI

A free press is vital-

GORDON

(interrupting)

Officer Montoya! Place Miss Vale  
under arrest and have her escorted-

VICKI

(interrupting)

Jesus, I'm going! I'm going!

Vicki quickly backs out of the police zone.

Montoya shoots Gordon a look, halfway between disapproval and confusion.

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK - MEANWHILE

The room is silent, but thick with tension. It seems everyone but the Joker is still waiting to exhale. A few moments pass awkwardly.

The Joker puts the receiver back down. He takes a beat.

JOKER  
-everything! (LAUGHTER)

Joker squats down and pets what remains of the dead teller's crown, smearing his pastel-violet glove with deep-red blood.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
And your timing is shit,  
dear. You'll have to work on it.

Joker leaps to his feet.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Alright, brainstorming session,  
people. The fuzz is here-

Joker leans down toward Dick, stage-whispering in a conspiratorial tone.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
And I ain't talkin' 'bout little  
miss fire-crotch there...

Joker jumps back up.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
-and they'll be wanting  
demands. Anyone? Demands? Anyone? There  
are no bad ideas!

WILLIS, a working class father with flaming red hair, laying next to his brunette wife and ginger son, answers sarcastically.

WILLIS  
How about some god-damn Prozac?

Willis' wife braces for retaliation. The crowd gasps.

Joker lets the comment breathe before CACKLING raucously.

(CONTINUED)



JOKER

Now that's comedy! What's your name, son?

Willis glances around, unsure whether Joker is talking to him.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Well, speak up boy.

WILLIS

Bill.

JOKER

Billy, I wish more hostages could be like you, willing to take chances, to commit to the bit. You could all stand to be a mite more like Willard here! Learn from his example! Oh, and Bilton...

Joker leans down next to Willis, almost placing his mouth on the father's ear.

JOKER (CONT'D)

(loudly stage whispering)  
-don't try to upstage me again.

Joker leaps back to an upright position, practically prancing around the room.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Come on, people, demands! I need something you'd find at a flea-market, a place that a family of four might go on vacation, and something a Polack might put in a sandwich... go ahead and just yell them out. Don't be shy!

As Joker continues his improv rant in the background, Dick and Barbara whisper to each other.

BARBARA

(whispering)

If I can get into the bathroom, I could get into the wiring, do all sorts of shit.

DICK

(whispering)

It's too dangerous.

(CONTINUED)

BARBARA

(whispering)

I could turn out the lights, I  
could lock down all the doors... I  
could set off the sprinklers...

DICK

(whispering, frustrated)

Look, Babs, you're not... (a beat)  
You're not a super-hero. Let's  
just keep our heads down.

BARBARA

(whispering)

Why? I'm like the best hacker ever  
and you're gymnastics Jesus, why  
don't we come up with a plan and  
fuck shit u-

The phone rings, interrupting Barbara's impassioned if  
nearly-silent speech.

INT. GCPD SURVEILLANCE VAN, OUTSIDE GNB - MEANWHILE

Merkel sits in the back of a GCPD surveillance van, phone to  
his ear. Gordon stands next to him, leaning over the desk,  
supported by both hands, cigarette smoking between his  
fingers.

MERKEL

It's ringing.

Harold Bullock stands at the open back door of the van.

BULLOCK

You gotta be yankin' my johnson.

GORDON

Merkel is the best negotiator on  
the force, Harry. God's sake, he  
teaches it at the Academy.

BULLOCK

Yeah, fine, flop-sweat can talk 'em  
down, whatever. But that's the  
Clown in there, that freak doesn't  
think like you and me, chief. He  
don't think at all.

GORDON

That may very well be, Detective  
Bullock, but-

(CONTINUED)

Merkel speaks loudly, clearly, cheerily, interrupting Gordon's small tirade.

MERKEL

Mr. Joker! I'm Stan, I've been authorized to negotiate with you on behalf of the city.

Gordon steps slightly more aside with Bullock, still in the truck. He leans in, whispering hoarsely.

GORDON

(whispering hoarsely)  
He's capable of anything. That's why if we can get even one hostage through those doors before whatever goes down goes down, I'll consider it a life saved.

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK - MEANWHILE

Joker converses on the phone, leaning against a desk. He has the bored affectation of a teenager forced to remain on a call with his parents.

JOKER

Yeah. (*listening*) uh-huh.  
(*listening*) uh-huh. (*listening*)  
right. (*listening*) reasonable.  
(*listening*) okay. (*listening*)  
alright. (*listening*) uh-huh. Sure,  
one sec.

Joker puts his hand to the receiver and speaks to the hostages.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Because Stan here is such a charming fellow I'm going to release one hostage.

The hostages stir slightly, unsure of how to react.

JOKER (CONT'D)

And it's going to beeeeeeeee...

Joker scans the crowd.

JOKER (CONT'D)

...you!

Joker's outstretched index finger has landed on Dick.

(CONTINUED)

Dick is upset. He cannot decide if he wants to stay and protect Barbara, or create space to become Robin. He pauses.

BARBARA  
(quietly)  
Dick, go... go!

WILLIS  
(from across the room)  
I'll go! I'll take his place!

Willis' wife (CATHERINE) is appalled.

CATHERINE  
Will!

Joker's gaze snaps toward Willis. His joviality is gone.

Joker lunges across the room onto Willis, practically flies at him. The telephone receiver bounces out of his hand and hits the floor, skidding away. He is a flurry of fists and feet and knees and elbows and forearms and claws, an incomprehensible perpetual motion machine of haphazard, vicious strikes. He screams during the attack.

JOKER  
You! Don't! Get! To! Decide! MY  
STAGE! MY TIME! YOU'RE RUINING  
IT! YOU'RE RUINING IT!

Joker leaps to his feet, face contorted in rage, shaking so hard he's almost vibrating, hair a tussled mess.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
(screaming, completely and  
insanely)  
NOBODY LEAVES THEN! **NOBODY!!!**

With zero transition, Joker is in hilarious hysterics, LAUGHING at seemingly the funniest joke ever told.

From a worm's eye view; the phone receiver is on the floor in the foreground, Joker cackling in the back.

INT. GCPD SURVEILLANCE VAN, OUTSIDE GNB - MEANWHILE

Merkel listens on his earpiece, then looks up at Gordon.

Gordon can tell from the negotiator's face that it is not going well.

(CONTINUED)

FADE TO BLACK:

**ACT TWO:**

FADE FROM BLACK:

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK - NIGHT

Joker wipes away a minuscule tear that had been clinging to his eye as he tries to slow his fit of laughter to a halt.

JOKER  
(ending laughing fit)  
hoooo!... ehhehh... ehhehh. hoo!

The room holds it's breath

JOKER (CONT'D)  
hoooooooooooo!

A beat.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
hehheh.

Out of nowhere, with whip-like speed and intensity, Joker stiffens and throws his gun arm in the direction of LLOYD, one of his meat-head lackeys, somehow without turning his head to face him. Lloyd's position should put him well behind Joker's periphery, but that doesn't seem to matter.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
LLOYD?!

Lloyd attempts to carry an armsful of bill-stacks, wads falling off like bread-crumbs as he awkwardly ambulates. He stops dead in his tracks, his mouth slack, his eyes wide.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
What. Thee. HELL are you doing?

LLOYD  
(stammering, unsure)  
Well... boss... I was... it's a bank robbery, right? So I was... you know... robbin' the bank.

A beat.

LLOYD  
Right?

(CONTINUED)

Joker explodes into movement, displaying a full range of motion as he soliloquizes.

JOKER

No! Wherever did you get that idea? We are in the business of comedy. This is about humour. The joke, the LAUGH, is its own reward! Money is anathema to humour! Filthy lucre the death-knell of funny!

He bounds toward Lloyd, grabbing a stack of hundreds from his arms.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Do you take me for a SELLOUT?!

Lloyd flinches at the screamed final word. With a humongous, lanky arcing motion, Joker hurls the stack to the ground, sending it skidding off. He turns back and grabs another one, displaying it in Lloyd's face.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Do you think THIS-

Lloyd flinches.

JOKER (CONT'D)

-is why we're here?

Joker hurls the stack to the ground, then turns back and grabs another one, displaying it in Lloyd's face.

Lloyd flinches.

Lloyd slowly opens his eyes.

He glances around.

He realizes Joker has not asked another question.

LLOYD

Uuuuuuhhhhhh... no?

Joker spins on his heel, turning his back to Lloyd and casually tossing aside the stack.

JOKER

Roscoe, shoot him.

(CONTINUED)

ROSCOE  
But I thought-

JOKER  
(interrupting)  
Hardy, shoot 'em both.

HARDY  
Yes boss.

LLOYD  
Wait!

Hardy lets loose two shots. The bodies of both goons lump to the floor.

Joker fingers something in the breast pocket of his suit-coat.

JOKER  
Well, looks like their routine...

Joker pulls a pair of purple sunglasses from the pocket and slowly places them onto his face.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
... was full of holes.

Hardy leaps into frame, miming as though he is playing an electric guitar.

HARDY  
(singing)  
\*CSI MIAMI SCREAM\* \*CSI MIAMI  
GUITAR RIFF\*

Dick and Barbara lie on the ground, watching the display in disbelief.

BARBARA  
(whispering)  
This is ridiculous, we have to do something.

Joker is still standing in his Caruso pose; Hardy is still jamming out on an air-guitar. With no transition, Joker begins sniffing.

Joker takes off his his shades and glances around while placing them back in his coat pocket.

He sniffs more intensely.

He slaps Hardy's arm a few times.

(CONTINUED)

JOKER

Listen! (*a beat*) Do you smell something?

Hardy sniffs. Hardy sniffs again.

HARDY

Ammonia!

JOKER

Ammonia?

HARDY

Ammonia!

JOKER

What's ammonia?

HARDY

It's like a Greek monk.

Joker takes a beat, reflects, then gets in another comical slap-fight with his henchman. After extricating himself and straightening his coat, he leaps up, his finger upstretched in a 'eureka moment' pose.

JOKER

Piss!

HARDY

...what?

JOKER

It's piss! I knew I recognized that smell. WHO WAS IT?! HM?

No one speaks, or points, but eventually, most eyelines arrive at Willis. He is pathetic, sputtering drool and blood through broken and missing teeth, his eyes almost completely bruised shut; he sits in a small puddle of his own urine.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Oh, Willmore. What are we gonna do with you, huh? You really are hopeless aren't you?

Joker starts to play more to the "crowd" than Willis.

JOKER (CONT'D)

There was a time- and it wasn't that long ago, oh no- there was a time when hostages had

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



JOKER (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
manners. No, you know what? Back  
when I was starting out, hostages  
had *class*. Did it ever occur to  
you simply *ask* to use the bathroom,  
Wilmer Valderama? Did that thought  
even attempt to float through your  
fractured cranium? Hm?

Joker leans down at the waist to get face to face with  
Willis.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Answer me, Waldo! Why didn't you  
just *ask* to go to the bathroom?

WILLIS

I-

Willis hesitates.

WILLIS (CONT'D)  
I didn't want to upstage you.

Joker drops his head into his hand while extending his gun  
hand and pulling the trigger on a potentially fatal shot to  
Willis' face. The gun makes an empty CLICKING sound.

Joker bats the gun around in his hands a little bit as if  
searching for the problem. He finally releases the clip,  
finding it empty.

JOKER  
Well. My properties department has  
certainly gone to the dogs. HARDY?

Hardy quickly and easily fires a fatal shot into Willis'  
skull. Willis slumps to the floor. Catherine shakes and  
lets a tiny, gasping cry escape her lips. His ginger son  
seethes with rage, clenching his fists and turning an even  
brighter red.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Now, before we go any further, does  
anyone have to use the bathroom?

Joker's query is met with silence.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
I'm not gonna shoot you-

Joker looks to the useless gun and empty clip in his  
hand. He throws them aside, seemingly hoping no one will  
notice.

(CONTINUED)

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Hardy's not going to shoot  
you. You will simply be allowed to  
utilize the facilities before  
returning to your seats.

Still, silence.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Anyone? Anyone? Bueller?

Silence.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Alright.

The Bank's phone rings out.

Joker scoops a stack of bills up off the floor and puts it  
to his ear.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Ahoy-hoy, you've reach the Ace of  
Knaves...

Moving only his eyes, he looks over the "phone" in his hand,  
then follows with the rest of his head as he realizes his  
mistake.

The phone rings out again.

He smiles sheepishly and tosses the stack behind  
himself. The stack falls in the lap of Willis' young boy.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
One ringy-dingy...

Joker looks around as if in a game of hide and seek. The  
phone rings out once more.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Two ringy-dingies...

Joker throws himself to the ground, leaping onto the  
receiver like a cross between Jeremy Brett's Sherlock Holmes  
and a mountain lion felling its prey. He answers it.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
You've reached Joker and Joker  
Finance, banking with a smile, how  
may we assist you today?

Still on his stomach, Joker lifts his feet into the air and crosses them. He mimes twirling a phone cord like a gossiping teen girl from an 80's movie.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Stan! How wonderful to hear from you again, we do appreciate our return customers.

On the floor, Barbara whispers to Dick.

BARBARA

(whispering)

We just watched four people die, Dick. Screw this. He's only got one henchman left, so unless you've got a plan-

As Barbara continues to speak, Dick sees, through the front wall of windows, a faint glimmer of light on a rooftop across the street, blinking.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

-I'm jumping in and you can back me up or not-

DICK

(interrupting, loudly)

Excuse me, Mr. Joker?

Dick, leaving his hands behind his head, slowly gets to his knees.

JOKER

I'm sorry Stan, one of the hostages is trying to get my attention. *(loudly, to Dick)* What is it, side-part?

DICK

I... wow, really? Side-part?

BARBARA

(whispering)

What the hell, Dick-

DICK

I need... to use the bathroom.

Joker starts to approach Dick.

(CONTINUED)

JOKER  
Listen, twink, I'm in the middle of  
a very important call right now-

DICK  
I know but I just really have to  
drain the lizard.

Joker is caught of guard by Dick's flippant language.

JOKER  
Why didn't you go before the  
phone-call, when I asked?

DICK  
I didn't have to go then.

Joker, phone-receiver held to his shoulder, regards Dick a moment.

JOKER  
Alright. Roscoe, take-

Joker looks back at Hardy. Hardy uses his eyes to gesture sheepishly at Roscoe's corpse.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
Oh that's right.

Joker considers his options.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
You can find your way, right kid?

Dick looks over to the men's bathroom door, which is in plain view of most of the lobby.

DICK  
Yeah.

JOKER  
Alright man, knock yourself out.

Dick stands.

Joker leans in and stage-whispers to him loud enough for all to hear.

JOKER (CONT'D)  
I know laying around with miss  
fire-crotch all evening can't be  
easy, but I will have to ask that  
you not spend too long in there...  
eh?... wink wink nudge nudge, eh?

(CONTINUED)

DICK

Yeah, uh... say no more.

Joker claps Dick on the back, then playfully boots him on the bum toward the bathroom.

JOKER

This guy gets it! Now g'wan ya little bugger!

INT. GCPD SURVEILLANCE VAN, OUTSIDE GNB - MEANWHILE

Both Gordon and Merkel are exasperated. Merkel listens intently on his headset.

MERKEL

I don't know Commissioner, it... it sounds like he's arguing with a kid.

GORDON

Oh Christ.

MERKEL

A boy.

GORDON

Hm.

MERKEL

I... I think we've lost his attention, sir.

GORDON

Then you hang up and you call that son of a bitch back.

MERKEL

Yes sir.

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK - MEANWHILE

JOKER

Now... where were we? Oh yes.

Joker places the phone back to his ear.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Stan?... Hello?...Stan?

(CONTINUED)

The phone rings right in his ear, eliciting a slapstick response from Joker. He oversells the pain to his ear, then presses the button as he brings the receiver back to his temple.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Stan! Christ! I hadn't gone anywhere! You almost ruptured my-  
(*listening*) I'm sorry what was that?

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM, FINANCIAL DISTRICT, ALLEY - MEANWHILE

Vicki Vale hugs a wall in a dark alley just away from the police activity, her smart phone up to her ear.

VICKI

I said I'll enter the bank in exchange for an exclusive, one-on-one interview.

Vicki listens intently, then smiles.

VICKI (CONT'D)

I would make a very good hostage, I assure you.

FADE TO BLACK:

**ACT THREE:**

FADE FROM BLACK:

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK, HALLWAY - NIGHT

In the foreground, Dick stops halfway into the bathroom with his hand still on the door. He looks back at Barbara.

She looks back at him, concerned and confused.

Dick finishes entering the bathroom, letting the door swing shut behind him.

In the deep background, Vicki enters through a side door at the end of the hallway.

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK -CONTINUOUS

Joker swings around to face the front windows and gesticulates wildly.

JOKER

Oo er Vicar! It sounds like a rollicking good time, but I don't see how you're going to get in with the police having cordoned off the front-

Vicki walks in from behind Joker.

VICKI

(interrupting)

There's a side door.

As she speaks, Joker makes a terrible SURPRISED NOISE, simultaneously turning around and leaping backward up onto a small check-writing desk, as if in fear of a mouse.

He sees it is just her and drops down to a cross-legged sitting position on the small desk, perched above the proceedings.

JOKER

There has to have been a badger in the alley.

Vicki smiles wryly.

VICKI

There was.

Joker leaps back up to his feet, in full manic performance-mode.

JOKER

Say no more! Not knowing is so much funnier.

He bounces and lands sitting on the edge of the small desk, feet crossed at the ankles, legs swinging playfully.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Now then, V-Double. What is it you wanted to know?

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK, BATHROOM - MEANWHILE

Dick looks behind himself as he walks into the bathroom, making a b-line for one of the stalls.

He looks up at the false ceiling of foam tiles above the stall and notes the nearby vent fan as he reaches for the stall's handle, obviously assessing his escape route.

He opens the door and only barely starts as he sees Batman crouched on the toilet seat, holding a small black bag.

Batman raises his finger to his lips to sush his protege.

INT. GOTHAM NATIONAL BANK - MEANWHILE

Two chairs have been set next to an adviser's desk in such a way as to suggest a late night talk show. Vicki is sitting behind the adviser's desk, Joker is sitting in the chair beside the desk, and the chair beside Joker is empty.

Hardy runs in front of the desk and squats to a knee, looking forward into a non-existent camera as he counts down from three with his fingers before sprinting away again.

Vicki watches Hardy go, then looks at Joker. For a moment she seems confused.

Joker leans back and drapes his arm across the chair next to him, crossing his legs in a devil-may-care, masculine way.

Vicki 's whole body suddenly jitters with realization. She looks out to the lobby.

VICKI

And we're back.

She turns to Joker, hesitates for a moment, and then pick up a small stack of papers from the desk, hitting them on its surface to align them like interview cards.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Before the break I was asking you about the motivation behind your... works.

Joker stops leaning back, coming forward just enough to be sitting upright. His demeanor is unnervingly calm, smooth. He is playing the part of a talk-show guest perfectly, but it is obvious he is still himself.

(CONTINUED)



JOKER

Well V-sauce -can I call you  
V-sauce?- crime is a lot like a  
joke in that way. If you explain  
it, it's not funny anymore.

VICKI

I see. And that's important to  
you, isn't it, as a criminal?

JOKER

What, being funny?

VICKI

Yes.

JOKER

Being funny is more than important  
to me, Vick's Vapo-rub... but I'd  
like to go back a moment- if I may?

Vicki does not immediately respond, presumably thinking the  
question was rhetorical.

They sit in silence a moment.

VICKI

Oh, yes! Of course.

JOKER

You asked if it was important to me  
as a criminal, but I would argue  
the question. I don't consider  
myself a criminal.

VICKI

I apologize... it's just... a  
moment ago you called your work  
"crime."

JOKER

I may create crimes, but I am not a  
criminal. I am an artist, ol'  
Vic. For a criminal, the crime  
itself is the goal, whereas-

Out of nowhere, a batarang zings into the back of joker's  
hand, embedding itself an inch or two below the middle  
finger. His glove starts to turn crimson.

JOKER

Oh come on man!

(CONTINUED)

Batman and Robin are rushing into the lobby. Vicki dives under the desk.

JOKER (CONT'D)

That *really* hurt!

Hardy trains his gun on Robin, already beginning to squeeze the trigger. Robin rolls under what might have been a bullet, but Batman was already inside the goon's reach; he pushes Hardy's gun-arm up and the shot rings out into the ceiling instead.

Robin, still full of forward momentum, rights from his roll already on the other side of the larger combatants, ready to confront Joker.

Joker has put Barbara between himself and the crimefighter, his blood-covered arm wrapped tight across her chest, his unwounded hand holding the batarang to her throat. Robin skids on his toes as his momentum grinds to a halt.

Hardy stops fighting against Batman's force and starts falling back, taking Batman with him, attempting to throw the vigilante overhead as he goes. Batman of course flips through gracefully, his billowing cape obscuring the exact style of flip or twist he used.

Robin shifts one foot slightly. Joker ever-so lightly presses the razor-sharp batarang into Barbara's throat, eliciting a small drop of ruby-red blood. Robin freezes, remaining even more still.

Batman bobs and weaves back toward Hardy with erratic leaps, forcing Hardy to fire bullet after bullet into spots that Batman had just left.

Robin, deflated, relaxes his muscles and stops leaning forward. He slowly raises his hands at his sides, a sign of surrender.

Green liquid shoots out of the small hydrangea on Joker's lapel, hitting Robin in the face and turning to gas on impact.

Batman leaps at Hardy, wrapping an arm around the goon's neck and spinning over him, forcing the back of Hardy's head into the ground, hard.

Robin, trying to clear his face, wobbles, falls to a knee, and then crumples to the ground. Joker throws Barbara aside and starts to take off for the side door.

Batman has Joker in his sights and a clear shot to take him down any way he wants.

(CONTINUED)

Willis's boy, the red-headed child, leaps onto Joker's back, screaming.

As Batman approaches, Joker hurls the boy off of himself and the boy lands awkwardly against the corner of a desk.

Joker runs for the door. Dick is still unconscious. Batman has no choice but to check on the boy.

He approaches the red-headed child and leans down, checking his pulse.

We hear the side door SLAM shut. Batman looks up, scowling.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM, OUTSIDE GNB - NIGHT

Merkel checks hostages out one by one at the front door of the bank.

Bullock pushes a handcuffed Vale past the line and out the door into the snow.

VICKI

Harry, come on! It was a story,  
I'm press, you can't-

Harry interrupts, shoving her a little faster as they walk past Gordon.

BULLOCK

(interrupting)

You're a dumb broad, you know  
that? You're lucky you're still  
alive to get freakin' arrested.

VICKI

Harry-

Bullock interrupts again as he opens the back door of his unmarked.

BULLOCK

I'll tell you what-

Bullock puts his hand on the back of Vicki's head, lowering her helpfully into the back seat of the vehicle.

BULLOCK (CONT'D)

-if I give you my cell phone, so's  
you call your shark on the ride to  
the station, will you shut the fuck  
up?

(CONTINUED)

He shuts the door and walks around the car.

Dick, now back in his civilian clothes, and Barbara step past Officer Merkel at the bank door.

BARBARA  
(to Dick)  
It was crazy, they were flipping  
and-!

Barbara sees her father and sprints at him, practically jumping into him for a deep hug.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Daddy!

Dick walks behind her at a more leisurely pace, keeping his distance a couple yards away from the father/daughter duo.

Gordon kisses his daughter on the hair and on the forehead.

GORDON  
Oh baby, oh honey, Jesus H. Christ  
I was scared to death.

Dick hands back awkwardly.

Gordon frees an arm to wave Dick over.

GORDON (CONT'D)  
For God's sake son, get over here.

Dick walks up to them and places his hand awkwardly on Barbara's shoulder. Gordon wraps his arm around Dick's head and neck, pulling him deep into a three-way hug.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM, FINANCIAL DISTRICT, ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

From behind Batman as he watches the hug, hidden in the shadows of the alley.

From in front of Batman. He is in focus, a passive, unreadable look on his lower face. A small figure is behind him, in the background, out of focus.

The figure speaks.

RED-HAIRED CHILD  
That was so awesome!

The focus shifts. We see it is the red-haired child from the bank. Batman whips around.

(CONTINUED)

BATMAN

That was a disaster. Now leave.

RED-HAIRED CHILD

But...

Batman turns his back on the child.

RED-HAIRED CHILD (CONT'D)

I saved you! I did it... I'm a hero!

Batman not only turns back to face the child but takes a stride toward him, looming over him.

BATMAN

Save me? Do you have any idea how stupid that was? The fifty-seven different ways you could have gotten someone killed pulling a stunt like that? You're not a hero. You're a menace.

The two stare at each other a moment.

Batman slowly turns back around and crosses his arm, watching Gordon, Dick, and Barbara. Gordon is getting in the driver's seat of his car, Dick is opening the passenger door for Barbara.

Dick shuts Barbara's door and glances to the alley, then gets in the back seat.

The red-haired child is still standing behind Batman, clenching and un-clenching his fists.

Finally, the child turns and leaves, walking back down the alley.

INT. GORDON'S CAR - MEANWHILE

Dick looks through the back window at the blinking lights and small crowd of people disappearing into the distance.

BARBARA

It's okay, Dick.

Dick shifts his focus to Barbara.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

You don't have to be embarrassed about hiding in the bathroom when

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BARBARA (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
the shit was going down. I'm just  
happy you're safe.

Barbara grabs Dick's hand and intertwines their fingers,  
then leans over and rests her head on Dick's shoulder.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM, FINANCIAL DISTRICT - NIGHT

Gordon's car drives through the snow.

CUT TO BLACK: