

JOKER
an origin

written by
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This story takes place in its own universe. It has no connection to any of the DC films that have come before it.

We see it as a classic Warner Bros. movie. Gritty, intimate and oddly funny, the characters live in the real world and the stakes are personal.

Although it is never mentioned in the film, this story takes place in the past.

Let's call it 1981.

It's a troubled time. The crime rate in Gotham is at record highs. A garbage strike has crippled the city for the past six weeks. And the divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is palpable. Dreams are beyond reach, slipping into delusions.

TP/SS

OVER BLACK:

HEAR LAUGHTER.

The sound of a man totally cracking up.

FADE IN:

1

INT. DEPT. OF HEALTH, OFFICE - MORNING

1

CLOSE ON JOKER (30's), tears in his eyes from laughing so hard. He's trying to get it under control. His greasy, black hair is matted down. He's wearing an old, faded red hooded zip-up sweatshirt, a threadbare gray scarf, thin from years of use, hangs loosely around his neck.

WE NOTICE TWO FADED OLD SCARS cut at the corners of his mouth. Almost forming a smile.

He's sitting across from an overworked SOCIAL WORKER (50's), African American. Her office is cramped and run-down in a cramped and run-down building. Stacks of folders piled high in front of her.

She just sits behind her desk, waiting for his laughing fit to end, she's been through this before. Finally it subsides.

Joker takes a deep breath, pauses to see if it's over.

Beat.

JOKER

--is it just me, or is it getting
crazier out there?

Despite the laughter, there's real pain in his eyes. Something broken in him. Looks like he hasn't slept in days.

SOCIAL WORKER

It's certainly tense. People are upset, they're struggling. Looking for work. The garbage strike seems like it's been going on forever. These are tough times.

(then)

How 'bout you. How's the job? Still enjoying it?

JOKER

Yeah, I mean, it's different each day, so I really like that. I don't think I could ever work in an office. Behind a desk.

(MORE)

JOKER (CONT'D)

(beat)
No offense.

She smiles. Writes something down. Looks at the clock, she's running late for her next appointment.

SOCIAL WORKER

Have you been keeping up with your journal?

JOKER

Everyday.

SOCIAL WORKER

Great. Did you bring it with you?

Beat.

JOKER

(dodging the subject)
I'm sorry. Did I bring what?

SOCIAL WORKER

(impatient; she doesn't have time for this)
Arthur, last time I asked you to bring your journal with you. For these appointments. Do you have it?

JOKER

Yes ma'am.

Beat.

SOCIAL WORKER

Can I see it?

He reluctantly reaches into his bag. Pulls out a weathered notebook. Slides it across to her--

JOKER

I've been using it as a journal, but also a joke diary. Funny thoughts or, or observations-- Did I tell you I'm pursuing a career in stand-up comedy?

She's half-listening as she flips through his journal.

SOCIAL WORKER

No. You didn't.

JOKER

I think I did.

She doesn't respond, keeps flipping through his journal--

SOCIAL WORKER

Oh yeah. Because of what your mother said,-- about your purpose. "To bring laughter and joy to the world," right?

JOKER

Right.

ANGLE ON JOURNAL, pages and pages of notes, all in neat, angry-looking handwriting. Also, cut out photos from hardcore pornographic magazines and some crude handmade drawings.

A flash of anger crosses Joker's face. We see him picking at his right eyebrow, almost obsessively. Trying to stay calm. His eyebrow is actually half-gone. Something he does a lot.

JOKER

I didn't realize you wanted to read it.

The social worker gives him a look, then reads something in the pages that gives her pause.

SOCIAL WORKER

(reading out loud)

"I just hope my death makes more sense than my life."

She looks up at Joker. He just stares back. Lets it hang out there for a beat.

Then he laughs a little, even though he doesn't think it's funny--

JOKER

Yeah. I mean, that's just--

SOCIAL WORKER

Does my reading it upset you?

He leans in.

JOKER

No. I just,-- some of it's personal. You know?

SOCIAL WORKER

I understand. I just want to make sure you're keeping up with it.

She slides his journal back to him. He holds it in his lap.

SOCIAL WORKER

What about your mom? How's she feeling?

JOKER

She has good days. But mostly bad. It's been a big help having me there. She really needs me.

SOCIAL WORKER

Seems like she's been sick a lot since you got home.

JOKER

(nods)

Yeah, it's good I'm there. When I was in the hospital, after my last episode-- she was having trouble getting over there to visit.

She looks back up at the clock, she needs to get to her next appointment.

SOCIAL WORKER

All right. So, I'll see you again, two weeks from today?

He nods. But keeps sitting there for a moment.

She stands up, trying to signal it's time for him to leave--

SOCIAL WORKER

Is there something else I can help you with, Arthur? My next appointment is waiting.

He just keeps sitting there.

JOKER

Yeah, I was wondering if you could ask the doctor to increase the dosage on my medications? Nothing seems to make a difference.

SOCIAL WORKER

(looking over his record)

Do you know which ones you'd like increased?

Shakes his head, no.

SOCIAL WORKER

Have you been sleeping?

JOKER
 (lying)
 Some.

She glances at his file again.

SOCIAL WORKER
 Arthur, you're on seven different
 medications. Surely they must be
 doing something.

He finally stands up. Zips up his faded red sweatshirt.

Looks at her--

JOKER
 I just don't wanna feel so bad
 anymore.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE:

JOKER

2 **EXT. GOTHAM SQUARE, MIDTOWN - KENNY'S MUSIC SHOP - DAY** 2

GOTHAM SQUARE IS CLOGGED WITH TRAFFIC. Non-stop honking horns, pedestrians crowding the sidewalk. Huge billboards, giant movie marquees, garbage bags piled high everywhere. Underneath it all we hear a TINKLING PIANO playing something bouncy and fast-paced.

FROM ACROSS THE BUSY CITY STREET, we see Joker. He's dressed as a sad-faced HOBO CLOWN. This is his job.

Dressed in tattered clothes, dark five o'clock shadow painted on his face, big bulbous red nose, his mouth's outlined in white, turned down at the corners.

He's holding up a sign in front of Kenny's Music Shop that reads, "EVERYTHING MUST GO!" A banner above the store reads, "GOING OUT OF BUSINESS!" Behind him, an OLD MAN plays a piano on the street. Both of them there to draw attention to the big sale going on in the store.

Joker's doing a little Charlie Chaplin like waddle to the music. Most people walk right past, ignoring him. A few bump into him by mistake.

JOKER SEES A GROUP OF FIVE BOYS, no more than 15-years-old, walking toward him. He moves out of their way. They crack up laughing when they see him. Start making fun of him.

Joker ignores them, tries to do his job the best he can while maintaining some dignity. Keeps dancing and holding up the sign.

One of the kids knocks the sign out of Joker's hands--

KID #1
Suck my dick, clown.

The kids laugh. Joker doesn't say anything. Just bends over to pick up the sign--

Another kid kicks him in the ass--

KID #2
Whoops.

Joker falls face first onto the sidewalk. Oddly, the old man playing the piano picks up the pace of the music--

The kids crack up. One of the boys grabs Joker's sign and takes off running across the street--

The other kids follow, weaving through traffic--

Joker gets up and gives chase. He needs his sign back.

He almost gets hit by a taxi, spinning out of the way just in time-- Spinning right into another taxi that stops just short of hitting him.

Joker keeps running through traffic. People stare. A clown barreling down the street has got to be a joke--

3 **EXT. CORNER, SIDE STREET - GOTHAM SQUARE - CONTINUOUS** 3

The five boys are booking it down the crowded street laughing and whooping it up. At the last second they take a sharp right turn down a cross street--

Joker almost overshoots the corner, slip-sliding in his big red shoes--

He rights himself and heads down after them--

Sees them running up ahead--

WHAP! Out of nowhere Joker gets hit in the face!

He falls to the ground.

One of the kids was hiding between parked cars and hit Joker with the "EVERYTHING MUST GO!" sign, splintering it in two--

The other kids turn back and walk up to Joker down on the ground.

Joker reaches out, still trying to save the sign--

THE KIDS START KICKING AND BEATING THE SHIT out of Joker. It's brutal and vicious. Nobody on the street stops to help.

CLOSE ON JOKER'S HOBO CLOWN FACE, down on the ground. Sweat running down his face, smearing his make-up. He doesn't even look like he's in pain. He just takes the beating.

That stupid frown painted on his face.

4

INT. CITY BUS (PULLING OUT) - HEADING DOWNTOWN - DUSK

4

Joker, makes his way toward the back of the crowded bus, now walking with a slight limp, but keeping his head held high.

His make-up's washed off, costume and props all shoved into a big shopping bag slung over his shoulder. Some white grease-paint still smudged on the sides of his face.

He finds an empty seat in the back of the bus. Sees a sad-eyed FOUR-YEAR-OLD GIRL, face puffy from crying, sitting on her knees looking back at him. Her mother's facing forward, but even from behind you can tell she's angry.

Joker sees the sad-eyed girl staring straight back at him. He doesn't know where to look, feeling self-conscious and small. He gets back into "character" smiling like a clown and covers his face with his hands-- Starts playing the peek-a-boo game with her.

The girl stares back at him for a moment then giggles--

WOMAN ON BUS

(turns back to Joker;
already annoyed)

Can you please stop bothering my kid?

JOKER

I wasn't bothering her, I was--

WOMAN ON BUS

(interrupts)

Just stop.

AND SUDDENLY JOKER STARTS TO LAUGH. LOUD. He covers his mouth trying to hide it-- Shakes his head, laughter pausing for a moment, but then it comes on stronger. His eyes are sad. It actually looks like the laughter causes him pain.

People on the bus are staring. The girl looks like she's going to cry again.

WOMAN ON BUS

You think that's funny?

Joker shakes his head no, but he can't stop laughing. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a small card. Hands it to the woman.

CLOSE ON THE CARD, it reads: "Forgive my laughter. I have a condition (more on back)"

She turns the card over and there is a bunch of information in small writing--

"It's a medical condition causing sudden, frequent, uncontrollable laughter that doesn't match how you feel. It can happen in people with a brain injury or certain neurological conditions."

She doesn't read it (but if you freeze frame the movie you could). She just shakes her head annoyed and throws the card on the ground.

Joker laughs harder. Tears running down his face.

Not wanting to attract any more attention to himself, he pulls up his red hood, and uses his threadbare scarf to cover his mouth, trying to muffle the laughter.

He looks out at the city passing him by.

5 **EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE, STREETS - GOTHAM - EVENING**

5

The bus pulls away, sun almost gone.

Joker heads slowly down the litter-covered streets. Garbage is piled along the sidewalks, the air thick with smog creates a haze over everything.

The streets are crowded with the poor, the elderly and disenfranchised. Women with children in busted strollers. Homeless people sleeping on subway grates. Stray dogs. His is one of the few white faces.

Joker makes his way into a run-down drug store, behind him two drunks fight on the corner, beating the shit out of each other. Joker, and nobody else for that matter, pays them any attention.

No one here gives a shit.

6 INT. LOBBY, APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

6

A shabby lobby in a building that was once probably pretty nice, but now it's a dump.

Joker checks his mailbox. He's holding a small white (prescription) bag in his hand.

The mailbox is empty.

7 INT. ELEVATOR, APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

7

Joker steps onto the wheezing elevator, harsh fluorescent lights, graffiti on the walls. As the door closes, he hears-- *

SOPHIE (OS)

Wait!!

He puts his foot out with some panache to stop the closing door-- He's a romantic at heart. *Ding.*

And SOPHIE DUMOND (late 20's), tired eyes, hands filled with grocery bags, steps onto the elevator with GIGI, her 5-year-old daughter.

SOPHIE

Thank you.

(realizing)

Of course it's you,-- everyone else in this building is just so fucking rude.

Joker nods "thanks." Holds his breath, hoping he doesn't start to laugh.

Floors dinging as the elevator rises.

Joker sees GiGi licking the dirty smudged elevator handrail behind her mom.

SOPHIE

How's your mom doing?

He takes a deep breath, he's uncomfortable talking to her, holds up the white prescription bag.

JOKER

It's day to day. I'm doing everything I can to get her back on her feet.

(re: pharmacy bag)

Picked up her medicine. Gonna make her some dinner.

SOPHIE
 (smiles; being polite)
 She's lucky she has you--

Joker smiles thanks, can't help but glance at GiGi licking the rail.

Sophie finally notices. She wants to grab her but can't with her hands full. Tries to kick her away--

SOPHIE
 Jesus. Don't do that, GiGi! How many times have I told you that?
 (to Joker)
 This building is so awful, isn't it?

Joker just nods... he doesn't know what to say, but clearly wants to continue this conversation with Sophie.

The doors open. They all step off.

SOPHIE
 Okay. Well, tell your mom I said hello.

And Sophie and GiGi walk down the hall-- the opposite way of Joker. He just stands there for a beat. Heart beating fast.

JOKER
 (calls out after her)
 Hey Sophie--

She turns around.

JOKER
 I'll tell my mom you said hello.

She smiles as in "yeah, that's what I said."

8

INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, FRONT DOOR - EVENING

8

Old apartment, worn carpet. Nothing's new inside but it's fairly neat and well-kept.

Joker closes the door behind him, leans his back against it and swoons. Hears a deep purring sound. He looks down and sees an OLD ORANGE CAT, rubbing up against his leg.

Then--

MOM (OS)
 (shattering the moment,
 calls out)
 Happy?! Did you check the mail
 before you came up?

JOKER
 Yes, Ma. Nothing. No letter.

MOM (OS)
 You sure you looked? Sometimes I
 don't know where your head is.

Joker glances back down and sees the cat is gone.

JOKER
 Yes I'm sure. And my head's right
 here. I'm gonna make you some
 dinner, okay?

QUICK CUTS:

JOKER TEARS OPEN THE PRESCRIPTION BAG... A FLURRY OF PILL
 BOTTLES TUMBLE OUT ONTO THE COUNTER.

SEE HIS NAME, "ARTHUR FLECK" ON THE ORANGE PILL BOTTLES, AND
 GLIMPSE THE GENERIC DRUG NAMES, TEMAZEPAM... PERPHENAZINE...
 AHENELZINE... AMITRIPTYLINE... BENZEDRINE... DIAZEPAM...
 MEPROBAMATE...

TAKES OUT ONE PILL FROM EACH THE TEMAZEPAM AND MEPROBAMATE
 BOTTLES.

TWO PILLS BEING CRUSHED UP TO POWDER.

SPRINKLES THE POWDER ON TOP OF A TV DINNER.

SWALLOWS A HANDFUL OF PILLS FROM THE OTHER BOTTLES.

LOOKS DOWN AND SMILES AT THE ORANGE CAT LOOKING UP AT HIM
 FROM THE COUNTER.

9

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM, APARTMENT - NIGHT

9

Joker brings the food to his mother, PENNY (70's), lying in
 her bed. The TV is on, playing the local news.

Joker sets the food down in front of his mother. He covers
 the pain from his beating the best he can-- His mother
 doesn't seem to notice anyway.

MOM
 He must not be getting my letters.

Joker sits down on a chair next to the bed.

JOKER

He's a busy man.

MOM

Too busy for me? I worked for that family for 12 years. He always had a smile for me. Least he could do is write back.

JOKER

Ma, eat. You need to eat.

MOM

You need to eat. Look how skinny you are.

Before Joker can say anything, his mother points to the news on the TV--

MOM

All day long it's more bad news. That's all there is.

JOKER

Maybe you shouldn't watch so much television.

MOM

(ignoring)

He's the only hope for Gotham. He'll make a great mayor. Everybody says so.

JOKER

(playful)

Everybody who? Who do you talk to?

MOM

Well everybody on the news.

JOKER

Stop it. He's not even gonna run. Why would Thomas Wayne want to be mayor? He can do more good as a businessman.

MOM

Because he cares about this city. And everyone in it-- that's why I can't believe he hasn't written me back.

JOKER

He will. Now eat some dinner.

He feeds her a bite of the food.

JOKER

How you feeling today?

MOM

I don't know. It always hits me worse at night, you notice that?

He shakes his head.

JOKER

(teasing)

Maybe it's the moon. Maybe you're a werewolf?

HE HOWLS SOFTLY like a wolf. She laughs.

MOM

It's not funny.

Joker watches her as he cuts up some more of her food.

MOM

Anyway, I wrote a new letter today. A better one. I want you to hand deliver it to him.

JOKER

What? Why?

MOM

Cause maybe the mailman is throwing them away. We should have tipped him at Christmas time.

JOKER

Who tips their mailman?

MOM

Some people do. Rich people do.

Joker sighs, resigned.

JOKER

Okay. I can try his office. Tomorrow.

MOM

Thank you.
 (she pats the bed)
 Come sit. It's almost on.

Joker gets into bed with her.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION, intro to "LIVE WITH MURRAY FRANKLIN!", and we HEAR THE ANNOUNCER over clips of comedy bits, stars and Murray Franklin himself--

ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

*It's Live with Murray Franklin!
 Tonight Murray welcomes, Sandra
 Winger, comedian Skip Byron and the
 piano stylings of Yeldon & Chantel!
 As always, Don Ellis and his Jazz
 Orchestra. And now, without any
 further ado-- Murray Franklin!*

Joker and his mom watch from bed, this is a ritual of theirs.

10 **INT. LIVING ROOM, MOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

10

Late night. Joker's mom is dead asleep. Joker is alone in the living room, which doubles as his bedroom. He can't ever sleep. He opens his worn notebook. Flips to a page titled "Jokes" and starts writing--

CLOSE ON WORDS, as he slowly writes: "The worst part about having a mental illness is..."

ANGLE ON JOKER, pausing, thinking it over for a moment. Then he laughs to himself when he comes up with something.

CLOSE ON WORDS, coming faster now, "...that people still expect you to behave as if you don't."

CUT TO:

11 **EXT. WAYNE TOWER, STREET - MIDTOWN - MORNING**

11

Joker's looking up at the intimidating steel and glass tower, he looks so small, holding his mom's letter in his hand. Bustle of professionals coming in and out of the company's corporate headquarters, Joker looks out of place.

He heads inside through the giant glass doors.

12

INT. RECEPTION, WAYNE ENTERPRISES - 25TH FLOOR - MORNING 12

Joker steps off an elevator and walks up to the white marble reception desk as if he belongs there--

JOKER

Hello. I have a personal letter for Mr. Thomas Wayne.

RECEPTIONIST

Okay. You can leave it with me.

JOKER

It's kind of important. I need to make sure he gets it himself.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh, in that case, I'll buzz you right in.

Joker goes to enter--

RECEPTIONIST

I'm kidding. Leave it here.

He laughs along with her, even though she's not laughing.

JOKER

Oh. Right-- well, my mom used to work for the Wayne family-- for 12 years. She was their housekeeper.

A couple other business people are now waiting behind Joker, there for meetings.

RECEPTIONIST

That's great. But you can leave it with me or you can leave with the letter. Those are your options. Now please step aside.

JOKER

Mr. Wayne knows her. Can you maybe at least call back to him? Tell him that I'm here.

RECEPTIONIST

Thomas Wayne is away on business.

Joker is getting frustrated.

JOKER

Okay. Well, can I have your name? So I know who I left it with.

Now Joker sees a GROUP OF MEN walking behind the glass that separates the reception area from the back offices. Amongst the group, he catches a glimpse of THOMAS WAYNE (60's), deep tan, hair dyed so black it's almost blue.

JOKER

Wait. He's right there.
(goes up to the glass,
shouts)
Mr. Wayne! Mr. Wayne.

He starts banging on the glass... but the group keeps moving. Not noticing him.

RECEPTIONIST

Sir. Please stop. Sir!!

Joker keeps banging on the glass.

13 **EXT. WAYNE TOWER, FRONT ENTRANCE - MORNING**

13

The glass doors swing open and Joker is forcibly thrown onto the street. TWO LARGE SECURITY GUARDS stand over him.

He is still holding the letter.

He makes as if he's going to leave peacefully, then at the last minute, TAKES ANOTHER RUN AT THE DOOR--

The two guards stiff arm him.

CUT TO:

14 **INT. HA-HA'S TALENT BOOKING, LOCKER ROOM - DAY**

14

The cramped locker room of a small talent booking agency. This is where Joker works. They "rent out" talent for parties and events. Clowns, magicians, male strippers.

Joker takes off his shirt, grimaces in pain as he moves. His body's bruised from the beating he took chasing after his sign.

RANDALL (OS)

You okay?

He turns. RANDALL (mid 50's), a big bear of a know-it-all, standing there. He's a party clown as well. He's half-dressed in his clown suit.

RANDALL
I heard about the beat down you
took. Fucking savages.

JOKER
It was just a bunch of kids. I
should have left it alone.

Randall opens his locker--

RANDALL
It's crazy out there. And it's only
getting worse.

JOKER
(nods)
My mother says that the people
nowadays lack empathy.

RANDALL
What's empathy?

JOKER
It means like "feeling for other
people."

RANDALL
Like sympathy?

JOKER
Kind of. But different.

Randall comes over, hands Joker a brown paper bag-- Joker
looks inside. It's a GUN, a .38 snub-nose revolver. *

Joker looks up at him, confused--

RANDALL
Take it. I got a few. You gotta
protect yourself out there, buddy.
Too many wackos.

As Joker stares at it--

RANDALL
(lowers his voice)
It's a .38 snub-nose. Gets the job
done if you ever need to use it.
Usually pulling it out is enough.

JOKER
I, I don't have the money for this,
Randall. *

RANDALL

Don't sweat it. You can pay me some other time. You're my boy.

That lands with Joker, he smiles to himself.

RANDALL

(as he walks away)

But you didn't get it from me, okay?

Joker nods. Puts the brown paper bag in his locker. Slowly starts to get dressed-- his eyes darting toward the bag as he does. * *

Another clown, GARY (30's), a dwarf, pops his head into the locker room.

GARY

Arthur,-- Hoyt wants to see you in his office.

JOKER

What for?

GARY

No clue.

15

INT. FRONT OFFICE, HA-HA'S TALENT BOOKING - DAY

15

Joker still half-dressed, walks into the cramped office.

His boss, HOYT VAUGHN (60's) sits behind a metal desk. The office is a complete mess, newspapers and files litter the desk. A giant ashtray filled with cigarette butts. A calendar of booking hangs on the wall. A scribbled, jumbled mess.

JOKER

Hey Hoyt. Gary said you wanted to see me?

HOYT

(without even looking up)

How's the comedy career? Are you a famous stand-up yet?

JOKER

Not quite. Haven't even performed yet. Just been working my material. This business is all about fine-tuning.

Now Hoyt looks up. Takes a drag from his cigarette.

HOYT

Right.

Joker goes to sit down--

HOYT

Don't sit. This will be quick.

Joker stops in his tracks.

HOYT

Look, I like you, Arthur. A lot of the guys here, they think you're a freak. But I like you. I don't even know why I like you. I mean, you don't say much.

(beat)

It's probably that stupid laugh. It gets me every time. Kills me.

Unsure how to respond, Joker just nods.

HOYT

But I got another complaint. And it's starting to piss me off.

Joker takes a deep breath, maybe picks at his eyebrow.

HOYT

Kenny's Music. Sunday. The guy said you disappeared. Never even returned his sign.

JOKER

No. I got jumped. I told you about that.

HOYT

For a sign? Bullshit. It makes no sense, just give him his sign back. He's going out of business for god's--

BANG! Out of nowhere, Joker slams his head into the wall. Head-butting it hard.

HOYT

(taken aback)

Hey!

BANG! BANG! He does it two more times. Breaking the plaster on the wall--

HOYT
What the fuck, Arthur?!

JOKER
(voice tightens)
I don't have his sign. *

And Joker just stares at Hoyt, some blood forming on his forehead-- *

CUT TO: *

16 **EXT. BACK ALLEY, OUTSIDE HA-HA'S - AMUSEMENT MILE - DAY** 16 *

WE'RE AT THE FAR END OF AN ALLEY, about halfway down, catch a glimpse of Joker still half-dressed on the other side of a dumpster. From this vantage, all we can see is him furiously KICKING and STOMPING on something... or somebody. *

We don't hear anything. And we can't make out what it is that he's so violently beating down. *

It could be a cat... a cardboard box... a homeless person... We don't know. *

Joker just continues unleashing his rage-- *

17 **INT. CITY BUS (MOVING) - DUSK** 17

Joker at the end of his work day, sitting in his spot toward the back of the bus.

Across the aisle from him, he's innocently watching a young couple, playfully teasing each other.

18 **EXT. GOTHAM, LOWER EAST SIDE - EVENING** 18

Joker heading back home down the litter-covered streets like he does every night. Garbage still piled along the sidewalks, air still thick with smog.

He's carrying the paper bag that Randall gave him.

19 **INT. LOBBY, APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING** 19

Joker checks his mailbox. Empty.

20 **INT. ELEVATOR, APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS** 20

Joker is on the elevator, as the door closes, he sticks his foot out to stop it.

The door limps back open. *Ding.*

He looks to see if anybody, *if Sophie*, is coming. He waits. Hoping.

The door starts to close on him again-- Right before it does, *
he stops it with his foot again. *Ding.*

21 **INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT** 21

JOKER'S GIVING HIS MOM A BATH, being careful with her as he shampoos her hair.

MOM

--so what did he say when you gave him the letter?

JOKER

They wouldn't let me see him.

(lying)

But they promised me it would get to him.

MOM

It's good they promised. He only works with the best. We should hear something soon.

He fills an empty plastic container with some bath water.

JOKER

Look up.

She tilts her head back and he rinses her hair with the water from the container...

JOKER

Why are these letters so important to you, Ma? What do you think he's gonna do?

MOM

He's gonna help us.

JOKER

Help us how?

MOM

Get us out of here, take me away from this place and these-- these awful people.

JOKER

You worked for him over 30 years ago. What makes you think he would help you?

She looks at him with conviction.

MOM

Because Thomas Wayne is a good man. If he knew how I was living, if he saw this place, it would make him sick. I can't explain it to you any better than that.

Joker nods. Annoyed, but not worth the argument. He stands up to get her a towel.

JOKER

I don't want you worrying about money. Everyone's been telling me they think my stand-up is ready for the big clubs. It's just a matter of time before I get a break.

She steps into the towel. He's helping dry her off.

MOM

Happy, what makes you think you could do that?

JOKER

What do you mean?

MOM

I mean, don't you have to be funny to be a comedian?

Beat.

Joker's mom is out cold in her bedroom, a half-eaten plate of food is next to her on the bed.

23

INT. LIVING ROOM, MOM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

23

Joker sits on the couch. The TV is on, but the sound is off. He holds the .38 SNUB-NOSE REVOLVER Randall gave him in his hand. He's never held a gun before, looks uncomfortable with it, the weight of it in his hand...

He points it at the TV, hand trembling a bit... Points it at the cat... Points it at his head. *

Looks closely at the grip. The barrel. The cylinder. Now he casually pulls the trigger--

BLAMMMMMMM!

He jumps up off the couch. What the fuck!? He looks around in a panic. His hands shaking.

He shot a hole in the wall.

MOM (OS)
(awoken by the shot)
HAPPY!? What was that?

JOKER
What?!

He quickly turns up the TV volume. REALLY LOUD. Shoves the still smoking gun under the couch cushions.

MOM (OS)
THAT NOISE! DID YOU HEAR THAT
NOISE?

He's inspecting the hole in the wall. Shouts back over the TV noise--

JOKER
I'M WATCHING AN OLD WAR MOVIE.

MOM (OS)
TURN IT DOWN!

He heads for his mother's bedroom.

24

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM, DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

24

Joker looks in on his mom in her dark bedroom, can make out the outline of her body sitting up.

MOM
It's so loud.

JOKER

I know. The Americans are really giving it to the Japs.

He walks over to her in the darkness. Kisses her on the forehead.

JOKER

(softly)

I'm sorry. I'll turn it down.

25

INT. KITCHEN, MOM'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

25

Joker is writing in his journal. He speaks softly to himself as he writes...

JOKER

Why didn't Randall tell me the gun was loaded? He's my friend. With my luck, I could have killed someone.

(beat)

I could have killed myself.

CLOSE ON THE LAST LINE, he crosses out "could"...

Writes... "should".

JOKER

(still to himself)

I should have killed myself.

CLOSE ON JOKER as he crosses out something again...

JOKER

(louder to himself)

I should kill myself.

Beat.

26

EXT. STREET, LOWER EAST SIDE - MORNING

26

HANDHELD POV, see the run-down building where Joker lives from across the street.

REVEAL, Joker is watching his own building on the far side of a parked truck. Red hood pulled up, covering his head. He waits. Watches.

Now we see Sophie exiting the building with her daughter GiGi. Sophie's dressed more conservatively than when we previously met her.

Joker starts following them.

27 **EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - MORNING** 27

Sophie drops GiGi off at school. Joker's still watching.
Following.

28 **EXT. ELEVATED SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING** 28

Sophie waits on the platform. Lights a cigarette.

We see Joker, hidden behind a steel support beam-- watching
her from a distance.

29 **INT. SUBWAY (MOVING) - MORNING** 29

Joker stands at the window between two subway cars. Just
watching Sophie as she reads a book in the next car.

The train comes to a stop and she exits. Joker exits as well.

30 **EXT. STREET, UPPER EAST SIDE - MORNING** 30

Nicer part of Gotham. Joker follows Sophie from a distance,
watches as she walks into Gotham First National Bank.

Sees her say hello to the guard. This is where she works.

Joker just watches and waits.

31 **INT. GOTHAM FIRST NATIONAL - LATER** 31

A large, mid-level bank. Sophie is one of THREE BANK TELLERS
working behind the plexiglass windows.

Joker pulls the hood back off his head, takes a deep breath
before he walks up to her window. She is looking down,
counting her drawer.

Takes another deep breath. Then--

JOKER

Hello. I'd like to open an account.

She looks up.

SOPHIE

(surprised)

Hey, what are you doing up here?

JOKER
 Oh, hi. That's weird.
 (pausing to see if he's
 gonna laugh; he's good)
 I didn't know you worked at a bank.

SOPHIE
 Pretty glamorous, right?

Not getting the sarcasm, Joker nods. Looks around.

JOKER
 Very glamorous. Look at this place.

She laughs.

He stands there awkwardly for a moment looking around to see what she's laughing about.

Realizes she thought he was making a joke.

Beat.

JOKER
 I'm a comedian. I do stand-up
 comedy.

SOPHIE
 Really? I had no idea.

JOKER
 Yeah. You know, I'm always making
 funny observations. Always on the
 look out for my next bit-- so it
 makes sense.

SOPHIE
 Right. Anyway, is there something I
 could help you with?

Beat.

JOKER
 I said hi to my mom.

SOPHIE
 Excuse me?

JOKER
 Last week. You said to say hi to my
 mom. I did. Made her day.

They are interrupted by the BRANCH MANAGER (50's), white,
 heavy-set, who has come up behind Sophie--

BRANCH MANAGER
Everything okay here?

He puts his heavy hand on Sophie's shoulder. She practically shudders from his touch.

SOPHIE
Everything is fine Mr. Slotnick.

Now he leans down and whispers something in her ear-- Joker just watches through the glass.

SOPHIE
(shakes her head; to her manager)
No. He's not. He's interested in opening an account.

BRANCH MANAGER
(to Joker)
Great. You just need to fill out a form. They are back there-- against the wall.

As the manager talks, Sophie makes wide eyes at Joker, like "I almost got in trouble."

JOKER
(covering; trying to act cool)
Okay. Thank you, sir. And thank you as well, Miss.

Joker walks back to the wall by the forms.

He fumbles around for a minute, clearly not there to open an account. He begins filling out a form. Then--

JOKER
(shouts out, to no one in particular)
YOU KNOW WHAT?! I FORGOT MY ID!
I'LL BE BACK. THANK YOU.

He walks out of the bank. Head in the clouds.

32

INT. GOTHAM COMEDY CLUB, CHINATOWN - NIGHT

32

*

Joker sitting in the middle of a dark, crowded comedy club. People on dates. Groups of friends. All here to watch the stand-up. He sits at a small table by himself, watching the act on stage.

*

The comic on stage is killing it. The whole room is laughing and applauding. Everyone except Joker.

He's watching. Studying. Diligently jotting down notes in his notebook.

33 **EXT. GOTHAM COMEDY CLUB, STREET - CHINATOWN - NIGHT** 33 *

People are piling out of the club, onto the narrow street, jumble of lit-up signs, most glowing yellow or red. Joker walks out alone, carrying his notebook. He sees a FLYER taped to the entrance of the club. *
*
*

CLOSE ON THE FLYER, "Open mic night. Thursdays. 10pm."

He rips the flyer off the wall.

34 **INT. HA-HA'S TALENT BOOKING, LOCKER ROOM - DAY** 34

Joker is working on his "Mr. Jingles" clown look, using the small mirror in his locker. Behind him a couple of other clowns are eating their lunch at a small table, not paying Joker any attention.

Joker pauses half-finished, and stares at himself for a beat. He starts to examine the two small scars on the corners of his mouth, we really notice how they form a smile. Joker hooks the corners of his mouth down with his index fingers, turning his smile into a frown--

He lets go and his smile returns.

Does it again, up and down, up and down, his face a living comedy/tragedy mask.

And then he pulls his fingers wider, stretching his smile into a grotesque parody, pulling his mouth so wide tears come to his eyes--

AND WE HEAR JOKER SINGING "If You're Happy and You Know It" at his next gig.

JOKER (PRE-LAP)

(singing)

*--if you're happy and you know it
and you really want to show it, if
you're happy and you know it clap
your hands.*

35

INT. GOTHAM GENERAL - CHILDREN'S WARD - EVENING

35

Joker is performing for a ward full of sick children, wearing an oversized white lab coat over his "Mr. Jingles" clown costume. A few nurses and doctors watch as well.

His white clown face, mouth outlined in black and filled in with red, his green wig frizzy and worn out. Joker plays a UKULELE along with the song.

JOKER

*If you're happy and you know it,
stomp your feet.*

Joker and the kids stomp and sing along.

JOKER

*If you're happy and you know it,
stomp your feet.*

(stomp, stomp)

*If you're happy and you know it and
you really want to show it, if
you're happy and you know it stomp
your feet.*

As the song winds down, the KIDS and NURSES clap.

Joker takes an exaggerated and ridiculous bow--

And as he does, his .38 SNUB-NOSE REVOLVER slips out of his pants and slides across the floor.

Everyone stops. Looks at the gun on the floor.

36

INT. LOBBY, GOTHAM GENERAL - LATER

36

Joker is on a payphone in the lobby of the hospital. He's in his street clothes, wig in his hand, clown-face still painted on.

JOKER

(into phone)

Hoyt, let me explain.

HOYT (OVER PHONE)

*Oh, this'll be good. Please tell me
why you brought a gun into a sick
kid's ward?*

JOKER

(into phone)

*It was, it was a prop gun. It's
part of my act now.*

HOYT (OVER PHONE)
 Bullshit. Jingles would never carry
 a fucking gun. Besides, Randall
 told me you tried to buy a .38 off
 him last week.

Joker's taken aback that Randall would do that to him.

JOKER
 (into phone)
 Randall told you that?

HOYT (OVER PHONE)
 He was with me when the call came
 in. You're a fuck up, Arthur. And a
 liar. You're fired.

JOKER
 (into phone)
 Hoyt--

HOYT (OVER PHONE)
 Say it, Arthur.
 (beat)
 Let me hear you say it.

JOKER
 (into phone)
 Say what?

HOYT (OVER PHONE)
 I'm a fuck up and I'm fired.

Joker picks at his eyebrow.

JOKER
 (into phone; low)
 --I'm a fuck up and I'm fired.

HOYT (OVER PHONE)
 Louder.

JOKER
 (into phone; louder)
 I'm a fuck up and I'm fired.

HOYT (OVER PHONE)
 Yes. You are.

Click. He hears Hoyt hang up.

Beat.

37

INT. SUBWAY (MOVING) - NIGHT

37

JOKER SITS ON THE SUBWAY CONTEMPLATING WHAT JUST WENT DOWN, face still painted, his bag on the seat next to him, along with his wig.

There's only one other person on the subway car, a YOUNG WOMAN (30's) sitting at the far end-- reading a book.

The train comes to a stop and THREE WALL STREET GUYS enter. They are being loud and obnoxious, clearly drunk. One of them is eating some french fries out of a greasy McDonald's bag. He flops down on the bench across from the girl and checks her out. The other two guys start getting into it with each other--

WALL STREET #1

--I'm telling you, she wanted my number. We should have just stayed.

The train starts moving again...

WALL STREET #2

You're dreaming, man. She wasn't interested-- at all.

WALL STREET #1

Are you nuts? Did you see how close we were dancing!? She was in love, bro.

He starts dancing a bit with himself, mimicking what he remembers. Wall Street #2 takes a swig from the brown bag he is carrying.

WALL STREET #2

She couldn't wait to get away from you.

Joker is watching them closely, impressed by their confidence and easy-going camaraderie.

WALL STREET #1

(to the third guy)

Ryan, am I crazy? Tell him what you saw.

But the third Wall Street guy isn't paying his friends any attention. He has his eyes set on the young woman sitting across from him, reading her book.

WALL STREET #3

(to the girl)

Hey. You want some french fries?

He holds out his McDonald's bag and shakes it to get her attention. The other two share a look. Joker watches from his seat.

WALL STREET #3

Hello? I'm talking to you. You want some fries?

She looks up and shakes her head, polite smile.

YOUNG WOMAN

No thank you.

The other two guys crack up at this apparent blow-off. The third Wall Street guy shakes his head, embarrassed, and starts softly flinging fries at the young woman.

WALL STREET #3

You sure? They're really good.

She just buries her face deeper in her book--

WALL STREET #2

Don't ignore him. He's being nice to you.

One of the french fries lands in her hair. She looks down toward Joker, looking to see if he's going to do something or say something--

Joker just sits there nervous. Not sure what to do, or even if he wants to do anything at all.

AND HE JUST BURSTS OUT LAUGHING. He covers his mouth with his hand as they continue to harass the woman.

They all look over-- What the fuck is this clown laughing at?

WALL STREET #1

Something funny, asshole?

With their attention diverted, the young woman rushes out through the door between subway cars, glancing back at Joker before she goes--

WALL STREET #3

(shouts after her)

BITCH!

Joker laughs even harder through his hand. The Wall Street guys turn to him sitting by himself at the end of the car--

Joker sees them staring. Looks down at the ground, hand still covering his mouth, face turning red. Subway swaying, lights flickering on and off.

Beat.

One of the guys heads down the car toward Joker, starts singing "Send in the Clowns" as he approaches--

WALL STREET #1

(singing)

Isn't it rich?

Are we a pair?

Me here, at last on the ground *

You in mid-air

Send in the clowns. *

The others crack up and follow after him. The guy plops down next to Joker, puts his arm around his shoulder as he sings--

JOKER

(shakes his head, stifling
the laughter)

Please. Don't.

WALL STREET #1

(continues singing to him)

Isn't it bliss?

Don't you approve?

One who keeps tearing around,

One who can't move.

Joker starts to get up-- The lead guy pulls him back down.

WALL STREET #1

Where are the clowns?

There ought to be clowns.

As he finishes the song, Joker's laughing fit is coming to an end. One of the other guys sits down on the other side of him. He's now sandwiched in between them-- *

WALL STREET #2

So tell us, buddy. What's so
fucking funny?

JOKER

Nothing. I have a condition--

Joker reaches into his bag to get one of his "Forgive my laughter" cards, the third guy sees him reaching and tries to grab the bag from him---

Joker pulls on it--

JOKER

No. It's just my stuff. I don't
have anything.

The guy rips the bag from his hand--

WALL STREET #3

I'll tell you what you have,
asshole.

Joker gets up from between them to go grab his bag back. The
two guys are cracking up.

WALL STREET #3

You want it back? Here--

Joker reaches out to grab the bag--

And the guy tosses it over his head to one of his friends.
Keeping it away from Joker.

Three guys in suits tossing a bag around, playing 'monkey in
the middle' with a clown. THE LIGHTS ON THE TRAIN SEEM TO *
GLOW BRIGHTER AND WE HEAR the drum roll opening to BOBBY *
SHORT singing "Send in the Clowns" Live at the Café Carlyle. *

Joker keeps trying to catch his bag until suddenly--

WHAP! Out of nowhere one of the guys punches him hard in the
face.

Joker goes down as if in slow motion. Blood coming from his
nose. He tries to get up, but his feet slip from under him
and he falls back down--

WALL STREET #1

Stay down you freak.

And the third Wall Street guy starts kicking him--

The others join in. Surrounding Joker on the ground, kicking *
him deliberately, sadistically, and the music swells-- *

BLAM!

SUDDENLY THE LIGHTS GO BACK DIM, and one of the guys stops
kicking and falls back dead. Blood splattering on the subway
wall behind him--

And we HEAR Bobby Short sing out, picking up from where the *
Wall Street Guy left off-- *

BOBBY SHORT (SINGING) *
Just when I'd stopped opening doors *
Finally knowin' the one that I *
wanted was yours *

BLAM! BLAM! Wall Street #2 goes down--

Revealing Joker on the ground, opening his eyes to see what he did, smoking gun in his hand--

BOBBY SHORT (SINGING) *
Making my entrance again with my *
usual flair *
Sure of my lines *
No one is there *

The third guy takes off running for the doors that separate the cars. *

Joker starts after him, but then stops... turns back to grab his bag and his wig, his hands shaking from the adrenaline.

The train is coming to a stop.

BOBBY SHORT (SINGING) *
Don't you love farce? *
My fault I fear... *

Joker picks up his bag between the two dead bodies, blood everywhere... *

The subway doors wheeze open and Joker steps halfway off the train, waiting to see if the third Wall Street guy gets off in the car ahead of him. Joker sees him run off--

38

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

38

The platform is empty, the Wall Street guy is running toward the stairs--

Joker follows--

Behind them, the train pulls away--

BOBBY SHORT (SINGING) *
I thought that you'd want what I *
want. *
Sorry, my dear. *

The guy makes his way to the stairs, unaware that Joker is behind him--

BLAM!

The third guy falls, tumbling down the stairs. Joker walks over to the body and empties the chamber-- BLAM! BLAM! *

BOBBY SHORT (SINGING) *

*But where are the clowns? **

*Quick, send in the clowns **

*Don't bother they're here. **

And as "Send in the Clowns" ends, Joker fires the last shot-- BLAM! He's got nothing left. *

39 **EXT. STREET, ROBINSON SQUARE PARK - NIGHT** 39 *

Joker hauls ass out of the subway and makes a mad dash across a busy street, horns honking-- *

Running as fast as he can past piles of garbage, he takes a sharp turn high-tailing into a small, run-down needle park, disappearing into the darkness. *

40 **INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM, ROBINSON SQUARE PARK - NIGHT** 40 *

Joker runs into the bathroom, locks the door behind him and SUDDENLY EVERYTHING HITS HIM ALL AT ONCE-- *

He throws up into the dirty toilet, puking his guts out-- *

He finishes, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. And pulls the gun out of his waist, looking around for someplace to throw it out. Under the sink he sees a rusted, metal grate hanging off the wall covering some pipes. *

Before he bends down, Joker catches his reflection in the smudged mirror. Sees himself holding the gun in his hand-- *

Beat. *

He raises the gun to his head and pulls the trigger-- *

Click. *

It's empty. *

He gets down on his knees, sweat dripping off his face, pulls the grate away from the wall. And tosses the gun away inside. Moves the grate back in place. *

Joker stands back up and turns on the faucets. Rinses out his mouth. *

Looks at his smudged reflection as he starts washing the clown make-up off his sweaty face-- *

JOKER
Hi. Do you like to laugh?

Water dripping, white grease paint running off his face--

JOKER
Remember how I told you that I'm a stand-up comedian?
(again)
Hi. How are you?

Beat.

41 INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, LOBBY - LATER 41

Joker enters his building with great urgency. No time for the elevator, he takes the stairs. Two at a time.

He races up the stairwell.

42 INT. HALLWAY, APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS 42

When he gets to his floor, instead of making a left toward his apartment-- He makes a right, toward Sophie's. He stops at her door. Out of breath.

Knocks.

He hears footsteps. Quickly pulls the folded-up flyer out of his pocket.

The peephole in the door goes dark and then light again. He hears locks unlocking. Sophie opens the door halfway--

Joker looks down at his feet--

JOKER
Hi. Do you like to laugh?

SOPHIE
What?

JOKER
(continuing without taking a breath)
Remember the other day when I told you about my stand-up comedy. Well, I'm doing a set next Thursday and I'm inviting a bunch of my friends and I was wondering if maybe you wanted to come and check it out.

He reaches out to give Sophie the flyer, she opens the door wider-- He notices her face, sees her eyes are red.

*
*

JOKER

Were you crying? Why are you crying?

Beat.

SOPHIE

I had a bad day.

JOKER

I'm sorry. I, I didn't--

SOPHIE

It's okay. How would you know.

JOKER

What happened?

SOPHIE

I got fired. From the bank.

Joker takes a deep breath and smiles without realizing it, hoping he doesn't start to laugh.

JOKER

What for?

SOPHIE

Because,-- I don't know. It doesn't fucking matter. I don't know what I'm gonna do.

And she starts crying again. Joker doesn't move. Just stands in the doorway awkward.

JOKER

(finally)

Okay. Well, all the info is right there on the flyer.

He starts to walk away, then turns back to her--

JOKER

You know they say laughter is the best medicine.

Sophie wipes her eyes and manages a smile.

SOPHIE

Is that what they say?

Joker just nods yes and walks back toward his mother's apartment.

43

INT. DEPT. OF HEALTH, OFFICE - MORNING

43

JOKER SITS ACROSS from the same Social Worker from the opening scene. Same depressing office.

She stares at him for a beat, clearly annoyed.

SOCIAL WORKER

We spoke about this last time, Arthur. You're supposed to bring your journal with you.

JOKER

Well I didn't think you were going to read it.

SOCIAL WORKER

You said it didn't bother you.

JOKER

I lied. *Everything bothers me.*

SOCIAL WORKER

What about it bothered you?

JOKER

It's personal. It's my private thoughts. Plus it contains original comedy material that I don't feel comfortable handing over to you.

She looks at him and shakes her head. Not in the mood to deal with this.

SOCIAL WORKER

Arthur, I have some bad news for you.

He looks up, intrigued.

SOCIAL WORKER

They've cut our funding. We're closing down our offices next week.

He looks around, just noticing some MOVING BOXES stacked against the wall.

JOKER

So where will we be meeting?

SOCIAL WORKER

We won't be. The city's cut funding across the board. Social services is part of that.

Joker nods, not hating the idea.

JOKER

Okay.

SOCIAL WORKER

They don't give a shit about people like you, Arthur. You don't have a voice and they don't really care what happens to you or to us for that matter.

He sits there for a moment. And then it dawns on him--

JOKER

How am I gonna get my medication?

Beat.

44 **INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING**

44

CLOSE ON A COUPLE OF PILLS, as they get crushed up.

CLOSE ON THE RESIDUE, as it's sprinkled on top of a bowl of oatmeal.

MOM (OS)

Happy! Come in here. Thomas Wayne is on TV.

Joker takes a couple of pills for himself. Looks inside. Not many left. He looks over at the orange cat sitting on the counter, purring loudly, watching him.

MOM (OS)

Quick! Come.

45 **INT. MOM'S BEDROOM, APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

45

Joker walks in carrying her breakfast. She waves him over to her bed.

MOM

They're interviewing him about those horrible murders on the subway last week.

JOKER

Why are they talking to him?

His mother shushes him. Joker sits on the end of the bed next to her. It's one of those "Good Morning, Gotham" shows.

THOMAS WAYNE (ON TV)

--as you know, Jerry, all three of them worked at Wayne Investments, and they were the best of the best. Solid young men.

A small smirk registers on Joker's face when photos of the THREE WALL STREET GUYS come up on the screen.

THOMAS WAYNE (ON TV)

And while I didn't know them personally, like all Wayne employees, past and present, they were family.

Joker's mom perks up at that--

MOM

You hear that! I told you. We're family.

ANGLE ON TELEVISION, footage of GRAFFITI around the city. "KILL THE RICH" spray painted on a storefront. "F*CK WALL STREET" written on a subway wall. "RESIST" scrawled across a billboard.

"GOOD MORNING" HOST (ON TV)

There now seems to be a groundswell of anti-rich sentiment in the city. It's almost as if our less fortunate residents have taken the side of the killer.

THOMAS WAYNE (ON TV)

Yes and it's a shame. It's one of the reasons I'm considering a run for mayor. Gotham has lost its way.

"GOOD MORNING" HOST (ON TV)

Are you announcing your candidacy?

THOMAS WAYNE (ON TV)

(smiles)

No comment.

We hear his mother gasp, excited.

"GOOD MORNING" HOST (ON TV)
 What about the eyewitness report of
 the suspect being a man in clown
 make-up or a clown mask-- Care to
 comment on that?

Joker leans in, intrigued. The camera zooms in closer to
 Thomas Wayne on the screen...

THOMAS WAYNE (ON TV)
 It makes total sense to me. What
 kind of coward would do something
 that cold-blooded? Someone who
 hides behind a mask. Someone who's
 envious of those more fortunate
 than themselves, yet too scared to
 show their own face.
 (to camera)
 And until that jealousy ends, those
 of us who've made a good life for
 ourselves will always look at those
 who haven't as nothing but clowns.

CUT TO:

46

INT. COMEDY CLUB, BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - NIGHT

46

JOKER'S POV, slowly walking down the hall -- as if in slow
 motion -- toward a curtain at the end, spotlight bleeding
 through, other wannabe comics looking at him as he passes--

CLOSE ON JOKER, eyeing the others, sweat beading on his
 forehead--

He gets to the curtain, the light, pulls his worn joke-
 notebook out of his back pocket. Glancing into the room he
 sees it's a pretty good crowd. Sees Sophie taking a seat in
 the back.

Wheeling back into the dark hallway, he catches his breath in
 the shadows--

And starts BANGING HIS HEAD BACK against the wall--

He hears the EMCEE from the stage.

EMCEE (OS)
 This next comic describes himself
 as a lifelong Gotham resident who
 from a young age was always told
 that "his purpose in life was to
 bring joy and laughter into this
 cold, dark world." Ummm. Okay.

He hears the crowd laugh.

EMCEE (OS)
Please help me welcome Arthur
Fleck!

There is a smattering of applause.

CUT TO:

JOKER STEPPING ON STAGE, out under the spotlight, lifts the microphone in front of his mouth, the light so bright he can't see faces in the dark audience, his hand trembling holding onto his worn notebook--

He takes a deep breath, looks out at the dark crowd, and opens his mouth.

And starts to laugh. His eyes go wide. God no, not now. A terrified look comes to his face under the laughter. He just keeps laughing. The crowd is just staring back at him.

Finally he composes himself--

JOKER
(trying to stop himself
from laughing)
-- good evening, hello.
(deep breath; trying to
stop laughing)
Good to be here.
(keeps cracking up)
I, I hated school as a kid. But my
mother would always say,--
(bad imitation of his mom,
still laughing)
"You should enjoy it. One day
you'll have to work for a living."
(laughs)
"No I won't, Ma. I'm gonna be a
comedian!"

Dead silence. Except for Joker, who's still cracking up.

CUT TO:

47

EXT. COMEDY CLUB, CHINATOWN STREET - NIGHT

47

*

Joker and Sophie walking out of the club after the show, the audience trickles out around them. Nobody looking in Joker's direction, nobody says anything to him, maybe one or two even cracking up at him behind his back. Garbage bags crowding the narrow street, lit up by the bright signs.

*

*

Joker and Sophie walk a ways without saying a word. Awkward silence.

Then--

JOKER

So, did you laugh? Really couldn't see much from up there.

Sophie pauses, doesn't know what to say. She lights up a cigarette.

SOPHIE

(trying to be nice)
Of course. Yeah. You couldn't hear anything?

JOKER

All I heard was my heart pounding.

SOPHIE

It was good. I really needed to get out of my apartment so, thanks.
(beat)
What happened to the rest of your friends?

JOKER

What friends?

SOPHIE

Didn't you say some of your friends were coming?

JOKER

(he forgot; recovers)
Yeah, I decided not to invite them. As a performer sometimes you want to see how a "real" crowd reacts. People who don't already love me, or, or have a notion of who I am, you know?

SOPHIE

(nodding)
Yeah. I get that.

Joker smiles at the connection. They walk past a newsstand-- a wall of Chinese language newspapers mixed with local papers and tabloids, screaming headlines about the three Wall Street Guys gunned down on the train. *

Joker stops and stares at the headlines--

CLOSE ON HEADLINES, "Subway Vigilante"... "Yuppie Slaughter"
"Killer Clown On The Loose?"...

SOPHIE (OS)
(re: the headlines)
You believe that shit?

JOKER
Yeah,-- I don't know how something
like that happens.

SOPHIE
Please. I'll bet you five bucks
those rich assholes deserved it.

He turns to her.

JOKER
You think?

SOPHIE
Look at their faces. Those smug
smiles. I've seen that look. Fuck
them.

Sophie flicks her cigarette away and starts walking.

SOPHIE
The guy who did it is a hero. Three
less pricks in Gotham City. Woo-
hoo! Only a million more to go.

Joker watches her walk for a beat.

JOKER
(calls out to her)
Hey. You want to get some coffee?

Sophie turns around and smiles. She looks great, even in
front of the mounds of garbage bags that line the sidewalk.

AN AMBULANCE SCREAMS BY, SIRENS BLARING as Sophie says
something that Joker doesn't hear. She keeps walking.

Joker chases after her and trips over a TIN GARBAGE CAN LID--

CLANG. CLANG. He falls down flat on his face.

Sophie turns and bursts out laughing. She can't help but
laugh. It's the first time she's laughed all night.

48

INT. SZECHUAN ACE RESTAURANT, TABLE - NIGHT

48

*

Table covered with plates of half-eaten Chinese food.

*

Joker and Sophie sitting across from each other, middle of conversation. Crowded room, brightly lit, looks more like a casino. Almost everybody eating there is Chinese. It's loud.

*

*

*

SOPHIE

--I'm telling you, it's across the board. Wall Street, the banks, politicians. *They've* been making a killing for years. Fuck them.

Joker takes a moment to think about what she said.

JOKER

I don't know.

SOPHIE

What don't you know?

JOKER

Not all of them are awful. Take someone like Thomas Wayne for example. *He's* a hero.

SOPHIE

Oh c'mon, he's the worst!

Joker is taken aback--

JOKER

Sophie, he's the only one who can save this city.

SOPHIE

You can't be serious!?! He's a complete narcissist. Brags about his money. Meanwhile, the rest of us can barely make rent. Or feed our kids.

Joker nods. Thinking about it.

Then--

JOKER

What happened?

SOPHIE

With what?

JOKER
With your job. At the bank?

SOPHIE
(suddenly uncomfortable)
Oh. Yeah, I was, um,--

JOKER
We don't have to talk about it.

Beat.

SOPHIE
Have you ever been fired before?

Joker thinks it over for a moment.

JOKER
Every time.

SOPHIE
And have you ever wanted to torch
the place?

JOKER
(thinks it over again)
Every time.

Sophie smiles.

SOPHIE
Right. And this was like the first
good job I had in like, years. Not
waitressing or anything like that.
It was 9-5. I had benefits. You
know what that means when you have
a kid?

Joker just looks at her, he doesn't really know what that
means. He just smiles.

SOPHIE
But from the very first day, the
manager guy starts smiling at me,
whispering in my ear, touching me,
trying to get me to sleep with him--

JOKER
(interrupting)
Did you do it? Did you go to bed
with him?

SOPHIE

Fuck no. The guy's a fucking pig.
So finally I complained to his
boss, and they fired me... And now,
now I don't know what to do with
myself.

JOKER

Right. Wait, what do you mean?

SOPHIE

I finally felt good. Like I had a
future. A purpose. And now I don't
even know how I'm gonna pay my
rent.

AND JOKER STARTS LAUGHING. He puts a hand over his mouth
trying to cover it, but he can't stop cracking up--

It's unsettling and disturbing for Sophie. People eating,
waiters in red vests, busboys, all look over and stare at
him. A few laugh. Joker turns away embarrassed, he looks out
the plate-glass window, face turning red from laughing so
hard--

AS HE LOOKS OUT, HE SEES A GROUP OF ROWDY KIDS walking down
the street. One of them glances back before he turns the
corner-- HE'S WEARING A CLOWN MASK THAT LOOKS JUST JOKER'S
CLOWN FACE. And then he's gone. The group disappears around
the corner--

Joker can't believe his eyes, still laughing-- He turns to
Sophie who didn't see them. Just sits there awkwardly waiting
for it to stop.

Finally, it subsides--

JOKER

(catching his breath)
I'm sorry. I have this thing--

SOPHIE

I know.

Awkward beat.

SOPHIE

How did you get it?

JOKER

I don't know. I read you can get it
from a brain injury or, or a lesion
in there. My mom said I was born
this way. Born laughing.

SOPHIE

Is that why she calls you Happy?

JOKER

Kind of. That actually started when I was a kid. The other kids made fun of me, called me Happy-- but not in a good way. I got so sick of it, one day when I was about ten, I, I,--

He smiles.

SOPHIE

What?

JOKER

I took a razor and cut this smile onto my face.
(she's taken aback as he points to the scars)
Sort of like "You want happy? Here, how's this for happy?"

He looks down, still smiling. She just watches him for a beat.

SOPHIE

You okay?

JOKER

I've been thinking about this night my whole life.

They just sit there for a beat. Quiet.

49

INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

49

Joker opening the door to his mother's apartment, holding a doggie bag in his hand, sees the flickering blue light of the TV on in the living room, hears the end of "LIVE WITH MURRAY FRANKLIN!" He locks the locks, drawing the security chain high on the door. *

Turns to catch a glimpse of his mother passed out in the living room, the cat jumping up next to her on the chair.

Joker watches for a beat as Murray does his signature sign off, the one he's been doing for years--

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)
(looking into camera)
Good night! And always remember,--
That's life.

JOKER
(quietly)
"That's life."

He hears Don Ellis and his Jazz Orchestra playing the show's closing song-- the instrumental version of Frank Sinatra's "That's Life".

As the music continues, Joker puts his face up against his mom's nose, to see if she's breathing or if she's dead.

He feels her breath against his cheek.

Now he picks his mother up in his arms and carries her into her bedroom to the music, almost as if he's dancing with her as he leaves the room...

We stay behind.

"That's Life" still playing from TV.

He comes back into the living room and turns off the TV. Takes off his jacket and throws it on the couch. Notices something sticking out of his jacket pocket. He pulls it out.

It's the envelope he was supposed to deliver to Thomas Wayne.

He stares at it for a beat. And then--

Quietly rips it open, starts to read the letter:

CLOSE ON WORDS, "Dearest Thomas, I don't know where else to turn..."

"Need your help..."

"You have a son. We have a son. His name is Arthur."

Stops reading, stays on--

"You have a son."

JOKER STARING DOWN AT THE LETTER, reading those words over and over again -- "You have a son."

CUT TO:

50

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM, APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

50

JOKER'S SITTING IN A CHAIR in his mother's room watching her sleep. He has clearly been up all night. Still wearing the same clothes.

He's holding her letter in his hand as the sun is just starting to rise outside the windows, light just beginning to crack the gloom.

THE ORANGE CAT SITS AT HIS FEET staring up at him, won't take her eyes off of him.

Joker impatiently sits there for another moment waiting for his mother to wake up, then suddenly--

SHRIEKS OUT AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS like a teapot, kicking his back on the chair like an excited toddler--

His mother wakes with a start, looking around half asleep and confused--

Joker turns and sees the cat run out of the room--

MOM

--what, what time is it?

He doesn't answer.

MOM

What happened? Did you hurt yourself again?

Joker holds her letter up in his hand.

JOKER

What is this? How come you never told me?

MOM

Is, is that my letter? Is that my letter, Happy?

JOKER

How could you not tell me, Ma?

MOM

You told me you dropped it off.
You have no right opening my mail.
Who do you think you are?

JOKER

(raising his voice;
excited)

(MORE)

JOKER (CONT'D)
 Apparently I'm Thomas Wayne's son!
 How could you keep that from me?

His mother slowly getting up out of bed.

MOM
 Stop yelling at me, you're gonna
 kill me, give me a heart attack!

She goes into the bathroom.

JOKER
 (shouts after her)
I'm not yelling! I'm just, excited.
 How can any of this be real!? How
 can Thomas Wayne be my father?

MOM (OS)
 (shouts back from behind
 the door)
 I'm not talking to you until you
 calm down.

Joker sits for a minute then gets up and goes to her bathroom door. Talks to his mother from the behind the closed door.

JOKER
 (lowers his voice; trying
 to sound calm)
 Okay. How's this, Mom? Better? Will
 you please talk to me?

Joker leans in closer to the door. Leaning against it with just his head--

JOKER
 Please.

MOM (OS)
 He is an extraordinary man, Arthur.
 We had a connection. I was so
 beautiful then. We were in love.

Joker just leans there, listening. He closes his eyes, it's all too much.

MOM (OS)
 His wife could see it. She was
 jealous from the moment I started
 working there. She fired me before
 I even knew I was pregnant with
 you.
 (hear her crying now)
 (MORE)

MOM (OS) (CONT'D)

And, I never told him or anybody
because, well, you can imagine what
people would say about Thomas and
me, and, and what they would say
about you.

JOKER

(eyes still closed, head
leaning against the door)
What would they say, Ma?

MOM (OS)

That I was a whore, and Thomas
Wayne was a fornicator, and that
you're a little, unwanted bastard.

AND THE BATHROOM DOOR SUDDENLY SWINGS OPEN, and Joker falls
face first into the bathroom--

Just missing his mother, crashing down onto the floor--

CUT TO:

51 **EXT. BOARDWALK, AMUSEMENT MILE - MORNING** 51

Joker heads down the boardwalk toward Ha-Ha's, a bounce in
his step.

Looming behind him like the skeletons of monsters, a
sprawling rickety-looking wooden roller coaster and the
gigantic steel Wonder Wheel in the amusement park by the
ocean. Sound of waves crashing, seagulls squawking.

52 **INT. HA-HA'S TALENT BOOKING, LOCKER ROOM - MORNING** 52

Joker walks into the locker room, sees Randall half-dressed
for work, red nose, big pants, big shoes, no wig yet, sitting
with Gary, TWO OTHER CLOWNS AND A MAGICIAN around the small
table, shooting the shit, drinking coffee.

They nod hello at Joker or give him a perfunctory wave, most
of his co-workers think he's a freak.

GARY

Hey Art, I heard what happened--
I'm sorry man.

RANDALL

Yeah, Hoyt did you wrong, buddy.
Doesn't seem fair.

Joker looks hard at Randall for a moment, just slowly nods, and continues on to his locker.

He starts to clean it out, stuffing all of his clown gear into an old brown paper shopping bag. Hears them talking about him behind his back, about why he got fired, laughing at him--

HA-HA CLOWN #1 (OS)
Did you really bring a gun to the kid's hospital, Artie? What the fuck would you do that for?

Joker doesn't answer them, just continues emptying his locker, a bag of balloons, a magic wand, some trick flowers--

HA-HA CLOWN #2
No, I heard he pulled it out and waved it around like a cowboy.

His co-workers crack up. Joker answers the guy without looking back--

JOKER
It was a prop gun. And I didn't pull it out, it fell out.

MAGICIAN
So is that part of your new act? If your singing doesn't do the trick, you just gonna shoot yourself?

*

More laughter.

HA-HA CLOWN #2
I thought Jingles was a lover not a fighter.

Joker turns and looks at all of them, nods at Randall--

JOKER
Why don't you ask Randall about it? It was his idea.

GARY
(to Randall)
Since when do you use a prop gun?

RANDALL
What? *I don't*. Stop talking outta your ass, Art!
(to the guys)
(MORE)

RANDALL (CONT'D)
 I think all his stupid laughing
 musta scrambled his brain or
 something.

*

The guys laugh and keep jawing. Joker doesn't say anything.
 Just finishes packing his bag and closes his locker door--

53

EXT. HA-HA'S, BACK ALLEY - AMUSEMENT MILE BOARDWALK - MORNING

Joker exits the back door holding onto his brown shopping bag
 under his arm, starts down the alley.

Behind him, Randall hustles out and chases down the alley
 after him, still half-dressed for work.

RANDALL
 (calling out)
 Art! Hold up,--

As he catches up with Joker his red nose falls off, but he's
 so out of breath he doesn't realize he lost it--

RANDALL
 What the fuck was that about?

Beat.

JOKER
 What?

RANDALL
 Why would you say that? That, that
 it was *my idea*.

*

*

Joker just looks back at Randall. Sees his red Styrofoam nose
 bouncing down the alley behind him.

JOKER
 ...

*

*

RANDALL
 You don't get it, do you, buddy,
 that shit that went down on the
 subway, that's no joke. They got
 clown sketches on the front of
 every fucking paper. It's just a
 matter of time before the cops come
 around.

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

Beat.

*

JOKER
 I don't know anything about it.

RANDALL

(leans in close; lowers
his voice)

Art, you know you're my boy. I'm
not gonna say shit. I just hope you
got rid of that gun. That can't
come back on me, okay?

*
*
*
*

JOKER

Randall, I didn't shoot anybody.
That wasn't me. And I don't have
time for this, I got somebody real
important I gotta go see.

Joker turns to go--

RANDALL

You know they're sellin' masks.

JOKER

(turning back around)
What?

RANDALL

They're selling masks of your clown
face,-- based off the description I
guess. It's like a thing now.

*

JOKER

What are you talking about?

RANDALL

There's a lot of people in this
city who are happy you did what you
did. If you did it.

JOKER

Randall. Your nose.

RANDALL

What?

Randall touches his face. Realizes his nose is not there.

Joker points to Randall's clown nose tumbling back down the
alley. And Randall hustles after it, chasing after his red
nose blowing skipping away in the wind--

54

INT. METRO TRAIN (MOVING) - COUNTRYSIDE, OUTSIDE GOTHAM - 54
NEXT AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON NEW "KILLER CLOWN" SKETCH ON FRONT PAGE OF THAT
DAY'S TABLOID, a more detailed drawing.

The little boy walks down toward the fence, face like an angel. *

Joker waits until he gets closer and then reaches his hand through the fence and hands the kid his magic wand so he can try and figure out what it does-- *

The boy takes the wand and it goes limp in his hand before he can wave it-- He laughs, surprised. He hands it back to Joker. *

The boys sees Joker's face up close, staring at his scarred smile-- *

Joker straightens the wand back out, and reaches in through the fence again so the kid can give it another try. *

AND AGAIN THE MAGIC WAND DROOPS IN THE BOY'S HAND. He laughs and gives it back to Joker-- *

Joker examines the wand as if its "broken", stiffens it one last time, crouches down lower, and... *

Ta-da! A bouquet of flowers bursts out the end of the wand--

Joker smiles and hands him the wand bouquet of flowers-- *

The little boy takes the flowers. Keeps staring at Joker, at the scars around his mouth. *

Now, he reaches his hand out through the fence and touches Joker's face, tracing his finger around the edges of Joker's mouth, over his scarred smile-- *

Joker closes his eyes -- embarrassed -- but it feels good to him, nobody ever touches him besides his mother. *

He starts to smile, when a man's voice shatters the moment-- *

ALFRED (OS) *
 (shouting; slight English *
 accent) *
Bruce! What are you doing? Get away *
 from that man. *

The little boy pulls his hand back. Turns and runs away-- *

Joker looks up and sees a balding, tired-looking, ALFRED PENNYWORTH (50's) bounding down the hill toward them. *

Joker stands back up. *

ALFRED
 (still shouting)
 What are you doing? Who are you?

Little Bruce runs behind Alfred, hiding behind his legs.

JOKER
 My name's Arthur. I'm here to see
 Mr. Wayne--

ALFRED
 (interrupting)
 You shouldn't be talking to his
 son. Why did you give him those
 flowers?

Alfred takes the flower-wand away from the kid--

JOKER
 I, I was just trying to make him
 laugh.

He hands it back to Joker.

ALFRED
 Well it's not funny. Do I need to
 call the police?

JOKER
 No, please. My mother's name is
 Penny Fleck. She used to work here,
 years ago. Can you tell Mr. Wayne
 that I need to see him?

ALFRED
 (color drains from his
 face; beat)
 You're her son?

JOKER
 Did you know her?

Alfred doesn't say anything.

Joker puts his face right up against the bars, whispers so
 the boy can't hear him--

JOKER
 You don't need to cover for them.
 I'm sure Mrs. Wayne was very upset
 when she found out.

ALFRED

There was nothing to find out
about. Your mother was, was
delusional. She was a sick woman.

*
*
*

JOKER

No. No, just let me speak to Mr.
Wayne.

*
*
*

Now Alfred leans in closer to Joker, almost looks like he
feels some pity for him--

*
*

ALFRED

Please just go, before you make a
fool of yourself.

*
*

Beat.

JOKER

(blurts out)

Thomas Wayne is my father--

Alfred looks at Joker, and can't help but crack up laughing
at him.

*
*

AND JOKER REACHES THROUGH THE BARS AND GRABS HIM. Pulls him
in close, trying to choke him, still holding the wand of
flowers in one hand--

*
*
*

AS HE CHOKES ALFRED, Joker sees little Bruce, wide-eyed in
the shadows, looking out at him in horror.

*
*

Joker stops.

Lets go of Alfred... Takes off running back down the street
away from Wayne Manor, magic wand in hand, leaving the rest
of his clown gear behind.

*
*
*

CUT TO:

57

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE, STREETS - NIGHT

57

JOKER'S BACK IN HIS PART OF TOWN, garbage everywhere here.
The neighborhood at night is alive. Loud kids on the street
corners... A drunk seemingly fights no one... Hookers working
the street... He hears a wailing siren...

As Joker turns the corner, he sees AN AMBULANCE PARKED in
front of his building. Lights flashing. Hit with a sense of
dread, he runs toward the building--

58 **EXT. STREET, APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

58

A SMALL CROWD OF GAWKERS have gathered around watching the drama unfold. Shouting and laughing, loud dance music blaring out an open window, feels like an impromptu block party.

Joker runs up, sees his mother being wheeled down the front steps unconscious on a stretcher, AN EMT holding an oxygen bag on her face. TWO DETECTIVES IN PLAIN SUITS following behind them. It's a chaotic scene.

FROM ABOVE, Joker pushing through the crowd, rushes to his mother's side. We don't hear what he says to the paramedics over the music and the crowd, just see them nod okay and Joker follow after them into the back of the ambulance--

59 **INT. CITY AMBULANCE, BACK (PARKED) - NIGHT**

59

Joker looking out the back doors as they start to shut close--

CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF SOPHIE, coming out of the building. He stares at her through the small back door window. Casually waves at her, trying to connect with her--

Joker sees the two detectives approaching Sophie as the ambulance pulls away. Speeding away down the street, siren wailing--

CUT TO:

60 **INT. CITY HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY TREATMENT ROOM - NIGHT**

60

Joker's standing near the doorway of a large overcrowded treatment room. Watching a sleep-deprived ER RESIDENT (late 20's), and an EMERGENCY NURSE start to intubate his mother. He hears shouts and cries of pain from around the crowded room.

Joker turns away when he sees them insert a thin endotracheal tube into her mouth and down through her larynx. It makes him gag--

61 **EXT. CITY HOSPITAL, ER - NIGHT**

61

Joker sits on a bench outside the bustling emergency room. He's getting some fresh air, but he picked a weird spot to do it.

He watches the sick and dying being rushed through the glass doors. Opening and closing. This happens in the background throughout the scene.

The two detectives walk up to Joker, interrupting him watching the doors. Gotham police detectives, GARRITY (50's), grey hair, and BURKE (30's), his partner.

DET. GARRITY

Mr. Fleck, sorry to bother you, I'm Detective Garrity, this is my partner Detective Burke.

Joker looks up at them. Doesn't say anything.

DET. GARRITY

We had a few questions for you, but you weren't home. So we spoke to your mother.

JOKER

You did this to her?

DET. GARRITY

What? No. We just asked her some questions and she started getting hysterical-- hyperventilating, trouble speaking-- then she collapsed. Hit her head pretty hard.

JOKER

They told me she had a stroke.

Beat.

DET. GARRITY

Sorry to hear that.

AND JOKER BURSTS OUT LAUGHING, he can't stop it.

The detectives are taken aback. They don't know what to make of him laughing. They share a look. *

DET. BURKE

(confused)

I'm lost. Is something funny?

JOKER

(laughter choking up in his throat)

No I,-- I have a, a--

Tears rolling down his face, he takes out one of his cards and hands it to Det. Burke. Burke glances over the card, a skeptical look on his face.

DET. BURKE

Okay. But we have some questions for you.

DET. GARRITY

About those subway killings from a few weeks ago.

Joker pauses for a moment, his laughter subsiding. He holds his breath.

JOKER

I don't know anything about that.

DET. GARRITY

We have an eyewitness who described a white male, about 6 feet tall, in clown make up. Or a clown mask. Spoke to your boss at Ha-Ha's, Mr. Vaughn, and he said you were on a job the day of the shooting.

Joker's still holding his breath, he nods yes.

DET. GARRITY

(just continues)

He also said you got fired that day,-- For bringing a gun into the children's hospital.

And Joker cracks up again, his laughter coming back harder-- He covers his mouth with his hand, shaking his head no, his face now turning red.

DET. GARRITY

You weren't fired?

Joker catches his breath as the intensity of his laughter starts to wane, petering out.

JOKER

Not for having a gun. That was prop gun. Part of my act.

Joker's laughter finally stops for good.

DET. BURKE

So why were you fired?

JOKER

They said I wasn't funny.

The detectives share another look.

Joker stands up.

JOKER

Now, if you don't mind, I have to go back and look after my mother.

Detective Burke steps close to him, holds up the card that Joker handed him--

DET. BURKE

Hey lemme ask you a question? This condition of yours,-- Is this real or is this like some sorta clown thing?

JOKER

Clown thing?

DET. BURKE

I mean, is it part of your act?

JOKER

What do you think?

And Joker walks away-- heads for the sliding glass doors. Only the motion detector doesn't engage--

AND HE SLAMS RIGHT INTO THE GLASS DOOR.

HARD.

He bounces back.

62

INT. HALLWAY, NURSE'S STATION - CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

62

Joker walking down the hallway, ER flooded with the poor and uninsured. Overwhelmed doctors and nurses trying their best to keep up. He stops at the busy nurse's station, and stands there for a moment, trying to get a nurse's attention--

JOKER

Excuse me, I was wondering how I could check my mother out of here?

One of the nurses at the desk looks up at him, seems slightly annoyed.

ER NURSE

What's your mother's name?

JOKER

Penny Fleck. I'd like to take her home.

The sleep-deprived ER RESIDENT who was working on his mother overhears Joker, comes over to talk to him with a clipboard in his hand. Joker recognizes him--

ER RESIDENT

Mr. Fleck, your mother had a stroke. It's very serious. You can't "check her out." She's gonna be here for at least a week.

JOKER

She's not gonna wanna stay that long. She doesn't like hospitals. Or doctors.

ER RESIDENT

I'm sorry to hear that. But she can't just leave.

JOKER

I don't like hospitals either.

Beat.

The resident just nods okay. Looks down at his clipboard--

ER RESIDENT

Listen, I wanted to talk you about something we noticed in her tox report. We found heavy traces of multiple medications in her system.

JOKER

Okay. Thanks.

He turns to go, but the resident continues--

ER RESIDENT

One of them's perphenazine. It's a powerful anti-psychotic. If she was taking that regularly and then suddenly stopped, the withdrawal could have contributed to her stroke. Did you notice any symptoms?

JOKER

Symptoms?

ER RESIDENT

Withdrawal symptoms. Nausea... anxiety... hallucinations.

Joker shakes his head, no.

ER RESIDENT

Do you know how long she's been
taking it?

Joker shakes his head no again, leans in closer to the
resident--

JOKER

Can you tell me what those symptoms
are again?

CUT TO:

63

INT. PATIENT BAY, EMERGENCY TREATMENT ROOM - NIGHT

63

CLOSE ON TV, Murray Franklin is in the middle of doing his
monologue.

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)

So I told my youngest son, Tommy,
remember he's the 'not so bright'
one,--

(laughter)

I told him that the garbage strike
is still going on. And he says, and
I'm not kidding, Tommy says, "So
where are we gonna get all our
garbage from?"

Murray Franklin cracks up at his own joke. Studio audience
laughs.

JOKER LAUGHS, LYING IN BED NEXT TO HIS UNCONSCIOUS MOTHER in
the large overcrowded treatment room.

Blue curtain dividers separate the bays. He's watching the
show on a TV bolted high on the wall. He glances over at his
mother, laughing over the sounds of her labored breath, the
pain and suffering of those around him.

He looks back up at the television.

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)

And finally, in a world where
everyone thinks they could do my
job, we got this videotape from the
Gotham Comedy Club. Here's a guy
who thinks if you just keep
laughing, it'll somehow make you
funny. Check out this joker.

EXTREME CLOSE ON TV, GRAINY VIDEO OF JOKER'S STAND-UP PERFORMANCE. Joker on stage smiling behind the microphone, under the harsh spotlight.

Joker watching himself on TV, his jaw drops--

JOKER (ON TV)
 (trying to stop himself
 from laughing)
 -- good evening, hello.
 (deep breath; trying to
 stop laughing)
 Good to be here.
 (keeps cracking up)
 I, I hated school as a kid. But my
 mother would always say,--
 (bad imitation of his mom,
 still laughing)
 "You should enjoy it. One day
 you'll have to work for a living."
 (laughs)
 "No I won't, Ma. I'm gonna be a
 comedian!"

Back to Murray Franklin shaking his head, trying not to laugh.

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)
 You should have listened to your
 mother.

The studio audience erupts into laughter.

ANGLE ON JOKER, watching Murray Franklin make fun of him on TV. He gets up and starts walking toward the TV set as if in a trance. Unsure if this is really happening.

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)
 One more, Bernie. Let's see one
 more. I love this guy.

The tape continues of Joker at the comedy club.

JOKER (ON TV)
 It's funny, when I was a little boy
 and told people I wanted to be a
 comedian, everyone laughed at me.
 (opens his arms like a big
 shot)
 Well no one is laughing now.

Dead silence. Nobody is laughing. Not even him.

CUT BACK CLOSE ON MURRAY FRANKLIN, just shaking his head.

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)
 You can say that again, pal!

Murray cracks up and the studio audience laughs along with him.

CLOSE ON JOKER, looking up at the television, hearing them all laughing at him.

Beat.

JUMP CUT:

Joker is dragging a chair to the television set.

In a rage, he gets up on the chair and tries to pull the TV out of the wall, as the show continues to play--

But the set is firmly secured to the wall, and Joker pulls so hard the chair flips from underneath him and he goes flying up the air, crashing down hard onto the floor.

64

INT. CAFETERIA, CITY HOSPITAL - EARLY MORNING

64

Joker walks with a plastic tray of food. Some runny eggs and a coffee. He keeps his head down so no one can see his face. There are a few DOCTORS AND NURSES sitting and chatting at one table. A group of ORDERLIES are sitting together at another table.

He goes and sits down in the far corner, far away from everyone else. Sees a tabloid newspaper left on the table, and picks it up to read so he doesn't seem so alone.

ANGLE ON FRONT PAGE HEADLINE, "Thomas Wayne Announces Run", over a full-page campaign-style photograph of Thomas Wayne waving to a crowd standing next to his wife, MARTHA (50's), a severe looking, well-preserved former model, and little Bruce Wayne standing in front of them. Photo catches Bruce looking into camera, eyes wide, scared by the crowd.

SUB-HEADLINE READS, "Protest Planned at Wayne Hall Opening Tonight"

Joker stares at the family photo.

CLOSE ON BRUCE WAYNE IN PHOTO, Joker's fingers ripping his picture out of the front page.

YOUNG DOCTOR (OS)
 -- I'm sorry to bother you, but can you settle an argument for us?

CLOSE ON JOKER LOOKING UP, interrupted from ripping out the picture. One YOUNG DOCTOR and TWO NURSES are standing around him. We stay with Joker, don't see their faces. Just their bodies, all dressed in green scrubs, uniforms.

JOKER
Excuse me?

YOUNG DOCTOR (OS)
You were the guy on Murray Franklin
last night, right?

He hears the nurses giggle.

JOKER
No, sorry. Wasn't me.

NURSE #1 (OS)
Of course it was you. You were the
comedian.

YOUNG DOCTOR (OS)
Except you weren't funny. You
didn't tell any jokes.

He hears the nurses giggle again.

STAY CLOSE ON JOKER, getting upset. He just shakes his head.

JOKER
I don't know what you're talking
about.

YOUNG DOCTOR (OS)
No. It was definitely you, buddy.
You're the guy who couldn't stop
laughing. Murray killed you.

More laughter. Joker looks up at them.

JOKER
If I were you, I'd walk away from
this table before I strangle all
three of you with that fucking
stethoscope hanging from your neck.

Beat.

65

EXT. CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS, WAYNE HALL - UPTOWN - DUSK 5

Joker crosses a busy street heading to the Center for Performing Arts. Light falling. Storm clouds gathering.

Joker stops when he sees--

A CROWD OF PROTESTERS SCREAMING AND SHOUTING IN FRONT OF WAYNE HALL, behind steel barricades. Many wearing Joker's "clown face" mask... A few wave homemade signs, "CLOWN FOR MAYOR"... "KILL THE RICH"... "MR. WAYNE, AM I A CLOWN?"

A LINE OF POLICEMEN AND SECURITY GUARDS stand between the crowd and the lit-up white marble building.

Joker watches the protest for a moment, then continues across the street. It starts to rain.

66 **EXT. WAYNE HALL, FRONT ENTRANCE - EVENING**

66

A FIGHT BREAKS OUT between a "clown" masked protester and two cops. The crowd goes crazy, pushing through the barricades toward the building in the driving rain. The police and Wayne Hall Security fight to keep them out--

Amidst all the chaos, we glimpse Joker slipping into the building unnoticed--

67 **INT. LOBBY, WAYNE HALL - EVENING**

67

Joker walks through the massive multi-level lobby. It's completely empty since the performance has already begun and whatever security was available is outside helping the police deal with the protesters.

He looks up in awe at the crystal chandeliers... The shiny, marble floor beneath his feet. He's never seen anything this opulent in his entire life.

68 **INT. BACK OF THEATER, WAYNE HALL - EVENING**

68

JOKER MAKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE DARK SHADOWS ALONG THE BACK WALL OF THE AUDITORIUM, looking for Thomas Wayne in the sold-out black-tie audience--

He catches bits of Chaplin's MODERN TIMES projected on a screen behind the Gotham Philharmonic playing the silent movie's score... the Tramp roller skating blindfolded on a date with the Gamin (Paulette Goddard) in a department store.

He continues moving along the wall from aisle-to-aisle looking for Thomas Wayne...

The audience laughs as the Tramp skates blindfolded, skirting along the edge of a balcony with no rail, orchestra playing the bouncy score. Joker can't find Thomas Wayne in the dark--

He moves to the top of the next aisle, pausing to watch more of the film. Suddenly somebody bumps into Joker--

He looks up and sees it's one of Thomas Wayne's TWO SECURITY GUARDS, escorting Thomas Wayne out of the auditorium--

Joker turns and watches them lead him out. Behind Joker on screen, the Tramp is rescued by the girl before he falls off the edge, orchestra swelling--

69 **INT. LOBBY, WAYNE HALL - CONTINUOUS** 69

Joker peeks his head out of the auditorium, sees Thomas Wayne heading into the men's room, his two security guards waiting by the door, still hear the orchestra playing the score--

Joker glances back into the auditorium--

Sees a lobby broom and upright dustpan tucked in the back corner--

70 **INT. HALLWAY, MEN'S ROOM - WAYNE HALL - SECONDS LATER** 70

Joker's sweeping up the hallway with his head down, hear the orchestra playing the melancholy "Smile" from the film's score. He sweeps along to the music like Emmett Kelly's famous hobo clown... Sweeping around the two security guards' feet... Annoyed, they move a bit away from the bathroom door... And don't give Joker a second look as he heads inside...

71 **INT. MEN'S ROOM, WAYNE HALL - CONTINUOUS** 71

Joker sweeps his way into the cavernous, black & white tiled bathroom, ornate gold fixtures. It's empty save for Thomas Wayne peeing at the far end of a long line of urinals.

Joker takes a deep breath, and walks down the line of urinals right up next to Thomas Wayne--

He stands there for a beat while Thomas urinates, lobby broom and upright dustpan in hand--

 THOMAS WAYNE
 (glances over; annoyed)
 Can I help you, pal?

 JOKER
 What? Yeah. No I, I--

THOMAS WAYNE
(interrupting)
You need to get in here or
something?

Thomas Wayne finishes and zips his fly back up. Joker is not sure what to say to him, just says--

JOKER
Dad. It's me.

Beat.

But Thomas Wayne doesn't hear him, he was flushing the urinal. He walks toward the sink.

THOMAS WAYNE
Excuse me?

Joker follows after him.

JOKER
My name is Arthur. I'm Penny's son.
(beat)
I know you didn't know about me,
and I don't want anything from you.
Well... maybe a hug.

And Joker smiles, it's all very emotional for him. Thomas looks over at him like he's fucking crazy.

THOMAS WAYNE
Jesus? You're the guy who came by
my house yesterday.

Joker nods, relieved he finally broke through.

JOKER
Yes. But they wouldn't let me in,
wouldn't let me see you. So I came
here. I have so many questions.

Thomas Wayne just laughs to himself and turns on the gold faucets at one of the sinks.

THOMAS WAYNE
Look pal, I'm not your father.
What's wrong with you?

JOKER
How do you know?

Thomas Wayne just keeps washing his hands, doesn't even look over at Joker.

THOMAS WAYNE

Cause you were adopted. And I never fucked your mother. What do you want from me, money?

JOKER

No. What? I wasn't adopted.

Thomas starts drying his hands.

THOMAS WAYNE

She never told you? Your mother adopted you *before* she even started working for us. She was arrested when you were four years old and committed to *Arkham State Hospital*. *She's batshit crazy.*

Joker starts to smile, feels a laugh coming on.

JOKER

No. No, I don't believe that.

Thomas finishes drying his hands. Turns to Joker, his tone way more serious now.

THOMAS WAYNE

I don't really give a shit what you believe.

(steps in closer)

But if you ever come to my house again, if you ever talk to my son again, if I ever even hear about you again, I'll--

AND JOKER CRACKS UP LAUGHING, interrupting his threat. Laughing right in his face--

THOMAS WAYNE

Are you laughing at me?

Joker's laughing so hard he can't answer.

THOMAS SHOVES JOKER HARD UP AGAINST THE TILED WALL, gripping his neck with one hand. Joker just cracks up louder, he drops the dustpan and broom--

THOMAS WAYNE

(shouting)

You think this is funny?

Thomas Wayne's security guards bang open the door, rushing into the bathroom when they hear the shouting--

They stop when they see Thomas has Joker jacked up against the wall.

JOKER

(tries shaking his head
no; still laughing and
choking)

No, no I have a con--

THOMAS WAYNE

(interrupting; raising his
voice)

Is this a fucking joke to you?

AND THOMAS WAYNE PUNCHES JOKER STRAIGHT IN THE FACE with his free hand, blood spraying from his nose--

72

EXT. WAYNE HALL, FRONT ENTRANCE - PLAZA - NIGHT

72

The two security guards roughly throw Joker out of the hall, right in front of the drenched crowd of screaming protesters, TV cameras and photographers now on hand, bulbs flashing--

Joker knowing how to take a fall, plays it up in front of this audience for all it's worth, tumbling end-over-end out onto the plaza in the rain--

He rolls to his feet with a bit of panache and brushes himself off like it was nothing.

The protesters go crazy, cheering and applauding his act--

And Joker takes a deep dramatic bow. Wet hair. Bloody nose.

He turns and sees the security guards coming back out--

Joker takes off running through the plaza in the downpour, running out of the Center for Performing Arts. Turns down a side street almost slipping--

And keeps running even though nobody's chasing after him.

We HEAR the familiar beats of THE SUGARHILL GANG'S "Apache" as Joker just keeps running and running.

73

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - NIGHT

73

Joker knocking on Sophie's apartment door, "Apache" blaring inside. He's soaking wet, clothes clinging to his body.

There's no answer.

He knocks again. Hard to hear anything over the loud music.
Now he tries the door. It's unlocked.

74 **INT. SOPHIE'S APARTMENT, FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS** 74

Joker walks into Sophie's apartment, "Apache" thumping,
lights dim.

JOKER

Sophie?

WALKS INTO THE DARK LIVING ROOM, catches a glimpse of Sophie,
naked riding on top of SOME GUY on the couch--

The guy sees Joker standing in the shadows and jumps. Sophie
turns and sees Joker as well. She screams--

75 **INT. HALLWAY, APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT** 75

Joker rushing for his mother's apartment.

Behind him, the guy comes out half naked into the hallway,
zipping up his pants, screaming at Joker--

Joker doesn't look back, doesn't hear the guy yelling at him--

Quickly opens the door to his mother's apartment and hurries
inside.

76 **EXT. ARKHAM STATE HOSPITAL - MORNING** 76

A GRAY, BEHEMOTH STATE HOSPITAL looming over the city block.
Metal screens cover steel-framed windows. Joker crosses the
street toward the building, eyes weary, he hasn't slept in
days.

HE SEES TWO GOTHAM CITY COPS AND A PARAMEDIC rolling a gurney
into the entrance... a naked, sunburned man screaming his
head off is handcuffed to the stretcher underneath a white
sheet. Joker follows them inside.

77 **INT. ARKHAM STATE HOSPITAL - ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - MORNING**

Joker sits waiting in a cramped office, looking out a
plexiglass window that overlooks the crowded hallway--

A constant din of people moving about, talking and shouting. Patients handcuffed to the armrests of their wheelchairs, lying on stretchers, heads covered with pillowcase turbans or forearms to block out the harsh fluorescent lights.

His gaze is interrupted by a CLERK (40's), ID clipped to his shirt, who's lugging an old heavy file storage box.

He drops the box down on his messy desk with a thud.

CLERK

Sorry for the wait. All our records that are 10 years or older are stored in the basement. You're talking over 30 years ago,-- I had to do some serious digging.

*

Joker nods thanks.

CLERK

Like I said, if it's in here, I'm still gonna need a release from her.

The clerk opens the file box. Starts digging though it. Joker stares out the plexiglass window that faces the hallway--

JOKER

Can I ask you a question? How does someone wind up in here? Have all these people committed crimes?

CLERK

(going through the files)
Some have. Some are just crazy and pose a danger to themselves or others. Some just got nowhere else to go.

Beat.

JOKER

(nods; looks down)
Yeah, I know how that is. Sometimes I don't know what to do, y'know, I don't think I can take any more of this.

The clerk is half listening as he scans the paper work.

CLERK

Yeah, I can't take much more of this shit either.

(MORE)

CLERK (CONT'D)

Now they talking about more layoffs, man, we're understaffed as it is. I don't know what I'm gonna do.

Joker looks up at the guy, thinking he's made a connection.

JOKER

Last time I ended up taking it out on some,-- people. Bad shit. I thought it would bother me but, it really hasn't.

For the first time, the clerk looks at him--

CLERK

What's that?

JOKER

It's just so hard to try and be happy all the time, y'know, when everything's going to shit all around you.

CLERK

(taken aback; beat)

Listen, I'm just an administrative assistant, like a clerk. I file paperwork, fill out forms. I don't really know what to tell you, but maybe you should see someone-- they have programs, like city services.

JOKER

(backtracking)

Yeah. They cut those. Anyway, I was just talking to talk.

The clerk just nods. Finally finds what he was looking for.

CLERK

(surprised)

Here it is,-- Fleck. Penny Fleck.

He pulls out an old file, bulging with yellowing records. Moves the box to the floor and sits down at his desk.

JOKER

(saying it out loud for himself to hear)

So she was a patient here.

The guy opens the file. Yellowing pages of her records--

CLERK

(nods, skim-reading)

Uh-huh. Diagnosed by Dr. Benjamin
Stoner... The patient suffers from
delusional psychosis and
narcissistic personality
disorder... Found guilty of
endangering the welfare of a child--

*
*
*
*
*
*

The clerk stops reading out loud, eyes going wide as he skims
further ahead. Joker just looks at the guy, waiting to see
what he's gonna say.

*
*
*

JOKER

What?

CLERK

You said she's your mother?

*

Joker just nods.

CLERK

(closes the file)

I'm sorry, I can't. Like I said, I
can't release this without the
proper forms. I could get in
trouble.

(closes the file; beat)

Besides, it's pretty bad.

CLOSE ON JOKER, he shakes his head and smiles to himself.

JOKER

I can handle bad. I've been on a
pretty bad run myself.

The clerk puts the file down on his desk--

CLERK

I can't help you. If you want these
records you have to get your mom to
sign a patient disclosure form. I
can have someone mail you one.

Joker just sits there, thinking it all over for a moment.

Then snatches the file off the clerk's desk--

The clerk grabs it as well.

They play tug-of-war with the file, it's awkward and goes on
way too long. Finally, Joker shoves the guy hard and pulls
the file away--

Dr. Stoner keeps going through the file, pulls out black & white forensic photographs of three-year-old Joker's body--

DR. STONER

You also stood by as one of your boyfriends repeatedly abused your adopted son. And battered you.

Penny looks at Dr. Stoner like he's crazy.

MOM

He didn't do anything to me. Or to my boy. Can I go now, I don't like hospitals.

Dr. Stoner lays out the photographs in front of Penny--

Penny keeps smoking her cigarette, glances down at the photos, we catch glimpses of various bruises on parts of Joker's body... A filthy crib... A rope tied to the radiator...

CUT BACK TO:

Joker looking over the same black & white photographs, still HEARS his mother--

MOM (VO)

I never heard him crying. Not once. He's always been such a happy little boy.

DR. STONER (VO)

Penny, your son was found tied to a radiator in your filthy apartment, malnourished, with multiple bruises across his body and severe trauma to his head.

Joker looks up from the file when he hears/reads this, turns and looks at Penny's reaction-- HE'S NOW IN THE INTERVIEW ROOM WITH THEM, living what he's reading on the page.

He sees his mother lean forward in her chair, glaring at Dr. Stoner--

MOM

That's not true. My apartment wasn't filthy. I keep a clean house.

Joker just stares at his mother.

Dr. Stoner looks at Penny, not sure how to respond to that.

DR. STONER

(beat)

And what do you have to say about
your son?

ANGLE ON PENNY, thinking it over, taking a drag off her
cigarette.

MOM

I'm just glad I got to know him.

Joker just keeps staring at her as she exhales--

JOKER BACK IN THE STAIRWELL LOOKS UP FROM THE FILE, looks
like maybe there's cigarette smoke drifting in front of his
face--

CUT TO:

81

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND, STREET - AFTERNOON

81

Joker walking fast toward the playground. Sees Sophie talking
with some other moms, as GiGi and a few kids play on the
monkey bars.

Sophie walks toward him, still disturbed about last night--

SOPHIE

What the hell was that? You can't
just walk into my apartment like
that.

He is taken aback by her anger--

JOKER

No, wait,-- Sophie, we can get
through this, that's why I'm here.

SOPHIE

What are you talking about? What do
you think this is?

JOKER

I don't know. I mean I've never
been with a woman "like that," but,
this feels like a beginning to me.

SOPHIE

Arthur, I was just being nice to
you. I felt sorry for you. I have a
boyfriend.

JOKER

You what? What? What kind of *woman*
are you? Who does that?

Some of the other mothers turn toward them--

SOPHIE

You need to leave. I'm not having
this conversation with you.

JOKER

(shouts)
Why not?

GiGi runs up to Sophie's side to see what's going on, to see
if her mother's okay.

SOPHIE

(turns to her daughter)
Go back with your friends, honey.
Mommy's having a grown up talk.

Before GiGi leaves Joker looks down at her--

JOKER

No. Don't listen to her GiGi, you
need to hear this. Your mother's a
bad person. She's a whore, she's
seeing two men at once. You can't
trust her,-- She'll break your
fucking heart.

Joker turns to go, behind him GiGi starts to cry. He's close
to tears himself.

Sophie takes off after him, and reaches out and grabs him--
Joker spins quickly around to face her, looks like he might
even hit her--

JOKER

*How come nothing ever comes easy
for me?*

And Sophie slaps him hard across the face-- Then turns and
walks away.

CLOSE ON JOKER, he begins to laugh--

CUT TO:

82

INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

82

Joker manically pacing around the living room, banging the side of his head with his hand, muttering to himself, almost like he's having a conversation with himself, taking part in some story in his head, in the background the 11:00 News is playing on the television.

*
*
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*

Footage of a protest in front of Wayne Tower... Protesters in "Joker" clown masks... Hear the NEWS ANCHOR's bombastic voice over, "The anger and resentment that's been building up for weeks now, seems close to exploding. Protestors today, many dressed as clowns, took to the streets in front of Wayne Tower in one of many planned demonstrations."

Joker stops when he hears this, turns to the flickering screen--

ANGLE ON TELEVISION, protesters in the middle of a massive crowd outside a Wayne Tower.

"CLOWN" PROTESTER #1 (ON TV)
You'll see what's gonna happen at
City Hall next Thursday. We're
gonna--

Joker sits down on the couch eyes, leaning forward to make sure he's seeing what he's seeing--

"CLOWN" PROTESTER #2 (ON TV)
(interrupts; screaming
into camera)
[Beep] the rich, [beep] the media,
[beep] the blacks, [beep] the
whites, [beep] everybody. They all
[beeped] us, that's what this is
[beeping] about!

CLOSE ON JOKER, doesn't even blink, it's like he's watching himself on television.

CUT TO:

83

INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

83

*

Sun peeking through the windows. PHONE RINGING. Joker opening his eyes.

His orange cat is sitting on his chest, staring at him.

Joker finally got some sleep. He lies there for a beat. Phone still ringing, until the machine picks up the call.

SHOW BOOKER (ON MACHINE)
 This message is for Arthur Fleck.
 My name is Shirley Woods, I work on
 the Murray Franklin show.

Joker sits up, the cat jumps off his chest. He can't believe
 what he's hearing. He gets up off the couch as the woman
 continues to leave a message on the machine--

SHOW BOOKER (ON MACHINE)
 I don't know if you're aware, but
 Murray played a clip of your stand-
 up on the show recently and we've
 gotten an *amazing*--

Joker picks up the phone--

JOKER
 (into phone; skeptical)
 Who is this?

SHOW BOOKER (OVER PHONE)
 Hi, this is Shirley Woods from
 Murray Franklin Live. Is this
 Arthur?

Beat.

JOKER
 (into phone)
 Yes.

Joker looks down at the cat purring at his feet, and kicks it
 away.

SHOW BOOKER (OVER PHONE)
 Hi Arthur. Well, as I was saying--
 we've gotten a lot of calls about
 your clip, amazing responses. And,
 Murray asked if I would reach out
 to see if you would come on as his
 guest. Can we set up a day?

PUSH IN ON JOKER'S FACE, as it sinks in.

JOKER
 (into phone)
 Murray wants me to come on the
 show?

SHOW BOOKER (OVER PHONE)
 Yes. Isn't that great? He'd love to
 talk to you, maybe do some of your
 act. Does that sound good to you?

As the PUSH IN ON JOKER finishes. *

Hold. *

84

INT. CITY HOSPITAL, HOSPITAL ROOM (SHARED) - MORNING

84

JOKER WALKS INTO HIS MOTHER'S SHARED HOSPITAL ROOM, passing an elderly wheezing woman in the bed closest to the door. Sees his mom in her bed by the window.

He pulls the blue curtain separating the beds, giving him and his mother some privacy. Sits down on the edge of her bed.

She smiles when she sees him. Still fairly incapacitated.

He leans down close to her. Speaks softly, but filled with rage--

JOKER

Ma, remember how you used to tell me that God gave me this laugh for a reason. That I had a purpose. To bring laughter and joy into this fucked up world,--

She looks at him confused. *

JOKER

HA! It wasn't God, it was you or, or one of your boyfriends,-- how could you let that happen? What kind of woman are you? What kind of *mother* are you? *

She looks away.

JOKER

What's my real name?

Her whole body is shaking, overwhelmed with emotion.

JOKER

C'mon, Ma, I know I was adopted. What's my name? Who am I really?

She looks back him, struggles to speak--

MOM

H-h-happ--

JOKER

(interrupting, snaps at her)

(MORE)

JOKER (CONT'D)
 Happy?! I'm not happy. I haven't
 been happy for one minute of my
 entire fucking life.

He reaches behind her, grabs one of her pillows--

JOKER
 But you know what's funny? You know
 what *really* makes me laugh?

Leans down closer, face-to-face with her--

JOKER
 I used to think my life was nothing
 but a tragedy, but now, now I
 realize it's all just a fucking
 comedy. *

85 **INT. BLUE CURTAIN, HOSPITAL ROOM (SHARED) - CONTINUOUS** 85

Other side of the blue divider curtain. We see Joker's feet
 shifting a little.

SLOWLY WE PULL OUT, backing out of the room. Leaving behind
 whatever Joker's doing to his mother on the other side of the
 curtain. And we HEAR applause... *

86 **INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 86 *

JOKER'S STUDYING VHS TAPES OF "MURRAY FRANKLIN LIVE!", studio
 audience applauding Murray... He jots down notes in his worn
 notebook... Watches the guests come out... how they cross the
 stage... how they greet Murray... how they sit down... if
 they cross their legs or not... studying how he should act,
how to be a person like other people. *

His cat sits on top of the TV watching him the whole time,
 never taking her eyes off him. *

JUMP CUT:

Practicing. Joker walks across the living room like he's on
 the show, smiling, waving to the "audience"... He mimes
 shaking Murray's hand... Mimes unbuttoning his jacket and
 sits down. He smiles and pulls out his worn notebook from his
 pocket-- *

JOKER
 You wanna hear a joke, Murray? *

He "waits" for Murray to answer. Then Joker nods okay and
 opens his notebook-- *

JOKER
 (reading)
 Knock-knock.

*
 *
 *

His cat still watching him, now at his feet. Joker crosses and uncrosses his legs... Looks uncomfortable.

He glances down at his cat. It's as if he can hear the cat talking to him.

JOKER
 (nods; frustrated)
 Yeah, I don't know if I should cross or uncross 'em. *Both feel completely unnatural.*

Joker gets up off the couch and walks back across the living room. Waves to the "audience"... Mimes shaking Murray's hand... Mimes unbuttoning his coat and sits down... Crosses his legs.

*

JOKER
 Thanks for having me on, Murray. I can't tell you how much this means to me, it's been a life long dream. I have a joke for you--

*
 *
 *
 *

Joker stands back up.

Looks down at the cat again.

JOKER
 You're right. You're right, uncrossed is better.

Joker sits back down... Doesn't cross his legs this time.

CUT TO:

87

EXT. POTTER'S FIELD CEMETERY - DUSK

87

WIDE SHOT, a lone figure in a vast sea of mass graves, grey headstones. This is where they bury the poor and the unclaimed dead.

*

Joker stands by his mother's grave. His head bowed, face in his hands, his body convulsing. He's dressed in an ill-fitting faded rust colored suit, almost shiny from all the wear. Behind him in the distance, the TWO DETECTIVES stand by their parked car on the cemetery roadway. Sun dying in the sky.

CLOSE ON JOKER'S FACE BURIED IN HIS HANDS, see he's laughing-- impossible to tell if he's laughing because of his condition or laughing for real.

88

EXT. ROADWAY, POTTER'S FIELD CEMETERY - DUSK

88

Joker walking away from his mother's grave, goes to the two detectives -- GARRITY and BURKE -- waiting for him by their unmarked car. His face is still red, tears in his eyes from laughing.

JOKER
 (wiping his eyes;
 restrained anger)
 You shouldn't be here. It's not
 right.

DET. GARRITY
 We just came to pay our respects.
 Sorry about your mother.

DET. BURKE
 Yeah, it's too bad.

Joker just stares at the two detectives.

Awkward beat.

DET. BURKE
 Where is everybody?

JOKER
 It's always been just me and her.

Joker pauses for a moment, then starts to walk away.

DET. BURKE
 (calls out)
 We saw you on Murray Franklin.

Joker turns back to them.

JOKER
 You saw that?

DET. GARRITY
 Yeah. Heard you were on, so we got
 a videotape.

DET. BURKE
 I just couldn't tell if you were
 actually trying to be funny or not.

JOKER

Yeah, well I guess you didn't get the joke.

DET. GARRITY

Listen, we need to clear a few things up, we spoke to the hospital administrator--

JOKER

(interrupting)
Which hospital?

DET. BURKE

The Children's Hospital.
(reminding)
The night you were fired. He said it didn't look like a prop gun, it was heavy, like a real one. We have some more questions for you.

JOKER

I just buried my mother.

The detectives share a look. Garrity pulls out a card. Hands it to Joker.

DET. GARRITY

We can do it tomorrow. But you need to come down to the precinct-- first thing in the morning.

JOKER

(looks down, reading the card)
Right. Thanks for coming.

DET. BURKE

Of course.

Joker looks back up.

JOKER

That was a joke.

We hear applause followed by the familiar opening riff to ELTON JOHN'S "Bennie & the Jets".

JOKER'S LEANING OVER THE BATHROOM SINK, water running. He's wearing rust colored pants and a white "beater" T-shirt.

A "Joker" clown mask hangs off the dirty mirror by its elastic band. "Bennie & the Jets" blaring from a transistor radio turned all the way up.

Joker lifts his head up. He's dyed his hair green like his old "Mr. Jingles" clown wig-- but he's missed spots. Some of his hair is still its original color, sticking out all helter-skelter.

JUMP CUT:

Now he's smearing white grease-paint all over his face.

He's dancing along to the music, gyrating and thrusting his hips to the beat, as he glances at the mask hanging from the mirror, trying to copy how it looks... A copy of a copy of himself.

He barely hears someone banging on the front door over the loud music--

Doesn't answer. Joker just keeps putting on his make-up, dancing provocatively to the music.

More banging on the front door.

Joker casually opens the medicine cabinet. Finds some old rusty scissors and turns the radio off--

90

INT. FRONT DOOR, MOM'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

90

*

Joker unlocks the locks, keeping the security chain latched, and cracks open the door,-- Sees Randall. Looks down, and sees Gary next to him. Undoes the chain and opens the door for them--

*
*
*
*

Randall and Gary get a look at Joker's face, his dyed green hair still wet, streaking white grease-paint smeared over part of his face--

*
*
*

GARY

(re: his look)

Hey Arthur, how's it going? You get a new gig?

Joker shakes his head no, steps aside so they can come in, palming the scissors in his hand--

*

RANDALL

You must be goin' down to that rally at City Hall. Right? I hear it's gonna be nuts.

JOKER
Is that today?

Randall looks at him and laughs--

RANDALL
Yeah. What's with the clown-face
then?

Joker shuts the door behind them. Locks the chain-lock.

JOKER
My mom died.

RANDALL
(nodding)
Yeah we heard. That's why we're
here. Figured you might wanna go
out, get a drink or something?

Joker doesn't answer.

Awkward beat.

GARY
We don't wanna bother you. Randall
just thought we should come and pay
our respects.

RANDALL
Yeah, we're family. We gotta stick
together.

Joker stares at Randall.

JOKER
(beat)
It's not a good time. I'm in the
middle of something here.

GARY
Of course. No problem. Another
time.

Gary turns to go. Randall pauses for a moment, has something
else to say before he leaves--

RANDALL
Yeah. Another time, then. Oh hey,--
one other thing--

He takes a step closer to Joker--

RANDALL

Listen, the cops have been poking
around the shop, they're talking to
all the clowns about those subway
murders and--

GARY

(interrupting)
They didn't talk to me.

RANDALL

(snaps at Gary)
That's because the suspect was a
regular-sized person. If it was a
fucking midget you'd be in jail
right now.
(turns back to Joker)
Anyway, Hoyt said they were looking
for me, and, and I just wanna see
what you said. You know, make sure
our stories line up, bein' that
you're my boy and--

AND JOKER STABS THE SCISSORS AS DEEP AS HE CAN into Randall's
neck. Blood spurts. Randall screams. Gary stumbles back in
shock--

GARY

(screaming)
What the fuck what the fuck WHAT
THE FUCK--

Joker pulls them out and jams them into Randall's eye before
he can react. The sound is sickening. Gary's screaming in the
background--

Randall blindly fights back, screaming in pain, flailing his
arms, his own blood blinding him--

Joker grabs Randall by the head -- all of his pent up rage
and frustration pouring out of him -- AND SLAMS HIS HEAD
AGAINST THE WALL.

AGAIN. And AGAIN. And AGAIN.

Joker lets go of Randall's head, and Randall drops to the
ground. Joker leans back against the wall, out of breath,
kind of slides down the wall to the floor--

Sees Gary huddled in the corner, trembling with fear--

JOKER
 (catching his breath)
 I'm gonna be on TV tonight. Can you
 believe it?

Gary doesn't answer. Doesn't move--

JOKER
 It's okay, Gary. You can go.

Gary backs away toward the door. Joker sits there for a
 moment, breathing heavy, wipes Randall's blood off his face--

GARY (OS)
 Hey, Art?

Joker turns, sees Gary at the front door. He points up high
 to the chain-lock. He can't reach it.

Joker just shakes his head to himself and gets up to unlock
 the door.

He walks past Gary who's still trembling almost too afraid to
 look up at him. Joker leans over him and undoes the chain,
 opens the door. Gary bolts, running down the hallway as fast
 as he can--

CUT TO:

91	INT. MOM'S BEDROOM, APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON	91	*
	(Over the following, we don't see Joker's face. We don't reveal his finished "look" just yet.)		
	CLOSE PICKING UP HIS NOTEBOOK, fanning through the pages-- Pausing at the BLACK & WHITE RIPPED PHOTO OF BRUCE WAYNE for a moment. Continues, stopping at the same entry from the opening scene--		
	CLOSE ON WORDS, " <u>I just hope my death make more sense than my life.</u> "		
92	INT. LIVING ROOM, MOM'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON	92	*
	CLOSE ON TAKING RANDALL'S WALLET OUT OF HIS BLOOD SOAKED PANTS, pocketing all the cash.		
	CLOSE ON BUTT OF A GUN STICKING OUT OF RANDALL'S WAISTBAND, glimpse Joker's hand reaching for it--		

93 **INT. KITCHEN, MOM'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON** 93 *

JOKER'S P.O.V. FINISHING WRITING A NOTE, "On Murray Franklin Tonight -- Please Watch!" *

CLOSE ON STUFFING THE NOTE AND ALL OF RANDALL'S MONEY into an envelope-- *

TURNING ENVELOPE OVER, WRITING "SOPHIE" on the front. *

94 **INT. LIVING ROOM WINDOW, MOM'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON** 94 *

CLOSE ON THE ORANGE CAT AT THE WINDOW, and maybe if we're looking close enough we notice something strange... the cat has no reflection.

ANGLE OVER JOKER'S SHOULDER OPENING THE WINDOW, shooing the cat out onto the fire escape, out into the dying day-- *

JOKER (OS)

Go on. Go. You're free. *

CLOSE ON THE CAT LOOKING BACK AT JOKER FOR A LONG MOMENT, before scampering off out into the world, leaving him behind for good.

As he closes the window we *almost* catch Joker's reflection in the glass--

95 **INT. HALLWAY, APARTMENT BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON** 95 *

FOLLOWING BEHIND JOKER, walking down the hallway as if in slow motion, heading for Sophie's apartment. His dyed green hair now slicked back.

He's wearing the ill-fitting rust colored suit he wore to his mother's funeral.

STILL FROM BEHIND, he lays the envelope in front of Sophie's door, then pulls something else out of his pocket -- his body obscuring what it is -- puts it down by her door and leaves. *

As he walks away down the hallway, we see what else Joker left behind-- *

HIS WAND OF FLOWERS, at Sophie's door. *

Hold. *

Joker pops back up from getting hit. He's in pain. But not dead.

Garrity has drawn his service revolver as he makes his way through the pile up. And Burke, now blocked because of the crash has jumped out of his car--

Joker takes off running, limping down the street toward an entrance for the elevated train--

99 **EXT. ELEVATED TRAIN STATION, STEPS - CONTINUOUS** 99

Joker hustling up the stairs, dripping sweat, his white grease-paint running down his face. He gets to the top of the stairs, looks back and catches a glimpse of Garrity and Burke at the bottom--

100 **EXT. PLATFORM, ELEVATED TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS** 100

Joker makes his way down the crowded platform, the passengers starting to file on a waiting Lexington Ave/Pelham Express Train heading downtown. The train's packed with protesters heading to the rally at City Hall. Many carrying signs... most of them in "Joker" masks... a few painted up to look like the "Joker" mask. Joker fits in with all of them. *

He looks through the crowd of clowns and sees the two cops getting to the top of the stairs, looking up and down the platform for him. Pulling out their badges on chains from around their necks. Identifying themselves as cops.

Joker's willing the doors to close. But they don't.

The two detectives run onto the train just as the doors are finally closing--

101 **INT. LEXINGTON AVE/PELHAM EXPRESS (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS** 101

Joker moves through the loud train pushing through the rowdy protesters-- Into the next car, all of them packed. *

AS THE TRAIN GOES UNDERGROUND, the lights flicker on and off-- car GOING BLACK FOR A FEW SECONDS as the train turns and dips and speeds down the tracks. *
*
*

Joker glances back at Burke and Garrity pulling out their badges on chains around their necks. Smith & Wesson service revolvers by their sides. Shouting at the crowd, identifying themselves as cops. *
*
*
*

Joker hears some on the train shouting back in anger at the police, keeps moving... past clown-faced protestors carrying signs, "RESIST"... "AM I A CLOWN?"... "SAVE A CITY, KILL A YUPPIE"...

The two cops push through the car, scanning all the "clown" faces... So many look like Joker. They just shove protestors out of the way, shouting at them all the while. A few more voices rising up in protest--

Joker feels Burke and Garrity behind him getting closer. In the flickering light sees a DRUNK GUY (20's) wearing a 'Joker' mask and pulls it right off his face--

The drunk guy turns ready to fight.

He throws a punch at Joker, and Joker steps out of the way--

The guy pummels someone else--

A FIGHT BREAKS OUT, spilling down the car.

Joker slips the clown mask over his clown face--

AND JUST STANDS THERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHAOS, at home with the chaos all around him--

Garrity and Burke spot Joker's rust colored suit in the middle of the unruly mob--

Burke pulls his gun--

BURKE
(shouting)
EVERYBODY DOWN, GOTHAM PD!

The crowd doesn't drop to the ground. They just keep fighting with each other--

Burke sees Joker just standing there. Keeps yelling for the crowd to get down, get down, but they don't listen to him--

He starts shoving protestors down, out of the way-- and

AND THEN THE MOB TURNS ON HIM AND GARRITY, starts closing in around them--

Garrity and Burke are pointing their guns at the crowd, yelling panicked for them to back off, back off, and one idiot reaches for Garrity's gun--

Bang.

Burke fires into the crowd, as the train pulls into the station-- *
*

A protestor falls dead. The other clowns on the train go *
crazy, starting to riot. Glimpse Joker walking away calmly *
out of the chaos. Taking off the mask and dropping it at his *
side as he steps off the train, disappearing onto the crowded *
platform. *

CUT TO: *

102 **EXT. WGCTV STUDIOS, FRANKLIN THEATER - MIDTOWN - EVENING** 102 *

An excited line of ticket holders waiting to get in to "Live with Murray Franklin!" The poster marquee box near the door reads: "TONIGHT'S GUESTS. Lance Reynolds. Dr. Sally Friedman. And Special Guest."

They swing open the doors and start to let the audience inside...

103 **EXT. BACKSTAGE DOOR, FRANKLIN THEATER - SIDE STREET - EVENING** *

Random fans and autograph hounds hanging out by the backstage door, waiting for the night's guests to arrive...

104 **INT. STUDIO 4B, STAGE - FRANKLIN THEATER - EVENING** 104 *

Studio audience filing into the studio, being seated in the wide bleachers along one wall. Three TV monitors hang from the ceiling, facing the audience. Three studio cameras on the floor, black cables strewn everywhere.

The set for "LIVE WITH MURRAY FRANKLIN!" is dark... but we can still make out his desk... guest chairs... Don Ellis and his Jazz Orchestra's band stand... big blue curtain.

105 **INT. HALLWAY, FRANKLIN THEATER - EVENING** 105

The host of the show, MURRAY FRANKLIN (60's), usually quick with a bemused grin but right now in a sour mood, walks fast down the hall toward the drab dressing rooms with his old-school producer, GENE UFLAND (60's), who's holding the show's rundown rolled up in his hand.

GENE UFLAND

--You gotta see this nut for yourself, Murray. I don't think we can put him on. With the rioting out there. *

MURRAY FRANKLIN

(annoyed)

Jesus, Gene, I don't have time for this. Cindy's been breaking my balls all day.

GENE UFLAND

She's still mad at you about that thing?

MURRAY FRANKLIN

Three marriages, you'd think I'da fuckin' learned something.

(then)

What do I gotta see? I already know he's a nut. That's *why* we're putting him on, it's a goof.

A young BLONDE INTERN walks by in the opposite direction. She nervously smiles to them and keeps walking. Both men turn and check out her ass. Murray winks at Gene.

GENE UFLAND

(just shakes his head, and smiles)

I'm telling you, you gotta see him, Murray. I think it's too risky, the show's too big. It's worth too much to blow it on this,-- this freak.

106

INT. DRESSING ROOM, FRANKLIN THEATER - CONTINUOUS

106

Joker's sitting on a small couch in the cramped dressing room, watching the local news on a TV that's mounted up on the wall, live shots from the subway station where Burke shot the protestor, footage of the City Hall rally, clashes with police.

*
*
*

He's cleaned himself up as best he could... white grease-paint smeared more evenly over his face, green dyed hair slicked back in place. Red lips redone.

Murray and his producer Gene open the dressing room door without knocking--

Joker gets up off the couch and goes to shake Murray's hand. Murray pauses when he sees Joker's face.

JOKER

(shakes Murray's hand; effusive)

Murray, I can't believe this is real, that I'm really here.

GENE UFLAND

It's Mr. Franklin kid, show some respect.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

Oh shut up, Gene.

(to Joker)

Murray is fine. I prefer it in fact. Thanks for coming on the show.

JOKER

Are you kidding? Thank you for the opportunity. I've been watching you forever. My mother never missed a show.

Murray nods not listening, he's heard this before.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

So what's with the face? Are you part of the protests?

JOKER

No, I don't believe in any of that. I don't believe in anything. I just thought it would be good for my act.

GENE UFLAND

(upset)

Your act? Didn't you hear that a kid got killed on the subway and two cops who were almost beat to death? You didn't hear about the dozens of protestors and police injured in the riots?

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Joker looks like he's about to bust out laughing. All of that news is playing out on the TV above their heads. He takes a deep breath. Swallows the laugh.

*
*
*

Beat.

JOKER

No. I hadn't heard.

Gene and Murray share a look.

GENE UFLAND

--the audience is gonna go crazy if you put him on. It was okay maybe for a bit, but not a whole segment.

Murray thinks about it for a beat.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

I like it. It's timely. It's edgy.
It's, it's dangerous. The best
comedy is all those things put
together.

(done)

We're gonna go with it.

Gene rubs his temples, he doesn't like this, but Murray is the boss.

JOKER

Thank you Murray.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

(flashes his bemused
smile; condescending)

Couple rules though,-- No cussing,
no off-color material, we do a
clean show, okay? You'll be on
after Dr. Sally. Someone will come
and get you. Good?

Joker nods good. Smiles back at Murray.

Murray and Gene turn to go, exchanging smirks with each other as they walk out, making light of Joker who we see behind them still standing there.

JOKER

Hey Murray,-- one small thing? When
you bring me out, can you introduce
me as "The Joker"?

Murray and Gene look back at him

GENE UFLAND

What? You don't want to use your
real name?

JOKER

Honestly, I don't even know what my
real name is.

Joker smiles, the guys can't tell if he's kidding or not.

JOKER

Besides, that's what you called me
on the show, Murray. A joker.
Remember?

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 (to Gene; trying not to
 crack up)
 Did I?

GENE UFLAND
 I have no idea.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 (turns back to Joker)
 Well, if you say so, kid. Joker it
 is.

Murray starts to laugh at Joker as he closes the dressing
 room door, shutting it right in his face.

CUT TO:

107

INT. BACKSTAGE, BEHIND CURTAIN - STUDIO 4B - NIGHT

107

JOKER'S BACKSTAGE AT THE EDGE OF THE BLUE CURTAIN, trying to
 watch the show through a slim gap. Behind him there's a
 monitor on a cart playing the live feed.

He moves the curtain aside to get a better look-- Glimpses
 Murray laughing, finishing up talking to noted sex therapist
 DR. SALLY FRIEDMAN (60's).

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 (to Dr. Sally)
 You gotta see our next guest for
 yourself. Will you stick around?
 Maybe you can help, I'm pretty sure
 he could use a doctor.

The audience laughs.

DR. SALLY FRIEDMAN
 Oh. Does he have sexual problems?

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 He looks like he's got a lot of
 problems.

Another big laugh.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 (turns, looks into camera)
 It's been a crazy few days here in
 Gotham, and, I think maybe things
 are about to get crazy around here
 too. Don't go anywhere folks. We'll
 be right back.

APPLAUSE SIGN LIGHTS UP. Everyone claps. Joker keeps watching Murray through the slim gap at the end of the curtain. Hears the floor director shout, "And we're out. Back in three."

Joker adjusts the waist of his pants under his jacket. Takes a deep breath.

108 **INT. DIRECTOR'S BOOTH, STUDIO 4B - NIGHT** 108

Perched one story above the studio. There's a long console where the DIRECTOR sits in front of a gooseneck microphone, looking over a double-bank of monitors.

Sitting next to him are the ASSOCIATE PRODUCER who times the show, and the TECHNICAL DIRECTOR who operates the board. The monitor showing the live feed is playing a commercial.

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
Back in 30 seconds.

DIRECTOR
Okay, cue the clip. We'll come to it straight out of break.

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
Five... Four... Three...

DIRECTOR
Roll clip. Put up the show graphic.

ON THE SHOW MONITOR, video of Joker's original stand-up performance comes up with the show's graphic in the lower right of the screen.

109 **INT. TALK SHOW SET, STAGE - STUDIO 4B - CONTINUOUS** 109

ON THE SET, Murray watches the clip on the monitor above his desk, can't help but laugh. Sees the FLOOR DIRECTOR counting him down silently with her fingers... Three... Two... points to Camera One.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
(looking into camera)
O-kay, you may have seen that clip of our next guest when we first played it two weeks ago. Now before he comes out, I just want to say that we're all heartbroken here and sensitive to what's going on in the city tonight. But, this is how he wanted to come on the show. So let me introduce-- The Joker.

BEHIND THE BLUE CURTAIN, Joker gathers himself, ready for his moment. Doesn't hear his introduction or see a STAGEHAND pull open the curtain for him to go out--

ON SET, THE CURTAIN'S OPEN, Don Ellis and his Jazz Orchestra are playing Joker on. He doesn't come out. Murray looks over to the empty space in the curtain.

The audience laughs.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN, Joker sees the stagehand motioning for him to go out on stage. Joker starts out, pausing when he takes a step into the bright lights. The stagehand doesn't see him stop, and drops the curtain back on Joker before the audience can really see his face--

Tangling Joker up in the curtain.

The audience keeps laughing thinking it's part of his act. The band keeps playing him on. Joker untangles himself from the curtain and the audience gets a good look at him.

Some continue laughing. A few boo. Most don't know what to make of him.

Joker walks across the stage, forgetting to wave like he practiced. He trips over the riser surrounding the set when he goes to shake Murray's hand. Almost falls on him.

Murray tries not to crack up. The audience laughs. Thinks it's part of Joker's act.

Joker reaches out to hug Dr. Sally as she goes in for a handshake. Another awkward moment. More laughs.

Joker finally sits down next to Murray. Crosses and uncrosses his legs. Can't get comfortable.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

So, ahhh, thanks for coming on the show. But I gotta tell ya, with what happened at City Hall today, I'm sure many of our viewers here in the studio, and at home, might find this look of yours in poor taste.

Joker's not listening to Murray. He's mesmerized by all the lights shining on him... all the eyes on him... he doesn't answer Murray.

Nervous laughter from the audience.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 (tries again)
 Can you tell us why you're dressed
 like this?

AND JOKER STARTS TO LAUGH. Not embarrassed of it anymore. He goes with it. Giving in to it, enjoying the laughter.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 (can't help but smile at
 Joker's laughing)
 Okay. But I'm not sure how any of
 this is funny. A lot of those
 protesters are going with this
 look. City seems to be full of
 clowns these days.

JOKER
 (just nods, still
 laughing)
 Yeah. Isn't it great?

Joker just keeps cracking up. Audience still isn't sure what to make of him. There's some awkward laughter.

110 **INT. DIRECTOR'S BOOTH, STUDIO 4B - CONTINUOUS**

110

Nobody's laughing in the booth.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
 (looks to the director)
 This guy's got nothing.

DIRECTOR
 (hits the producer's talk
 button; into the mic)
 Gene, what the hell? You wanna kill
 this?

111 **INT. TALK SHOW SET, STAGE - CONTINUOUS**

111

Murray glances over at his producer Gene Ufland, who's sitting off-camera on a director's chair by a monitor. Gene shrugs at him.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
 (smiles; trying to save
 the interview)
 So when we talked earlier, you
 mentioned that you aren't
 political. That this look isn't a
 political statement.

JOKER

(between laughs)

That's right. I'm not political,
Murray. I'm, I'm, I'm just trying
to make people laugh.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

(beat; smiles)

How's that goin' for ya? Have you
been working on any new material?
Do you want to tell us a joke?

The audience claps, egging Joker on to tell a joke.

Joker looks over at Murray -- his laughing fit finally
subsiding -- and reaches into his jacket pocket and--

Pulls out his worn notebook, catching his breath. Looks
through it to find a new joke.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

You brought a joke book?

The audience laughs. Joker smiles, opens the page to Bruce
Wayne's photo, pauses for a moment then turns the page. Finds
a joke--

JOKER

(reading)

Okay. Here's one. Knock knock.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

Oh god, a knock-knock joke? And you
need to read it?

JOKER

(nods, reads it again)

I want to get it right. Knock
knock.

Murray makes a face like, "Okay, I'll go along with this."

MURRAY FRANKLIN

Who's there?

JOKER

(looks up from his
notebook)

It's the police, ma'am. Your son
has been hit by a drunk driver.
He's dead.

Beat.

112 INT. DIRECTOR'S BOOTH, STUDIO 4B - CONTINUOUS

112

The associate producer tries not to laugh, but she can't help it. The director looks over at her like she's lost her mind.

DIRECTOR
(shakes his head)
Okay, ready Camera Two. Take Two.
Ready Three. Three.

ON THE MONITORS, some of the audience cracks up. Joker smiles at the response. Murray Franklin shakes his head, smirking at the joke despite himself.

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON MONITORS)
So, Arthur, you told me backstage
that your--

Joker leans over interrupting Murray, whispers something to him.

113 INT. TALK SHOW SET, STAGE - STUDIO 4B - CONTINUOUS

113

Murray nods as Joker whispers.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
(bemused smile;
patronizing)
Right. Sorry. I mean *Joker*-- you
told me backstage that your
mother's a big fan of the show,
that she never misses it.

Joker puts the notebook back in his pocket. Crosses his legs, starting to get a bit more comfortable.

JOKER
That's right, Murray. But she's
dead now.

The audience laughs.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
(goes along with the
"joke")
Hold on. Your mother's dead?

JOKER
Yeah. She is.

Murray's not sure if this is part of his act.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

Okay. What about your father? Does he watch the show?

Laughter from the crowd.

JOKER

I don't know who my father is, Murray. Turns out I was adopted and sexually assaulted by my mother's boyfriend.

A few in the audience groan. A couple even laugh. Still think it's just Joker's edgy, off-kilter sense of humor.

Don Ellis plays "wha-wha-wha-whuuuuh" on his trumpet from the band stand.

DR. SALLY FRIEDMAN

Ahhhh! No, no,-- You can not joke about that.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

(shakes his head;
irritated)

Yeah, that's not funny, that's not the kind of humor we do on this show.

Murray glances over at Gene in the wings. He gives him the "wrap it up" sign.

JOKER

(just keeps going, on a
roll)

Sorry. It's been a rough few months, Murray. I mean, after my mother died, the police came to question me at her funeral. Who does that?

MURRAY FRANKLIN

(too easy)

Oh really? Were you a suspect?

The audience laughs.

JOKER

Very funny, Murray. No, they came because I killed those three Wall Street guys.

Beat.

Studio audience can't tell if he's joking or not. Murray can't either.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
(looks at him confused)
Okay. I'm waiting for the
punchline.

JOKER
There is no punchline. It's not a
joke.

114 INT. DIRECTOR'S BOOTH, STUDIO 4B - CONTINUOUS

114

The director stares at the monitor.

DIRECTOR
Did he just confess to killing the
Wall Street Three?

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
(horrified)
Yeah. I think he did.

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
(turns to the director,
nods)
He definitely did.

DIRECTOR
Jesus Christ.
(hits the camera talk
button, into mic)
Camera Three, get in close.

ANGLE ON MONITOR, Camera Three zooming in close on Joker's face.

115 INT. TALK SHOW SET, STAGE - CONTINUOUS

115

Gene Ufland is now standing up from his chair. Motions for Murray to kill the interview. Murray shakes his head to himself. This is a big "get," it could be great television.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
(turns back to Joker; with
gravitas)
You're serious, aren't you? You're
telling us you killed those three
boys on the subway. Why should we
believe you?

JOKER

(shrugs)

I got nothing left to lose, Murray.
Nothing can hurt me anymore. This
is my fate, it was *always* my fate.
My life is nothing but a comedy.

116

INT. SOPHIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

116

Sophie's sitting on her couch watching this interview play out on TV. GiGi's asleep next to her. The open envelope and the money are lying on the coffee table. No sign of the flowers anywhere.

*
*
*

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)

Let me get this straight, you think killing those young men is funny?

JOKER (ON TV)

Yeah. But comedy is subjective, isn't that what they say? Besides, the way I see it, what happened was a *good* thing. All of you, Gotham, *the system that knows so much, you* decide, *you* decide what's right and wrong. What's real or what's made up. The same way you decide what's funny or not.

Sophie edges forward on the couch, can almost see a hint of agreement on her face.

117

INT. TALK SHOW SET, STAGE - STUDIO 4B - CONTINUOUS

117

Back on set, we can tell by the way Murray's now interviewing Joker, talking to him slower, more thoughtfully, that he thinks this is gonna get him an Emmy... Maybe even a Peabody.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

(beat)

Okay, I think I understand. You did it to start a movement, to become a symbol.

JOKER

C'mon, Murray, do I look like the kind of clown who could start a movement? I killed those guys because they were awful. *Everybody's* awful these days. It's enough to make anyone crazy.

*
*
*

MURRAY FRANKLIN

So that's it, you're crazy. That's your defense for killing three young men? Because they were mean to you?

*
*

JOKER

No. They couldn't carry a tune to save their lives.

*
*

Some audible groans from the audience.

*

JOKER

Why is everyone so upset about these guys? Because Thomas Wayne went and cried about them on TV?

*
*
*

MURRAY FRANKLIN

You have a problem with Thomas Wayne, too?

*

JOKER

Yeah. I do. Everything comes so easy for him.

MURRAY FRANKLIN

And what's wrong with that?

JOKER

Have you seen what it's like out there, Murray? Do you ever actually leave the studio? Everybody just yells and screams at each other. Nobody's civil anymore. Nobody thinks what it's like to be the *other guy*. You think men like Thomas Wayne, men at ease, ever think what it's like to be a guy like me? To be anybody but themselves.

*
*
*
*

(shaking his head, voice rising)

They don't. They think we'll all just sit there and take it like good little boys. That we won't werewolf and go wild. Well, this is for all of you out there.

*

Joker "howls at the moon." It's fucking weird.

118 INT. STATION SQUAD ROOM - 7TH PRECINCT - CONTINUOUS 118

OFFICERS AND DETECTIVES JUMPING INTO ACTION, rushing past a small portable black & white television sitting on one of the desks, hear one of them shout--

POLICE LIEUTENANT (OS)
That asshole just confessed to
killing those Wall Street guys on
fucking live TV!

ANGLE ON THE LITTLE TV, TIGHT TWO-SHOT OF JOKER looking at Murray.

MURRAY FRANKLIN (ON TV)
(shakes his head)
So much self-pity, Arthur. You
sound like you're making excuses
for killing three young men. Not
everybody's awful.

*

119 INT. TALK SHOW SET, STAGE - STUDIO 4B - CONTINUOUS 119

Back on set. Joker looks straight at Murray.

JOKER
You're awful, Murray.

There is no more laughter. The audience is watching this exchange with full attention.

MURRAY FRANKLIN
Me? *How am I awful?*

JOKER
Playing my video, inviting me on
the show,-- You just wanted to make
fun of me. Well it's easy to laugh
at Frankenstein on a crowded beach,
isn't it? You're just like the rest
of them, Murray. Everything comes
too easy for you.

*
*
*
*
*

MURRAY FRANKLIN
(on the spot; defensive)
You don't know the first thing
about me, pal. Look what happened
because of what you did, Arthur,
what it led to. There are riots out
there. Two policemen are in
critical condition, someone was
killed today.

*
*
*

Joker nods in agreement, yeah, it's because of what he did. *

JOKER *

How about another joke, Murray? *
 What do you get when you cross a *
 mentally-ill loner with a system *
 that abandons him and treats him
 like trash?

Murray pauses for a minute, not really listening to Joker, suddenly realizing the seriousness of the situation. He starts to turn to camera--

JOKER *

(pulls Randall's gun) *
 I'll tell you what you get. You get *
 what you fucking deserve,-- *

And as Murray Franklin turns back to him, JOKER SHOOTS THE SIDE OF MURRAY'S HEAD OFF--

Blood splatters all over the back of the set. Some spraying in Joker's face. AUDIENCE SCREAMS! Dr. Sally dives for the floor.

120

INT. SOPHIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

120

Sophie screams and jumps to her feet horrified! Waking up GiGi who starts to cry when she sees what's on television--

ON THE TELEVISION, Joker gets up and walks right up to the camera. Blood sprayed over his white painted face. Hear the studio audience still screaming, bedlam all around him.

JOKER (ON TV)

(looks straight into
 camera; screams Murray's
 signature sign off)

GOOD NIGHT AND ALWAYS REMEMBER,-- *
THAT'S LIFE! *

And as Joker waves goodbye to the home audience, a black & white "INDIAN-HEAD TEST PATTERN" cuts off the show-- *

"PLEASE STAND BY"

HERB ALPERT'S "Spanish Flea" plays underneath.

Beat.

CLOSE ON JOKER AS THE SQUAD CAR SWERVES OUT OF THE WAY, Joker *
banging up against the door-- *

CRAAAASSSHHHHHH!!!! *

The squad car hits a parked car hard and flips over, sliding *
across the street on its roof-- *

123 **EXT. SQUAD CAR (SLIDING), STREET - CONTINUOUS** 123 *

SPARKS FLY UNTIL FINALLY THE UPSIDE DOWN SQUAD CAR COMES TO A *
STOP. Smoke rising from the wreck. Ferrante & Teicher's piano *
only version of "Send in the Clowns" still playing... *

Both police officers in the front seat are either unconscious *
or dead. We see movement in the back seat, hard to tell *
what's going on inside. *

Suddenly the back door kicks open-- *

And Joker falls out of the car, landing hard on the street, *
one hand free, handcuffs dangling from his other hand. Hear *
sirens in the distance-- *

JOKER LEANS BACK AGAINST THE CAR, his face bloody, his body *
broken from the crash. Sitting there amongst the wreckage, *
can still see and hear the chaos, the fires burning all *
around him. He reaches for a jagged shard of broken glass-- *

And pauses for moment catching his breath, hand holding the *
jagged glass resting on his lap, wailing sirens getting *
closer, looks like he's about to cut his wrists-- *

124 **EXT. MOVIE THEATER, STREET - UPTOWN - CONTINUOUS** 124 *

A WELL-HEELED CROWD LETTING OUT OF A MOVIE THEATER, the *
violence has even reached up here, the nice part of town... *
Sirens wailing, gangs of punks wearing "Joker" masks running *
past, breaking car windows, fires burning... Catch a glimpse *
of the lit up marquee listing the films playing, "Blow Out" *
and "Zorro the Gay Blade". Hear "Send in the Clowns" still *
playing... *

FROM BEHIND SEE A SILHOUETTED COUPLE AND THEIR KID hurry down *
the dark side of the street, ducking into an alley to avoid *
the chaos-- *

Catch a glimpse of a punk in a "Joker" mask following after *
them pulling a gun-- *

His head's been shaved. He looks medicated or maybe even lobotomized. Wearing white institutional clothes. *

HIS NEW SMILE IS ALL STITCHED UP, cut deep up the corners of his mouth. Forming a longer, "happier" smile. *

He's sitting across from an overworked HOSPITAL DOCTOR (50's), African American woman. Somehow it's the exact same room Joker imagined his mother was in some 30 years ago. The room and the doctor also look vaguely similar to the social worker and her office in the opening scene. *

The doctor just sits there, waiting for him to stop laughing. A weathered notebook is on the table in front of him. Finally, Joker stops himself. *

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
What's so funny? *

He takes a deep breath, his eyes are glazed over. His voice is scratchy, like he doesn't use it much. *

JOKER
-- just thinking of this joke. *

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
Do you want to tell it to me? *

Beat. *

JOKER
No. *

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
Because you don't think I'll get it? *

JOKER
Because it's personal, it's between me and him. *

Beat. *

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
Okay. Is the medication working?
How's your sleeping? *

JOKER
(nods yes)
... *

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
How are you feeling? *

JOKER
Good. Everything's good now.

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
Have you been writing in your
journal?

Joker slowly nods.

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
Great. I want to make sure you're
keeping up with it.

JOKER
(beat)
Yeah.

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
Have you written about your
episode? About what happened?

JOKER
How I remember it.

HOSPITAL DOCTOR
(re: the journal)
Can I see?

Joker slides his journal across to her. She picks it up and
flips through the pages--

ANGLE ON JOURNAL, blank page after blank page, there's
nothing inside of it.

The doctor looks up at him confused.

ANGLE ON JOKER, a smile creeping across his face. And we HEAR
the groovy organ opening to FRANK SINATRA's anthem "That's
Life"...

Beat.

128

INT. HALLWAY, ARKHAM STATE HOSPITAL - MORNING

128

From behind, see Joker shuffling down the hallway past all
the other mental patients, an orderly by his side. Sinatra
starts singing.

And Joker does a slide step to the music like he can hear it
too... into a skip... and another slide step into a spin...
Dancing down the hallway into the sunset...

IRIS OUT:

"That's Life" keeps playing over credits.

*