



Rogues Gallery #7
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"The Man in the Other Room"

He could hear it, the voice from below. In his cell, the cold dark, barren cell. With only a bed, not even a window. All there was in his room was his bed, his door, and of course, the vent. First he listened to the frantic pacing, the muttering, the typical sounds of those confined to the hell of Arkham Asylum. His long strides brought him to the ventilation duct, one of his only means of honing his craft in his prison. He bent his tall, slender frame down, and whispered into the vents.

"Welcome to the Mad House, welcome to Hell. It is my pleasure to introduce myself, my name is Dr Jonathon Crane, alias The Scarecrow," He said gently into the vent.

He grinned as he heard the subtle gasp. How long had he done this now? It seemed to be routine, he was sure of that.

"Th-the Scarecrow?" The voice from the vents asked.

"So you've heard of me then? That's good to know, I was worried that the press was still fixated on that Clown. Honestly, what does The Joker have that I don't? I mean, surely I've killed more people than him, not to mention I've caused mass panic in the streets in ways that he could only dream of. So tell me, why are more people scared of clowns than birds?" Crane asked.

"Um, please don't, I want to be alone," The man replied. Crane's grin grew wider, he loved how the echo in the vents amplified the tone of voice, the uncertainty in ones tone, the rising panic, the fear.

"But you are alone, I am merely speaking to you from the ventilation

duct. I surely can't go into your room and throttle you. Nor could I slip some of my infamous fear toxin into the vents and... Wait, I suppose I could do that couldn't I?" Crane casually replied.

"Dear god!"

"Tell me, do you know who was in your cell before you? Do you know what happened to him?" Crane asked.

"N-n-no, p-p-please duh-duh-don't!" The man screamed.

"A stutterer? This could get tedious, but alright. The man who was in the cell before you, he met the beast below you. Do you know what's on the floor beneath you? The very bottom of Arkham?" Crane asked.

"Re-re-reception," The man replied, uncertainty in his voice.

"No, the floor beneath that? Do you know what the monster in the basement is known as?" Crane asked.

"Th-the d-devil isn't in Arkham!" The man cried.

"Let's not get into theology just yet, although that could be a fun subject for later. But, the beast of Arkham is named Waylon, Waylon Jones. Tell me, do you recognize that name? Or do you need the name that the media aptly gave him? Do you recognize the name, Killer Croc?"

"He-he c-c-can't get to me!"

"That's what the previous tenant said as well. If you listen carefully enough, you'll hear the beast through the vents. The rattle of the shackles they keep him in. They aren't strong enough though, they may keep his arms and legs in check, but his jaws can tear through those chains any time he wants, any time he grows hungry. Did you know it was a full moon tonight?"

"W-what?"

"A full moon, they say, makes people and animals act strangely when it's out. So how do you think something like Waylon, who is neither beast nor man, acts under it's light? Well, it just so happens that the last tenant was found the morning after a full moon. What was left of him anyway," he said.

"Lies... "

"Is it dark in your room? It is in mine. You see, they're afraid of what I might be capable of if there were a window in my cell. The possibility of my escaping is only heightened I suppose. I know how Waylon loves to kill in the moonlight, how the blood shines off of his claws. Last time he howled so loudly that it woke Jeremiah Arkham. Did you know he lives on the grounds of Arkham Asylum? A little cabin in the northern sector, but of course you may not know that. Only me and some of the inmates do know, the ones who have memorized the schematics of the building. Is it dark in your room? It is in mine, you see they're afraid of what I might be capable of if there were a window in my cell. The possibility of my escaping is only heightened I suppose."

"J-just s-st-stop t-talking," The man whimpered.

Crane laughed, taking energy off of the fear building inside his prey. He pressed the assault onto him. "I know how Waylon loves to kill in the moonlight, how the blood shines off of his claws, last time he howled so loudly that it woke Jeremiah Arkham,"

"What?"

"Didn't you know he lives on the grounds of Arkham Asylum? A little cabin in the northern sector, but of course you may not know that. Only me and some of the inmates do know, the ones who have memorized the schematics of the building. Did you know that it only takes one hundred and thirty seven steps to get to the elevator? That's for you, me, Waylon, and all it takes is another one hundred and thirty seven steps to get to any of our cells. How does that make you feel? Knowing that all it would take is two hundred and seventy four steps for Waylon Jones, or me to be outside your door?"

"He couldn't open the door... " The man whispered into the vents.

"You still don't believe me do you? Well, tomorrow ask your doctor about what happened to the previous tenant of your cell. Do you know what he'll do? He'll smile, and tell you that it's not your concern, that you should focus on getting better. That's why you have to look in his eyes my friend, because his eyes will tell you the truth. The quick flash of horror, of disgust over the memory of what had been done to poor Mr Jameson, torn limb from limb by the monster that can hear every word we're speaking. Every step you make across the room, every time you sweat, bleed, it makes him hunger. You know that right? It makes him desire you, and when his desire grows too strong, nothing will stand in his way. Not the guards, not the heavy steel doors, and not even your pathetic cries of mercy. You will die when he comes for you, and I'll be up here, listening to every sound you make,"

There was a moment of silence, then frantic whispering, Crane leaned in, trying to hear what the man was saying. However, it was too fast, and he was pacing again. Moving away from the vent, only when he paced back, closer could he hear what he was saying. Then, Crane heard the one thing that ended the game. The one thing that always made Crane smile.

"H-he wont take me!" There was a loud noise as this was said. A pounding, once, twice, and a third time, then a silence. Crane moved away from the vent and walked back to his lonely bed and laid down, content in what he had accomplished that night.

END

"Punchline"

Gotham City, a dark place, a lonely place. In a city poisoned by greed, violence, one man challenges the darkness. He puffed on his cigarette. He took a peek out at the stage, the spotlight shining down on the centre, the man MC-ing the event building up the audience, setting up the next act. Setting things up for him, tossing the smoke on the ground, he ground his heel into the butt as he heard his cue. This was his time, he had prepared every joke, every punchline, everything was planned to a T. It may not be the biggest, or the best comedy club in Gotham City, but for tonight, it was his. He took in the energy, the clapping, though something felt off. It was his first time performing, but the clapping was light, almost in rhythm. Was that right? Was the audience supposed to be acting this way? He shook the feeling off, he was nervous of course, that had to be it.

He waved to his audience as he took centre stage, sweat starting to form on his forehead. As he grabbed the microphone, the audience came to a hush. And he broke the silence with his opening line, "Hello everyone, this is my first time onstage so be gentle alright?" A nervous chuckle crept into his throat as he said this.

Before he could continue, a voice interrupted his monologue. "First timer? Why'd I even bother coming then!?! Rip off!"

"Hey hold on a sec, I promise you'll be in stitches by the time I'm done ok?" He told the voice from the audience, as he wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Yeah right, you couldn't make a guy high off of Nitrous Oxide laugh! You're so bad, you'd make the happiest man alive fall into a state of depression, who the hell did you sleep with to get this shot?"

The Comedian looked into the audience, trying to find the face of the man heckling him. But the light shone into his eyes, the audience was nothing but shadows to him. Faint reflexions of real people, none seemed to be real. "Hey, if you think this is so easy, why don't you give it a try then?" He replied.

"Don't mind if I do!" The high pitched, nasally voice replied. And up

jumped one of the shadows, The Comedian still couldn't make out his features, only that he was in a suit of some sort. He made his way to the stage, and as he moved away from the near blinding shine of the spotlight, his features became more and more clear. The polished black shoes shined as he moved closer and closer, and the purple of the tux fitted the frame of the slim man perfectly. Finally his face became clear. At first The Comedian thought the sheer whiteness was face paint; that the green hair was a wig. But reality quickly sunk in. As he looked into the eyes of his heckler, he looked into the eyes of madness incarnate.

"Dear god, you're the Joker!" he screamed.

"And you're not funny, what's your point?" came the reply of the Clown Prince of Crime.

The Comedian looked to the audience, they made no move. None dared even speak in the presence of this man. His pearly white teeth shined glistened under the spotlight, and his grin was wider than any man. Perhaps the most unnerving thing about him was the twinkle in his eye. He took several steps back, "What do you want from me?" he asked.

"What do I want? Strange, every time someone asks me that, I make a joke. Then again, I'm funny. Tell me, what do you do when someone asks what you want? Being unfunny and all I'm curious,"

"I tell them?" The Comedian replied, unsure of what to do.

"You tell them what? Your not making any sense boy! Tell me, are you perhaps insane? Is that it? Are you bonkers in the head? I see that the lights are on, but does that matter if someone isn't behind the wheel?"

"Your not making any sense... " The Comedian replied.

"What are you, a parrot? Tell ya what, if you can make these people laugh, proving that I'm wrong and you're actually funny I won't kill you. But if I'm right, and you're not funny, well who really wants an unfunny comedian anyway? I'll kill you I guess," the Joker said with a shrug.

"I have to make them laugh?" he asked.

"It's what you came here to do isn't it?" The Joker replied.

"Or you'll kill me?"

"Just think of me as the most honest critic in Gotham," The Joker laughed.

He first looked to the audience, then The Joker. He truly was insane, there was no question about it. What was the point of him doing this? Who on god's green earth would ever do something this twisted? But he saw no other options; he had to play the lunatics game, or it was lights out. He slowly brought the microphone up to his lips and started to speak.

"Oh, before you start let me just tell you that you only get to tell one joke,"

"What?"

"Well, if your good, you'll have the audience laughing after just one joke. So make it good,"

"You're a sick freak you know that?"

"Why yes, yes I do. Oh yeah, and you've got five minutes, so if I was you, I'd get on with it" The Joker informed him.

"Five minutes? Are you kidding!?" he screamed.

The Joker took two steps toward him, and gently placed his hand on The Comedian's shoulder. "My dear boy, I never kid when it comes to comedy! Oh, and you've got four and a half minutes."

"Shit! So, uh, Jesus Christ is walking down the road one day right? And... "

"Ooooh! A Christianity joke, you've got my interest already! Oh, and four minutes to go," The Joker replied.

All he could do was ignore him for now, all he could do was focus on the joke, and pray... He'd think of the irony of that later, if he survived that is. "Anyway, he's walking down the road right? And he hears this group of people, yelling all kinds of stuff about killing this prostitute and... "

"Oooh! Is it Mary Magdalene? Is she going to bad touch Jesus!?" The Joker asked excitedly.

"Would you just shut up and wait for the punchline!?" The Comedian screamed. There was a collective gasp amongst the audience, had he really told The Joker just now to shut up?

"Your absolutely right, I'm sorry. Oh, three minutes, and twenty seconds,"

"So uh, Jesus asks why they all want to kill this woman, and they tell him she's a whore, and she deserves to be stoned to death right? So JC, he pauses, thinks for a second right? And says: 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone,' and everyone there is kinda mumbling amongst themselves, until this sweet old lady starts to move through the audience and every time someone is in the way she asks ever so sweetly to move out of the way until finally she's just a few feet from the woman right? That's when she picks up the biggest rock she finds— I mean the thing's gotta be at least 20 pounds, kay? Then she just chucks it at the woman, and it hits her point blank in the face! Boom, she falls down on the ground, dead."

"Heh, Not bad so far, two minutes by the way," The Joker states.

The Comedian looked to the audience, and then The Joker once more, and continued on, trying his absolute best not to panic. "So everyone kinda scatters after that, except Jesus and this old woman , kay? And he lets out this long sigh, and says 'You know mom, sometimes you can really piss me off!'"

He waited.

One second, two, but the audience never laughed.

"What's wrong with you people!? Don't you know he's going to kill me if you don't laugh!?"

"They know, but you wanna know my punchline to all this?"

"What are you talking about now?" he asked.

"Well, you see if any of them laugh they all die, kay? And not just them, I told them I was going to hunt down their family, their pets, even their Mother-in-Laws, and kill them all! What do you think of that?"

"You're a sick bastard that deserves to be shot... " The Comedian whispered.

"Hahaha!"

Both The Joker and The Comedian looked to the audience. Someone laughed? Someone actually laughed? The King of Komedya was quick to the person that did so, and drew a gun on him. Pressing it squarely against his forehead, he cocked the hammer back and asked him one thing.

"Why did you laugh? You know what I'm going to do now right?"

"Yeah, it's just that I fuck'n hate my Mother-in-Law."

END

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