



Stephanie's Second First Halloween

Batman - All Media Types · Not Rated · 8942 words

by Arukir

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Stephanie's Second First Halloween

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Stephanie's first Halloween after being adopted is a bit more chaotic than she might expect. Includes Fear Toxin, bad song rewrites, and maybe the beginning of a little romance.

Was going to post on Halloween, but accidentally deleted it and barely managed to restore it, so panic-posting now. Will add Fanart on Halloween, as a compromise.

First chapter's a little awkward, but it gets a lot better after that, I promise!

Chapter 1: The Most Important Quest Of The Year

Stephanie's like nine or something. Corvin's my OC Demon for Jon, he's about the size of a cat.

For anyone who's happened to have adopted a young child and had to deal with moments like these — how did you handle it?

"I cannot believe I let you talk me into this." Jonathan hissed, adjusting his straw hat, long brown ears flopping on it.

"But you look so adorable, Haigha!" Jervis had, somehow, managed to make his costume even more reminiscent of the Mad Hatter. He hopped up on his tiptoes to plant a kiss on the other's cheek.

Still annoyed, Jonathan straightened to his full height, making it impossible for the other to actually reach him. He smirked at Jervis's annoyed huff, waiting only a moment more before obligingly leaning down.

"Guys! I'm ready!" Edward called from his bedroom, appearing in furry bodysuit, purple nightcap adorned with green stars. Jonathan would've scolded him about not

giving clues to their real identities, but Jervis' existence made such an action futile. "Well? How do I look?"

"Perfectly splendid, Dormouse!" Jervis clapped happily. Jonathan spent too long thinking of a sarcastic response — of course Edward could find a way to make these ridiculous costumes actually look good. Of course he fuckin' could.

"Where's Corvin?" Edward asked, looking around.

"Helping Stephanie get dressed." Jonathan replied, instantly regretting it.

"He's *what*?" Edward looked damn near murderous. Which was funny, considering he probably couldn't outright murder someone even if he wanted to, not without a puzzle of some sort. Damn, Jonathan wished there was a non-lethal way of testing that...

"Relax, Ed." Jonathan rolled his eyes, using the soothing tone he knew worked on the other, no matter how much Edward resented it. "She needed help, what were we supposed to do? Have one of us dress her?"

"No!"

"Exactly." Jonathan nodded decisively. "She is perfectly safe. He is a Demon, he does not have human biology nor impulses. He's actually confused as to why we didn't just help her."

"That better be true, Crane." Edward hissed in a very dangerous way. It was easy to think of him as harmless, as weak, but he might've been the biggest threat out of the three of them — so long as he had the right motivation, of course.

At that moment, the bathroom door clicked open. Stephanie stepped out in a blue and white dress, large black bow in her hair, grinning as wide as Joker. She twirled. "Well? How do I look?"

"Absolutely marvelous, Steph." Edward nodded, watching Corvin trot out after her, dressed up as a kitten. "Are you alright, Stephanie? I hear Corvin helped you."

"Huh? Oh!" Stephanie nodded. "Yeah, I couldn't get my dress zipped up or the bow tied."

"And you're comfortable with that?" Edward asked, double checking.

"Why wouldn't I be?"

"Corvin's not a pet, Sweetie. He's a person, like Jon."

"So?" Stephanie asked, her faced scrunched up in thought. She really was a clever child, quickly realizing why exactly he was so worried. "He didn't *do* anything. He just zipped up my dress and tied the bow."

"That's all?" Edward asked nervously. Jonathan couldn't decide between exasperation at what was very much an overreaction or shocked pride he actually cared this much.

"He helped me decide which pair of shoes to wear." Stephanie added, shrugging. Her own calm mood put Edward at ease, and soon the bizarre group was joining hundreds of other Gothamites in the most important quest of the year — trick-or-treating!

Chapter 2: Heads I Win (Tails You Lose)

I want to put a little disclaimer here saying that this is a work of FICTION. Thanks to Gotham magic/mutations/comic book science, Twoface is two separate goofballs who are reluctantly stuck with each other. In real life, this is not how split personality disorder works. I've seen people try to act like it is, but in real life people with SPD are very broken individuals who need help, the separate personalities aren't their own people and must be recombined or repressed or whatever.

If you or someone you know is suffering, don't try to treat it like Twoface, because that's not how reality works. Seek help, please. Be safe, everyone.

"Trick or treat! Smell my feet! Give me somet'ing good ta eat! Or at yer house, I will yeet — three stinky rotten eeeeggs!" Joker sang, juggling said eggs along with a treasure-chest-shaped candy bucket, a maybe-fake sword, and an eyepatch he'd found too itchy to keep on for very long.

"Awk! Yeeet! Yeet!" Harley repeated cheerily, dancing around him in her feathered costume. "Who's a pretty Harley?"

"If I ever agree to go out with them on Hollween again," Ivy said through clenched teeth, struggling to walk along the street in her mermaid costume, "you have my permission to take me to Arkham."

Selina laughed, the bell on her collar tinkling along. "And miss all this? Never."

Joker gasped, expertly ceasing his juggling and putting away his toys before running towards a rickety old house, ignoring several others that almost certainly had more candy. He stood in front of it for several minutes, face scrunched up as he scrutinized the building.

"What's wrong with him now?" Ivy grumbled, staring at the house but not seeing anything that could've possibly caught the Clown's attention.

"Twoface is hidin' out here!" Joker announced, snapping his fingers with a grin. "We should say hello."

"What makes you think this is his hideout?" Selina asked, looking around. There wasn't anything that particularly screamed Twoface.

"Ya can't see it?" Joker asked, confused. He gestured at the house and yard a few times, looking between them and his three companions. Finally, he gave up and explained, as if it was absolutely obvious. "It's all mismatched! Perfectly down da middle."

They looked back at the house. Patchy roof, peeling paint, a few crappy decorations scattered randomly throughout the yard — it didn't really look asymmetrical so much as it looked sad.

"Ya know, I can kinda see it." Harley squinted her eyes, turning her head this way and that. "Yeah! Look, da paint's a bit of a different color on each side, an' dat bit of da roof's sorta repaired."

"Now that you mention it, I think there's two different themes with the decorations." Selina hummed. The decorations on one side were classic, black and orange, pumpkins and witches. The other side was bright, tacky, plastic and modern.

"You are feeding into his-" Ivy cut herself off. There was a tree to either side of the cracked front path. Two entirely different species that happened to look similar, but only one kept its leaves this late in the year. "Oh Gaia, don't tell me he's right."

"Dere's only one way ta find out." Joker grinned, wiggling his eyebrows. He bounded along the path and up the crumbling steps (which were definitely crumbling more on one side, if one looked closely), knocking on the door to the tune of Shave And A Hair-cut.

A few moments passed with no-one answering, though a slight shuffling could be heard from inside. Joker tapped his foot impatiently. He put an ear against the door.

"Yooo-hooo! Harv, ol' buddy ol' pal, ya in dere? Ya know bettah den ta ig-nore me~" He sing-songed, bouncing excitedly on the balls of his feet, fully prepared to dodge a fist should the wrong Harvey answer.

A few more seconds passed, then the door opened, nearly making Joker fall flat on his face. Harvey was dressed in a split red and white suit, bat wing and bird wing harnessed to his back.

"How did you find us?" He growled, gripping the collar of Joker's shirt and lifting him into the air.

"Well, wha'd'ya expect when yer hideout's so obvious?" Joker asked, undisturbed by the situation. He laughed. "Da funny t'ing is, I wasn' even lookin' fer ya!"

"He has a point, Harv." Ivy smirked. "It was rather easy to spot." Anyone who thought she was above lying just to mess with an ex had quite obviously never met her.

Harvey took a moment to calm down, pulling out his Coin and scowling at whatever the result was. "What. Do. You. All. Want?" He ground out through clenched teeth, looking between them.

"Gee, Twozy, we're only goin' trick-or-treatin'." Harley said innocently. She suddenly bounced up, flapping her arms like wings. "Hey! Why don't'cha join us? Da more da merrier."

"Speak for yourself." Ivy grumbled.

"No." Harvey threw Joker down the path, not even glancing when the Meta made a giggling-squeak sound as he bounced along the ground.

"Aww! Ya didn' even flip fer it." Harley pouted.

"We don't need to." Harvey had already half-shut his door, standing mostly in his house. "Neither side wants to."

"But dat isn' fair!" Harley argued, turning around. "Tell him, Cat— oh, drat."

Selina had, as she often did, gotten bored and left. Most likely she was flirting, stealing, or spying. She was like an outside cat — she would always come back, but you never really knew when.

"Oh well." Harley sighed, starting to walk off. "Guess it'll jus' be Mistah J', Red, an' me. All by ourselves. Noooo buffer."

Ivy's eyes went wide. She ran up to Harvey, grabbed his coin, and flipped it. Hiding the answer under her hand, she asked. "Heads or tails?"

"That's not how that works." Harvey protested, visibly uncomfortable with someone else using his coin.

"Heads. Or. Tails?" Ivy repeated slowly, glaring.

"...Tails."

"Oops, you lose. Guess you're coming with us!" Ivy said cheerfully, handing the Coin back before Harvey could double check the answer.

"You are a bitch." Harvey growled, reluctantly following the others down the street.

"I'm desperate." Ivy gestured to Joker and Harley, who were jumping around and hollering out a bad rewrite of an already stupid Halloween song.

"You're still a bitch." Harvey argued. Mentally, only half of him really blamed her. The other half was plotting revenge either way and didn't particularly care.

"True."

Chapter 3: Sugar And Spice (Aren't Very Nice)

I stopped eating sugar as a child, and thought it would be fun to have Stephanie do the same. So, partially ventfic, I guess?

The friends who aren't negatively impacted by sugar are the mutants and such.

"I still don't get why that mean old lady was so mad." Stephanie huffed, crossing her arms with a pout.

"Well, Sweetie, I don't think she was used to being told off for the amount of sugar in her candy." Edward said soothingly. He looked to the others for help, but Jervis was still busy trying to wrap his head around the concept of a kid that didn't like sugar, while Jonathan and Corvin were locked in a heated debate about whether that woman was too old to expose to Fear Toxin.

(At least, Edward assumed that was what they were arguing about, from what he could overhear of Jonathan's harsh whispers.)

Looks like he was on his own. "I'm fairly certain a lot of the houses will be giving out sugary treats." *Because that's sort of the point of the holiday*, he didn't add.

"But then what will I eat?" Stephanie pouted. For a girl that had already suffered much worse in her life, this seemed to be a particularly devastating concept.

"Well, um." Edward fumbled for a second. He'd never actually babysat her around Halloween before, the sugar thing hadn't occurred to him. "What did you used to do? Before, well..." Yeah Eddie, bring up the kid's dead dad, *great idea*. Times like this almost made him question his own genius.

"...Daddy didn't usually—" She stopped, sniffing for a second. "He was always busy on Halloween."

"You've never celebrated Halloween?" Jervis exclaimed in horror, snapped out of his own head much easier than usual by the comment.

"I celebrated!" Stephanie defended, turning old sorrow into directed anger with much too much skill. "I made costumes, and decorated, and watched scary movies, and *everything*."

"By yourself?" Jonathan asked. He and Corvin had stopped arguing to stare at her. Corvin squawked worriedly from his perch on Jonathan's shoulder.

"Daddy said Mommy used to do it with me, before I could remember." Stephanie shrugged. "And sometimes he got home in time to watch half of something. He always promised we'd do more next year, but work always got in the way."

Edward had faced bullies, his father, angry bosses, squads of policemen, and the Batman himself on a regular basis — yet the sight of this little girl barely holding back tears? That made him panic like nothing ever had in his life.

"You know, a lot of my friends aren't negatively affected by sugar." Was what came out of his mouth for some fucking reason. When Edward caught up with his own logic, he grinned. "We could go out tomorrow and give them whatever candy you have fun collecting tonight, and then buy you your own healthy treats."

"Like what?" Stephanie asked, allowing the topic change with gratitude.

"Whatever you want!" Edward promised. At a glare from Jonathan, he added, "Within our budget. Until I get those papers sorted out, I can't risk getting caught stealing anything." Falsifying an entirely new identity, plus adoption paperwork, was proving a tad difficult. Mostly due to his no-lying compulsion, but he'd figure it out. He always did.

Stephanie smiled hopefully. "Can we watch scary movies instead of getting treats?"

"We can do *both*." Edward assured her, a tiny piece of his heart breaking. "So long as Jon isn't the one that picks the movies."

"I do have *some* understanding of what's appropriate for kids." Jonathan muttered mutinously, but they all knew that he tended to forget himself when it came to horror.

Stephanie grinned brightly, already running off to the next house to get another bucketful of candy. This trick-or-treating thing was actually kind of fun, now that she didn't have to care about the sugar.

"I want to knock on every door in Gotham!" Stephanie announced, pulling Edward into an apartment building. It was going to be a long night...

Chapter 4: In Which A Crowd Of Gothamites Must Use Their Emergency Scarecrow Plans And Are Very Much Not Happy About It

Harvey is he/him, Harv is he/him, together they are they/them.

We are getting her caught by Batman. No, Lock-Up! Harv mentally scowled.

We are not getting anyone captured by that creep, not even Ivy. Try again. Harvey responded, internally sighing. He'd been in a bad mood all day, and it was already looking like the night was just going to get worse.

"Oh, give us some figgy puddin', give us some figgy puddin', wha' da Hell even is figgy puddin'?" Joker loudly sang, striding confidently past civilians who dutifully pretended they didn't know who he was. It was an unspoken rule that the Rogues would get to enjoy themselves on Halloween, ever since Scarecrow started taking the night off, and most people respected it.

"Oh, give us some figgy puddin', fer me an' my Puddin'," Harley giggled, twirling around in the middle of the street, "or we'll burn yer house down!"

"Believe it or not, this is them toning it down." Ivy whispered conspiratorially to them. "They must really want you along, big guy."

"Yeah, I'm sure." Harvey didn't even try to stop Harv from rolling their eyes. It was obvious the clowns wanted them along, for whatever *fucking* reason, the issue was that neither of them wanted to come.

We could always just go home.

The Coin said we had to.

We don't know that. She probably faked it!

We can't risk it.

There's a fifty-fifty shot we're risking it right now, numbskull!

I'd rather not think about that.

Sure, just run away from our imaginary problems, instead of getting the Hell away from our fucking real ones!

Harv gestured their hand at the duo marching ahead of them. Harvey shrugged, wishing he'd just drop it. As far as they knew, this was the Coin's decision, and they had to stand by it. No matter wha–

Screaming people ran past them, clawing at thin air, eyes wild as they catapulted down the street. They were yelling all manners of nonsense, but it was clear that all of them were terrified of things that weren't there.

The people around them who hadn't been affected glared at the Rogues, before running off to follow whatever emergency Scarecrow plan they had this year.

"Spooky's gonna ruin it fer all of us!" Joker whined, frowning sharply for a few moments before his face twisted back to its regular grin. Somehow, he still looked greatly displeased.

"Professah Crane wouldn't go back ta Halloween Heists wit'out tellin' us." Harley argued. As more people ran by, she deflated. "He wouldn't, right?"

"Since when does that bitter old crow care about *anyone* but himself?" Ivy scoffed, marching in the direction the people were running from. "I think it's time to give that stupid *man* a piece of my mind."

I thought she didn't want to be here anymore than we did?

Broad's defending her dame, oldest tale in the book. Harv paused. Okay, well, *maybe not.* Hey, Fear Toxin is a great excuse for getting out of this whole thing! Those bozos won't even think about the fact we aren't immune like they are until it's too late.

It says something about his mood that Harvey actually went along with that plan without argument, quietly following the other three, looking forward to when the Toxin wore off and they could salvage the last bit of their quiet night at home.

Chapter 5: Jonathan Crane Has No Idea How Children Work

This version of Jon is my own interpretation, and might seem a little OOC. I tried to keep him as in-character as possible while still fitting my headcanons and changes, I hope I did a good job.

I forgot to say that his Scarecrow Mask was in the satchel, because of course he brought it.

It had been an accident, really. Jonathan honestly hadn't intended to cause any trouble at all. Sure, in the past, Halloween had been a time for a rather unique sort of celebration. The kind that ended with an extended stay in Arkham.

But that had been *before* he'd had people to celebrate with. Besides Corvin, anyways, and he shared his taste in celebrations so didn't really count. Nowadays, Halloween was a relatively relaxing time with no work and lots of candy.

Could he really help that he'd taken a vial or nine of Fear Toxin along? He brought the stuff with him *everywhere*, it made him feel safe! How was he supposed to know that the satchel Jervis made him bring ("It matches your outfit much better than that old bag, March Hare!") would rip so very easily? Sure, his normal bag was reinforced against Corvin's claws, and he should've thought about it, but...

This was his fault, wasn't it? Jervis and Edward were huddled on the ground trying to overcome the urge to run, everyone around them was panicked and sobbing (even children! Oh, what had he done?), and he was failing at comforting Stephanie. At least his Scarecrow Mask was enough filter for her to be unaffected by the Toxin itself (he'd converted it to be part gas mask after the Bat had developed chemicals that actually affected Demons), but seeing everyone else so terrified was definitely upsetting her.

"Hush Child, there there now." He said awkwardly, gently patting her back. He'd been an *adult* psychologist, he had no idea how the mind might differ with children. "I know it's scary, but everything shall be alright. They'll all be fine in an hour. Or two." Or possibly four. *Dammit*.

"What's happening to them?" She cried, her voice muffled by the mask. He couldn't see her eyes behind the orange lenses, but he knew they were probably wide in fear. He hated that he had to take a moment to stop himself from purposefully making it worse.

"They have been exposed to a chemical substance of my own invention. I've dubbed it 'Fear Toxin'." Was she too young for this? Most of his social circle were insane and/or geniuses, and he'd met them all past childhood (not long past in some cases, but still), he had absolutely no clue where her cognitive development was at. "This particular

strain causes panic and mild hallucinations, but nothing too bad." They weren't reliving past trauma or going through their innermost terrors, at any rate.

"Why would you make something like that?" Stephanie asked. Something about her body language shifted, and she backed away from him. "Are you a bad man like Daddy?"

"Um..." How in tarnation was he supposed to answer that one?! The answer wasn't 'no', precisely, but it sure as Hell ain't 'yes' either. He didn't go around killing random people, he didn't hurt the elderly (unless they deserved it), didn't hurt children (even if they deserved it). He wasn't exactly a saint either, though. "I'm not like your father, Child. I do not attack the innocent for nothing but my own sick pleasures." Maybe that hadn't been the best way to put it. How much did she know of her father's crimes, again? Oh, Ed was going to get him for this...

"Then *why*?" It was a little hard to believe she wasn't Edward's biological child, with how often she questioned things.

Jonathan took too long to think, but Corvin clicked and whistled an answer he dutifully translated. "Edward cannot lie. He is obsessed with puzzles and riddles. You know this, yes?"

"Yeah. He's different, like Daddy was." Stephanie answered. She hesitantly added, "Not exactly like Daddy, though."

"He is broken, Child." Was that too blunt? "So was your father, and so am I. Instead of questions and games, I obsess on *fear*. I cannot help it, but I try to direct it at those who deserve it. Or those who volunteer." He had made mistakes, lost himself and hurt people, but he liked to think he'd managed to spare the innocent 90% of the time.

"Who would volunteer for this?!" Stephanie gestured to where Edward and Jervis were tightly holding onto each other, whimpering and mumbling. Everyone else on the block had already run away or locked themselves in their houses.

Who would volunteer? Drug addicts, people who really needed money, idiotic rich socialites, teens on a dare (not that he let them), the rare few who truly believed in the research like he did... Jonathan had the feeling that wouldn't exactly calm her down. Really, his friends were overacting, they should have a much higher resistance after knowing him for so long!

...And pointing that out wouldn't be helpful, would it?

Chapter 6: It's Just Who He Is

J hadn't really known what he was expecting, but it certainly hadn't been a young girl in Scarecrow's mask staring down the (very panicked) real Spooky while Eddie and the Hatter cuddled. He almost thought he was getting a bit too into his imagination, but he hadn't missed his meds in ages.

"Hey, Spooky! Wassup?" J grinned wider, delightfully confused when Jonathan seemed to melt with relief at their arrival.

"Oh, thank Fear!" Jonathan looked quickly between them, his friends, and the child. "I can't- are you an utter buffoon?!" He suddenly shouted, his eyes locked on something right behind J.

Curious, J turned around to see. Oh, ol' Twoface was screaming and holding his head. Right, he wasn't immune to all the Toxin stuff, was he? Poor Harv... Oh well, he'd get over it soon enough, no real harm-

Twoface screamed, swinging a hand at Ivy with a roar that really didn't sound human. A guy that big had no business reacting this violently to a little fear! Seriously, wha-

Harley squeaked as she was backhanded away, landing hard enough to leave bruises, but lightly enough that she probably didn't break anything. Dammit, J really wished that hadn't happened — he couldn't just let that slide, now could he?

One cut from his poison-tipped cards would have the brute out like a light for at least a day, but where was the fun in that? J cackled like the madman he was, jumping at Twoface with slightly less than his full force (this was a friend, after all. And, more importantly, wasn't Batman).

J hated to attack the guy, it wasn't really Twoface's fault he was lashing out like this, he probably thought they were all monsters or something. But he'd hurt Harley, and therefore had to pay. It was just the way things worked, it wasn't like J could change it!

// A few hours later... (You know you said/thought it in that weird meme voice. Don't lie. ☺)

Remind me to hurt that demonic buffoon. Was Harv's first thought when consciousness came crawling back.

We did this on purpose, remember? Ugh, Harvey always forgot how badly they reacted to this stuff. Though, it didn't usually hurt quite this much...

What's your point? Harv responded petulantly. He was definitely going to hurt Jonathan later, and only the Coin could possibly stop him.

...Were we in a fight? Harvey rolled their shoulder, wincing at a certain soreness he knew all too well from their rough life. He hadn't opened their eyes yet, but something in the air was familiar. Where are we?

Open our eyes and find out. Harv mentally shrugged, trying to act like he didn't care.

What if we're still under the Toxin? Harvey asked hesitantly.

Yeah, what if we are? Harv challenged.

Harv... He'd never been good at dealing with stress, he didn't want to face any monstrous hallucinations again.

Harv opened their eyes with a groan. He dealt with the bullshit that Harvey couldn't, he always had, always would. It was just who he was.

"What the fuck?" Harv groaned, sitting up on the couch in their fucking house. He stared at the other couch (the one he liked better, fuck you very much), where the other participants in this night of Hell were seated.

"Language, Twozy!" Perky McClown demanded, her face stern. "Dere's a child present."

There was, indeed, a child present. A young girl who was playing with a lamp in the corner, apparently trying to figure why it looked so strange and twisty (the answer being that it pissed Harvey off, so Harv liked it). Fuckity-fuck fuck fuck. He hated watching his language.

"Duck you." Was the only compromise he was willing to make. "What the duck are you doing in our house?"

"It seemed the safest place to bring you, after Joker knocked you out." Spooks explained reasonably, as if he wasn't the reason for all of this. "We didn't want to get sent to Arkham while we waited for you, Edward, and Ha- Jervis to recover."

"What a great way to spend Stephanie's second first Halloween." Green Bean muttered.

"Who's what?" Harv grumbled, his attention grabbed by the mention of second *anything*.

"Stephanie." The little girl raised her hand, a little hesitant but shockingly unbothered by the big yelly man with a fucking half-mutated face. "It's my first Halloween since I got adopted, and my first time really trick-or-treating."

"Adopted?" Oh, this was bad. He glared at the assembled Rogues. "One of you fucking adopted a kid?!"

"Technically I haven't finished forging the papers yet." Green Bean answered, as if that was at all an okay thing to say.

"You kidnapped a kid?!" And got her exposed to Fear Toxin, the fucking idiotic twit...

"N—" He did some weird choking thing, grimaced, then said, "Well, yes, I suppose I technically did. But I kidnapped her from *foster care*, and I've been babysitting her for years!"

"Why would that make it okay?!" Harv yelled, standing, relishing in the other man's flinch. Maybe he really was pissed about the kidnapping thing, maybe he just wanted this night to be over, maybe it was a little of both — he really didn't care, he needed to get his anger out *somehow*.

"I couldn't just let her rot with some simple-minded family that would beat the intelligence out of her!" To Harv's surprise, the other man jumped up and stared him down, despite their laughable size difference. "If you'd seen the family they were planning to put her with... I don't even want to imagine how bad her depression would've gotten. She's been through so much, and she's so young, and I just want to help her, but now our first holiday has been a disaster, and I should've known I couldn't raise a child!"

Edward's voice got higher pitched as he talked. And he kept talking, flooding the room with his vocal panic and everything that had happened and...

Harv? Harvey whispered. *Maybe I should—*

Please. Harv had never been good at emotions, comforting others, being nice. He couldn't handle this stuff.

"Edward, calm down, it's okay." Harvey dealt with the soft shit Harv couldn't, he always had, he always would. It was just who he was.

Chapter 7: Outside Looking In (Should've Paid More Attention)

Edward wasn't entirely sure he hadn't walked into a dream. One moment he was screaming at a man at least twice his size despite knowing exactly how badly that kind of situation typically ended for him, the next he was sitting in Twoface's house with his friends and newly-acquired daughter (he was never going to get used to that), eating popcorn and watching cheesy horror movies that artfully rode the line between 'Stephanie was allowed to watch' and 'Jon was willing to watch'.

Throughout his life, panic attacks normally ended in ridicule and maybe violence. Being calmed down and helped was a fairly new thing he was still half-convinced Jonathan had invented as a manipulation technique, yet now Twoface had done it? Of all people, Harvey Dent?

And then the man (men?) had invited them all to watch crappy horror, because apparently Edward had said something about Stephanie never getting to watch it with her dad. What had Jonathan done to that batch of Fear Toxin?! He hadn't been affected this badly by it in a while...

Of course, the stress he was already under might've contributed a smidge or two. To avoid thinking about any of this (not that he could really escape his own exceptional mind that easily), he excused himself to the kitchen. A bit of time alone should allow him to recenter himself somewhat.

Edward wasn't expecting to find Twoface already there, arguing with himself. No, actually... One part of Twoface was arguing with another part? They were having an argument?

"How does one refer to one who is two?" Edward asked before he could stop himself. "Or is it two that are one?"

"Excuse us?" Us. We. Our. He always used plural pronouns... They always used plurals because they were two people! Why hadn't Edward figured that out sooner? And why had he seen it now?

"It must be annoying, being talked to as if you're the same person all the time." Edward said smoothly, leaning on the doorframe, hoping neither of them would figure out he'd only just realized this.

They were quiet for a second, face twitching in a most unique way. "What do you want?"

"I want to apologize on Jonathan's behalf." Edward announced. It wasn't the want that had brought him here, but it was a want he had. After a moment's consideration, he added, "And, I wish to convey my utmost gratitude to you both for allowing us to continue impeding on your valuable time and space." And for not beating him to a pulp for freaking out at them, but his pride wasn't going to let him mention that bit.

"It's fine." H— they sighed, running a hand down their face. "It's not like we really had any plans for the night, after all."

"Weren't you trick-or-treating with the clowns and Dr Isley?" Edward asked. He frowned, considering. "Though, how in the world you two managed to get roped into going with *that* particular grouping, I can't begin to fathom."

"Neither can we, to be honest." Twoface chuckled.

"You really weren't planning anything, then?" Edward asked after a quiet moment. When their face started twitching again, he quickly added "Not to pry, of course, you don't *have* to tell me." Years of friendship with Jonathan had given him a tolerance for not knowing things other people wished to keep private, even when he wanted to know them. It was a courtesy he'd only extended to close friends so far, but he supposed it was the least he could do in this case.

"We were gonna sit on the couch and watch the news until we fell asleep." Twoface shrugged. "We weren't really up for more, still aren't really, but..."

But they were still letting everyone spend Halloween in their living-room. They were letting their house be overrun while they hid in the kitchen, because they just wanted to be alone (or as alone as either could ever get — did they find the lack of privacy from each other annoying, he wondered?). Maybe Edward should just leave them be, but he would rather not go back to the group quite yet. He was being a coward, he knew, hiding from his thoughts by hiding from the people connected to them.

He was aswell being selfish, ignoring Stephanie and imposing on Twoface. Now he wasn't just being a horrible father, but a horrible friend (coworker? Fellow inmate? Occasional partner in crime? What were they to each other, exactly?). He should just go back to the living-room.

Instead, he opened his big mouth and asked "Bad day?" As if it was any of his business. He really had to be testing Twoface's patience by now, he'd be lucky if the night didn't end in violence after all.

"Yeah." Twoface answered simply, not seeming annoyed in the slightest.

"Oh." Edward nodded, and an uneasy silence filled the small space. Despite working together a few times in the past, this was actually the longest conversation he'd ever had with them, not counting his panic attack rambling from barely an hour ago. Hell, this might be the longest time they've ever been in the same room outside Arkham. He shifted a little, having no idea what to say next.

Okay, that wasn't entirely true. He had plenty ideas of what to say next, mostly involving questions about how living with another person in your head worked, but nothing that felt appropriate to the moment. Should he even say anything, or just assume the conversation's over and leave? Before he can decide, Twoface piped up.

"You want a snack?" They asked, reaching around Edward to pull open the fridge door.

"What?" Edward backed away a step, turning to peek into the fridge. Twoface was offering him a snack. The same guy — guys — he was low-key terrified of whenever they bumped into each other in Arkham's cafeteria, the same guys that could break him in half with barely a second thought, the ruthless criminal ganglord that had almost as good a track record against Batman as he himself did—

"We need to go shopping soon, but we've got string cheese and apple slices."

—were offering him string cheese and apple slices. They apparently ate string cheese and apple slices. Though, was this honestly weirder than breaking up rhyming battles between Scarecrow and Mad Hatter? Or going trick-or-treating with a demon dressed as a kitten?

"Uh, thanks. *Made from bovine blood and left to rot, yet people like it quite a lot.*" Oops.

"We figured you as more of an apple slices guy." Twoface smirked, handing over the string cheese. They didn't seem the least bit bothered by the riddle. If anything, they seemed amused.

Curiouser and curiouser. Edward thought, then immediately followed it up with a mental note he knew he wouldn't follow to stop hanging around Jervis. He ate his string cheese slowly, trying to pick off even strips, and let another silence hang over them. For about a minute, anyways, before it got to be too much and he spouted the first thing that came to mind.

Which was, of course, a question. "So, bad dreams?"

"What?"

"You said you had a bad day." Edward explained. "Usually when Jon has a bad day, it's because of nightmares, so I thought it might be the same for you."

"Spooky gets nightmares?" Shit.

"Please don't ever tell him I told you that." Edward half-joked, half-begged. "He's very much willing to use his *delightful* Toxin on his friends, and I've had more than enough exposure for one lifetime."

Twoface nodded in agreement, their face doing that weird twitchy thing again. Now that he thought about it, Edward remembered it happening on a few heists in the past, and in the Arkham Rec Room. What caused it, what did it mean?

"...it wasn't bad dreams." Twoface said after a bit of quiet, the twitchiness gone now. *Interesting*. "There's not really a reason, it's just one of those days. You know?"

He did, actually. "Again, I really am sorry to impose on you like this. If you two wish, myself and my roommates shall go home. I can't make any promises for the clowns and Isley, unfortunately."

"And risk the Bat coming after you?" Twoface shook hi- their head. "No, who'd watch the kid if that happened? By the way, we still think it's a horrible idea for you to adopt her, mainly because what will happen *when* you next go to Arkham."

"I'm making arrangements for that scenario." Which mostly meant he was cutting back on crime almost to the point of unofficial retirement until she was older, but he wasn't ready to share that with anyone yet. Not even Jon and Jervis knew.

(The longer he put off telling others, the longer he could pretend he wasn't doing it).

"For what it's worth-" Twoface cut themselves off, pulling out their coin. They flipped it, smiling at the result. "For what it's worth, we think any of the Rogues adopting a kid is a bad idea, it's not a personal remark against you. You'd actually make a pretty good dad."

"You really think that?" Edward asked, letting an uncharacteristic amount of nervousness into his voice.

"Eh, don't let it go to your head, green bean." Twoface muttered, his tone coming out gruffer than it had been, sounding more like it did on heists. More like it had when he'd woken up. With the knowledge that they were two people, Edward began to wonder if the vocal shift was more than the mood signal he'd always thought of it as.

"I should've asked this a long time ago," should've figured it out a long time ago, "but is there any way you prefer to be addressed?"

"What the fuck are you on about now?" Twoface growled. Their face did that twitching thing again, with a deep scowl crossing their face. They sighed. "I mean, could you pretty please fucking clarify what the fuck you're talking about, green bean?"

Edward got the feeling that this is what it looked like when one personality was mocking the other, which was completely *fascinating*. But he had to stay focused, so he mentally shook himself and said "Do you both go by 'Harvey Dent', or do you each refer to yourselves differently? Does 'Twoface' represent one personality while 'Harvey' represents the other?"

Twoface blinked, staring at him as if they'd never been asked that before. Come to think of it, they probably hadn't.

Chapter 8: Talking (It Feels Nice)

What the fuck kind of question is that?! Harv panicked (he was not panicking, he was angry). What's his game?

Is it that hard to believe he honestly just wants to know? Harvey asked, uncertainly.

No-one else ever has.

No-one else ever referred to us as 'you two'. Harvey pointed out. And when was the last time someone asked if we had a bad dream?

Puh-leeze! He's probably just gathering info on our fears for the demon.

...Fair point. Harvey acknowledged. He caught Edward staring, probably waiting for an answer, and turned their head away. They were probably twitching like crazy right now. But still, would it really be that bad to tell him our names? I mean, don't you want to?

It was a big decision, too big to even use the Coin for. 'Twoface', 'Harvey', 'Harv' — everyone always just picked which one to call them, no-one knew (or cared) that there might be a difference. Them having different names had only ever been a thing between the two of them, to bring anyone else into that little bubble...

Fine, we can tell him. Harv grumbled. As a trial run, I guess, to see how people react. But you better not freak out when he ignores it and just calls us whatever he wants anyways, because I ain't in the mood to deal with your emotional shit.

I won't freak out. Harvey rolled their eyes, remembering too late that Edward could still see them. Edward, who was very patiently still waiting, not looking the least bit bothered.

Harvey cleared their throat, knowing he was going to have to say this for both of them. "Uh, no, Twoface is both of us. It's a shared villain name. I'm Harvey, the other one is Harv. But, really, it's okay for you to call us whatever. We're used to it." He felt nervous, really wishing Harv would be the one to do this, while paradoxically being glad he wasn't.

"It's a pleasure to be properly introduced." Edward smirked, holding out his hand. "So Harvey's the one that calmed me down from my little, ugh, episode, I'm guessing?"

"How'd you know?" Harvey asked, carefully shaking his hand.

"You haven't cursed, so I'm guessing it's the rude one that goes by 'Harv'." Edward said smugly, as if proud of himself for figuring that out. A second later, he coughed, leaning away. "No offense meant, of course! Living with Jon has made me more than used to a bit of insult, after all."

"Would you stop panicking, you fucking twit?" Harv growled, ignoring Harvey's protests. "We're not gonna beat you up while your fucking kid's in the house."

I doubt he was worried about that.

Trust me, he definitely was. Harv laughed. *Hey, do me a favor and don't let me beat him up without flipping for it first, will ya?*

That was already my plan. Harvey agreed, inwardly smirking. He knew that was as close as Harv was going to get to saying he kinda liked Edward, but it was a lot more than he had expected from his other half.

"Is that tone change a conscious decision or a subconscious one?" Edward burst out, as if he'd been trying not to ask and had failed. There was something puppy-like in the way his eyes got wider as he continued asking, "Does your voice always change when who's in control changes? Are there other signs, and how often are they even there? How do you decide who gets to be in charge when? How—"

The questions kept coming, Edward looking alternatively excited and horrified as he asked in a seemingly endless stream of talking.

That's it, I'm shutting him up. Harv reached out a hand, blocking the other's mouth. Edward flinched, then froze. *Oops, didn't mean to frighten him.*

Yes you did. Harvey mentally sighed, removing their hand. He started answering a few of Edward's questions, though he had to really think about a couple.

It was strangely nice. No-one had ever been this interested in knowing more about them before, and even if it was due to The Riddler's compulsion to learn as much as he could, it felt good to be the center of attention for something other than crime (or stopping crime, when he was a DA).

Eventually, though, they were interrupted by the kitchen door opening slowly. Big brown eyes and blonde hair peeked around the door, Stephanie very hesitantly speaking once Edward turned to look at her. "D-dad?"

Edward's entire body tensed up, eyes going wide and mouth hanging open a little. He seemed a bit like his brain had just stopped working and he had to wait for it to re-boot.

Wait, is *that* the first time she's called him *that*?

Idiot's gonna mess it up if he doesn't answer. Harv actually sounded worried, in a pissed-off way. She's going to be too fucking anxious to do it again.

Acting on impulse, Harvey elbowed Edward in the ribs as subtly as he could, quietly hissing without fully opening his mouth "Say something!"

"Um, uh, y-yes, Sweetie?" Edward smiled shakily, rubbing his ribs. He briefly glanced at Twoface, though they couldn't figure out whether it was a silent thanks or a glare. It might've been both.

"We're gonna watch Beetlejuice, now." She said quietly, moving a bit more behind the door. "Are you gonna watch it with us? You don't have to, but..."

"Oh, Sweetie!" Edward fretted. "Of course I want to watch it with you. I didn't mean to ignore you, Steph, I just needed a few moments away from everyone. Uncle Jon's Toxin made my panic attack a bit worse than normal, I'm still a little shaken up, but just give me a minute more and I'll be right out. Okay?"

Before Harvey could question the wisdom of talking to a little girl about panic attacks, Stephanie nodded as if she perfectly understood, leaving with a smile. Then again, considering the trio she lived with, this was almost certainly not the first time she'd seen someone have one.

"Well, I guess I should get out of your hair." Edward smirked. "No more annoying questions tonight, I'm afraid."

"Too bad." Harvey answered much too honestly. He felt a lot better than he had all day. Maybe even good enough to...

You know, I've never actually watched Beetlejuice. Harvey thought slowly. Aren't there two movies?

Ugh, you bastard. Harv grumbled, but he didn't even try to reach for the Coin, instead just pushing past Edward while muttering about how his favorite spot on the couch better as Hell be available.

Edward followed them to the living-room, a look of happy confusion on his face completely missed considering their back was facing him.

Chapter 9: Best Halloween Ever

Read a couple fics where Edward had a habit of sitting on the back of furniture, and I thought it was a ridiculous but neat quirk to give him.

This is the end of the story, the next chapter is a bonus of sorts (plus Fanart, starting on October 31st). I hope you enjoyed my story! 😊

J was having a *great* time! Here he was, surrounded by more of his friends than he'd thought he'd run into that night, about to watch one of his all-time favorite movies. Not that he'd ever actually seen it, but the guy on the front looked cool and it was directed by Tim Burton, so it had to be great.

The only thing that could make this better would be if Batsy decided to join them, but he knew that was unlikely. Ah well, he could just crash the Wayne Halloween party tomorrow night (held late so Brucie could take his Flock trick-or-treating, not that his Darling would admit that). Until then, he'd just enjoy a night in with the gang.

The gang who all looked a lot happier than they had before, which he liked. Even Twoface was frowning in that way that meant he was actually smiling but didn't want to show it. Which probably had something to do with Eddie being practically glued to him at the hip, no trace of his little panic attack left. Aww, how cute! J hoped they invited him to the wedding, he'd hate to have to crash it. Well, actually, he'd love to crash it. But Harley would probably get mad at him if he did, so he still hoped they invited him.

"Mr. Joker?" The little girl who'd been wearing Spooky's mask tugged at his sleeve. Who'da thunk that Eddie would actually decide to get a little one of his own, just like the Bat? J hoped this didn't lead to a Riddler Flock, he doubted Gotham could take that. Though all the green and purple minisuits would be *adorable*.

The girl was staring at him, why-? Oh, right, she'd been trying to get his attention. What was her name, again? It started with 'E', didn't it? Hmmmm... Well, he supposed he could just call her random things until someone corrected him. That was usually a pretty good plan.

"Yes, kiddie?" He grinned widely at her. Most kids backed away when he did that, which he thought was funny but (he remembered too late) usually made Harley angry, for some reason. The kid didn't even flinch, instead smiling back at him. It was a small, uncertain expression, but he still mentally gave her points for it.

"Do you want to hear a joke?" She asked, shifting back and forth hesitantly. What, did she think he was gonna say no? To a joke? *The Joker*?

"Of course I do, Alice!" J clapped, bouncing in his seat. "Always." He added, just to make sure she knew that. She looked like someone who didn't get listened to enough.

The kid's smile turned into a grin, eyes brightening. "Okay, uh, knock-knock."

"Oooh, a classic!" He giggled. "Who's dere?"

"Chickens." She answered.

"Chickens who?" He asked, trying to remember if he'd heard this one before. He didn't think so, and wasn't that exciting?

"No, they don't." She said very seriously, shaking her head. "They cluck."

J was quiet for a second, processing. Then, he burst into laughter, throwing his head back as he crowed. "Hey, Eddie! Yer kid's a comedic *genius*!" Not like he was, of course, but give her a few years...

"Of course she is." Edward said proudly, smiling at her. He didn't smile at J, instead briefly scowling at him, but J expected that. Eddie loved pretending they weren't friends, and J wasn't about to deny him the little joke. Didn't mean he couldn't tease him back, of course.

"Yer dad doesn' have da slightest bit o' comedic timin', kid." J winked at her, making her laugh. "Maybe ya could teach 'im a ting or two, huh?"

"I'll try." She agreed with that silly-serious look kids were so good at. "Do you want to hear another joke?"

Before J could respond (yes, of course he wanted to, why would that even be a question?), Eddie interrupted. "Sweetie, how about you tell him more later? The movie's about the start."

"Okay, Dad." The kid agreed, hesitating just slightly on the 'dad' part. She went over to the chair that he'd perched himself on the back of, claiming the arm. With no other spot available, Twoface reluctantly sat on the actual seat, scowling at Edward in a way J knew was to hide a smile.

Harley turned off the lights, then bounced over to the couch that J occupied, laying down with her feet dangling over one edge and her head in his lap. Ivy sat on the floor with her head against Harls' stomach, balancing avoiding him and staying near her girlfriend (were they dating yet? J couldn't remember, but decided it didn't matter).

Spooky, his demon, and the Hatter were occupying the other couch, pretending not to cuddle. Well, Spooky was pretending not to, while the others were actively impeding his attempts to do so.

Surrounded by friends, a fun movie starting, his fingers carefully trailing through Harley's pigtails, J felt *calm* for once. It wasn't trick-or-treating, nor was it a night out with his Darling, but it still was rather nice. Who knew that movie night could be so fun and relaxing?

"Hey." Harley sat up a little, looking around. "I jus' remembered dat Cat wandered off. Wonder wha' she's up ta?"

"Eh, who cares?" Ivy dismissed, waving her hand. "Just enjoy the movie, Harls, she'll be fine."

"If ya say so, Pammy." Harley shrugged, laying back down.

Best Halloween ever. J thought, unknowing that Edward and Twoface were thinking the exact same thing.

Stephanie — watching a Halloween movie with wide eyes while her new Dad was right next to her, surrounded by interesting people she'd learned all sorts of new things from, after a night of trick-or-treating and with the promise of buying treats tomorrow — had a thought that was very similar, but not quite the same.

Best first Halloween ever.

Chapter 10: Bonus: Whatever Happened To The ~~Mouse~~ Cat?

If anyone knows whether it's possible to do that line-through-the-words thing on chapter names, I'd really appreciate the info. Thanks. ☺

This chapter will include Fanart starting on Halloween. The reason I won't put it in its own chapter is so I can keep the nice round number ten I accidentally reached.

I forgot that Jon was supposed to have a straw hat. Uh... Just pretend he's wearing one?
Hope you enjoyed reading as much as I enjoyed writing/drawing ☺

"Trick-or-treat!"

"Sorry, lady, the museum isn't giving out candy."

"I think my friends would disagree with that."

"What frie- YAAH!"

Rrow! Meow! Hissss!

"Don't forget the shiny ones in the Egyptian Exhibit, babies!"

"Ozzie, you know -yipe- I love calls from you -oof- but I'm a little -rrow!- busy here!"

"Are you seriously on the phone while trying to rob me?"

"-Shush, Waylon, I'm trying to hear- Katrina did what now? Can't you -I swear I will claw your eyes out, Croc!- deal with it? Oh, fine, put her on. -Can you stop for five seconds, dear?-"

"Nuh-uh, I stole those fish fair and square! If you can't fight while on the phone, you could always just give me back my stash."

"-No, no, I can do both- Kitty, I'm very proud -yah- that you pulled it off, but -woah, close but not enough, dear- you know better than to steal from Daddy's -did you just try to bite me, scale face?!- business associates."

"Okay, I shouldn't've tried to bite you! Now get your claws outta my face!"

"Honey, it's okay if Daddy was flirting, you know that. So long as he didn't— wait, he flirted with *who*, now?"

"Uh-oh."

"...put Daddy on the phone, honey."

"You know what? Keep the fish, I'm just gonna... See ya!"

"Trick-or-treat!"

"Oh, what adorable costumes! Here you go, little ones."

"Rock candy?"

"Not the edible sort, dear. Now, remember to wait a few weeks before trying to sell them, let the heat cool down."

"Alfred! Bruce let Aunt Selina give out candy again!"

— end of "Stephanie's Second First Halloween" —