



★ When Did I Start Shipping Batjokes?! ★

Batman - All Media Types · Not Rated · 1585 words

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Joker's feeling a little sad at Christmas, so he goes for a walk. Who does he happen to meet, but Batman!

My 6th fic to ever reach 100 Kudos!

Batman already suspected that Joker knew, he just wasn't expecting him to admit it.

"Jingle Bells, Batman Smells..!" Joker loudly sang, destroying a make-shift workshop he'd been using. As a table splintered under the force of his mallet, ripped-up blue-prints flying everywhere, he let out a growl that sounded more beast than man.

"Mistah J, I'm headin' ovah ta Red's-" Harley stopped in the doorway, mouth open as she took in the wreckage. "Puddin', are ya alright?"

"For your own safety, Harl," Joker panted, "enjoy the Holidays with your girlfriend and leave me alone."

"...We're talkin' 'bout dis when I get back." Harley whispered, walking away. "Have a merry Christmas, Mistah J."

"Not likely." Joker sighed, dropping his mallet, his energy suddenly gone. He rifled through the rubble for his coat and hat; maybe a walk would make him feel better.

Every Christmas, the same things happened, the same groups formed. Harley and Ivy, the Dorks, the B-Listers -- everyone had someone to spend time with, in Arkham and out.

Everyone except Joker. Oh, sure, he could play third wheel and hang with Harley. Could crash Penguin's private party. Could bring himself down to the level of Condi-ment King and such. Could convert and spend Hanukkah with Croc.

But he didn't. Because no one actually wanted him with them during this time of year. And, besides, they weren't who he really wanted to be with.

Joker trudged through the snowy streets of Gotham, the hood of his coat pulled low to cover his latex mask that made him look *normal*. The Joker had to be fun and laughing and crazy, but he didn't feel any of those things right then, so he could hardly be Joker.

Jacob, then. Jack. Jack bought some hot chocolate from a street vendor and drank it on a bench in the park. It was such an everyday sorta thing, something people did all the time, were doing at the same time as him.

It was strangely comforting, just being a human being for once. Not a supervillain, not a mutant, not a clown -- just a guy, enjoying his cocoa.

Jack looked up, to the horizon. Between two skyscrapers, he could see a hill in the distance with a dark building on it. Wayne Manor. All the little Bats and Birds were in Gotham, no Rogue was planning anything big, and the Wayne Christmas Party was canceled that year -- Batman would get to spend the Holiday with the people he cared for.

Not Joker. Not Jacob. Batman hated one and didn't know the other. Jack sighed and tore his gaze away. The sun was setting, he had to go home and clean up before the morning, try (and probably fail) to convince Harley that his freak-out hadn't actually happened.

He stood up, stretched, and froze. He'd seen a dark figure jump between two buildings, black cape fluttering like wings, but he *had* to be wrong. Batman wasn't seriously patrolling during Christmas, right? The guy was at home, taking full advantage of this rare opportunity to celebrate with his entire family.

...or he was shooting a grappling hook and scaling the side of a skyscraper. Jack cursed, ripping off his mask and coat. Looks like the Joker was going to have to talk some sense into the idiot.

"Heya, Darling!" Joker crooned, jumping into a roof behind Batman. "Merry Christmas!"

"Joker." Batman said in his gravelly voice, turning to glare at the clown. For the tiniest second, his anger almost seemed to be hiding relief. "What are you planning this year?"

"Darling, you wound me." Had he gone on a few Christmas crime sprees since Harley got a girlfriend? Maybe, but still... "I jus' wanted ta see how you were doing, dis fine holiday season."

"You're accent's changing more than normal." Batman said quietly, almost curiously. He growled, stating more loudly, "I don't buy it, Joker. Tell me what you're planning, now!"

"Batsy, I-" he cut himself off as something occurred to him. He growled back, surprising the Dark Knight. "Oh no you don't. Ya don' get ta use me ta ignore your family on Christmas! What tha hell are ya even doin' out?"

"I have a responsibility to the citizens of Gotham." Batman argued, almost defensively. "I-"

"You have a responsibility to those idiots that somehow managed to win your affection." Joker stomped closer to the other. "What's up with you? You're on a cold rooftop with *me* when ya could be in a warm mansion wit' *them*."

Batman's eyes went wide behind the white lenses, and Joker chuckled mirthlessly. "Yeah, Brucie, I figured that out a while ago. Darling, I'll let you take me ta Arkham if you want, just go spend da holiday with those who care about you."

"You really aren't planning anything?" Batman asked, apparently taking the news his archenemy knew his real name with grace.

"I'm plannin' ta clean mah hideout." Joker shrugged. "Maybe eat my weight in potato chips and fudge."

"You aren't spending the day with Harley?" Batman asked, not making a single move to put some distance between them.

"Uh, well..." Joker hadn't been expecting that. Usually there was punching by now. "I used to, but she's got Ivy these last few years. I mean, they invite me every year, but I'm pretty sure the day ends in the 'bedroom' for them, so..."

Batman actually smirked, a small one but it was definitely a smirk. It dropped into a frown. "So you just spend Christmas by yourself or committing crimes?"

"Yeah, but I'm not gonna pull anything this year, honest." Joker held his arms out in a placating gesture. "Now, go on! All the little pups and chicks are in town, be with them."

"Why are you so obsessed with this?" Batman asked, actually taking a step closer.

"You work so hard, Darling. Take a break." Joker made no move, neither closing nor expanding the gap. Would they fight now, finally? "Or, ya could spend the night with you favorite punchin' bag."

"You aren't a punching bag." Batman frowned deeper.

"I know, Batsy." Joker rolled his eyes. They'd had this argument too many times. Snow started slowly falling, though the stars could still mostly be seen. Dark, grey Gotham was filled with light and soft powder. It was beautiful.

They both spent some time just staring. At some point, they sat down, their legs swinging over the edge of the building.

"Alfie's gonna be worried 'bout you." Joker broke the silence, but his voice was soft, barely able to be heard.

"I once heard Dr Fries call you Jacob Doe." Batman replied in a complete non sequitur, making Joker tense up. "Is that your real name?"

"...No." He took a second before he responded. He knew his Dark Knight's real face, it was only fair to give him *something* in return, right? So he whispered "The first part is, though."

"So Doe is an alias?" Batman was whispering as well, as if he was trying just as hard to not completely shatter the moment. Neither had looked at each other, still looking out over Gotham. "Is there a legal paper trail? How far does it go?"

"Interrogating me on Christmas, Batsy?" Joker chuckled. "You still need ta get back home, ya know."

"Does Mr Doe have an address?" Batman asked.

"Why do you care?" Something broke in Joker, making him panic. If Batman found his address, he wouldn't get to be Jacob Doe anymore, wouldn't ever get to be a 'civilian' again.

"...Do you want to come to my Christmas party?" There was something innately comical about such words being spoken in his signature stoic, gruff voice, but Joker didn't laugh. "The big one was canceled, but there's a smaller one. No one would look twice at me bringing an unfamiliar face."

Unfamiliar. He'd have to go in disguise. Go to Bruce Wayne's private Christmas party. Spend Christmas with Batman, but not fighting. His mouth hung open, and he couldn't remember how to speak.

"This was a bad idea." Batman muttered, making to stand up. To leave.

"Wait!" Joker yelled. He grinned. "Of course I want ta go! I need ta stop at my hideout an' change, but yes, I'll come. Why would you possibly invite me?"

"Why did I spend the sunset on a cold rooftop instead of a warm manor?" Batman asked. "The party starts at nine, semi-formal wear. Shall I tell Alfred to expect a Jacob Doe, or do you have a different alias you'd rather use."

"J-Jacob is fine." Joker swallowed, not believing what was happening. "But I sorta go by Jack?"

"See you at nine, Jack." In a blink, Batman was gone.

A few minutes passed without movement or sound. Then, like an old dam being broken apart, Jack Napier fell onto his back in uncontrollable laughter.

He had a date with Bruce Wayne, with his Darling Bat! What just happened, was any of that real? What did this even mean? No way his Dark Knight wanted a long-term thing. Could they even make that work, considering?

He jumped up, rushing home. It didn't matter, honestly. Whatever happened next, one thing was absolutely certain -- this was the best Christmas ever.

— end of "★When Did I Start Shipping Batjokes?!★" —