



◻◻◆ I See You ◆◻◻

Batman - All Media Types · Batman: The Animated Series · Not Rated · 5844 words

by Arukir

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❖ I See You ❖

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In a world where Joker isn't a murderous, abusive scumbag, he wouldn't be the kind of guy to manipulate a young psychiatrist into losing her mind.

So how did Doctor Harleen Quinzel become the infamous Harley Quinn?

Chapter 1: Backstory

Everyone loves a bit of backstory, right? This particular version of Joker is not a sadistic, murdering, psychopathic scumbag -- everyone just thinks he is.

Joker's threatening a hostage? That hostage is a struggling actor who's getting paid for what he thinks is a gig.

Joker's killed someone? That someone really needed to fake their death, and he was happy to help, whether they asked for it or not.

Joker's made all the fish in Gotham Bay look like him and now they're toxic to humans? Well, yes, he actually did that. But the fish aren't *deadly*, they're still alive, and he's secretly an animal rights activist.

This version of Joker is a prankster, a thief, a showman -- he causes massive disruption and he sometimes destroys things, but he doesn't *hurt* anyone. Some people (Batman, the Rogues, even Commissioner Gordon) slowly find out what he's actually like; A big fluffy goofball.

But that raises one very important question: how did Harley find out? In a world where they didn't date, in a world where he wasn't the kind of guy to mentally break someone for laughs, in a world where neither of them are psychopaths -- how did Dr Harleen Quinzel become the infamous Harley Quinn?

Let's find out...

Chapter 2: It Hurts When I Laugh (I Laugh So Hard I Cry)

This chapter is Joker's POV (3rd Person), but most of the fic is from Harley's POV (3rd Person).
TW for swearing?

"What if one of your victims had children? What do you think would happen to them?" The psychiatrist asks. He's stopped paying attention to the finer details like gender, age, race -- it doesn't matter, they never last more than a few weeks any more.

"Hmmm..." He pretends to think, leaning back in his chair. *They'd be 'dead' too*, "Little Timmy would finally get the big room all to himself?"

Monster. Sick, depraved, monster. This one's too professional, or maybe too scared, to say those things. Yet he calls himself that and worse, every time he adds a joke to the sick stand-up act that's become his life. But as long as that act's on the lineup, no criminal in Gotham dares mess with him or his territory (or the people in it). So he just laughs every time they hurry out in horror, wishing he could run too.

Ah, damnit, when'd the shrink leave? And the clock's moved too much. The meds they give him in Arkham never work, his blood's not human anymore, they just make him lose time. Enough time that now he's being escorted to his cell by four guards.

If he really wanted to escape, they wouldn't be near enough. Hell, ten guards probably wouldn't be able to handle him long. But Batman could stop him all by his lonesome, the Darling crusader was incredible that way.

Joker grinned as he was led down the middle of two rows of cells, whistling and laughing. It was a good evening. His session was over, he'd thought of the best joke to tell Penguin next time they started up a gang war (they were due for one soon), the new therapist was letting him have crayons *and paper*! It didn't get much better than that.

After he was locked into his cell, his brain started *buzzing*. There was something he needed to do, something about the guards... Joker snaps his fingers when he finally remembers -- the guards have been acting strange, whispering about something, increasing security.

"Heeeey, Eddie boy!" Joker laughs, pressing his face against the bars to catch a glimpse of the man in the cell next to his. He knows Riddler's scowling, because Riddler hates him. The boy's no murderer, most of the criminals in their block aren't.

"What do you need, clown?" Riddler grumbles, unlocking his cage and standing where he can see Joker. The guards let him, used to it and knowing he won't help any of the other inmates 'cheat' their way out. They wouldn't be able to stop him escaping any-ways.

"Do ya know why tha staff's so worked up?" Joker asks casually, knowing the other was too scared of him to refuse answering. Which was a pity, because Joker actually liked him.

"There's a new psychiatrist coming in tomorrow." Riddler answered, crossing his arms and leaning against the wall. "Is that all? I'm a very busy man, you know; I don't have time to waste on this nonsense."

"Since when does a newbie cause this much fuss?" Joker wagged his finger scoldingly, still smiling. "You're hiding something, Eddiekins. You know I don't like that."

The briefest flash of panic went through Riddler's eyes, gone so quickly most people would have thought him entirely unfazed. "If you must know, she volunteered to transfer here. Practically begged for the position, from what I hear."

"What?!" Joker plopped down on the thing that was supposedly a bed, staring in disbelief. "Who volunteers for Arkham?"

"Dr Harleen Quinzel, apparently." Riddler answered, shrugging.

Across from Joker's cell, Jonathan Crane fell out of his bed where he'd been peacefully resting up until then, choking on his water as he struggled to stand. That demon of his squawked and growled while he recovered his southern voice. "Ed, please tell me ya didn' jus' say 'Harleen Quinzel'."

"You know I detest lying, Jon." Riddler replied, raising an eyebrow curiously. "Why? Do you know her?"

"She was one of mah students." Crane actually *smiled* fondly for a second as he sat down, petting his demon. "One of the brightest people ah ever met."

"I-I thought you hated your students?" Riddler asked, suddenly nervous.

"I did." Crane answered simply, his accent fading as he regained his focus. "She was a rare pleasure ta teach, though. Always challenging norms and asking questions, not at all like those dunderheads I would usually lecture. They couldn't grasp the very basics."

"You were fond of her?" Riddler was definitely nervous now, pushing himself subtly into the wall. "No falling outs or anything?"

"Not reall-" Crane squinted his eyes at his friend. "Ed, what do you know?"

"Know? I don-" He choked on the lie. "Two sisters, *each gives birth to the other -- what are their names?*"

"Edward, what are you hiding?" Crane was standing next to his bars now, glaring.

"Here's a hint; one sister says 'I am The Day.'"

"Da other says 'I am The Night.'" Joker answered gleefully, wondering if he should do something. Rune collar or no, Scarecrow was dangerous when upset, and usually managed to sneak in a vial or two of that Fear Toxin stuff.

"Very good!" Riddler praised. Yeah, he had to be absolutely panicking to praise Joker for something like *that*. "Do you know this one? *What walks on four legs in the-*"

"Ed!" Crane shouted, flashing a vial hidden in his palm just long enough for them to see, and Joker knew he *definitely* had to do something to deescalate this. It was always fifty-fifty on whether that stuff would work on him, but he'd found those odds much too high in the past. "Tell me what's wrong, or I swear..."

"She's been assigned to Joker." And with that, Riddler scurried back to his cell, probably hiding from the sudden onslaught of shouting from Crane.

Joker didn't know what Crane was saying, whether it was directed at him, or whether the Scarecrow had already screamed himself hoarse. All he could think about was that the Warden was an utter *moron*.

Seasoned psychiatrists had quit after hearing the sorts of things the Joker spouted. Even Doc Leland had taken a swing at him once, and she wasn't even disciplined afterwards -- it was a mild reaction, considering how far his act had gone that day. Yet they thought a *newbie* could handle him?!

He wasn't even entirely sure a newbie could remain sane if they were in the same room with him too long. He couldn't drop the act, it would ruin his reputation and destroy his power within the criminal community.

There was only one solution; he had to put on his creepiest smile, recall his most frightening crimes, and scare this new shrink off before Arkham broke her. It shouldn't be too hard, after all she was just young, innocent Harleen Quinzel.

Heh, how much challenge could one little Harlequin be for a master criminal like him?

Chapter 3: All I Hear Are The Sobs (It Drives Me Crazy)

Trigger warning for implied, hypothetical violence/murder (nothing graphic).

Dr. Harleen Quinzel had received, as her first assignment ever, the Joker. It was... Terrifying, honestly. But it was exciting at the same time.

If she could get into the Joker's head, figure out what makes him tick, she'd unlock some of the greatest puzzles of the mind ever encountered. If she could survive him, she could survive anyone.

And if she figured out what drove him off the deep end, maybe she could figure out how to stop *herself* from doing so. Cut the little tendrils she saw in herself before they really had a chance to sprout. She just needed to learn how to get to the root of it all.

So she dressed prim and proper in her business suit, did her hair all professional-like, and slipped on fake glasses -- they made her look more mature. Her heels went click-clack as she walked down the halls of the Asylum, mouth a straight line, the picture of a serious psychiatrist.

She just had one little stop to make before she could really get to work. Harleen approached one of the cells, smiling softly. "Heya, Professor. Heya, Corvin." She whispered to the resting figures.

Professor Jonathan Crane sat up slowly, eyes widening. "Child, is that really you?"

Corvin didn't wait for a confirmation, slipping through the bars to pounce on her. Harleen laughed, hugging the demon before pushing him back into the cell. "Yeah, it's really me, Professor."

"You... Look so grown up." He smiled, coming closer to her. "I can hardly recognize you, Harleen. In a good way, I mean."

"I know, Professor." She smiled wider. "Listen, I'm not allowed to be assigned to ya-to you, because I was your student, but Doctor Leland said I could sit in on some of her sessions with you, if you want."

"I would like that, Child." Professor Crane nodded, smiling softly. "Please tell me it isn't true that you were assigned to the Joker, of all patients?"

"I'll be safe, I promise." Harleen assured him, but he still looked worried. "Dontcha worry, Professah. He starts somethin', I'll give 'im da boot, ya know?"

"I'm sure you will, Ms Quinzel." The Professor paused for a moment, turning towards Corvin, nodding in that way that meant the demon had said something to him. "Yes, yes, excellent point. Doctor Quinzel." His face twisted in worry as he turned back to Harleen. "Ah wan' ya ta tahk ta me if ya feel tha least bit as if he's tryin' ta manipulate ya, alrigh'? Fear experiments aside, ah was a damn good therapist."

"Of course." Harleen agreed easily. He was less careful about his accent slipping than when she'd last seen him, which honestly may have been a good thing. "I have to get going if I don't want to be late on my first day. Have a good day, Professor Crane."

"And you, Doctor Quinzel." Professor Crane nodded goodbye, watching her walk off, her professional mask back on. "If that clown touches a hair on her head..."

Later that night, laying in bed, Harleen couldn't stop thinking about her first meeting with the feared Clown Prince Of Crime. The things he'd done, what he said, they were utterly horrifying.

They were as well inconsistent. His stories didn't match up, they were lies. He met a person in one he had supposedly killed in a story set years previously. He was making things up, and no one knew why.

More than that, something was wrong with him. He'd gone utterly blank at one point, not responding for an hour, at which point he'd just continued his sentence as if no time had passed at all.

He was confusing, horrifying, and many of her colleagues refused to be within the same room as him. She was utterly, completely, entirely hooked.

Weeks passed, and Harleen made a fascinating discovery; Joker lied about his past. To her, he spewed a tale of his wondrous father he sought to emulate, apparently incapable of seeing how abusively he was treated throughout childhood.

To some, an unhealthy fascination with the circus led to him killing a ringleader to take his place. Others heard how he'd been born looking as he does now, and his parents had locked him away in disgust, his only companion the voices in his head.

A different beginning for every person he talked to. Were they all entirely lies? Was there truth hidden in them? Could he even remember what the truth of the matter was?

That last question seemed most important. His blackouts were happening more frequently, each time they increased his meds, and he almost seemed to be getting sick. When Joker started refusing the food in the cafeteria, cracking jokes about feeding on, well... *Horrible things*, she demanded a blood test.

If he'd ever been a normal human, he certainly wasn't anymore. In a few days, she managed to discontinue his meds and start him on a unique regimen of supplements that would've killed a regular man. He needed things that were *deadly* to anyone else, just to survive.

And that gave her the idea for a new type of med. She walked into the session room, pills clinking in their little bottle, one month (almost to the day) since their first meeting.

"Heya, Harley!" Joker adored nicknames, and hers was Harley Quinn. He leaned forward in his chair, exaggerated surprise on his face. "You're still here? Thought you would've ran for the hills by now."

"Good morning, Mister J." Harleen had been pleased to discover that he reacted with both surprise and slightly heightened cooperation after she'd returned his pet name. "I have something for you."

"Is it a puppy?" Joker grinned, sharp and cruel. "I do so love to 'play' with puppies."

"I could 'accidentally' leave one in your cell." Harleen challenged. After she'd caught him saving a rat one of the other inmates had tried to drown, she'd realized how many of his crimes resulted in increased wellbeing for wildlife. He'd probably literally play with a puppy if he found it, give it treats, and attack anyone that tried to take it away.

Joker sputtered, deflating a little. "That won' be necessary, Doc. I'd hate ta hafta move cells while they, heh, cleaned up da mess."

"Uh-huh." Harleen rolled her eyes, smiling a little. Once you realized he really was only joking, it was kinda funny to see the lengths he'd go to keep his reputation intact. She put the pill bottle between them on the table. "It's not a puppy, but I don't think anyone would bat an eye if you called it Fido."

Joker hastily covered up a laugh, then stared at the bottle. Was it her imagination, or did he look betrayed? His grin grew stressed, fake. "Doc, I thought ya said I didn' hafta take my meds anymore? I don' like it when people lie ta me, Harley."

"These are new meds, based on your DNA." Harleen assured him. "They might work better. And if they don't, I'll take you off them immediately, I promise."

Joker just kept staring at the bottle, grin falling into a frown. It was the sort of facial expression a normal human wouldn't have been able to make, too wide and too sharp.

"If you don't want to take them, you don't have to." Harleen said quietly. "I just think it might help with your mood swings, and the memory issues."

His eyes snapped up, holding her gaze. After a few quiet seconds, he grinned, breaking into laughter. "Oh, Harley Quinn, wherever did ya come from? You see too clearly for a place like dis. I think I'll actually be a lil' sad when you leave."

Another thing she'd noticed was that Joker's accent seemed to change, somewhat randomly, somewhat with his mood. He'd been recorded talking in his sleep a few times, and his accent still changed even then. No one knew why, apparently not even Joker himself.

"Don't you worry, Mister J," Harleen winked. "I'm not leaving anytime soon."

He stopped laughing, looking at her curiously. He sighed. "Ya know what da sad ting is, Harls? I think that might be true."

Chapter 4: I Dig A Little Deeper (Guess What I See?)

Trigger warning for attempted strangling and a syringe being used as self-defense. And for mentions of extreme bodily injury (nothing graphic).

The next month went by smoothly, with Joker's mood vastly improved since he'd started the new meds. But he'd apparently gotten a little too comfortable, slipping up more with his stories.

It was enough for Harley to start investigating. And what she found were names. Lists of victims whose bodies were never found, timed suspiciously near the disappearance of large amounts of money. What she found was one name in particular; Charlie.

A man that Joker had supposedly killed, along with his family, in the most gruesome of ways. A man she'd managed to find, by following trails that no one who didn't know Joker like she did would ever think to look at.

Charlie lived in Europe with a great deal of euros, and he claimed that Joker had let him live as part of an informant network. He as well claimed that the only information Joker ever seemed interested in was whether anyone had found them or not.

Charlie, who had been hunted by the mob before his supposed untimely demise. This one little discovery led to more, and more, and more. Three months after she'd first met the Clown Prince Of Crime, Harleen realized something she'd begun to grasp at that first night; The Joker was a *fraud*.

Harleen rushed in to the Asylum, responding to an emergency call. Apparently one of the new nurses had accidentally given Joker the wrong meds, some sort of experimental stimulant, and he'd gone on a rampage.

Casualties: 0

Injured: at least ten guards, 3 nurses, and a fellow inmate.

She found him with his back pressed against the wall, hidden in the med wing, scalpel clinched in his left hand. No one had been able to get near him, and there was talk of bringing Batman in if tasers didn't work. Hopefully, neither would be necessary.

"Hey, Joker." Harleen said softly, slowly approaching him. Glazed green eyes unsteadily tried to focus on her, pupils tiny pinpricks. "I heard you weren't feeling too well."

He just growled at her, raising the scalpel.

"Come on, there's no need for that." Harleen soothed, stopping midway between him and the door. "Do you recognize me? Doctor Quinzel -- Harleen."

"...Harley?" Joker asked, seeming confused. He shook his head violently, growling louder. "Stay away, toots, or else."

"I just want to help you, Joker." Harleen held up a syringe. "I have something that will flush those bad meds out of your system, but I need you to stand down. If you don't, they'll call the Batman, and you don't want that, right?"

"Batsy?" Joker faltered, pupils widening though still unfocused. "H-he can't see me like this."

"I know, you don't want your enemy to see you weak." Harleen agreed, trying to sneak closer.

"No." Joker shook his head. He mumbled deliriously. "Batsy won't like me anymore, if I'm not a challenge."

Like him? Harleen thought over the new things she'd figured out about Joker. What if... "Everyone thinks you hate Batman. Do you?"

"Hate?!" In his fog, Joker actually seemed surprised. He whimpered, shaking his head. "Batsy, Darling, dear -- never hate 'im. Nevah."

Focused on this newest discovery, Harleen forgot to pay attention to wear she was going, hitting into a rolling chair. The chair fell towards Joker with a loud clatter, making the clown's eyes go back to pinpricks. Pinpricks that lost all recognition as they zeroed in on Harleen.

Oops, was all she had time to think before he pounced on her, hands gripped around her throat, utter panic and rage flaring in his dazed eyes.

"J-Joker... Please..." She gasped out, trying to pry his hands off. It was no use, he was stronger than anyone she'd ever met. She grabbed the syringe, plunging it into his arm

with all the force she could muster. His metabolism worked it through his body in seconds, eyes starting to clear. "Please... Mistah J..."

"H-Harley?" Joker still looked so confused, releasing her and scrambling backwards across the floor. "Oh God. I didn' mean ta, I swear, I didn't. Harley, I'm sorry, I-" he jumped up and ran, with not a single person *daring* to stop him.

"Are you alright, Doctor Quinzel?" Was asked about a million times, and each time Harleen simply answered that she was fine. But she wasn't.

No one knew where Joker was, and it was another month and a half before she saw him again.

Four and a half months after they'd first met, Harleen watched Joker get dragged in to the Asylum by Batman.

"He needs medical attention." Was the Dark Knight's understatement of the century. Joker was bleeding in a hundred different places, several bones were visibly broken, one of his eyes was swollen entirely shut -- and that was just what Harleen could see before the med staff rushed him away.

"That monster!" Harleen hissed at Batman's retreating form. "How can anyone just beat someone bloody like that?"

"That ain't Batman's doing." Professor Crane called out, surprising her. He was standing by the bars, staring at the bloody spot the Joker had laid in before being taken away. She knew him well enough to see the disguised horror in his eyes. "I know first hand that the Bat is willing to go to extreme measures to protect civilians, but the amount of force necessary to *that* to the clown? Batman stops when you're no longer a threat, not when you're a bloody pulp."

"Are you saying someone else hurt him?" She asked, eyes narrowing.

"God, I hope not." The Professor shuddered. "The sheer amount of violence necessary to break one of his bones is hard to think of, honestly, but *that*?" He shuddered again.

Harleen gulped. Then her gaze, and her resolve, hardened. Batman better not have been the one to do that, or she and him were going to have to have a little talk.

Joker healed fast, and she was able to visit him after only a few days. She wasn't allowed to be his psychiatrist anymore, unfortunately, but Doctor Leland had called her in to tell her that she'd still be in charge of his meds; he was refusing to let anyone else even handle his food.

"Heya, Mister J." She smiled, sitting down next to the medical bed. It was weird to see him injured, wrapped up in gauze and eyes half-lidded with exhaustion. "I brought your meds."

"Hello, Doctor Quinzel." He muttered, not a hint of a smile on his face, not even looking at her. "Thanks."

"What did Batman do to you?!" She blurted before she could stop herself. To her surprise, Joker chuckled quietly.

"Oh, my dear, he barely did anything at all." Joker laid back, eyes closed. "I was... Distracted, and having some concentration issues from being off those meds you give me. Let's see... I mistimed an explosion, I've fallen off a few buildings, got hit by a truck, was attack by Sewer King, and all of this was after one of my regular fights with my Darling."

His pupils were the widest she'd ever see them, a small, genuine smile lighting up his face. "He was in top form this time, Har- Doctor Quinzel. He must have finally caught up on His sleep or something, what a sight to behold! And the way He fought off those alligators, how I wish I wasn't so foggy at the time, ah could've payed more attention."

"He saved you?" Harleen asked, feeling somewhat bad for calling Batman a monster. But only somewhat. There was silence for a few minutes. "How did you and Batman meet?"

"When He first stopped me from takin' ovah da city." Joker answered, squinting at her. "I thought everybody knew that?"

"I meant how you actually met."

"Oh." Joker didn't even try to defend the lie. "Sorry, Doctor Quinzel, but I can't have all mah secrets gettin' out."

"Stop calling me that." She snapped, a bit harsher than she meant to. "You haven't called me that since the first day we met, and now it's all you're calling me!"

"I didn' think you'd wanna hear one of my nicknames." He muttered, surprised. "After, well... I'm sorry about strangling ya, I wasn't myself."

"I know you weren't, and I forgive you, Mister J." She sighed, thinking. She smiled slyly, "As for my keeping a secret..."

She leaned close and whispered in his ear all the things she'd figured out these past few months, from Charlie to the rat to everything else. When she sat back, she couldn't help giggling at the utter shock on his face.

"See, Mistah J?" She smirked. "I can keep a secret as goid as da next goirl!"

"Ya really won't tell anyone?" He asked with a frown. After her nod, he broke into a wide grin. "Alright, Harls, ya wanna story? I'll give ya a story. It all started back when I was a regular ol' smalltime crook (hard ta believe, I know)..."

Chapter 5: What's Red And Green And Black All Over?

Bit of a two-for-one, as now we get Joker's origin!

The man he was before he was Joker, let's call him Jack, was very different to who he is now. He can't remember everything, but he thinks he was depressed and alone.

And then came the Red Hoods. If they told you to join, you did. If they said put on the hood and pretend to be the leader, you did. And that's how a barely-on-GCPD's-radar pickpocket like Jack ended up 'directing' a major heist inside a building called ACE chemicals.

He was on a cat walk above the chemical vats, which were normally closed, watching some dangerous stuff get loaded up into vans. Joker doesn't remember why, but Jack was able to identify all the different chemicals practically by smell alone. And the chemicals they were stealing could cause some major damage.

These people were maniacs, they needed to be stopped, but what could he do? Nothing, that's what. These people had advanced martial arts training and stolen weapons from Wayne Tech, of all places. No one person could possibly stop them. It made him wonder why they even forced nobodies like him to play-act being their leader.

The lights had gone out, for a few seconds, then flicked back on to reveal that several guys had been knocked out and tied up. It happened again and again, until He finally showed Himself to the last few remaining. The toughest, from what Jack could tell.

The Batman was incredible, taking at least seven guys at once, outdoing their martial arts and hijacking their tech as if he'd been born doing it. Jack had stood mesmerized as this otherworldly shadow that was truly flesh and blood took down all of them without breaking a sweat.

He was incredible, all the moreso for the fact that He was as human as Jack himself. Jack's utter amazement turned (mostly) into fear as the Dark Knight faced him with a growl.

"Red Hood One. I've finally found you." The Batman had approached like a force of nature, no sign of being worn out from His earlier fight.

"W-wait! I'm not-" Jack never got to finish his explanation. In his haste to escape, he had fallen off the cat walk, towards the chemicals below. The last thing he ever saw, as

his helmet cracked open on the metal side of the vat, was Batman reaching out an arm to try and save him.

The acid had burned so badly, but Jack had passed out before the worst of it came. He should've died, and in a way he did, but he was reborn. A nameless creature with bleach white skin, toxic green hair, blood red lips, and yellow teeth had climbed out of that vat.

It had taken some time for his memories to return. For a while, all he could remember was Batman trying to save him as he fell. But he reinvented himself; remembering that his name started with J, he took on the mantel of The Joker, becoming the most feared criminal in Gotham City.

Because there was one good thing he learned from the Red Hoods. If you look the part, it doesn't matter who you are underneath. He'd never be weak again, he'd control the criminal world with an iron fist.

What started as a mission of revenge had turned into a fun game. He caused real chaos, pulled off real heists, and got to fight again and again and again with his Bat. In between all the serious stuff, he got to enjoy the fun side of life.

Because, honestly, anything's funny if you look at it right.

Chapter 6: I See You (But Do You See Me?)

Last chapter!

Sorry that it's a bit rushed. I hope you all enjoyed it. 😊

Something seemed to change after Harleen learned Joker's backstory, after she had revealed that she knew his reputation wasn't deserved. He was more open with her, their conversation came easily, almost always ending in laughter. It was nice, simple, friendly.

"I can't believe you're friends with that psycho." Professor Crane admonished. "Harleen, please be careful. If he hurts you, tell me. Ah'll make sure he regrets it."

"He's not a bad guy, Professor." She wouldn't tell him why she thought that, she wouldn't break her word to the Joker. "But I'll be careful. I promise."

Professor Crane was still worried. As were the rest of the staff. It came to the point where Doctor Leland decided to cut all visitation rights, which of course resulted in Joker refusing to eat, drink, or take his meds.

Harleen knew he didn't want to risk another bad reaction, he didn't want to hurt anyone, but no one believed her. She was the only one he trusted to actually pay attention to his biology, and she was terrified that he'd waste away without her.

She was to the point of trying to break him out, had even drawn up a plan, when the news came that he'd disappeared. No sign of how he'd broken out or where he went. Harleen had been as stumped as everyone else, until she'd seen the calendar. It was obvious, after that.

"Heya, Mistah J." Harleen called, walking along the ACE chemicals catwalk. She was in her off-duty clothes, hair in loose pigtails and glasses left at home. She held up two paper bags, along with a water bottle. "I brought ya somethin' ta eat, an' your meds."

Joker sat on the edge of the catwalk, kicking his legs as he stared at the vat below. "I wonder how many years it's been? I can always remember tha day it happened, but never da year."

"How ya doin'?" Harleen asked, sitting next to him. She pulled out a sandwich, watching as he automatically took it and started chewing. "Is dis a goid day for ya or a bad one?"

"A little of both." He chuckled. "Harls, it's my rebirth day. A whole 'nother year of this act. It's hard, ya know? The things I say, the things I pretend to do. But so, so worth it."

"I can see dat." She hummed, looking out over the edge at the glowing green chemicals. The same shade as his eyes.

"Your accent changed." He muttered, as if just realizing something. He stared at her. "Why does it do that, sometimes?"

"Dis is my real accent." She giggled. Then she sat up straight, mouth going into a straight line. "But this accent is more mature and professional. I use it to gain respect amongst my colleagues."

"So why do ya keep dropping it?" He asked. "Mine changes on its own, and Jonny's switches with his mood."

"I don' wanna be fake around ya, I guess." She shrugged. "I know yer real self, ya shoid get ta see mine."

"I..." He grinned. "Harley Quinn, you're a real special girl, ya know that? I'm glad that we're friends. We are friends, right?"

She grinned back. "Of course, Mistah J, now that I'm not yer psychiatrist no more. I like bein' yer friend too."

They sat in silence for a little while, then just started chatting. At some point, Harleen had the idea of celebrating Joker's 'rebirthday' by dancing together up and down the catwalk.

They were laughing and twirling when the police swarmed in, startling Harleen into losing her footing and falling into the vat. Joker screeched, rushing down to the vats to pull her out.

She hadn't even been in long enough for the acid to completely burn through her clothes, but she'd definitely been affected. Her skin had already turned several shades paler, though not quite like his, as did her hair.

"Come on, Harley, stay with me!" Joker ordered, trying desperately to perform CPR. He growled at the police officers that had chased him down the catwalk. "What are ya idiots standin' around for?! Call an ambulance!"

According to the headlines, Joker had seduced a new psychiatrist over six months, culminating in him reenacting his creation. Somehow she survived, and was arrested for helping the Joker escape.

According to the headlines, she broke out of jail to follow her abusive paramour, becoming his new sidekick and girlfriend: Harley Quinn.

Harley laughed over the newspaper, almost choking on a bite of cereal.

"What's so funny, Harls?" Joker asked, walking out of the bedroom of their hideout in nothing but shorts and an undershirt. He accepted the bowl of cereal she gave him with a kiss to her forehead, trying to peer at the paper.

"Da newsies tink we're datin'." She answered, grinning.

"However can they think that?" He asked with mock surprise. He grinned. "We settin' 'em straight or playin' this up?"

"I don' know, Puddin'," she winked, "might be fun ta see where it leads."

"Whatever you say," he winked back, "Pumpkin."

— end of "|||◆I See You◆|||" —