



Hearing Voices

Batman - All Media Types · Not Rated · 645 words

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Fandom: Batman - All Media Types Rating: Not Rated Category: Gen

Warnings: No content warnings apply

Characters: Jonathan Crane, Lyle Bolton, Arnold Wesker

Tags: Implied/Referenced Abuse, Fear, Puppets, Multiple Personalities, Arkham Asylum, Angst with a Happy Ending, Ventriloquist shows off a little, Everyone Needs a Hug, Episode: s02e14 Lock-Up (Batman: The Animated Series)

Words: 645 Chapters: 1 chapter Status: Complete Published: 2024-07-06

Once again, Jonathan finds himself on the wrong side of Bolton's wrath, with no way to escape -- luckily, he has an unexpected ally.

Just a silly little idea I woke up with this morning.

Jonathan whimpered as he watched Bolton. The brute that was Arkham's new security head was right outside his cell, fumbling with his keys as he prepared to come in.

"Please..." Jonathan knew he couldn't avoid a beating, but he could lessen it. He just needed to ignore every ounce of pride or dignity he had (much too easy at this point), and beg his abuser for the tiniest scrap of mercy. "I swear I-I'll never do it again!"

What did he do? He searched his memory, but couldn't find the slightest slip out of line. It didn't really matter, of course; if Bolton felt like using Jonathan as a punching bag, then that's what would happen. Nothing could--

"Bolton!" The Warden's voice made them both jump. It echoed down the halls, angry and impatient. "BOLTON! Where is he?! I'm going to fire him for this!"

Bolton scoffed, unafraid of his boss's anger. Jonathan might've admired that, had it been anyone else. As it was, all he could feel was intense relief when he saw Bolton putting away the keys, the cell door unopened.

"You're lucky this time, Crane." Bolton growled, reaching through the bars to briefly slam his prisoner against them. He walked off, chuckling.

Jonathan curled up on the floor by the bars where he had been dropped, not yet having the mental energy to move back to his cot. He had to escape, he had to take that risk and get as far away from Gotham as he possibly could. He'd have to get his research

notes first, tell the crows where he was going (once he actually figured that out), contact Edward about a new ID...

His internal planning was interrupted by a timid voice, right next to his ear, "A-are you al-alright?"

Jonathan yelled, jumped up, and looked around wildly. His reputation as the Master Of Fear was most certainly shot at this point, but he'd stopped caring weeks ago. He couldn't see who had spoken, they certainly weren't in his cell.

"S-sorry." The voice muttered again, this time in the cell across from his. A short man with large glasses and greying hair on a pointy head frowned at him. "I've n-never done th-the Warden before. I-I-I hope I was c-convinc-convincing."

"You're the Ventriloquist." Jonathan remembered seeing the guy on the news. A closer inspection of the other's cell revealed his puppet, 'sleeping' on the cot. "You threw your voice."

"Yes... I'm... Rather... Good... At... That." Each word came from a new location, with an entirely different voice. Ventriloquist smirked, chuckling a little, before his face twisted back into a frown. "S-sorry. I know I-I shouldn't sh-show off..."

"It wasn't annoying." Jonathan shrugged. He was friends with Riddler, this was nothing. "It is an... Interesting ability." Jonathan was not very good at thanking people, and was even worse at complimenting them.

Ventriloquist lit up at the small praise, glancing back at the puppet as if to make sure it was still 'sleeping'. "I'm... H-he... Bolton's not very nice."

Jonathan frowned "No, he isn't."

"Y-you didn't do anything." Ventriloquist muttered. "I'm glad I c-c-could help, b-but please don't mention it to the Boss."

The Boss..? Oh, his puppet. "It shall be our secret."

"Th-thanks, Sc-Scarecrow." The man answered, smiling softly. Didn't he know that it wasn't him who should be thanking someone right then?

"...Jonathan." That was almost the same thing, right?

"W-what?"

"My name is Jonathan." He answered. "If you ever call me Jonny, you will regret it deeply."

"Oh." Ventriloquist was quiet for a minute or two. "Arnold. I-if you c-c-call me Arnie, I won't m-mind much."

Jonathan chuckled quietly, which caused Arnold to smile. Aw, *dammit* -- he really had to stop making friends.

— end of "Hearing Voices" —