

THE CRAVE

BY
STJEPAN
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BOOK ONE

STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ
STORY AND ART

GABRIELA DOWNIE
LETTERS

STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ
COVER AND VARIANT COVER

HARLEY QUINN CREATED BY
PAUL DINI AND **BRUCE TIMM**



AT FIRST IT SEEMS LIKE ANOTHER NIGHTMARE.

IN THIS DREAM I WALK A LONG, WINDING ROAD THROUGH A WARPED VERSION OF GOTHAM.

I'VE DREAMT OF THIS ROAD BEFORE. I'VE SEEN **THE TERRORS** THAT AWAIT ME AT ITS END.

AND YET, EVERY TIME, I KEEP WALKING.

EVERY TIME I THINK, **THIS TIME WILL BE DIFFERENT.**

AND THIS TIME, I'M **RIGHT.**



ANY OTHER NIGHT, THE MIST WOULD RISE AND A **GRINNING MONSTER** WOULD ERUPT OUT OF IT TO **DEVOUR ME.**

THIS NIGHT, THERE IS NO SINISTER LAUGHTER. NO MOUTH WITH TOO MANY TEETH SMILING HUNGRILY AT ME.

NO, THIS TIME IT'S JUST **THE BATS.**

THEY LOOK LIKE BATS, BUT IN MY DREAMING MIND THEY'RE **VULTURES.**



SUDDENLY I'M SURE OF ONE THING: SOMEONE IS ABOUT TO **DIE!**



THEY TAKE ME TO THE INEVITABLE PLACE...

... **THE END OF THE ROAD** WHERE SWIRLING MISTS RISE AND, LIKE EVERY OTHER TIME, **HE** IS THERE.

BUT THIS TIME IT'S DIFFERENT.

THIS TIME, THE MONSTER IS DIFFERENT...

I RUN TOWARD THEM...

THE MAN ON THE GROUND...

THE GIANT BEAST...

AND THE BATS.

IF A LARGE GROUP OF CROWS GETS TO BE CALLED A *MURDER*, THEN IN MY DREAM I THINK, *THIS IS A FEAST.*

A FEAST OF BATS.

BUT HUNGRY THOUGH THEY ARE, THEY DON'T ATTACK. INSTEAD THEY *SCREAM*. THEY *LAUGH*. AND THEY *CHEER*.

THEY WANT *HIM* TO DO IT *FOR* THEM.

THE GREAT BEAST MUST DRAW BLOOD. THE GREAT BEAST MUST *KILL* FOR THE FEAST TO BEGIN.

AND IN MY DREAM I FEEL *GUILTY*. I FEEL *RESPONSIBLE*.

KILL

KILL

KILL

KILL

KILL

AFTER ALL...HE IS MY PATIENT.

LEAVE HIM ALONE!

CAST HIM AWAY!
HE IS BEYOND HELP.

NO!
I...
...I CAN DO IT!

BE IT ON YOUR HANDS, THEN, DOCTOR...

THE GREAT BEAST LEAVES, HIS BATS IN TOW.



THE AIR GROWS SILENT.

ARE YOU...

ARE YOU OKAY?

YOU...

WHY DIDN'T YOU RUN?

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO RUN.

NOT ANYMORE.

I AM *YOUR* DOCTOR.

I'M HERE TO *HELP*.

YES, THIS DREAM IS DIFFERENT.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, HIS FACE IS NOT MONSTROUS.

HE SMILES... AND I MAKE THE *WORST MISTAKE* OF MY LIFE...

...I SMILE BACK.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD THINK BACK ON THIS DREAM AND FIGHT BACK A LAUGH.

THE WHOLE THING FELT LIKE ONE OF THOSE TRASHY ROMANCE TALES WHERE A PLAIN, ORDINARY GIRL MEETS MR. TALL, SEXY AND DANGEROUS. A BEAST THAT SIMPLY NEEDS HER GENTLE TOUCH AND A LITTLE BIT OF GUIDANCE.

IN THOSE STORIES, THE GIRL HELPS THE BEAST REGAIN HIS HUMANITY...

IN THOSE STORIES, THE BEAST *LOVES* THE GIRL...

I ASSURE YOU, MINE IS NOT ONE SUCH STORY.

NO, MY STORY ENDED UP BEING *SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT*.



MY STORY'S THE ONE WHERE THE GIRL
DANCES WITH THE DEVIL, AND HE TAKES
HER WITH HIM ON A LONG ROAD TO HELL.

THAT ROAD STARTS,
AS THEY OFTEN DO...

...WITH A GOOD INTENTION.

I MEAN, YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND, DOCTOR, WE *ALL* HAD OUR BEST INTENTIONS GOING IN.

WE HAD A CODE! NO WOMEN, NO CHILDREN!

MICKEY AND I *SWORE* TO THAT...

I MEAN, WE WERE NOTHING BUT TWO AMPED-UP JACKASSES WITH MORE BALLS THAN BRAINS, BUT WE WEREN'T FUCKING *ANIMALS*.

FOR THE FIRST FEW MONTHS WE KEPT OUR PROMISE. IT WASN'T HARD. WE HAD THE INSURGENTS ON THE MOVE...

HELL, THE WAR SEEMED AS GOOD AS *WON*... BUT THAT'S THE THING. WHEN YOU GOT THE TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY, THE ENEMY *ADAPTS*.

PROPER TERM FOR IT WAS *GUERRILLA WARFARE*... WE CALLED IT THE *ROACH WAR*.

SEE, THEY WERE LIKE ROACHES CRAWLING FROM UNDERNEATH EVERY FUCKING ROCK. YOU COULD NEVER *GET RID OF THEM*.

SNEAK ATTACKS, BACK STABS...ON ONE OCCASION THEY EVEN POISONED OUR WATER SUPPLY.

A SIX-MONTH DEPLOYMENT STRETCHED INTO *THREE YEARS*...

ONE DAY MICKEY AND I WERE ON A BREAK, VISITING A LOCAL BAR.

LOOKING FOR SOME *ACTION*. DOCTOR, YOU UNDERSTAND...

THERE WAS THIS GIRL. SHE WAS EYEING MICKEY... SO I...I...

I KEPT *PUSHING* HIM. I MEAN, HOW MANY CHANCES DOES A GUY HAVE TO...PARDON MY FRENCH, BREAK OFF A PIECE OF ASS.

LITTLE BITCH HAD A *RAZOR*... OPENED MICKEY'S THROAT EAR TO EAR. SO I BROKE *MY OATH* THAT DAY. BLEW HER BRAINS OUT. EMPTIED THE WHOLE DAMNED CLIP.

SHIT LIKE THAT, IT SNAPS SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU...

YOU START SEEING THE WORLD *DIFFERENTLY*...

WOMEN, CHILDREN...AT THE END OF THE DAY, THEY WERE *THEIR* WOMEN AND CHILDREN. EACH ONE OF THEM HIDING A RAZOR, A GUN, A FUCKING BOMB FOR ALL I KNEW...

IN A WAR ZONE, *EVERYONE IS AN ENEMY!*

WITHOUT HIM, I HAD TO BE CAREFUL. GREW EYES IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD.

MICKEY AND I...WE HAD EACH OTHER'S BACK, YOU KNOW?

TRAINED MYSELF TO SEE *THE MURDER* IN THEIR EYES.

I HAD TO GET THEM BEFORE THEY GOT ME.

SO WHAT ABOUT THE HOSPITAL?

THEIR HOSPITAL! THE CIVILIAN USE OF IT WAS A *FRONT*. THERE WERE OVER *SIXTY* COMBATANTS THERE! IT WAS *MY CHANCE!*

HELL, THEY SHOULD HAVE GIVEN ME A DAMNED *MEDAL!*

INSTEAD, I GOT A DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE AND AN ARREST, AND HERE I AM SPILLING EVERYTHING TO YOU, DOCTOR...

UH...



QUINZEL,
MR. MORRIS.
DR. QUINZEL.

TWO YEARS LATER.

MR. MORRIS *FAILED* TO MENTION THAT THE HOSPITAL HE OPENED FIRE ON ALSO HOUSED 24 INJURED CHILDREN. THERE WERE *NO SURVIVORS.*



EDUCATIONAL SYMPOSIUM:
Center for the Study of Criminal Psychology, Gotham City.

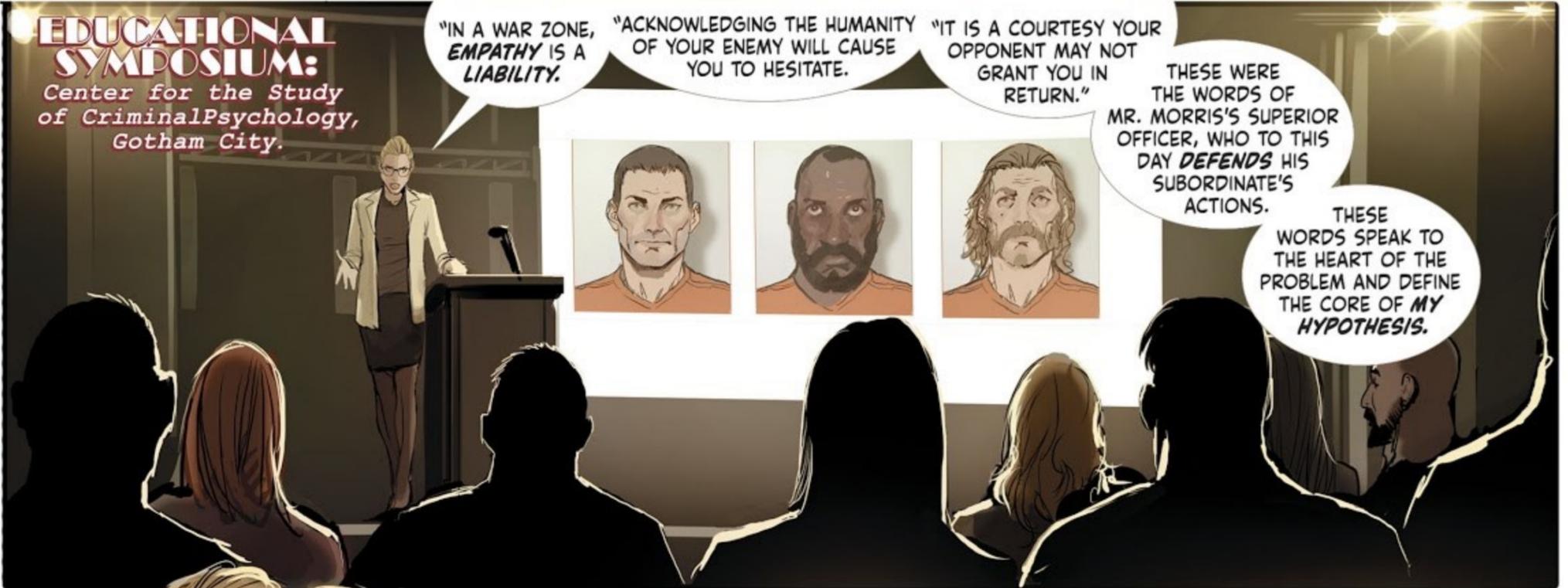
"IN A WAR ZONE, *EMPATHY* IS A *LIABILITY.*"

"ACKNOWLEDGING THE HUMANITY OF YOUR ENEMY WILL CAUSE YOU TO HESITATE."

"IT IS A COURTESY YOUR OPPONENT MAY NOT GRANT YOU IN RETURN."

THESE WERE THE WORDS OF MR. MORRIS'S SUPERIOR OFFICER, WHO TO THIS DAY *DEFENDS* HIS SUBORDINATE'S ACTIONS.

THESE WORDS SPEAK TO THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM AND DEFINE THE CORE OF MY *HYPOTHESIS.*



IT IS AN INSTINCTIVE *REACTION* THAT *OVERRIDES* REGULAR BRAIN CHEMISTRY WHILE DAMPENING ONE'S ABILITY TO PROCESS *EMPATHY.*

IN A WAR ZONE, THIS STATE OF *HYPERAROUSAL* CAN *SAVE LIVES.*

FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE HAS LONG BEEN STUDIED, AND ITS UNDERLYING PROCESSES MAPPED.

THIS INSTINCT IS A PART OF A *GREATER* MECHANISM.

A KIND OF A *MENTAL IMMUNE SYSTEM* DESIGNED TO PROTECT US FROM IMMINENT THREAT BY MANAGING BODY CHEMISTRY IN A WAY THAT MAXIMIZES OUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.

BUT WHAT IF THIS MECHANISM IS OVERUSED?

AND FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME?

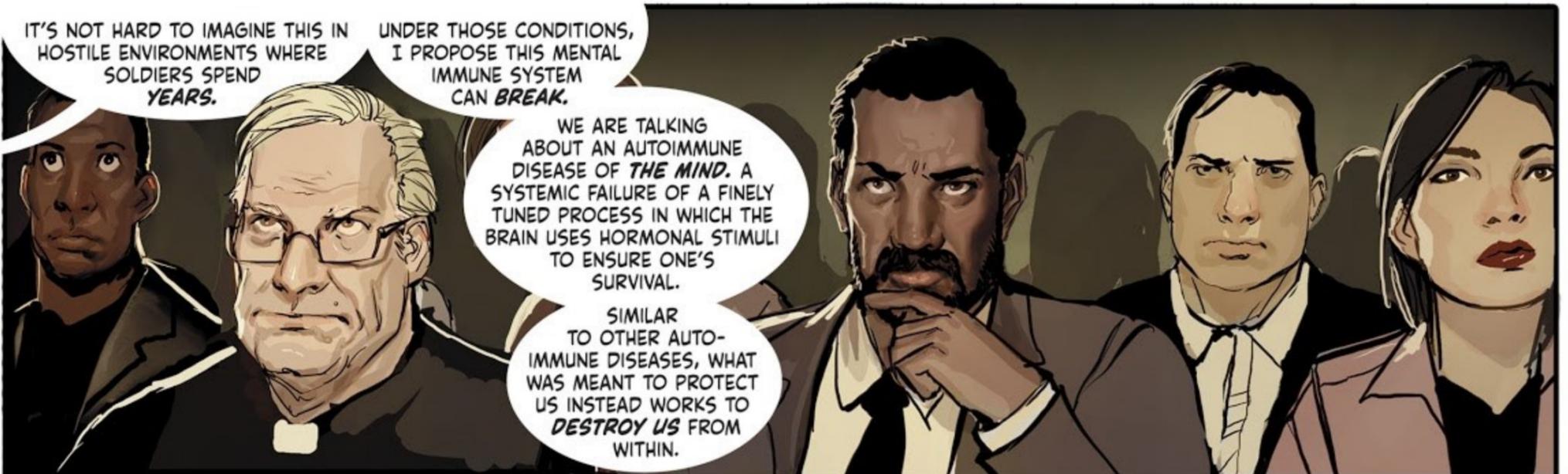


IT'S NOT HARD TO IMAGINE THIS IN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE SOLDIERS SPEND *YEARS.*

UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS, I PROPOSE THIS MENTAL IMMUNE SYSTEM CAN *BREAK.*

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE OF *THE MIND.* A SYSTEMIC FAILURE OF A FINELY TUNED PROCESS IN WHICH THE BRAIN USES HORMONAL STIMULI TO ENSURE ONE'S SURVIVAL.

SIMILAR TO OTHER AUTO-IMMUNE DISEASES, WHAT WAS MEANT TO PROTECT US INSTEAD WORKS TO *DESTROY US* FROM WITHIN.



TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, THIS MAY RESULT IN **PERMANENT DETERIORATION** OF EMPATHY WHICH, UH...

...WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO DEVELOPING **ANTISOCIAL** BEHAVIORS...

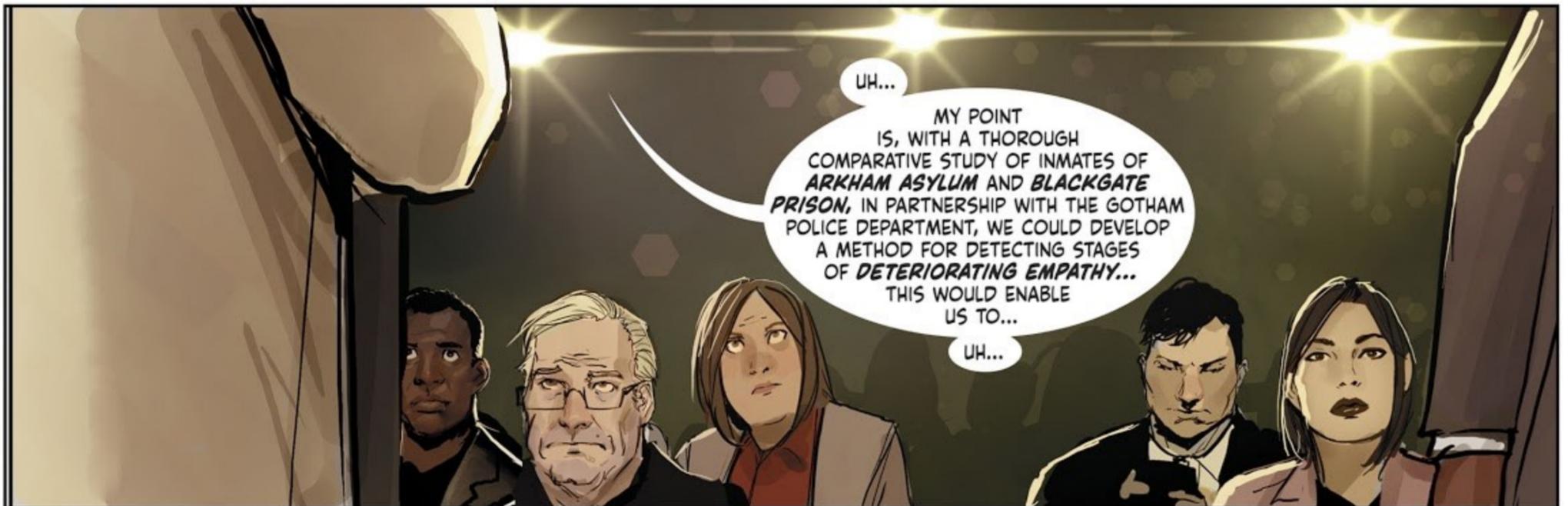
OF COURSE, IDENTIFYING SUCH AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE IN A DISTANT WAR ZONE IS UNLIKELY.

HOWEVER, WE NEED LOOK NO FURTHER FOR A WAR ZONE THAN THE **STREETS OF GOTHAM** ITSELF...

UH...

STATISTICS OF RECIDIVISM **STRONGLY** INDICATE THAT THERE IS A LARGE ISSUE NOT ONLY WITH PETTY CRIMINALS RELAPSING INTO THE LIFE OF CRIME, BUT ALSO WITH THE **INCREASING SEVERITY** OF THOSE CRIMES...

UM... THAT...



UH...

MY POINT IS, WITH A THOROUGH COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INMATES OF **ARKHAM ASYLUM** AND **BLACKGATE PRISON**, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOTHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT, WE COULD DEVELOP A METHOD FOR DETECTING STAGES OF **DETERIORATING EMPATHY**... THIS WOULD ENABLE US TO...

UH...



...IDENTIFY A SOCIOPATH IN THE MAKING...



BLAM



CAN YOU HEAR IT, SHONDRA? MY CAREER IMPLODING.

PRETTY SURE THAT WAS A CAR BACKFIRING!



I'M SERIOUS! I WASN'T EVEN HALF DONE AND THEY WERE ALREADY CHECKING THEIR WATCHES.

LET ME GUESS, YOU WENT ALL **BIG WORDS** ON THEM?

IT'S A SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM...

I WASN'T GONNA EXPLAIN CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY WITH **HAND PUPPETS!**

HARLEY! THEY ARE **MONEY** PEOPLE! YOU BRING THE WHOLE PUPPET SHOW IF NEEDED.

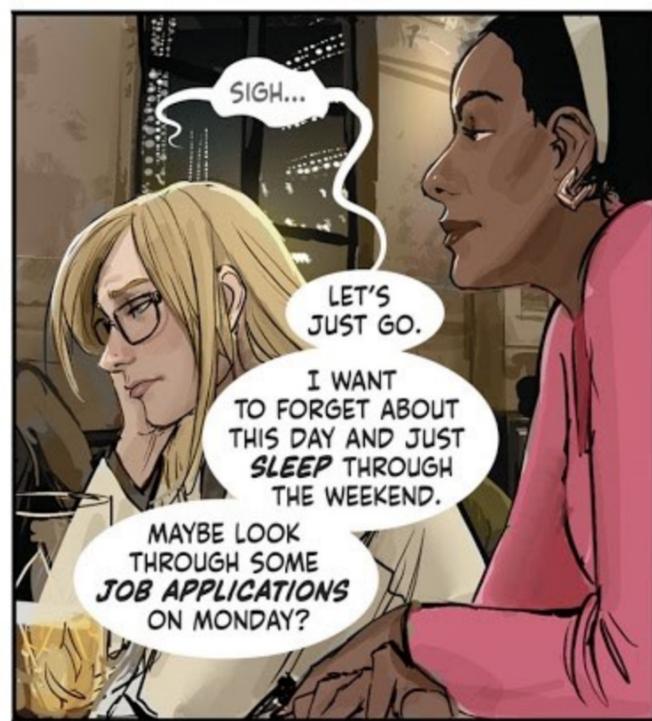
"THIS IS **STAB ME ELMO** AND HE NEEDS SERIOUS THERAPY!"



SHONDRA, I'M **SOOOO** NOT IN THE MOOD FOR THAT SHIT RIGHT NOW!

RIIIIGHT, I'D SAY YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH OF **THIS!**

I'M NOT DRUNK! I'M **MISERABLE!**



SIGH...

LET'S JUST GO.

I WANT TO FORGET ABOUT THIS DAY AND JUST **SLEEP** THROUGH THE WEEKEND.

MAYBE LOOK THROUGH SOME **JOB APPLICATIONS** ON MONDAY?



SO WHAT ABOUT YOU? HOW DID YOUR THING GO?

HARLEEN, I'M PROPOSING **PHARMACEUTICAL** SOLUTIONS TO TREAT FORMS OF DEPRESSION.

THERE IS MONEY IN THAT!

MY PRESENTATION WENT **FLAWLESSLY.**



WOW... AND THEY USED TO CALL **ME** CYNICAL.

I SEEM TO REMEMBER PEOPLE CALLING YOU **MUCH WORSE** THAN THAT...

LOW BLOW, SHONDRA!

WHATEVER! ALL I'M SAYING IS IF YOU WANT THE RESEARCH CASH, YOU LEARN TO PLAY THE MONEY CROWD.

THE WAY I SEE IT, RICH FOLK HAVE LONG LINES OF ZEREOES ON THEIR BANK ACCOUNTS AND SHORT ATTENTION SPANS. SO, THE FIRST THING YOU GOTTA DO IS MAKE THEM SEE HOW YOUR THEORY WILL **MAKE MONEY.**





THEN AGAIN, THAT'S THE THING WITH ROADBUILDING. YOU GET A LITTLE TUNNEL-VISIONED.



YOU TEND TO KEEP YOUR EYES TO THE GROUND SO MUCH THAT BY THE TIME YOU'RE AT THE GATES OF HELL, YOU DON'T EVEN REALIZE IT.



NOT EVEN WHEN YOU CAN FEEL THE FLAMES...



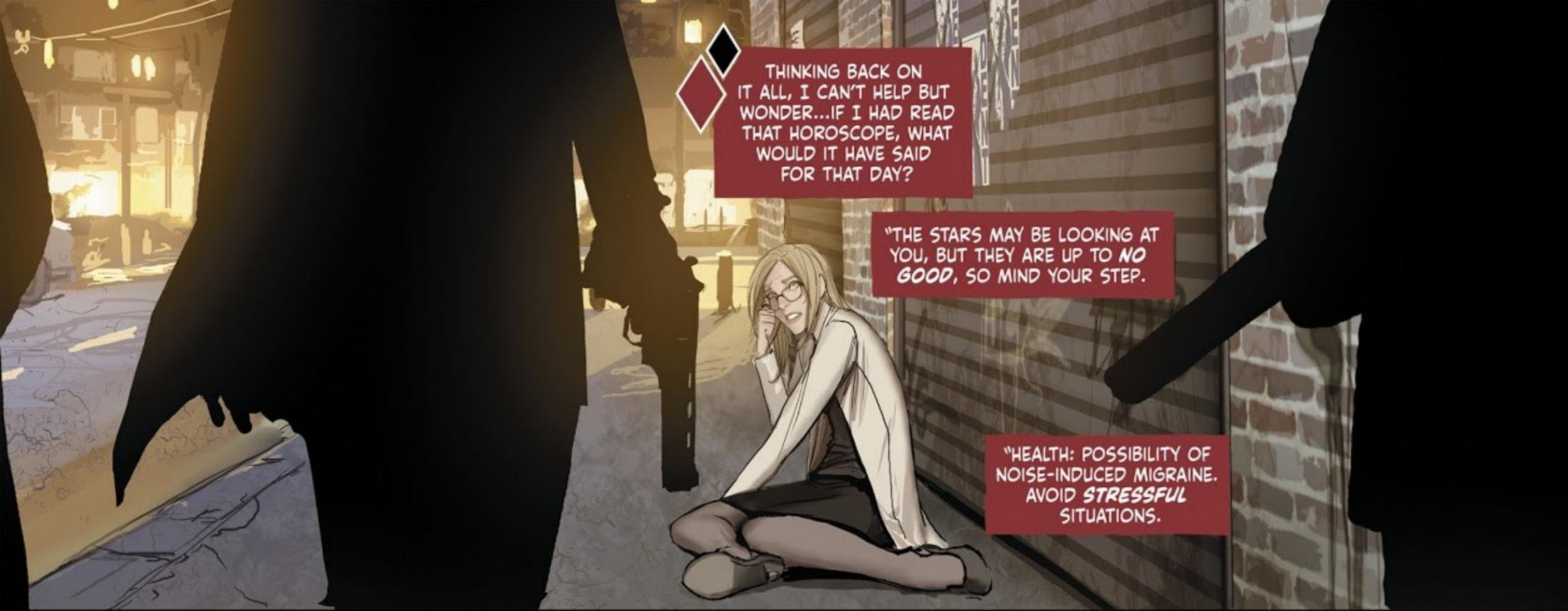
NOT EVEN WHEN YOU CAN SMELL THE SMOKE...

NOT EVEN WHEN
THE *DEVIL HIMSELF*
COMES TO GREET YOU.

NOW WHAT
DID I TELL YOU, BOYS?
WHEN BUYING WEAPONS,
THERE'S JUST NO BEATING
PERSONAL QUALITY
CONTROL!

WRAP
IT ALL UP
TO GO!

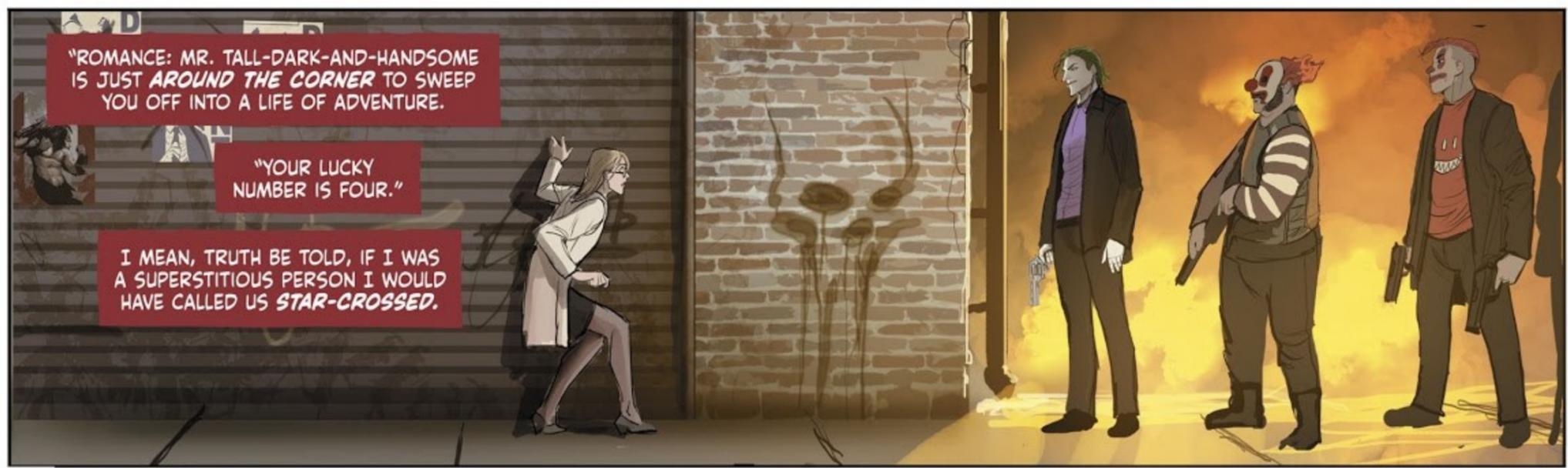




THINKING BACK ON IT ALL, I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER...IF I HAD READ THAT HOROSCOPE, WHAT WOULD IT HAVE SAID FOR THAT DAY?

"THE STARS MAY BE LOOKING AT YOU, BUT THEY ARE UP TO *NO GOOD*, SO MIND YOUR STEP.

"HEALTH: POSSIBILITY OF NOISE-INDUCED MIGRAINE. AVOID *STRESSFUL* SITUATIONS.



"ROMANCE: MR. TALL-DARK-AND-HANDSOME IS JUST *AROUND THE CORNER* TO SWEEP YOU OFF INTO A LIFE OF ADVENTURE.

"YOUR LUCKY NUMBER IS FOUR."

I MEAN, TRUTH BE TOLD, IF I WAS A SUPERSTITIOUS PERSON I WOULD HAVE CALLED US *STAR-CROSSED*.



DESTINED.

ME...



...AND HIM.

THE MAN I WOULD SOON LOVE.



PICKED A *HELL* OF A NIGHT FOR A WALK!

IT...WASN'T LOVE AT *FIRST SIGHT*, MIND YOU.

IN FACT, LOVE NEVER EVEN CROSSED MY MIND.

WHAT DID CROSS MY MIND, HOWEVER, WAS A WHOLE LIFETIME OF DECISIONS.



DECISIONS THAT, IN THE END, NO LONGER MATTERED.

BECAUSE LET'S BE HONEST:
THEN AND THERE, IT WAS
VERY LIKELY THE LAST THING
TO EVER CROSS MY MIND
WOULD BE A *BULLET*.



WE GOT
SOME GIFTS TO
UNWRAP, AND YOU
KNOW HOW I LOVE
THAT *NEW GUN*
SMELL!



YOU BE
CAREFUL OUT THERE,
MA'AM! GOTHAM STREETS
ARE DANGEROUS AT
NIGHT, *DON'T'CHA*
KNOW?!
HHAHAHA!



I REMEMBER IT CLEARLY.
MY HEART BEATING ITS
WAY THROUGH MY CHEST,
MY EARS RINGING.



I'M FROZEN IN THE STREET.
DEATH HAS PASSED ME...

IT'S DONE...

IT'S DONE...

THE WORST OF
IT IS DONE!





ANYWAYS, MY APOLOGIES, BATS! I HAD SOME COMPANY RESTRUCTURING TO DO, BUT NOW YOU HAVE MY **FULL ATTENTION!** HOW MAY I ASSIST YOU?

DROP THE WEAPONS!

JUST LIKE THAT, HUH? SERIOUSLY? WHEN HAS THAT **EVER** WORKED FOR YOU?

I MEAN, YOU GOT YOUR MEAN BAT-PLANE THING...WHAT'S IT GONNA BE? YOU GONNA OPEN FIRE ON US? GONNA START **KILLIN'?**

POINT I'M MAKING IS...WE GOT OUR CARROT, SO WHERE'S **THE STICK?**



IT'S MORE OF A BAT, REALLY.



HA! AND THEY SAY YOU DON'T HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR!

I REMEMBER ONE THOUGHT RUNNING THROUGH MY DAZED MIND.

I'M TRAPPED...

I'M TRAPPED BETWEEN SMOKE AND FIRE.



AND I AM TERRIFIED.



WHOA, LADY! CALM DOWN! GOOD GUYS HERE!

OH THANK GOD!



CAN YOU WALK ALL RIGHT?

Y-YEAH?

GOOD. I'LL NEED YOU TO KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN AND FOLLOW US! CAN YOU DO THAT?

FOLLOW YOU WHERE?

THE FUCK OUTTA HERE.

WE'RE GOING FOR THE SUBWAY ENTRANCE AROUND THE CORNER.

THAT'S... THAT'S ACROSS THE ROAD?



SHIT!

NGH... THERE'S STILL MUNIATIONS IN THAT ALLEY...GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE CAN GO OFF.

WE TRY TO CROSS NOW, WE MIGHT GET CAUGHT IN ANOTHER BLAST.



OKAY, CHANGE OF PLANS! THIS WAY! STICK TO THE WALL AND STAY LOW!

CAN'T YOU CALL BACKUP OR SOMETHING?

LADY, WE WERE THE BACKUP!





THERE ARE NO MORE GUNSHOTS, AND YET THIS *SILENCE* FEELS EVEN MORE *TERRIFYING*.

IT IS A SILENCE OF *ANTICIPATION*...



...LIKE THE MOMENT JUST AFTER A *FLASH OF LIGHTNING* IN THE DISTANCE.

AND THEN IT COMES. A *CRACK* IN THE AIR, A SOUND LIKE A *MASSIVE FLAG* FIGHTING A GUST OF WIND, AND FOLLOWING IT, A *SINISTER LAUGH*...



THEY, HOWEVER, PAY
NO ATTENTION TO ME.



IN FACT, THEIR WORK
WITH ME IS *DONE*.

THEY GRANT ME THEIR GIFT OF *FEAR* AND
RESTLESS NIGHTS... AND THEN THEY LEAVE.

AND I THINK, "I SHOULD LEAVE TOO. MY LEGS
ARE MY OWN AGAIN AND I SHOULD JUST..."



"...RUN."



BUT I DON'T. AND I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE.

A GUST OF WIND CLEARS ENOUGH OF THE SMOKE FOR ME TO SEE OTHERS SIMILARLY TRANSFIXED BY THE MADNESS OF THE MOMENT.



I SHOULD BE RUNNING AWAY.

WE ALL SHOULD.

INSTEAD, WE RUSH TO THE RAILING TO SEE THE SPECTACLE, LIKE A *BLOODTHIRSTY CROWD* OF ANCIENT ROMANS.



WE COME TO WATCH...



WE COME TO CHEER...



WE COME TO FEAST.



FOR A SECOND...IT COMES OVER ME. I REMEMBER BEING HELD AT GUNPOINT AND I TOO FEEL IT. *THE RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION* THAT CALLS FOR BLOOD...

FOR A SECOND I WANT TO *CHEER* AS WELL.

AFTER ALL...HE IS THE JOKER!

A MURDERER...

BUT I'M SNAPPED OUT OF IT BY A STRANGE THOUGHT...

IT DROWNED OUT THE SOUND...

THE CHEERING DROWNED OUT THE SOUND OF THE FIST CONNECTING.

INSTEAD OF SICKENING CRUNCHES, THE SOUNDS HIS PUNCHES MADE WERE...

more kills

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, I TRULY FEEL IT.





I FEEL A TWINGE OF SOMETHING *UNHINGED* ABOUT THIS CITY...



IT IS THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES...

AND I WANT TO SCREAM.



THREE DAYS PASSED AND I AM LEFT WITH *MEMORIES AND DREAMS.*



TERRIBLE DREAMS...



STRESSFUL DREAMS...



DREAMS THAT *LINGER.*

AHA
HAHAH
HA...

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY.

Gotham City.

I DECIDED TO KEEP THE EVENTS OF THAT FATEFUL NIGHT TO MYSELF.

WHO KNOWS, MAYBE IF I HAD TOLD SOMEONE ABOUT THAT NIGHT, THINGS WOULD HAVE GONE DIFFERENTLY.

MY LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN...DIFFERENT.

BUT I KEPT QUIET. THE LAST FOUR YEARS WORKING AT THE CENTER TAUGHT ME TO KEEP MY HEAD DOWN.

TO NOT ATTRACT ATTENTION.

SEE...I HAD THIS **FLING** WITH A **PROFESSOR** BACK IN MY COLLEGE DAYS AND PEOPLE FOUND OUT ABOUT IT.

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE THINGS THAT TEND TO STICK TO YOU.

TEND TO...DEFINE YOU IN THE EYES OF SOME.

DIDN'T HELP THAT TWO OF THE PEOPLE WORKING AT THE CENTER HAD GONE TO SCHOOL WITH ME...

SUFFICE IT TO SAY, WORD GOT AROUND. AND I GAINED A...LET'S CALL IT A REPUTATION.

OKAY, WHO DID YOU **\$#%&** TO GET IT?

HEY!

YOU KNOW WHAT? AFTER MY WEEKEND I'VE GOT **ZERO PATIENCE** FOR YOUR BULLSHIT, PAULINE!

OH, DON'T YOU GIVE ME THAT **CRAP!** HOW DID YOU **DO IT?** DID YOU **\$#5&** SOMEONE FROM THE FINANCE BOARD?

QUINZEL, DR. MATHEWS'S OFFICE, NOW!

UH, DR. MATHEWS?



OH, I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE IN HERE. I'LL WAIT OUTSIDE.

NO, NO, QUINZEL! COME IN. WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!



DR. QUINZEL?



HARLEEN, PLEASE! HEY, I REMEMBER YOU. YOU WERE AT MY PRESENTATION...AND THEN YOU LEFT.



GOOD MEMORY.



I'M GOOD WITH FACES. PLUS I TEND TO REMEMBER PEOPLE LEAVING MY PANEL WHEN I'M TRYING TO PRESENT MY LIFE'S WORK. ALL 28 OF THEM...

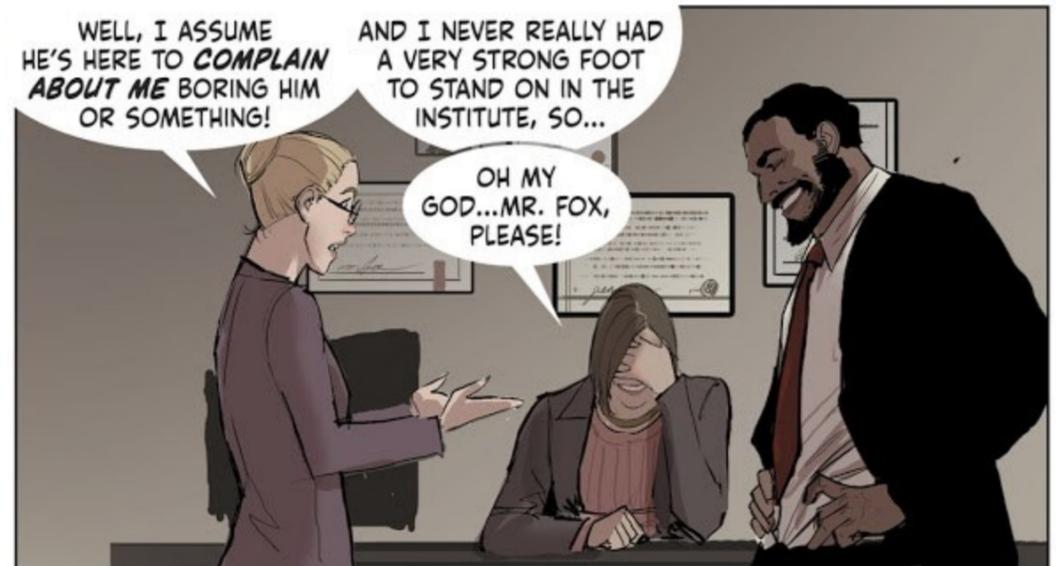


UH...SORRY I'M RAMBLING. I TEND TO DO THAT WHEN I'M NERVOUS.



AM I FIRED?

WHAT?



WELL, I ASSUME HE'S HERE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT ME BORING HIM OR SOMETHING!

AND I NEVER REALLY HAD A VERY STRONG FOOT TO STAND ON IN THE INSTITUTE, SO...

OH MY GOD...MR. FOX, PLEASE!



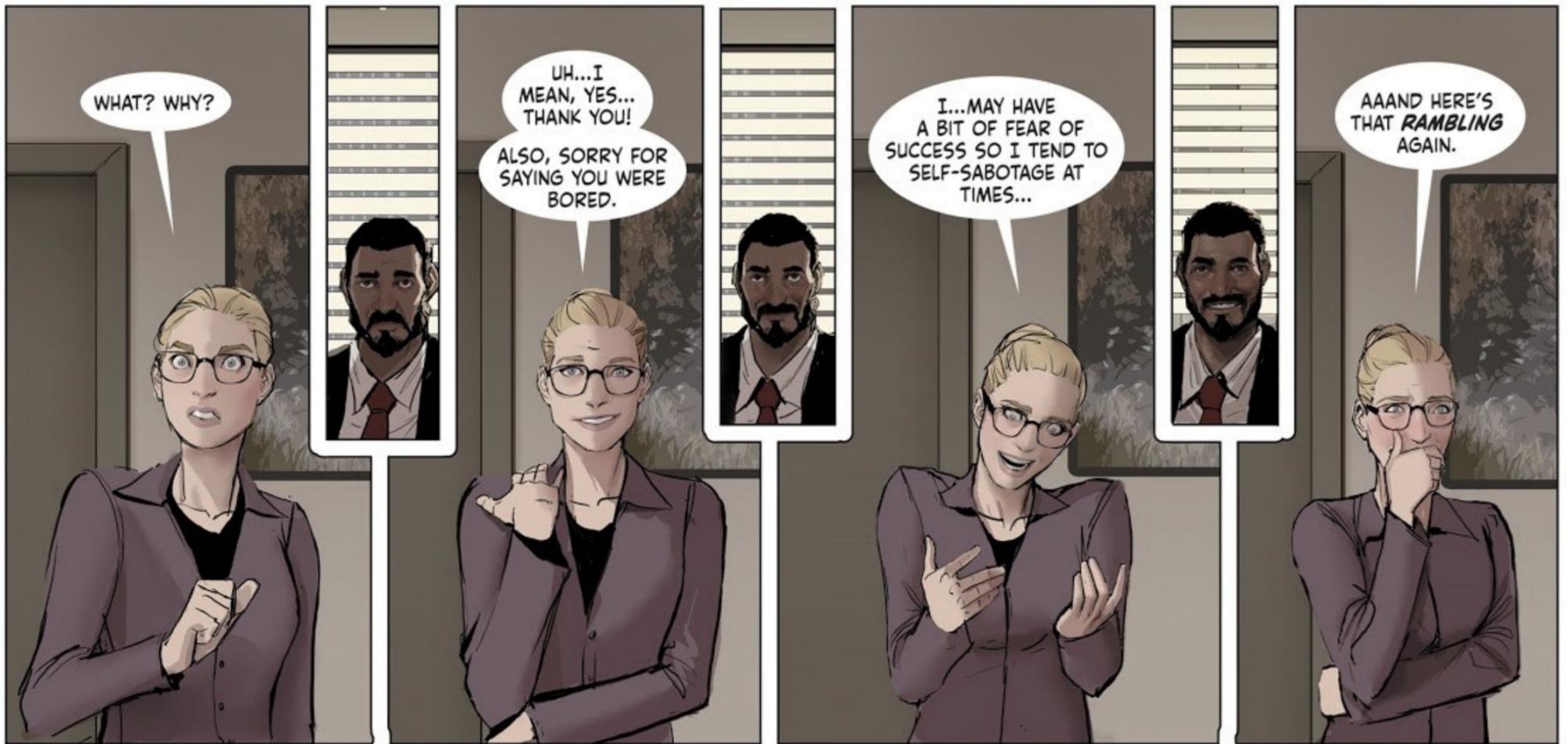
FIRST OF ALL, I WASN'T BORED BY YOUR PITCH.

I'D SIMPLY HEARD ENOUGH OF IT TO UNDERSTAND ITS POTENTIAL.

THAT BEING SAID, ALLOW ME TO ACTUALLY INTRODUCE MYSELF.

MY NAME IS LUCIUS FOX.

AMONG OTHER THINGS, I AM THE CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR TO THE WAYNE FOUNDATION, AND I'M HERE TO TELL YOU WE ARE INTERESTED IN FUNDING YOUR RESEARCH.



WHAT? WHY?



UH...I MEAN, YES... THANK YOU!
ALSO, SORRY FOR SAYING YOU WERE BORED.



I...MAY HAVE A BIT OF FEAR OF SUCCESS SO I TEND TO SELF-SABOTAGE AT TIMES...



AAAND HERE'S THAT *RAMBLING* AGAIN.



YOU EVER CONSIDERED SEEING A THERAPIST FOR THAT?

I DO, EVERY MORNING WHEN I BRUSH MY TEETH.

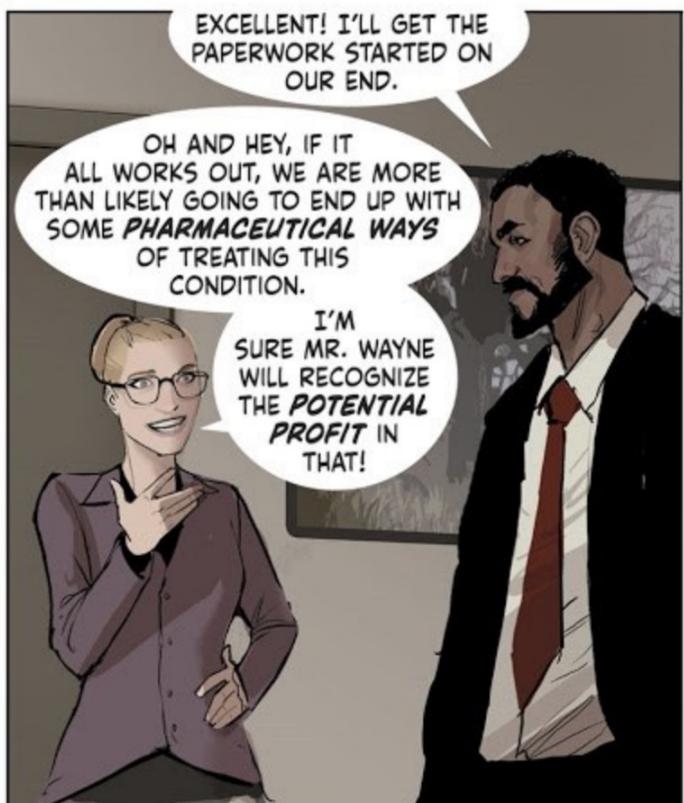


HEH!
SO...THE RESEARCH GRANT? INTERESTED?



OF COURSE!
UH, I MEAN, YES. VERY INTERESTED.

SO, THE FIRST THING YOU GOTTA DO IS MAKE THEM SEE HOW YOUR THEORY WILL MAKE MONEY.



EXCELLENT! I'LL GET THE PAPERWORK STARTED ON OUR END.

OH AND HEY, IF IT ALL WORKS OUT, WE ARE MORE THAN LIKELY GOING TO END UP WITH SOME PHARMACEUTICAL WAYS OF TREATING THIS CONDITION.

I'M SURE MR. WAYNE WILL RECOGNIZE THE POTENTIAL PROFIT IN THAT!



DR. QUINZEL, MR. WAYNE IS NOT DOING THIS FOR ANY SUCH CYNICAL REASONS.

RIGHT, SORRY.

AAAAARGH, SHONDRA, I'LL KILL YOU!



I...UH. I DIDN'T MEAN TO IMPLY THAT. IT'S MORE THAT I'M STRUGGLING TO FIGURE OUT WHY SOMEONE LIKE MR. WAYNE WOULD INVEST IN, WELL...



MR. WAYNE HAS A **PERSONAL HISTORY** WITH CRIME IN THIS CITY.

HE WOULD LOOK FOR **ANY PLAUSIBLE WAY** TO HELP **REDUCE** IT.

I, FOR ONE, CONSIDER YOUR THEORY PLAUSIBLE ENOUGH TO MERIT THE REQUESTED FUNDS.

IT HELPS THAT YOUR PROPOSED RESEARCH BUDGET IS EXCEEDINGLY MODEST.



I MEAN...YEAH. THE ONLY REAL **COST** WILL BE THE SECOND PHASE WITH THE **BRAIN ACTIVITY NEUROIMAGING**.

EVERYTHING BEFORE THAT IS INTERVIEW WORK.



WHICH MEANS...OH GOD, NOW I GOTTA FIND OUT HOW TO ACTUALLY **GET ACCESS** TO ARKHAM, BLACKGATE, AND THE GOTHAM POLICE...



RELAX, DOCTOR.

ARKHAM SHOULDN'T BE A **PROBLEM**. MR. WAYNE HAS **FUNDED** ITS REPAIRS AND SECURITY, SO THEY **OWE US**.

SAME GOES FOR THE GOTHAM PD. WE CAN MAKE SOME CALLS.



MEANWHILE I'LL ASK FOR PERMITS FOR ACCESSING BLACKGATE.

PREFERABLY **WITHOUT** THE D.A.'S OFFICE HEARING ABOUT IT.

EVER SINCE MY EXPERT WITNESS TESTIMONY ON THE **NYGMA CASE**, DENT HAS BEEN ON A **WARPATH** AGAINST THE CENTER.



WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT'S SETTLED THEN. GOOD LUCK, DOCTOR. PLEASURE MEETING YOU!



Y-YEAH... UH...LIKewise!



WELL, I'LL GET IN CONTACT WITH **HUGO STRANGE** AT ARKHAM AND MAKE SURE HE'S UP TO DATE WITH ALL OF THIS.

I DON'T THINK STRANGE WILL BE **OVERLY ENTHUSIASTIC** ABOUT WAYNE PUSHING A STAFF MEMBER ON HIM. THE LEAST I CAN DO IS GREASE THE WHEELS BY **VOUCHING** FOR YOU.



THANK YOU!



I THINK THAT WILL BE ALL, DR. QUINZEL. YOU'RE FREE TO GO.



UH...DR. MATHEWS?

YES?

I MEAN IT. THANK YOU.



PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY GIVE ME A CHANCE AROUND HERE...SO...



BECAUSE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PROFESSOR COLLINS?

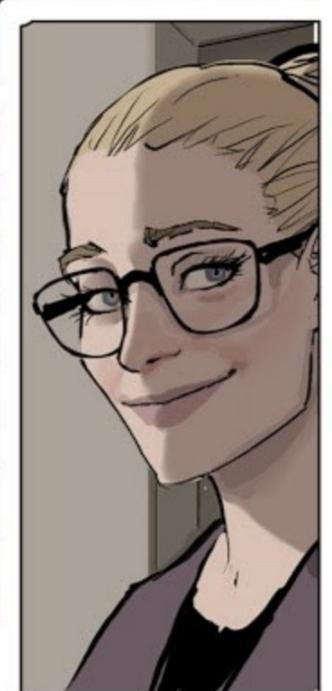
UH...YEAH.



YOU ALSO SCORED TOP GRADES WITH PROFESSORS CHEN AND PHILLIPS. ONE OF WHOM IS A CROTCHETY WOMAN OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE MADE MY OWN COLLEGE CAREER A LIVING HELL. YOU DON'T PASS HER CLASS WITHOUT PUTTING IN THE WORK.

EVERYONE HAS A PAST, HARLEEN.

AND YOU SHOULD KNOW, HELPING PEOPLE GET OVER THEIRS IS IN OUR JOB DESCRIPTION.



AND THERE IT WAS. ONE THING WENT RIGHT FOR ME, AND ONE PERSON HAD MY BACK, AND I FELT LIKE A MILLION BUCKS.



HEY, HARLEY! I'M NOT DONE TALKING TO YOU!

HEY, PAULINE! RIGHT HERE!



IT TOOK TWO WEEKS FOR MY TRANSFER TO BE CLEARED, AND YOU KNOW WHAT?

I HAD *NO PROBLEM* WITH THAT.

AFTER ALL, I HAD *EARNED* MY MOMENT OF GLOATING, AND YOU BETTER BELIEVE I WAS GOING TO *ENJOY IT!*

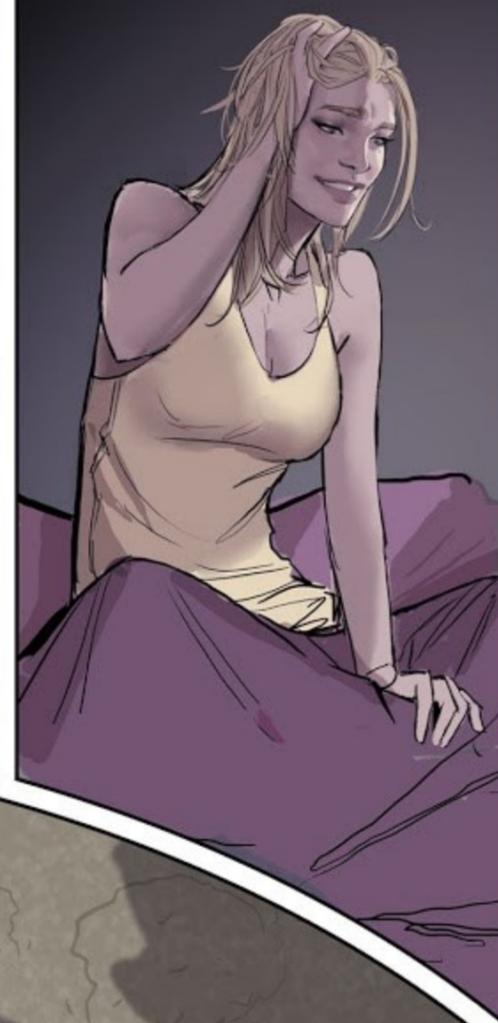
AND THAT WASN'T THE ONLY IMPROVEMENT. MY PREVIOUSLY *SHIT-YOUR-PANTS-TERRIFYING* NIGHTMARES SUBSIDED.



BY WEEK TWO, THEY WERE REPLACED BY BRIEF, UNSETTLING DREAMS.

IN THEM, THE MIST WAS STILL THERE. BUT THE *MONSTERS* SEEMED *ABSENT*.

AND I WAS VERY MUCH OKAY WITH *THAT*, TOO.



THE DAY I LEFT THE INSTITUTE WAS A HAPPY DAY.

I FELT LIKE I WAS LEAVING ALL THE BULLSHIT BEHIND ME AND I WAS WALKING TO A BRIGHT FUTURE.

I GUESS THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID ABOUT WALKING TOWARD THE LIGHT.

YOU TEND NOT TO *NOTICE* THE SHAPE OF *YOUR OWN SHADOW*.

I KNEW NOTHING OF MY FUTURE. STARING AT THE LIGHT, I CARED LITTLE ABOUT THE SHADOWS. ALL I KNEW...



...WAS THAT I FINALLY MADE IT.



YOUR NAME AND THE PURPOSE OF YOUR VISIT!

OH, I'M DR. HARLEEN QUINZEL. I START WORKING HERE TODAY.

TAKE OUT SOME FORM OF **GOVERNMENT-ISSUED I.D.** AND POINT IT AT THE CAMERA!



DO YOU HAVE A FORMAL LETTER OF INTRODUCTION?

I, UH, ACTUALLY MY BOSS SHOULD HAVE...



THAT'S ALL RIGHT! SHE'S CLEARED.

I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, PRIYA.



HEY, DR. UH...QUINTZLE? IS THAT RIGHT?

IT'S *QUINZEL*. HARLEEN QUINZEL.



ODD NAME.

MIDDLE NAME FRANCES.

HM...

THAT'S A MOUTHFUL.

ANYHOW, I'M TIM. TIM BRONSON.



I'M THE CHIEF OF SECURITY HERE.

COME ON, LET'S GET YOU INTO OUR SYSTEM.

RIGHT...



UH, SPEAKING OF *SECURITY*... I WAS A HALF STEP AWAY FROM A FULL PELVIC EXAM THERE.

IS THAT THE *STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE*, OR...?

OH, THAT... WE'RE ON *HIGH ALERT* AT LEAST UNTIL HIS *TRANSFER* IS COMPLETED.

HIS...



HONEYEEY, I'M

HOME!



LOOK AT ALL THESE *GLUM* FACES!

YOU *SEEM* TROUBLED! HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THERAPY? IT'S DONE *WONDERS* FOR ME!



NOTHING?
OKAY, HOW 'BOUT THIS:
THEY SAY THAT THE DEFINITION
OF MADNESS IS DOING THE **SAME**
THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN
AND **EXPECTING DIFFERENT**
RESULTS.
SAY...

COME TO THINK
OF IT, YOU SURE DO
KEEP BRINGING ME **BACK**
HERE OVER AND
OVER AGAIN!

STILL
NOTHING,
HUH?



I PREFERRED THE **OLD**
SECURITY STAFF...THEY HAD
A SENSE OF HUMOR.

WHAT
HAPPENED TO
THEM?

YOUR ESCAPE
HAPPENED.



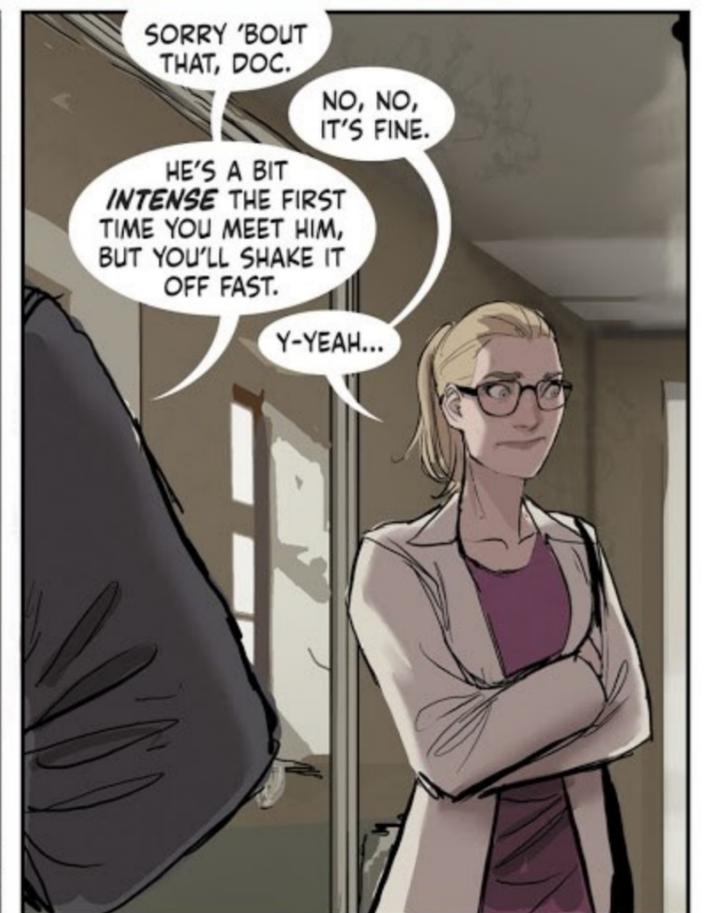
AAAAH...
SO THIS ONE
IS **ON ME**, THEN...WELL
NOW I JUST FEEL LIKE A
COMPLETE JACKASS.

TAKE HIM
AWAY!

WOULD
IT HELP IF
I SAID I WAS...



SORRY?



SORRY 'BOUT
THAT, DOC.

NO, NO,
IT'S FINE.

HE'S A BIT
INTENSE THE FIRST
TIME YOU MEET HIM,
BUT YOU'LL SHAKE IT
OFF FAST.

Y-YEAH...



BACK THEN IT ALL FELT LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN A **TERRIFYING COINCIDENCE**.

BUT KNOWING NOW WHAT I NEVER KNEW THEN...I CAN'T HELP BUT ONCE AGAIN THINK OF SHONDRA'S STARS.



I MEAN, WE BOTH ARRIVED AT ARKHAM ON THE **SAME DAY**.



WE WENT THROUGH THE **SAME THINGS** FOR DIFFERENT REASONS...

OKAY NOW...LOOK THIS WAY.



6'0"
5'6"
5'0"

AND SMILE, JACKASS!

THINKING ABOUT IT, IT ALL FEELS SORT OF **COSMIC**... THE TWO OF US, LIKE TWO INTERSTELLAR OBJECTS GRAVITATING TOWARD EACH OTHER ON A COLLISION COURSE...

OH, THERE WOULD BE **CHAOS** AND **DESTRUCTION**...

BUT MY WHAT A **SIGHT** IT WOULD MAKE.



I KNEW NONE OF THAT BACK THEN. FOR ME, IT WAS SIMPLY A **FRESH START**.

I REMEMBER THINKING, **IT'S A NEW PLACE. NO OLD BAGGAGE. I'LL DO MY RESEARCH, AND I'LL FINALLY SMILE AND MAKE SOME FRIENDS.**

OKAY, STAND STILL...
OH, YOU PROBABLY SHOULDN'T SMILE.

Turns out, Arkham was no place for smiles.





HE SAID WELCOME,
BUT LET'S BE HONEST,
THIS WAS ARKHAM.



A SMALL, WINDOWLESS OFFICE
WITH A MISPELLED NAME WAS
AS GOOD AS IT GOT.

Dr. Quinzoll

AND I WAS OKAY WITH THAT. BEATS
A CUBICLE, AND ANYWAY, I HADN'T
GONE THERE FOR COMFORT. I HAD
A **JOB** TO DO.



I CAME TO ARKHAM WITH
A LIST IN HAND. A VERY
SPECIFIC LIST.



IT COMPRISED PEOPLE WHO
WOULD BE MY PERFECT
EXAMPLES OF THE **ABSOLUTE
DETERIORATION** OF EMPATHY.

I HAD A SIMILAR LIST FOR BLACKGATE
PRISON, BUT AS I WASN'T ALLOWED
THERE AT THE MOMENT...WELL, YOU
KNOW HOW IT GOES. YOU PLAY THE
CARDS YOU HAVE, NOT THE CARDS
YOU WANT.

AND MY, WHAT A DECK IT WAS. EVERY
PSYCHOLOGIST'S **DREAM**. THE STUFF
THAT CAREERS ARE BUILT ON.



THE **KINGS,
QUEENS,
JACKS,
AND ACES** OF
THE **CRIMINALLY
INSANE**.



AND YES...
A **JOKER**
AS WELL...



BACK OF THE LINE
FOR YOU.



I WASN'T NEARLY
READY TO DEAL
WITH **HIM**... BUT
THAT WAS FINE.



I HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH
ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY
DISORDERS TO GO THROUGH.

THE WAY I SAW IT, BY THE TIME
I WAS DONE WITH THEM, MY
NIGHTMARES WOULD HAVE GONE
AWAY, AND HE WOULD SHRINK
IN THE EYES OF THIS...WELL...
YOU GET IT.



AND YOU KNOW WHAT? AT FIRST, IT SEEMED THIS MIGHT BE THE CASE.

I MEAN, HE WAS AN INTENSE PERSONALITY BUT LET'S BE HONEST, THEY ALL WERE.

OH EVERY SCAR IS A STORY...

A LOT OF STORIES, A LOT OF REAL HAPPY ENDINGS.

YES, I'M AWARE OF THEIR...STORIES MR. ZSASZ.

I'M CURRENTLY INTERESTED IN YOUR STORY.

BUT THEY ARE ALL MY STORY!

RIGHT...

EMPATHY?! YOU WANT TO ASK ME ABOUT MY EMPATHY?!

I CAN LITERALLY FEEL THE DYING OF NATURE IN MY VERY FLESH.

I CAN HEAR THE SCREAMS OF THE GREEN AND THE TRIUMPHANT HOWLS OF THE FESTERING DECAY.

AND YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO ASK ME ABOUT EMPATHY, AS YOU SCRIBBLE NOTES ON THE DESECRATED CORPSES OF FELLED TREES!?

THE ONLY REASON I AM EVEN HERE IS BECAUSE I LET THEM CATCH ME!

MY RIDDLES ARE THEIR FIGHTING CHANCE.

BUT DON'T WORRY, DOCTOR, I'M HERE TEMPORARILY...

IN FACT, I'LL GIVE YOU A CLUE OF WHAT I'LL DO!

THERE'S A THING ON SUPERMAN'S BACK, A WONDERFUL THING, WITH A LETTER ON TOP.

NAME ME THAT LETTER AND NAME ME THAT THING...

S...CAPE?

NO ROOM FOR EMPATHY. MAN-EAT-MAN WORLD.

ME...TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN.

AND SEE ME GO FREE WITH NO CHAIN, CUFF, OR STRING!

WELL, DOCTOR? WHAT WILL I DO?

ALICE! AT LONG LAST YOU'VE ARRIVED!

WE ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE OUR TEA NOW!

FOR A WHILE MY SLEEP IMPROVED, BUT AS MY INTERVIEW LIST GREW SHORTER, MY THOUGHTS TURNED TO THE FILE IN MY DRAWER. TO HIM.

HE STARTED WEIGHING HEAVY ON MY MIND, AND WITH THAT, THE MISTS FOUND THEIR WAY BACK INTO MY DREAMS, NOW MORE TERRIFYING THAN EVER.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I COULD DO ABOUT IT.

I'D JUST NEVER SLEEP AGAIN.



BY THE WAY, YOU WANT THE COFFEE MACHINE ON THE SECOND FLOOR, TRUST ME. MUCH STRONGER.

YAHUH... YAAAAAANWN!



WELL, DOCTOR?
BACK FOR ANOTHER
INTERVIEW?



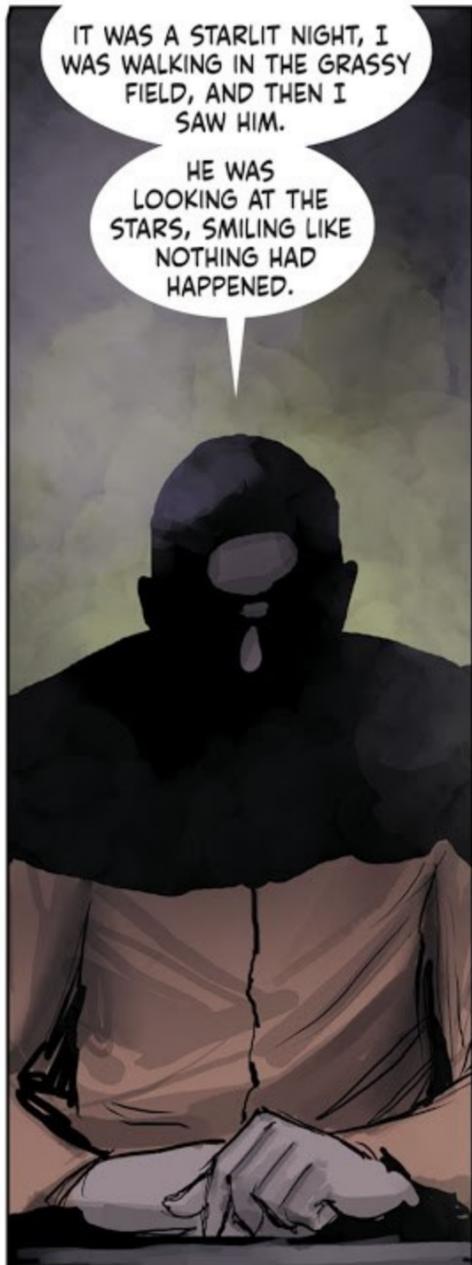
I WAS HOPING
TO SEE YOU AGAIN. I STILL
HAVE SO MUCH TO TELL
YOU.



REMEMBER HOW
I TOLD YOU ABOUT
MICKEY AND THAT BITCH
THAT SLIT HIS
THROAT?



WELL, I
SAW MICKEY LAST
NIGHT...



IT WAS A STARLIT NIGHT, I
WAS WALKING IN THE GRASSY
FIELD, AND THEN I
SAW HIM.

HE WAS
LOOKING AT THE
STARS, SMILING LIKE
NOTHING HAD
HAPPENED.



HEH...
FUNNY THING,
I THOUGHT: HE'S
SMILING **TWO**
SMILES!
ONE ON
HIS MOUTH AND THE
OTHER ONE WHERE HIS
THROAT OPENED
UP.



SO THERE WAS MICKEY
IN THE STARLIGHT,
LOOKING UP AND
SMILING.
AND THEN,
HE TURNS TO ME
AND SAYS...



PICKED A
HELL OF A NIGHT FOR
A WALK!

BWAH!



FOR MORE THAN THREE WEEKS I'D BEEN AVOIDING HIM.

FOR ALMOST A MONTH HE HAD *INVADED* MY DREAMS.



AND THAT DAY I KNEW THERE WAS NO ESCAPE FROM IT.

FUCK!



FINE, DAMN IT!



OKAY, HARLEY! YOU'RE A GROWN WOMAN WHO SAT FACE TO FACE WITH *KILLER CROC*.

THIS CLOWN IS NOTHING!



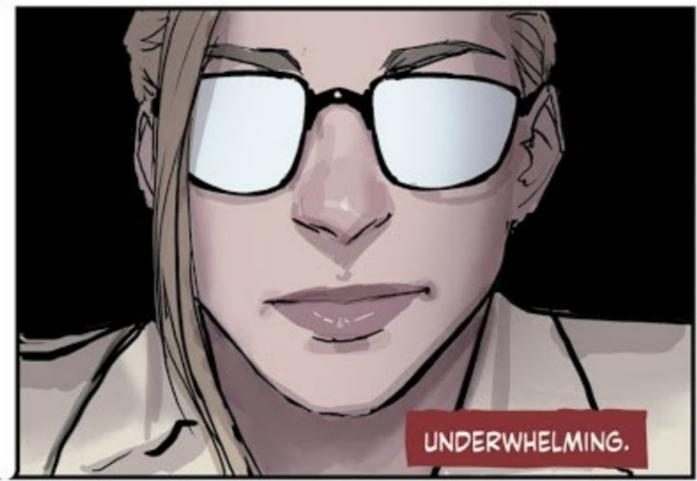
I SAID THAT, BUT I REMEMBER MY HANDS SHAKING AS I CARRIED BOXES WITH TAPES OF HIS INTERVIEWS.



PUTTING THE FIRST TAPE IN WAS ITS OWN SPECIAL KIND OF NIGHTMARE.



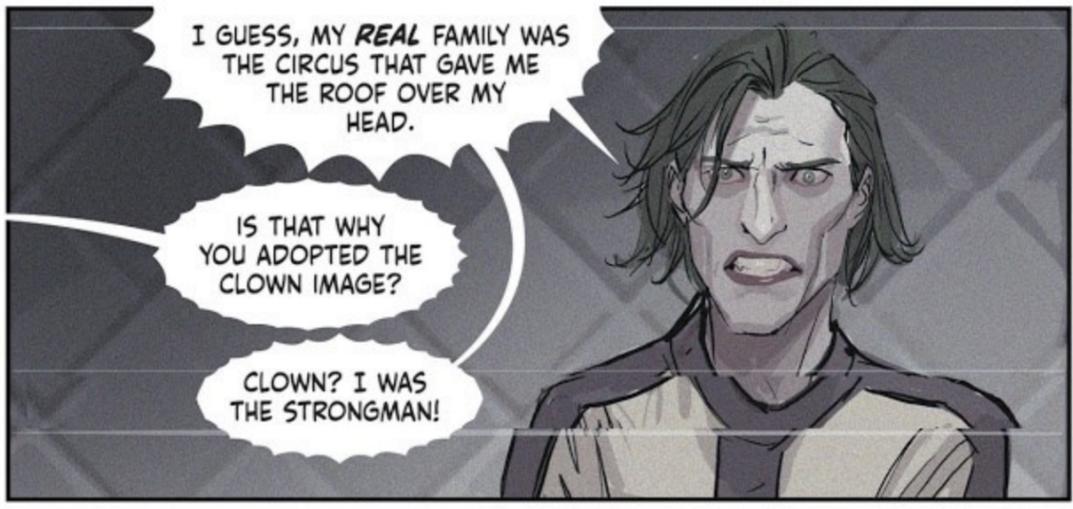
BUT THEN, THE TAPE STARTED ROLLING AND IT ALL JUST FELT...



UNDERWHELMING.



MY FAMILY? IT'S A SAD STORY, REALLY. VICTIMS IN A FIRE DOWN AT THE DOCKS.



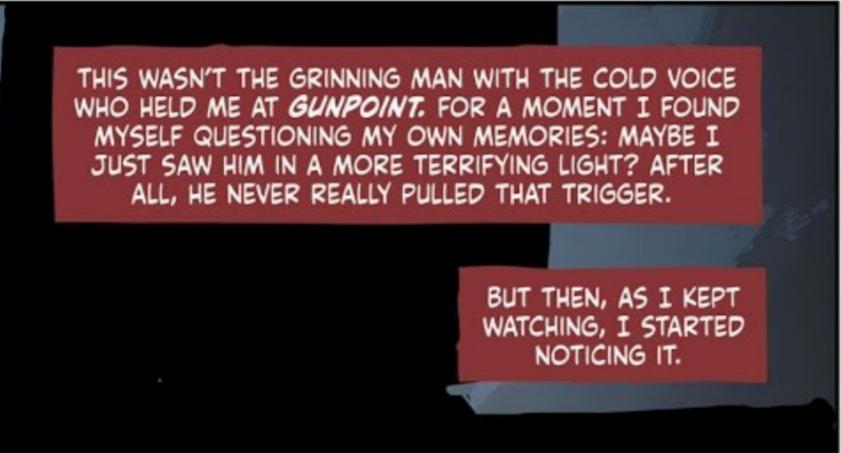
I GUESS, MY REAL FAMILY WAS THE CIRCUS THAT GAVE ME THE ROOF OVER MY HEAD.

IS THAT WHY YOU ADOPTED THE CLOWN IMAGE?

CLOWN? I WAS THE STRONGMAN!



THIS WAS WRONG. WHATEVER I SAW THAT NIGHT IN THE STREET, IT WASN'T THERE IN THOSE TAPES.



THIS WASN'T THE GRINNING MAN WITH THE COLD VOICE WHO HELD ME AT GUNPOINT. FOR A MOMENT I FOUND MYSELF QUESTIONING MY OWN MEMORIES: MAYBE I JUST SAW HIM IN A MORE TERRIFYING LIGHT? AFTER ALL, HE NEVER REALLY PULLED THAT TRIGGER.

BUT THEN, AS I KEPT WATCHING, I STARTED NOTICING IT.

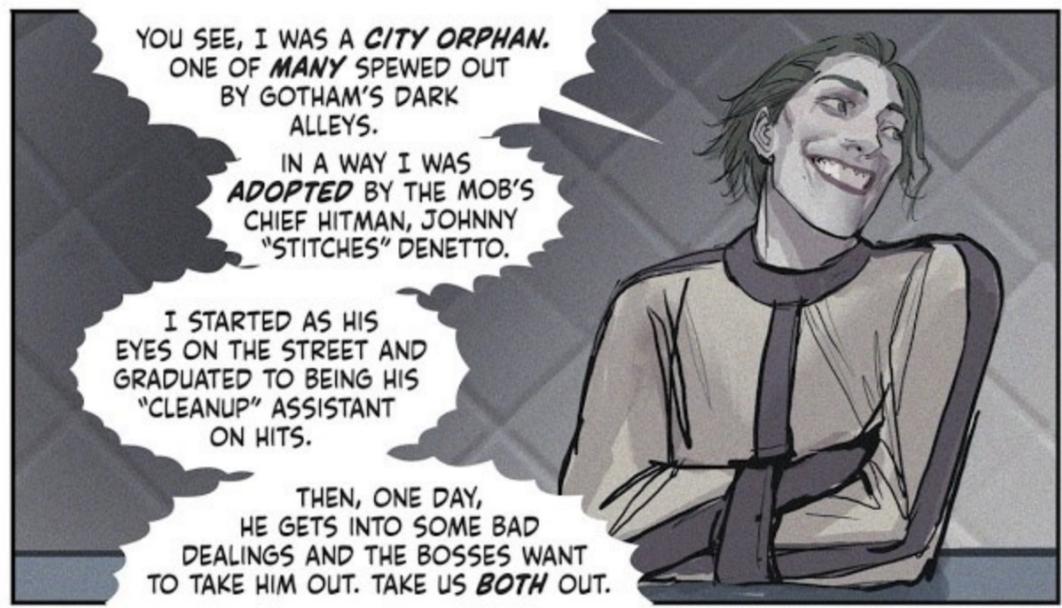


SO, "JOE," HOW DID YOU COME TO CRAFT THIS PERSONA OF THE JOKER?

JUST GONNA JUMP RIGHT INTO THAT ONE?

MY PREVIOUS SHRINKS WOULD USUALLY BUTTER ME UP BEFORE GOING THERE, BUT YOU...

YOU'RE A GO-GETTER, I LIKE THAT!

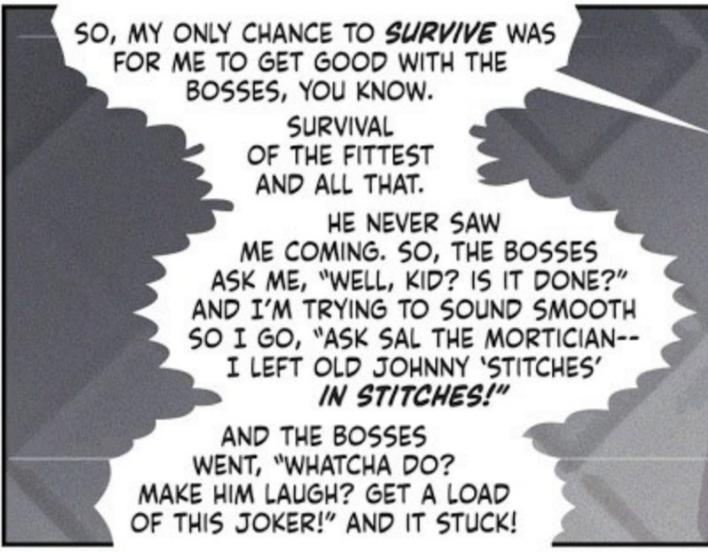


YOU SEE, I WAS A CITY ORPHAN. ONE OF MANY SPEWED OUT BY GOTHAM'S DARK ALLEYS.

IN A WAY I WAS ADOPTED BY THE MOB'S CHIEF HITMAN, JOHNNY "STITCHES" DENETTO.

I STARTED AS HIS EYES ON THE STREET AND GRADUATED TO BEING HIS "CLEANUP" ASSISTANT ON HITS.

THEN, ONE DAY, HE GETS INTO SOME BAD DEALINGS AND THE BOSSES WANT TO TAKE HIM OUT. TAKE US BOTH OUT.



SO, MY ONLY CHANCE TO SURVIVE WAS FOR ME TO GET GOOD WITH THE BOSSES, YOU KNOW.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST AND ALL THAT.

HE NEVER SAW ME COMING. SO, THE BOSSES ASK ME, "WELL, KID? IS IT DONE?" AND I'M TRYING TO SOUND SMOOTH SO I GO, "ASK SAL THE MORTICIAN-- I LEFT OLD JOHNNY 'STITCHES' IN STITCHES!"

AND THE BOSSES WENT, "WHATCHA DO? MAKE HIM LAUGH? GET A LOAD OF THIS JOKER!" AND IT STUCK!

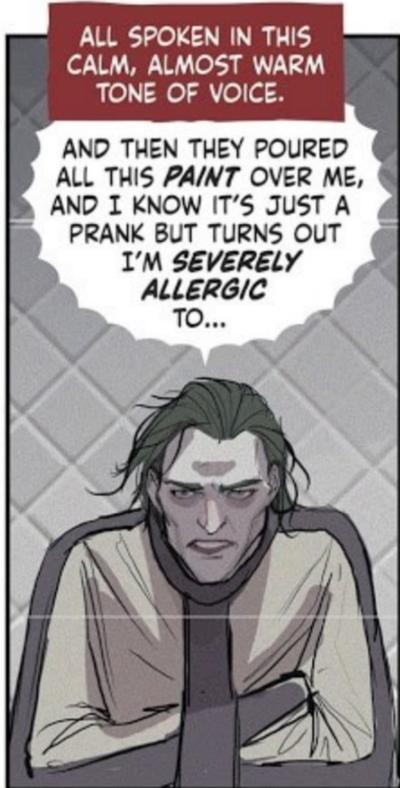


ONE VIDEO AFTER ANOTHER...



LIE AFTER LIE AFTER LIE.

MY REAL NAME IS **WILLIAM JOHNSON**.
BILLY JAY TO FRIENDS.



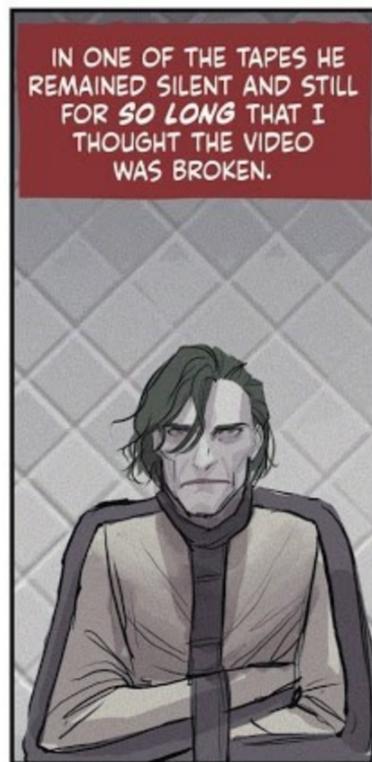
ALL SPOKEN IN THIS CALM, ALMOST WARM TONE OF VOICE.

AND THEN THEY POURED ALL THIS **PAINT** OVER ME, AND I KNOW IT'S JUST A PRANK BUT TURNS OUT I'M **SEVERELY ALLERGIC** TO...



AND MY SON'S LAST WORDS WERE, "**SMILE, DAD...FOR ME...**"

AND I DID. I KEPT SMILING.



IN ONE OF THE TAPES HE REMAINED SILENT AND STILL FOR **SO LONG** THAT I THOUGHT THE VIDEO WAS BROKEN.



AND THEN THERE WAS ONE WHERE HE SPENT A SESSION JUST NAPPING.

UM...**JOKER?**



IT WAS **ALL** AN ACT.

A COMEDY ROUTINE FOR **HIS OWN** AMUSEMENT.

A GAME HE PLAYED WITH EACH AND EVERY PSYCHIATRIST ASSIGNED TO HIS CASE.

I FOUND MY FEAR REPLACED BY **ANNOYANCE**. IN A WAY IT WAS AN IMPROVEMENT.

HELL, I MIGHT HAVE SLEPT WELL THAT NIGHT IF ONE OF MY PREDECESSORS HADN'T DECIDED TO ADD A **REMINDER** THAT THIS COOL-AS-A-CUCUMBER ACT WAS A LOAD OF CRAP.



THE ONLY TAPE THAT CAPTURES **THE REAL** HIM, IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT.



GIVE HIM THE **CHAIR!**

JOKER SENTENCED.



HEY!

KILL THAT **FUCKING MONSTER!**



THERE HE WAS.

A MONSTER, HUH?

HEH! WE'RE ALL MONSTERS IN A CIVILIZED **CAGE**, IT JUST TAKES THE **RIGHT KIND** OF PAIN AND FEAR TO **BREAK THE LOCK**.

SEEMS YOU'RE ALMOST THERE YOURSELF, BUDDY.



JUST GIVE THOSE BARS A GOOD **PUSH!**

OUTSIDE OF YOUR CAGE IS **MY** GOTHAM.

IT IS THE CITY OF MONSTERS! AND IT'S AN HONEST PLACE!

THE MAN ON THE STREET, HIS TONE OF VOICE WAS COLD, LIKE SHATTERING GLASS, LIKE **THAT NIGHT**.



BUT, MORE THAN THAT, IT WAS WHAT HE SAID.

WE'RE ALL MONSTERS IN A CIVILIZED *CAGE*, IT JUST TAKES THE *RIGHT KIND* OF PAIN AND FEAR TO *BREAK THE LOCK*.



SEEMS YOU'RE ALMOST THERE YOURSELF, BUDDY.

SO I BROKE *MY OATH* THAT DAY...BLEW HER BRAINS OUT...EMPTIED THE WHOLE DAMNED CLIP...SHIT LIKE THAT, IT SNAPS SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU...YOU START SEEING THE WORLD *DIFFERENTLY...*

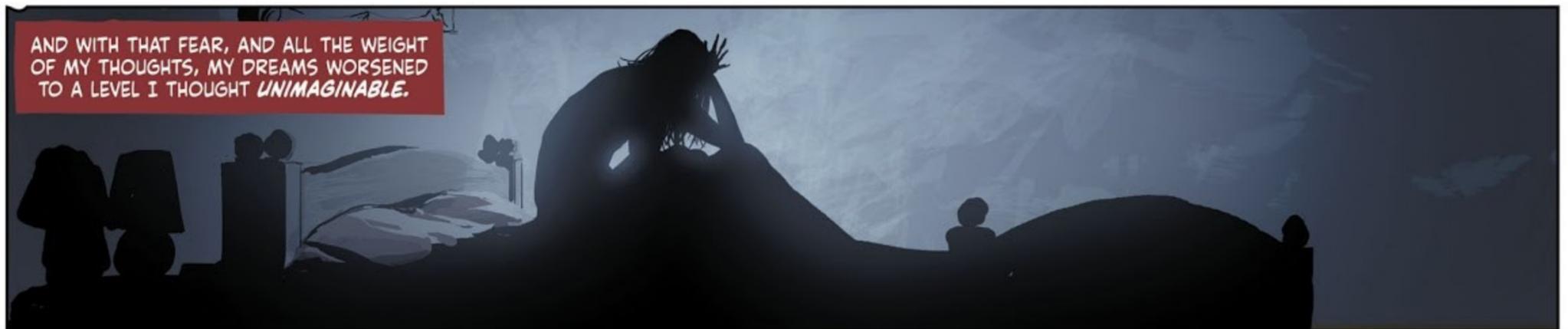


I *HAD* TO INTERVIEW HIM.

MORE THAN EVER, I KNEW THIS.



AND MORE THAN EVER, I FEARED IT.



AND WITH THAT FEAR, AND ALL THE WEIGHT OF MY THOUGHTS, MY DREAMS WORSENER TO A LEVEL I THOUGHT *UNIMAGINABLE*.



I SWEAR, I WAS NEVER *DELUSIONAL*, BUT... THERE WERE MOMENTS WHEN I COULD ALMOST SEE *THE MIST* GATHER IN MY WAKING HOURS.

AND WHEN ANYONE LAUGHED, I *FLINCHED...*



SO, I TURNED TO THE ONE PERSON I COULD TRUST, THE ONE PERSON THAT COULD HELP ME.

MOSTLY BECAUSE SHE HAD ACCESS TO THE *STRONGEST* KINDS OF PHARMACEUTICALS.

ALTHOUGH, BEFORE YOU DO THAT, I READ THIS BOOK ABOUT CRYSTALS...

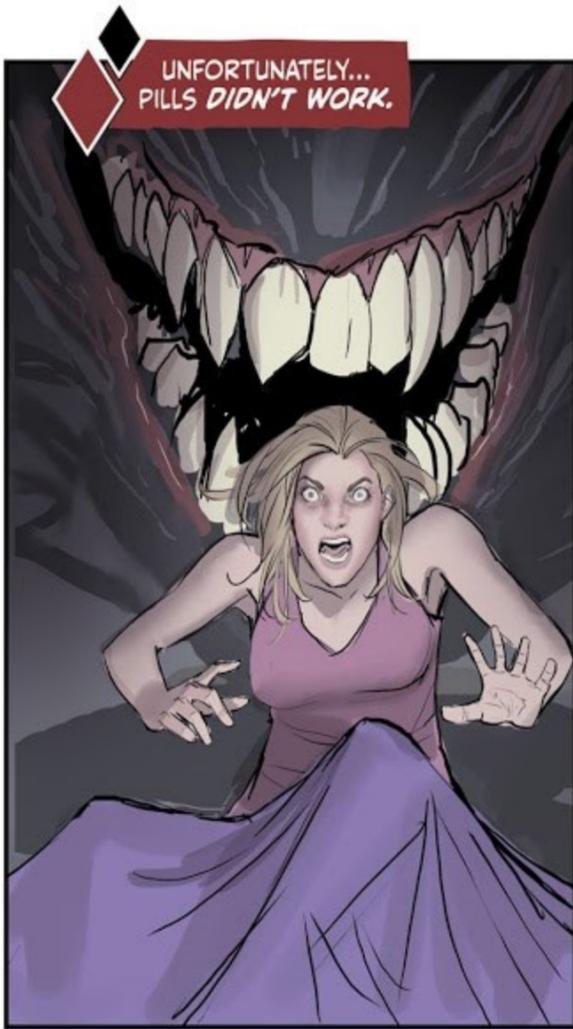
NO CRYSTALS, NO DREAM CATCHERS, NO ROSARIES OR LUCKY CLOVERS.

PILLS, SHONDRA!

HORSE TRANQUILIZERS, ELEPHANT DOWNERS! SOMETHING THAT WILL KNOCK ME THE HELL OUT FOR EIGHT HOURS OF HONEST-TO-GOD DREAMLESS SLEEP!

JOKER

JOKER
JOKER 4-17-08
JOKER 8-24-09

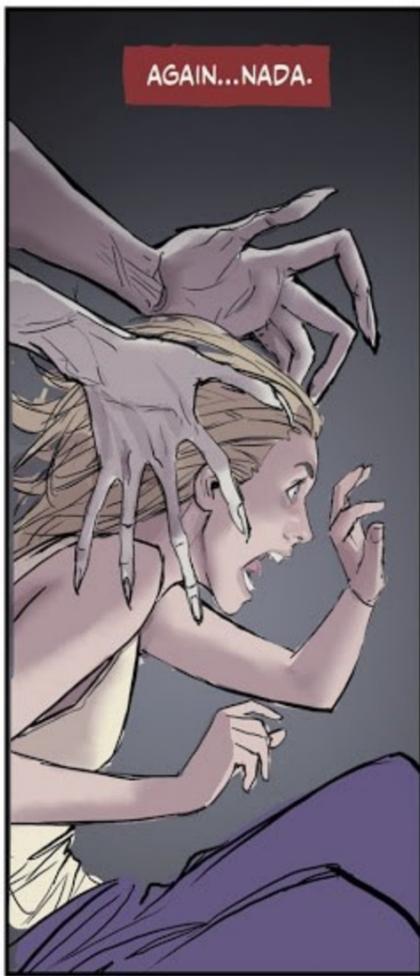


UNFORTUNATELY... PILLS DIDN'T WORK.



SO, I STARTED MY OWN RESEARCH

NO SPICY FOOD...



AGAIN...NADA.



MILK/HONEY/VINEGAR/ TWELVE DIFFERENT KINDS OF TEA BEFORE SLEEP...

NOPE.



A CHIROPRACTIC ADJUSTMENT SOLVED MY NIGHT TERROR PROBLEMS...
HMM...



KRA-POP



ZILCH. ALSO, BACK THEN, I GENUINELY THOUGHT THAT WAS THE MOST UNCOMFORTABLE ORDEAL MY BONES AND TENDONS WOULD EVER GO THROUGH. HAH!



IN THE END, ONLY ONE THING WORKED.



HEY, I SAID IT WORKED!

NOT HELPED!

AARRRGHHH

RING RING



YES?

IN FACT, THIS WOULD HAVE GONE ON FOR GOD KNOWS HOW LONG IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE PHONE CALL.



HE WANTS TO MEET ME? LIKE, IN PERSON?

UHHH... SEVEN IS FINE. WAIT, DID YOU SAY A.M.?



DR. QUINZEL!

OH, MR. DENT!



CALL ME HARVEY, PLEASE!

RIGHT! UH, SORRY I'M LATE...

DON'T WORRY, I'M IN NO RUSH TODAY.

IT'S ONE OF MY RARE DAYS WHEN I HAVE THE TIME TO LEAN BACK AND ADMIRE THE BEAUTY OF *HER*.



GOTHAM.

AH.



I LIKE TO COME HERE SOMETIMES, EARLY. BEFORE ANYONE ELSE IS AROUND...

SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL CITY IN THE MORNING, DON'T YOU THINK?

SUNLIGHT DISPERSES THE SHADOWS FROM HER ALLEYS AND ROOFTOPS, AND SHE IS JUST... *BEAUTIFUL*.



UH... MR. DENT...



I WANT YOU TO REFUSE THE WAYNE GRANT.

WHA--



I'D ALSO LIKE YOU TO END YOUR RESEARCH.

EXCUSE YOU?!

BRUCE WAYNE IS...HE'S A *GOOD* MAN. HIS WHOLE LIFE, HE'S DONATED TO CAUSES LIKE YOURS, DESPERATELY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE *WHY* BEHIND THE MINDLESS VIOLENCE THAT BEFELL HIS FAMILY.



I FAIL TO SEE WHAT THAT HAS TO DO WITH MY RESEARCH! AND ALSO, WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT--

LET ME FINISH, PLEASE.



SEE, BRUCE IMAGINES THE CRIMINALS OF THIS CITY AS BROKEN, BUT *FIXABLE*.

I ASSUME YOU SHARE THIS OUTLOOK IN THE SAME WAY I ONCE DID.



HOWEVER...

I'VE DEALT WITH THEM FOR LONG ENOUGH TO *KNOW BETTER*.



IN MY FIFTEEN YEARS AS A *PROSECUTOR*, I'VE WITNESSED *DEPTHS OF INHUMANITY* THAT WOULD MAKE HONEST PEOPLE OF GOTHAM *NEVER* LEAVE THEIR HOMES AGAIN.



MR. DENT, I'M SURE THIS LITTLE SPEECH GOES ON FOR A WHILE LONGER, BUT SINCE I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME THESE DAYS LISTENING TO THE SELF-AGGRANDIZING IDEOLOGIES OF PATIENTS IN ARKHAM, I'D RATHER NOT DO IT *HERE* AS WELL. COULD YOU GET TO *THE POINT*?



FINE. WHILE YOUR BOSS TRIED TO SLIP IT UNDER THE RADAR, ONE OF YOUR COWORKERS ANONYMOUSLY CALLED MY OFFICE AND INFORMED US ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH...



OH, I HAVE A DECENT ENOUGH IDEA OF *WHO* IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...BUT DO GO ON.

AND WE'VE COME TO SEE YOUR WORK FOR WHAT IT IS.

A THREAT.



A THREAT TO THE VERY *NOTION* OF PROTECTING *LAW AND ORDER* IN GOTHAM.

RIGHT NOW, EIGHT OUT OF TEN OF THE *MOST-HARDENED* CRIMINALS ARE SITUATED NOT IN MAXIMUM SECURITY FACILITIES LIKE BLACKGATE, BUT IN *ARKHAM ASYLUM!*

THE BREAKOUT RATE THERE IS SO HIGH THE BLOODY PLACE MIGHT AS WELL HAVE REVOLVING DOORS INSTALLED!

YOU PUBLISH YOUR RESEARCH AND EVERY DEFENSE LAWYER LOOKING TO BUILD A CAREER WILL JUMP ON IT LIKE A *RABID DOG*, AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, EVERY TRIAL WILL BE NOTHING BUT LAWYERS TELLING SOME SOB STORY ABOUT HOW THEIR CLIENTS LOST THEIR ABILITY TO *FEEL EMPATHY*.





IF MY THEORY IS PROVEN CORRECT--



BIG IF!



OKAY, LISTEN, MR. DENT...I'M WELL AWARE IT WILL MAKE PROSECUTING PEOPLE A **MORE NUANCED** BUSINESS, YES.

BUT IT WILL RESULT IN A **SIGNIFICANTLY** GREATER REHABILITATION PERCENTAGE...



IT'S **CERTAINLY** BETTER THAN PROGRESSIVELY LONGER **INCARCERATIONS** THAT ONLY END UP MAKING THESE PEOPLE FIND THEIR ONLY SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG **OTHER CRIMINALS.**



SEE THIS? IT'S A **DOUBLE-HEADED COIN.** HEADS ON **BOTH SIDES.**

IT WAS GIVEN TO ME BY A MOTHER WHOSE DAUGHTER WAS KILLED BY A PAROLED CRIMINAL.

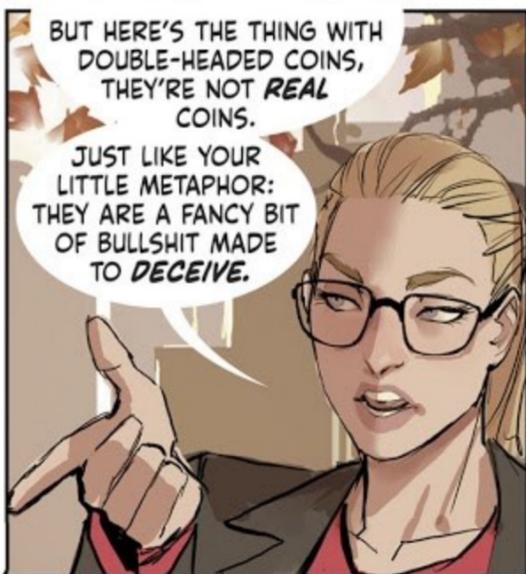
SHE SAID, "YOU TAKE THIS, MR. DENT. YOU KEEP IT AS A REMINDER.

"THESE **MONSTERS** WILL TRY TO CONVINC YOU THEY **CHANGED** THEIR WAYS, THAT THERE IS A **GOOD SIDE** TO THEM, BUT THEY ARE LIKE THIS COIN.

"THEY MAY SPIN AND THEY MAY FLY, BUT WHEN THEY LAND, THEY'LL ONLY SHOW YOU MORE OF **THE SAME.**"



SEE, I BET THAT STORY WORKS REAL WELL AT YOUR ELECTION FUNDRAISERS. IT'S PUNCHY, IT'S GOT A NICE LITTLE GIMMICK WITH THE **DOUBLE-HEADED COIN...**



BUT HERE'S THE THING WITH **DOUBLE-HEADED COINS,** THEY'RE NOT **REAL COINS.**

JUST LIKE YOUR LITTLE METAPHOR: THEY ARE A FANCY BIT OF **BULLSHIT MADE TO DECEIVE.**



GET YOURSELF A **REGULAR OLD COIN,** MR. DENT.

IT MAY MAKE YOU SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY. OH, AND I'M **NOT** BACKING OFF.



IN FACT, I'M **JUST GETTING STARTED.**



IT'S KINDA FUNNY...ALL OF OUR **BIG WORDS** AND **MORALIZING** AND YET WITHIN FIVE MONTHS WE WOULD BOTH BECOME **MURDERERS...**



THAT DAY, HOWEVER, WHILE NOT QUITE **MURDEROUS**, I DID EVER-SO-BRIEFLY ENTERTAINING SOME VIOLENT FANTASIES FEATURING THE ESTEEMED MR. DENT.

IT WAS THE SMUG TONE WITH WHICH HE SIMPLY **DEMANDED** I ABANDON MY WORK.

IT **INFURIATED** ME IN WAYS I NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE.



HE'S DOWN THE HALL. YOU CAN'T MISS IT.
WE KEEP HIM SEPARATED FROM THE REST OF THEM AS HE'S GOT A TENDENCY TO START SHIT.

AND SO, DRIVEN BY THIS RAGE AND BARELY SUPPRESSED TIDE OF PROFANITY ADDRESSED TO HARVEY DENT, I THREW ALL CAUTION TO THE WIND.

I HAD A JOB TO DO.

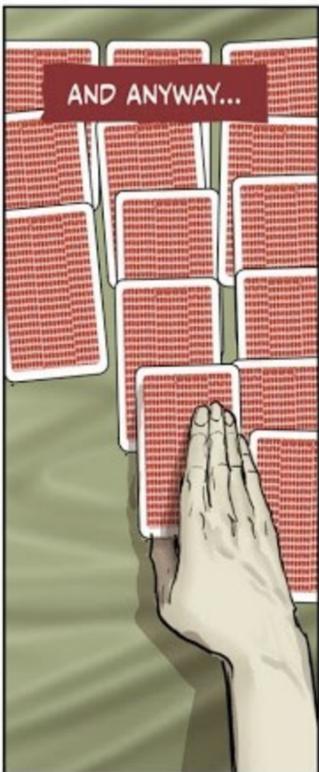
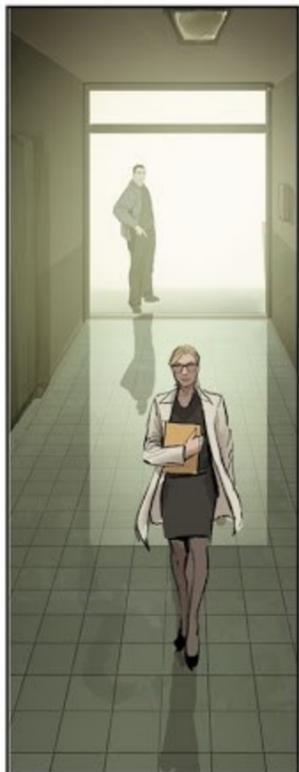


I MEAN, FOR ALL I KNEW HE COULD BE **THE ONE...**

THE **PERFECT** CANDIDATE FOR MY STUDY.

CALL IF YOU NEED ME.

THANK YOU, MR. BRONSON.



AND ANYWAY...



IT'D BEEN OVER A MONTH.



SURELY HE WOULDN'T REMEMBER **ME**.



SO, WHICH ONE ARE YOU? ONE OF MY PREVIOUS ONES OR A **BRAND-NEW** BRAIN-TINKERER?



I CAN'T REALLY SEE YOU ALL THE WAY OVER THERE **IN THE DARK.**

COME CLOSER, I WON'T BITE.

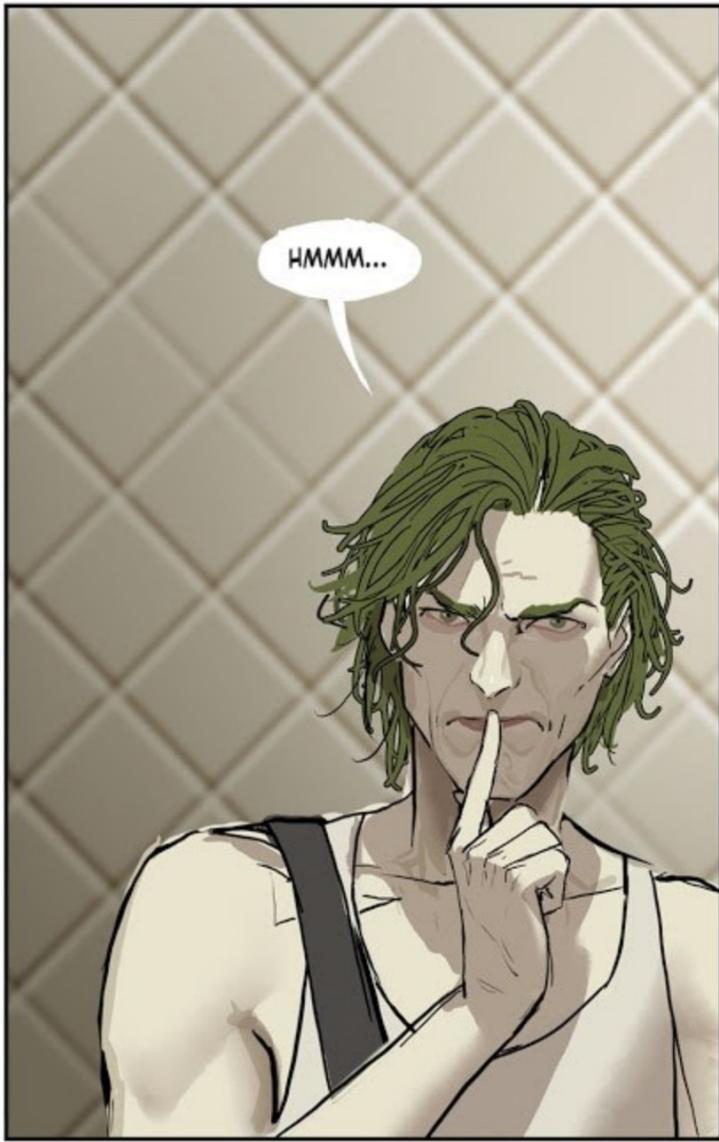


I MEAN, I **MIGHT** BUT...
Knock knock

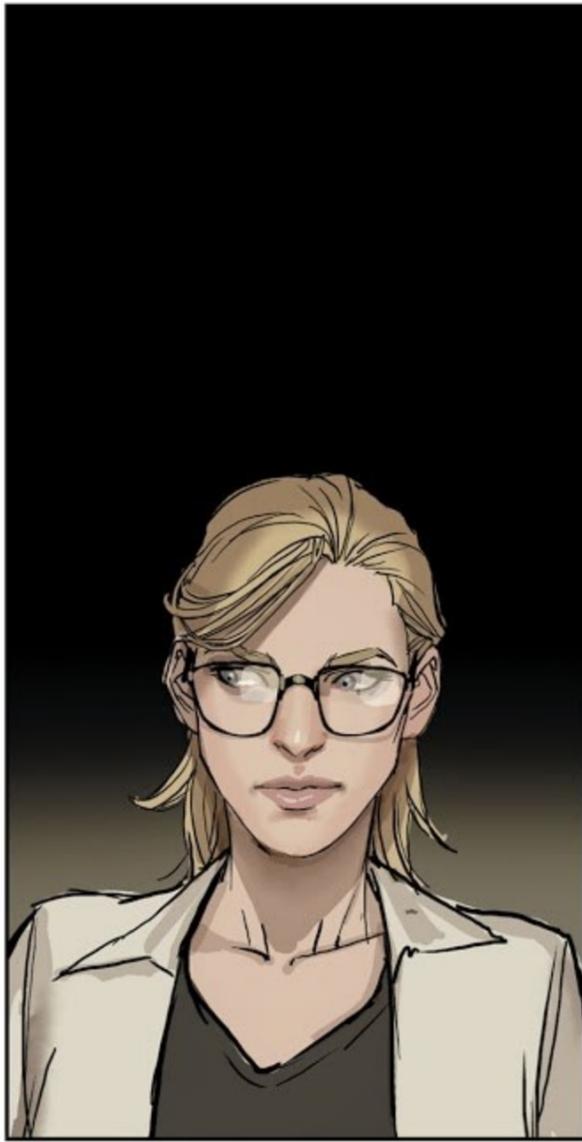
REINFORCED GLASS AND ALL.



I...
I AM **DR. HARLEEN QUINZEL**. I'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO YOUR...UH... CASE.



HMMM...



YOU KNOW...

FUNNY THING ABOUT GETTING YOUR HEAD SLAMMED INTO A WALL REPEATEDLY...

IT DOES A NUMBER ON YOUR **MEMORY...**

THEN AGAIN, **ELECTROSHOCK** THERAPY PROBABLY HASN'T DONE MUCH TO HELP WITH THAT EITHER...



WHAT I MEAN IS, YOU **LOOK** LIKE SOMEONE I'VE MET...BUT...NOT ENTIRELY!



IT'S LIKE SOMETHING IS...





YOU TELL ME! THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE, AFTER ALL: TO PICK THROUGH MY BRAIN, MAKE SENSE OF MY STORIES.

RIGHT...



THE STORIES. I'VE READ UP ON THEM. AS IT TURNS OUT--ALL AT THE SAME TIME-- YOU WERE A RICH MOBSTER, THROWN INTO A VAT OF ACID, A FAILED COMEDIAN, ABUSED BY YOUR FATHER, MOTHER, BROTHER, AND...



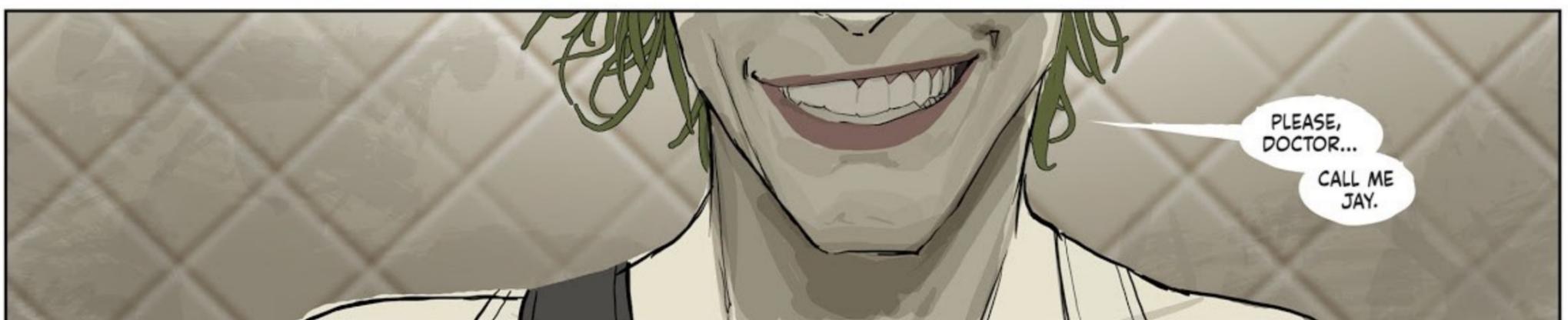
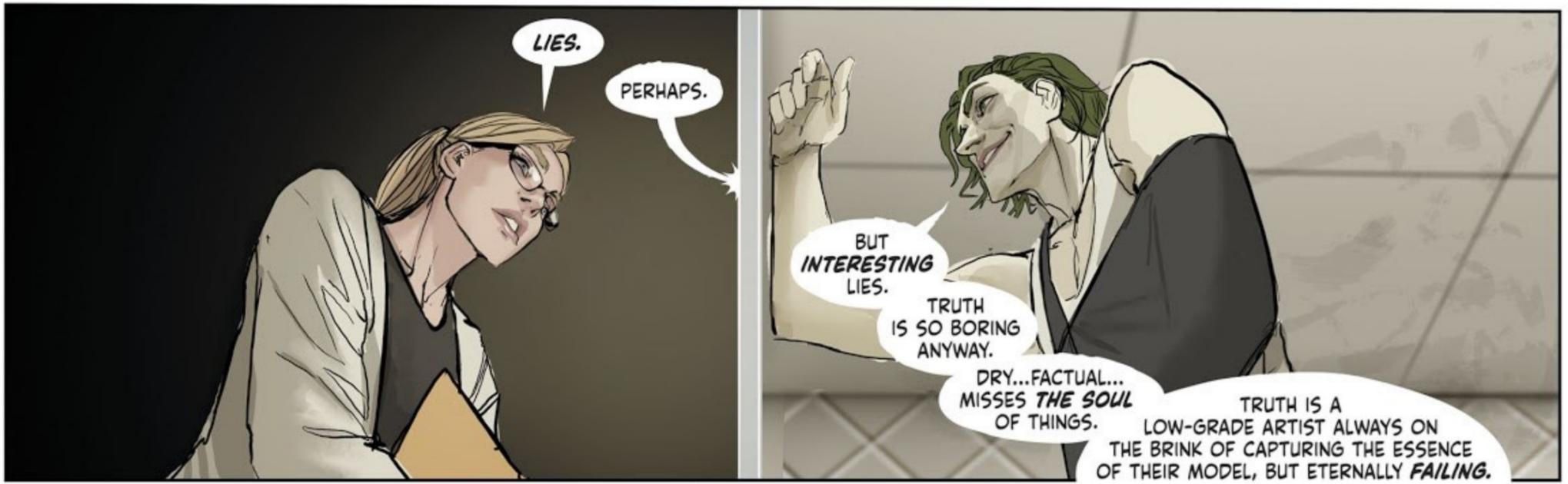
A MATRON OF AN ORPHANAGE THAT DOUBLED AS A SWEATSHOP PRODUCING GOLF BALLS.



PFFTT! I WAS ALWAYS PROUD OF THAT ONE. DOC WILKINS ACTUALLY BELIEVED IT!



BUT SEE, NOW YOU RUINED IT. I COULD HAVE TOLD YOU STORIES LIKE THOSE AS WELL!



I REMEMBER THINKING,
*THIS IS FINE. I CAN
CONTROL THIS SITUATION.*

IT WAS NEITHER THE FIRST
NOR THE LAST TIME I WAS
WRONG ABOUT THAT.

VERY WELL,
MR. JAY.



END OF CHAPTER ONE



**"HEAVEN
HELP ME..."**

**"...A SMALL
PART OF ME..."**

**"...WANTS TO
LET HIM IN."**

HARLEEN

BOOK TWO - IN STORES OCTOBER

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LABEL**

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**“THE ROAD TO
HELL
IS PAVED WITH
GOOD
INTENTIONS.”**

**“ON THAT ROAD
I SAW A
PALE
MAN,
MAN,”**

**“AND HE
SMILED
AT
ME...”**

A BRILLIANT YOUNG PSYCHIATRIST WITH THE CURE FOR THE MADNESS OF GOTHAM, DR. HARLEEN QUINZEL, TAKES DRASTIC MEASURES TO SAVE THE CITY FROM ITSELF. WITNESS THE BIRTH OF THE LEGENDARY SUPER-VILLAIN HARLEY QUINN IN THIS STUNNING REIMAGINING OF HARLEY AND THE JOKER'S TWISTED AND TRAGIC LOVE AFFAIR BY ACCLAIMED STORYTELLER STJEPAN ŠEJIĆ (*AQUAMAN: UNDERWORLD, SUNSTONE*).

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