

The Bat & the Bard: Star-Crossed Love

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This script was inspired by a writing challenge, essentially “Shakespeare writes Batman.” The dialogue was written in Shakespearean style, and it should evoke a surreal mixture of Batman and Shakespeare. This is purely a fan work, I have no ownership of the characters.

PAGE ONE: (Splash Page)

Panel. Splash panel of the Gotham cityscape, with the bat signal shining in the moonlight.

1. CAPTION:

A constant battle rages like a fire,
In dreary Gotham where we lay our scene.
Where one man seeks to save hope from the pyre,
A soldier of the shadows, swift and keen.

This champion, with will of solid steel,
The Bat his mantle, night his closest friend,
Seeks justice with unconquerable zeal,
To bring all wrong and evil to an end.

The worst of those who seek this Batman's death,
A man of clownish face and fiendish grin,
Strikes terror with each cruel laughing breath;
The Joker, jubilant in joyous sin,

One cannot help but ask the gods above,
With what women could these two e'er find love?

PAGE TWO: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. CATWOMAN lands on a rooftop, swinging from her whip. A large sack is tied to her waist.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 2. Catwoman flicks her wrist, coiling up her whip, smiling.

1. CATWOMAN:

Oh, what wonderous night this is to prowl,

PANEL 3. Catwoman holds up a jewel, taken from her bag, and looks at it admiringly.

2. CATWOMAN:

And what fine prey those noble houses offer!

PANEL 4. Same layout as before, only Catwoman looks in surprise at her now empty hand. Lines indicate that a batarang has just knocked the jewel out of her hand.

3. SFX:

Ching

PANEL 5. Catwoman looks up, smiling coyly. Over her shoulder is BATMAN'S outline in the shadows.

4. CATWOMAN:

Could it be thee, my point-eared winged love?

5. BATMAN:

Speak not of love with thievery hand.

PAGE THREE: (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Catwoman strikes a fighting pose, bearing claws on her gloves. Batman steps out of the shadows, with a firm, unyielding expression on his face.

1. CATWOMAN:

Come now, our passion elevates this sport.
Step forward, love, and try to take my prize!

PANEL 2. Front view of Batman in a fighting stance. He suddenly looks to his left, where in the distance there is an explosion.

2. SFX:

Boom

PANEL 3. Catwoman shrugs, grinning.

3. CATWOMAN:

Thou couldst give chase, but other matters beckon.

PANEL 4. Catwoman calls down from the rooftop to Batman, who is swinging away towards the explosion.

4. CATWOMAN:

My love, don't fret! We'll soon have our tête-à-tête!

PAGE FOUR: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. The JOKER dances happily in front of a burning building, laughing. In one of his hands is a jester stick. On either side of him are people running from the burning building in blind terror.

1. JOKER (SFX, filling the panel):

Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha

PANEL 2. Joker gestures dramatically to the fire, like a circus ring master.

2. JOKER:

Come one, come all, come revel in the fun!

A night of playful Bacchus has begun!

PANEL 3. Joker looks with a sneer as Batman swings from his rope and lands onto the street nearby.

3. JOKER:

And lo, 'tis Pluto, come to end my night.

4. BATMAN:

No god would sanction such insanity!

PANEL 4. Joker grabs the head of his jester stick and pulls on it, revealing a hidden short sword.

5. JOKER:

Perhaps, Batman, but I seek no consent
To seed this city with chaotic fruit.

6. SFX:

Sching

PANEL 5. Joker and Batman charge at each other, the Joker laughing wildly.

7. JOKER (SFX):

Ha Ha Ha Ha!

PAGE FIVE: (6 Panels)

PANEL 1. The Joker, now bound in a straight jacket, is being dragged across a stone floor. We see the back of Batman, his hand gripping the straight jacket as he pulls the Joker through the Arkham House of Healing. The Joker has the same laughing expression, though his face is now bruised and beaten.

1. JOKER (SFX):

Ha Ha Ha Ha!

PANEL 2. Batman pushes the Joker into a cell. The Joker trips forward.

2. BATMAN:

May God grant us respite from thy dementia!

3. HARLEEN (OFF PANEL):

Unhand him!

PANEL 3. SISTER HARLEEN [Harleen Qunizel, dressed in a white nun's habit], charges towards Batman as he steps back from the cell door, curious at this new person.

4. HARLEEN:

Is this manner with which to treat the sick?

5. BATMAN:

No manner fits for sickness such as him.

6. BATMAN:

Thou art?

PANEL 4. Sister Harleen does her best to be intimidating, while Batman calmly grabs the cell door.

7. HARLEEN:

Sister Harleen, a Healer of this House.

Methinks, like him, thou needst my healing art.

PANEL 5. Same pose and expressions as before, except Batman slams the cell door closed.

8. SFX:

Slam

PANEL 6. Batman walks away. Over his shoulder, Sister Harleen sternly watches him go.

9. BATMAN:

Compassion is a virtue for us all.

Take care that it not lead thee to a fall.

PAGE SIX: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Scene of the entrance to Arkham, now in daylight. A sign on the front reads “Arkham House of Healing.”

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 2. The Joker lays back calmly in his cell, smiling slightly.

1. HARLEEN (OFF PANEL):

Care thou to tell me what I hold in hand?

PANEL 3. Harleen stands on the other side of the bars, holding a bouquet of irises in her hand. She has a stern expression on her face.

2. JOKER (OFF PANEL):

Irises, good lady.

3. HARLEEN:

Have I not eyes? ‘tis not the what I seek,
But how they found their way into my chamber.

PANEL 4. Joker jumps up, excitedly.

4. JOKER:

A token of my thanks, to my white knight!
What ill that Bat would do me lest thou came.

PANEL 5. Harleen crosses her arm, still stern. The Joker shrugs his shoulders, mournfully.

5. HARLEEN:

Such ill would not be wholly undeserved.

6. JOKER:

‘tis true. In madness, malice have I wrought.

PAGE SEVEN: (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1. The Joker clasps his hands together, in wistful mourning.

1. JOKER:

Such madness, when it grips I can no more
Tell right from wrong than a hawk from a handsaw.

PANEL 2. Harley holds a hand out, smiling in comfort. The Joker leans through the bars, looking hopeful.

2. HARLEEN:

Such ailment is what I'm here to heal.

3. JOKER:

Verily? Could thou truly set me free?

4. HARLEEN:

If 'tis thy wish, then shall be my obsession!

PANEL 3. Harleen turns to leave. The Joker waves to her longingly.

5. HARLEEN:

Provided there be no repeat, I shall
Neglect to tell the guards of this one gift.

6. JOKER:

Thou hast my thanks, angel of salvation!

PANEL 4. Walking down the corridor, Harleen suddenly stops, checking to see if anyone is watching.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 5. Harleen brings the bouquet up to her nose, smelling them with a bright smile on her face.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 6. The Joker, leans through the bars looking where Harleen left, with a big sinister grin on his face.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE EIGHT: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Establishing image of Gotham city scape at night.

1. SFX:

Crack

PANEL 2. A smiling Catwoman and a grim Batman battle on a rooftop. Batman narrowly dodges Catwoman's whip.

2. CATWOMAN:

How long I've longed to waltz with thee again!

3. SFX:

Crack

4. CATWOMAN:

1,2,3...

PANEL 3. Batman kicks the whip out of her hand, scowling. Catwoman smiles wistfully.

4. BATMAN:

This is no waltz!

5. CATOMAN:

...1,2,3...

PANEL 4. Catwoman lunges, Batman dodges

6. CATWOMAN:

...1,2,3...

PANEL 5. Batman scores a hit, knocking Catwoman back.

7. BATMAN:

Enough! Enough! Cease all this talk of love!

All thieves like thee are vile in my sight!

PAGE NINE: (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Catwoman puts her hand to her bruised cheek, smiling coldly.

1. CATWOMAN:

Methinks the rodent doth protest too much!

Our love be strange, but true...

PANEL 2. Catwoman flies forward, claws bared, with a furious expression.

2. CATWOMAN:

...as I shall prove!

PANEL 3. Batman steps aside as Catwoman flies past him.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 4. Catwoman lands on the very edge of the roof, suddenly afraid as she realizes she's about to fall.

3. BATMAN (OFF PANEL, BURSTING):

Catwoman!

PAGE TEN: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Catwoman's eyes widen as she flails her arms for balance, tipping over the edge.

1. CATWOMAN:
Batman, I...

PANEL 2. Batman's hand grabs Catwoman's flailing arm.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 3. Batman pulls Catwoman back, swinging her around so they're face to face. Both look relieved.

2. BATMAN:
Thou must take better care, lest...

PANEL 4. Catwoman kisses a surprised Batman.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 5. Catwoman continues to kiss him. Batman slowly brings his arms up, accepting the kiss.

3. BATMAN:
...lest gravity should take thee from my—

PAGE ELEVEN: (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Catwoman smiles as she punches Batman hard in the stomach, causing him to double over in pain.

1. BATMAN (BURSTING):

Ooof!

2. CATWOMAN:

And so thy love's revealed to me at last!

PANEL 2. Catwoman, smiling, kicks Batman in the head while he's doubled over.

3. CATWOMAN:

To keep our courtship warm within thy heart...

4. BATMAN (BURSTING):

Ugh!

PANEL 3. Catwoman, still smiling, daintily drops a handkerchief.

5. CATWOMAN:

...accept love's token, as I must depart.

PANEL 5. Batman lies on the roof, stunned the from pain. Next to his head is the handkerchief, on which "CW" is lavishly embroidered.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE TWELVE: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Establishing shot of Arkham, at night.

1. HARLEEN (OFF PANEL):

Joker...

2. HARLEEN (OFF PANEL):

...Joker...

PANEL 2. Sister Harleen leans over a balcony, looking wistfully up into the night.

3. HARLEEN:

...wherefore art thou Joker?

PANEL 3. Flashback panel, to the Joker lying in his cell. He is recounting something that's visibly painful, while Harleen listens with tears in her eyes.

4. CAPTION (HARLEEN):

“Somewhere in thy tragic history
Must lie the seed of thy insanity!”

PANEL 4. Harleen back at the balcony paces, with a look of a sudden realization.

5. HARLEEN:

So dear thou has become, that if I could
Excise the root of madness from thy mind...

6. HARLEEN:

...I...

PANEL 5. Harleen pulls her head up with sudden determination.

7. HARLEEN:

...I could forswear my vows, and join thy—

8. JOKER (OFF PANEL):

Hark!

PAGE THIRTEEN: (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Harleen looks down from the (one story) balcony to see the Joker. Some sturdy vines run down the nearby wall. Harleen is shocked, the Joker gives a loving, predatory smile as he raises his hand up to her.

1. JOKER:

What light through yonder window breaks?

PANEL 2. The Joker grabs on one of the vines and starts climbing up the wall.

2. JOKER:

'tis the angelic, healing light of clarity!

PANEL 3. Harleen steps back, angry, as the Joker climbs over the balcony.

3. HARLEEN:

Hast thou lost all sense? The guards—

4. JOKER:

The guards I need no longer, thanks to thee!

PANEL 4. The Joker steps forward, exuberantly happy. Harleen looks hopeful, despite herself.

5. JOKER:

For thy sweet care hast cured my mind of villainy!

6. HARLEEN:

I...thou...

7. HARLEEN:

...verily?

PAGE FOURTEEN: (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1. The Joker puts his hands on Harleen’s shoulders, smiling warmly. Harleen looks uncertain.

1.JOKER:

Thy healing art did sanity restore,
And so I shall depart this Healing House.

2. HARLEEN:

But...

PANEL 2. The Joker suddenly turns serious. Harleen looks confused.

3. JOKER:

But first I must heal thee, as thee did me.

4. HARLEEN:

Heal...me?

PANEL 3. Flashback panel. The Joker lies in his cell, in the same position as Page 12, Panel 3. Harleen has turned around with her hand to her mouth, in shock over what she has just heard. Behind her, we see the Joker grinning.

5. CAPTION (JOKER):

“As you absorbed my tales of tears, I saw
The loneliness you hide within your habit.”

PANEL 4. Joker speaks lovingly, with a hand warmly placed on Harleen’s shoulder. Harleen’s resolve is visibly weakening.

6. JOKER:

Thy life of noble service robs thee of
The passion one can only find in love!

PANEL 5. Close up of their faces, with the Joker’s hand now on Harleen’s cheek. Tears are welling down Harleen’s face, while the Joker continues to speak with intense passion.

7.JOKER:

And so, if thou art likewise fond of me,
I wish to take thee from the nunnery.

PANEL 6. Close up on the Joker’s face, bearing a suddenly sinister grin.

8. JOKER:

What say thee?

PAGE FIFTEEN: (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Gotham's cityscape, at night.

1. HARLEEN (OFF PANEL, BURST):

Help!

PANEL 2. Batman looks down from a rooftop, eyes narrowing.

2. HARLEEN (OFF PANEL, BURST):

Please, help!

PANEL 3. Batman swings down, landing on the street in front of a frightened Sister Harleen running towards him. Harleen's habit is now ripped and disheveled.

3. BATMAN:

Sister Harleen?

4. HARLEEN:

Beware Batman! That wretched clown is loose!

PANEL 4. Batman places his hands on Harleen's shoulders, scowling. Harleen is hysterical.

5. BATMAN:

Joker!

6. HARLEEN:

That snake snuck in my chamber and did try
To snatch my honor from its sanctity!

PANEL 5. Behind the furious Batman, the grinning Joker emerges from the shadows, brandishing his Jester stick like a club.

7. BATMAN:

Where be that rogue? This time I swear I'll—

PANEL 6. Completely black, except for the sound effect.

8. SFX:

THUD!

PAGE SIXTEEN: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Show through Batman's slowly opening eyes, where we see the Joker's sinister grinning face.

1. BATMAN:

Ugh

PANEL 2. The Joker's face hovers over Batman's, disturbingly within kissing distance. The Joker grins, Batman glares.

2. JOKER:

Awake, Batman, and greet this joyous night...

PANEL 3. Batman is chained to a medieval rack (the torture kind), with a large lever at the top. The Joker leans against the rack to his left, speaking in Batman's ear and wagging his finger. Batman is not pleased.

3. JOKER:

...for t'would be rude to miss the christening!

PANEL 4. Batman, tied to the rack, looks to the left (to the off-panel Joker) with his typical scowl.

4. BATMAN:

Where be Sister Harleen? If thou hast harmed—

PANEL 5. Same shot as before. Batman now looks to the right, eyes wide and mouth open in shock.

5. HARLEY (OFF PANEL):

Oh, speak not that sorry, silly name.

PAGE SEVENTEEN: (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Sister Harleen makes her debut as HARLEY QUINN, with a smiling, seductive pose.

1. HARLEY:

Sister no more! 'Tis Harley Quinn, I am!

PANEL 2. Harley keeps the same smile, holds out her hand. The Joker takes hold of it with one hand, and gestures to her with the other, gloating to Batman.

2. JOKER:

The noble nun, remolded in my heart!

Lo, is she not my greatest work of art?

PANEL 3. Joker and Harley stand beside the rack. Joker's arm is around Harley, as she kisses his cheek. Batman turns his head, accusing Harley.

3. BATMAN:

Fool! The fiend has robbed thee of all sense!

4. HARLEY:

If 'sense' be all the social chains that bind
Such sorry saints as me to duty's anchor,
Then aye—he robbed me well, my sweetest pudding.

PANEL 4: Smiling widely, Joker grips the lever on the rack. Harley recoils slightly, suddenly hesitant.

5. JOKER:

Now let our birthday merriment commence!

Wouldst thou like the honor, my lady?

6. HARLEY:

Me? You'd have me...do the deed?

Forgive me, love, but such an act is—

PAGE EIGHTEEN: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Close up of one of Batman's hands. He has produced a lock-pick from his gloves, and is working secretly on one of the manacles.

1. JOKER (OFF PANEL):

Doth thou not wish to celebrate our love?

PANEL 2. The Joker advances on Harley, furious, with a hand raised to strike her. Harley recoils in terror.

2. HARLEY:

Of course, my sweet, but this—

3. JOKER (BURST):

Then take hold the lever, now, lest I shall...

PANEL 3. The Joker, now calm and sweet in contrast to before, puts his arm around Harley and leads her back to the rack. Harley is still trembling.

4. JOKER: ...softly guide thy hesitating hand.

PANEL 4. The Joker's hand covers Harley's as they both pull the lever.

5. SFX:

Crick

PANEL 5. Harley's hand is still on the lever, with the Joker behind her whispering sweetly in her ear. Harley has a perverse smile on her face.

6. BATMAN (OFF PANEL):

Urrgh

7. JOKER:

Again!

PAGE NINETEEN: (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Harley, now getting excited, pulls the lever. Batman cries out, the Joker laughs.

1. SFX:

Crick

2. BATMAN (BURSTING):

Agggrh!

3. SFX (JOKER):

HA HA HA

PANEL 2. Batman pulls his hands free, the manacles popping open.

4. SFX:

Click

PANEL 3. Batman's fist connects with Harley, knocking her back. The Joker smiles wearily.

5. JOKER:

It seems 'tis time for valor's better part!

PANEL 5. Joker bursts through a set of doors onto a balcony, dragging a dazed Harley behind him.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 6. Joker and Harley stop at the balcony railing, with nowhere else to go.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE TWENTY: (5 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Back in the doorway that Joker and Harley came through is Batman, angry and scary.

1. JOKER (OFF PANEL):

Oh dear Harley...

2. HARLEY (OFF PANEL):

Yes, my pudding?

PANEL 2. The Joker pushes Harley over the railing, smiling. Harley, shocked, starts to fall.

3. JOKER:

Parting is such sweet sorrow!

PANEL 3. Close up of Batman's face, eyes wide with shock.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 4. Batman swings on his rope down the side of the building, catching Harley as she falls.

4. HARLEY (BURSTING):

AAAAAH

PANEL 5. Batman holds on to his rope with one hand, and a crying Harley in his other arm. Batman looks up, scowling.

5. JOKER (SFX):

HA HA HA HA HA

PAGE TWENTY ONE: (6 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Exterior shot of Arkham in the day.

1. HARLEY (OFF PANEL):

So here she sits, the Queen Fool on her throne.

PANEL 2. Harley Quinn sits in a cell, with only some straw for a bed, fuming with anger.

2. HARLEY:

My vows, my name, my honor tossed aside,
For what? For love?

3. HARLEY:

Ha! Too late, the truth be clear as day.

PANEL 3. Harley stands up, determined in her fury.

4. HARLEY:

That evil clown be rotten to the core!
And so I do condemn that wretch to Hell!

PANEL 4. Harley looks down, noticing something.

5. HARLEY:

That vile, loathesome..

PANEL 5. Tucked away in the corner, near the straw, is a bouquet of irises.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 6. Harley clutches the bouquet to her heart, melting warmly with love.

6. HARLEY: ...sweet and shining angel!

PAGE TWENTY TWO: (4 PANELS)

PANEL 1. Gotham cityscape, at sunset. Batman stands on a rooftop, pondering as the sun goes down.

1. BATMAN:

'tis clear to me, 'tis illustrated well
By Joker's latest savage act of sin
That evil love can lure the purest soul.

PANEL 2. Batman holds up Catwoman's handkerchief, solemnly.

2. BATMAN:

In weaker moments, I too have been vexed,
Been tempted to consort with certain foe.

PANEL 3. Batman angrily throws the handkerchief away off of the building.

3. BATMAN:

No more! On my dead parents' grave I vow
That such temptation I will not allow!

PANEL 4. Batman jumps off, majestically outlined in the setting sun.

4. BATMAN:

Be it Joker or Catwoman I fight,
They all will know my vengeance of the night!

END