

Infatuated by Corruption

By

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The Gotham Police Major Crimes Unit is a fluster in response to the Joker's escape. Which is understandable, considering the building repairs were completed only last month, and the death of several MCU detectives remains fresh in all our minds. Not to mention the ambush of the prisoner transport, the bombing of Gotham General, or the hostage situation with the ferries. The tension is palpable.

"Gordon." Detective Stephens hands me a paper cup of coffee. "Cream, no sugar." He looks as exhausted as I feel. It's been a long night.

"Thanks." I tear back the plastic tab and take a sip. "Did the rookie have to grow the beans himself?"

Stephens doesn't chuckle or even grin. He just shrugs impassively. He hasn't been the same since the Joker held a shard of glass to his throat. He blames himself for the Joker's escape from the MCU and everyone who died as a result. If I didn't need every able body available, I'd send him home.

I take another sip and decide it'll be my last for the night. It's too bitter. "Who's next?"

Placing his coffee on my desk, Stephens picks up an Arkham employee file. "Only one left. The one all the others pointed their finger at."

I glance over at the holding cells at a beautiful blue-eyed blonde in a white coat. She's my number one suspect. I just need her to confirm it for me.

"Looks mousy. I'll get more if I question her alone."

He nods, hands me her folder and takes his coffee.

I read through her file as she's taken into the interrogation room, and let her sit alone pondering her future as I review the other staff's statements regarding the doctor. When I feel I've let her sweat long enough, I gather up the files and walk to the interrogation room.

I straighten my tie, then nod to the security camera above the steel door, and the buzzer sounds as it unlocks. I pull open the door and march inside. Even under the harsh fluorescent lighting, surrounded by dirty white-painted brick walls, she looks gorgeous. I plop my files on the table and take a seat.

"Good evening, Dr. Quinzel." I reach out my hand, palm up, signifying my submission to her subconscious to help lower her guard, and she gives my hand a timid shake. "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. There was a *surprising* amount of information to assess." I open her employee file even though I've already memorized it, another subtle ploy to incite confidence in her. "I see here you studied at GSU, on a scholarship for gymnastics, where you majored in Psychiatry under Dr. Odin Markus. You're obviously an intelligent young woman. So I've gotta ask, why Arkham for your residency? With your GPA you certainly could have done better."

Her blue eyes dart around the room in a shy manner. "I, um, well I wanted a challenge."

"That's understandable, admirable even." I stroke my mustache as I browse her file. I pause for a beat, then nudge my rectangular-framed glasses up the bridge of my nose as if taking notice of an interesting piece of information previously overlooked. "Are you aware Dr. Markus was dismissed from GSU for sexual allegations?" I already know the answer. Her degree's in review for possible withdrawal.

She gulps and her eyes drop to her fidgeting hands. "No." She looks up at me, masking her obvious lie with a facade of shock. "That's terrible. I can't believe he'd do such a thing."

And then I yank the proverbial rug from under her. "Frank Boles, the chief security officer on duty, he claims to have taken an extended smoke break at your request, in exchange for..." I clear my throat. "An *oral* favor."

She gasps, her eyes going wide. "That's preposterous! I'd never! I swear!"

Ignoring her spurious surprise, I open another file. “The Joker was scheduled for one hour of private therapy a week by chief psychiatrist Dr. Young. According to Security Officer William North, you were visiting his cell once, sometimes *twice* a day, for up to *three hours* at a time, and always *without* an accompanying guard.”

Whited-knuckled hands gripping the table, fear rattling her voice, she exclaims, “He wouldn’t talk to me unless I was alone. We were making excellent progress.”

“If that’s true, why did you fail to submit a single patient report for the Joker? Why did you cover the security camera and disable the microphone during each session?”

“I didn’t file any session reports because he wasn’t one of my assigned patients. Interns are only given mundane patients. The first time I visited his cell I had only wanted to meet him due to his notoriety. I didn’t expect him to open up to me when he hadn’t spoken a word to any other psychiatrist. And even then, he wouldn’t speak to me if he was being recorded.”

“That’ll never hold up.” I lean forward, lacing my fingers. “You can drop the act.”

The nervous anxiety in her expression morphs into defiant determination. “He means to rouse the soporific masses from their self-destructive slumber. To show them they’re slaves to a corrupt system that’s all-consuming. He causes chaos to shatter their imprisoning illusions.”

“His psychosis is so extreme, he can turn a sane person *insane*.”

“You think I don’t know about Harvey? He told me all about Dent. Psychosis is a loss of contact with reality. He has a greater grasp of what’s going on in the world than the vast majority of *sane* people.”

“I can offer you a deal. Just tell me where I can find the Joker?”

The door buzzes behind me and a twisted smile splits her face. Her voice becomes high-pitched with a thick Brooklyn accent. “If ya drank ya coffee, I wouldn’t have to do this.” Her foot swings across the table, and a flare of pain drops me into an abyss of darkness, the Joker’s laugh echoing above.