

Born Laughing

by
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Based on characters created by Bob Kane

FADE IN

INT. FILTHY SLUM - NIGHT

Feet shuffle across the dirty floor, they are clad in brown shoes and multi-colored socks. Into the bathroom he goes and stops at the sink. He leans over and looks into the mirror, his scraggly hair hangs around his face.

JOKER

Well, don't I look jovial.

He fumbles with some make-up jars on the counter.

JOKER (CONT'D)

I need just the right shade. I
really am more of a winter.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

The same feet shuffle through a disgustingly wretched alley. Trash is pushed out of the way by his steps and a rat scurries by.

JOKER

Ah Gotham. This city by any other
name would still smell like rat
feces.

Joker picks up a three foot long piece of rusted metal.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Joker steps out into the sunlight and we see his grotesque face for the first time. He inhales deeply the polluted air.

JOKER

Oh what a mess we'll make of today.

He steps in front of a moving car which screeches to a halt. Joker casually steps to the driver's window.

DRIVER

What the hell is wrong with you?
Crazy freak!

JOKER

Get out of the car.

DRIVER

Go to hell!

JOKER

Let's not jump ahead of schedule.

Joker takes the piece of metal he is carrying and smashes the windshield. The driver puts his window up.

JOKER (CONT'D)

You shouldn't drive with a broken windshield. It's dangerous.

DRIVER

What the hell?

JOKER

You're going to get pulled over.

Joker pulls back like he is going to smash the driver's window and swings, but stops just short. Joker laughs maniacally as the Driver flinches. The Driver curls up and tries to get into the passenger seat, but he is still buckled.

Joker pokes the window with the metal rod and shatters it. He opens the door, hits the lock button and releases the Driver from his seat belt, who scrambles into the passenger side and tries the door to no avail. Joker cracks him in the head, knocking him out.

Everything goes black.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The Joker's face comes into focus, then all goes dark again.

The sound of handcuffs clicking shut.

The sound of duct tape.

The driver wakes up to find his hands behind his head, cuffed behind the head rest. His feet are duct taped to the metal rod, which is under the seat and dash board so he can't lift his legs.

JOKER

Welcome back.

The Driver is confused and terrified. Joker is driving now.

JOKER (CONT'D)

I'm glad you decided to stay. I could use some company today.

DIRECTOR DRIVER
Please.

DIRECTOR JOKER
Where are you from?

DIRECTOR DRIVER
What?

DIRECTOR JOKER
Where did the roller coaster of
your life start? I know where it's
going to end, just curious how far
you've gone.

DIRECTOR DRIVER
What?

DIRECTOR JOKER
Answer me!

DIRECTOR DRIVER
I don't...

Joker twirls a small dagger between his fingers and jams it
into the Driver's leg. The Driver SCREAMS.

DIRECTOR JOKER
Where were you born?

DIRECTOR DRIVER
Center City!

DIRECTOR JOKER
Where do you live now?

DIRECTOR DRIVER
The Narrows.

DIRECTOR JOKER
Yuck.

The driver starts to cry.

DIRECTOR DRIVER
Please... Please, let me go.

DIRECTOR JOKER
No. Now would you please, PLEASE
try to have a little fun!

DIRECTOR DRIVER
What?

Joker pulls the car over and stares down the Driver.

JOKER

If you refuse to enjoy yourself I
am at least going to make it look
like you're having fun.

Joker takes out his knife and climbs over the seat in front of the driver. The camera pans to the side of the road and the Driver's screams ring out.

INT. CAR - DAY

Joker is driving with a big smile on his face.

JOKER

Feeling better already, aren't you.

The camera pans over to the Driver, his face has been slashed on each side into a garish smile.

JOKER (CONT'D)

So happy you can't even speak huh?
I can't tell you how thrilled that
makes me. You know what they say,
"If you see a friend without a
smile; give him one of yours."
(laughs)

Joker looks in rear view mirror and sees the flashing blue and red lights of a police car attempting to pull him over.

JOKER (CONT'D)

See? I told you we were going to
get pulled over. Cops, I tell ya,
there's always one around when you
don't need 'em.

Joker pulls over.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Just play it cool man, we'll get
rid of him in no time.

The Officer approaches the car.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Good day Officer. May I ask what
I've done?

OFFICER
Your windshield...
(he gets a look at Joker)
What the hell is going on here?

JOKER
We're on our way to a costume
party. Care to join us?

OFFICER
Get out of the car.

JOKER
Granted, your costume is drab and
uninspired, but I've seen worse.
Check out my friend.

OFFICER
NOW!

JOKER
Oh alright, but only because I like
your moxie!

Joker gets out of the car and stands behind the Officer as he looks in the car at the Driver. Joker takes out a gun, points it at the Officer's head as he tilts his head from side to side like an artist sizing up his next stroke of the brush.

OFFICER
What the hell!

The Officer turns quickly and reaches for his gun as his head is met with the blast from Joker's gun.

JOKER
Oh well, cops always ruin the party
anyway.

Joker rolls the Officer's body onto its back. He reaches into his coat pocket and takes a playing card from it. He places the card over the gaping wound in the Officer's forehead. When his hand pulls back we see it is a Joker card.

JOKER (CONT'D)
We've got an officer down boyo!
(laughs)

Joker gets back in the car. Joker looks over at the Driver who is near shock, but still has the bloody grin dripping down his face.

JOKER (CONT'D)
Whhat are you smiling about?

Joker laughs as he pulls off.

INT. CAR - LATER

JOKER
I mean that gas station attendant
acted like we were robbing him
blind. Sure, I left him blind, but
I paid for the gas. I'm not just
some petty thief. Am I?

The driver says nothing.

JOKER (CONT'D)
AM I?

DRIVER
No sir.

JOKER
Good. And here we are.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Joker pulls up to the house. He pauses as he looks at it.

JOKER
Sometimes things just don't work
out the way you want them to.
Sometimes days just don't go the
way you planned. Don't you hate
that?

The driver just looks at him.

JOKER (CONT'D)
Well? Don't you?

DRIVER
Yes.

The Joker reaches into the Driver's jacket pocket and takes his wallet. He flips through and finds family pictures and looks at his license.

JOKER
Now you be a good boy, or I'll be
paying your family a visit.
(MORE)

JOKER (CONT'D)

And what you've seen me do today
will be Strawberry Shortcake to
what I do to them. Follow?

The Driver nods.

JOKER (CONT'D)

OK, I won't be long. I'd leave the
window open for you, but you'd
probably just scream for help.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Inside the townhouse sits an OLD MAN. He sits in the only
furniture there, a small wooden chair. His face is buried in
his hands and he is sobbing.

The rest of the place is empty and there is a huge gaping
hole, black with soot, in the dining room that looks straight
through to the basement.

The door bursts open and light floods the room as Joker kicks
his way through. The MAN looks up, terrified.

JOKER

Hello old man. Remember me?

OLD MAN

Oh my God!

JOKER

You've probably done your best to
forget, but memories are stubborn
things. No matter how hard you try
to keep 'em down they keep fighting
their way back up. They are a part
of you. That's why I've made myself
a blank slate. Just a few loose
ends to tie up.

OLD MAN

What happened to you?

JOKER

What do you mean?

OLD MAN

You, you look...

JOKER

What? Is something wrong? It's my
hair isn't it? I knew you'd hate
the hair.

OLD MAN

Why?

The Woman looks at the hole in the dining room.

JOKER

Oh that? Sorry about that. That was supposed to take you out too. Got the old broad though huh?

OLD MAN

What did we ever do to you?

JOKER

I'm the one in control here honey, and if you don't know, I'm not gonna tell ya!

OLD MAN

What is this supposed to be, a joke?

JOKER

The world is a joke. There are morbidly obese people that live in poverty. THAT is a joke. Life is a joke. Wars are fought, people die, in the name of God and religion. THAT is a joke. Me? I'm just having fun.

OLD MAN

You're insane.

JOKER

And loving every minute of it!

Joker looks out the front window.

JOKER (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

The Woman wait for a few moments in fear.

Then in walks the Driver carrying two five gallon containers of gasoline. Joker is following him with his gun trained on his back.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Put them down and stand over there.

The Driver puts the gas down and stands against the wall.

DRIVER

Can I go now? You said you would
let me go.

JOKER

Don't worry, I'll be releasing you
soon.

Joker takes one of the containers, walks over to the hole in
the floor, raises it above his head and sends it hurtling
into the basement. It bursts open upon impact.

DRIVER

Please.

Joker walks over to him and puts his gun under his chin.

JOKER

You want me to release you now?

DRIVER

Yes.

JOKER

From the crippling grip of life?

DRIVER

What?

BANG! Joker shoots him under the chin and the Driver's body
slumps to the ground. Joker puts the gun in the Driver's
hand.

JOKER

Sorry pal, this Joker is wild!
Haaaa HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

OLD MAN

Oh my GOD!

Joker takes the other container of gasoline and starts
spreading it around the room.

JOKER

You know the best part of all of
this?

The Old Man just stares at him in disbelief.

JOKER (CONT'D)

Don't care to hazard a guess? OK,
I'll tell you, but you're no fun.
(MORE)

JOKER (CONT'D)

The police, stupid swine that they are, are going to be spending months trying to figure out who this guy is, how he knew you and why on earth he would want to burn you and then kill himself. Come on, now that's funny.

Joker finishes with the gas at the front door. He takes a Joker Card from his jacket and dips it in the gasoline on the floor.

JOKER (CONT'D)

One down, seven to go.

OLD MAN

You're sick!

JOKER

I am as I was made.

He lights the card and flicks it into the house.

END