

THE DARK KNIGHT

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T H E D A R K K N I G H T

BURNING. Massive flames. A dark shape emerges- The BAT SYMBOL. Growing. Filling the screen with BLACKNESS.

CUT TO:

DAYLIGHT. Moving over the towers of downtown Gotham... Closing in on an office building... On a large window... Which SHATTERS to reveal-

INT. OFFICE, HIGH RISE -- DAY

A man in a CLOWN MASK holding a SMOKING SILENCED PISTOL ejects a shell casing. This is DOPEY. He turns to a second man, HAPPY, also in clown mask, who steps forward with a CABLE LAUNCHER, aims at a lower roof across the street and FIRES a cable across. Dopey secures the line to an I-beam line- CLAMP on- sends a KIT BAG out then steps OUT the window...

EXT. HIGH-RISE -- DAY

...into space. The men SLIDE across the DIZZYING DROP... landing on the lower roof across the street.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GOTHAM -- DAY

A MAN on the corner, back to us, holding a CLOWN MASK. An SUV pulls up. The man gets in, puts on his mask. Inside the car- two other men wearing CLOWN MASKS.

GRUMPY

Three of a kind. Let's do this.

One of the Clowns looks up from loading his automatic weapon.

CHUCKLES

That's it? Three guys?

GRUMPY

There's two on the roof. Every guy is an extra share. Five shares is plenty.

CHUCKLES

Six shares. Don't forget the guy who planned the job.

GRUMPY

Yeah? He thinks he can sit it out and still take a slice then I get why they call him the Joker.

Grumpy cocks his weapon. Bozo pulls the car over in front of the GOTHAM FIRST NATIONAL BANK.

EXT. ROOFTOP, BANK -- CONTINUOUS

Dopey PRIES open an access panel-

HAPPY
Why do they call him the Joker?

DOPEY
I heard he wears make-up.

HAPPY
Make-up?

Dopey pulls out thick bundles of blue CAT 5 cables.

DOPEY
Yeah. To scare people. War paint.

EXT. BANK -- CONTINUOUS

Grumpy, Chuckles and Bozo get out of the car and march into the bank CARRYING ASSAULT RIFLES-

INT. BANK -- DAY

The Security Guard looks up- Grumpy FIRES into the ceiling. Customers SCREAM. Chuckles CRACKS the Security Guard.

As Grumpy and Bozo round up the hostages, one of the TELLERS presses a button mounted beneath her window- a SILENT ALARM.

EXT. ROOFTOP -- DAY

Dopey watches the alarm PING his handheld.

DOPEY
Here comes the silent alarm.
(touches a button)
And there it goes. That's funny. It didn't dial out to 911- it was trying to reach a private number.

Behind him, Happy RAISES his silenced HANDGUN.

HAPPY
Is it a problem?

DOPEY
No, no. I'm done here.

Happy SHOOTS. Dopey SLUMPS. Happy picks up his bag and FORCES OPEN the roof access door...

INT. STAIRWELL, BANK -- DAY

...and speeds down the stairs, to the basement. He SLAMS open the door...

INT. VAULT ROOM, BANK -- DAY

...and comes face to face with a huge VAULT.

INT. LOBBY, BANK -- DAY

Bozo and Grumpy move down the line of hostages- Bozo hands each Hostage OBJECTS from a bag. A GRENADE. Grumpy follows, PULLING THE PINS.

GRUMPY

Obviously, we don't want you doing anything with your hands other than holding on for dear life.

BLAM. Chuckles is BLOWN OFF HIS FEET- Grumpy and Bozo DIVE for cover- the Bank Manager steps out of his office, SHOTGUN in hand. Hostages SCRAMBLE, CLINGING their grenades...

INT. VAULT ROOM, BANK -- DAY

Happy CLAMPS a DRILL to the vault- the bit SPINS- SLIDES into the metal door- a BOLT of ELECTRICITY RIPS THROUGH THE DRILL, THROWING HAPPY TO THE FLOOR-

INT. LOBBY, BANK -- DAY

Grumpy and Bozo cower as the Bank Manager FIRES again.

GRUMPY

He's got three left?

Bozo raises TWO fingers. Grumpy squeezes off a SHOT. The Bank Manager FIRES. FIRES again. Grumpy looks at Bozo, who nods. Grumpy JUMPS UP.

The Bank Manager FIRES- Grumpy GRUNTS as buckshot CLIPS his shoulder. FALLS. The Bank Manager moves in for the kill, FUMBLING for new shells. Bozo STANDS- SHOTS him.

Bozo picks up the shotgun. Grumpy checks his wound- it's superficial. He struggles to his feet.

GRUMPY

Where'd you learn to count?!

Bozo's mask stares him down. Grumpy heads for the stairs in the back. Bozo starts loading fresh shells into the shotgun.

BANK MANAGER

You have any idea who you're stealing from? You and your friends are dead.

Bozo looks down at him. Says nothing.

INT. VAULT ROOM, BANK -- DAY

Happy at the vault door, barefoot, turning the tumblers with hands stuffed into his SNEAKERS. Grumpy walks in.

HAPPY
They wired this thing up with 5,000 volts. What kind of bank does that?

GRUMPY
A mob bank. Guess the Joker's as crazy as they say.

Happy shrugs. Grips the WHEEL BOLT and SPINS it.

GRUMPY
Where's the alarm guy?

HAPPY
Boss told me when the guy was done I should take him out. One less share.

GRUMPY
Funny, he told me something similar...

Happy FREEZES. The wheel SPINS to a STOP- the vault DOOR CLUNKS OPEN- Happy GRABS for his weapon- SPINS to see Grumpy SHOOT. Grumpy steps over Happy into the vault...

INT. VAULT, BANK -- DAY

...which is filled with an eight-foot MOUNTAIN OF CASH.

INT. LOBBY, BANK -- DAY

Grumpy walks into the lobby, straining under several DUFFELS filled with cash. He DUMPS them. Looks at Bozo. LAUGHS.

GRUMPY
C'mon, there's a lot to carry...

INT. LOBBY, BANK -- DAY

Bozo walks back into the lobby with two more DUFFELS. Sets them down on an ENORMOUS PILE. Grumpy looks at it.

GRUMPY
If this guy was so smart he would have had us bring a bigger car.

Grumpy JABS his pistol in Bozo's back. Takes his weapon.

GRUMPY
I'm betting the Joker told you to kill me soon as we loaded the cash.

BOZO
 (shakes head)
 No. I kill the bus driver.

GRUMPY
 Bus driver? What bus-

Bozo steps backwards. SMASH. Hostages SCREAM as the TAIL END OF A YELLOW SCHOOL BUS ROCKETS through the front of the bank, SLAMMING Grumpy into the teller's window.

Bozo picks up Grumpy's weapon. Another clown OPENS the rear door of the bus. Bozo SHOOTS him. Then loads the bags onto the bus. The wounded Bank Manager watches him. In the distance: SIRENS.

BANK MANAGER
 Think you're smart, huh? Well, the guy who hired you's just do the same to you...

Bozo slowly shakes his head.

BANK MANAGER
 Sure he will. Criminals in this town used to believe in things...

Bozo turns back to the Bank Manager. Crouches over him.

BANK MANAGER
 Honor. Respect. What do you believe, huh? What do you bel-

Joker slides a GRENADE into the man's mouth. A PURPLE THREAD is knotted around the pin.

THE JOKER
 I believe that what doesn't kill you...

Bozo PULLS off his MASK. The Bank Manager GASPS. In the reflections of the glass DEBRIS behind the Bank Manager we see GLIMPSES of a SCARRED MOUTH and CLOWN MAKEUP. THE JOKER.

THE JOKER
 ...simply makes you stranger.

The Bank Manager's eyes go wide. The Joker rises, strolls towards the bus, the purple thread attached to the grenade pin UNRAVELLING FROM THE PURPLE LINING of his jacket as he walks. The Joker climbs into the bus, SHUTS the rear door, TRAPPING THE PURPLE THREAD...

EXT. SCHOOL, GOTHAM -- DAY

Kids pour out, heading onto a long line of school buses.

INT. BANK -- CONTINUOUS

As the bus pulls out, the purple thread PULLS THE PIN-
hostages scream and scurry away from the Bank Manager, who
shakes with fear as, with a FIZZ, the grenade does not
explode, but SPEWS RED SMOKE.

EXT. BANK -- DAY

The School Bus pulls free of the Bank wall and pulls out onto
the street, SLIDING INTO THE LINE OF IDENTICAL BUSES HEADING
PAST THE BANK. The buses trundle past COP CARS racing up the
street... and we-

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVING OVER GOTHAM -- NIGHT

From the top of a brick building a SHAFT OF LIGHT comes on.

EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS -- CONTINUOUS

A PATROLMAN looks up at the BAT-SIGNAL. Smiles. A DEALER
standing beside a car spots the signal. Steps back.

DEALER

No, man. I don't like it tonight.

BUYER

What're you, superstitious? You got
more chance of winning the powerball
than running into him...

INT. MAJOR CRIMES UNIT, GOTHAM CENTRAL -- NIGHT

DETECTIVE RAMIREZ, female, rookie detective, 30's, makes
coffee, watching a news show on the television.

ON SCREEN: The host, MIKE ENGEL, lays into the MAYOR.

ENGEL

*Mr Mayor, you were elected on a
campaign to clean up the city... when
are you going to start?*

MAYOR

Well, Mike-

ENGEL

*Like this so-called Batman- a lot of
people say he's doing some good
that criminals are running scared...
but I say NO. What kind of hero
needs to wear a mask? You don't let
vigilantes run around breaking the
law... where does it end?*

(MORE)

ENGEL (cont'd)
Yet, we hear rumors that instead of trying to arrest him the cops are using him to do their dirty work.

MAYOR
I'm told our men in the Major Crimes Unit are close to an arrest.

RAMIREZ
 Hey, Wuertz- the Mayor says you're closing in on the Batman.

WUERTZ looks up, listless. Crumples up a paper.

WUERTZ
 The investigation is ongoing.

He throws the paper at the trash. It rebounds off a board headed 'BATMAN: SUSPECTS.' Lined with pictures: Abraham Lincoln. Elvis. The Abominable Snowman.

EXT. ROOFTOP, MAJOR CRIMES UNIT -- NIGHT

Ramirez comes out onto the roof. LIEUTENANT GORDON sits by a SEARCHLIGHT. She hands Gordon a cup of coffee.

RAMIREZ
 Ever intending to see your wife again, Lieutenant?

GORDON
 I thought you had to go look after your mother, detective.

RAMIREZ
 They checked her back into hospital.

GORDON
 I'm sorry.

RAMIREZ
 (making light)
 Least there she's got someone round the clock. Unlike your wife.
 (looks at bat-signal)
 He hasn't shown?

Gordon gets up. Looks into the sky at the bat-signal.

GORDON
 Often doesn't. But I like reminding everybody that he's out there.

RAMIREZ
 Why wouldn't he come?

GORDON
 Hopefully... Because he's busy.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE -- NIGHT

Two black SUV's pull onto the top floor. A large man emerges- the CHECHEN. A BODYGUARD points at the sky. The Chechen peers up at the BAT-SIGNAL. Shrugs.

CHECHEN
That's why we bring dogs.

BODYGUARD 2 opens the back door- three enormous ROTWEILERS emerge, GROWLING. The Chechen crouches, KISSING the dogs.

CHECHEN
My little princes...
(to bodyguards)
The Batman's invisible to you
fools... but my little princes...
they can find human meat in complete
darkness.

The Chechen moves to the second SUV, reaches in and DRAGS out a skinny, wild-eyed JUNKIE by his hair.

JUNKIE
(babbling)
No! No get 'em off me! Off me!

The Chechen drags the Junkie towards a battered white van. The van's REAR DOORS OPEN... two armed THUGS emerge, carrying BARRELS... a third hovers in the dark interior.

CHECHEN
Look! Look what your drugs did to my
customers!

VOICE (O.S.)
Buyer beware...

The figure emerges: SCARECROW. Wearing his mask.

SCARECROW
I told your man my compound would
take you places. I never said they'd
be places you wanted to go.

CHECHEN
My business is repeat customers.

SCARECROW
If you don't like what I have to
offer, buy from someone else.
Assuming Batman left anyone else to
buy from.

The Chechen frowns. THE DOGS START BARKING.

BODYGUARD
 (nervous)
 He's here.

A BURLY THUG at the periphery is suddenly SUCKED into the darkness. In his place a shadow straightens, revealing POINTED BAT-EARS against the glittering skyline.

CHECHEN
 Come on, sonofbitch- my dogs are hungry, pity there's only one of you...

A BODYGUARD to the side DISAPPEARS with a scream, and a SECOND BAT-SHADOW appears.

The Chechen looks taken aback. Three more BAT-SHADOWS appear... even the dogs stop growling.

BOOM! A hole appears in the SUV next to the Chechen. The first bat-shadow steps into the light carrying a SHOTGUN.

CHAOS as men scatter and the rooftop erupts in GUNFIRE. The Chechen TURNS as he hears one of his men SCREAM.

CHECHEN (CONT'D)
 Loose the dogs!

A Bodyguard releases the DOGS- they RACE, SALIVATING, into the darkness...

The Dogs RACE towards a Bat-Shadow- the first dog LEAPS, gets its JAWS around the Bat-Shadow's throat...

Scarecrow ducks behind the van- holes PUNCHED in the side by shotgun blasts right behind him. He starts to climb into the driver's seat-

The muzzle of a shotgun is pressed to the back of his head- a bat-shadow is behind him- he SPRAYS him with FEAR TOXIN- the bat-shadow collapses to the ground, SCREAMING. The Cechnyan, cowering from gunfire, looks down at him.

SCARECROW
 Not the real thing.

CHECHEN
 How you know?

SCARECROW
 We're old friends.

A HUGE BLACK SHAPE SLAMS down onto a row of parked cars. The BATMOBILE.

SCARECROW
 That's more like it.