



Nursery Rhymes

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Jonathan Crane already has a friend (alright, maybe he has two), he doesn't need another. Jervis Tetch disagrees.

AKA, I read *The Long Halloween* and then wrote a pre-relationship Hattercrow fic based on that one scene where they're robbing a bank using a horse-drawn carriage.

That one little scene where Scarecrow finishes the Hatter's quote was so adorable, and their whole little nursery rhyme clashes and such... It demanded a fic.

"**If seven maids with seven mops swept for half a year,**" Mad Hatter recited, pulling on his horse's reigns, "**do you suppose that they could get it clear?**"

Scarecrow hummed, thinking about the sheer quantity of money they had been hired to steal. "**I doubt it.**"

Scarecrow jumped off the cart to start loading money bags, cheerfully singing "*The King was in his counting house, counting all his money. The queen was in the parlor, eating bread and honey,*"

Mad Hatter clapped, laughing.

"*The maid was in the garden, hanging out the clothes,*" Scarecrow twirled the bag onto the cart, eliciting more cheers, "*when down came a blackbird-*"

Of course, Batman always comes. It's all about how much you can get away with before he does. Scarecrow groaned on the ground as the cops pulled up, roughly pushing him into a police car.

He was almost entirely certain he had a broken rib or three, but that could wait until they got to Arkham...

"The Knave of Hearts, he stole the tarts, and carried them away." Tetch recited glumly, crawling onto the top bunk in their cell.

"I don't know when he'll break us out." Jonathan muttered, burying his face in his pillow. He didn't notice the other's confused look (Jervis was hardly used to being understood). "Just shut up and be patient."

A few minutes passed in silence. Then Tetch started *humming*.

"Would you cut that out?" Jonathan took his pillow, blindly whacking the top bunk with it. He grinned when he heard some squeaks of dismay.

"You can hardly blame me!" Tetch snapped, the first non-quote he'd spoken in a while. He peaked over the bed. "I'm bored."

"You sound like Ed- Nygma." Jonathan rolled his eyes. "Can you not entertain yourself in a way that doesn't annoy me, you hat-obsessed loon?"

Tetch was quiet again, a brief flash of hurt in his eyes as he laid back down. A few minutes later, a soft whispering reached Jonathan's ears. **"The Walrus and The Carpenter were walking hand in hand. They wept like anything to see such great quantities of sand. If seven maids with seven mops swept for half a year, do you suppose that they could get it clear?"**

"...I doubt it." Jonathan sighed, a strange feeling of guilt leaking into his walled-off heart. The Hatter wasn't the **worst** colleague, he supposed. He stood up, leaning on the top bunk to look Tetch in the eye. He wasn't good at this when he wasn't Scarecrow, but... "Hush little Hatter, don't you scream, Scarecrow's gonna get ya an old canteen."

Tetch grinned, sitting up and clapping. He chuckled. "I'm not sure that's how it goes."

"Well, it is now." Jonathan retorted, twirling a little. "Let's see... And if that canteen makes things taste funny, Scarecrow's gonna get you a bear named Honey."

Tetch laughed harder as Jonathan danced across their cell. "Oh, oh! And if that bear named Honey starts to pout-"

"Scarecrow's gonna get a broom and chase it out?" Jonathan laughed quietly, pausing to think. "And if that broom happens to snap, Scarecrow's gonna run because oh crap!"

Tetch laid on his bunk, kicking his legs as he laughed. "Oh, good show! Good show!"

"Thank you, thank you!" Jonathan bowed as if he was on a stage.

"Encore..?" Tetch asked hesitantly.

It was a lot harder to act like this when he wasn't in his Scarecrow persona, even little embarrassing. But something in Jonathan liked this, liked laughing with Tetch... Dammit, this was almost the same way he felt around Edward. He was not about to make another friend. No way, no how. He'd just have to shut this down now, use his hidden vial of Fear Toxin before any attachment could develop.

Instead, he grinned like the damn clown and nodded. "I suppose I could do one more. But, oh how does it go? **Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?**"

Tetch gaped at him. Then he jumped down, doing an awkward little twirl. "**How doth the little crocodile improve his shining tail, and pour the waters of the Nile on every golden scale! How cheerfully he seems to grin, how neatly spreads his claws, and welcomes little fishes in with gently smiling jaws!**"

"I don't think I've heard that one before." Jonathan responded, holding back a laugh at the truly atrocious twirl Tetch was trying to produce.

"It's from Alice."

"There are nursery rhymes in Alice?" Maybe an obsession with children's poetry wasn't the best hobby for a so-called Master Of Fear, but Jonathan could hardly stop reciting the old rhymes he learned.

"Why, yes, a lot of them." Tetch nodded. His face scrunched in thought. "Uh, how about... **In winter, when the fields are white, I sing this song for your delight. In spring, when woods are getting green...**"

One of the new guards peaked into a cell, eyes wide. Two of the inmates were twirling and rhyming at each other, laughing as they did so. "What are they doing?"

"Ignore 'em." An older guard told him. "They've been doin' this for a couple months now. Keeps 'em from buggin' us, so who cares?"

"If you say so, sir." The young one replied, taking his eyes off the duo. He repeatedly tapped his leg. He shouldn't be this nervous, nothing bad was going to happen. He'd just heard too many rumors, that was all...

Laughter rang down the halls. At first, it was a quiet thing, off in the distance. In mere minutes, it grew louder and closer, until it seemed that the entire Asylum was in on some grand joke.

"Shit." The more experienced guard's eyes bugged out as he fiddled with his belt for his emergency gas mask. "Come on, let's get outta here!"

"But what about the prisoners?" The younger guard asked, putting on his own mask. "Won't they-"

"Ya think we can stop an escape?" The older man laughed bitterly, grabbing his arm to pull him away. "I knew ya were green, but I didn' think ya were *that* green!"

"It's showtime!" Joker giggled, breaking off the cell lock. "Ya gals ready for our, heh, Halloween Special?"

"We just need to stop by the storage rooms first." Jervis answered cheerfully. "I miss my hat, and I do believe the March Hare misses his mask."

"'March Hare'?" Joker asked, grinning wider.

"Shut up." Jonathan growled, pushing out of the cell. The other two followed him. "You know Jervis has a love for nicknames, *Knave*."

"So, he's 'Jervis' now?" Joker whispered.

"What? No." Jonathan was going to develop a strain of Fear Toxin that worked on the clown if it was the last thing he ever did. Joker winked at him. "Shut up before I abandon this whole plan and return to my crows."

"Haigha, I think they moved our belongings." Jervis called, leaning past the broken door to the storage room.

"No, they've just hidden them again." Jonathan grumbled, going into the room. He moved boxes and pushed on ceiling tiles, eventually finding what he was looking for. Slipping on his own burlap mask (his second skin, his preferred face), he held out an oversized tophat. "Here, Hatta."

"I left ya two alone for, what, three months?" Joker asked, incredulous. "I woulda expected ya ta be at each other's throats by now! Instead of a panicking Hatter or brain-washed Strawman, I find a coupla lovebirds?"

Jervis squeaked, going red, while Jonathan growled again. Joker guffawed, patting Jervis on the shoulder. "I shoulda known ya were inta da literary types, Spooky. But wouldn' a tinman fit da aesthetic better than a munchkin?"

"For the last time, clown, *shut up*." Jonathan glared. "We're doin' this plan basically for free, tha least ya could do is be a bit respectful."

"Oh, come on." Joker rolled his eyes, squeezing Jervis' shoulder. "I hardly think-"

"**Then you shouldn't talk!**" Jervis snapped, automatically. His face drained of color as he realized what exactly he had just said and *who* he'd just said it to.

"I know yer new an' all," Joker's grin grew sharp, moving his face close to the Hatter's, "so I'll give ya a pass, dis time. But interrupt me again, shortstack, an' I'll introduce ya ta enough of my Joker Gas to *really* drive ya mad! Got it?"

Jervis nodded. Jonathan growled yet again, having little other recourse. Joker wouldn't really do that, and they both knew it, but the Hatter didn't. He reluctantly brushed it off. Jervis was still relatively new to the Rogues, he was bound to experience a bit of teasing.

Batman always comes, and every crime spree always ends where it started; in Arkham.

Jonathan hummed to himself, moving a Knight across the chessboard. Edward tutted, looking around the rec room with a bored gaze. Edward being bored could be a bad or a good thing, but it *always* meant trouble.

"Really, Jon, you are just not on your game tonight. The loss couldn't have hit you that badly, could it? We both know the plan wouldn't have worked anyways. You should've brought me in on it."

"Joker was in charge of the 'guest list', as he put it." Jonathan shrugged. "Honestly, I think he was more interested in fighting Batman than making sure anything actually worked. But, no, that's not what's bothering me."

"Then what is it?" Edward groaned, locking eyes on his friend. "Missing your crows? Too many broken bones? Inhaled your own toxin *again*? What?"

"Like I'd tell you." Jonathan muttered, looking behind him at the sound of the rec room door opening. Jervis nervously wandered in, sitting down at an empty table.

"So, problems with your *delightful* new cellmate?" Edward grinned, following the other's gaze. "What, does he steal your blankets? Or maybe make fun of your little rhymes?"

"Ed..." Jonathan warned, glaring.

"Oh." Edward smirked, but went quiet. For about ten seconds. "We should invite him over for chess; there's this three player variant I've been wanting to try."

"No."

"Why not?" Edward pouted, glancing back over at Jervis. "He doesn't seem too stupid, at least not like the rest of these morons. It might be nice to expand our little friend group."

"It's bad enough that I have *one* friend." Jonathan shook his head, returning his focus to the game. Whose turn was it? "Just because we've worked together and he's a *tolerable* cellmate, does not mean we have to hang out."

"Hang out'?" Edward chuckled, finally moving his rook. "Ms Quinzel's been writing again, I see. Tell me, was it myself or her you were referring to as your 'one' friend?"

"..."

"Two friends, plus Jervis, plus your widdle feathered pets." Edward winked at him. "I'd say you have more of a heart than you'd care to admit."

"You smug, arrogant, little-" Jonathan's admittedly not very intelligent insult was cut off by a sharp cackle from across the room. He turned, seeing Joker standing by Jervis.

"Dontcha know dat's my seat, Tetchy?" Joker faux-politely explained. Jervis abandoned the seat without argument, moving to another table -- bad move. "I said, dat's my seat."

"B-but I..." Jervis gulped as Joker sauntered towards him.

"Shouldn't have moved so easily." Edward shook his head. "Joker loves playing with the easy ones."

Jonathan didn't respond, thinking. He did not need another friend, regardless of how many he already had. And it was *never* a good idea to piss Joker off. He really should just ignore it, let Jervis sink or swim on his own.

Too bad he was already walking towards them. "Hey, Hatter!"

"Haigha?" Jervis turned to look at him, as did Joker.

"Stay outta dis, Spooky." Joker warned, frowning.

"*The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts, all on a summer's day.*" Jonathan felt his mind buzz as it switched over, felt his thought processes change. It wasn't another personality, not like that Twoface fellow, but it was definitely different. Scarecrow grinned, loudly singing, "*The Knave of Hearts, he stole the tarts, and carried them away. The King of Hearts called for the tarts...*"

He locked eyes with The Mad Hatter, a silent understanding passing between them. Jervis looked some unusual combination of unbelieving and relieved as he finished "**and beat the Knave full sore?**"

"*And the Knave of Hearts,*" Scarecrow turned to the Joker, approaching him with slow, jerky movements that he'd perfected over years, "*returned the tarts, and swore he'd pick on them no more.*"

It started with himself and Jervis turning on the Joker, but somehow ended with half the inmates in the hospital wing. All in all, not the worst possible outcome.

Jonathan limped into his cell, ignoring the guard's blathering about how he wouldn't be getting rec room privileges for a while, he was lucky not to be in solitary, blah blah blah.

"He's going to get us for that, you know." Jervis said in lieu of a greeting, looking down from the top bunk. "I've heard that the Knave is good at revenge."

"Eh, we'll be ready for him." Jonathan shrugged, collapsing onto his bed. He was almost asleep when Jervis' small voice quietly spoke up.

"Hai- Jon?"

"Yes, Jervis?"

"Thank you."

"Mention it again and I'll spike the cafeteria's poor excuse for tea with my toxin."

"Alright." Jervis hummed, quiet for a few moments before reciting: **"The Butcher would gladly have talked till next day, but he felt the Lesson must end, and he wept in delight in attempting to say..."**

Jervis trailed off, and Jonathan wondered if that was the end of the quote. He could barely make out the next little whisper; **"...That he considered the Beaver his friend."**

A small smile crept up Jonathan's face, despite his better judgement. He sighed, singing softly. "Hushabye Hatter, in the top bunk. Instead of most cellmates, I'd rather a skunk. But if I must be honest, I think I shall confess, sharing with you doesn't bring too much stress."

Jervis chuckled. "Oh, please do another?"

"Pat a cake, pat a cake, banker's man," Jonathan recited, smiling, "roll me some quarters, fast as you can..."

The Mad Hatter, delusional mind-controlling neuroscientist, obsessed with fantasy.
The Scarecrow, self-proclaimed God Of Fear, a psychology professor specializing in terror.

It's not the most conventional of friendships, but they aren't exactly the most conventional guys, are they?

— end of "Nursery Rhymes" —