

CHAPTER 1

Robbers at the bank

On the street in front of Gotham First National Bank, three bank robbers were getting ready. In a big room at the back of the bank, millions of dollars were waiting for them. All three men were wearing clown masks with white faces and big red mouths. All three carried guns and little bombs.

'Is it just the three of us?' asked the robber called Chuckles.

'No, there are two more on the roof,' said the one called Grumpy.

'That means five people to share the money,' said Chuckles.

'No, six,' said Bozo. 'There's the Joker too – the guy who planned the job.'

Up on the roof, the robber named Dopey had just switched off the security system.

'I'm finished here,' he said.

'Yes, you are,' said Happy. He took out his gun and shot Dopey. Then he grabbed the bags and ran down into the bank.

The three robbers in the street ran into the bank shooting. Chuckles hit the security guard on the head with his gun. The guard fell to the floor. Grumpy and Bozo pushed all the people in the bank together. They gave everyone a little bomb and took out all the pins.

'Keep very still,' they said. 'Those bombs will explode if you move.'

At the back of the bank, Happy was opening the large metal door to the room with all the money. Grumpy came to join him.

'What kind of a bank is this?' asked Happy.

'A Mob bank,' said Grumpy. 'What happened to Dopey?'

'The Joker told me to kill him,' said Happy.

'That's funny,' said Grumpy. 'The Joker told me to kill *you*.' He took out his gun and shot Happy. Then he started putting money into the bags.



When Grumpy went to the front of the bank again, he saw Chuckles' body. Only he and Bozo were left.

'You're going to kill me, aren't you?' he said to Bozo.

'No,' said Bozo. 'I'm going to kill the bus driver.'

'Bus driver? What bus ...?'

Suddenly a yellow school bus crashed through the window. It threw Grumpy across the room and killed him immediately. Bozo shot the driver. Now he was alone. He put all the money into the bus and climbed into the driver's seat. Then he turned to look at the people. They were still holding the bombs and they were shaking.

The clown began to laugh, quietly at first, then louder and louder. Suddenly he tore off his clown mask. It was Gotham's newest and most feared criminal – the Joker.



Lieutenant Gordon stood in the middle of Gotham First National Bank. There was a huge hole in the wall, and all around him was broken glass. The police had rescued everybody and turned off the bombs. They had found five bodies, all wearing clown masks. Now Gordon's officers were asking people questions.

Detective Ramirez showed Gordon some photos. 'They were taken by the bank's security cameras,' she said.

Gordon looked at the photos. The Joker looked like a clown, even without his clown mask. His skin was covered in white make-up, his hair was green, and a big red smile was painted across his face. He didn't look funny. He looked scary.

Gordon heard a noise behind him. He turned around. It was Batman.

'Give us a moment, please,' he shouted to his officers. They moved away.

Gordon showed Batman the photos. Batman knew the Joker's face from other crimes in the city.

'Him again,' he said. 'Who are the others?'

'Just ordinary criminals. Nobodies,' said Gordon.

Batman picked up some money from the floor.

'These are some of the marked notes that I gave you,' he said. Batman had marked the notes in a special way, to find out which banks the Mob was using.

'We used the notes last week to buy guns from the Mob,' said Gordon. 'We've found four other banks where the Mob does business.'

'Then it's time to take their money,' said Batman. He knew that they had to stop the Mob. Gotham could only be safe if the Mob was finished.

'We'll have to attack all the banks at the same time. And we'll have to talk to the new District Attorney first.'

'Is he a good man?' asked Batman.

'He's got very strong ideas,' said Gordon, looking again at the notes. 'Like you.'

Gordon looked up, but Batman had gone.



Bruce Wayne was in his secret room deep under the ground – the Bat-Bunker. In the middle of the room was the Batmobile. Behind it, the wall was completely covered with television screens and computers.

Bruce was watching the screens when he heard the noisy lift coming down. He wasn't worried. Only one other man knew about this place. Alfred had looked after the Wayne family for years, and was Bruce's assistant and friend.

As he put a pot of coffee in front of Bruce, Alfred looked at one of the screens.

'That's Harvey Dent, the new District Attorney, isn't it?' he said.

'Yes,' replied Bruce. 'I wonder if we can trust him.'

He looked at different pictures of Harvey Dent on the screens. In one video, Dent was helping a woman out of a taxi. The woman was Bruce's friend, Rachel Dawes. The couple disappeared into a restaurant.

'Are you interested in Dent's politics, or his women friends?' asked Alfred.

'Rachel's the Assistant District Attorney. It's no surprise that she and Dent spend time together,' said Bruce unhappily.

Alfred poured Bruce a cup of coffee. 'Be careful, sir,' he said. 'Don't try to do too much.'

'Batman can do anything,' said Bruce.

'That's not true, sir,' said Alfred, and he turned back towards the lift.



Gordon walked into the District Attorney's office.

'I want to meet Batman,' said Harvey Dent from behind his desk. 'I know you're working with him.'

'Batman is a law breaker, wanted by the police,' said Gordon, repeating the words that Dent always used with reporters. 'I'll tell you when we've found him.' Then he changed the subject. 'I want to search five banks, and I need the right papers from your office.'

'Who are you chasing?' asked Dent.

'I can't tell you that yet,' Gordon replied.

'The information's safe with *me*, Gordon. It's your cops* who are working for the Mob.'

Gordon didn't answer. He knew that Dent might be right. In his last job, Dent had found out a lot of bad things about Gotham's police officers.

'I can give you the names of the banks,' Gordon said finally.

'Well, that's a start,' said Dent. 'I'll get you the papers ... but I want your trust.'

'I trust you,' said Gordon. 'We all know that you're Gotham's White Knight.'

'I hear the police have a different name for me.'

'Yes,' thought Gordon. 'And not a very nice one.' But he just smiled at Dent.



* cop: another word for police officer