

JOKER
an origin

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FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

Arthur reaches out, still trying to save the sign--

THE KIDS START KICKING AND BEATING THE SHIT out of Arthur. It's brutal and vicious. Nobody on the street stops to help.

CLOSE ON ARTHUR'S CLOWN FACE, down on the ground. Sweat running down his face, smearing his make-up. Doesn't even look like he's in pain. He just takes the beating. Arthur's good at taking a beating.

That stupid smile painted on his face.

TITLE:

JOKER

INT. CITY BUS (MOVING) - HEADING UPTOWN - LATE AFTERNOON

Arthur sitting in the back of a crowded bus, looking out the window at the city passing him by... his make-up's washed off, still see some white grease-paint smudged on the sides of his face.

He feels somebody staring, turns to see a sad-eyed THREE-YEAR-OLD BOY, face puffy from crying, sitting on his knees looking back at him. His mother's facing forward, but even from behind you can tell she's angry.

Arthur doesn't know where to look, feeling self-conscious and small. He gets back into "character" smiling like a clown and covers his face with his hands-- Starts playing the peek-a-boo game with him.

The boy stares back at him for a moment then giggles--

WOMAN ON BUS

(turns back to Arthur;
already annoyed)

Can you please stop bothering my
kid?

ARTHUR

I wasn't bothering him, I was--

WOMAN ON BUS

(interrupts)

Just stop.

AND SUDDENLY ARTHUR STARTS TO LAUGH. LOUD. He covers his mouth trying to hide it-- Shakes his head, laughter pausing for a moment, but then it comes on stronger. His eyes are sad. It actually looks like the laughter causes him pain.

People on the bus are staring. The little boy looks like he's going to cry again.

WOMAN ON BUS
You think that's funny?

Arthur shakes his head no, but he can't stop laughing. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a small card. Hands it to the woman.

CLOSE ON THE CARD, it reads: "Forgive my laughter. I have a condition (more on back)"

She turns the card over and there is a bunch of information in small writing--

"It's a medical condition causing sudden, frequent, uncontrollable laughter that doesn't match how you feel. It can happen in people with a brain injury or certain neurological conditions."

She doesn't read it (but if you freeze frame the movie you could). She just shakes her head annoyed and throws the card on the ground.

Arthur laughs harder. Tears running down his face.

Not wanting to attract any more attention to himself, he covers his mouth with his threadbare scarf, trying to muffle the laughter--

EXT. THE BRONX, STREET - SUNSET

The bus pulls away, sun almost gone.

Arthur heads slowly limping down the litter-covered streets. Garbage is piled along the sidewalks, the air thick with smog creates a haze over everything.

The streets are crowded with the poor, the elderly and disenfranchised. Women with children in busted strollers. Homeless people sleeping on subway grates. Stray dogs. His is one of the few white faces.

Arthur makes his way into a run-down drug store, behind him two drunks fight on the corner, beating the shit out of each other. Arthur, and nobody else for that matter, pays them any attention.

No one here gives a shit.

EXT. SIDE ALLEY, TENEMENTS - EARLY DUSK

Arthur cuts through a garbage filled alley behind decaying apartment buildings. Holding a small white (prescription) bag in his hand. Tenants overhead leaning out their windows, smoking out their windows, laughing, arguing over loud music.

A BUNCH OF YOUNG KIDS HANGING OUT ON A FIRE-ESCAPE, yell down at Arthur giving him shit in Spanish.

EXT. STEEP STAIRWAY, TENEMENTS - DUSK

Arthur turns from the street, looking up at a long, steep concrete stairway that seems to go up forever, cutting between two tenement buildings, graffiti tags sprayed all over the brick walls. He starts the long climb up, step-after-step-after-step-after-step...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, LOBBY - DUSK

A shabby lobby in a building that was once probably pretty nice, but now it's a dump.

Arthur checks his mailbox. He's still holding the small white bag in his hand.

The mailbox is empty.

INT. ELEVATOR, APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Arthur steps onto the small, graffiti covered elevator, flickering fluorescent lights.

INT. MOM'S APARTMENT, FRONT DOOR - EVENING

Old apartment, worn carpet. Nothing's new inside but it's fairly neat and well-kept.

PENNY (OS)
(shattering the moment)
Happy?! Did you check the mail
before you came up?

ARTHUR
Yes, Ma. Nothing. No letter.

His mother, PENNY FLECK (60's), comes in all made up. She walks over and gives him a kiss on the cheek. He covers the pain from his beating the best he can-- His mother doesn't seem to notice anyway.

PENNY

All day long it's more bad news.
That's all there is.

ARTHUR

Maybe you shouldn't watch so much
television.

PENNY

Thomas Wayne is our only hope.
He'll make a great mayor. Everybody
says so.

ARTHUR

(playful)
Everybody who? Who do you talk to?

PENNY

Well everybody on the news.
(beat)
He's the only one who can save this
city. He owes it to us.

Arthur smiles for his mother as he cuts up some more of her
food.

PENNY

(she pats the bed)
Come sit. It's starting.

Arthur gets into bed with her, their nightly ritual. Stay on
his face as he watches the opening to their favorite show--

BARRY O'DONNELL (OS ON TV)

*From NCB Studios in Gotham City,
it's "Live with Murray Franklin!"
Tonight, Murray welcomes, Sandra
Winger, comedian Skip Byron and the
piano stylings of Yeldon & Chantell!*

ANGLE ON TELEVISION, intro to "LIVE WITH MURRAY FRANKLIN!"
playing--

BARRY O'DONNELL (ON TV)

*Joining Murray as always, Ellis
Drane and his Jazz Orchestra. And
me, I'm "that guy" Barry O'Donnell.
And now, without further ado--
Murraaaaay Franklin!*