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## Joker: Folie à Deux

Joker: Folie à Deux is a tragic tale of two personalities clashing. What happens when a figure becomes a symbol—one that develops meaning beyond his grasp and beyond his intention? This is the central question that haunts Folie à Deux.

What is Arthur Fleck to do now that the symbol he created has taken on a life far greater than himself? And what is director Todd Phillips to do now that Arthur, despite all original intentions, has become romanticized by the world? Do you submit to the symbol people want you to be—and what happens if you can't?

Arthur becomes romantically involved with a fellow patient, Lee (Harley Quinn). He soon realizes that, like the other fans of Joker, Lee only loves him because of his persona—because he is the famous Joker. Arthur tries to live up to that persona, but he can't, because the truth is that he is not the hero of this story. He is just a broken man.

The real tragedy is that no matter what Arthur does, he cannot make people happy—he cannot make them laugh. When he is Arthur, everyone turns their back on him. His fans despise him. But when he becomes Joker, he is applauded, he is loved. And yet, in the end, the very people he once inspired become his end. Folie à Deux is not only a love story between Arthur and Lee—it is also a love story between the Joker and the world that created him. Their shared madness reflects a larger truth: a society that needs icons, is hungry for spectacle, and searches for monsters both to worship and to burn. Arthur does not merely get lost inside the Joker—he is completely consumed by the version of himself that others demand he become.

At the end, Lee leaves Arthur because he gives up the Joker persona. Arthur tries to reach her, tries to connect to her as himself, but they

can no longer meet in the same place. It is a brutal illustration of how relationships fall apart—not just because people change, but because we often fall in love with an image rather than the person behind it. We believe we see each other clearly in the beginning, yet in the end, we may realize that we never truly knew who we were loving at all.

This idea is reflected in the opening short animation, *Me and My Shadow*. Joker arrives in an impossibly long limousine to the adoration of the masses, only to be locked inside a dresser by his own shadow. The shadow takes on the identity of the Joker and charms the audience. The shadow becomes the symbol. It becomes the star. And it no longer needs Arthur. Arthur, as he is called in the final courtroom—Arthur Fleck, who?

Phillips treats the first film like a fantasy—an illusion Arthur creates for himself, where his pain is mistaken for power and his loneliness is mistaken for meaning. *Folie à Deux* exists to confront that fantasy and tear it apart. The second film does not continue the dream—it corrects it. What once felt like triumph is revealed as delusion. What once looked like transformation is exposed as escape.

The first film ends in triumph, but the second ends in tragedy. Joker rises, but then he falls. And through his fall—through his death—he still inspires what may be the real Joker. This is the cycle of violence: one clown replaces another, and the cycle continues as long as there is always someone new willing to wear the smile.