Farewell To My False Self

by vivvav

Summary

As Ren Amamiya leaves Tokyo, he and his friends discuss those two nice gentlemen watching their van.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

Ren felt strangely empty as he rode the train to Shibuya for the last time. So many of the things he’d gotten used to the past year weren’t with him. He didn’t have his journal on him. He’d given it back to Sojiro, after spending the past few weeks erasing all the mundane lies he wrote to make it seem like he was living a normal student life, meticulously filling in as many of the real details as he could. Morgana wasn’t in his bag. He took off the night before, saying he’d meet Ren at the station, wanting one last walk through the city before he got accustomed to country life. The biggest absence wasn’t a physical one. It was the fact that he wasn’t going off to meet any of his friends. Every time Ren had boarded one of these trains, he was off to do something new and exciting with somebody he’d come to care about. Whether it was a date with Makoto, coming home to Sojiro, or getting a gun pointed in his face alongside Iwai, he had cherished every moment of it. Even going to school offered him something new, thanks to being able to hang out with Ryuij and Ann. Every time Ren got on one of these trains, he was off on an adventure. Maybe not a big one, but it was special all the same.

And now he wasn’t. Now he was heading to the train station to catch one more long ride back home. Not to his friends or girlfriend or new surrogate family, his real family. His old life. No longer was he Ren Amamiya, delinquent set loose in the mean streets of the big city. He was finally going back to being Ren Amamiya, son of a small-town repairman. The only thing that was different from his life then and his life now were the fake glasses he was wearing. His mother had given them to him right
before he got on the train. She told him they’d make him stand out less, look gentler. They were a mask, a lie he wore to try and seem less like the delinquent the courts said he was, not that it helped.

“Well, I guess I won’t need these anymore.”

Ren took off his glasses as he stepped off the train. He hung by the edge of the tracks as the train took off, and when nobody was looking, dropped the glasses onto the tracks. It wasn’t exactly the proper way to dispose of them, but he wanted to do one last devilish little thing before life became dull again. He stayed on the platform until the next train came. He couldn’t see the glasses get run over, but knew it was happening, and there was something satisfying about it. He was free of the label of delinquent. He didn’t need a disguise anymore. It sucked to leave his exciting city life, but knowing he could live without pretense was a comfort to him. And besides, things wouldn’t be totally boring. Morgana was coming with him.

“Oh right. Morgana.”

Ren headed above ground to look for his furry friend. As he stepped on the surface, he took one last look at that blue Tokyo sky. Three months ago, it had been blood red, and the world was on the verge of ruin. But Ren put an end to that. Along with his friends, he saved Japan, if not the entire world. Ren really had no idea what he was supposed to do when he got back home. Being a Phantom Thief had given him a clarity of purpose. Steal hearts, save lives, expose injustice, and look good while doing it. His hometown wasn’t a place where you could climb along the side of cruise ships or run around the rafters of museums or fight monsters. Granted, with the collapse of the Metaverse Tokyo was no longer such a place either, but it was still exciting. The next year was going to be agonizing. Ren wished he could spend just one more day with his friends, pack in one more joyful memory to help him get through the future until the day he could return.

Ren was broken out of his wistful wishing by a very loud voice cutting through the crowd.

“Yo! You over there!”

Ren’s eyes trailed down from the sky to a blue van across the street.

“Hey, look this way!”

Ryuji and Ann were waving at him.

“After we said we’d disband. My word.”

“Huh?” Ren looked to his side to see Yusuke standing beside him. As the taller boy escorted Ren to the vehicle, Ren felt reinvigorated, especially once he noticed Makoto sitting in the driver’s seat.

“Sorry about the weird parking job” Ryuji said. “The engine just died on us right here.”

“Hey, Morgana,” Ann asked, looking to the front of the van, “are you done yet?”

Ren could hear the rattling of tools coming from the van’s open hood.

“Why the heck am I in charge of the car again?” Morgana’s muffled voice asked.

“And I thought we were done” Yusuke said as he sat down in the van. As Ren climbed in, he noticed Haru and Futaba sitting in the back.

“It’s fine,” Haru said, “we’re on break.”
“Exams are done too, right?” Makoto looked at Ren as he sat down. “Come on, why don’t you let us drive you home?”

“Nothing would make me happier” Ren said.

“You really, really got to go?” Futaba asked.

“C’mon man,” Ryuji added, “nobody’s forcin’ you to leave, y’know.”

“Yeah, but I have to.” Ren sighed. “Now that I’m officially a law-abiding citizen with no record, it’s time to be with my family again.”

“Yeah, but wipin’ your slate clean ain’t so easy.” Ryuji looked back behind the van. “You see what I mean?”

Everybody looked back. About a hundred feet away was a black car with a couple suspicious-looking men in suits inside. One seemed to be reporting something into a radio. Sae had warned Ren that there would be people watching him for a while.

“Things must be slow these days” Yusuke said with a smirk on his face.

“Don’t mind them” Makoto said. “What they think of us doesn’t really matter.”

“Yeah, she’s right” Ann said. “We can totally do whatever we wanna do.”

Everyone seemed to agree. There was no reason to fear mysterious G-Men. The Phantom Thieves weren’t active anymore. There may be people in power who feared what they could do with the Metaverse, but they couldn’t actually do those things anymore. Still, being under surveillance was annoying.

“The car’s fixed!” Morgana jumped into the van and settled himself on Ren’s lap. “Just had to borrow a plug.” Morgana chuckled as Makoto turned the key in the ignition. The engine came to life.

“Nice job” Makoto said. “On the first try!”

“Alright, let’s roll!” Ryuji shouted.

Ren looked back as Makoto drove off. The G-Men’s car lights were flashing, but they weren’t moving. They seemed to get very angry all of a sudden. Ren snickered and scratched Morgana behind the ear.

“Anyways…” Ryuji grinned at Ren. “Now that we gotcha, we ain’t takin’ you straight home.”

“What do you mean?” Ren asked.

“‘Hey, can I ask something?’” Ren looked over to Haru to see her reading from her phone. She was looking at the Phansite. “‘My friend’s in trouble, and I’d like everyone’s input.’”

“Ooh, that sounds like fun!” Futaba laughed maniacally.

“If this is any more work, count me out” Yusuke said.

“You know you want to, Inari!”

“I’m getting out.” Yusuke slid open the van door, despite the fact that they were still in motion. Ren felt a blast of wind come in and hit him on the face.
“Why’d you open the-“ Ann looked ahead at the highway. “WE’RE ON THE TOLL ROAD!”

“Yusuke, sit back down!” Ren grabbed Yusuke by the hem of his shirt and started pulling.

“Let me off!” Yusuke shouted.

“Hey, stop moving around!” Morgana shouted. The others began to laugh, and a slow song began to play on the radio. “Come on, that’s dangerous!”

“Alright, that’s enough of that!” Ren reached over past Yusuke and slid the door closed. “Yusuke, you can’t jump out of a moving van on the highway.”

“Of course not” Yusuke said. “That is why I asked Makoto to stop.”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that, Yusuke.” Makoto shook her head. “We don’t want those men to catch up to us, after all.”

“What’s the deal with those guys anyway?” Ann asked. “Do you think they’re with that conspiracy?”

“I doubt it” Makoto said. “Almost all of Shido’s co-conspirators have been arrested already. He gave Sis a long list of names after his change of heart.”

“Almost”? Does that mean there are still some members of the conspiracy at large, Mako-Chan?” Haru looked at Ren with concern. “What if they’re trying to assassinate Ren-Kun!? Perhaps I should have hired some security for this trip…”

“You don’t have to worry about that, Haru.” Nobody except Ann could see it, but Makoto was smirking. “The few members of the conspiracy who haven’t been caught yet were lower-level members who went to ground the second Shido started confessing. Even if they did know who Ren is— which is unlikely— they’re too busy hiding from the police.”

“So why were those guys followin’ Ren?” Ryuji asked.

“The government’s just freaked” Futaba said. “They don’t realize we can’t change hearts anymore, so they want to keep an eye on our leader to make sure he doesn’t pose a threat to anybody else in power.”

“I don’t understand,” Yusuke said, “hasn’t Makoto’s sister cleared Ren’s name? The Phantom Thieves have been exonerated of any wrongdoing, have they not? It’s not as if Ren has done anything else to make them suspicious of him.”

“Yeah, as far as the government knows, I’m on the up and up.” Ren leaned back in his seat, putting his hands behind his head. “For the most part.”

“‘The most part’?” Ann looked back at Ren, grinning. “Just what have you been up to the last month?”

“I bet he robbed a convenience store right before skippin’ town.” Ryuji elbowed Ren’s arm. “There’re easier ways to stay in Tokyo than gettin’ yourself labelled a delinquent again, you know.”

“Look, it’s nothing like that” Ren said. “I just did a little something back in that interrogation room that probably rubbed ‘em the wrong way.”

“Oh?” Makoto’s voice was calm, but her shoulders were tense. “And what would that be?”
“It’s no big deal.” Ren yawned and stretched out his legs. “’S’all water under the bridge now.”

“Ren…” Makoto turned off the radio. She kept her eyes on the road, but Ann looked over to the driver, then looked back at Ren in panic. “What did you do?”

“Nothing serious…” Ren’s heart started racing. He looked to the blank space in the row behind him, considering jumping to the back seat to escape Makoto’s reach.

“Ren Amamiya!” Makoto looked back just enough for one of her burning red irises to strike fear into her boyfriend from the corner of her eye. “Did you do something that’s going to get you thrown back in jail?”

“Uh…” Ren laughed nervously. “Probably not?”

“Holy shit, dude, what did you do?!” Ryuji looked at Ren fearfully.

“You better tell her, Joker” Morgana said. “We don’t want to see what Queen’s road rage looks like.”

“Look, Makoto…” Ren held his hands up in front of him. “I promise I’ll tell you, but you have to calm down.”

“I’ll decide how calm I should be after you tell me what I want to know!”

“Ok, ok!” Ren wiped some fresh sweat from his brow. “So, back when I got arrested as part of the plan, I might have… kind of… given a false name for my signed confession.”

“You DID WHAT!?” Makoto’s foot pressed a little harder onto the gas.

“It seemed like a good idea at the time!” Ren was pulled back into his seat as the van gradually accelerated. “I was freaking out! I got worried about what if our plan failed and I got killed and then they decided to go after my family, so I gave them a fake name!”

“What made you think that was possibly a good idea!?”

“I was on drugs and being tortured! I wasn’t in my right mind!”

“He’s got you there” Ryuji said.

“Makoto…” Ann whined as the van narrowly missed hitting a car on the passenger side. “Please slow down!”

“Alright, sorry, I…” Makoto took a deep breath and eased off the gas, bringing the van back to a safe speed. “I’m just worried, is all. Lying about your identity while under arrest, even under the circumstances…”

“If I may, Mako-Chan.” Haru put a hand on Ren’s shoulder and gave him a reassuring smile. “I’m sure that Ren-Kun is safe. If he weren’t, your sister would have told us.”

“Yeah” Futaba said. “Besides, we committed a real crime when I hijacked the airwaves for Shido’s calling card. That’s like, actual for-real terrorism, and they just seemed to forget all about that.”

“Futaba’s right.” Ren yawned and rubbed his eyes. “I’m sure our friends in the suits just want to make sure no more hearts get stolen.”

“I suppose.” Makoto groaned. There was an awkward silence, so she decided to turn the radio back
Gradually, the mood began to lighten up.

“So…” Ryuji looked at Ren. “What did you say your name was?”

“Huh?”

“When you gave the cops a fake name. What was it?”

“Oh. Uh…” Ren scratched his chin as he tried to remember. “I think it was... ‘Akira Kurusu’.”

“Who’s that?” Ann asked.

“I dunno.” Ren leaned back in his seat and shut his eyes. “Just something I made up.”

End Notes

So yeah. Joker's got a canon name now. Hoo boy.

I spent a lot of time today going through my fics and changing it to be canon compliant. I struggled with the decision a bit, but as Persona 5 expands as a sub-franchise and its fandom grows from this point on, "Ren Amamiya" is going to be the name people associate with Joker, plus some of the veteran fans have already embraced it. I decided to stop being stubborn and just get on board with where the zeitgeist is going instead of making myself into an archaic holdout.

It is not easy. I wrote this fic to get used to it, but I kept typing "Akira" over and over during. I also, like I said, went through most of my stories and changed Akira's name to Ren, which even included a couple little dialogue tweaks at some points.

Some stories I still write will still use the "Akira Kurusu" name, like Evil Queen. Basically, anything that isn't canon to my overall fic verse will use "Akira Kurusu", like AUs or one-shot crackfics. Also, for the folks who contribute to the TVTropes page, don't feel the need to change the name from KFR. It's fine.

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