The task is a simple one: talk his way into the detention center and shoot Akira Kurusu in the head.
At least, it should be simple.
At least, it was simple when he planned it.

Akechi has too many feelings and is bad at handling all of them (but is pretty good at murder), a fanfic.

Notes

Written for the AMKE 2020 fanfic contest. It's SHORT because I only had 4k to work with, but I hope it entertains nonetheless.

The best solution to having mixed feelings was not to feel anything at all.

If only it were so easy.

Akechi had one step left: kill Kurusu. If he did that, he'd end the Phantom Thieves and cement his spot as utterly irreplaceable in his father's legacy. It would take one lie and one bullet and then all of this would be over.

So why did he feel so fucked up?

Talking to Sae was all autopilot. He couldn’t even enjoy her shock when he told her he had been
promoted over her. He hadn’t been, but the explanation he gave for why he had access to the prisoner was just as much of a lie. He had access because he wanted it. When he wanted something badly enough, he always got it in the end.

Or so he had to keep telling himself, if any of this was ever going to be worth it.

Sae offered him Kurusu’s phone to help with the investigation, but he declined. There would be no investigation, or at least not one that either he or Kurusu had to care about. Soon, his path would be clear.

So why was he out of breath? Why did he want to slam on the brakes? There was no time to hesitate. He parted ways with Sae, deft and thoughtless, and arrived at the guarded door of Kurusu’s cell.

“Would you accompany me?” He asked the guard waiting there. As if one guard could have stopped him from getting in, or Kurusu from getting out. “Going in unarmed to interrogate a murderer makes me uncomfortable.”

The guard easily agreed. Of course he did. He had no fear of the dark-haired man sitting behind the unremarkable metal desk, his face bruised and dirty, his grey eyes as striking, as unwavering as ever.

The guard didn’t have the sense to fear Kurusu… or to fear Akechi. Akechi breathed, reached, slipped the man’s gun from its holster as though he had done it a thousand times.

And then Akechi shot him, once, in the back of the head.

For his first kill outside of Mementos, it was… underwhelming.

Feigning a calmness he didn’t feel, Akechi turned his eyes to Kurusu. He had expected to see nothing there, but apparently, seeing Akechi kill a man was at least worth a look of surprise. Akechi couldn’t help the smile that bloomed on his lips. Surprising Kurusu was high praise indeed.

There was so much he wanted to say. There was so much between them that he’d never been honest about, that he’d never get the chance to be honest about. And in thirty seconds, Kurusu would be dead and none of it would matter.

Akechi leveled the gun at him, but Kurusu didn’t look afraid. His glasses were missing, and there was nothing to protect Akechi from the unerring steel of his gaze.

This was it. Akechi had been planning for months, ever since he had discovered the Phantom Thieves and figured out the identity of their leader.

Months of planning… and weeks of Kurusu’s company. Of Coffee at Leblanc. Of cut-short, heartfelt talks where Akechi almost ruined everything he had worked so hard for because something about Kurusu was so fucking insidious.

It was almost over now. He knew exactly what to say, what he should say, because he had planned it when thinking of this moment. He would do this, and free himself from that weakness.

*I owe you for all of this. That’s right, you and your little friends were vital to our plan. And now, it will be completed.*

He’d dreamed of saying those words, but when he opened his mouth, there was nothing.
Kurusu broke the silence.

“Akechi-kun.” Soft, without hesitation, like he was addressing Akechi at a Phantom Thieves meeting and not talking to someone who had a gun to his head.

Akechi’s grip on the gun was so tight that he could see the way his hand was shaking. His words wouldn’t come, but like an echo that was ingrained in his soul he wanted to return Kurusu’s greeting. Part of him wanted to pretend that all of this was as planned, that he was savouring the moment instead of falling apart at the seams.

“You have to make everything complicated-” He lowered the gun, tearing his eyes away from Kurusu to blink away his tears of frustration. His heartbeat was pounding in his chest and he struggled to get control of himself. “Why. Why is it always you.”

He glanced up in time to see Kurusu sigh, to see the line of his shoulders soften with the exhale. So he had been worried. Little good that did Akechi now. Like so many other victories, it had quickly turned hollow in the face of everything that was still to be done. He was tired. He wanted this to be over.

It was his turn to sigh and he set the gun on the table. Would Kurusu grab the gun and shoot him? Surely not. Phantom thieves didn’t kill.

"I suppose I can’t expect others to resist you when I find myself falling into the same trap…”

Kurusu said nothing. Infuriatingly, he had always been a man of few words. He should have been the one falling to pieces, not Akechi. Which one of them was minutes from death, again?

Akechi made a frustrated noise, running one gloved hand through his hair. He didn’t realize the way he had circled the table, coming closer to where Kurusu sat. It was automatic.

“It’s fine,” Kurusu said. When he extended his hand towards Akechi, Akechi could see the bruise that circled his wrist. He must have fought against his cuffs. “Isn’t it?”

Akechi was struck with the sudden memory of fighting shadows at Joker’s side, getting slammed flat on his back and looking up to something almost like this: Joker extending a hand to him, and smiling that effortlessly daring smile. Akechi thought his heart was going to beat right out of his chest.

Kurusu wasn’t smiling here, but Akechi felt the same.

“It isn’t fine ,” Akechi insisted hotly, but the sheer ridiculousness of the statement earned a quiet, breathless laugh for Kurusu. “Are you crazy?”

Maybe he was. Maybe Akechi was. It was impossible to tell.

But Kurusu hadn’t withdrawn his hand. Akechi could still take it.

He did, grabbing the sleeve of Kurusu’s jacket and yanking him to his feet. Akechi wasn’t even sure what he was doing and acting on instinct had never been his forte. With Kurusu standing, Akechi was just barely taller than him, but he felt like he was looking up to Kurusu even now.

“It’s fine,” Kurusu said again, softer but no less certain. “Whatever happens, Akechi-kun, it’s fine.”
Akechi’s grip tightened, pulling the fabric taut around Kurusu’s wrist. “Don’t call me that. You don’t know me.”

“Okay,” he said, just as easily. Then he smiled, the razor-sharp grin that always stopped Akechi’s heart.

“Goro.”

Akechi stopped short, caught between fury and helplessness. It would have been better if Kurusu was mocking him at this point, but there was nothing in Kurusu’s tone that wasn’t warm and familiar. It was exactly what he wanted to hear, his name spoken with such effortless fondness. He made himself let go of Kurusu’s sleeve… and grabbed him by the lapel of his jacket instead.

“Don’t,” he insisted, keeping his voice low in the hope that Kurusu wouldn’t hear how unsteady it was. “Don’t call me that.”

Kurusu didn’t flinch. Akechi had watched him hold Shadows at gunpoint without an ounce of concern, so that shouldn’t have been a surprise. He reached for Akechi instead, and laid his hand over where Akechi’s trembling grip held tight to his jacket.

“What about Crow, then?” No sharp smile this time.

The name Akechi had picked for himself, the one the Phantom Thieves had used from the start. It brought to mind struggle and violence, but the kind of struggle where he was a part of the group, not working against them. Even Skull, who had made his initial dislike of Akechi the most obvious, had laugh-called his name out to him in battle, congratulating him on his prowess.

Maybe he could stand to be called Crow. It was a lie, but it seemed to be the gentlest of all the lies he was tangled in.

“Okay…” He sighed. “Crow it is, then.”

That horrible feeling of sliding towards the inexorable had stopped. It felt like time itself had stopped. The world outside of the interrogation cell had ceased to matter, ceased to exist. His gun lay forgotten on the table, and while his senses could have kicked in at any time, he prayed for them to stay quiet. Whatever this was, this quiet, the warmth of Joker’s hand over his, the calm in his normally lethal gaze… Crow wanted this. Even if it was just for now.

He wasn’t sure who kissed who. He might have been the one who initiated, but if he was being honest with himself, he wasn’t sure he would ever be brave enough for such a thing. It was probably Joker… though that didn’t explain why he felt the other man briefly tense in surprise. He was surprised, too, when the distance between them closed, when Joker’s lips were on his and it was, as Joker had said, fine. More than fine. It was good, the way he felt Joker relax, the way Joker shifted his touch from Crow’s hand to his cheek.

It was his first kiss. Was it Joker’s too? Crow didn’t think that was possible.

“It’s fine…” He echoed when they parted. He could feel each time Joker breathed, and it was oddly calming. “It’s fine…”

The second time, Joker definitely kissed him, with all of his trademark decisiveness. It was better than good. It was electric, it made Crow’s heart jump, but this time his racing pulse was from pleasure rather than panic. No wonder so many people gave up everything for this. No wonder his mother had. No wonder, really, that he was doing the same.
Crow admitted it to himself, maybe, but loud enough that Joker could hear him. “I want more of this…”

“Always happy to serve,” Joker said, smiling against his lips. Crow shivered. Such confidence. It was just like Joker, who he’d never seen falter, but that he could be so steadfast, here, while Crow felt so unsure… it was both endearing and endearingly frustrating. Joker had so much that he didn’t, and none of it seemed to be anything he worked towards.

But here, together, where he shared himself with Crow… Crow’s lack seemed much less painful than usual.

It still hurt. Every beat of his racing heart was another pain in his chest. But… he kind of liked it. This pain was oddly exhilarating, and his breath hitched into their next kiss. This was everything Crow had imagined in the dreams he insisted he never had, the ones where, at the end, someone fell asleep with their arm around him, just as protective as they had been desiring.

Joker’s hands tugged his jacket undone, not even fumbling with the buttons, his hands warm and insistent as they pressed past the material, smoothing his touch over Crow’s shirt. Crow shuddered, hard, a reaction soothed by another heated kiss. Encased in their shared concrete cell, Crow should have been chilled with his jacket open and his shirt rapidly being undone to join it, but he wasn’t.

The heat that seemed to course through his veins, and the need that accompanied it, did not care about where he was or what he should have been doing.

He pulled his gloves off with his teeth (and felt Joker’s breath of laughter when he did) and the first thing he did with his newly-freed hands was cup Joker’s face in both of them and pull him into another kiss. He couldn’t remember the last time he had taken his gloves off to touch anyone. He tugged Joker’s uniform jacket off, and the other man let it fall to the floor without a concern. What did he have to worry about? His clothes were already dirty from resisting arrest.

And he didn’t have any convenient buttons, just his turtleneck. Crow had the brief, very liberating idea of tearing it down the center, but with the way he was barely managing to keep his feet, he wasn’t sure how plausible that was. Joker guided him back in uncertain, nervous steps until his hip hit the edge of the table. Between the steel table and Joker, whose grip on him was unfailing, Crow wouldn’t be falling any time soon.

Although, when Joker nudged at his jawline and tipped his head back so he could press kisses to Crow’s neck, Crow found he was incredibly thankful for the other man’s foresight. Joker’s hungry kisses, his lips hot against Crow’s skin, made his knees go weak. Crow clung to Joker, too desiring to be self-conscious. He’d hate himself for this later, whenever that was. For now, he deserved this, and Joker seemed only too eager to give it to him.

Crow had no idea what he was doing, but he wasn’t content to relax into passivity. No. This was more alive than he had ever remembered feeling. He wanted to memorize every second of it. When Crow pressed a kiss over the pinprick where he had been drugged, he felt the way Joker tensed. When he tugged the collar of his turtleneck out of the way to kiss elsewhere, he was rewarded by feeling him relax.

It finally occurred to Crow to feel shy when Joker’s touch went lower, knowing fingers pressing against where Crow was so badly desiring of him. Should he be shy? Probably. But what a joke that was. How could he have room for feeling coy when his lust, his need were so singular and overwhelming?

He reached for Joker, too, running uncertain fingers over the material of his pants, clumsily
palming against his erection. When Joker groaned into their next breathless kiss, Crow was sure he had never felt so powerful in his life. Selfishly, he wanted more pleasure, but a deeper part of him, a viciously territorial part wanted more of *this*, more of Joker's pleasure. He wanted to feel every minute of it.

The air seemed to grow hot. His breath was ragged and punctuated with hitches and gasps as Joker undid his pants to slip his fingers inside. Crow tangled his fingers into Joker's messy hair and their next kiss was short and desperate and aching.

"I… I…" *I don't know what I'm doing*, he could have said, or *I want more. I need more.* But he didn't need to say it. Joker grinned, reckless and beautiful.

"Me too."

He pulled away then and Crow immediately missed his warmth. He could guess *why* Joker had stepped back when he went to dig through his coat. He was stupidly attractive, with red in his cheeks and his tousled hair and the victorious smile he had when he pulled something from his jacket pocket.

"You don’t. There’s no way—" Crow blinked, taken aback. There was no way the world was so convenient.

And it wasn’t, apparently. What he held out to Crow wasn’t some sort of questionable personal lubricant but a small, travel-sized bottle of hand lotion.

"Gift from Panther," he explained.

"Surely not for this?" Crow raised a disbelieving eyebrow.

Joker laughed, shaking his head, and pulled Crow into another kiss. It was a wonder that talk of the others didn't ruin this for him. He had expected any mention of them to shatter the rose-tinted lenses of his desire. But that wasn’t the case. In fact, in his fondness for Joker, he could almost find fondness for them.

Or at least for Panther, who had given such a convenient present.

"I…" It was a hard thing to confess, harder still for the way Joker’s teeth scraped against the pulse-point of his neck, making him shudder. "I’ve never…. Which one of us should…?"

Crow wanted this. He rocked his hips against the insistent touch of Joker’s hand and the idea that there was more, that he could have more, sounded like just about the best thing he had ever heard. But he was so unpracticed at any of this.

And maybe Joker wasn’t much more practiced than him, but god forbid something like common sense ever get in Joker’s way. Their next shared kiss was rougher, but there was a sweetness to it. Crow didn’t mind the force of Joker’s desire. It was… flattering, motivating, it was… hot, honestly, and he wasn’t about to complain.

"You can take me," Joker said, his voice rough with lust, low and intoxicating in Crow’s ear. It sounded like an invitation and a challenge. Still, Crow wasn’t so stupid that he didn’t realize what it *actually* was: a gift. In return for his vulnerability, in return for the chance he’d given Joker to hurt him… Joker was giving him this.

"B-but you have to tell me what to do—" Crow stopped their frantic pulling at one another, their needful grinding and kissing, and pushed Joker back just enough to look at him. He swallowed,
finding his next words took more courage to say than he had expected.

“I don’t want to hurt you.” In the heat of his desire, Akechi simply forgot to lie.

“You won’t.”

Joker did help him, though. Showed Crow where to touch, told him how, made it obvious when he was doing well. The sheer eroticism of having his fingers inside Joker was enough for Crow to think that this was a dream. Joker sat on the edge of the table, his arms around Crow’s shoulders, giving Crow a front-row seat to every hitched breath, every groan of desire. Crow’s feelings about Joker might have been complicated but here, they were simple: affection and desire and maybe something he wasn’t brave enough to name. His other hand stroked Joker teasingly, and he coveted every little rock of his hips as the other man sought out more and more pleasure.

“S’enough-” Joker shook his head, his grip on Crow’s open shirt tightening, tugging insistently. “I want…”

“Yeah…” Crow agreed breathlessly, nodding. In this he needed no instruction, at least. No matter how screwed up he was as a person, his instincts still knew what this was, still knew what to do. He wanted to be meticulous and slow, to make Joker wait for it, to make him beg… but he couldn’t. He was just as much a victim of Joker’s desires as Joker was of his. He pressed into him, slow and careful until his greed got the better of him and Joker tensed, sinking his teeth into his lip. Though it frayed Crow’s control in a way that was almost painful, he froze in the same instant. He was afraid even to breathe until he heard Joker’s strained laugh and still, his only movement then was to kiss where Joker had bit his lip so roughly.

“It’s fine…” Joker reassured, pressing himself back against Crow. “Really.”

*It’s fine.* Maybe Crow shouldn’t have believed him in the first place, but what chance did he have of disagreeing here?

There was nothing poetic about fucking your enemy, your rival, your friend on a steel table in a detention center cell, but Crow wasn’t looking for poetry. He buried his face in the curve of Joker’s neck, breathing him in as he started to move in earnest. Joker was slick and warm, and when Crow did something right (such as sucking a bruising kiss to the hollow of Joker’s throat), he could feel the way Joker tightened around him. There was something raw and uncalculated and *wild* about it, about the unsteady rhythm they made together, about the way Joker gripped his shoulder hard enough tobruise.

There was no saving face, no pretending that he was unaffected. There was nothing in the world but the two of them, at last made honest by their vulnerability and desire.

He came with Joker’s name on his lips. Not his codename, his real one. Hearing it seemed to affect Joker, too, as in the next moment, his orgasm followed, slicking Crow’s fingers and staining both their clothes. Crow slumped against him, his forehead against Joker’s collar, and the world was still, just their racing hearts and ragged breathing.

Except… something seemed off.

Akechi, for all the carefully cultivated lies that surrounded him, was a detective. His intuition was, naturally and by necessity, very sharp. And though Joker matched him in breathlessness, when he laid a hand on the other man’s chest to carefully pull free of him, Akechi felt no heartbeat under his fingers.
“Joker….” He said quietly, trying to push down the sudden, nauseating panic that was rising inside him. “You said… you said Panther gave you that, right?” He asked.

Joker nodded, halfheartedly cleaning himself up. He was no less beautiful for the mess.

“Can I admit something to you?” Akechi swallowed. He was cold, suddenly. Like he had forgotten the temperature of the detention center and it had all come rushing back. “It’s rather silly.”

“Tell me.”

He felt dizzy. His fear wasn’t that he didn’t know what was going on, but that he did know, and he was trying to fight that feeling with every fibre of his being. He had never wanted to be wrong more than right now.

But when was the last time he’d actually been wrong…?

“I have Panther in my phone, you know…” He lied, running a hand through his hair. It was purely a nervous reaction, but he tried to play it off as getting himself tidied up again. “But I put her in by her first name and since we never use it… I don’t remember what it is. I’d like to thank her for being so thoughtful, i-if you don’t think it’s too bold of me.”

It was a terrible lie. Akechi expected Joker to laugh at him. How could he have forgotten Ann’s name? It’s not like Akechi hadn’t known their identities for some time now.

But Joker didn’t laugh. In fact… he looked like he couldn’t remember the answer himself.

Which was all the answer Akechi needed.

He stumbled back, half-falling against the table. It hurt, but it gave him a chance to catch himself before he fell to the floor. The pain in his chest was back, but it wasn’t the throbbing ache it had been earlier. Now, it felt like he had been stabbed.

He was such a fucking idiot.

“You’re not Joker,” he said finally, as if he even needed to say it. Did the cognition in front of him really think that he was Joker? Did he know the difference?

Akechi had given so much of himself and this, this was his reward? He wasn’t sure if he was going to be sick or pass out, but he wasn’t going to give himself the luxury of either one. He’d been weak enough already.

This was all there was. When he cared, when he tried to do better, to be better… pain was the only reward for weakness.

It wasn’t anger that gave him the strength to move, it was just desperation. He wanted nothing more than to forget any of this had happened, to deny that it could have ever been possible. He didn’t have to look behind him to know where he had left the gun, and feeling his fingers brush the cool, familiar metal finally seemed to clear his head.

It didn’t matter. None of this mattered. It would all be done soon, and when it was… He wouldn’t let anyone hurt him again.

It’s fine, he thought, taking a deep breath and levelling the gun at Joker for the second time that night.
It’s fine.

This time, he pulled the trigger.

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