Catalyst

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/1178.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Category:	General (non relationship-focused)
Fandom:	Dangan Ronpa
Character:	Oma Kokichi
Additional Tags:	Character Study, POV Oma Kokichi, Oma Kokichi-centric, Canon Compliant, Canon Character Death, Unreliable Narrator, Concussions, Canon-Typical Lying, Other Additional Tags To Be Added
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-11-03 Words: 3,577 Chapters: 1/1

Catalyst

by flightless_pigeon

Summary

It starts going wrong when Ouma Kokichi falls through that damn floorboard.

There are four murders now, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that he isn't doing well enough.

Clearly he's not a good enough leader to corral the group into working together. He decides to take matters into his own hands, and so he steals the card key and spends all day trying to figure out where it's supposed to be used.

What a colossal waste of time.

His head hurts, and it doesn't matter one bit.

How it all went wrong.

Notes

(Originally published on AO3 on 03/07/2022. The version I have on my notes may not be the most up-to-date, and did not have tags saved, so once the AO3pocalypse is over, I will update this with the official latest version, and change the publishing date to the original one.)

Hello, this oneshot is pseudo-sponsored by The Family Jewels (the Deluxe album) by MARINA (and the Diamonds). If your question is whether my drafts are full of retrospective character studies of my favourite characters from every fandom, the answer is yes.

It's taken me eight years to write something from Danganronpa, and it will never happen again [this was a lie], because these characters are just too complex for me to do justice. But I have so much to say about Ouma, and admittedly this fic won't capture my full interpretation of him as its focusing on a specific theme, but I've never been this close to finishing a DR fic before, so I pushed through, and here we are. Please be hyperaware of the Unreliable Narrator tag.

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

It starts going wrong when Ouma Kokichi falls through that damn floorboard.

That's a lie, of course. A little one to himself, to distract him from the pain. It's been going wrong since the beginning, really. He tried really, really hard to steer the group away from blind hope, both raised their spirits and culled their expectations when necessary, and attempted to deter Akamatsu from thinking she was doing something right. It was in her best interests, yet it still failed.

There are four murders now, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that he isn't doing well enough. He is making mistakes. He messed up with Akamatsu, and then he told Hoshi who had his motive video *knowing* there was nothing on it, because he assumed that Harukawa would just tell him to fuck off, but he forgot that Hoshi had Harukawa's video and could use it against her. That's his fault, too. They should have all watched the motive videos together, so everyone could have a mutual understanding of one another, and they could have decided what to do as a group from then on.

And then Angie started a damn cult. Everyone else fell into it, for the sake of blind hope and escapism, the underlying truth that none of them believed in a better solution to this situation. And now she is dead. And Chabashira is dead. There are six people dead. If they succeed in the trial, there will be seven. If not, fifteen.

What a brilliant leader he is.

He contemplates this as he lies somewhere in the hallway - ha, *lies*. Ironic, when this is the only thing he isn't capable of disguising right now. He shouldn't have thought so in the first place, when the floorboard gave way and one of the corners smacked him right in the temple, and he promptly span on his feet and walked with the intention of making it to the toilets to clean himself up, and just as promptly lost control of his own legs hitting his head a *second* time on the ground.

This is his fault too. He's good enough at navigating in the dark that he should have seen a hole - no, there wasn't a hole, was there? Is there? He should check - but the floor went up, so the crosspiece... yeah, the crosspiece was gone, so the floorboard was loose. Why aren't they just nailed down? The architect of this place - Monokuma, probably - really doesn't like him, huh? Tried to kill him off. Still a possibility, because he's acutely aware of the blood pooling around him on the floor, and he doesn't need to have an extensive amount of medical knowledge to know two severe concussions in the space of a minute probably isn't good for his brain.

Maybe Kokichi's ruining the game. There's a satisfaction in knowing Monokuma might want him dead, and he grins widely when he hears voices approaching, because he *looks* dead, and that's really, *really* funny right now. It's hard to keep himself from laughing.

The first sign that it is a problem is when Saihara asks him what happened and he stumbles and slurs his way through an explanation, duly noting to himself that he hasn't even tried to relate what just happened to him to the cases yet, hasn't exhausted every possibility as he usually does immediately upon discovering something amiss. That seems really tiring to do,

though, and he's really dizzy and needs to get away from the assassin before she takes advantage of his vulnerability, so he dumps as much information as he can think of onto the detective - the second most reliable person in a trial next to himself - and wanders vaguely in the direction of the toilets.

Kokichi muddles his way through the class trial with heavy reliance on his natural retaliation of lying. He points random fingers at obvious suspects to rule them out, pretends he's bored when he spaces out (and definitely does not fall *asleep*) for a bit, and acts mysterious and all-knowing when he accidentally starts mumbling his thought process aloud.

He's slower to come to conclusions - the gap between himself and Saihara in figuring out the truth is smaller today. He figured from the moment Shinguuji asked about how two culprits would affect the trial that he caused Chabashira's death, but the time it takes him to think about how that could relate to Angie... well, Saihara trumps him, for that mystery. How reliable of him. Even if he needed all of Kokichi's hints to get to this point. He needs encouragement. Logical encouragement, not Momota's blind faith bullshit.

Blind faith won't prevent his death. Especially when he can hear Momota coughing his guts up in the toilets that night - wet, guttural pain that sounds completely out of his control. Kokichi is forced to throw up in another set of bathrooms.

His head hurts all night, and he sleeps fitfully. Not unusual for him, but it's extremely concerning when he wakes up to the morning announcement. He *never* stays in bed that late. Not since the Bug Incident. Maybe he was distracted conversing with Amami's effigy too long, or got into the zone working on his blueprints when he was trying to distract himself from the nausea. He doesn't remember. It doesn't matter.

Clearly he's not a good enough leader to corral the group into working together. Clearly the mastermind is fucking that up for him. So he decides to take matters into his own hands, and prevents any of them from seeing the next of the motives that they all seem to keep crumbling under before he can think of a plan of how to overcome them.

And so he steals the card key and spends all day trying to figure out where it's supposed to be used. He can't, until Gonta offhandedly mentions that he's opened the manhole to the Death Road of Despair up again, and he finally has his chance. Iruma's long-finished with those Electro-hammers, after all. Finally, he can see what's at the end of the tunnel.

He laughs his ass off once he closes the door and catches his breath.

What a colossal waste of time.

His head hurts from the lack of oxygen, and it doesn't matter one bit.

What does he do?

Ideally, a good leader in this situation would figure out the best solution whilst harming as few people as possible. Lies are, and have always been, to everyone that has ever used them, a form of protection for the liar, for the recipients, from the bitter truth. There is no way to

admit the truth about this without breaking everyone's spirits. They will just want to die. It is easier to die.

At least they can die ignorant.

He doesn't have time to think of a better plan. He pressures Iruma into finishing up the remote, and she in turn forces him to return the favour, to focus everyone's attention on yet another form of escapism, the virtual world. Iruma wants to escape, all right. She always has, from the very moment they awoke in this school. Kokichi left the simple bait of suggesting he would be vulnerable in his room, and she took it up immediately. Since then, he has been forcing projects onto her, giving her something to do to take her mind off it all, and giving her useful inventions that he even *told* her would aid in their collective escape, no murder needed.

Maybe he lied too much. She doesn't have any more belief in him, after all.

The next morning his head is hurting in two places instead of one, because Momota can only resort to violence when his weak-willed words cannot steer the room in the way he wants them to. Kokichi is being weirder than usual, apparently. He wonders what he did that is so out of character when none of them have a good read on him, and concludes that they're all losing their minds, not just Iruma.

Iruma, who betrayed his trust and is planning to murder him soon. As usual, her less-than-par social skills give her away. She can attribute that to whatever hit on the head she suffered before the killing game. If it's the excuse she gives for her genius, it's the excuse Kokichi will give for her godawful personality. It's not her fault. Everyone has a reason.

The only one with even less-than-par social skills than Iruma is Gonta. Kokichi is confident that he could convince just about anyone who sees what the outside world looks like to help carry out his plans, but they would likely waste time trying to think of a better solution. Gonta is increasingly vulnerable the longer he convinces himself he is useless and has to do something to protect the group. Their interests align. It's easier to just take advantage of that. A good leader works to everyone's strengths, after all. And if they're still being watched, even in the virtual world, it's easier to keep up his charade and pick the guy that everyone is convinced is easily manipulated and incapable of making their own decisions. Kokichi knows better.

He observes the investigation with intrigue. Never before has he known every single detail of a murder from the getgo, and he wonders how easy it'll be to direct attention away from the culprit. He wonders what Saihara is capable of when separated from Momota, with no one else to depend on to aid him but someone who is trying to steer him away from the truth, a friend who will betray him. If he's truly worthy of being an Ultimate Detective, if he manages to reach the truth in this trial, then he will be useful for the backup plan.

Gonta is a better liar than he thought.

Kokichi talks too much in the trial, and he knows this, even as he's doing it. He's convinced himself at this point that it's fun, *so fun*, to create a murder mystery. To create a murder. He didn't do it, of course, but he created it. He instigated. That doesn't matter, because he's going

to end the game, and he's so excited at the prospect of winning, to ruin the fun of whoever is watching them play, that he doesn't pay attention to the bullshit he's spitting. Of course, he intended to lie, for Saihara to catch him out, and the plan is that he will freak out, get pinned as the killer, and voted out.

He hasn't felt this harrowing pressure in such a while. *Tell us the truth,* they demand. He hates the pressure. He hates the judgement. They'll all turn against him. They don't know what's good for them. It's better for everyone - including himself - to lie.

He doesn't really think about it until Gonta sides with Saihara, too. They're all such liars, they're willing to hide from the truth to preserve their emotions, and he's a hypocrite for sure, but Gonta seems, as usual, reluctant to accuse Kokichi. He should be happy.

And, come to think of it, Gonta has been particularly naive this trial, putting on a facade of not understanding the virtual world and wasting time to throw Saihara off. It's... a really good strategy. Especially since they believe so easily that he wouldn't be able to comprehend the virtual world, even though Gonta is someone who adapted *extremely* quickly to a different environment after living in a forest for so long, so quickly understood societal expectations and how he should present himself to other humans to appear... good.

Gonta knows that about himself, he has to, so it's not a very good strategy for someone who doesn't want to be caught. If he's sad about Kokichi being blamed, will he have a change of heart?

He's going to betray him like Iruma, isn't he?

It figures. Nothing has gone his way thus far, and the worst possible thing right now would be not only for his plan to be foiled, but for his charade of the evil supreme leader to be shattered in Monokuma's eyes. That would destroy his future plans. Or maybe Gonta doesn't understand what he saw, and is using the situation to his advantage to kill and escape the killing game. Spiders eat their mates, after all. Gonta can adapt to survive.

Time for Plan B, then.

Ouma Kokichi tells the truth. And as soon as the seed of doubt is placed into Saihara's mind, there's no turning back. He doesn't understand why Saihara can use lies to his advantage but he can't. He tries so hard to work with his lies, to manipulate them into something befitting a leader, but it's no use if they won't believe him, if they won't work with him. Saihara's a fucking idiot. Gonta's a fucking idiot for not giving a single logical argument to prove his innocence, even though he was arguing against Saihara's logic from the start of the trial. Yeah, now Kokichi's not the target, Gonta's not trying. It was a sabotage. It's betrayal.

There's no turning back, because everyone else has an alibi, and Kokichi has reminded Saihara of the settings of his avatar. It's not fair. It's frustrating, how no one will let him do his damn job, and he screams at Gonta and Momota until Saihara reveals that Gonta didn't remember a thing in the virtual world, and suddenly, he feels so, so stupid.

There is no turning back.

It hurts. In the end, he is the one who has betrayed. He has betrayed Gonta and killed him for nothing. He has betrayed Iruma by killing her after spending all that time trying to work with her and protect her from her own fears of being betrayed. They are... were... the only two people who could put up with him, who he could trust to become his allies without worrying constantly about why Kokichi lies. They don't care why he lies. Didn't.

Neither does Saihara, clearly, because despite being a detective, he doesn't bother to try and work out *why* Kokichi has to do the things he does, and he thwarts Kokichi's plans out loud, rather than mulling it over in his head. Lets Monokuma and the mastermind listen to him picking Kokichi apart and judging him. And despite all the goddamned help Kokichi has given Saihara, instead of taking his lies beyond face value, instead of seeing his intentions behind them, he lies back. He lies to put Kokichi at a disadvantage. And that... that is also betrayal.

They betray when one of them (Momota, probably) votes for him. They betray when Gonta *explains* why he agreed to murder Iruma and claim he was certainly tricked by no-good, selfish Ouma-kun. And when Kokichi is losing his mind over Gonta's execution, regrets his mistake, his failure to see that Gonta wasn't lying after all, just didn't remember the virtual world, Gonta forgives him and asks him to work with the others. He promises, but the others betray him, and they betray Gonta because they don't *believe* him or value his words.

If they don't want to believe Gonta, the most honest person there ever was, in Gonta's judgement of Kokichi to stay friends and work together with them, then the truth never had any value to them to begin with. Their belief is false. They can't face the truth. And he has known that the entire time, really, when they shut down his ideas again and again in favour of escapism and pretending they aren't trapped in a killing game, but now he is completely isolated, there is only one option he sees.

He has to seize control of this somehow. And... every single one of these people is against him. Ironic, that they'll work together only when he tries not to lead them.

And that's when a truly genius idea crosses his mind.

If they want him so bad to be the villain, so be it. If it means they'll work together to defeat him, to escape and end the killing game, then their interests align. He has to use his lying to his advantage.

He hates this fucking game. He's going to ruin it.

He is the villain. He has contributed to every single bad thing that has happened here. He is responsible, as the ringleader. He is the mastermind. So much of it is the truth, but he lies, and lies, and lies, and they believe all of it. The consequences don't matter anymore, and he tells himself it is for the greater good when he punches Momota and exposes the truth of his illness, for the greater good that he believes wholeheartedly how fun this game is for someone as evil as he is trying to be.

It's something he's intended on doing for a while. If you put yourself in someone else's shoes, it becomes easy to predict their actions and reasoning. If he pretends to be the mastermind,

not only can he predict their next moves, but he can also gauge the reactions of everyone else, and plan around that.

There is no longer any time to consider their feelings, he decides, because he needs to preserve their lives now. As redemption. To give the others' stolen lives meaning. Gon- Gokuhara, Iruma, Shinguuji... Chabashira... the others. He doesn't remember. He doesn't need to. The mastermind doesn't care who they are.

His classmates despair as the truth of the outside world is revealed to them. Momota is still a threat to their giving up. Angie - ah, yes, Angie (what was her surname? He can't remember) - was right, in a way, that they should just live their lives here in peace. Maybe she was a prophet after all, Kokichi laughs as he tells them he is the mastermind.

The hangar is perfect with its high-security and lockoff points. If he so pleases, he can prevent anyone from coming in and out, and with the remote he can stop Monokuma from coming in, and with the Exisals he can... yes, it's perfect. He spends all his time drafting up his plan, his script. Momota is going to die soon, so, in the interest of preserving as many lives as possible, he may as well be the culprit for this unsolvable murder. The killing game should be over, and the only obstacle is the mastermind, Kokichi. Once he has killed, there will be no more game. They will think they are free, and live in the academy in peace forever. It is a flawless plan.

He deserves the worst despair. That's why he sabotaged himself and his plans. He has full control of this situation now, because he is the mastermind of this killing game. All the deaths are because of him. He led them to this point. No more mistakes can be made. Not even by Monokuma. It is a flawless plan, indeed.

Two arrows in his body later, he dimly wonders where it all went wrong. If he has full control of this world, how did this happen? How didn't he notice someone getting a crossbow to Momota (he was engrossed in constructing his master plan), or pissing Harukawa off enough that she would come here to kill him (he has always figured she would be the one to end him)? Enough that she'd go for the head when he doesn't give the right response to her questions (the mastermind doesn't have those answers)? Is it... his-

No. She must have been provoked by someone else. He has worked too hard for his own plans to blow up in his face. He thought getting rid of Momota was the solution, but clearly there is someone else with their own plans, someone capable of messing with his ow-

Ah. The mastermind. That's... not him. He's not the mastermind, he recalls, and never was, as he taunts Harukawa through the bathroom window for starting the killing game again. He wants it to end. Someone else doesn't, and never has. Who is it? He doesn't know. He's too tired to figure it out. That's the poison's fault. He almost swallows the antidote by accident. *Accident-prone*. He's so clumsy now.

He can lie to the grave if he wants to. He can still manipulate Momota without telling the truth. But it's tiring. It hurts to. He can't be bothered.

So he doesn't, and there's definitely no cameras in here, because he has complete trust in Iruma's abilities and inventions, just as he had complete trust in Gokuhara's good-

naturedness, and now he will have to trust Momota's ability to lie and carry out his plans. That's Kokichi's choice. He has control over that. Even if he doesn't have much control over his emotions anymore, and his body shudders under waves of anger and pain and sadness that flow through him as he answers all of Momota's questions without any protection this time. Odd. He just needs to be dying to cure his chronic lies.

But it's fine, because he has a flawless plan in place, because he will make no more mistakes, and it is *perfect*, he lies a final time to himself, even as he watches Momota thumb through pages and pages of poorly-written lies of a manic child.

It's only when the press begins to slowly push onto his skull that he remembers just how much his head hurts.

How it all went wrong.

End Notes

What a fucking fantastic, tragically-written character. I can't do him justice which is why I opted for no dialogue nor outward presentations of him nor anyone else, because DR characters, and particularly those in NDRV3, are so unique in their construction and difficult to replicate without me thinking I haven't got a good enough grasp of their characters.

Anyways, I find it particularly interesting how, beyond the physical evidence and surprise factor of a third body, they presented Ouma to have pretty blatant concussion symptoms (and of course, no one cared, yet in the plot it doesn't seem to come up again. But concussions can affect organisation, planning, emotional reactions (which Ouma is pretty good at disguising so no one would *really* notice and pretty much everything regarding cognitive thinking (I've had a minor concussion before and it took me two days to figure it out because I forgot I hit my head lmao), and it's clear throughout the game that Ouma's actions rely heavily on long-term strategy and planning, as well as his presentation of himself to his classmates, Monokuma and the mastermind.

As a leader trying to prove himself to the group with the aftermath of his actions whilst trying to combat his natural tendencies to lie (he would be too fucking OP if they didn't give him that), my argument is that, in a concussed state, Ouma decides he's had enough, says a couple of insensitive things and blatantly takes the motive for himself, and then that motive absolutely fucks with his fragile mental state. The concussion was the catalyst, the motive put him over the edge, and losing Gonta fucking broke him [idk how much I agree with this now but I stand by my concussion theory]. While at the start of the game he's trying so hard to help the group whilst simultaneously trying to keep them from getting close to or understanding him, in the end they all despise him, and in the end he becomes the person he thinks they picture him as - a poor decision on his part, but clearly a last-ditch effort to stop the game.

Thanks for reading, and I hope you enjoyed :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!