

The Weight of the World

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The Weight of the World

by [jxnine](#)

Summary

Marinette Dupain-Cheng has been named Guardian of the Miraculous after the unfortunate accident that many in Paris have called, "Battle of the Miracle Box." With Chloe being turned into Miracle Queen and the identity of every present Miraculous holder on the line, Master Fu had done what was necessary to protect the identities of Ladybug and Chat Noir. But how will Marinette handle the responsibility that has been unwillingly given to her?

Notes:

Set after Miracle Queen. (Potential spoilers)

Aged-Up (Main Characters 16/17)

IMPORTANT UPDATE: The computer on which I was writing/finished this story on was stolen. Unfortunately I did not have a backup file of this fanfiction. I can no longer update it. I apologize!

Gone

It had only been a few hours, and yet the pain was still fresh in her heart. Marinette Dupain-Cheng sat upon her little balcony, snugly settled on the top of the Tom & Sabine Boulangerie Patisserie. The Paris skyline twinkled on the horizon, and yet it did not bring Marinette joy like it had done all her life. The lights that shone through the night...it was life all around her. Life that she was responsible for. The battle that had unraveled before her replayed over and over in her mind, and yet she found herself criticizing her every move, maybe if she had moved quicker or thought things out faster things could have been different. She was Guardian now.

“Marinette?” It was the squeaky voice of her kwami that had brought her out of a trance. “Are you okay?” Tikki said cautiously.

Marinette cupped her hands together and the kwami floated to them, nestling into her palms quietly. She gave her kwami a sad smile. “Yea, Tikki. Of course I’m okay, why wouldn’t I be?”

Tikki searched within her master’s eyes. “Marinette, you know you can talk to me.” Marinette looked away back to the city skyline. Tikki frowned. “Or at least you should talk to Chat Noir.”

“What is he going to do?” Marinette said with a little too much ice in her voice. “Chat Noir is my partner, and he is someone that I can trust with my life but... I am the Guardian now. This goes beyond Ladybug and Chat Noir. All of the Miraculous...and I am in charge of them! Master Fu should have known I wasn’t ready.”

Tikki shook her head, “But Marinette, Master Fu knew you were ready. He chose you for a reason--“

Marinette had hot tears streaming down her face, whipping her head back to lock eyes with her kwami. “I keep hearing that but *why me?!?*” Marinette sobbed. The pained sobs echoed around the balcony and Tikki flew up to her master’s face and nuzzled into her cheek.

“I’m sorry Marinette.” Tikki cried. “I am so sorry. I will always be here for you.”

Silence settled all around them. Marinette continued to cry for a few moments, before quieting her sobs. “I don’t think I can do this—I don’t think I can...”

“Are you okay?” It was a new voice who had caught Marinette’s attention. She brought her teary eyes up to her roof, where piercing green eyes met hers. For a moment she blinked, looking around and sighing with relief to see that her kwami had disappeared. “Umm... Marinette?”

It was weird hearing her name come from his mouth. “Chat...Chat Noir.” She mumbled. The black masked super hero smiled. In turn, Marinette found a small smile forming on her face. Chat Noir gracefully landed on the balcony and knelt down next to Marinette. “What are you doing here?”

His ears flickered, and he lifted a leather hand to her cheek, wiping away the tear. “Apparently, there was a damsel in distress that needed some saving.” He said with a smile. “Why are you crying?” Chat Noir asked. Marinette tore her eyes away from his and sighed.

Because I am now the Guardian of the Miraculous, I feel like I have the weight of the world on my shoulders, all of my friend’s identities are compromised, I am not ready for any of this...and I’m sad that the boy I love, loves someone else.

If only Marinette could have said that. “I just have a lot on my plate right now.” Marinette said sadly. She brought her hands to her eyes and wiped them roughly. “I just feel, so alone.”

Chat Noir sat with his knees tucked beneath him. “You’re never alone.” He paused. “I mean, you’ve got me!” The silly cat gave her a toothy grin. Marinette felt her mood lifting, and she let out a giggle.

“Oh Chaton, I only get to see you when the sun sets for the night to rise.” She replied cheekily. “We barely even know each other.”

Chat Noir grinned. “Well that means I will have to visit some more.” He pondered. “What do you say? Midnight rendezvous with my Princess?”

Marinette shrugged. “You have a duty to Paris, not to a baker’s daughter.” She pointed out. “What if there is an akuma attack all the way on the other side of town?”

Chat Noir put a finger to his chin. “Then as soon as I get the akuma alert I will make my way over.” He murmured. Chat Noir turned to Marinette and became serious. “Marinette...you are my friend.”

She blinked a few times. “I...uh,” She let her voice die down.

“I’m serious Marinette. I know you and I aren’t exactly the closest of friends, but c’mon, we have been on so many great adventures together! Remember the Evillustrator and how we worked as a team to help defeat the akuma? Or what about the time that I saved you from Gamer?” He smirked.

Marinette laughed. “I wouldn’t call that saving...I could have handled it.” She said proudly. Chat Noir leapt to his feet and leaned on his baton.

“Handled the giant robot from Ultimate Mecha Strike III?” He laughed. “Marinette... that was a huge robot akuma! Even me and LB had some trouble taking him down.”

Marinette looked at the ground for a moment, before pushing herself out of her chair and walking towards the railing of her balcony. Chat Noir watched her with some hesitation. Looking out at the skyline for what seemed like the hundredth time that night.

“How are you and Ladybug anyways?” Marinette asked quietly. Chat Noir was not expecting her to ask that question. In all honesty, Chat Noir had no idea.

Today, had been one the most difficult days of his life. With all that has gone on today...with Hawkmoth and Mayura, and then what happened to Master Fu...Chat Noir felt like it was a blur.

The moment Master Fu had passed on Guardianship to Ladybug...he saw it on her face. Chat Noir had very limited information about the Guardian and who Master Fu was. But he had known that the Guardian was in charge of all of the Miraculous, even the one that he gave to Adrien. The responsibility that was on his shoulders...was now on Ladybug’s.

He knew that deep within her heart, Ladybug did not want to be Guardian. After all, it had been earlier that day when Ladybug was faltering.

“We’re good.” He replied curtly, joining Marinette on the railing. “We’re great. Marinette...if only you could see her. She works so hard and Ladybug is just so incredibly smart! I honestly have never met a more selfless person. I will always have her back.”

“That’s good to hear, Chat Noir.” Marinette sighed. “Paris is in good hands.” She added. “Do...do you still love her?”

Chat Noir let out what sounded like a yelp. He was caught completely caught off guard. “I mean...of course I do.” He said. “B-But Ladybug doesn’t love me back.”

Marinette hummed. “I mean I think Ladybug loves you. She is your partner after all.” She saw from the corner of her eyes that Chat Noir slumped over a bit. “Love comes in all different forms, Chaton.”

Chat Noir composed himself before leaning towards Marinette. “Is that a crush I see, Princess?” He grinned. Marinette rolled her eyes, of course he is trying to change the subject.

“You wish Chat Noir.” She giggled. “Anyways, what are you even doing out tonight?” Chat Noir looked out over the skyline.

“Ladybug has a lot of stuff going on right now, so I’m voluntarily taking patrols tonight.” He replied. Marinette’s heart fluttered with happiness. She knew Chat Noir was the best partner in the world. “Speaking of patrols, I better get to them. But I will promise to visit you more often. It made me sad seeing you upset. No one deserves to be alone.” He grabbed her hand and gave it a gentle kiss.

“Goodnight Chaton. Have a safe patrol tonight.” Marinette smiled. The alley cat grinned at her and saluted.

“Goodnight Marinette, until next time.” He grinned, before taking off into the night.

Marinette glanced once more over the beautiful city before jumping through her hatch and onto her bed. Tikki had flown up from Marinette’s desk. “Are you feeling better Marinette?” Tikki asked.

“Silly Chaton, visiting me of all people.” Marinette smiled, before looking at her kwami.

“Tikki, I’m going through a lot right now, and I am sorry if I am not completely there. But I promise you that I will always try my best for the safety of Paris and for what is best for the Miraculouses.”

“That’s my girl.”

When Adrien returned home to the Agreste mansion, he let himself collapse onto his bed from exhaustion. “You’re overworking yourself, kid.” Plagg, his kwami, said worriedly as he floated about his bed.

“Plagg, what is going to happen now?” He asked his kwami, kicking off his shoes and lazily ripping off his shirt. “With the whole Guardian thing and Ladybug?”

Just like Ladybug had done countless times over that night – the other hero of Paris was also thinking about the events that unfolded. The duo had done everything in their power to protect the people of Paris from Hawkmoth and Mayura. With the exposure of all the Miraculous identities, it was no longer just Ladybug and Chat Noir in danger now. Alya, Nino, Max, Kim, Luka and Kagami in their civilian forms now were in more danger than ever. How can he protect his friends and his identity all at once?

Plagg sighed. “Adrien...I don’t know. Master Fu was the Guardian for so long but he grew up training for it. Ladybug...I had no idea he was going to choose her to be the next Guardian. I have no idea what she knows—I...”

“What about Tikki, have you talked to her?” Adrien asked worriedly. He remembered Plagg talking about Tikki when their teacher had accidentally discovered the existence of kwamis.

“No...I mean with all that happened today, I thought it would be best to have stayed near you.” Plagg admitted. For some reason, the little black cat did not crave his usual stinky cheese, but instead had the urgency to stay by Adrien’s side. With Master Fu gone...that meant another cycle of the Guardians. “I’m worried.”

Adrien Agreste had never seen his kwami act this way before. It was all fun and games, Plagg being his usual arrogant self, addicted to expensive camembert.

“Can Ladybug be Guardian and, well, Ladybug at the same time?” Adrien asked, staring up at the ceiling. He turned his head to the kwami, who nestled into the pillow beside his master.

“Of my entire existence, it has never been done before. Being a Guardian and being Ladybug and Chat Noir were all duties that belonged to separate entities.” Plagg replied solemnly.

“Master Fu knew what he was doing though, he was such a wise Guardian even at 186 years old.”

“Ladybug hasn’t been herself lately.” Adrien said sadly. Plagg hummed in agreement.

“How...How can I help her? How can I help the woman I love?”

Plagg perked his head up. “I thought you were starting to like that girl from your fencing class?”

Adrien rolled over on his side, turning away from Plagg. "Kagami? No... I mean I know she likes me because she tried to kiss me and I don't want to hurt her. But...Ladybug doesn't love me. I don't know Plagg...maybe I should give up on ever finding true love." He sighed deeply. "I mean, I feel like I have much bigger things to worry about."

"What about Marinette?"

The Next Steps

“Hey Adrien? Is there any chance you have heard from Marinette?” Alya asked, noticing the second day in a row that her best friend was absent from class.

Marinette had lied to her parents – sort of. The following day after the Battle of the Miraculous, Marinette woke up feeling sick to her stomach.

“Marinette! C’mon wake up sweetheart, you’re going to be late for school.” Sabine, her mother, had called through the hatch on her floor. Marinette was propped up against the wall, leaning over a trash can. “I’m coming in! Marinette—Oh!”

The moment the hatch had opened, the teenager threw up in the trash can. “Mom...” Marinette groaned.

Sabine rushed to her daughter’s aid. “Oh Marinette.” She cooed, placing a hand on her daughter’s forehead. “You’re running a fever—Tom! Can you come up here dear?”

The baker had clambered up the stairs. “Is everything alright? Oh—My sweet Marinette. Are you not feeling okay?”

Marinette felt tears welling in her eyes. “Can I stay home? Please.” She pleaded, sniffing. Marinette rested her head against the edge of the bin.

“Of course.” Sabine cooed. “Let’s get you back into bed dear. Tom, can you call the school and let them know Marinette will be absent today?”

“Of course, dear. And I’ll get a pot of tea started for her.” Tom nodded, disappearing through the hatch.

“I guess I caught a bug.” Marinette murmured, climbing into her bed and burying herself under her pink comforter. “I’m sorry mom.”

Sabine sat on the edge of her bed. “Oh honey, don’t apologize.” She smiled, caressing her daughter’s rosy cheek. “Rest up. Dad’s making some tea and I will start up some soup.”

When her mother had left to the kitchen, Tikki appeared from behind the bookcase. “Marinette! What’s happening? Are you alright?” The kwami asked.

Marinette cracked her eyes open. “Tikki, I need you to bring me the Turtle Miraculous.” She said weakly. The little red ladybug cocked her head to the side, confused. “Hurry, Tikki.”

The kwami disappeared for a moment, only to return a second later with a bracelet. Marinette slipped in on to her wrist, and not a few seconds later Wayzz appeared. “Master! Is everything alright?”

Marinette shuttered at the name the kwami had addressed her by. “Wayzz, what do we do? What’s happening to Marinette?” Tikki asked, floating to next to her kwami friend.

“Wayzz...I don’t know if I can do this.” Marinette groaned. Wayzz turned to Tikki.

“Master has taken on a lot within the last day,” Ways explained. “She’s stressed and I can see that it is finally taken a toll on her physical and mental health.”

“Please, just Marinette is fine.” Marinette grumbled. Wayzz nodded.

“Tikki, Marinette will be alright. The same has happened before with Master Fu and the many masters before him. It’s almost like an illness that comes with the transference of Guardianship.” Wayzz said sadly. “She is stressed and has a lot going on within her. Marinette will be okay in a few days.”

Marinette felt a small wave of relief wash over her. It was good to hear that what she felt will only be temporary. She looked up at the kwamis from her spot beneath the covers. “Wayzz, what am I to do next? If I am Guardian now, what are the next steps?”

Back at Francois-Dupont high school, Adrien shook his head. “I haven’t heard anything from her. Is she alright?” Alya shrugged.

“She’s not answering any of my texts or phone calls.” She said sadly, turning to her boyfriend Nino. “Even he tried calling her, but we got nothing.”

Things had been different since the tragic event that unfolded only a day ago. Chloe Bourgeois, who had willingly become Miracle Queen under the guidance of Hawkmoth, had also become public enemy number one within the school. Even Sabrina, her best friend, didn’t think it was cool what she did.

“So what?” She snapped that day to Rose and Juleka. “Look, if I can’t be Queen Bee, what makes you think that any of those losers deserve their Miraculous?”

“That’s so low, Chloe.” Ivan said, coming up and defending his friends.

“Whatever! Ladybug shouldn’t have been selfish and just given me the Miraculous. Who cares if people know my identity? Now everyone knows the identity of Rena Rouge, Carapace, Viperion, Pegasus, Ryuuko, and King Monkey, so that means they can’t get their Miraculous either.” Chloe hissed. A small crowd had begun to form around her

“Chloe, you put us all in danger!” Alya raged, balling her fists tight. “Our identities were supposed to be a secret, but now *Hawkmoth*, the literal supervillain of Paris knows who we are! We were safe in our civilian forms, but we’re vulnerable out in the open!”

Nino nodded his head. “Hawkmoth can use us to get to Ladybug and Chat Noir. Not cool dude.”

Chloe scoffed, tossing her hair over her shoulder. “Oh whatever. Everyone knew my identity as Queen Bee and Hawkmoth never went after me.”

Adrien had scratched his head nervously. “Well...I mean he used you and turned you into Miracle Queen.”

Chloe's eyes slowly widened in abject horror. "I...I don't know what you're talking about Adrikins." She said before retreating.

The dynamic of the classroom shifted ever since.

"Maybe we should go over to the bakery and check up on Marinette." Alya suggested at lunch time. Nino and Adrien nodded in agreement.

It was always ever so convenient that the Dupain-Cheng bakery was just across the street from school. The three pushed the door open and let the wafting scent of freshly baked bread surround them. "Good afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Dupain-Cheng." Alya greeted. Marinette's parents lifted their heads up and smiled, seeing the sight of their daughter's friends.

"Ah, it's always good to see you guys." Tom greeted with a wave. "Come to check on Marinette?"

The three friends nodded. "I hope our dudette is alright." Nino smiled. Sabine nodded, motion towards the stairs.

"She should be up in her bed resting. Feel free to let yourself in." Sabine said, before turning back to the customer she was helping. Nino, Alya and Adrien thanked Marinette's parents before turning to the staircase. "Don't forget to grab a snack on your way back to school!"

Marinette lay almost motionless on her bed, staring up at the open sky. She propped the hatch to her balcony open, and allowed the fresh air to spill into her room. Tikki laid upon her chest, watching her owner with careful eyes.

From below the loft, she heard the hatch on the floor open. "Mom, I told you, you don't have to keep checking on me." Marinette sighed, knowing very well that her parents run on a tight schedule, and that she should be helping in the bakery with her father.

"Not your mom, just some worried friends."

Marinette turned her head and looked over the loft, watching Alya, Nino and Adrien climb into her room. "Oh." She peeped, nudging Tikki under her covers.

"Don't act too happy to see us." Adrien joked, trying to ease the tension. Marinette locked eyes with him and felt her heart sink heavily. "You haven't been in school and so we thought we would check up on you."

Marinette nodded, before climbing out from her bed and descending the ladder.

Alya, Nino, and especially Adrien noticed how different Marinette looked. Their friend let her hair fall to her shoulders loosely. She was wearing pastel pink bottoms that matched her tank. But what was the most noticeable about their normally cheery friend, was her face.

What once held soft and gentle features, suddenly looked different. The bags beneath her eyes were a dark purple, contrasting violently against Marinette's pale skin. Her eyes were puffed up and bloodshot, and the blue seemed to have lost life. Her cheeks seemed to have sunken in slightly.

This was not the Marinette that Adrien had visited a few nights ago as Chat Noir. And for some reason, this broke his heart.

“Girl...you haven’t answered my phone calls or texts.” Alya said worriedly. She went up and hugged Marinette. “I was so worried something bad had happened to you.”

Marinette gave a lifeless smile. “I’m sorry Alya.” She apologized gently. “I just fell ill so suddenly and I have been on bed rest since. I didn’t mean to worry you guys.” Over Alya’s shoulder, Marinette brought her eyes to Adrien.

It felt like she was fighting herself at this point. Before, her heart would have started to beat madly within her chest and it would have been so difficult to look at him. And yet, it was different now. Something within her, humanized Adrien Agreste. Marinette knew that she had worshiped the model ever since that day in the rain where he gave her his umbrella. But yet there he stood, right in her bedroom, worried about her.

“It’s been so weird without you in class.” Adrien added. Alya released her friend and turned, watching as Adrien gave Marinette a gentle embrace. To the reporter’s surprise, Marinette calmly returned his hug before releasing him and taking a step back.

“I mean, dude, it’s been just been weird period.” Nino said, giving Marinette a fist bump.

Marinette cocked her head to the side. “W-What do you mean?”

The three friends glanced at each other for a moment. “Girl, are you telling me you haven’t heard what has happened to Paris in the last few days?” Alya asked. “The Battle of the Miraculous?”

Marinette sighed. “Oh yea...that.” Suddenly the room felt very tense. Alya’s eyes widened.

“I am so sorry I never told you I was Rena Rouge!” She blurted out in a panic. “You are my absolute best friend in the entire world and you know I tell you everything but Ladybug told me I had to keep it a secret to protect me and the people I love and-“

“Alya.” Marinette cut off. “It’s fine. I’m not mad.”

“You aren’t?” Alya asked. “Thank goodness.”

“So...school?” Marinette mumbled. Nino and Alya had begun to dive into how the dynamic at school had changed since the Battle of the Miraculous, and yet Adrien could not help but watch Marinette closely. Even with all the details unraveling before them, Marinette seemed unphased.

It wasn’t even that that was bothering him. Marinette was...well Marinette. She was strong willed and determined. She always had a smile on her face. In the few years that Adrien had known Marinette, he has only seen her upset maybe once or twice. In fact, she was probably the most selfless people he knew. *Well, besides Ladybug.*

Either way, there was something different about her, and he began to really notice.

Wayzz, Tikki and Marinette had spent hours that day deciding what was the next course of action. It was already beginning to get dark outside, and yet Marinette still knew she would not be well enough to return to school tomorrow.

“What are we going to do without the Grimoire?” Marinette sighed, looking at the spotted, oval shaped sphere that contained the rest of the Miraculous. It felt heavier than ever the day she carried it home for the first time. Even in the corner of her room when it was locked in a trunk she could still feel its ever looming presence.

“You are sure that Master Fu had not left it in the locker at the train station?” Wayzz asked, for the millionth time.

Marinette nodded. “All that was there was the phonograph and the note.” She replied. “The Grimoire was on Master Fu’s tablet. And the tablet is nowhere to be found. If that gets into the wrong hands who knows what evil could be released onto the world.”

Tikki felt a frown form upon her face. “We’re lucky enough that there hasn’t been any akumas in Paris since the battle.”

“Hawkmoth has to be up to something.” Marinette groaned, slumping into her chair. “And I am afraid to find out what it is.” She paused. “There is no way that I could give the Miraculous back to their previous holders. The world knows who they are now.” She picked up the Miraculous box—albeit it was in the shape of a sphere but she was so used to calling it a box—and gently placed it into her trunk. Marinette closed it, and locked it with a key that now hung loosely around her neck on a chain.

“What if we need more help though?” She found herself asking the kwamis. Wayzz and Tikki looked at each other.

“It is up to you.” Tikki replied. “You control who gets the Miraculous.”

Marinette groaned. “But I—”

Above her, there was a gentle knock on her balcony hatch. Her eyes locked with a familiar pair of green. He pointed to the hatch, asking to be let in.

Marinette glanced around her room and saw that the kwamis had found a suitable hiding spot, before returning her gaze back to the hatch. She motioned for Chat Noir to come in, and ever so quietly, he ducked in through and onto her bed.

“Hello again, Chaton.” Marinette said softly, taking a seat on her chaise lounge chair. She pat the spot next to her, watching as the masked hero gently slipped down the ladder and landing so silently on her bedroom floor.

Quietly, he sat next to her. “Good evening, Mari.” He said formally. Chat Noir noticed she smiled ever so slightly. “Is it alright if I call you that?”

“Of course.” She replied. Marinette grabbed the blanket that was next to her and placed it over her body. “Is everything alright?”

Chat Noir let out a small laugh. “I feel like I should be asking that to you. I have heard you've been sick.”

She kind of felt small, hearing that. “I've been alright.” She replied curtly. Marinette watched as he reached into his leather pockets, fishing around for something. “What are you doing?”

Chat Noir brought his hands up to eye-level, revealing about four tea bags labeled with Chinese characters. “I...I, uh...brought you some tea. It's my favorite.” He said sheepishly.

She blinked for a moment, before letting him deposit the tea into her hands. “That's very kind of you, Chaton.” She mumbled. “You didn't have to.”

Chat Noir knew he didn't have to. Yet, it was seeing her earlier that day that made him want to. Suddenly, Marinette was different. When Adrien returned from lunch that day, he found himself thinking about her in class. He tried to shake it off too, like he said before Marinette was a strong person.

Yet as he sat next to her on the pink chaise lounge chair, she seemed like she was holding up a façade. Like, she wanted to be okay, but wasn't.

“I wanted to.”

Conflict

Surprisingly, Adrien was disappointed that Marinette had not returned to school, for the third day in a row.

“She texted me back, finally.” Alya said while they were walking to Mme. Bustier’s class. “She’ll be in tomorrow.”

“That girl never gets sick.” Nino pointed out. “I guess when it rains, it pours.”

Alya nodded in agreement. “I’m probably going to drop off the notes for her after school. Do you guys want to come with?” She asked. Adrien sighed.

“I can’t today. I have to get to fencing later.” He mumbled. It’s not that he didn’t want to go, but he knew Mr. D’Argencourt would be disappointed because he wasn’t focused.

And he was right.

Mr. Dargencourt had been watching the sparring match between Kagami and Adrien and sighed in frustration. “Mr. Agreste, it seems you aren’t all into it today. Might I suggest you return tomorrow better prepared. Hit the showers.”

Adrien groaned beneath his mask, as he sat splayed on the floor after another crushing defeat. Kagami walked up to him and offered a hand. “Are you alright Adrien?” She asked tenderly.

Adrien took her hand and was lifted to his feet. Bending over, he grabbed his saber. “Yea, I’m alright Kagami.” He replied, giving her a smile. Kagami looked unsure.

“You’ve been acting weird since...since the day on the Seine.” She said, lifting her mask. Adrien locked eyes with her.

“It’s not that Kagami.” He reassured. “I like spending time with you, so don’t think its that.” Her features softened and a small blush crept onto her cheeks.

“That’s good to hear.” She replied. “Did you maybe want to grab something to eat after fencing?”

Adrien smiled. “Sure. Let me hit the showers first and then we can grab something.”

“Marinette, it’s good to finally see you out of your room.” Sabine greeted her daughter, who had appeared in the bakery, fully dressed and smiling.

“I figured I might go get some fresh air around the park.” Marinette said. She was still feeling a bit off, yet she was definitely well enough to get out of the house and return to school tomorrow. “Is that alright?”

“Oh course, sweetheart!” Tom had chipped in, slipping a small box into her hands. “Here are some freshly baked macarons. Go out and enjoy today, it’s really nice out and I’m sure you’ll enjoy the sun.”

For a day in October, the weather really was extremely pleasant. Marinette thanked her parents and walked out of the bakery. School had long been out for that day, Alya and Nino stopping by after for an hour and giving Marinette the notes she had missed.

The reason that Marinette really wanted to get out was because she was looking for the Grimoire that had been misplaced. “First place to check is the park.” Tikki said from Marinette’s side purse.

“That’s where I got the Dragon Miraculous from Master Fu and I forgot to detransform.” She replied, opening the box her father had given her and handing her kwami a macaron. “Such a dumb mistake.”

“Marinette, you shouldn’t beat yourself up about it,” Tikki murmured through the bites of her snack.

Marinette didn’t reply, just sighed and continued towards the Merry-Go-Round. It was not operating today because of maintenance. She walked around it a few times, before tapping a worker on the shoulder. “Excuse me sir, but I seemed to have misplace my school tablet and the last place I had it was here. You haven’t by chance have seen it?” She asked.

The maintenance worker shook his head. “Sorry dear, there isn’t anything in the lost and found and I haven’t seen it.”

Marinette’s heart sunk. “Oh okay. Thank you anyways.” She mumbled before turning and walking away. “Well, that was a bust. Somebody had to have—”

“Hello Marinette.” A voice from behind her greeted. She turned on her heel and was greeted by the soft features of Luka, standing there with his bike. “Juleka told me you were out sick from school. I’m glad to see you’re finally feeling better.”

Marinette smiled. “Thanks Luka. Yea, I guess I caught a bug or something.” She said. “But I am feeling a whole lot better. I should be back in school tomorrow.”

Luka smiled. “Awesome.” He replied. “Are you doing anything right now? I was on my way to pick up some flowers for my mom’s birthday. Would you like to come with me?”

“Oh.” Marinette peeped. In truth, she knew that she should be looking for the Grimoire and thinking about her duties as Guardian—Oh! And as Ladybug too, how could she have forgotten? She hadn’t transformed since the day of the battle. Chat Noir had been doing a lot of the heavy lifting with patrols.

“Marinette?” Luka chuckled, noticing that she had been spacing out. “If you don’t want to, that’s alright—”

“No, I’d love to.” Marinette blurted out. Luka smiled, offering her a helmet. “Thanks.”

Marinette strapped the helmet onto her head and took a seat on the bike. Luka climbed up in the front. “Ready to go? Hold on tight.”

She enjoyed this. Much more than she had anticipated. Swaying ever so slight on the back of Luka’s bike, and letting the wind touch her cheeks and make its way through her hair. How often had she been able to have moments like this? The Miraculous of the Ladybug had been bestowed upon her around two years ago when she was just fourteen. The time that had passed from then until now had been a whirlwind of a ride. She had good days and bad. She made so many friendships that have made all of these days easier. Plus, an unlikely friend in the form a black-masked superhero. Chat Noir, even with his flirtatious advances had become her best friend. In the media he had more often than not been portrayed as her sidekick—but that was not true at all. Ladybug wouldn’t be the superheroine she was today without Chat Noir. They were partners...equals. Until the day she died, Marinette would fight tooth and nail to remind everyone they were a team.

But overall? When was the last time Marinette was able to just be a teenager? To live her life as the baker’s daughter, with hopes and dreams of being the world’s greatest fashion designer? To one day meet her soulmate in a coffee shop in the city of love? Yes, it might have been unrealistic, but it was true: Marinette wasn’t an ordinary teenager.

It was moments like these where she appreciated the time to recognize that even with the responsibilities she had, she was only human.

“Watch out!” Luka called, swerving around a couple that had rounded the corner. He burst out laughing, “That was a close one Marinette!”

“Sorry!” She giggled, looking back towards the couple. It felt like slow motion, catching his eye.

There he stood, a duffle bag on his shoulder and his fencing partner behind him, just as confused as she had been.

Don’t.

She pleaded with herself as she felt her heart burn in her chest. What was the point anymore? Like she had explained to Chat Noir just a few nights before, she felt alone. Adrien Agreste had been the love of her life for years, and it was her choice to let him go.

Let him go.

It was easy to say, but it still hurt. If it made him happy, then who was she to get in the way of his happiness?

As Adrien and Kagami had grown smaller in the distance, she returned her gaze back to Luka, who was smiling all the way down the block. How was it easy for him to just be so happy? So grounded?

Luka glanced behind himself. “You good Marinette?” He asked.

She nodded. "I'm great Luka."

He had pulled up to a flower cart that was just on the other side of the Pont au Change bridge. "Here we are, Marinette. The best flowers in all of Paris." He announced. The florist, who was attending to a batch of carnations, laughed.

"Oh Luka, flattering will get you nowhere." She snickered. "The name's Adele." She introduced, sticking a hand out to Marinette.

After dismounting the bike, she shook her hand. "Marinette. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Adele turned to Luka. "So, you've come to buy your girlfriend some flowers? What'll it be then?"

Luka smiled gently. "I've come to buy flowers for my mother's birthday." He stated. Marinette stood there in silence, not really sure what to do.

Adele smiled. "Ah, of course. Sorry, I didn't mean to assume." She corrected herself. "Anything particular you are looking at for the Captain?"

Adele and Luka had carried off into conversation, and Marinette stared at the flowers on display. The floral aroma swirled around her and she leaned forward, taking it in. The blue and pink Larkspurs had to be the prettiest flower there. They were so bold and bright; how could it not have attracted Marinette?

She smiled, running her thumb over the soft petals. *Oh*, she thought to herself as a small, red ladybug landed on her hand. She didn't dare move; she was too afraid she would scare it off. With watchful eyes, she observed as it crawled from her thumb and up her index finger.

Very slowly, she lifted her hand to eye level, staring at the little insect.

"They're good luck, ya know." Luka had said in a gentle voice. Her eyes flickered a moment to the blue haired boy. When she returned them to the ladybug, she was surprised to see it opened its wings and fly onto her nose.

"Eep!" She squeaked, a smile on her face. Luka burst out into a fit of laughter with Adele.

From the other side of the bridge, Adrien was not trying to stare.

"Your panini is going to get cold if you keep spacing out." Kagami chuckled, snapping Adrien back into the present. "Your head is somewhere else today."

Adrien couldn't help but nod guiltily. He was exhausted from everything the last few days. At night, he was jumping across the rooftops and making sure Paris was safe. During the day he was on a strict schedule of school, fencing, Chinese lessons, and photoshoots. Adrien could sneak a few moments here and there, but things had just been *different*.

He felt different. With his yearning for Ladybug's love also came heartache. He was tired of feeling upset so much. And with the shift of the classroom, he even felt weird with his

friends. It seemed like everyone had taken a step back and realized the reality they all lived in—the danger that constantly loomed around them.

Everyone knew Hawkmoth had not released an akuma since the battle, but then what was he up to? And what of Mayura?

“Aren’t you scared, Kagami?” Adrien asked, turning to his friend.

“Scared of...?” She questioned. He sighed.

“What’s going to happen next.” He replied. Adrien glanced across the river once more and watched Marinette and Luka erupt in a fit of laughter. He turned back to Kagami. “I mean... Hawkmoth knows your identity as Ryuuko. I mean, all of Paris knows everyone’s identities. Aren’t you... I dunno the least bit concerned that Hawkmoth and Mayura will go after you in your civilian form? Or that—”

“Adrien.” Kagami cut off. Her eyes focused on the glistening of the water. “Of course, I’m scared. But I can’t let fear overcome me when or if the time comes that Hawkmoth and Mayura come after me, er...or all of us.”

She paused for a moment and looked across the river at her friend Marinette. Dear, sweet Marinette, whom she never wanted to hurt. Everyone called her their “everyday” Ladybug, and she was beginning to understand why. “Ladybug and Chat Noir will always be there to save the day. I have faith that they will protect Paris and all the people that live here.”

Adrien felt his heart ease slightly. “You’re brave, Kagami.” He complimented. From her position next to him, once again a blush crept onto her cheeks.

“Thanks.” She murmured. “Adrien...do you like me?”

Adrien was taken back. “I...uh, of course I like you Kagami.”

Heartbreak ached through Kagami’s chest. She knew that his answer was not to what she really meant.

“Okay.”

“Alright, here you are.” Luka said, stopping the bike in front of the Dupain-Cheng bakery. “Safely at home.”

Marinette hopped off the bike. “I wanted to give you one of these, Luka.” She said, opening the box and offering him a macaron. Luka smiled and took a nibble. “Thanks for taking me out on a bike ride. I really needed it after being cooped up the last few days.”

Luka nodded his head. “Of course, Marinette.” He smiled, before reaching into the bouquet of flowers and picking up a small bunch of Larkspurs. “I saw you eyeing these, and I thought you might like having some in your room.”

Marinette took the flowers into her hands and took a deep breath. “Thank you so much Luka.” She smiled, reaching up and pecking him on the cheek with a gentle kiss. “Get home safe, alright?”

Luka beamed. “I will. Goodnight, Marinette.”

And she watched him bike off into the distance.

Marinette climbed up the stairs and smiled seeing her parents sitting on the couch, her father asleep and her mother attentively watching a movie. “I see dad still can’t make it through a movie.” Marinette whispered to her mom. Sabine giggled.

“It’ll never change.” She replied. “There’s some dinner in the fridge if you’re feeling up for it.”

Marinette smiled. “Thank you, mom. I’m going to take it upstairs and catch up on some homework. Goodnight.”

But when she climbed upstairs, she quietly placed the plate of food on her desk and opened her purse. “Tikki, you ready?”

Her kwami beamed with excitement.

It never got old, jumping over rooftops and performing flips and tricks that she knows she would be unable to do without the aid of her kwami. The wind that nipped at her cheeks and the sights...*oh the sights.*

Ladybug stood tall and proud, on the very top of her favorite landmark in all of Paris: the Eiffel Tower. She could see everything from here, it was quiet and serene.

Landing on a small maintenance balcony, she scanned the city. “Chat Noir...where are you?”

No one felt more guilty than Ladybug had in the last few days. She knew, thanks to a little rendezvous on her own balcony in her civilian form, that Chat Noir was vigilantly taking control of the patrols.

She had decided to go up and down the famous Champs Elysees, before resting after about an hour on the roof of a restaurant. Ladybug opened her yo-yo, maybe expecting a message or two, but was left empty handed.

Ladybug had made up her mind, at last, about what she wanted to do next. After much discussion with Tikki and Wayzz, it felt like she had gotten nowhere. In the back of her mind, the next best thing than talking to the previous Master’s kwami, was to talk to her partner.

“Ladybug.” Someone had breathed behind her.

She knew at the sound of his voice, who exactly it was. In one swift motion, she pushed herself off the ground and into the arms of Chat Noir.

Without hesitation, he embraced her. Oh, how he had missed her these last few days. The constant worrying about her and her safety had begun to eat him alive. Of course they didn't know each other in civilian forms, the only way he has ever gotten in contact with her was when they were suited up. The last time he saw her...was the day of the battle.

Ladybug embraced him tighter suddenly, and he felt her beginning to tremble. It was no mistake that she had begun to cry.

He said nothing, and she appreciated that with all her heart. All she needed was for him to be there, for him to understand that she was so sorry for leaving, for him to know that they were a team, always.

Ten minutes had gone by without a single word, before Ladybug finally released her grip on him. Her ocean eyes sparkled in the moonlight. Although they were puffy and red from her tears, it did not stop him from noticing that they still contained hope.

"My Lady." He whispered, noticing the closeness in proximity to her. "It is so wonderful to see you."

Ladybug smiled, and yet her features hardened slightly.

"Chaton, we need to talk."

We're a Team

He waited for her to continue, and yet it looked as if she could not find the words. She stood there, very still; her lips pursed. "I am Guardian now." She managed to mutter out.

Now was not a time for jokes, so Chat held his tongue. "Yes." He acknowledged.

Ladybug sighed. "This is a lot of responsibility." She continued. "I just...I-I don't know—I can't do it."

Chat Noir reach a gloved hand to her cheek and gave it a gentle stroke. "Whether or not you were Ladybug, the person under the mask is a strong, smart, and clever woman." He said. "We all have burdens that might have been passed on to us, whether or not we wanted them. You and I...we never asked to be the next saviors of Paris, and when that little miracle box came to us, we took up arms, and learned what to do together."

"My Lady, it is true that you are Guardian now." Chat Noir continued. Her eyes were searching his. "You don't have to hold this burden alone. "

"But...I don't even know what to do next!" She burst out. Ladybug's eyes were brimming with tears once more.

"It's okay if you don't know what to do next." Chat Noir replied. He placed his hands on her shoulders. "We figure out what to do next, *together*."

He waited for her to speak, and yet again, nothing came to her. "Have you hidden the miraculous box somewhere safe?" He asked. Ladybug nodded quietly. "That's good."

"What about the rest of the Miraculous team?" Ladybug asked. "I don't think I trust anyone else with their Miraculous. They know their powers and they know the deal. I can't bestow their Miraculous to anyone else besides them, it wouldn't be right." She continued on. "But there is *so* much danger."

Chat Noir glanced over Ladybug's shoulder and admired the stars that shown brightly behind her. "All of Paris is in danger, every single day." He stated. "But we're the ones who stop it. Rena Rouge and Carapace, and everyone else knew what they were signing up for when they decided to take the Miraculous. People want to help people in need."

Ladybug tore her gaze away from him. "I thought about asking to see your identity." She said in the quietest voice possible.

Chat Noir's ears perked up. "What?" He questioned. "A-Are you serious?"

Ladybug's eyes widened. "I *thought* about it." She stated quickly. "It was a passing thought. That's all. I don't think I could actually let you do it."

“W... Why would you finally want to know? I mean, after everything!” He said, still confused. Ladybug sighed.

“I already told you it was a passing thought.” She said. “I just thought, that if anything were to happen, if I needed to find you, whether that be transformed or not then this would be the easiest way. Master Fu knew both of our identities. I don’t know... I take it back now.”

“You know how much I love you.” Chat Noir said in a low tone. “If you were to ask me to detransform right now, I would.”

“No.” Ladybug stated firmly. “We’ve gotten this far without knowing.”

Chat Noir decided to not fight it. The idea of Ladybug knowing his identity scared him, and yet excited him.

“My Lady,” He said in a serious tone. “Regardless of whether or not we decide to reveal our identities, deep down you must understand that at the heart of it, we’re still Ladybug and Chat Noir. Although Master Fu bestowed this duty upon you, you won’t bear this burden alone, ever.”

Ladybug was beginning to feel better, even if it was just the slightest. She had held a lot of respect for her partner, even through the most difficult days between them as a team. Ladybug had known the pain of heartbreak, she lived through it a lot more in the last few weeks. Knowing that Chat Noir experienced the same thing with her every rejection – upset her; yet there was not much she could feel guilty for. Sometimes it just doesn’t work out between people. She firmly believed they were better off as friends.

But...

Maybe it was lack of sleep making her think this way, or maybe it was the anxiety and stress. But the truth is, Ladybug was giving up too. She knew that Adrien would never fall for a girl like her. He found his person, Kagami – at least that is what she believed.

Stop thinking about this, you have bigger things to deal with.

Ladybug scolded herself. “Chaton, no words could ever describe how blessed I am to have you as a partner.” She praised.

“You’re changing the subject.” He objected. Ladybug looked at him with pleading eyes.

“What am I supposed to say?” She replied quickly. “Look, I appreciate you more than you’ll ever know. But I’m still trying to wrap my head around this whole Guardian thing. Thank you for bearing this burden with me it’s just that... I don’t know what to do. I have been sick for days; physically, mentally, emotionally... it’s been so hard. *Everything* has been so hard. Balancing out being Ladybug and being – well, me – has been difficult enough. It’s just gotten so much harder with Guardianship.”

Ladybug was beginning to tremble once more. “I know without a doubt that you are always going to have my back and I am always going to have yours. I just *wish* that one day I could

just live my life *how I want*. Where I don't have to lie to the ones I love as to why I can't catch a movie or why I randomly disappear for hours at a time. Don't you ever wonder where you would be without all of this responsibility?" She stuttered. Chat Noir's demeanor changed.

"I never would have met you – and I refuse to imagine a life without you in it."

Marinette was greeted the following morning with a plethora of smiles and hugs. "We missed you!" Rose squeaked, running up to Marinette just as her and Alya were about to walk into Mme. Bustier's classroom.

"Aww, thank you." She replied, smiling brightly. Juleka stood next to Rose, as the latter gushed to Marinette. "It was only a few days."

"It was different without you Mari." A new voice chimed in. Marinette turned her head as Adrien and Nino walked up, their bags hanging from their shoulders. "Glad to see you're feeling better."

Even with his kind words, Marinette felt sad. "Yea, I'm feeling loads better." She offered as a reply. Nino gave her a fist bump, before they all trickled into the classroom.

The day went relatively normal, until lunchtime.

Adrien sat with Nino, Alya and Marinette, happily enjoying their food when across the courtyard, classmates that were beginning to yell at each other caught their attention. It was Chloe and Alix.

"You've messed up Chloe, big time." Alix spat. "But you're too dense to even realize it!"

"Oh please, Alix. You don't know what you're talking about. You don't understand." Chloe retorted.

"Understand that being a bully to all of us wasn't enough? That you had to go much, much bigger and bully Paris too?" Alix hissed.

Adrien felt bad for Chloe, just the slightest. After all, they have been friends for such a long time. But ever since her transformation into Miracle Queen, Chloe had been taking a lot of heat. Those whose identities had been exposed, refused to talk to her.

The model did not notice that one of his three friends had left from the table they were seated at, until she walked into his field of vision, striding across the courtyard. "Alix, I think that's enough."

You could hear a pin drop. It felt like the entire courtyard had silenced, watching to see what Marinette was going to do next.

“Marinette...you’re joking, right?” Alix asked, clearly confused. Marinette closed her eyes and sighed.

“It’s not right for any of us to go after Chloe.” She said firmly. It seemed like the mayor’s daughter was just as equally as surprised to see someone finally coming to her defense. “We make mistakes. We’re all only human.” Marinette paused. “It was not right to expose everyone’s identity in front of all of Paris. I am sure no one feels more guilty than Chloe.”

Beside her, Chloe dropped her head, confirming Marinette’s words.

“But if you are going to be mad and upset with someone, it should be towards Hawkmoth.” No one said a word, but continued to listen carefully. “He preys on our negative emotions and takes advantage of us teenagers who are just learning to figure out the world and our place within it.”

“That girl...she’s something else.” Alya said proudly. “Always sticking up for those who need it, even if it is her worst enemy.”

Adrien smiled.

“Hawkmoth wants this. He wants us to turn on each other, when in reality, the best thing we can do to defeat this super villain is to be there, *for each other*.” Marinette had looked around, talking to everyone. “Ladybug and Chat Noir would want us to unite together. Bring each other up.” The designer turned to Chloe. “And I am sure Chloe is going to do everything in her power to resolve her mistakes, to remind us why Ladybug deemed her worthy enough for a Miraculous.”

Just like that, the tension that had been present within their school community eased. Adrien saw that his classmate’s eyes were filled with hope, instead of anger. All because of Marinette.

Our everyday Ladybug.

Alix had apologized to Chloe, and excused herself, leaving the two girls standing their together. “Not that I am saying I needed your help,” Chloe started, unable to make eye contact with Marinette. “But thank you.”

Marinette saw the sorrow behind Chloe’s eyes, they were pained and full of regret. She knew that Chloe had received a lot of backlash for her actions and she knew that nobody was holding back. Maybe that’s why Marinette had stepped in, because she saw someone in need of help—someone to be there for them.

“Did you get all of that Alya?” Nino asked, turning to his girlfriend. Adrien tore his gaze away from Marinette and Chloe.

“I sure did.” Alya replied. “This is *so* going on the Ladyblog.”

“That was amazing.” Adrien breathed. The couple turned to the awestruck model. “Marinette, I mean—she just stood up for Chloe.”

Alya laughed, “Typical Marinette, right? She’s too sweet.”

Even though Miracle Queen had been one of the worst akumas she had faced as Ladybug, she knew that Chloe was just a kid. Marinette’s life had been turned upside because of the chaos Hawkmoth had brought to them through their classmate, yet she could not blame Chloe. If anything, she could blame herself more than she could her classmate. Jealousy had gotten the better of her, and she felt ashamed because of it. Not to say that Ryuuko was a bad team member, Kagami knew how to use the Miraculous well.

But it was jealousy that had driven her decision.

Marinette soon returned to her friends and quietly began eating once more. Adrien, Nino and Alya gawked at her. “W-What?” She mumbled.

“Girl!” Alya exclaimed, “That was a really cool thing you did for Chloe.” Marinette shrugged.

“Chloe hasn’t been a very good friend to a lot of us, I’ll admit. But this is so much more than school bullying. *People are in danger*. Not because of Chloe, but because of Hawkmoth.” She stated.

Adrien had been amazed at Marinette. It was like, this week alone she had become this enigma that puzzled him. She was in his thoughts more than he realized. Seeing her, looking so fragile and tired in her room when they visited her—made him worry. Watching her finally bounce back, laughing her heart out on Luka’s bike...it made him wish that he was the one making her laugh. And just moments ago, the maturity that his classmate had exhibited in front of everyone was so surprising it made him speechless.

Why was it that Adrien was just beginning to notice Marinette? *The real Marinette*.

It was when school ended, when the four friends descended the steps and began to part ways. Alya and Nino wanted to catch a movie at the local theatre, and took off. Adrien and Marinette were walking towards his car, where his bodyguard stood waiting. They were talking about physics.

“I don’t know, I’m just so confused with the whole mechanical advantage thing.” Marinette sighed. “Simple machines should be...simple!” She chuckled. Adrien laughed along with her.

She wasn’t stuttering anymore, and that was something the model noticed. He only picked up on it a few months ago, but like he realized before, things were different and he couldn’t figure out why.

“Yea, the whole effort force and resistance distance is a little confusing.” He said, even though physics came naturally to him. “But I agree, simple machines should be simple.” He paused, gazing into Marinette’s blue eyes. “Um... I can help you out if you want, like just to go over the notes.”

Marinette smiled kindly. “That would be awesome. Maybe tomorrow night?”

Adrien grinned, “Yea, that works perfectly. I’ll make sure Natalie keeps my schedule clear.” He said with a little too much excitement. “Er...do you want a ride home?”

Her laughter was so innocent, so sweet. It graced the model’s ears and made his heart swell with warmth. He noticed that Marinette had the smallest dimples on her rosy cheeks. But—why was she laughing?

“Adrien, that is very sweet of you, but my house is right there.” Marinette giggled, pointing to the bakery just across the street. How could he have forgotten?

“Oh right.” He laughed nervously. Marinette smiled, leaning in and giving Adrien a hug. For just a moment, he breathed in her scent: *vanilla*.

Much too soon she retreated. “If it makes you feel any better, if you feel compelled to know that I got home safely you can wait.” She said. “I’ll see you tomorrow Adrien.” She smiled, turning towards her home.

“See you tomorrow,” He said under his breath, watching her go. When she stepped into the bakery, only then did Adrien turn and finally get into his waiting car.

Marinette thought a lot that night. She thought about Chat Noir, and their conversation they had. She thought about her friends welcoming her back at school and how at lunchtime she stood up for Chloe. She thought about Adrien, and his kindness in offering to help her with Physics.

But she didn’t realize the impact of it all. It’s like she viewed the world differently, because things had changed. She didn’t even notice that she was not nervous and stuttering around Adrien, because she began to view him as a friend. No more over glorifying the model and putting him on a pedestal.

Adrien was her friend.

The First Akuma

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

In hindsight, things would have been different if it had not been for the cameras. The famous Trocadero, a must see when visiting Paris. For the safety of the civilians and tourists alike, there had been cameras all over the place in strategic locations to catch anything and everything.

Cameras that captured the entire battle for the Miraculous. Which meant footage was aired on to the news and was leaked onto the internet.

Marinette sat there, watching a clip that had been posted on Alya's blog; her friends faces clear as day.

It was in one of the forums, where thousands of people had commented on it, explaining that Alya Cesaire, the owner of the Ladyblog, was Rena Rouge. It wasn't long into the thread where the rest of her friend's identities were compromised.

"Alya texted me earlier, she said that it's impossible to manage the content on the blog without basically shutting the site down." Marinette sighed, glancing at the kwamis who were floating next to her.

Marinette had become accustomed to having Wayzz around as well as Tikki. She only wore the Turtle Miraculous in her room and whenever she left, she placed it safely back into the Miraculous box.

"Even if Alya took down the site, the footage is still out there." Tikki sighed, turning to her kwami friend. "Wayzz, things haven't been this dire in a long time."

"I know Tikki." Wayzz said worriedly, eyes still glued to the clip on the Ladyblog. He turned to Marinette, "Have you been in contact with Chat Noir?"

Marinette nodded. "We've talked a bit." She replied. "He's willing to bear Guardianship with me."

Wayzz smiled. "That seems like the best plan for now."

"I'm so worried." The blue-eyed girl sighed. "It's like, I want things to be how they were, but even then, were they even—"

"Marinette! You have a visitor!"

It was Sabine's voice that called through the hatch. Marinette turned to the kwamis. "It must be Adrien." She said. "To go over the physics notes. Tikki, Wayzz, I left some freshly baked macarons in the jar by the bookshelf. Feel free to help yourself."

The kwamis disappeared and Marinette walked over to the hatch, opening it and giggling as the sight she saw. Adrien ascended the stairs, his messenger bag slumped over his shoulder and in his hands, he was holding a tray filled with food. She helped Adrien through the hatch in her floor, grabbing the food and placing it on her desk.

“Your mom insisted.” Adrien explained, dropping his bag to the floor.

“Typical mom.” Marinette smiled. “Did you want anything to drink? Water? Tea?”

Adrien smiled, “I wouldn’t mind some tea.” Marinette nodded, and excused herself to go downstairs to make it.

When Marinette was out of sight, Plagg had flown out from Adrien’s shirt pocket. “Adrien, I’m hungry.”

The model sighed, reaching down to his bag and pulling out his notebook. “Plagg, you already know where the camembert is in my bag.”

“What if I don’t want camembert today?” He said, grinning. Clearly, he was lying and was not very good at hiding it. Adrien watched his kwami fly around the pink room, looking at the pictures on the walls and the half-completed designs on her cork board.

Plagg flew by the bookcase, and was surprised to see Wayzz and Tikki huddled behind some books, sharing a macaron. The kwamis locked eyes, and Tikki put her hand to her mouth, shushing the black cat kwami.

“Plagg, get back over here before Marinette comes back.” Adrien called, flipping through the pages of his notebook. Plagg stuck his tongue out at the other kwamis playfully, before going back to his owner. “You’re such a snoop.”

Plagg hummed. “So what? Nothing wrong with snooping.” He said, floating up to eye level. “Plus, she has pictures of you up anyways. So, is it really snooping?”

Adrien felt his cheeks warm up. “Marinette is a designer.” He explained. “She really likes father’s brand.” He continued. “C’mon Plagg, go hide.”

The kwami smirked, before disappearing. Adrien sighed, looking around Marinette’s room. This had not been the first time he had been to her room, visiting a few times before as Chat Noir and even once or twice as Adrien. It really felt like her, soft and pink. She had an unfinished project hung loosely over a mannequin; he had noticed. Her room smelled like flowers.

“I hope jasmine tea is alright.” Marinette said, announcing her arrival. She walked over, placing a mug on her desk in front of Adrien. He chuckled quietly to himself, noticing that it was a black mug with a green paw print that said, Chat Noir on it.

“I know, I know, such a nerdy mug.” Marinette smiled, taking a sip from a spotted red and black Ladybug mug. “They were a gift from Alya.”

Adrien picked up the mug and let the heat warm his hands. "I think they're cute," he replied. "Thank you for the tea."

Marinette smiled softly, taking a big sip. She watched Adrien carefully, he was looking at her computer monitor. "Have you seen this?" She asked, referring to the post on the Ladyblog that she still had up. The video was paused.

Adrien nodded. "Yea, I watched it at home." He said. "Nino apologized about a hundred times for not telling me his identity as Carapace. It's totally cool though, like I wasn't mad at all."

"Same with Alya." Marinette smiled. Of course, Marinette already knew her best friend's identity as Rena Rouge, as she was always the one to give her the Fox Miraculous when she was Ladybug. But it was really sweet of Alya to be so apologetic when she didn't need to be. "It's so cool that they got to work with Ladybug and Chat Noir."

Adrien had known Marinette also got to work with him and Ladybug as the hero: Multimouse.

Yet, that entire situation still confused him just the slightest. The day their teacher became Kwamibuster, was a very weird day for him. Adrien had noticed that Marinette often disappeared when there was an akuma in Paris, and for a second he strongly believed that she was Ladybug. She held such similar traits as the hero, and everyone even called her their everyday Ladybug. But, his kwami had told him to forget about it and for a few weeks, he did.

Marinette couldn't possibly be Ladybug; that day she was standing right there next to my partner.

But he thought about it again, as he sat there in Marinette's room in such close proximity to her. She was rummaging through her backpack, retrieving her notes from physics. She was going on about what she needed help with today, explaining that even Alya was struggling in the class as well. He could tell he was staring at her, but he just couldn't tear his eyes off of her.

She was aware that he was staring, and because of that, she was rambling. Marinette tried to ignore it, but it was pretty hard to ignore. "Have you tried my mom's dish?" She finally asked, locking eyes with him. Adrien didn't say anything for a few seconds, his eyes searching hers.

"Huh?" He said suddenly. "Oh! No, I haven't." Adrien admitted sheepishly. "Your mom said it was beef bourguignon."

"Oh, one of my favorites." Marinette smiled, handing Adrien a fork. "Shall we?"

Adrien took the fork and nodded, before they both dug into the dish. The flavors swirled in his mouth and tingled his cheeks. "Wow Marinette, your mom is such a great cook!" He gleamed, cheeks full.

Marinette burst out into laughter. “Adrien! You look like a hamster with your cheeks like that!”

Adrien felt happy here. He felt good knowing that Marinette was smiling.

“Marinette, we should hang out more.” He said suddenly, wiping his cheek. Marinette took another sip of her tea, smiling. “I mean, I know in the past we haven’t hung out that much, but I think it would be pretty cool if we could.”

“Alright Mr. Agreste, where can you fit me in on your schedule?” Marinette teased.

Adrien grinned from ear to ear. “Let’s see, Miss Dupain-Cheng, I’m a little booked up right now, but I know after my photoshoot this weekend I can be free?” He flirted. Marinette rolled her eyes playfully.

“I think that wor-“

Ding!

The teens turned their gazes towards Marinette’s computer. At the top of the Ladyblog, a banner appeared, reading: Akuma Alert – Notre Dame de Paris!

Adrien felt a pit in his stomach.

Perfect timing, Marinette thought to herself. She was enjoying Adrien’s company immensely, so of course Hawkmoth had to release an akuma and remind Marinette of her duties to Paris. And, how was she supposed to suddenly excuse herself long enough to go fight the akuma? Adrien had come over to study with her.

She looked at the tray of food and sighed, knowing what she needed to do. Marinette brought her hand down on the corner of the plate, causing it to flip up towards her and dump the dinner all over her.

“Oh!” Adrien said suddenly, picking up the plate off the ground.

“Clumsy me.” Marinette said nervously. “I’m so sorry if it got on you.”

Adrien shook his head. “No, it’s alright, I don’t think that it got on me. Should I bring you a towel or something?”

Marinette stood up. “Is it okay if I take a quick shower? You can hang out in the meantime, we can study after?” She offered.

There it was again, that feeling in Adrien’s gut that Marinette...*was disappearing when an akuma appeared*. Paris still needed to be saved, so he had to hold on to his suspicions until later. “Go ahead. Take your time. I’ll clean up around here.”

Marinette smiled. “Thank you so much Adrien, I’ll be right back.” She said, before excusing herself and going downstairs. When the hatch closed behind her, Plagg came out of Adrien’s bag.

“You two were so flirting.” He said, feigning disgust. Adrien rolled his eyes.

“We can talk about that later,” The model said, “Plagg, claws out!”

By the time he arrived at Notre Dame, Ladybug was already there. “Good afternoon, my Lady.” He announced, walking up next to her as she crouched on a Paris rooftop. “What are we looking at?”

Ladybug had arrived to the Notre Dame covered in an eerie mist. At the foot of the stairs, a man stood there, wearing a full tuxedo suit and thick black glasses. “I’m...not too sure actually. I just got here.”

“Oh Ladybug! Chat Noir! Come out, come out where ever you are!” The man jeered.

“There’s no civilians around, which so weird since it’s the Notre Dame.” She observed. Ladybug stood up, glancing at Chat Noir. “Ready, Kitty?”

With a salute, Chat Noir bounded off the rooftop, his partner following close behind. They landed on the concrete in unison, Ladybug twirling her yo-yo and Chat Noir in a stance, baton at the ready. “Well, well, well, Paris’ pathetic excuse for heroes. Took you long enough.”

“What have you done to Notre Dame?” Ladybug hissed, eyeing the man carefully. The man shook his head.

“Such ungrateful people!” He roared, “Taking pictures in front one of Paris’ most remarkable landmarks? None of them even knowing the history and culture behind it? These ignorant tourists, destroying the beautiful Notre Dame. I wanted them gone and out of my city!”

“He’s crazy.” Chat Noir whispered to Ladybug.

Ladybug tossed her yo-yo at the man, but he side-stepped and it disappeared into the mist. “Be careful of the mist, Ladybug, or you’ll be gone too!”

In a quick moment, Ladybug felt a tug on her yo-yo and was pulled into the mist. “Chat Noir!” She screamed, before disappearing. Silence followed.

Chat Noir’s heart thumped in his chest. “My Lady!” He said in a panic, turning to the akuma. “What did you do to her Trapper?”

Trapper smirked, “Why don’t you find out?”

Ladybug was surrounded in white. She could no longer see her beloved city, and she could no longer hear Chat Noir. “Chat! Where are you?” She called. “Is anyone out there?”

“Hello?” Someone called. Ladybug turned, her yo-yo twirling in her hands. “Ladybug?”

She noticed the accent; it was clearly American. A girl walked out from the white mist; she must have been just a little bit older than Marinette. “Are you alright?” Ladybug asked as she fully came into view. She had blonde hair, and green eyes. *Just like Adrien.*

“I’m alright.” The girl replied. “I’ve heard about you on the plane from my professor.” Ladybug quirked her head. “My class is here on a trip. He told us that Paris had a real-life superhero duo and that if we were lucky enough, we might see them in action. For some reason, I don’t think this is what he meant.”

“What happened?” Ladybug inquired. The blonde thought for a moment.

“Well, we were here with my class when suddenly some boys were messing around and broke a window. This guy, I think he worked here, got really upset and I noticed a black butterfly like...morphed into his glasses? I don’t know—”

Ladybug grinned. “Perfect, I know where the akuma is.” She said confidently. “Are your other classmates here?”

The girl nodded. “If I wander around long enough, I mean yea I’ll eventually run into them.”

“Go find your classmates. My partner and I will take care of everything.” Ladybug murmured, before watching the girl disappear once more. She grabbed her yo-yo, and dialed Chat.

On the outside of the mist, Chat Noir and Trapper were engaged in a heated fight when his baton began to ring. “I’m kinda busy my Lady!” He exclaimed, tucking the baton between his ear and shoulder. Trapper lunged out and Chat Noir blocked with his forearms. “Where are you?”

“I’m trapped in the mist,” She replied hastily. “But I think I know how to defeat him. My Lucky Charm gave me a voice recorder. I need you to lure him into the mist and then locate me through the map on your baton.”

Chat Noir groaned, after receiving a nasty elbow in his side. “You got it my Lady.” He replied before hanging up and slashing his baton forward. Trapper side stepped and was missed by an inch. “You heard the Lady, she wants to see you!”

Trapper was hit under his chin, and he stumbled backwards into the mist. Chat Noir stood there for a moment, before running in.

It was just a few moments later, when he saw his favorite red bug, her arm extended forwards, pointing in front of her. “I’m glad to see you’re safe.” She whispered. Chat Noir quirked a brow. “Seventeen paces straight ahead. The akuma is in the glasses. Listen.”

And so he did. Ladybug’s voice echoed through the mist, feigning fear. *Chat where are you? I’m over here! I can’t see a thing, where are you?*

“I got you now, Ladybug.” The duo heard Trapper say. “Hawkmoth will finally get your Miraculous and it’ll be your downfall.”

Ladybug motioned for them to proceed forward, in a surprise attack. In unison, they launched forward, Ladybug tossing her yo-yo and allowing it to wrap around the villain whilst Chat Noir knocked him to the ground. However, while he fell down, his legs kicked up in the air and nicked Ladybug on the cheek. She winced in pain.

Chat Noir grabbed the glasses and tore them in half, a little black butterfly wriggling free and beginning to fly away. Suddenly, the mist disappeared and they could see the courtyard of Notre Dame once more, people relieved and reunited with their friends and family. Ladybug tossed her yo-yo towards the little black butterfly. “No more evil doing for you little akuma. Time to de-evilize!”

Chat Noir helped the former akuma victim up. “It’s okay, you’re alright now.” He explained to the confused man.

The purified butterfly was released. “Bye-bye little butterfly.” Ladybug retrieved the voice recorder that had been on the ground next to them, and tossed it into the air. “Miraculous Ladybug!”

However, as they went in for their signature fist bump, Chat Noir frowned, “Bugaboo, you’re bleeding.” He said, carefully wiping the blood from her cheek. She winced just the slightest. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright, it’s just a tiny cut.” Ladybug replied. “I’ll be okay.”

“That akuma wasn’t too bad.” Chat Noir said, “I mean, I thought maybe Hawkmoth would come back stronger.” He groaned suddenly, his hand gripping his side. “Though I guess this is the first time we both didn’t walk away without a scratch.”

Ladybug shrugged. “Be careful what you wish for, Kitty.” Her earrings beeped. “Well, that’s my cue, bug out!”

Chat Noir watched her bound away before remembering he needed to be in Marinette’s bedroom before she came back from her shower. In a panic, he took off.

“Claws in!” He exclaimed, dropping through her balcony hatch and landing with a thud on her bed. Adrien bit his tongue as his side burned with pain—it was definitely bruised.

“Kid, you okay?” Plagg said, looking at Adrien. He nodded.

“I’ll be okay.” He replied through clenched teeth. The model descended the ladder and sat back down at her desk, where the discarded dinner was left behind. He handed Plagg some cheese from his shirt pocket. “Eat up and hide, please.”

Not a moment later, Marinette had returned through the hatch in her floor, a towel draped around her neck and her hair flowing to her shoulders, little water droplets falling from them. She wore her pajamas.

“Sorry that took so long.” She mumbled sheepishly.

But even though Adrien was fixated on the beautiful girl in front of him, so innocent and sweet, something caught his eye.

It was a little cut, right on her cheek.

Chapter End Notes

I want to credit Krixby87 on reddit for the idea of an akuma called Tourist Trapper, who traps tourists because they don't understand the history and importance of landmarks, since Paris is full of them.

Also, who saw that Chat Blanc trailer?? Wow wow wow I'm SHOOK.

Feelings

Chapter Notes

I just wanted to say thank you for such kind words and comments. It really makes writing easier, knowing that people like my story.

Additionally, I am still quite shook about that Chat Blanc trailer, and I have no idea if it will end up messing with my story. We'll see I guess. Happy reading!

After studying for an hour, the two teenagers began to get bored of physics. Marinette was beginning to understand the section way more now that Adrien had taken the time to help her learn it more. He was extremely sweet and kindly broke down questions that she really had a difficult time with.

“Is there a certain time you need to be home?” She asked suddenly, looking at the clock and noticing it was nearly nine. “I don’t want to keep you if you need to get home.”

Adrien shook his head. “Not really, I told my father that I needed to study tonight with a classmate and he was really relaxed with letting me go out however late I needed, just as long as I get a sufficient amount of study time in and call my bodyguard whenever I’m ready to come home.”

“Wow, that was really cool of him.” She said, surprised. Adrien shrugged.

“If I’m honest with you, I think his mind is somewhere else right now. I think he’s got a bunch of projects coming up.” He said causally, leaning back in the chair.

Adrien, was trying to remain as calm as he could for the last hour. There was not really any substantial proof that Marinette could be Ladybug, besides the small cut on her cheek just like the one Ladybug had gotten a few hours before. But still, that wasn’t nearly enough proof to make a claim of that magnitude.

Yet, in a way, he hoped it was her.

“Adrien, did you maybe wanna watch a movie?” Marinette asked. “I’m getting tired of school work.”

He smiled. “I think that’s a great idea. Any particular movie you had in mind?”

Him and Marinette began to go through her movie collection, before selecting a film from Miyazaki. Ironically, both of their favorite films came from Miyazaki. Adrien helped Marinette rearrange her room, moving the lounge chaise in front of the projector screen that

hung from her loft. She set up the projector, while he offered to make more tea and bring their used dishes downstairs to the kitchen.

When he came back, the movie was ready to be played, and Marinette sat there on the lounge, wrapped in a fluffy pink blanket. Adrien set the teas down on the night stand and climbed next to her, getting under the blanket as well. He rested his arm on the back of the chair, behind Marinette's shoulders, touching them slightly.

For the first time that night, her heart exploded in her chest and a flurry of feelings she had tried to push away, came back.

"D-Does your girlfriend know you're with me?" She asked, turning her head to Adrien. The poor boy nearly choked on his tea. "Oh god! I'm sorry!" She said in a panic.

After coughing a few more times, he recomposed. "I...-uh, I don't have a girlfriend." He explained, genuinely looking confused. Marinette's eyes bulged.

What an idiot! She screamed to herself. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to assume." The night had been going so well, and here she was, beginning to ruin it for herself. Adrien was such a good friend, he was amazing. Marinette made a vow to herself to just let him go and be happy with Kagami, and here he was, in her room, telling her that he didn't have a girlfriend. "I just thought...well I mean Kagami told me that—I don't know."

Adrien sighed. Kagami. It is not like he forgot about her, but he would be lying if he didn't say he was ignoring her. Kagami liked him, and Adrien had established that he did not return her feelings. There was nothing wrong with that, it's just, Adrien didn't want to hurt his friend's feelings. "Kagami and I are good friends, but that's all." He said simply. To him, it seemed that Marinette was relieved with the answer. "I mean, I could say the same about you and Luka."

Marinette pursed her lips. "What about me and Luka?"

Adrien shrugged. "That you two could be a couple. Or could not be a couple, I don't really know." He said nonchalantly, though there was a smirk on his lips. Marinette giggled.

"Adrien Agreste, is that jealousy I see?" She smirked playfully.

Adrien had become so enticed by Marinette within this last week, and even more so as they continued to hang out and be with each other. He didn't want to ever leave, never having enjoyed himself this much. Additionally, in a way it felt like who Marinette really was, was finally starting to shine through. It was all the more attractive.

Maybe the girl that he had fallen in love with really was right in front of him all this time. After all, it seemed like the two separate entities that he had known were starting to merge together. Marinette was beginning to act more and more like Ladybug and vice versa.

"Cat's out of the bag. Perhaps it was jealousy, or maybe not?" He replied smoothly. "You tell me."

Marinette rolled her eyes. “You’re such a dork, Adrien Agreste.” She smiled, leaning back. Adrien shifted his arm so it draped over Marinette’s shoulder. For a moment, they locked eyes and smiled at each other. “Let’s start the movie.”

“Sir, Adrien’s classmate’s parents called.” Natalie said in a hushed tone. It was late, yet she promised herself that she would stay up to assist him in the atelier. “He fell asleep while they were studying and the parents were wondering if you are okay with him spending the night and picking him up in the morning.”

Gabriel had his eyes glued to the monitor in front of him, swiping at the screen. Displayed, was detailed instructions on how to fix a Miraculous. And in his hands, was the Peacock Miraculous. “Yes, that is alright. I don’t need my son accidentally wandering in here while I’m working with this Miraculous. Have his bodyguard pick him up at eleven or so, and make sure he is prepped for his photoshoot at twelve.” He replied.

Natalie nodded, returning to her office to relay the message to Adrien’s classmate’s parents.

Gabriel sighed, reading the detailed instructions that had been neatly stored in the tablet he had taken from the previous Guardian of the Miraculous. Although his latest akuma had failed, yet again, Gabriel Agreste felt more powerful than ever. Ladybug and Chat Noir had no idea of the storm that was coming for them.

They didn’t understand. That was Gabriel’s reasoning. The child superheroes did not understand why he so desperately needed the earrings and the ring. Everything he did, all the people he akumatized and the battles that have taken place, he was doing for his family.

“Once the Peacock Miraculous is fixed, things will finally go in my favor.” He murmured, running his thumb over the brooch.

When Marinette woke up, it was to the steady rhythm of a heartbeat. She blinked her eyes slowly, letting them focus for a moment. She was warm, but it wasn’t uncomfortable. There was something on her back, holding her in a soft embrace.

Marinette lifted her head slightly, to see Adrien fast sleep, one hand propped behind his head and the other around her waist. She was laying next to him, their legs entangled, her hand upon his chest. She didn’t know what to do, or how to feel.

But she was content.

The morning sun poured in from the windows, lighting the room a bright gold. She noticed that his hair was tousled, an unfamiliar sight on Adrien. However, it did remind her of another friend: Chat Noir.

They shared similar physical traits; Marinette could argue. Mostly golden hair and emerald eyes; those would be the most dominant features that are easy to spot. Perhaps they were the same height too. Personality wise, she would have said before that they were leagues different, but maybe now...not so much.

She lowered her eyes to his stomach, where his shirt had hitched up at some point in the night. On his side, there was a nasty bruise that made her frown.

I wonder what happened. She thought to herself, reminiscing on the night before, when Chat Noir got injured too.

She closed her eyes, letting that last thought slip away for just a moment. Marinette was experiencing such bliss—for a moment, she cuddled into him further, drinking in his scent. He responded even in sleep, pulling her closer.

Maybe...just maybe she could fall back asleep and enjoy this moment longer. *Adrien could be Chat Noir*, she thought to herself. It was a fleeting thought...one that she had at the edge of consciousness, right before she returned to sleep.

When Adrien woke up, he was surprised to see a quietly sleeping Marinette on his chest. Her mouth was open just the slightest, soft breaths rhythmically going in and out. Her hair fell loosely, framing her rosy cheeks and sweet, innocent face. He could stay like this forever.

They must have fallen asleep at some point during the night.

He remembered bits and pieces of the movie, and then nothing. Adrien looked around the room and saw that on her projector screen, was a small, pink post-it. Written in neat handwriting, it read:

Adrien—your father said it was alright for you to spend the night, so no need to panic. A car will arrive for you at 11AM. Enjoy some breakfast. – Tom & Sabine.

And right underneath the post-it, on a small table, was an assortment of pastries. He hadn't felt this elated in a long time.

Adrien returned his gaze back to the sleeping girl on his chest. He had an urge to capture the moment—an so he did with his phone. Of all the photos that he had ever been in – the magazines, billboards, articles, posters—the photo right there on his phone had become his favorite.

He reached down with his hand and caressed her cheek. Marinette's eyes fluttered opened. "Good morning." He said, a smile on his lips.

Marinette let out a small yawn. "Good morning." She replied. Maybe it was the sleepiness or maybe it was the fact that she was feeling particularly bold, but she buried her head into his chest. "Don't make me get up, Adrien. I don't want to."

Adrien chuckled. "You don't have to get up Marinette." He replied. "Not yet."

She smiled and enjoyed the moment. They both did. He laid there, his thumb soothingly caressing her cheek and then his hand running through her hair.

This is what they had both dreamed of: just enjoying a simple moment of happiness. They both knew the things that were to come of them as superheroes—albeit even if they didn't

know each other's identity. Living in the moment and appreciating being in someone else's company, honestly nothing could have helped them more.

"Can we do this again sometime?" It was asked in unison.

The Others

Chapter Notes

I just wanted to shout out some awesome people: @geekbaits, @DrafteeDragon, @MagicalInspiration, @BenRG, @Chacha, and @Nerd101. Thanks for the comments, I hope you're enjoying the story!

Additionally, I just wanted to let you guys know that after this chapter, I will probably not be able to update for a few days. I live in California and specifically in a part that has lost power due to the crazy wildfires. (Basically, if you haven't seen it on the news, low-key California is on fire) My family and I are safe, however we might be evacuated soon.

I will update as soon as I get internet again.

Happy reading!

He left at 11AM on the dot. After the both of them had finally decided to get up, they enjoyed some pastries together in comfortable silence before Tom and Sabine notified them that his bodyguard was here to pick him up for his photoshoot.

Marinette walked him to his car, and waved to him as it drove away. She returned back into her home and then up to her bedroom where Tikki was floating around in a buzz. “Marinette! That had to be the cutest thing I’ve ever witnessed!” She giggled, flying up to Marinette’s cheek and giving it a gentle embrace.

Marinette smiled. “Oh, stop it Tikki.” She replied. Truth be told, Marinette had felt amazing. It was the best night sleep that she had received since the Battle of the Miraculous. “I can’t believe how calm I feel right now.”

Tikki nodded, as Wayzz had appeared from his spot inside Master Fu’s old phonogram, hidden in the same trunk where the Miraculous box was. “That’s good, isn’t it?” Tikki asked. The teenager nodded.

“Yea, it is.” She replied, going through her closet and picking out an outfit. Her phone buzzed twice, and Tikki and Wayzz floated down near the device. “Who is it guys?”

“The first text is from Adrien.” Wayzz said.

“The second is from Luka.” Tikki added. “He asked you out for lunch.”

Marinette felt a pit form in her stomach. Sweet and kind Luka, who had let her cry on his shoulder the day the Miraculous Box had been stolen from Master Fu, who took her on a bike

ride and bought her flowers, and who was there for her when she broke down.

“Well, that’s sweet of him.” She said, reaching for her phone to reply to the text. “I wouldn’t mind going out to lunch.”

“Marinette...what if he is asking you out on a date?” Tikki said, which caused Marinette to pause, her finger hovering over the ‘send’ button.

“I...I don’t think I like Luka like that.” She said, “I don’t want to give off the wrong impression either. He’s my friend, and especially lately he was there for me when I needed someone. But...I don’t want to hurt him.”

“Is it because you still like Adrien?” Tikki asked.

Marinette groaned. “I don’t know.” She said simply. “I feel like the only answer I have for everybody is that I don’t know.” The happiness that she had woken up with was starting to trickle away. “It has been by dream to have Adrien like me back for as long as I could remember, and it feels like the moment I let him go and let him have his happiness with someone else, is also the moment he’s taken notice of me.”

Marinette sighed, discarding the message to Luka. She opened up Adrien’s text message to find a picture of her and him together from this morning, her sleeping on his chest and Adrien cheesing at the camera. Marinette smiled.

“Would it even be right for me to date anyone right now?” She said, turning to the kwamis. “There seems to be a glaring factor that we aren’t taking into account here—the whole superheroine thing?”

Wayzz thought for a moment. “Well...I mean Ladybug and Chat Noir always end up together. Are you saying you are conflicted because you like Chat Noir as well as Luka and Adrien?”

Marinette gawked. “No! I wasn’t saying that at all.” She sighed. “I was saying that being Ladybug and Guardian might interfere with my love life. I mean, how am I supposed to keep that a secret? My future boyfriend would not appreciate me being absent all the time or disappearing—or why I am keeping secrets.”

Wayzz nodded. “Well if you date Chat Noir, then you don’t have to hide your super hero secrets.”

Marinette rolled her eyes. “Wayzz...I appreciate your input, but that’s not the point.”

“If she dated Chat Noir, then to protect one another they would have to hide their identities so Hawkmoth can’t use them to get each other’s Miraculous. If she dated Luka or Adrien, then she would still have to lie to them and hide the fact that she was Ladybug.” Tikki explained. Her master nodded. “Plus, Marinette can’t force herself to like someone else. She either likes someone or she doesn’t.”

“I finally feel okay around Adrien.” She stated, running her hands through her hair. “But let’s say things do happen between us, I don’t think I’m realizing the magnitude of everything. Adrien Agreste, son of famous fashion designer Gabriel Agreste, is a world-famous model who has priorities and obligations to follow through with. I am Marinette, a simple school girl who wants to be a designer. In addition to being a nobody, I am also the world-famous superheroine Ladybug, current Guardian of the Miraculous. I have duties and obligations to save Paris from Hawkmoth, fighting akumas that terrorize the city.” She paused. “There is just absolutely no way that we would work out.”

“I think he likes you.” Tikki said hopefully. Marinette sighed, conflicted.

Gabriel Agreste had been watching in on the photoshoot that was taking place around the mansion. This next shoot featured his newest line for men, a sleek look featuring only black and white pieces that ranged from everyday wear to formal. In addition to these photos, there was an exclusive interview on his son around their home.

“Mr. Agreste, I have to say these are some of Adrien’s best photos.” The photographer, Giuseppe, commented. The photos flashed on the tablet Natalie was holding. Gabriel peered down at them.

“Yes, they are quite remarkable.” He replied. Adrien was sitting at his desk, posing once more, a grin plastered on his face. “Can I have a word with my son, please? Everyone go on lunch please.”

The photographers and crew left to go to the dining room, where lunch was being catered. Gabriel, Natalie and Adrien were left alone. The designer and his assistant strode up to the model, their faces expressionless. Adrien sat there, still quite shocked that his father decided to sit in on this shoot.

“Yes, father?” He said, worrying he had done something wrong.

“Your photos are looking quite well.” Gabriel voiced, “I’m glad to see that you are on it today.”

Adrien beamed at the compliment. It was rare that his father ever showed any emotion towards him, and to be praised for his work? It really was beginning to shape into a wonderful day, especially after this morning.

“Thank you, father.” He replied.

“How did studying with your classmate go?” Gabriel continued, looking around his son’s room. Adrien felt a blush creep onto his cheek.

“It went well. Marinette was really struggling—” He began, but was cut off by his father.

“Marinette? I thought you were with your other friend, the DJ?” He said, his voice growing cold. Adrien was taken back.

“No, I was with Marinette—the one who’s family owns the bakery right next to school.” His son explained, suddenly panicking. He could tell when his father was unhappy, and it was definitely happening right now.

Gabriel felt sour. He had heard of Marinette. Albeit, she had potential to be a world-class designer one day, but that was not the reason for his distaste. Lila Rossi, a classmate of his son, had warned Gabriel about Marinette and how she wasn’t a good influence on his son. Until that day, he had nothing against the young fashion designer, yet now with that information, he wasn’t very sure how he was feeling with her hanging around his son.

“I’ve heard some bad things about that girl.” He stated, his expression cold. Adrien’s eyes widened in horror.

“Marinette is amazing!” He said in her defense. “She is one of the sweetest, most kind people I have ever met in my life. Marinette is so selfless and is always sticking up for everyone. She’s our everyday Ladybug, there is nothing bad about her.”

The fashion designer felt anger radiate throughout his body at the mention of Ladybug. He was about to scold his son, when Natalie whispered in his ear, requesting to speak privately with him in his office.

“You have fencing after this. Your bodyguard will take you after the photoshoot.” Gabriel said, before disappearing with his assistant, leaving Adrien alone in his bedroom.

“What was that about?” He asked aloud, knowing Plagg was hiding somewhere in his room. The kwami appeared and flew towards his master. “Why would father dislike Marinette? He doesn’t even know her.”

“I think the more important thing I noticed was how quick you were to bite the bullet for her.” Plagg teased. “My kitten is finally smitten for someone else other than Ladybug!”

Adrien rolled his eyes, open his phone and smiling at his new home screen wallpaper. “Plagg, come on now. Why are you teasing me?”

Plagg flew towards the phone, looking at the picture. “Yuck, it’s so adorable I’m going to be sick.”

Adrien smiled, unable to tear his gaze away from the phone. “I think that was the sweetest thing you’ve ever said to me.”

“It was not sweet. I am the God of Destruction—I hold unimaginable power that people are envious of!” He protested, causing Adrien to roar with laughter.

“Alright, O mighty God of Destruction. Here’s a piece of camembert.” Adrien said, picking out a particularly smelly piece. The kwami grinned and flew over to the cheese, stroking it gently.

“Soo gooey.” He hummed in delight. Adrien attempted to take advantage of Plagg’s good mood.

“What would happen if Ladybug and Chat Noir found out about each other’s identity?” He asked nonchalantly, looking down at the ring on his finger. Plagg squinted at his owner.

“Well, I don’t know.” He replied simply. Adrien gawked.

“What do you mean you don’t know? You told me before that if Ladybug and Chat Noir were to find out about each other’s identities we would have to give up being superheroes.” Adrien pointed out. Plagg took a nibble of the camembert.

“It’s different now.” The tiny black kwami said. “That was Master Fu’s rule. But he isn’t Guardian anymore, Ladybug is.” He paused. “Different Guardians always had different rules.”

“Do you know who Ladybug is?” Adrien asked in a serious tone. The kwami locked eyes with Adrien, and nodded.

“I won’t tell you though, you know that.”

However, it was in Gabriel Agreste’s office, right on Natalie’s tablet, where a photo of Marinette Dupain-Cheng and Ladybug were being examined, side by side.

“Well done, Mr. Agreste! Well done!” Mr. D’Argencourt praised, turning to the rest of the fencing team. “Please use this match as an example as what to strive for. Miss Tsurugi, exemplary performance as per usual.” He continued. “Continue!”

“I see you’re back on your game.” Kagami smiled, twirling her saber. Adrien shrugged casually.

“The key is a good night’s sleep.” He said happily. Although he was on his game, he was still slightly hurt from the last akuma, though he tried to not let it bother him. “En-garde.” Adrien called. Kagami got into a stance. “Pret...Allez!”

Of all the extracurriculars that his father made him partake in, his favorites were between fencing and piano. He loved the sport and the exhilaration that came with it that coursed through his veins with every fight.

Plus, in a way, it was like practice for fighting when he was Chat Noir. A baton and a saber were similar in a way. He was much better with a baton than with Ladybug’s yo-yo, remembering the time they had accidentally swapped kwamis.

When fencing was over, Kagami went over to Adrien in the locker room. “Adrien, can I talk with you?” She asked.

“Sure Kagami, is everything alright?” He asked, zipping up his duffle bag and hoisting it onto his shoulder. Kagami looked to the ground.

“I...I wanted to ask you on a date.” She said, her voice wavering. Adrien’s heart sank, knowing that this was going to come up eventually.

“That’s very sweet of you Kagami, to ask.” He replied nervously, scratching the back of his head. “But...I think I like someone else.”

And for the first time, he did not say that he was outwardly in love with Ladybug, because when he said this, he was thinking about Marinette Dupain-Cheng.

Kagami already knew the answer before she asked. “Oh, okay.”

“Please don’t take this the wrong way.” Adrien said quickly. “You are an amazing friend—and even a fantastic fighter! It’s just that—”

Kagami took a deep breath. “You don’t have to say anything else Adrien.” She smiled. “I get it. Sometimes you win in fencing, and other times you do not. There’s no hard feelings.”

Adrien was relieved.

That night, he decided to visit Marinette once again, however this time under the guise of Chat Noir. He landed on her balcony and peeked through the glass hatch to see Alya and Marinette in her room, animatedly talking and laughing. He brought his hand to the hatch and knocked three times.

Although Marinette was no stranger to see the super hero on her balcony, Alya gawked, “Girl, is that Chat Noir?” She asked with surprise written all over her face. Marinette smiled.

“It sure is.” She replied, waving for him to come inside. “He likes to visit sometimes.”

“Sorry to interrupt your slumber party, girls.” Chat Noir said, climbing down from the loft and landing quietly on the bedroom floor. “I just wanted to check up on my Princess.”

Marinette rolled her eyes. “Princess, really Chaton?” She sighed, turning to Alya. “Oh, where are my manners. Alya this is the stray I’ve picked up. Stray, this is Alya.”

Chat Noir erupted into laughter along with Alya. “Wow Marinette, that’s cold.” Alya teased, before turning to Chat Noir. The black cat and Alya, locked eyes. “We’ve...met before.” She said slowly.

The gears seemed to have turned in Marinette and Chat Noir’s head before they realized what she meant. This was the first time that Chat Noir had seen Alya since the Battle of the Miraculous...since the identities were exposed.

It felt tense for a moment, before Chat Noir decided to break the silence. “Well, it is very nice to formally meet the genius behind Rena Rouge.” He said, reaching out his hand for a handshake. “I am terribly sorry that your identity had been revealed because of Miracle Queen. How have you been doing?”

Alya smiled kindly, shaking his hand. “Thank you for the compliment. I’ve been doing alright. It was a little difficult at first, but Nino and I are managing.”

Chat Noir smiled. “That’s good to hear. If you ever need anything, Ladybug and I are here for you guys. We won’t let anything happen.”

Alya felt relieved.

“Have you done your patrol for tonight?” Marinette asked, looking at the hero. Chat Noir nodded. “How was tha-“

Alya put a finger to Marinette’s lips. “Oh no girl, you’re not getting away that easily. We were talking about something and just because Chat Noir is here does not mean you’re off the hook.”

Marinette groaned, closing her eyes and burying her face into her hands. “Alya, I already told you what happened.”

Alya smirked, bringing up her phone. “Well, let’s see what Chat Noir has to say.” She brought the phone up to Chat Noir’s eyes. “Chat Noir, this is our little Marinette, quietly sleeping on our friend, Adrien Agreste. Now, Adrien sent me this photo a little earlier today, with the caption: Don’t wake her up! I, of course, had *no* context what so ever.”

Chat Noir chuckled. “Wow, Marinette. You’ve got a boyfriend?” He teased, knowing very well that he was the one that sent Alya the photo a few hours ago.

Alya smirked. “Thank you!” She exclaimed, turning to her best friend who was trying to hide under a blanket. “Marinette has had a crush on Adrien for like—forever.”

Beneath the mask, Chat Noir’s heart beat wildly in his chest. This...this was new information to him. Marinette, the girl who had sat behind him in class, the girl who united their friends together, who had helped Adrien be a better person himself...liked him.

“Okay, so Marinette constantly used to be so nervous around him, like to the point where she would stutter and mess up sentences.” Alya continued. “It’s obvious Adrien likes her, right?”

“Chat Noir don’t you dare answer that.” Marinette pleaded, though hope was lost when the hero smirked.

“I dunno Marinette, I think that boy might like you.” He said nonchalantly. “I mean, come on, the evidence is right there on the photo.”

Alya cheered. “See, someone is on my side!”

Marinette sighed. “You guys, come on. Adrien came over to study physics. We got bored of school decided to watch a movie and we both fell asleep. His father said it was alright for him to stay the night and he left in the morning. There is nothing romantic about that at all.”

“Well, if he asked you out, would you say yes?” Chat Noir inquired. Alya looked to her friend for an answer. Marinette felt a blush creeping on to her cheeks.

“Of course I would, but it won’t happen.”

Hawkmoth's on the Move

Chapter Notes

This one is going to be a doozy.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Marinette felt an arm drape around her shoulder as she arrived at school the following Monday. “Good morning, Marinette.” Adrien greeted. Marinette rolled her eyes.

“Adrien Agreste, don’t you know the mornings are evil?” She replied as they walked in unison. They strode up to Nino and Alya, the latter who was trying to hold in a smirk.

“Seriously, I don’t know how you’re so...awake.”

Adrien shrugged. “I’m kind of a morning person.”

Marinette sighed. “Evil. Adrien is evil.” She joked. Alya and Nino laughed. “How did your photoshoot go by the way?”

Adrien reminisced to a few days ago. The photos that he shot that day, like the photographer had said, were some of the best that he had done in a while. It was all because of the night he spent over at Marinette’s. Yet, he had not forgotten the way his father had acted when he realized he was over at her place. Why had he acted so cold?

“The photoshoot went well.” He replied. “I think I took my favorite picture that day.” He said giving her a wink. Marinette’s cheeks burned red.

“Adrien Agreste you are a dork!” She giggled, though she was quite nervous.

“Dude, did you get my message about what I looted in the drop box after the raid that’s going on right now?” Nino asked excitedly. Alya scoffed, pulling Marinette’s arm and dragging her away from Adrien.

“Alright Marinette, let’s leave the nerds to talk about their gaming.” She laughed, “We’ll save you two a seat!”

As they walked away, Adrien couldn’t help but stare at Marinette.

“Dude, you’ve got it bad.” Nino laughed. Adrien rolled his eyes. “You’re not going to deny it? No, ‘Marinette is just a really good friend?’ Wow.”

“Nino...I don’t know what happened. It just, came out of nowhere.” He replied sheepishly. “She’s just so... amazing.” He groaned, burying his face in his hands. “How have I been so blind?”

Nino shrugged. “Well, you were in love with Ladybug not too long ago.” He said. “Your head might have been just a little bit preoccupied somewhere else. I guess you got over that, though.”

Well, that was sort of true. Adrien had an entire weekend to contemplate the information that was right there in front of him. He was suspicious that Marinette, could be Ladybug. In a way, he did not really want to snoop because that was an invasion of privacy, but also he so badly wanted it to be her. So Nino was kind of right—there were still feelings there for Ladybug, but there were also feelings there for Marinette, and if his theory was right, then he was in love with the same girl. And if his theory was wrong...then he accidentally fell in love with two separate people. Both, absolutely amazing people.

“You do realize that she’s had a crush on you for like, ever?” Nino smirked.

“I’m such an idiot. Thank you for the reminder.”

He was never the jealous type, honest to God he wasn’t. Yet as he stood there, watching Marinette say hello to Luka as he was picking up his sister, Juleka, from school—he realized that he was just *slightly* jealous.

They talked for just a few minutes, before Marinette returned to the group of friends. Today, they decided to all stay after school and start their research paper in the library. It was on notable people in Parisian history.

“Well, the obvious choice is Ladybug and Chat Noir.” Alya said, as they sat down in the library.

Marinette shrugged, “Yea, but it’s a history paper. Ladybug and Chat Noir aren’t exactly history, right?”

Adrien smiled. “Plus, it’s on one person. Ladybug and Chat Noir are a duo.”

“Well then, Ladybug.” Nino pointed out. Alya nodded.

“Hey now, you can’t just forget about Chat Noir.” Marinette defended. “He’s just as good of a hero as Ladybug is.”

Adrien’s heart swelled with pride. “I agree with Marinette.”

Alya rolled her eyes. “Well of course you agree with Marinette.” She smirked. “I’m just saying, it would be awfully suspicious if the author of the Ladyblog wrote her term paper on Chat Noir instead of Ladybug.”

“I’ll write my paper on Chat Noir.” Marinette replied nonchalantly. “What do you say Adrien, if you also do Chat Noir then we can split up the research?”

How awkward it was, to agree with Marinette’s request and write a paper...on himself.

“Maybe you should just call him Marinette, you won’t need to look up scholarly sources when the person is right there in front of you.” Alya joked, and Marinette laughed.

“The only problem is, Marinette can’t just phone him up.” Nino pointed out, to which the two girls erupted into a fit of giggles.

“Oh my gosh! That’s right, we didn’t tell you guys what happened the other night! Chat Noir went and *visited* Marinette. How awesome is that?”

Adrien feigned excitement while Nino gasped. “No way. What happened?” Adrien inquired. The girls bounded off into a tale that Adrien had already known.

After a few hours in the library, the team of friends decided to call it quits for the day. They were walking out of the school when their phone’s *dinged!* in unison. “What the...” Adrien started. It was from an unknown number, and attached in a message was a video.

“Did you guys all get this creepy video too?” Alya asked. They put their phones together to see that it was the same video.

“What is this?” Marinette asked, pressing play. The three huddled around the phone and watched.

It was Hawkmoth, standing in an eerie lit lair. “Good evening, Paris. I am Hawkmoth. But you already know that, don’t you? It has come to my attention that many of you are tired of suffering ...tired of the ongoing fights that have traumatized many of you. That is why I am offering a deal.” He paused, before an image of Ladybug and Chat Noir appeared next to him on the screen. “I am only asking for what I have always wanted: the earrings of the Ladybug Miraculous and the ring of the Black Cat Miraculous. In return, these akumatizations will cease.”

“Yea, like that’ll happen.” Nino scoffed.

“Now I speak directly to your heroes of Paris: you have five days, Ladybug, Chat Noir. Five days, before the havoc begins.” He threatened menacingly. “Need a little motivation?”

New images appeared on the screen next to Hawkmoth. They were school pictures of Alya, Nino, Luka, Kagami, Max and Kim.

“Don’t think I have forgotten about the heroes you weren’t able to save. Innocent little teenagers...are you really going to let them suffer at your expense?” Hawkmoth let out a menacing laugh. “You have five days Ladybug and Chat Noir, before I started going after the rest of your team...after all, what will they do with no powers to protect them?”

It didn’t feel real, what they were watching. Yet there was a panic that had set in amongst the group. The video was about to end.

“And how will you protect yourself, Ladybug? When it seems, I have figured out your identity as well.” The screen cut to black and ended.

Marinette said nothing, trying to process everything that had just occurred. She felt her heartbeat in her throat, and her ears were ringing loudly. It felt like the air had become thick and suddenly it was hard to breathe. Marinette wanted to cry, but tried to hold it in.

She turned to her friends, who stood there in shock. Alya had tears brimming her eyes and Nino put a hand on her back trying to comfort her, yet there was clear and evident shock on his face.

Adrien felt the shock course through his body, kicking in adrenaline. “Come on, everybody get in my car. I’m driving you all home.” Adrien said, finally breaking the silence.

Alya was beginning to sob, and Marinette hugged her before guiding her to Adrien’s waiting car. Nino followed close behind, before the model himself got in, directing his bodyguard where to drive.

“What do we do?” Alya asked, eyes still watering. Marinette still could not figure out what had just happened.

“Your family has to call the authorities.” She finally managed to choke out. “Both of you. Hawkmoth just publicly threatened you guys and our other friends.”

“What if that’s not enough to stop him?” Nino asked quietly. Marinette and Adrien did not want to think about that.

“We have five days to figure something out. Surely that is enough time for law enforcement to come up with a plan.” Adrien reassured. “In the meantime, I think it’s safe to stay on the down low until we know Ladybug and Chat Noir have a plan.”

They couldn’t find the words to say, and so they sat in silence. First, they dropped off Nino and then Alya, before circling around and heading towards Marinette’s house.

She began to tear up, and Adrien simply offered an embrace, to which she fell into his arms. The safest place she has felt in a long time, was right there with him.

How could she have been so careless? What had she done that revealed her identity to Hawkmoth?

“Mari...everything is going to be alright.” Adrien said soothingly. He placed a hand under her chin and lifted it, so their eyes’ locked. “I won’t let anything happen to you.”

Marinette’s eyes searched his for an answer. “How can you be so sure?” She whimpered.

Adrien leaned forward and placed a kiss on her forehead. “Staying strong and optimistic is the best thing we can do right now. Hawkmoth can’t win—Ladybug and Chat Noir won’t let him.”

When she returned to her room, Tikki and Wayzz tried to console the teenage girl. Her body wracked with emotions, she felt physically sick. It was becoming too much for her, once again. How could she hold the weight of the world on her shoulders? She was just a kid.

“I can’t do this.” She cried, leaning over her sink. Tikki frowned.

“You have to, Marinette. You are the best Ladybug I have ever had.” She said, trying to be encouraging. Even with her words, she had no idea what was to come. “I believe in you. We all do.” She continued, looking at Wayzz, who nodded furiously.

“What if I don’t believe in myself, though?” Marinette sobbed. “I keep messing up everything! I was the one who lost Master Fu. I was the one who made mistakes! I’m the one that is starting to get sloppy and is getting hurt in battle! I was never good enough.”

“That’s not true.” Tikki cried, flying to her master and hugging her tightly. “You were always good enough. You’re better than good.”

Marinette wiped her eyes furiously. “My friend’s lives are in danger because I couldn’t stop Miracle Queen and because I let Hawkmoth and Mayura get away. I’m the worst Ladybug in history.”

Her emotions were out of control. Even in the corner of the room, the Miraculous Box’s presence was felt, and she hurt. It was too much, all at once. She had so many great days lately, only to be overshadowed by days like this.

Marinette wanted out. She wanted all of this to be over with. No more fighting, no more secrets—nothing. Marinette wanted to feel nothing.

But it was because she was feeling something, a little black butterfly slipped in through her window.

“Marinette! Akuma!” Tikki screamed in terror. Marinette’s eyes widened in fear as she watched it fly towards her. She kicked the hatch on her floor open and ran down the stairs.

“Ohmygod! Ohmygod!” She yelled, ripping the front door open and running outside. Marinette turned, to see the butterfly still following her.

“Marinette, you need to get your emotions in check!” Tikki squeaked, watching the akuma fly closer. Marinette was panicking far more than she had ever done.

“I-I can’t Tikki!” She cried, before turning down the street and running. Her kwami followed close behind.

Marinette ran for blocks, her lungs gasping for air. Her legs were on fire, and she wanted to fall. Yet, even with the distance that she had run, the akuma still followed. Tears still spilled from her eyes, and she could not stop herself from crying. So badly, she had tried, but the emotions kept flaring up and feeding the akuma—enticing it.

In a flurry of madness, she had gotten tangled up in her legs and tripped, causing her phone to fly out of her hands and into a wall—the walls that surrounded the Agreste Mansion.

“Marinette, get up!” Tikki cried. The kwami had known why Marinette had not transformed. If the akuma were to get to her—and it was really close to doing that—it would be over for

Paris. There was just not enough time for a transformation and then purification, Marinette was not in the right mindset anyways, it was too dangerous.

Marinette picked up her phone and clicked the first contact on her list. It rang for a moment, before there was an answer. “Hello?”

“Adrien! I’m outside! Please let me in—akuma!” She said in a panic, her eyes streaming with tears. “Help me—please!”

It was feet from her, the akuma, as she stood there, her back to the gate of his home. Suddenly, the gate gave way, and she turned and ran towards the house. Adrien burst through the front door, and ran towards her.

It happened so fast, in a flurry of bright green light. Where Adrien once was, was suddenly replaced by Chat Noir. “Cataclysm!” He roared, leaping over Marinette and swiping at the akuma.

Marinette fell once more to the ground, turned just in time to see the black butterfly disintegrate in his hand.

Chat Noir felt it course through his body, the negative emotions and the *evil*. It felt like someone had pumped ice cold liquid into his veins. It made him shiver, and suddenly feel very nauseous. With a groan, he keeled over onto his hands and knees.

He was shaking, his body sweating and his heart beating a million miles a minute. For a second, it seemed like an image of Hawkmoth crossed his mind, like he was trying to make the connection to his akuma but was failing. “Now I know why Ladybug does the purifying.” He groaned, before getting sick right there in the courtyard.

Marinette sat there for a moment, before running over to him. He looked up at her through the mask, waiting for her to say something. She didn’t, instead, kneeling next to him and embracing him.

“You’re such a dork, Adrien Agreste.”

Chapter End Notes

In fairness, I had written this chapter before the Chat Blanc trailer dropped...and then the trailer did the thing and I was like, "Oh wow, lowkey like in my fic" and yea. So that was cool lol

The Days to Come

Chapter Notes

I apologize for the short chapter--but the next one is a long one! Happy reading!!

Marinette stayed in Adrien's room that night. After helping him from the courtyard to his room, where he detransformed on his bed, collapsing, Marinette sat there, watching over him with his kwami.

"Kid, why did you do that?" Plagg asked worriedly. "That was so dangerous. No other Chat Noir in history could have survived absorbing an akuma like that."

Adrien rolled over into a ball, his head resting against Marinette's knee. "I had no choice, Plagg. I needed to save Marinette."

Marinette and Plagg locked eyes. The kwami squinted at her, making her feel small—ironically. Of course Plagg knew she was Ladybug. His owner wasn't going to suffer for nothing, "Your rules, Dupain-Cheng." He said simply, eyeing up the Guardian. Tikki, who hid in Marinette's hair growled.

Marinette was taken back by the kwami's sudden attitude. "I think it's Master to you, Plagg." She retorted.

The black cat kwami gawked, flying down to his owner. "Well, well, well, look at the balls on this one, Adrien? You sure know how to pick them."

"That's enough, Plagg." Marinette and Adrien said in unison, causing them to lock eyes.

"What did you mean by Master?" Adrien asked.

Of all the ways that she had thought about the day she would reveal her identity to Chat Noir, it definitely wasn't this way. It had always been so heroic, having to change at the last second and save the day—and here she was, being sassed by a little, mini God. But what was the point anymore? Marinette was giving up anyways and Hawkmoth supposedly already knew her identity. It could have been way worse, she supposed.

"Tikki, come out." She said quietly, and the little red bug flew out from her hair and straight into Plagg.

"You stupid, ignorant little—" She started, pinning the kwami to Adrien's headboard.

"Tikki, be nice." Marinette sighed. It took Adrien a few seconds to process it, before it clicked.

“I knew it.” He said simply. Even though he was feeling much more ill than he was letting on, he still managed a weak smile.

Marinette fell onto the bed, her face crashing into the pillow. She was letting out a flurry of curses, which were being muffled through the pillow.

Adrien, Tikki and Plagg let her have her moment, before she rolled over and was face to face with the model. “I understand if you’re disappointed.”

“Never.” He replied quickly, to Marinette’s surprise. “I loved you as Ladybug and I realized I loved you as Marinette. It’s just my luck you two were the same person.”

Marinette smiled weakly, before nuzzling into Adrien’s chest. He wrapped her arms around her. “Thank you, for saving me.” She said in a whisper.

“All I’m saying is Master Marinette doesn’t roll off the tongue.” Plagg shrugged. Tikki rolled her eyes.

“Plagg, stop being so insensitive. Don’t you realize what’s happening?” Tikki asked, looking down at the two teenagers.

“You don’t have to call me Master, Plagg.” Marinette said, still nuzzled into Adrien’s chest. “I would however, appreciate it if you could cool it with the attitude. I haven’t been exactly having the easiest few weeks.”

“You should apologize, Plagg.” Adrien said, his eyes closed. “It’s only fair.”

“Maybe after some cheese.” He replied nonchalantly. No one said anything, and then the kwami sighed. “I’m sorry Marinette.”

Marinette smiled, lifting her hand up to the kwami and caressing his tiny little cat head. Plagg purred. “It’s alright, Plagg. I understand how worried you must have been about your owner.”

“Is...is he purring?” Adrien asked in confusion. Tikki giggled.

Plagg felt sheepish. “A-Anyways, I think we have a lot to talk about.” He said indignantly. Adrien and Marinette looked at each other.

“How is it...that you and I are going to stop Hawkmoth in five days?” She asked Adrien. He smirked, his pain slowly subsiding.

“Together.”

School was a whirlwind of emotions the next day. Kim and Max didn’t show up for class, which did not seem out of the ordinary given the circumstances. When Adrien and Marinette arrived to school, there were police guarding the entrance, checking everyone’s school ID cards.

Adrien picked her up from her house, after she had left in the morning and swung across the Paris rooftops as Ladybug to get back to her home and grab her school things.

Alya would have been buzzing, seeing the two of them exit his car together, hand in hand, had it not have been for the imminent danger her and Nino were in. “How are you guys doing today?” Adrien asked, his hand squeezing Marinette’s just the slightest. She glanced at him.

“We’re alright.” Alya replied. Nino put a hand around her waist. “We’re okay. Our families are worried sick.”

“With good reason.” Marinette said sadly. “The school has officers posted around the entire campus.”

“Ladybug and Chat Noir haven’t responded to the video yet.” Alya mumbled. “I would have thought they might have said something by now.”

Marinette and Adrien looked at each other for just a second, before turning their gazes back to Alya and Nino. The superheroes of Paris stayed up all night trying to think of a plan. At one point, Marinette broke down in tears because she did not know what to do. It felt like that was the only thing she had been feeling within the last few days.

It pained Adrien to see her like this. This girl he loved, his very own friend Marinette, had been the strongest person he had known within the last few years, in and out of the costume. Thinking about it now, he realized how many good days she had, and additionally how many bad ones. Yet, she always had a smile on her face—she never had shown any of the times that she had struggled.

In a way, he felt relieved that she trusted him enough to let down her walls down. Adrien held her in an embrace, listening to her words and letting her get everything out. The best thing that they could do for each other, given the circumstances, was to be there for each other.

Marinette cried her eyes out. Everything that had just happened that night—her friends getting threatened by their number one enemy, Hawkmoth possibly knowing her identity, the trauma of nearly being akumatized—it was all so much. She appreciated that Adrien didn’t say anything at first, and just held her and let her be.

“What can we even do?” She asked Adrien. The model looked away from a moment.

“Protect our friends and protect Paris from Hawkmoth, even if that means the final showdown.” He replied solemnly. Marinette rubbed her eyes furiously.

“I’m scared.” She replied. “Aren’t you?”

Adrien smiled. “How can I be scared, knowing I have the best partner in the world?”

Back at school, the four friends drudged to Mme. Bustier’s classroom. “Ladybug and Chat Noir will think of something.” Marinette said, holding the door open for her friends. “They’ll do everything in their power, I’m sure of it.”

Once in the classroom, Ayla and Adrien switched seats. He sat close to Marinette, holding her hand underneath the desk. “Are my eyes deceiving me, Sabrina?”

It was Chloe, walking in with Sabrina trailing her. “Adrien...you’re with *her*?”

Marinette had far bigger things to deal with than Chloe—and even after she had stood up for her!

“Chloe, don’t be like that.” Adrien replied, his brows furrowing together.

“Be like what?” She snapped. “I just thought you had better taste.”

“Ouch.” Marinette sighed.

“Seriously Chloe, there isn’t any reason for you to be so rude right now.” Adrien retorted. “I’m in love with Marinette. I’ve been in love with Marinette for a very long time. I don’t appreciate you being mean to her. She’s amazing, and she’s been there for everyone—even *you*.”

The class silenced themselves. Marinette sat there, her cheeks burning a bright red. Chloe, did not have a response and Marinette was grateful. Instead, the girl and her friend walked over to their seats in silence. “Thank you.” Marinette whispered into Adrien’s ear. Her warm breath sent shivers down his spine.

The model turned and replied in a whisper. “Anything for you, my lady.”

It was conflicting, at least to Marinette. She had dreamed for the day that Adrien was to fall in love with her. And here she sat, exactly one day after Hawkmoth’s video was released, at her house with the model himself. She wanted to be happy and overwhelmed with joy, yet it was being overshadowed by the incredible amount of danger that was to become of Paris.

They had been up on the balcony, looking at the Paris skyline as the evening sun was beginning to set. Tikki and Plagg sat on the table, a plate of cheese and cookies set in front of them. They were silent for quite awhile now.

“We need to get the team together.” Marinette said in a quite voice. Adrien and their kwamis turned their heads to her, waiting for her to continue. “Viperion, King Monkey, Pegasus, Carapace, Ryuuko and Rena Rouge. They’re waiting for a response. We might not have much but they deserve to know what is going on.”

“What about Chloe...er, Queen Bee?” Adrien asked. Marinette brought a hand up to his cheek, caressing it gently. He seemed to lean into her touch.

“Queen Bee too.” She said. Marinette turned to her kwami, who seemed to know just exactly what her owner was thinking. “Tikki, spots on!”

Adrien had only seen it once before, and he hardly remembered it. He was still half asleep when Marinette had to return home the night before to gather her school things. All he saw through the slits of his eyes was flurry of pink light.

But here she was, transforming from Marinette to Ladybug in the same flurry of pink light. Ladybug gripped the yoyo on her waist, before turning to Adrien and Plagg. “Well kitty-cat, are you coming?”

Adrien stood up and looked into Ladybug’s bluebell eyes. “Plagg, does this girl know how much I’m in love with her?”

Ladybug rolled her eyes and giggled. “Yuck, you two are so gross.” Plagg gagged.

“Let me put you out of your misery. Plagg, claws out!”

The Miraculous Team

In the dead of night, Alya would have expected an akuma, rather than the super duo team of Ladybug and Chat Noir. They both had a finger pressed to their lips. "I'm sorry to wake you up so late." Ladybug started, taking a seat on the side of Alya's bed.

"Oh. I mean, it's alright." She replied sleepily. "Is everything okay?"

Chat Noir glanced at Ladybug, who bit her lip nervously, trying to find the right words to say. When nothing came to her, he spoke up. "We need to talk." He said in a serious tone.

Only then did Alya realize that there was a satchel hanging from the leather clad cat. Ladybug reached into the bag, and pulled out a small wooden box engraved with a red Chinese lettering. She handed it to Alya, and she opened it slowly. In a bright flash of light, a little orange kwami appeared. It was Trixx. "Hello, Alya."

Alya gasped. "Trixx. It's so nice to see you." She replied, before turning to Chat Noir in Ladybug. "I-I don't understand."

"Suit up." Ladybug said, standing up and taking her place next to her partner. Chat Noir laced a hand around her waist. "We're talking, tonight. All of us. We need Rena Rouge there too."

"All of us? You mean, *everyone*?" She asked incredulously. Ladybug nodded. The journalist turned to her kwami. "Well Trixx, let's pounce."

The team of miraculous holders grew and grew in the night. Ladybug and Chat Noir had stopped by each of their homes, carefully and quietly explaining what the plan was for that night. Kim was the most hesitant of all, to return out there in the night where he could be attacked by Hawkmoth. But seeing everyone standing there, suited up and trusting Ladybug and Chat Noir with their decision, he finally accepted his Miraculous.

The final person they needed to gather that night, was Chloe. The rest of the team had been directed toward an abandoned warehouse on the edge of the Seine, while Ladybug and Chat Noir took off to the Grand Paris hotel.

Landing quietly on the balcony, Ladybug took a deep breath. "I don't even know what to say to her." She murmured, pulling Chat Noir back. "It's not her fault, but...it's going to be so hard for everyone to look past what she's done to them."

"I know, Ladybug." Chat Noir replied, placing a hand on her shoulder. "We can only say so much because in the end, it wasn't our identities that were compromised." He paused. "Why don't we see what she says? Before making any decisions bring her to the rest of the team."

Ladybug sighed, looking out at the Paris skyline. "It wouldn't be fair to her." She replied. "Like it or not, Hawkmoth knows her identity too. He can go after her once again before we've had any chance to try to bring her back on to our side." She paused. "Come on."

Chloe Bourgeois was awake, when there was a knock on her balcony door. In a way, she was surprised to see them standing there. From her bed, she motioned for them to come in, as the door was unlocked.

Ladybug slid the glass door open and stepped in. Chat Noir followed. “Good evening, Chloe.” Chat Noir greeted.

Chloe said nothing, her eyes wide as they stood there in her bedroom. “Chloe.” Ladybug called out.

“Y-Yes?” The girl croaked out. Her heart beat in her chest and it felt like uneasiness settled in the pit of her stomach.

“How are you doing?” The spotted super heroine asked sincerely. Under her breath, Chloe gasped.

“I’m...I don’t know.” Was all Chloe could manage to muttered. Ladybug analyzed the room, and how it felt.

Far too often this last week, *I don’t know* had become the only answer anyone could really come up with. Although in her civilian life, Chloe had been a real pain in her side, she felt for the mayor’s daughter. When the world was placed on the shoulders of Ladybug, the world turned its back on Chloe Bourgeois.

To feel isolated like that, to know that so many people felt negatively towards you, even the worst people in the world didn’t deserve that—and additionally, Chloe Bourgeois was just a kid. They all were.

Master Fu said that everyone makes mistakes. Maybe...just maybe Chloe could admit to hers. To prove to the new Guardian that she was worthy of a Miraculous...that she was ready to be the person Ladybug knew she could be.

“Everyone has been treating me so horribly.” Chloe burst out so suddenly that it startled both Ladybug and Chat Noir. “But I don’t blame them.” She paused. “Of all the people I thought would come to my rescue, Marinette Dupain-Cheng was the last person I would have guessed. I’ve always...buted heads with her. But she stood there, in front of everyone, defending me.”

Ladybug’s heart beat loudly in her chest, as she watched her classmate begin to tear up. “She shouldn’t have, because I deserved it after everything I did.” Chloe continued.

“That’s not true, Chloe.” Ladybug cut in. “No one deserves to be treated with disrespect.”

Chloe sniffled. “But people are in danger because of *me!*” She exclaimed.

“Everyone is in danger because of Hawkmoth.” Chat Noir said seriously.

“I’m sorry, Ladybug...Chat Noir.” She said in a whisper. “Paris would be so much better if I just disappeared, maybe go to New York.”

“You are a Parisian. Your heart and home are here in Paris.” Ladybug argued. “I understand, that you wanted the Bee Miraculous and that you wanted to help your parents. And—”

“I was being selfish.” Chloe interjected. “I wanted to be a hero and I wanted people to know that it was me, Queen Bee, that could help save the day with Ladybug and Chat Noir. Being Queen Bee to me...was an image and I realize that it was foolish of me to think that. Now that all my classmate’s lives are being threatened and in danger, it is such more *real* now. If I could take it all back I would.”

Ladybug and Chat Noir glanced at each other, before nodding in unison. The superheroine reached into Chat Noir’s satchel and pulled out the final Miraculous box. “Chloe Bourgeois, here is the Miraculous of the Bee, which grants the power to immobilize your opponent. You will use it for the greater good, can we trust you?”

Chloe sat there in shock, staring at the hair comb in the small wooden box. “After everything...why?”

“Our Miraculous team will stick together, through thick and thin.” Chat Noir smiled. “Everyone was chosen for a reason. We’ve all had our good days and bad days. Some days we make mistakes—but its how we reflect and move forward that makes us who we are, and who we want to be. Do you want to be a part of our team?”

To have a second chance, after everything horrible that she has ever done to anyone—to finally be able to redeem her self once and for all, it was something that she had dreamed about. Chloe felt sick to her stomach knowing all the pain and agony she caused with her words and actions. Truth be told, she didn’t have many friends, and that was clear as day within this last week. The few friends she did have she treated with such disrespect.

When she felt so alone...so isolated, here were two people who came to her, and gave her another chance.

“I want to be a part of your team.” Chloe said, tears pricking out from the corner of her eyes. “I want to make things right.” She lifted the hair comb out of the box and smiled through the tears as Pollen appeared.

“At your service, my Queen.” Pollen greeted proudly. Chloe lifted a hand to the kwami and caressed its little head.

Ladybug grabbed Chat Noir’s hand and intertwined her fingers in between his. “Kitty, are you ready?”

“With you by my side? Always.” He purred. The duo turned to Chloe, as she called upon her transformation.

“Pollen, buzz on!”

Ryuuko stood a little off to the side, leaning on an empty crate. The colorful group of heroes were gathered in silence, waiting for Ladybug and Chat Noir to return. “It’s a bit odd, don’t

you think?” A voice said, snapping her back into the present. She glanced upwards, to lock eyes with Viperion.

“What’s odd?” She asked, confused. Viperion shrugged.

“How we all ended up in this situation.” He replied coolly. “I mean, *us*. We all know each other and yet, had no idea who else was behind these masks.”

“And here we are, about to get our butts whooped by an old man who controls butterflies.” Rena Rouge added, walking up with Carapace.

“I mean, I totally think we can take him.” King Monkey replied.

“Weren’t you hesitant about coming out tonight?” Pegasus added in. King Monkey huffed.

“Well... I mean—yea. Let’s not forget our lives are on the line right now.” He rebutted. “But just seeing all of us here, suited up. It makes you think, you know, how much of a chance could Hawkmoth really have against all of us?”

“I don’t think immediately wanting to fight Hawkmoth would be the best idea.”

From the shadows, Ladybug and Chat Noir strode up, hand in hand. Behind them, Queen Bee stood timidly.

For a second, anger flared up within the group. “What is she doing here?” Carapace said with a little more attitude than he intended.

Ladybug and Chat Noir glanced at Queen Bee, who stepped forward. “I’m here to make things right.” She started. “I know you don’t trust me, and I don’t expect you to right away. But Hawkmoth has hurt a lot of people I love and care about. I was a fool to trust the words of a man who preys on our emotions and on our vulnerability. Paris belongs to the Parisians and we shouldn’t live in fear in the best city in the world. I want to do anything and everything I can to take this monster down.” Queen Bee paused. “I apologize, for being a part of Hawkmoth’s team during the Battle of the Miraculous. I ask...if you can all give me a second chance to make things right.”

For a second, no one said anything. Then came the quiet laughter from Viperion. Everyone turned to him. “Now, now, Queen Bee. That’s my power. But I don’t think we need to use it tonight to give you another chance.”

The girl behind the yellow mask cried tears of joy.

Ladybug and Chat Noir’s heart swelled with pride, as the team stood in a semi-circle around them. To Ladybug’s left was Queen Bee, followed by Viperion, Ryuuko, Carapace, Rena Rouge, King Monkey, and then bringing up Chat Noir’s right was Pegasus.

“I am assuming you have all seen the video.” Ladybug started out, locking eyes with everyone behind their masks. “Hawkmoth has publicly threatened the lives of each of your civilian forms. His compromise, was for Chat Noir and I to give up our Miraculous to cease the akuma attacks on Paris.”

“There is no way he can get his hands on our Miraculous.” Chat Noir piped in, looking around the group. “Combined, the Ladybug Miraculous and the Black Cat Miraculous can give the power to change reality. No one should ever have that much power, especially someone as evil as Hawkmoth.”

Rena Rouge hummed. “But why does he want that power? What could he possibly want so much that he needs to change his reality?”

Ladybug and Chat Noir glanced at each other. “We don’t know.” Ladybug replied. “But if he is willing to terrorize the entire city and feed off of their emotions in order to gain power, there is no way that it could be good.”

“What are we going to do about it?” Ryuuko asked, her hand on hip.

“We’re not making a strategy to defeat Hawkmoth right now.” Ladybug replied honestly. “We brought you all here because we need a strategy to protect you.” She paused. “We know Hawkmoth isn’t working alone. He has the aid of Mayura, who is the holder of the Peacock Miraculous.”

“So, we need to be on the lookout for two people?” Pegasus clarified. Chat Noir nodded.

“We know that she has the power to create sentimonsters.” The cat said. “We’ve seen in the past just how powerful they are together. Both of them knowing your identities as civilians and as superheroes is a really big problem.”

“They could be people you know. Unlike them, we don’t know who is under the masks.” Ladybug said, annoyed. “But in five days, we have to be prepared for the worst.”

“Hawkmoth said he knew your identity, Ladybug.” Carapace said suddenly. A shiver ran down her spine and Chat Noir put a hand on her shoulder. “Is that actually true?”

Was it actually true? Ladybug didn’t know. Thinking about it now, upset her so much. She has been so careful all these years with her transformations. Even Chat Noir didn’t know her identity until only recently, and that was because of an almost akumatization on Marinette.

“It might be.” Ladybug finally choked out. “Only one person in the entire world I know for sure knows my identity,” She continued, glancing up to Chat Noir, who was staring at her with his emerald eyes. “Otherwise, I do not know how Hawkmoth found out my identity, I really don’t.”

“What if he reveals it?” King Monkey asked. Ladybug shuttered at the thought.

“I don’t know.” That was the best Ladybug could come up with...again.

“We won’t let that happen.” Chat Noir said in her defense. “We need to focus. We’re just days away before the supposed havoc begins.”

“How will we protect ourselves when Hawkmoth could be literally anyone?” Viperion asked.

“I have an idea, but I’m hesitant.” Ladybug murmured. Everyone waited for her response, even Chat Noir.

“You keep your Miraculous, to protect yourself.”

Day Two

To Marinette's discomfort, Adrien was not at school the next day. She had received a text in the early hours of the morning to say that his father had pulled him from school to do a photoshoot.

Suddenly not having her partner not with her, even in their civilian form, made Marinette nervous. Last night, she made the biggest decision as Guardian to put the seven Miraculous out there in the world. Even though six people in the classroom she had been sitting in held a Miraculous, including her, she felt uneasy.

"Girl, are you doing okay?" Alya asked. The journalist had noticed her best friend's uneasiness, but she could not figure out why. "Did something happen between you and Adrien?"

Marinette shook her head. "No, no we're fine." She said quickly. "I'm just feeling a bit ill is all."

Alya had a keen eye lately, and she could tell that Marinette was hiding something. "I'm your best friend you know, you can tell me anything."

But could she? Could Marinette bring herself to tell Alya everything she had been hiding for the last few years? So many times, she wanted to just tell someone that she was Ladybug, life would have been easier if Alya knew. Her secret had devastating effects to Marinette's mental health and she only recently realized that.

Having Adrien be a part of her life in a way that no one else had known about was amazing. He's been her crutch over the last few days. He was her kitty, the mischievous masked superhero who she *loved* with all her heart.

"I'm in love with Adrien." She murmured quietly, repeating her thoughts aloud. To her left, Alya gasped. Marinette blushed furiously. "I said that out loud, didn't I?"

Alya nodded, grinning.

Being in love with Adrien and then suddenly realizing he was also Chat Noir, messed with her head for a little bit at first. Suddenly, it didn't seem out of character for the model to crack a pun or for the hero to stare off into the skyline and have the world sparkling in his emerald eyes.

She had been an idiot for not realizing how relieving it was for someone to talk to about the whole superhero thing. After all of the precautions she took, the running away and the insisting to keep their identities a secret, the best thing to happen was for her to know who her kitty really was.

But now, would it be right to just tell Alya? And what about Nino?

On her desk, her phone buzzed. It was a text message from Adrien: *I'm sorry I can't be there today, Bugaboo. The shoot ends around 4 o'clock. My father is having a dinner to celebrate my mom's birthday and he said I could bring a guest to dinner tonight; would you like to come?*

Marinette had known the tragedy that befell the Agreste household. A year before Adrien started school at Francoise-Dupont, his mother disappeared. She never asked what happened, but he did mention that ever since then, his father was different.

I would love to come. Is her birthday tonight? Marinette replied quickly under the table. *Also, I want to talk to you about some hero business later.*

She waited for a few seconds before her phone buzzed again. *No, her birthday is in three days, but Father said he was busy that night so that's why we are celebrating early. And I'll make sure we have some alone time to talk.*

Marinette smiled, before glancing up and catching Mme. Bustier's eyes, who gave her a knowing glance. She shoved her phone in her pocket and sheepishly grinned.

By the end of school, her anxiety was through the roof. It might have been the armed officers around campus that were there to protect the students from the imminent threat of Hawkmoth, but it also might have been being able to locate each of the Miraculous on her friends, even if they were camouflaged. Everything made her heart hurt immensely, and so badly, just like in the recent days, she wanted to disappear.

"Marinette." Someone had called. She was at her locker and had just shut it, getting ready to go home for the day when she glanced up, seeing Adrien dressed up in Gabriel's most recent line of formal wear. Even with her classmates staring at the model, all done up for the photoshoot, she ran over to Adrien and threw her arms around him.

He swiftly wrapped his arms around the love of his love, his hands settling on the small of her back. Adrien was not expecting her to greet him like this, and immediately he felt protective over her. "Everything alright, my love?" He whispered tenderly into her ear.

His breath tickled her ear and neck, sending shivers down her spine. She felt herself gripping his shirt beneath her fingertips. "I had a weird day." She replied in a whisper. Adrien could sense the pain in her voice and lifted a hand to her chin, tipping upwards so he could lock eyes with her. He placed a tender peck on her nose, causing her cheeks to flush red.

"Let's get you home and we can talk about it." He smiled, grabbing Marinette's backpack. Adrien took her hand gently and lead her away. She turned in time to see Alya and Nino gawking at them.

After instructing his bodyguard to pick him up from the Dupain-Cheng's bakery at five, Marinette lead him inside. After saying hello to Marinette's parents, they were finally alone in her bedroom. They stood there for a second, her head buried in his chest. Adrien held her in a loving embrace, and slowly they swayed back and forth, as if moving their bodies to a gentle melody only they could hear.

Tikki and Plagg watched from the loft.

“It’s just...all hitting me.” Marinette finally croaked out. Adrien had his cheek resting against her head. “I just felt so awful today.”

“I’m proud of you for being strong.” Adrien replied, his voice reverberating through his chest. “The decision we made last night was difficult. I haven’t stopped thinking about it.”

“They were all wearing them.” Marinette replied, desperately wishing she could get closer to Adrien even when their bodies were already pressed against each other.

Adrien placed a kiss on the top of Marinette’s head. “That’s good, isn’t it?”

Marinette brought her ocean eyes up to Adrien’s. She nodded her head slowly. “Adrien...” Marinette started, her pink lips parting ever so slightly.

His heart beat in his chest loudly.

“I love you.” Marinette paused, “I want you to know that I love you, *all* of you.” She said softly. Adrien’s breath hitched in his throat for a moment as he searched the beautiful soul that stared up at him.

Marinette watched, a gentle smile slowly forming on his lips. “I love you too, Marinette.” He replied, leaning in just the slightest. She responded, inching closer and closer to him, closing her eyes and melting into the moment.

Through the slits of his eyes, he marveled at her angelic face, so innocently waiting for him. Even as the setting sun poured through the window and grazed over her porcelain skin, he could not help but feeling weak in the knees because of her beauty. She had freckles, and he had just noticed.

Their lips slowly touched, reserved at first as if they were afraid of hurting each other. She gasped quietly, before bringing herself closer again and closing the gap with more passion. Adrien responded, his hands racing up her sides and up to her hair, fingers entangling themselves within it.

He deepened the kiss and Marinette found herself unable to resist his touch. She felt her heartbeat all throughout her body, but was eerily calm. This is where she was meant to be, right here, in this moment.

A purr erupted from within the model, and he felt Marinette smiling into their kiss. Resting his forehead against hers, he withdrew just the slightest.

“You don’t know how long I’ve wanted to do to that.” Adrien whispered, a smile on his lips. Marinette opened her eyes just the slightest.

“Kiss me.” Marinette said, looking at the floor. “Kiss me again, Adrien.”

“So demanding.” He joked, a smile on his lips before kissing her once more.

She wore a red trench coat and a black skirt over to dinner that night at the Agreste Mansion. It wasn't much of a formal occasion, yet her regular school clothes were just a bit too informal. In her hand, she had a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Following the bodyguard through the front door, they were greeted by Gabriel Agreste and Nathalie, who were exchanging a few words on the staircase. They quieted down as Adrien and Marinette entered. "Good evening, father." Adrien said.

Marinette bowed her head just the slightest. "Good even Mr. Agreste. Thank you for inviting me into your home."

Gabriel Agreste nodded his head just the slightest. "Nathalie, please lead them to the dining room. I will be down in a moment."

His assistant nodded, before walking over to Marinette and Adrien. "Uh...I brought some flowers for Mrs. Agreste. Do you have a vase?" Marinette asked the assistant, who nodded, taking the flowers.

Adrien and Marinette took a seat at the long table, where food had already been set out by the chefs of the mansion. There were a few candles on the table, which lit up the room.

"The one time my father has dinner with me, to celebrate mom's birthday." Adrien said, trying to ease Marinette's nerves. "He is usually pretty relaxed."

"What if I do something stupid?" Marinette murmured, twiddling her thumbs. Adrien leaned over and kissed her cheek tenderly.

"You won't, you're amazing." Adrien replied.

"So, this is your girlfriend, then?" A voice asked, causing the two teens to whip their heads up and look at the other end of the table, where Gabriel Agreste had managed to sneak in and take a seat next to Natalie.

"F-Father." Adrien mumbled, blushing furiously, trying to find the right words to say. Were they dating? Was it alright to call Marinette his girlfriend? God knows he wanted to so desperately.

"We just started dating." Marinette cut in, placing a hand on Adrien's leg. Her touch calmed him just the slightest. "Very recently."

Gabriel nodded, "It makes sense."

Marinette and Adrien looked at each other, confused. "What do you mean, father?"

The stoic man shrugged. "This is the same girl that had won my derby hat competition, yes?" Adrien nodded. "Miss Dupain-Cheng has a keen eye for fashion, the true hands of a seamstress. I expect nothing less for my model son."

Although receiving a compliment from *the* Gabriel Agreste, her favorite fashion designer, Marinette still felt really weird.

Dinner continued, mostly with conversation between Marinette, Adrien and Nathalie. Every once in a while, Gabriel added a comment here and there, but otherwise kept quite reserved. In a way, it freaked Marinette out. Knowing that this was the person that Adrien had to live and look up to within the last few years, it hurt her heart.

Had Adrien felt lonely, all these years? Living his life on a strict schedule, having decisions made for him, and feeling no love in a household whose halls carried the memories of laughter and joy in the times when this family was whole. She made a promise to herself, that Adrien was never going to feel lonely again. Marinette would make sure of it.

After dessert, a fruit tart that was Emilie Agreste's favorite, Gabriel returned to his atelier, leaving Marinette and Adrien alone. "Would you like to go on a walk in the garden?" Adrien asked, standing up and holding out his hand. Marinette nodded, grabbing it and following him outside. In her other hand was the bouquet of flowers. Outside, under the full moon the lit up the beautiful city of Paris, they stood, walking in the garden and admiring the white flowers that adorned the mansion walls.

A statue of Emilie Agreste stood elegantly under the lunar light. She stood in perfect stillness, like a moment, captured in time. Marinette knelt down and placed the bouquet at the foot of the statue. Adrien Agreste adored the statue of her.

"Hi mother." He whispered quietly. Marinette turned her head, glancing at him before taking his hand. "Happy birthday."

Marinette squeezed his hand gently. She felt him squeeze it back.

"I miss you, every single day." He continued on. "I wish you can see how much I've grown. I'm going to school now, and I have made some pretty awesome friends." Adrien paused before looking at Marinette. "This is Marinette. I think I talked about her before. She's the girl I'm in love with—and it turns out after all this time she was in love with me too."

Marinette sighed, looking up at Adrien. She felt the sadness in his voice.

"I wish you could meet her. I think you'd really like her." Adrien finished, turning to Marinette and placing a gentle kiss on her cheek. "She's sweet and kind. She's very selfless—and she's a baker! You know how much I love sweets."

Marinette and Adrien erupted into a fit of giggles. "Happy early birthday, Mrs. Agreste." Marinette said quietly, leaning her head on Adrien's shoulder.

They stood in quiet bliss, in front of Emilie Agreste's statue, letting the night continue on around them.

Adrien found a black hoodie that Marinette changed into when the night started to come to an end. She had left the Agreste mansion after thanking Gabriel and Nathalie for their hospitality, before returning to Adrien's room as Ladybug.

Marinette changed into the hoodie, and crawled into Adrien's bed. The model was changing in the bathroom and brushing his teeth. "Adrien, I wanted to ask your opinion on something."

Marinette confessed. “Tikki, Plagg, I want your opinions too. “

The kwamis had appeared from Adrien’s desk, and landed on the soft blanket that covered the bed. Marinette reached out and scooped them up in both of her hands.

“Is everything okay, Marinette?” Tikki asked, suddenly concerned. Plagg rubbed his head against Marinette’s thumb affectionately.

“Everything is alright guys, I promise.” Marinette smiled. Adrien returned from the bathroom and slid into the bed next to Marinette.

“I swear, Plagg has such a soft spot for you it makes me jealous.” Adrien chuckled as his kwami rolled his eyes.

“She gives me pets and cheese. Can you really blame me?” Plagg retorted.

Adrien placed a hand on Marinette’s back. “So, what did you need to talk about?”

Marinette sighed. “I was thinking about...telling Alya and Nino.”

Tikki and Plagg glanced at each other. “Telling them that you’re Ladybug and Chat Noir?” Plagg asked skeptically.

Marinette shrugged. “I don’t know. It was a passing thought today.” She continued. “The idea that more people know who we are, terrifies me. But Hawkmoth has gotten so much more dangerous within the last few weeks. I thought it would be safe for everyone to keep their identities a secret but...how badly would it hurt if our best friends knew?”

Adrien had contemplated before, telling Nino. On days where he felt particularly alone, he wanted to go to his best friend. “Don’t you think, since Hawkmoth knows their identity, and them additionally knowing ours, would make them specific targets?”

Marinette had thought of that. “Yea.” She replied simply. “I just...I don’t know what’s going to happen in the next few days and I don’t want to keep secrets from Alya anymore.”

“I know how you feel.” Adrien replied. He turned to the kwamis. “What do you guys think?”

Tikki smiled. “I think Marinette has good points.” The kwami said. “I can tell how much she’s been struggling with this.”

“You guys do what you want.” Plagg murmured. “Marinette’s the Guardian now. She makes her own rules.”

Marinette knew that answer too. “That doesn’t mean anything to me, Plagg. I don’t know what’s best for anyone anymore. I just don’t want to keep lying. What if the best way to protect them is for them to know that Adrien and I have their backs? In and out of the costume?”

“I want to tell them.” Adrien said, giving Marinette a squeeze. “Together.”

Rena Rouge and Carapace

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the late update! I hope you enjoy the chapter!

Marinette had a terrible night. One that had made it difficult for her to eventually return to sleep.

At first, she had thought she woke up in the dead of night and that what she saw was a dream. The light poured into Adrien's room, illuminating it with a faint blue. From the corner of her eye, she saw movement.

There sitting in the shadows, sat a silhouetted figure on an armchair across the room. An evil laugh seemed to come from the figure. "Don't fret, little Marinette." He growled.

Marinette gripped onto the blanket with much stress. To her left, Adrien was fast asleep. Should she wake him? Where was Tikki? And Plagg?

Marinette opened her mouth to speak, but felt the words disappear into the wind.

"Your days are numbered, don't you know? What are you going to do?" The voice continued. The figure leaned forwards just the slightest, the light illuminating his face. There he sat, a smirk on his lips: Hawkmoth.

"H-Hawkmoth?" She managed to whisper. Hawkmoth's mouth twisted into a grin. "This isn't real. This isn't real." Marinette chanted, shutting her eyes forcefully and rubbing them with her hands.

And yet, when she reopened her eyes he was still there—this time, standing next to her. Paralyzed in fear, she sat there, blue eyes wide open. Hawkmoth brought a hand to her chin, tilting it upwards. "What makes you think this isn't real?" His voice was laced with ice. The gloved hand caressed her cheek, coming dangerously close to her ear. "Sweet and innocent Marinette Dupain-Cheng. The daughter of a baker and the superheroine of Paris. You've been right there all along, this entire time. How could I have been so foolish? How could I have been so blind?"

He paused, laughter erupting from within him. "And to think, I could have had you in my clutches if my sweet little akuma had gotten to you in time. So many times, you have slipped between my fingertips. This time, Ladybug, I won't let you get away. You will give me your Miraculous in due time." From the bed, Adrien rolled over, burying himself in the blankets further. "You wouldn't want anything to happen to your precious love. What will you do to protect him and your team?"

“You’re not real!” Marinette seemed to finally choke out. Tears poured from her eyes as she swiped at Hawkmoth.

It was realization that washed over her. It made her feel cold and anxious. He was real, and he was standing right here. As her face twisted with emotion, the fear seemed to feed Hawkmoth further. He smirked once more.

Yet, he did not expect the little teenage girl to whip off the blankets and throw her full body weight at him. They fell to the ground in a tumble.

“W-What?” Adrien murmured, the noise rousing him from his sleep.

He bolted upright to see that at the foot of his bed, Marinette knelt there trying to regain her balance. The figure in front of her stood up quickly and raised a hand, to bring it forcefully down across Marinette’s cheek with a *smack!* The girl fell to the ground with a groan.

Fear raced through him as Hawkmoth and him locked eyes. The villain had distaste etched across his face. “Know your place, Ladybug.” He muttered down to the girl at his feet. With a quick turn on his heel, Hawkmoth fled through the window.

Adrien rushed to Marinette’s aid, as she sat there rubbing her cheek. There was a horrid pink spot where Hawkmoth’s hand made contact with her face. Tikki and Plagg seemed to appear from the floor, clearly puzzled as to what happened in their absence.

“Marinette, are you okay?” Adrien asked, his hands cupping Marinette’s face. Tears were welling in her eyes.

“He knows, Adrien.” She choked out. “Hawkmoth knows I’m Ladybug.”

“What happened?” Tikki asked, floating near her owner, worry coursing through the tiny kwami.

“He was here!” She sobbed, throwing herself into Adrien’s arms. “He was here, and I couldn’t even stop him.”

Adrien pulled Marinette deeper into an embrace. “You’re safe.” He cooed, tears beginning to well in his eyes. “You’re alive and you are breathing and that’s all that matters.”

“He knows, Adrien.” She cried again, “Hawkmoth knows.”

Adrien felt fear and anger course through him. How dare Hawkmoth come into his own home and attack Marinette like this? A grown man, beating on *children*. Whoever Hawkmoth was, he was sure that he was nothing but a shell of a man.

The anxiety had returned to Marinette, in a much larger state. When Adrien awoke the next morning, he found Marinette sitting on the edge of the bed, her eyes heavy.

“You didn’t sleep last night.” It was more of a statement rather than a question. Marinette nodded, turning to him. “Oh, Marinette.”

The purple bags had returned, staining her porcelain skin violently. Marinette's eyes were bloodshot and had unfortunately, once again lost the light in them.

Adrien pat the spot next to him, and Marinette crawled over to him. She laid her head upon his lap, not saying anything. "How much time until school starts?" She murmured.

"Well, forty minutes until Natalie comes and gets me. So, an hour." He replied. Marinette took a deep breath.

"Tikki, spots on." It was the most unenthused he had ever heard Marinette. She didn't move a muscle, as the costume enveloped her body.

"Marinette." Adrien started, but was surprised when the words did not come to him. Ladybug picked herself from his bed. "Wait—"

"I just..." Ladybug said, locking eyes with Adrien. "We tell them at lunch." She murmured. Ladybug leaned over and kissed Adrien on the cheek, before turning to the window. "I'll be okay. I'll see you in an hour."

And just like that, Ladybug was gone.

She was a different person when he got to school. Although he could see right through her, he was greeted with a smiling Marinette, listening to Alya animatedly talk about a forum on the Ladyblog. "Good morning, girls." Adrien greeted, eyes flickering between Alya and Marinette.

Marinette smiled, lifting a hand out. Adrien took it eagerly. "Good morning, Casanova." Alya chuckled. "I see you two are getting along pretty well."

"Oh Alya, stop it." Marinette smiled softly. He noticed that her cheeks blushed just the slightest, one more pink than the other. Internally, he felt himself fill with anger over Hawkmoth and his actions against Marinette.

"Marinette is my everything." Adrien replied nonchalantly, bringing her hand up to his lips and giving it a kiss.

"Dude, that was pretty smooth." Nino said, strolling up. He placed an arm around Alya's shoulder.

"How have you guys been holding up?" Marinette asked sincerely. Alya and Nino smiled.

"We're doing alright." Alya said, in a rather cheery voice. "I feel a lot less on edge."

Adrien and Marinette glanced at each other with a knowing smile. "That's really good to hear." Marinette replied.

"Hey, did you guys want to grab lunch with us?" Adrien asked, taking the initiative. "Marinette and I were going to go over to the bakery and chill upstairs, you down?"

Nino grinned. "Oh heck yes! I want to get some macarons."

Marinette rolled her eyes. “Only if you promise to save some for the customers.”

It was hard for them to focus on Mme. Bustier and her lecture on Parisian history. Poor Marinette had felt sick to her stomach leaving the Agreste Mansion that morning. The tears stung at her eyes and fell upon her spotted mask as she flung herself upon the Parisian rooftops.

How could that vile man invade that home and terrorize her like that in the middle of the night? What kind of person was behind Hawkmoth’s mask? What did she even do to deserve this?

When she returned to her home and called off her transformation, Tikki watched her nervously. “Marinette...you shouldn’t have left Adrien like that.” She murmured.

Emotionless, Marinette got ready for school. “I’ll explain to him later.” She murmured, pulling her shirt over her head. “I just needed to get out of there after what happened.”

Tikki nodded. “But he’s your partner.” She murmured. “He cares about you, a lot.”

Marinette sighed, stuffing her tablet into her backpack. “What if something had happened to Adrien because of me?” She replied, locking eyes with the kwami. “I mean, he threatened him right there in his own room!”

Tikki shook her head. “Are you forgetting that Adrien is Chat Noir? Hawkmoth doesn’t know that. Chat Noir is very capable of protecting himself.”

Marinette sighed, slipping her backpack onto her shoulders. “I knew this would happen.” She murmured. “I knew that finally revealing my identity to anyone would result in them immediately becoming a target for Hawkmoth. Because Adrien and I are a thing now and Hawkmoth knowing my identity as Marinette, he’s a target.”

Tikki shook her head. “You two were always meant to be with each other.” The kwami said, causing Marinette to cock her head. “Like it or not, Ladybugs and Chat Noirs are and have always been soulmates. Every Ladybug I’ve ever served ended up with Plagg’s Chat Noir. It was inevitable that you and Adrien were going to find out your identities. You don’t understand how relieved I was to find out Adrien’s identity as Chat Noir when you two faced the Dark Owl, because I knew how happy you were going to be.”

Tikki paused her pleading. “Hawkmoth may know your identity, Marinette. But you and Adrien are stronger together, always.”

Reminiscing on this morning, out of reflex, Marinette grabbed Adrien’s leg in comfort. From his seat beside her at the desk, he turned his head.

Her eyes were still trained forward, as if trying her hardest to concentrate on Mme. Bustier’s words. Adrien smiled gently, knowing that she was having a hard time and sometimes the words she wanted to say were expressed in other ways. This was one of them.

“I love you.” Adrien whispered into her ear. Marinette smiled, her nerves seeming to melt away with his words. “I’m here for you, always.”

His words echoed the same that Tikki had said earlier that day, and Marinette’s eyes widened just the slightest.

They were stronger together. Those words seemed to echo throughout Marinette’s being.

The last few weeks she had noticed that she shut down and began to isolate herself—but not this time. This time, she was a part of a team that would never let her down.

By the time lunch rolled around, Marinette had a real smile on her face. She was confident her choice and she was happy that she was not doing it alone. “Good afternoon mom, papa.” She smiled, opening up the door to the bakery and letting her friends in.

“Ah come in, come in!” Tom Dupain said heartily, taking some freshly baked sweets out of the oven.

“Is it alright for them to have lunch here during our break?” Marinette asked, kissing her mother and father. They nodded.

“Of course, sweetheart. I just finished a lasagna, its cooling on the counter if you’d like to share it with your friends.” Sabine smiled. Nino and Adrien high fived each other, knowing that the Dupain-Cheng household always had the best homecooked meals in town.

They clambered upstairs, Adrien grabbing the lasagna and Marinette getting plates and forks before they all made their ways upstairs. Once in the room, they all began to chow down. “Man Marinette, your parent’s cooking never gets old.” Alya commented, wiping her lips.

She smiled. “Well, I guess I’m pretty lucky.” Marinette paused for a moment. “But not as lucky as you and Nino.”

Alya and Nino glanced at each other, their mouths full of food. They shrugged. “Dudette, I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

From Marinette’s side, Adrien nodded his head. “Probably the whole superhero thing.” He offered. Adrien leaned back in the chaise lounge chair, twiddling his ring in between his fingers.

Marinette nodded, her head leaning against Adrien’s leg from her seat on the floor.

Alya shrugged. “Yea, being Rena Rouge has been pretty cool.” She replied, her hand immediately going to her neck, fingering the necklace around it. Nino nodded, unconsciously reaching for his wrist.

“Must be hard though, too.” Marinette commented.

“With the whole video thing going on, it’s been pretty scary. But we trust Ladybug and Chat Noir.” Nino said.

Adrien and Marinette glanced at each other, while Alya eye them suspiciously. “Alright, what is it with you two.” She finally declared, peering over her glasses. “You’re being weirder than normal, and I don’t know if I like it.”

Adrien laughed. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.” He smiled. “Though I will admit Marinette has been wanting to talk to you guys.”

The girl at his feet squeaked. “Adrien!” She murmured. He hunched over and placed a kiss on top of Marinette’s head.

“Girl, what?” Alya asked, a smirk on her face. Marinette looked around nervously.

“You put so much trust in Ladybug and Chat Noir. Why?” Marinette asked. Alya looked at Nino, who shrugged.

“Well... I mean it’s Ladybug and Chat Noir. We’ve seen them fight and save Paris for over two years.” Alya said. “Ladybug has saved me *so* many times and when my little sisters got akumatized, she trusted me with a Miraculous. Hawkmoth is everyone’s enemy, and Nino and I will fight with Ladybug and Chat Noir with everything we got to protect the ones we love and the city we love.”

“They’re just people, like you and I though.” Marinette seemed to protest. Nino shook his head.

“Sure, you’re not wrong. But they’re symbols to this city. Symbols of unity and love and compassion. They make me want to be a better person each and every day.” Nino said.

“What if they’re just kids?” Marinette continued. Alya sighed.

“Even if they’re just kids, they have the power to change the world by their actions. Ladybug and Chat Noir protect us not only because it is their duty, but it’s the right thing to do. They are there for the little guys.” Alya defended.

“What if...Ladybug and Chat Noir were Adrien and I?” Marinette said quietly.

Silence settled around the room. Alya searched Marinette’s eyes. Under her gaze, Marinette felt small. Would she be angry? Would she be relieved? What was Alya going to say next?

Adrien sensed Marinette’s unease, placing a hand on her shoulder.

“You’re joking right?” Nino said nervously. Marinette felt her cheeks flush.

“What? I’m not good enough to be Ladybug?” She said hotly. Nino’s eyes flashed open wide, raising up his arms in defense.

“N-No that’s not what I mean at all!” Nino replied. He turned to Adrien, trying to get some help, however the model had a pout on his lips. “C’mon dude, you as Chat Noir?”

“Hey!” He snapped, his arms crossing. Nino sighed, turning to Alya.

“Prove it.” She said simply, eyes never leaving Marinette’s.

“You don’t believe me.” Marinette whispered, eyes slowly closing. “You don’t believe me.”

Silence fell around the room once again. How could Alya not trust Marinette’s words? Why in the world would Nino think this was a joke?

Marinette’s head dropped to the floor. Her demeanor grew hard. “Wayzz...Trixx. Please come out here.” She muttered in the quietest voice.

Two kwamis appeared from Alya’s bag, bowing their head at the Guardian. Alya gasped, looking from her bag to the kwamis.

“Trixx! What are you doing?” She said in disbelief. The kwami smiled sheepishly.

“Marinette, is everything alright?” Wayzz asked, worriedly. A small smile formed on her lips. “Marinette?”

“Of course, everything is fine, Wayzz. I missed you is all.” She replied, bringing up her hand and giving the little turtle kwami a scratch on the head.

Alya became flustered. “Just because you know our kwamis names, doesn’t mean you’re Ladybug and Chat Noir.” She muttered. “Stop messing around.”

Alya had never seen her best friend move so quickly. From the ground, Marinette rolled into a handstand before flipping onto her feet. She held a hand out to Adrien, who took it, standing up from his seat in the chaise lounge.

“Why would I be messing around, Alya?” Marinette said, bringing her gaze to her friend. “Why do you think, Adrien and I are never there when an akuma has attacked? Or why we couldn’t except our roles in Clara Nightingale’s music video? Why I have always had to make an excuse and you knew I was lying?”

“Plagg, claws out.”

“Tikki, spots on.” Marinette said, letting the warm, pink light flutter around her body. “Why so suddenly, Alya, Adrien and I realized our love for each other?”

Eyes wide, Nino and Alya watched as where their best friends were just standing, were suddenly replaced by a familiar pair of superheroes.

“My lady,” Chat Noir grinned, letting laughter erupt from his chest. “That was quite an entrance, if I do say so myself.”

“Do you believe me now, Alya?” Ladybug asked. “I know it’s a lot to take in. Cha—err... Adrien and I apologize for keeping this a secret from you two. But we are doing everything in our power to be the best we can be for all of Paris, and that meant hiding this from you guys.”

“The Guardian is so wise.” Trixx awed. Wayzz nodded in agreement.

From across the room, Alya and Nino seemed to finally find their words.

“What the *fuck*!?”

Explanations

Chapter Notes

Here is an update for you guys! I hope everything is going alright for everyone and (if you are American) I hope you have an amazing Thanksgiving holiday this week!

Ladybug's heart beat wildly in her chest. She turned to Chat Noir, looking deeply into his emerald eyes. "Say something." She whispered, nodding her head towards the direction of Alya and Nino, who were left quite speechless.

Chat Noir turned towards his friends, and gave a cheeky grin. "I'm purr-tty sure our transformations said it all." He chuckled.

Ladybug hid her face in her hands, turning to their friends. "Alya..."

Alya closed her mouth, which had been hanging open. "I can't believe this." She said so quietly. "After all this time...it was you."

Ladybug nodded. "Are you mad?"

Alya sighed. "A little bit...if I'm honest." She replied. "But that is only because after all this time, I was writing a blog about my best friend."

Chat Noir chuckled. "You have to understand, why we couldn't tell you." He added in.

Ladybug looked to the ground. "You were always someone I wanted to tell, Alya." She said. "I—"

"This totally makes sense now!" Alya gasped. "You and Adrien."

Chat Noir seemed to purr. "My Lady was a hard mouse to catch, but eventually I caught her." Ladybug rolled her eyes, booping Chat Noir's nose.

"Now kitty, don't make it out that way." She giggled. Ladybug turned to Alya and Nino. "The day the video was released, I almost got akumatized. I ran out of the house while the butterfly was chasing me and I happened to literally run into the Agreste Mansion. Adrien came out, transformed into Chat Noir and absorbed and killed the akuma. After I brought him back to his room, I told him I was Ladybug."

The bell on Chat Noir's neck *tinged!* as he began to animatedly give an explanation. "Long story short, Marinette was in love with Adrien, Adrien was Chat Noir, Chat Noir was in love with Ladybug, and Ladybug was Marinette." He paused. "But also, Adrien was beginning to love Marinette and I am pretty sure Marinette was beginning to love Chat Noir—"

“We get it, you guys were in love with the same person.” Nino chuckled. “That’s crazy.”

“I just...I can’t believe you really didn’t tell your best friend.” Alya said, making a pit form in Ladybug’s stomach.

“You’re upset.” Ladybug stated. “Spots off.”

Tikki released the transformation and floated next to Marinette. “Alya, you shouldn’t be upset with Marinette.” Tikki squeaked. Marinette smiled at her kwami, as Plagg joined her, Chat Noir calling off his transformation.

“Sugar Cube is right.” Plagg shrugged.

Marinette sighed. “None of this has been easy, Alya.” The designer started. Adrien put a hand on her shoulder, comforting her. “Since day one, being Ladybug has been so incredibly hard. I even tried to give you the Miraculous when Ivan was akumatized into Stoneheart, because I doubted that it was really me that was worthy of the Ladybug Miraculous.” She paused, looking out her window. It was cloudy outside. “For over two years, I refused to let Chat Noir know my identity, to protect him. It was by happenstance that as Adrien and I grew closer together in our civilian forms, he was also my partner in the costume. Adrien revealed his identity to me to protect me. That’s all I’ve ever wanted, is to protect people. That’s why we are telling you now.”

Adrien sighed. “Please don’t be mad at Marinette, Alya.” He defended. “She’s trying her best. Both of us are to protect Paris. Things have gotten way worse than you guys even know. Please, just understand that our identities were sacred to us—even after the years as fighting as Chat Noir and Ladybug, there’s an isolation to it. It’s not easy, and we didn’t have a choice back then.”

Nino looked quizzically at his friend. “Dude, wait. What do you mean things have gotten worse? Worse than the video that Hawkmoth released threatening all of the Miraculous owners? And what did you mean you didn’t have a choice back then?”

“Nino—the end of the video.” Alya said, realization washing over her. Marinette nodded, her hand reaching up and holding her cheek.

“Hawkmoth knows her identity as Ladybug. We were attacked last night in my room.” Adrien explained, his face twisting in anger. “He laid a hand on her, *on my Marinette*. I’ll never forgive him.”

“Nino, we didn’t have a choice back when Master Fu was Guardian...” Marinette started, locking eyes with the DJ. “But Hawkmoth knowing my identity means he knows I’m the Guardian of the Miraculous now. I enforce the rules that Miraculous owners must follow. Being the Guardian, while also being Marinette and Ladybug...it’s like having the weight of the world on my shoulders. One wrong move and *it’s over*.”

“Oh, Marinette.” Alya gasped, rushing over to her friend and enveloping her in a hug. “I’m sorry.”

Marinette let out a nervous laugh as tears welled in her eyes. “You’re my best friend, Alya. You’re my best friend.” She said over and over again. “I’m sorry too.”

Adrien smiled gently, looking over at Nino. He motioned for him to come over, and Nino chuckled. Together, they hugged Alya and Marinette.

Together.

They returned to class, different than how they left. There were no more secrets between the quad group of friends. In a way, Alya was still in shock, finding out that Marinette had been Ladybug after all this time. Knowing now, she can’t believe how silly she was for not figuring it out sooner. They looked so much alike!

Marinette, although relieved that she no longer had to hide this secret, still felt uneasy. They were running out of time, and the only plan that her and Adrien could really think up was giving them their Miraculous to protect themselves and their families. Was that really even a plan? What was to even happen on the fifth day?

When school ended, and Marinette had returned to the bakery, she was greeted with an odd sight in her living room. “Mr. Agreste?” She breathed out.

There, sitting on her couch drinking tea with her parents, was Gabriel Agreste. His assistant, Natalie, was standing behind him. “Good afternoon, Miss Dupain-Cheng.” He greeted, peering over his black frames.

There was a glint in his silver eyes, one that was eerily familiar.

“Marinette, Mr. Agreste came over with his assistant because he was interested in some of your designs.” Sabine said, excitement in her voice.

“My designs?” She repeated, the unease within her growing exponentially. Gabriel nodded. “Umm...”

“If it is alright, with you Miss Dupain-Cheng, I just wanted to see your portfolio. I know my son has praised your designs, and it has me quite intrigued. I do have internships positions available for my company, perhaps you are interested?”

“Oh, umm...yes. Would you like to come upstairs? I can show you what I have on the mannequins as well as my sketchbook.” She said nervously. Gabriel nodded, picking himself up from the couch and following Marinette up the stairs.

When in her room, she found it in shambles. Eyes wide, her room looked like it had been ransacked. “W-What?” She stammered, looking around. Gabriel stood in the corner, emotionless. “I don’t understand.”

“It appears, someone was looking for something.” He observed. Marinette gasped, her eyes wandering to the trunk that once held the Miraculous box. It was torn open and empty.

“Well there wasn’t much to find.” She replied, knowing very well that the Miraculous Box was moved earlier that day when Alya and Nino came over. Unbeknownst to Marinette, Gabriel’s brows furrowed in frustration. “I apologize for the mess, Mr. Agreste. Would it be possible to send my designs over with your son another day?”

Without saying a word, Gabriel nodded, and took his leave.

When the hatch closed behind him, Tikki flew out of Marinette’s purse. “Marinette, where is the Miraculous Box?” She asked worriedly.

Marinette nodded her head. “I moved it to my parent’s room under their bed earlier, remember?” She replied, picking up a mannequin that had fallen over. “This had to be Hawkmoth’s doing.”

Tikki looked worriedly at Marinette, as she picked up papers and books that had been scattered around her room. There was a broken picture frame that had their class photo.

“I can’t do this, Tikki.” Marinette said sadly, tears once more beginning to well in her eyes. “I can’t do this.”

Tikki couldn’t find the words to say anything. The monsters and beings her past owners had to fight against didn’t compare to the wickedness of Hawkmoth. This man was dangerous; he was cold and ruthless and was tormenting Marinette.

After an hour, Marinette had given up. Without saying a word, she climbed up and out to her balcony, watching the sun set.

She felt sick, knowing that Hawkmoth was in her home, in her *room*. Her eyes hurt, from all the crying that she had done in the last few days. “What kind of man,” Marinette started, turning to the kwami that sat next to her on the table. “Wants something so badly that he is willing to go to these lengths to achieve them?”

Again, unfortunately Tikki had nothing to say.

“You know, the third day is coming to an end.” She said through the tears. “The third day and Hawkmoth is already winning.”

“Don’t say that, Princess.”

A sad smile formed on her lips, as she turned to Chat Noir, who balanced himself on the railing. “Is everything alright? You didn’t answer my texts.” He paused, suddenly alarmed to see the tears streaming down her cheeks. “W-What happened?”

“He was here.” She said, strained laughter erupting from within it. “He tried to get the Miracle Box.”

Chat Noir threw himself at Marinette, hugging her protectively. “Please, don’t cry.”

Marinette pressed her head into the crook of Chat Noir’s neck. “How can I not? He was in my room trying to find the Miracle box. He’s winning, Chaton. Hawkmoth has me looking

over my shoulder every few seconds and I can't sleep, I can't eat, I just...can't."

They stood in silence for a moment.

"Your dad was here too." Marinette whispered. Chat Noir's ears perked up.

"What?" He asked, clearly surprised.

Marinette sniffled, "He said he was interested in some of my designs. I brought him upstairs because I had some pieces on the mannequins and I found my room a mess."

"Father didn't tell me." Chat Noir admitted. Although it was pretty normal for him to be out of the loop in his father's business, he would have thought that anything regarding Marinette, his girlfriend, would have been mentioned to him. "He just wanted to see your designs?"

Marinette shrugged. "He said something about an internship too. Not that I'll get it anyways."

"You're an amazing designer." Chat Noir purred. Silence fell around the once more. "Do you want me to stay tonight?"

"I don't want to be alone." Marinette said quickly. "Please don't leave me alone."

If only Marinette had looked closer at the remnants of her trashed room. If only she had noticed, the small piece of paper by her computer monitor, that had a drawing of a little butterfly on it. Written in cursive lettering:

Tomorrow.

Day Four: The Beginning

He was a liar, that bastard Hawkmoth. Marinette and Adrien claimed his treachery as Paris fell into darkness—quite literally.

When they woke up, they heard the screams of terrified Parisians.

“Marinette! Marinette! Wake up!” It was Sabine’s scared voice that sounded through the hatch as it whipped open. “Are you okay?”

Marinette and Adrien had peered over the loft, suddenly on guard. “What’s going on, Mom?” She asked.

Unphased by the sight of Adrien, Sabine continued. “It’s Hawkmoth. He’s attacking Paris!”

Eyes wide, Adrien and Marinette glanced at each other. “W-What do you mean? He said tomorrow! We had five days!”

Sabine shook her head. “I don’t know what else to tell you, sweetheart. You and Adrien need to stay here where it’s safe. Lock your windows and lock your doors.”

“I-I don’t understand. What’s going on outside?” Adrien asked Marinette’s mother. From below, they heard Tom on the phone with someone.

“Someone’s been akumatized.” She explained. “And they have sentimonsters.”

Sabine disappeared, returning downstairs to be with her husband. Marinette blinked her watering eyes rapidly, feeling like it was suddenly so hard to breath.

Adrien looked around for his kwami and found Plagg hugging Tikki. “It’s really happening, isn’t it?” He asked the kwami, who nodded.

“Looks like it, kid.” Plagg replied. “How are you feeling?”

Adrien looked at Marinette. Her eyes were scrunched closed, as if she was trying to prepare herself. Oh, how he adored the girl next to him. The girl who had forever changed his life. He would do anything for her.

Adrien shrugged. “I’m ready to protect the people I love.” He reached out and hugged Marinette. “Won’t you join me, in protecting Paris today?”

When they arrived in the heart of the battle, majority of the Miraculous team was already there. Pegasus was down, a horrible gash on his leg. King Monkey knelled beside him, trying to stop the bleeding.

“Carapace, what’s going on?” Ladybug called out, kneeling behind a turned over car. From across the street, Rena Rouge and Carapace were also taking shelter behind a car.

“It’s Volpina!” He called out. “They figured out how to turn her illusions into sentimonsters!”

Horried, Ladybug and Chat Noir peered over the car to see ten figures in the distance. Volpina sat there on the top of a bus, legs crossed and nonchalantly leaning back on her arms. Below her were nine other people, suited up in black and white. It was them, the Miraculous team of Ladybug, Chat Noir, Rena Rouge, Carapace, Queen Bee, Viperion, Ryuuko, King Monkey, and Pegasus.

“It’s...us.” Chat Noir observed. “We have to...fight us?”

Ladybug’s brows furrowed together. “Hawkmoth must have akumatized Lila, and turned her into Volpina. Then, Mayura had to amokized Volpina because of her strong hatred of Ladybug and all the Miraculous.”

“What happened to Pegasus?” Chat Noir said, alarmed that blood had began to seep through the cloth that was held against his leg.

Viperion shook his head. “The Ryuuko sentimonster got him with her sword.”

Ladybug’s eyes widened. “King Monkey, you need to get him out of here.”

Pegasus, who laid on the ground wincing, spoke up. “No, you need everyone here. I’ll be okay.” He groaned. Chat Noir shook his head.

“Don’t be ridiculous. You’re hurt.” Chat Noir replied. “You have to get out of here.”

“Come out Ladybug! Chat Noir! Don’t you want to play with my friends?” Volpina jeered from across the square.

Ryuuko felt anger course through her veins. “That coward.” She snapped. Queen Bee nodded in agreement.

“What do we do, Ladybug?” Rena Rouge asked. Suddenly feeling all eyes on her, Ladybug felt small.

“Protect Paris. At all costs.” She said, her voice slightly wavering. “King Monkey, get Pegasus to safety. Then come back and join the fight.”

King Monkey nodded, scooping up Pegasus and disappearing onto the rooftops of Paris. Ladybug turned to the rest of them.

“Volpina’s illusions are based off of us. Most likely, they’ll have the same fighting style as each and every one of you. They’ll have the same powers and strength. What I’m trying to say is that you know you best.” She paused. “Take on your own sentimonster.”

“Once you’ve defeated it, help each other out. Don’t take Volpina on alone.” Chat Noir added. “Only Ladybug can purify the akuma.”

“What about Pegasus’ sentimonster?” Carapace asked.

“Don’t worry about it. Chat Noir and I will take care of it.” Ladybug replied.

They all nodded in unison, before taking off into the square. A twisted grin appeared onto Volpina’s face, as a pink butterfly outlined her face. “They’ve fallen right into your trap, Hawkmoth.”

In her mind, a treacherous voice laughed. “Good. Thin them out, but leave Ladybug and Chat Noir to me.”

If only it had been that easy. Taking on Pegasus’ sentimonster was not difficult. However, the damage that the sentimonster created was devastating. He opened a portal right in the middle of a nearby building, causing it to collapse in the square. Everyone had to run for their lives to avoid the falling structure.

The gas pipes from the building ignited a fire, which spread around to other buildings.

Chat Noir ripped the glasses from the sentimonster’s face and tore them in two, a little feather erupting from it. Ladybug snatched it up with her yoyo and purified it. The Pegasus sentimonster disappeared into thin air.

“Oh boo, here I thought you were actually going to play nice.” Volpina egged on. Beneath her mask, Ladybug’s body filled with anger.

“Do you know what you’re even doing, Lila?” Ladybug screeched, ducking out of the way as the Ladybug sentimonster hurled its yoyo at her. “Why are you siding with Hawkmoth and Mayura?”

Volpina looked off into the distance, the fire crackling around them. “I don’t know.” She replied nonchalantly. “However, you do deserve everything that is coming to you.”

Chat Noir growled, parrying the baton that his own sentimonster thrust at him. “You don’t know anything, Lila!”

Volpina rolled her eyes. “It’s Volpina.”

An elbow dug into Ladybug’s back, cause her to cry out in pain. She fell to the ground, turning her body to see the Ladybug sentimonster towering above her. “Stop this.” Ladybug cried out. “You don’t have to do this.”

The sentimonster grinned, lifting a fist slowly. In a swift move, the fist connected with Ladybug’s chin, causing the superheroine to cough out blood.

“My Lady!” Chat Noir cried, hurling himself at the sentimonster. The two tumbled to the ground, disturbing the dust and causing it to fly up in all directions. “How dare you.” He spat, reaching for her yoyo and crushing it in his fist.

From across the yard, Ladybug tossed her yoyo and caught the feather.

Chat Noir scampered over to her, as she struggled to gain her balance. “Are you okay?” He asked, his eye catching Carapace being thrown into a building by Rena Rouge’s sentimonster. “I don’t understand, these sentimonsters are different than before.”

Ladybug spat out some more blood, caressing her chin. “I’m fine.” She murmured, looking at the Chat Noir sentimonster taking a stance before them. “They’re stronger—the sentimonster.”

“Correct you are, Ladybug!” Volpina giggled. “They’re my illusions turned real. They’re twice as deadly with no emotion...no regrets...nothing but a hollow shell.”

“You’re wrong, Volpina!” Ladybug cried out, throwing her yoyo towards her. Chat Noir’s sentimonster ran in front of Volpina, taking the hit.

“Am I, Ladybug?” Volpina smiled wickedly. “*Get* her.”

The fights raged all day. King Monkey had to be taken away from the chaos as he suffered a broken ankle.

In a last ditch effort, as the sun dipped below the horizon line, Ladybug and Chat Noir called a retreat. The damage had been done, and she needed to spare her friends.

“C’m on.” She said quietly, supporting Rena Rouge. The fox heroine sported a nasty black eye and several cuts on her cheeks. “Go to the school.”

And so, the remainder of their squad took off.

“Run while you can, children.” Hawkmoth laughed, strolling up to the square, Mayura in tow. He glanced up at Volpina, who after all this time had not moved from her spot on the bus. She was pouting. “You’ve done a wonderful job, Volpina.” He praised.

Volpina seemed to brighten up. “Thank you so muc—” But was cut off as she began to cough violently. “W-What are y-you doing?”

Hawkmoth shrugged, glancing at the Eiffel tower. “You annoy me.” He said, clenching his fist. Volpina began to gasp for air, eyes brimming with tears. Her eyes rolled into the back of her head, losing consciousness. “I’m done with you.” He hissed, snapping his fingers. The akuma left Volpina and all was left was the battered body of Lila, barely clinging to life.

“Sir?” Mayura asked in whisper. Hawkmoth glanced at her with a fierce stare. “W-What of the sentimonsters?”

“Send them after their team.” He ordered. Mayura nodded, turning to the sentimonsters. “I can feel it...today is the day our reality will change.”

At the school, the team was splayed out on the court. Rena Rouge and Carapace laid on their backs, eyes closed. There was a nasty cut on Carapace’s cheek.

Viperion was tending to Ryuuko, wrapping her ankle in a bandage. She winced in pain.

King Monkey and Pegasus, taken out early in the battle, were brought here. Pegasus was looking worse for wear, and King Monkey had put a makeshift splint on his ankle.

Queen Bee stood in silence; her hair fallen from the pony tail she once wore.

“We...we can’t take them.” Viperion said sadly, locking eyes with Ladybug. “There’s just not enough of us.”

Ladybug turned and looked at Chat Noir. Her partner didn’t look well either. “What do we do?” She asked.

Chat Noir stood in silence. “We have to keep fighting.” He replied, clenching his fists. “We have to.”

Ladybug closed her eyes. What would Master Fu have done in a time like this? What could she do? After all, wasn’t she just a girl that bit off more than she can chew?

“How many of you can fight?” Ladybug asked, looking at the group before her. For a moment, there was hesitation amongst the group.

“We can.” Rena Rouge said, picking herself up and then offering a hand for Carapace.

“I can.” Queen Bee snapped. There was anger in her eyes. How could that treacherous man beat her friends like that? How could he willingly destroy Paris?

“Us too.” Viperion murmured, offering a hand to Ryuuko. She took it, but staggered as she took a step forward. “You’re still hurt.”

“I-I have to keep fighting. For my family.” Ryuuko said through gritted teeth. Ladybug smiled, walking over to her. Chat Noir noticed the slight limp in her step.

“Ryuuko.” Ladybug started, placing a hand on her shoulder. “I appreciate your willingness and drive to fight. What you’ve done today for Paris will bring honor to you and your family. But I can’t allow my friend to go back and fight knowing that they are hurt.”

“Ladybug...” Ryuuko started, eyes watering. Ladybug pulled her into an embrace.

“Please. Rest up and take care of the others.” Ladybug said, a tear spilling from her eyes. Ryuuko nodded.

“What the plan, LB?” Chat Noir asked.

“We finish this. Once and for all.”

Day Five: The End

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Returning to the square, dread filled Ladybug and Chat Noir's being. Despite seeing Lila's limp body laying on the ground, it was the two figures that stood ahead of them that made their hearts stop: Hawkmoth and Mayura.

It was the early hours of the morning of the fifth day.

"So the baker's daughter has finally come out to play?" Hawkmoth said evilly. He saw Ladybug's face flush. "What's the matter? Or...have you not told them yet?"

"Stop it!" Ladybug roared. Chat Noir put a hand on her shoulder, giving it a gentle squeeze. Ladybug took a deep breath, closing her eyes.

"Better keep your emotions in check, I'm sure your beloved team wouldn't want their Ladybug akumatized." Hawkmoth egged on.

"We're not afraid of you, Hawkmoth!" Rena Rouge called out. Hawkmoth turned to the girl.

"Alya Cesaire...such a spitfire." Hawkmoth observed. "You'll all get in the way. Mayura."

Mayura snapped her fingers and the remainder of the Miraculous sentimonsters appeared in front of her. "We'll take care of the sentimontsters, Ladybug." Queen Bee announced. Their team nodded in agreement and collectively, they bounded into the fight.

"It's two-on-two Hawkmoth." Chat Noir said fiercely. "This ends today."

Hawkmoth nodded. "It does." He replied, before bounding forward in a sprint. Ladybug took off first, meeting Hawkmoth in the center of the square. She crossed her forearms in front of her, blocking the cane that Hawkmoth had tried to strike her down with.

"Why are you doing this?" Ladybug cried out, face to face with Hawkmoth. Chat Noir ran after Mayura.

"I'm doing this to fix everything." He replied, lifting his knee and ramming it into her stomach. Ladybug cried out as she suddenly became winded. She fell to the ground, trying to catch her breath.

Hawkmoth brought his foot up to Ladybug's face in attempt to kick it, but the hero moved to the side just in time for it to miss. She gripped onto his foot, and pulled it forward. Hawkmoth lost balance and fell to the ground.

Ladybug threw her weight onto Hawkmoth, catching his eyes once again. They were *silver*. She pinned his hands above his head, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Stop this, Hawkmoth. I don't want to hurt you."

Hawkmoth roared, pushing Ladybug off of himself. “Hurt me? HURT ME?” He laughed, picking himself off the ground. “You’re just a child, *Marinette!*”

Stopping in her tracks, she gasped. His voice echoed the throughout the square, and for a moment, her teammates turned to her. Queen Bee... Viperion...they didn’t know.

“How could you keep your identity from them?” Hawkmoth snickered, throwing himself at her once more. She was caught off guard, and tumbled.

“Ladybug is...Marinette?” Queen Bee murmured. From across way, Chat Noir pushed Mayura to the ground.

“Focus, Queen Bee!” He snapped, locking eyes with her.

It was Marinette... Marinette Dupain-Cheng who she always despised. She always butted heads with the designer. When she started dating Adrien, nothing else ignited such a fire within her. But it was also Marinette Dupain-Cheng who forgave her... and allowed a second chance.

Queen Bee turned to the sentimonster. “I won’t let you hurt my friend!”

Chat Noir felt his knees give way as Mayura hit out at them. He fell to the ground and felt the weight of her upon him. “Get off of me.” He snapped, swinging out with his fist. Mayura blocked it.

“Please understand, he is doing this for a good cause.” Mayura said almost pleadingly. Chat Noir’s eyes fell upon the brooch on her chest.

“It doesn’t matter what he is doing it for.” Chat Noir replied, trying to wriggle out from beneath her. “He’s an evil and wicked man.”

“He’s doing this for the ones he loves!” Mayura protested. Chat Noir swiped at her chest and managed to push her off. He felt something between his fingers.

“I’m doing this for the ones I love.” He replied, glancing at the brooch now in the palm of his hand. Chat Noir looked up to see the user, completely detransformed. He felt his words get caught in his throat as Nathalie knelled there. “W-What?” He said in shock.

It was too late for him to react, as something rammed him in the side, knocking him over. He grimaced on the ground, clutching at his ribs. Ladybug came to his side. “A-Are you alright?” She asked.

“Get out of here!” Hawkmoth ordered to Nathalie. The woman got back up on her feet and took off.

“I’ll be okay—LOOK OUT!” Chat Noir said, gripping Ladybug and rolling her over his body to miss Hawkmoth’s cane that flew past him.

They tumbled, Ladybug rolling into a lamp post. She groaned in pain. “Chat...”

Chat Noir felt someone grip at his collar, lifting him off the ground. His baton was just out of reach, as he struggled against Hawkmoth's grip.

With all his strength, Hawkmoth threw Chat Noir up against the wall. With the force behind it, Chat Noir felt pain course throughout his body. As his hand hit the wall, suddenly realization washed over him as his ring flew off.

Plagg was forced to call off the transformation, and in a flurry of green light was Adrien, desperately trying to fight the hand that was gripping at his throat. Adrien's eyes locked with Hawkmoth's, and for a second he saw the supervillain falter.

"Oh Adrien. It had to be you." Hawkmoth said in disappointment.

Adrien continued to fight, even when it was incredibly hard to breath. "Y-You...don't know...me!" He choked out. Hawkmoth turned to Ladybug, who stood there in shock.

"What are you going to do, Marinette? Give me your Miraculous or watch the love of your life perish?" Hawkmoth said wickedly. Ladybug felt something bump up against her left foot, and saw the ring the Adrien had lost. It rolled all the way over to her.

Even with the dread that was washing over her, she persisted.

This is for Paris.

Ladybug reached to the ground, grabbing the silver ring. "Hand it over to me, Ladybug." Hawkmoth called.

This is for mom and dad.

"You can't break me, Hawkmoth." Ladybug said quietly. Adrien sputtered, gasping for breath as Hawkmoth's grip grew tighter. "You've hurt too many people."

This is for Master Fu.

"Fight, M-M-Marinette." Adrien cried. "I l-love you."

Ladybug stood there for a moment, eyes watching Hawkmoth. "It's you and me, Hawkmoth." She paused, wiping the blood that had dripped down the side of her face.

This is for Alya and Nino.

"Give me the miraculous!" Hawkmoth roared. Ladybug looked at the ring in the palm of her hand. The Black Cat Miraculous, which grants the power of destruction.

This is for my friends.

Looking up once again, their eyes locked. It was the light from the fire that illuminated his face. It was eerily familiar—stone cold...reserved...emotionless...silver.

This is for my Miraculous team.

It clicked, and suddenly, she felt ill. “Gabriel Agreste.” She murmured, holding the ring between her right hand’s index finger and thumb. She lined it up with the ring finger on her left hand. “Gabriel Agreste!” She screamed out, tears streaming from her eyes. “How dare you!”

This is for Chat Noir.

Across from her, Hawkmoth suddenly felt small. He released his grip on Adrien, and the boy slid down the wall, barely keeping consciousness. “W-What?” He croaked.

Ladybug slipped the ring onto her finger. “How dare you, attack Paris.” Ladybug seethed. “How dare you hurt thousands of innocent lives for your own selfish needs.”

“You don’t know what you’re doing!” Hawkmoth said, inching closer to Ladybug. “You don’t kn—”

“Shut up!” Ladybug shrieked, her eyes flashing wide. “Look what you’ve done.” She said quietly, emotionless.

They stood there in silence, the fires crackling around them. Her team, was defeated. They lay scattered across the courtyard, taken down while trying to defeat the sentimonster versions of themselves—just a moment too late as they had disappeared the moment Chat Noir swiped the brooch. Paris was destroyed amidst the battle. Not even her Miraculous Ladybug could fix it.

Adrien, through the slits of his eyes, watched Ladybug closely. He couldn’t feel much of his body. Every breath he took felt like it burned his throat and lungs. There had to have been a few ribs that were broken.

“You’ve forced me hand.” Ladybug murmured. She intertwined her hands together in front of her. “Tikki...Plagg, unify!”

“NO!” Hawkmoth roared, eyes wide open, scared.

It had been different than before. Every time she had combined a Miraculous, it drained her. She felt physically and mentally tired—it took an incredibly large toll against her. However, the energy that flowed within her now was warm, and it filled her spirit.

Stood before them, was Ladybug—her costume looked different though. Green paw prints appeared on her spots and a small bell hung from her neck. Upon her head little black ears appeared. Around her waist, a black belt was strapped, looking very similar to the one Chat Noir always had.

In a strange turn of events, one of her eyes turned emerald.

“You...you’re just a child! You don’t understand the power you possess.” Hawkmoth spat, taking off into a sprint. The superheroine lifted her hand slowly, and Hawkmoth stopped in his place as if forced by an unknown power. “W-What?”

Her eyes grew fierce. “The power to change reality.” She breathed. “That doesn’t just mean a wish.”

“Give me the Miraculous!” Hawkmoth cried out, stumbling back, released from the invisible force.

“Gabriel Agreste...I wish I could know what you wanted so badly that you would destroy your home, your city...your *son*.” Ladybug said sadly. “What turned you into such a cold man?”

Hawkmoth gripped onto his cane tightly. “I’m trying to fix everything for my family!” He retorted. Hawkmoth lifted his cane, aiming for Ladybug. “I’ll kill you!” He yelled, hurling it with all his might.

This is for Adrien. This is for me.

Ladybug closed her eyes, before reciting: “*Reality!*”

For Marinette, everything went white.

Hawkmoth was blown backwards as her body was surrounded by a faint blue light. The girl before him began to hover a few feet off the ground, winds erupting from her and pushing against him. He held up a hand to try to shield him from the force.

“Marinette!” Adrien called from the ground, trying to pick himself up. He watched in horror as suddenly, her eyes glowed white. “What did you do, Bugaboo?”

“What do you want, Marinette Dupain-Cheng?”

It was a voice, that seemed to echo within her own head. The voice was familiar, and yet she could not place to whom it belonged to.

“What do I want?” Marinette repeated. All she could see was white. What happened? Where was she? “I don’t understand your question.”

“You called upon the ancient power of when the Ladybug Miraculous and the Black Cat Miraculous are combined.” The voice replied. “You called upon the forces that change reality.”

“Oh.” Was all she could reply. “Who are you?”

The voice in her head chuckled. “Dearest, Marinette. You don’t even remember this young Master?”

It clicked in her head. “Master Fu?” She gasped. “Is that really you?”

“Of course it is me.” Master Fu replied.

“I don’t understand. Your memories were erased.” Marinette said suddenly. “How do you know who I am?”

“My memories might have been erased in my physical body, but the spirits and souls of the Guardians of the Miraculous will always live on. Forever, we will reside in between planes of existence. Granting the wish of whoever holds the Ladybug and Black Cat Miraculous.” Master Fu explained. “As I’ve warned you before, the universe must stay in balance. For every action, there is a reaction.”

“So I ask again, Marinette Dupain-Cheng. What is your wish?”

Marinette thought for a moment. “I wish for happiness...for everyone.”

And the world, both where she was and the world around her, was enveloped in a white light.

When Adrien Agreste woke up, he was kind of annoyed. There was a horrible *beep!* that went off every few seconds. His eyes fluttered opened, and he was greeted by something that should have been impossible.

“Gabriel, dear, he’s waking up.” A feminine voice gasped. Adrien felt a hand close around his. “Adrien?”

His eyes scanned the face before him. One he hadn’t seen in so, so, so long. “M-Mom?” He said in disbelief. Emilie Agreste smiled, tears pricking at the corners of her eyes. “Is it really you?”

Emilie smiled. “Of course it is me, silly.” She said, running her hand over her son’s head. “Your father and I were so worried about you.”

Adrien’s eyes wondered over to his father’s. Gabriel was sitting there, worry etched across his face. “My son, I’m so glad you’re alright.” He said, walking over and embracing him. Adrien sat there in shock.

“I don’t understand...what happened?” He asked his parents. Emilie and Gabriel looked at each other.

“Hawkmoth was defeated by Ladybug and Chat Noir.” Gabriel replied. Adrien looked down at his hand and noticed that his ring was missing.

What happened?

Adrien searched the depths of his memories. He saw Ladybug standing there, yelling out the identity of Hawkmoth. Yet, every time she said his name, it was muffled and he could not hear it.

He remembered Ladybug combining his Miraculous with hers. And then nothing.

“Marinette!” He yelled out suddenly. “Where is she?” Adrien asked, searching the room. Emilie placed a hand on his leg. “Mother...”

“Your girlfriend is alright.” She soothed. “I can’t believe you two almost became casualties of Hawkmoth fighting Ladybug and Chat Noir.”

“I have to see Marinette.” Adrien said, whipping off his blankets. He unhooked himself from the hospital machines.

“Son...you need to rest.” Gabriel said kindly. Tears began to leak from Adrien’s eyes.

“P-Please.” Adrien begged. Gabriel and Emilie looked at each other, before sighing.

“She’s one room over.” His mother said. Adrien swung his legs over the bedside, landing on the cool tile floor. It made him shiver, as he tore out of the room and into the next one over.

There, Marinette sat, a pencil in hand, drawing on a notepad. Tom and Sabine sat in the corner, asleep. Marinette looked up, eyes locking with Adrien. “Marinette.” He breathed, taking a step closer to his best friend. Her eyes were still different colors. The girl smiled.

“We did it, kitty.”

Chapter End Notes

Don't you worry, fellow readers. The story isn't over.

The Aftermat

Chapter Notes

First, I need to apologize for my absence. The school semester finished and then I went to England/Germany on like a "life-changing solo trip across the world." Then after I had to go back to university because I was working like a million hours a week and now I finally have time to add another chapter. Don't worry fellow readers, this story is far from over. Happy reading!

Her voice reached his ears and instantly, he felt his body relax all the tensed-up muscles he didn't know he had been holding. In just a few short strides, Adrien made his way to her, his eyes watering.

She smiled lovingly, reaching out to him. He took her hand in his, and with his other, caressed her cheek. "I love you Marinette." He whispered, a tear rolling down his cheek.

"Why are you crying?" She giggled, wiping away his tear. Adrien leaned into her touch.

"Because I'm so happy." He replied, leaning forwards and kissing her forehead. "Because I love you with all my heart and I would have been devastated if something were to happen to you."

Marinette searched his eyes. "I'm right here, Adrien." She replied. "And I always will be."

Adrien's heart fluttered in his chest. Oh, how this girl had driven him crazy. The way she had always been there, both in and out of the costume. How he had fallen in love with the girl behind the mask, who was selfless and dedicated to saving the people of Paris. Then, suddenly falling in love with Marinette, one of his best friends who had always been there for him and their friends. Whose kindness and love radiated to anyone she met.

His Marinette. His Ladybug. His everything.

"I believe this belongs to you." Marinette said, catching his attention once more. Adrien glanced down and watched her take off his Miraculous ring. She held it out on the palm of her hand.

Adrien smiled, gently plucking the ring from her hand and slipping it onto his finger. "I guess it came in handy." He murmured, remembering bits and pieces of what happened just the night before.

Marinette looked at her hospital blankets sheepishly. "Adrien—"

“Mr. Agreste.” A voice called from the doorway. Adrien and Marinette turned to see a doctor standing there, a clipboard in hand. “I would appreciate it, if you didn’t unplug yourself from our machines.” He chuckled.

Marinette stared at him; eyes wide. “Adrien, you did *what?*”

Adrien sighed. “I’m sorry sir.” He apologized. “I just...I needed to be with Marinette. I was so worried about her.” He explained. The doctor nodded, before turning to the nurse next to him. He whispered something to her before she took off.

“You’ll be switching rooms.” The doctor said. “If it means you will stop unhooking yourself from machines meant to save your life, you’ll now be sharing a room with Miss Dupain-Cheng for a few days.”

“For...a few days?” Marinette asked. “Excuse me doctor, but what exactly are we being kept for?”

The doctor peered at the clipboard in his hand. “It seems Mr. Agreste and you, Miss Dupain-Cheng, have sustained an incredible amount of internal injuries. You both might not be feeling it much right now because of the medication we’ve prescribed.” The doctor paused. “Additionally, your parents have asked we us to take a look at your eyes.”

Adrien glanced at Marinette, who looked confused. “My eyes?” She murmured.

“You...you don’t know?” Adrien asked. Marinette shook her head. On the nightstand, Adrien grabbed the phone—presumably Marinette’s parents—and opened up the front facing camera. Marinette stared at herself for a moment.

“Oh.” She said, blinking rapidly. “W-What?”

Adrien shrugged. “Mari, I have no idea.” He said. “I think we need to talk later though.” He added in a whisper.

After having an additional hospital bed set up in the same room as Marinette’s, Adrien found himself once more laying down, wires and chords running all around himself. Gabriel and Emilie, and Tom and Sabine had gone home for the evening, after staying at the hospital all day with their children.

When it was just the two of them, beds pressed together, it finally hit them.

It might have been the adrenaline running through them the entire course of the day, maybe it was the medication, or it might have been the animated talks between parents and children on what exactly had happened between Hawkmoth, Ladybug and Chat Noir, but overall, Marinette and Adrien hadn’t really felt much pain until they were left alone.

As the sun set over the horizon and darkness appeared in the world around them, there they sat with hands intertwined and eyes closed, trying to concentrate on each of their ailments.

“This sucks.” Adrien breath, a hand on his abdomen. He felt nauseous. From his side, Marinette peered at him from half lidded eyes.

“A price to pay to save the world.” She grumbled, nuzzling closer to him. With their beds pressed together, was it really a surprise that they found themselves in each other’s arms?

“Shh!”

It was the tiniest of voices, that had uttered those words. But even so, it had caught the attention of Marinette and Adrien. “Umm...” Marinette murmured, looking around unsure. “Hello?”

“Plagg? Tikki? Is that you guys?” Adrien added, eyes darting around the room.

“You’re okay!” It was Plagg that had taken the liberty to zoom across the room and straight into Adrien’s cheek.

“Oof—Plagg!” Adrien had said in surprise. Following the black cat kwami, Tikki trailed behind. Marinette reached out her hand, and her kwami had nuzzled into it with affection.

“Oh Marinette. I was so worried about you.” Tikki said, hugging her owner’s thumb. The girl smiled.

“I’m sorry I worried you, Tikki.” She replied sweetly. Marinette turned to Adrien and Plagg. “I’m sorry I worried all of you.”

“I think we should talk about what happened.” Adrien said, with slight urgency. In all honesty, since he had woken up that morning, he had such a hard time remember anything and everything. He had questions about what happened and how they ended up where they were.

“Do you remember what happened at all?” Plagg asked Adrien. He looked down at his kwami and shrugged.

“I mean...I remember bits and pieces.” He replied, closing his eyes.

What did you do, Bugaboo? It echoed loudly in his memories. In the distance, he saw her, Ladybug, holding his Miraculous and slipping it onto her finger. She was shouting angrily, tears running down her cheeks. Ladybug was bloodied and bruised and around her and within her a fire raged. Yet, every time she shouted his name—Hawkmoth’s identity—it seemed to come out as nothing. Her lips were moving and yet no words left her.

“Marinette, you found out Hawkmoth’s identity.” Adrien stated. “But for the life of me I can’t remember who you said.”

Marinette frowned, looking out the window. “Adrien...I can’t remember either.” She replied honestly.

She remembered, for the most part the moment that it clicked. She could feel herself connecting the dots, of everything that had happened within the last two years fighting as

Ladybug and Chat Noir against Hawkmoth, and then—nothing. Like she had the name on the tip of her tongue, but couldn't place it.

Adrien's brows raised in surprise. "R-Really?" He asked. Marinette nodded, looking down. From where Tikki was floating, she stared at her owner's eyes.

"...A side effect of using *Reality*." She mumbled. Marinette glanced down at the kwami, looking confused. "Your wish came true...didn't it?"

"So you actually did it?" Adrien gasped.

Marinette felt like her head was going to explode. Her head throbbed, trying to search the depths of her memories for answers she felt like she had to have. "I don't know...I don't know." She murmured repeatedly.

Adrien, suddenly alarmed, reached over and embraced her gently. "Marinette...please don't stress yourself out. We're recovering. We're not the strongest and it's okay for us to not have answers. I didn't mean to stress you out."

Marinette knew there was a reason why she was in love with Adrien Agreste. Indeed, it had been his kindness and selflessness, but it was also his generosity, his thirst to protect the ones he loves, to live and love with all his heart, even when everything seemed against him.

Marinette took a deep breath, before nodding. "No...it's fine. We need to understand what happened."

Tikki looked at Plagg. The red kwami turned to her owner once more. "Well, Marinette. What happened?"

Marinette reached a hand out for Adrien's, before shutting her eyes tightly. "Everyone...everyone had been defeated. Volpina's sentimonsters had gotten the better of our Miraculous team and—Hawkmoth had Chat Noir pinned up against the wall."

The memory fought in her violently. It struck fear in her heart and made her stomach churn. Just remembering the fear in Adrien's eyes as his ring had slid loose—how Hawkmoth looked so disappointed to find out it had been Adrien behind Chat Noir's mask.

She remembered feeling the Miraculous slipping onto her finger and just *knowing* exactly what to say to activate the power within the magical jewelry.

"I combined the Miraculous to save...to save everyone." Marinette said finally. "I didn't have a choice. I mean...everything just *clicked*. Like this is what needed to be done in order to finally save Paris. To save the ones I love."

Adrien frowned. "But...how did you know that was the right thing to do?"

Marinette sighed, looking between the audience of three that she had before her. "Like I said...it just sort of clicked. I had just witnessed the defeat of our Miraculous team, I had seen my partner's identity to have been revealed to our greatest enemy, and I had finally recognized who was under Hawkmoth's mask. It was just...the final thing to do."

“What did you wish for?” It was Plagg’s question. Marinette, for some reason was slightly taken aback. Plagg looked between the two teenagers. “Well...maybe your wish had something to do with the missing pieces of memory you both seem to have lost.”

It was plausible.

Marinette bit the inside of her cheek nervously as she tried to remember. It felt like her own voice was echoing throughout the walls of her mind.

I wish for happiness.

“Happiness.” She said honestly, looking down at the blanket that was scrunched up in between her fingers. The silence that followed was deafening, and Marinette brought her gaze to Adrien. He sat there, flicking between her emerald and sapphire eyes, yet he did not say anything.

His silence had reason. The happiness that he had felt when he had woken up and seen the familiar face of his mother—it had filled a hole in his heart that had been empty for years. Emilie Agreste, sitting there alive and in the flesh, with a smile on her lips and love in her eyes.

His brow furrowed. “What specifically was your wish? Like, word-for-word.” Adrien asked. Marinette blinked for a few moments, before tearing her gaze away from him. She glanced at Tikki, her kwami.

“I wished for happiness...for everyone.” She replied. Marinette sighed. “But why does that even matter?”

Plagg, who had stayed relatively quiet for a while, finally spoke. “That explains why you don’t remember Hawkmoth’s identity.” The kwami said animatedly. “Perhaps both of you would have been upset with who Hawkmoth really was, and so *Reality* wiped the name from your memory.”

Marinette played around with the idea. “I mean...I guess—”

Adrien gasped suddenly. “That’s why my mother is here.” He said, smiling. “Marinette, you knew how much my father and I have missed my mother. Things have changed since she’s been gone—but she’s back now.”

“The wish probably gave Hawkmoth whatever he had been so desperate for.” Tikki added, a little red hand on her chin as she thoughtfully wondered. “He is defeated, isn’t he?”

But in the back of everyone’s mind, there was still something that had bothered them:

What was the price paid for Marinette’s wish?

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