

a new iteration

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Characters: [Marinette Dupain-Cheng | Ladybug](#), [Adrien Agreste | Chat Noir](#), [Tikki \(Miraculous Ladybug\)](#), [Plagg \(Miraculous Ladybug\)](#), [Alya Césaire](#), [Nino Lahiffe](#), [Chloé Bourgeois](#), [Kagami Tsurugi](#), [Luka Couffaine](#), [Juleka Couffaine](#), [Rose Lavillant](#), [Alix Kubdel](#), [Max Kanté](#), [Lê Chiên Kim](#), [Ivan Bruel](#), [Mylène Haprèle](#), [Sabrina Raincomprix](#), [Nadja Chamack](#), [Nathaniel Kurtzberg](#), [Marc Anciel](#), [Original Miraculous Ladybug Character\(s\)](#), (just to round out some backgrounds), [Master Fu \(Miraculous Ladybug\)](#), [Gabriel Agreste](#), [hope i got everyone lol](#)

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a new iteration

by [Lolly047](#)

Summary

“We could test whether kitties still land on their feet when tied up,” she offered sweetly.

As expected, this had him flinching.

“Or,” she began, the words already leaving a sour taste in her mouth, “we could try something different this time around.”

This isn't their first life on this earth. It is the first time in a long while that they have to work together though.

Notes

Disclaimer:

I don't own these characters, but I like to play with them ;)

Reincarnation AU, Enemies-to-Lovers (kinda?), crack and magical lore galore (these way-too-old teenagers need so much sleep)

cautiously giving this a mature warning? not sure, the whole story is not written up yet, but it does go a lot angstier than i expected it to lol, lemme know if i should change it

TW: past deaths/murder (off-screen, but mentioned); lots of swearing, lots of loss of trust and slow build-up back

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

New dance, same partner

Chapter Summary

Ladybug and Chat Noir enter the stage once more - but is the new Butterfly holder their biggest issue?

Chapter Notes

i swear this concept was much fluffier and funnier when i came up with it and then it... came out like this

enjoy xD

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

For fifteen years of her life, she'd been numb.

It wasn't a bad life by any means – but it had been muted. Parts of her hadn't been right, had never been right. Missing, she would have said, if she could ever put a finger on the feeling. But you can't miss what you don't even know exists.

You can't know you aren't whole, haven't been whole in a long time, before you are.

Until one day, when she was closer to sixteen than fifteen, she opened a box and became whole once more.

In a different part of the city than her, he opened a box too, and everything fell into place.

“-can’t believe I’m saying this, but this stone monster is attacking the streets of Paris!” Nadja yelled into her microphone. Then, “I’m advising everyone to seek shelter until the situat-”

Jean, her cameraman saw the giant fist coming their way. He couldn’t get out more of a strangled gasp to warn her, before they were both knocked to the side.

“Woah there, buddy!” A new figure called, stepping between the stone monstrosity and the reporting duo. “Far be it from me to be mad about destruction for destruction’s sake, but manslaughter is pushing it a bit.”

The giant stone monster roared, its yellow eyes focusing on the figure in black. The size difference between the two was enormous, and yet, the man didn’t tremble in fear. Instead, he calmly leaned on a walking stick of sorts, as if he were talking to a friendly acquaintance, as opposed to a towering monstrosity.

Nadja, still numbly sitting on the ground to where she was pushed, reached out to direct the camera towards the monster and the man in the costume talking to it.

“...you’re seeing this too, right?” she whispered to her colleague.

Jean nodded. This was very far from what he signed up for, when he applied to be Nadja’s on-field cameraman, but damn if they weren’t a good team. He knew how to get a good shot and he was going to do his job even if it killed him.

(He refused to contemplate the fact that doing his job literally almost got him killed less than a minute ago.)

Nadja nodded too, mostly to herself, and grabbed tighter onto her microphone that still seemed to be functioning despite the fall. She stood swiftly, and dusted off her clothes.

Jean and his camera followed with quiet professionalism.

It seemed the man and the monster had stopped conversing – if the one sided jabs and the roaring could be called a conversation –, because the monster was back to swishing its fists towards them again.

“Rude,” the man said, clicking his tongue. He didn’t even try to run.

He raised the stick he was leaning on, somehow expanding it and spun it with both hands so fast, it smacked away the stone giant’s fists.

The giant clearly didn’t like this, as it roared and tried again.

“I could do this all day, you know!”

“...it seems a new player has appeared on the scene,” Nadja began to narrate. Her eyes stuck to the man, who still had his back to them; with every spin, his skin-tight clothes rippled as his muscles worked, and yet, the spinning never tired. “Could it be that Paris is not only seeing a monster, but a valiant hero has shown up to take care of the threat on the very same day?”

The man snorted then.

It was barely a second, and yet, enough to allow a break in his concentration. One of the stone monster's fists punched through his spines and the man went flying.

Nadja, Jean, and the camera all watched as he arched through the air like a cartoon character.

He landed with a loud smack across the pavement.

Nadja and Jean exchanged a look.

The monster roared, and spun to find its previous prey. Its yellow eyes quickly found the boy, who was stupid enough to keep cowering nearby.

Unseen by the people, a glowing purple mask appeared around its face. The giant rumbled, unable to form words, and was granted permission to pursue its prey – for now. The butterfly wanted *both*, after all, and the ladybug hasn't shown its face yet.

The stone monster could always come back for the cat later.

Meanwhile, Nadja and Jean came to the silent conclusion that they should check on their savior, but avoid showing him on camera, in case he had any visible injuries... Or worse.

Nadja led the charge, as usual, and her eyes darted back to the giant for a moment. "It's leaving," she hissed to Jean.

Jean shrugged. (The motion hurt. Probably from being thrown to the ground earlier – not that being thrown around was worse than being squished to death by a giant stone fist. Again, Jean would freak out about this later, probably in the company of a bottle of the first alcohol he came across.) This shrug conveyed how much he didn't know what that meant, but that it was much easier for the two of them not to be a target of the giant's once more.

Nadja huffed, but didn't say anything; they reached the man lying in a heap on the ground.

A *groaning* heap. He was alive.

(For now.)

Nadja leaned over him, trying to find any traces of injury – but the black leather seemed flawless. *Maybe he has inner bleeding*, Nadja's mind suggested unhelpfully.

"Are you alright, monsieur?" She asked, even though the question didn't seem to be relevant. Who *would* be okay after being smacked around like that?

"Just a few secs," came the hushed reply. His eyes were still screwed together. "The suit absorbs less than I remember."

Suit, Nadja noted, was what he called his outfit. She allowed her eyes to roam over the look, and allowed herself to take in the-

Bell?

She blinked. She didn't hit her head, she didn't think, but to have the leather suit accompanied by that bell-

...he had cat ears.

The man who saved her and Jean had cat ears and a bell.

And, as he slowly opened his eyes, experimentally at first, she could make out slits instead of normal pupils.

Nadja breathed in, then breathed out. She sneaked a glance towards Jean.

Jean nodded heavily. A catboy. Man. They were dealing with a catboy-man. A catman.

After the stone giant, it honestly shouldn't have felt like such a stretch of the imagination.

(It still was.)

The catman groaned as he slowly rotated his neck and the rest of his limbs. He didn't exactly move as if he was in big pain – well, he did, but not as someone who had any need for a couple dozen surgeries, but rather like someone in need of a warm bath and lots of bedrest. His face, covered by a black mask, wasn't even an unnatural color, as best as Jean could tell. Sure, he was pale, but that seemed in-line with the rest of his skin tone.

A superhero catboy-man, then, Jean decided, and slowly lifted the camera back onto his shoulders. Knowing his partner, Nadja would snap back into reporter mode soon.

She didn't disappoint.

“The people of Paris need to know,” she began passionately, “who are you to have shown up in our hour of need? Is saving myself and my colleague just the beginning, are you the hero sent to save us all?”

With that, she stuck the microphone under his nose.

The catman raised an eyebrow and leaned away from the microphone. “Is that what you think I am?” He asked, amusement audible in his tone. “A hero?”

“You saved us,” Nadja argued, snapping her microphone back only for a few beats. “When that monster tried to hurt us, you stepped in to save us civilians. That is what a hero, a superhero does.” She took a moment to consider, before firing a new question. “Can Paris hope to rely on you in the future, monsieur...?”

He tilted his head to the side. “...Chat Noir. Call me Chat Noir.” He smirked. “It has a dramatic flair, but keeps things simple, no?” He stood, and Nadja's microphone and Jean's camera followed his movement. From his back, he pulled out a small baton, which expanded to the size he used previously – a weapon of his choice, perhaps? “And as for the rest... We'll see.”

His eyes flickered over to the rooftops where a blur of red was quickly moving, right in the direction the monster disappeared in.

Chat Noir locked eyes with Nadja, Jean and the camera, and threw up a two-fingered salute. “Cat-ch you later.”

Without waiting for a response, his baton extended and he jumped, leaping for the rooftops. The camera followed him, until he disappeared from sight, Nadja yelling questions that he didn’t stop to answer.

Jean finally turned the lenses back on her, and Nadja took a deep breath, steadying her ruffled feathers. She beamed at the camera. “You’ve heard it here first, Paris – where the police and the special forces fail to counter a supernatural foe, we might just discover a new hero: Chat Noir!”

“...is that a freaking yoyo?”

She turned on her heel so fast, her hair smacked her in the face. “*You*,” she hissed.

He leaned on a baton, posture false-relaxed. “Bug,” he greeted. “How nice to run into you again in Paris of all places.”

She wanted to tug at his ears until he was yowling in pain. Instead, she continued glaring. “Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t punt you into the Seine *right now*, Cat.”

“It’s Chat Noir now, actually,” he said, not answering her as he was wont to do. He eyed her, still far enough away from her to consider himself to be in a safe distance. She wondered if his baton hid a sword, or if it was just a very heavy piece of metal. “Your outfit isn’t very inspired this go around. Is everything okay, Bug?”

She couldn’t help snorting. “Says you. Tell me you are trying too hard to be cool without telling me?” She gestured at him. “*No one* wears this much leather.” Her eyes got caught on his throat and she chortled. “And is that a fucking bell?!”

His eyebrows knotted and one of his hands came up to his throat... He groaned in defeat. “Plaaaaagg!” He looked aside darkly. “It wasn’t my fault I couldn’t immediately find the good camembert.”

She smirked at him. “Tikki and I are getting along fabulously,” she boasted.

He gave her a look. “Is that why you got saddled with the most boring outfit since the creation of superheroes?”

“Oh, fuck off,” she huffed, gripping her yoyo tighter. “This is just a trial run. I didn’t want to get any of your blood on one of her better designs.”

His tail gave a twitch, but otherwise he didn’t move. “How are you going to manage that with a yoyo?” He wondered, either truly fascinated or stalling. “I could get how you’d strangle me with that, but where does the blood part come in?”

“We could test whether kitties still land on their feet when tied up,” she offered sweetly.

As expected, this had him flinching.

“Or,” she began, the words already leaving a sour taste in her mouth, “we could try something different this time around.”

His cat-like pupils widened, before narrowing back to slits. His smile came languidly. “You took the Guardian’s wishes seriously?” *You*, he didn't specify.

She ignored the underlying jab. “The butterfly is in the wrong hands,” she said.

He waved it off. “I’ve fought beside a butterfly before; it’s no big deal.”

She stored that information away, even as she pretended that he didn’t speak, “If you prove I can trust you with others’ safety, we can work together to retrieve it.”

“And after?” He didn’t take a single step towards her. His eyes were narrowed, and his ears were fully turned in her direction.

“I will get back at you for the last time, of course.” She smiled, full teeth. He chuckled, leaning ahead on his baton playfully.

“You know that was just payback for you poisoning me?” Despite his words, his smile came out earnestly. “A truce, then.”

“*If* you can prove yourself,” she stressed. Time was ticking, and they were sitting ducks for way too long. She could hear the giant rummaging around the city with every second they wasted.

He stretched, raising his baton behind his back. “You know I never back down from a challenge.”

She shot him an amused look; one daring him to go ahead and try.

After all the years together, she knew the best way to motivate him, after all.

Alya was pedaling after the stone giant like crazy, phone at the ready and recording – she'd fallen behind for a bit, but was able to catch up after the giant stopped to quarrel with a boy in a black costume. She didn't really get a good look, being too late to the scene, but that was a real life superhero! It had to be! And she was going to get footage of the fight if it killed her!

She skidded to a stop near the stadium that had a massive hole smashed into it. She heard the noises of the fight before she stepped in; but avoiding most of the debris, she made a beeline for the side, where an audience would usually sit and watch football or the like.

She positioned her camera to take in the stone giant – it really needed a cooler name to fit the villain aesthetics better – and the two figures fighting it. It looked to be a tricky thing, because every time the giant was hit too hard, it grew in size – not that she noticed.

Alya was busy squealing. Two heroes! It wasn't *just* the black costumed superhero; there was another one in red!

She zoomed in as best as she could – and yes, that was a second hero! One with black spots on their costume. Polka dots, Alya would have called it, if she knew that word. So they weren't color-coded heroes, she considered, while watching the fight. She kept a running commentary out loud too, mostly about their moves, and the names she guessed the two could have – all superheroes had a cool name, of course!

And every superhero needed a reliable journalist to document their fights. Alya would be just that!

With growing excitement, she realized that the fight was heading her way. With a little straining of the ears, she could make out a *conversation* between the heroes.

“-still don't get the yoyo!”

“It's pacifistic!”

The black hero stopped blocking with his weapon to laugh. “You? A pacifist?”

“Pay attention!” The hero in red yelled, snapping him away with her... yoyo, Alya noted excitedly. And they were working together! A superhero duo or a hero and their sidekick?

“I have no idea which one of them could be a sidekick,” Alya muttered to her camera, and the ongoing stream which had a view count in the high thousands and growing by the second. “So probably, partners?”

She was more than happy to just watch them battle the stone giant and evade its gigantic fists, but even she could tell this wouldn't work forever. Just as Alya was about to remark on this, the spotted hero let out a loud noise of frustration. “I've had enough!”

She gathered her yoyo back, and threw it to the sky. “Lucky Charm!”

Alya forgot to breathe. “They have *magic attacks*?!”

They did. Alya was starting to feel like she had a heartburn from excitement.

And then the heroes went to her for help and the day got *even better*.

“*Call me Ladybug,*” the spotted heroine said into the shaky camera, an arm around the boy who was transformed into the stone giant.

“*How original,*” could be heard vaguely in the background. Ladybug’s face tightened for a second, before she brightened.

“*And this stray here is Chat Noir! Any problems you have, he’ll help you with it; babysitting, taking the dog out for a walk-*”

“*Ha, ha,*” the hero in black leather held up his hands. “*Pettiness is a bad look on you, Bug.*”

“*You haven’t seen me be petty yet!*” She replied cheerfully. There was a faint beeping sound, and she palmed one of her ears.

“*Alas, we have to take our leave,*” Chat Noir said, bowing. He winked as he straightened. “*Until next time, Paris!*”

The two heroes practically flew away with their weapons, the shaky camera following them. The boy who was a monster remained, as well as the other one he lumped around, and the camera turned to focus on a way too excited girl, who started yapping immediately about the heroes-

He froze the video.

“What were the chances,” he muttered darkly, and yet, with a smile. The two miraculous that he wanted, active and back in action mere minutes after he sent out his first akuma. As if the universe itself was trying to aid him.

He closed his eyes, one hand on his brooch. He could still feel his akuma, as it fluttered its wings while flying over the streets of Paris. Watching. Waiting.

And with a little effort...

Multiplying.

baguette_gimme_strength

fresh from paris!!! managed to freeze the pics sorry for the quality lol

[id: a giant figure made of stone towering over a small red blur and a black one]

[id: a girl in a red, spotted mask grinning into the camera, as a cat-eared boy rolls his eyes behind her]

...

aliciaisthenamelesbianisthegame

look at tv sometime they got catboys face from up close

baguette_gimme_strength

omg they did!!! he looks so handsome wht??

jottoneyedyo

has french finally discovered cosplayers? shitty creativity btw

baguette_gimme_strength

learn how to english bruh lol

lil-miss-perfect

I just wanna adopt him Your Honor

[id: a black masked man with cat ears salutes at the camera]

just.keep.swimming.

i want shared custody jazz

lil-miss-perfect

FUCK OFF HE'S MINE

proposal-gone-wrong

So, storytime: I took my girlfriend to Paris this week, because it's always been her dream to be proposed to in the city of love... We were walking down the streets, trying to avoid the tourists when this butterfly starts approaching? And my girlfriend is like a disney princess, so

of course she lets it land on her finger – and now the butterfly turned her into a stone golem.
Help???

dan_the_man

lol so fake

mads-for-hire

How did the mods even let this post up?

koolaid

my cousin lives in paris and she said its a genuine concern people really do be turnin into monsters

local-h(b)ic

honey they are not monsters they are just french

amy_delarossa

im WHEEZING

“I haven’t worked with a butterfly before,” Marinette said, as she sat on her bed, a plate of cookies in front of her for Tikki to munch on. “What are they like?”

Tikki’s tiny mouth was full with chocolate chip cookies. She hummed. “Oh?” She put down a half-eaten cookie that was almost as big as her head. “Well, Nooro, the butterfly kwami is the avatar of emotion. Their holders usually gain a power to feel the emotions of others and enhance those emotions to turn them into champions who fight for or with them. A sort of chrysalis, I think.” Marinette nodded. Yeah, that made sense.

“So there is a chance that the butterfly holder won’t appear?” she asked, while grabbing a macaron to munch on herself. “That we have to seek them out to get Nooro back?”

“...yes. Sorry, Marinette.” Tikki winced.

She shrugged. “At least we’re not in a war this time,” she tried, smiling at her oldest friend.

“You still always have it worse than my other ladybugs,” Tikki murmured sadly, staring at her half-eaten cookie. “I’m supposed to be an avatar of good luck, and yet...”

“Hey,” Marinette lifted Tikki’s little chin with a finger, smiling gently. “I *love* our team. And even if I could ‘choose’” she wiggled her fingers, causing her kwami to giggle, “an easier

path, I wouldn't take it. You know me.”

Tikki nodded gravely. “You like the complicated ones.” She hid her smirk behind her cookie. “Like your black cat.”

“Oh, shush,” Marinette snapped, but there was a smile in her voice. “At least in this day and age it's less likely that we will kill each other.”

“Just less?”

Marinette leaned back into her pillows. “Knowing him, he probably already has an idea or two to counter me.” She grinned, a spark igniting in her eyes. “How fortunate that I am the queen of convoluted plans.”

“...really, kid?”

Adrien scrolled through the news on his phone. Every site worth its money was screaming about the new superhero duo and the very first supervillain they faced. He was glad he thought to introduce himself; some of the articles that came out earlier had their own nicknames for both him and his Bug and each was less flattering than the next.

“She's gonna hate you for this,” Plagg continued, even as he went back to eating his gigantic block of camembert. “Even more than the whole fire thing.”

Adrien hummed. “She said she'd be testing me,” he said, not looking up. The photos were all blurry, but he didn't yet give up on trying to find one with a close-up on her current looks. “Isn't it only fair that I test her back?”

“You know you can be a good team if you work together,” Plagg pointed out.

Adrien let his phone fall on his chest. He tilted his head to give his kwami a stare. “Plagg,” he called, deadpan. “We killed each other multiple times.” He held up a hand. “The last time we ‘worked together’, I literally stabbed her in the back and she threw me off a cliff.”

“You *deserved* that one,” Plagg said pointedly. He was murmuring darkly. “My kittens should be smarter than to start a fight on the edge of a cliff...”

“I didn't exactly think that one through,” Adrien had to admit. He propped himself up on his elbows, before sitting up. “Still. These last few times we were fighting and... I don't think she wants to try being friends again.” He stared at his shoes, which were orange. (Who even made orange shoes? Never in his previous lives would he have been caught dead wearing *orange* of all colors.)

“...you did have her burned at the stake,” Plagg agreed, his cheese now gone and consumed. He burped. “That was on you, kiddo.”

“I didn’t think they’d go that far!”

He breathed in, then out, the shout echoing in the enormous room.

“...I think I’m gonna switch to a vegetarian diet,” Adrien decided. “For... a while.”

(If he let himself think long enough, he could still *smell* it. Still hear the crackle of fire, misleadingly similar to the way a warm fireplace crackles.

Never her screams, she refused to scream. Not in front of an audience, not in front of him.

He was very glad modern houses didn’t warm themselves by fire.

He wasn’t going to let himself think too hard on it anyways.)

“Besides, why should I tell her about the butterfly?” He asked sourly, eyes moving to the new incoming notifications on his phone. “She’s gonna find out soon enough.”

Halfway across the city, Sabine was putting the finishing touches on a cake order. A decorative flower here, an edible bow there and-

“I WILL MURDER THAT BASTARD WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS!”

It was thanks to the years of routine that she didn’t accidentally squish the whole cake to bits. She heard Tom break something in the other room, and she could imagine that he had the same wide-eyed stare she was sporting.

...was that really their Marinette?

Sabine would have to reconsider letting her play all those video games. Clearly, her daughter was getting too competitive for her own good.

Chapter End Notes

i have some chapters prewritten, but bc i don't really work well without having a backlog, updates will probs be a little scarce - i was thinking twice per month for now and then we will see

(i am already at almost 80k in my drafts and i do not see an end in sight xD there was a reason i did not want to write this, but ig here we are? hope you enjoy <3)

Troubles galore

Chapter Summary

Round two with Stoneheart; and high school drama rears its head.

Chapter Notes

i think it's kinda funny how much i struggle with writing the social media part (it totally doesn't have anything to do with my always forgetting social media is a thing... nope, not at all)
so please ignore my unrealistic portrayal of #totallylegit unspecified social media site and just sit back and enjoy <3

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

Chloe checked her reflection in her hand-mirror again. She puckered her lips in delight. She was perfect, totally perfect! Today would be the day her darling Adrien finally got to school, and Chloe was undeniably at her best!

(Of course her best self would have been even shinier and brighter *yesterday*, the day Adrien was supposed to arrive like everyone else, when Chloe had her best designer shirt on, and not the second best like today, but she wasn't going to let such small details get in her way!)

She snapped her mirror shut.

“Sabrina!” she yelled, voice shrill. There were less and less students on the front steps of the school, most already in their classrooms.

Sabrina flinched, standing barely a foot away from her. “Yes, Chloe?”

Chloe clicked her tongue. “Time.” Her eyes didn't stop searching the streets for a black limousine, like the one she used to get around; surely her darling Adrien would only roll up to school in style...

“Three minutes before the bell rings,” Sabrina reported dutifully. Her face was clouded, not that Chloe saw. Unlike the heiress, the redhead wasn't so sure *the* Adrien Agreste was really coming. Then again, Chloe said they were best friends (Sabrina did her best not to be hurt by that) and Chloe rarely arrived in any other manner than ‘fashionably late’.

Still, when Chloe's lips curled in displeasure, Sabrina began to wish even harder that Adrien wouldn't match Chloe's traits.

"You're in the way," someone grumbled, shouldering past the two of them. Or trying to, as Sabrina stood resolutely in place.

It was someone they both knew; Marinette Dupain-Cheng.

Chloe's bad mood immediately dissolved; she faced her foe with her full body, a smug smirk already gracing her lips. "Peasants like you have no place to talk, baker-girl."

Sabrina took a whole step back from the stare Marinette directed at the blonde.

"You're lucky I already had breakfast," the girl spewed, deep bags under her eyes, "otherwise I'd make good on the saying to *eat the rich*."

Chloe was frozen. She didn't know why she felt like she should run away from the short girl who never before had a spine, and very much *didn't* used to resemble the monsters from her childhood nightmares.

Marinette kept an eye on them, before scoffing. "I don't have time for this." She stalked past, like a predator on the hunt.

Chloe shuddered as soon as she disappeared from view. "Someone didn't get enough beauty sleep," she muttered, but there was little heat behind it.

Sabrina laughed weakly. Her self-defense lessons with her daddy were starting to kick in; and yet, when faced with a foe like Marinette was just now, she knew; she wouldn't have stood a chance.

Inside the building, the final bell rang out. The hallways emptied of the last stragglers, only a few more students hurrying to reach class.

Sabrina was just about to suggest they head in, before the teacher could mark them late, when a languid voice called out to them, "Wow, school really does take tardiness seriously? I thought that was just in the movies."

Chloe's whole being lit up at once. "Adrien!"

The boy standing beside them – when did he sneak up on them, Sabrina wondered – beamed. "Hey Chlo," he greeted, the nickname rolling off his tongue with a practiced ease Sabrina found herself envying. "And you are?" he asked her.

Chloe snapped her fingers. "This is Sabrina." She grabbed his hand, the one he was not holding his bag with. "You're finally here, Ade!" she enthused. "Fashionably late as it should be!" She nodded to herself. "Although your fashion could use some pointers," she added, quieter, once her eyes roamed over him.

"I'm late because I had to sneak out – and I couldn't exactly wear designer outfits for wall-climbing, could I?" He raised an eyebrow. There was something genuinely charming in the

way he spoke, Sabrina noted. She wasn't surprised to see Chloe blink heavily, before demanding to be filled in.

Adrien laughed. "Shouldn't we go to class first?"

Chloe waved it off, but let Adrien direct her inside. Sabrina, following Chloe with only half a step behind the duo, had to admit; this boy was very different to how Chloe described him. But maybe that wasn't a bad thing, she continued the thought. Adrien seemed nice enough.

"-and more people are turning into those things!" Kim pointed out, rather loudly. Understandable, seeing as he was the victim of the stone giant last time. "I think 'being upset' is the right reaction!"

Alix rolled her eyes from across the table. "Oh, come off it," she turned to Max, who was even quieter than usual, and rapidly punching things into his tablet. "Either you make him shut up or *I* will." She wanted to eat her goddamned lunch in peace, why was that a tall order?

"Statistically speaking, it is highly unlikely that even one percent of Paris' populace will be transformed," Max spoke hurriedly, only stopping in his typing to fix his glasses. "Then again, with a rough average of forty-six people being turned in an hour..."

Kim gestured at Max so violently, he almost shook the contents of his sandwich over himself. "See?!"

Alix sighed. "You two are the *worst*." She wanted to be a nice friend, she really did. But Kim was kind of a dick to Ivan, so him being carried off by the stone giant...

Well, Alix didn't want to say it was karma. But Kim could definitely do with being taken down a few pegs.

She glanced around, eyes finding a different table with a free seat or two. Without even needing a moment, she stood.

"Look, Kim," she began, as she picked up her tray. "I'll give you the number of my psychologist, she's great with trauma – but I cannot listen to this worryfest. Maybe apologize to Ivan and he won't carry you off again even if he turns back into a monster?" She poured as much sarcasm into her words as she could, and yet, she knew it didn't reach his brain at all.

"Apologize? Apologize?! He almost murdered me!"

And that's why Alix was not dealing with this. She was the farthest thing from a therapist and if she had to listen to his self-conceited bullshit a moment longer, she was going to waste her food by yeeting the tray at his head.

She walked away without looking back once.

“Hey Nath,” she slumped down, tray slamming onto the table. “Mind if I sit here?”

Nathaniel jumped, dropping his pen. Alix was nice enough to pick it up for him.

“Sure, why not, not like I was saving that for anyone,” he grumbled, even as he accepted the pen. His own lunch sat untouched, but his notebook was open and filled with sketches.

Based on the cursory look Alix had, and the pictures he had open on his phone, he was drawing the same trio that everyone else was talking about; the stone giant and the two heroes who took it down.

The stone giant whose clones were taking over Paris, even as Alix sat right there, eating her lunch.

At least Nath was fanboying quietly.

Alix took a bite and hummed in quiet satisfaction. Technically, she knew the school was closed, because of the ‘extreme situation’, but she honestly couldn’t care less. The cafeteria was still open and she wasn’t going to miss the one day of the year when they actually served good food.

Stoneheart – as the media has taken to calling the monster – was back.

Chat was the first on the scene.

What were the chances that the first champion of the butterfly would be a guy from his brand new school? Even moreso; his class?

He didn’t even know the boy’s name.

What he did know was that Stoneheart having a hostage was not good.

Although that was what helped him and Ladybug defeat Stoneheart the other day, he didn’t want to think about what injuries the girl could sustain while stuck in that stone fist. Hopefully, Stoneheart wasn’t feeling as vengeful about her than the boy he abducted previously.

Chat couldn’t focus on that girl yet, though.

“Look out!” he shouted, jumping between Stoneheart and the same teenage girl they ran into yesterday. Just like then, she had her phone out, a manic grin on her face, and zero amount of self-preservation.

If she and Bug met, they'd be best friends, Chat thought, as he was pushed back by a giant stone fist. After his fall yesterday, he was ready.

"Chat Noir!" The girl screamed in excitement. Like she didn't even notice how she almost died just now, Chat thought, gritting his teeth. Definitely besties with Bug.

"Get away!" he yelled back. His warning fell on deaf ears.

No worries, he thought to himself, slowly maneuvering Stoneheart to face away from the girl. The monster only had one free hand, and although Chat couldn't hit him too hard, he could still draw attention away from-

Large limbs closed around his body, and he could barely struggle in place.

Fuck.

He forgot about the *other* golems.

His baton fell from his hands with a loud clutter, rolling across the street uselessly. Chat closed his eyes, to allow himself a moment to wallow in a familiar kind of bad luck. Maybe he really should have mentioned things to her, and the universe wouldn't have decided to kick him down a notch.

Stoneheart roared in victory, and he could hear a girl cry out. The hostage or the one he tried (and maybe failed) to save? Chat didn't want to check just yet. He could feel the small Stoneheart that held him begin to carry him off.

Joy.

He was only going to get his way out of here by murder, right?

Ugh. But he told Bug he'd win her challenge of keeping people safe!

...though she couldn't mean *everyone*, right, he tried to reason. Everyone would have been way too many people...

"Multiplication, isn't it?"

The arrival of the new voice snapped him out of his pity-party. "Bug!"

She wasn't smiling.

She also had her yoyo around the legs of the Stoneheart holding Chat. If she tightened her hold, he'd be free.

He made sure to smile at her prettily. "My knight in shining armor!" he sang.

"The butterfly," she spat. She stood on top of a shorter building, eyes striking from even this distance. "Why didn't you tell me it could multiply?"

“Slipped my mind,” he lied, bold-faced. “Help your kitty out, please?”

The Stoneheart holding him was starting to grumble. The original one has vanished from sight, probably further down the street – Chat was itching to go after him. Chances were, the hostage girl was still right there in his fist.

Ladybug tapped her chin, as if thinking. “I’d be spared a lot of trouble if I just let it crush you.”

Chat gasped, affronted. “You’d just let any other miraculous holder kill me?”

Ladybug hummed. “Miraculous holder?”

“Champion, then,” Chat corrected. If his hands were free, he would have crossed them. As it stood, he could only pout. “I thought we had something *special*.”

“Promise to tell me anything I want to know about the butterfly.”

Chat stuck his nose to the sky. “I dunno if I want to,” he told her. “Clearly, there is nothing special about *us*.”

The hands around him were tightening, and Chat was suddenly struck by a feeling of claustrophobia.

Claw-ustrophobia more like, he tried to joke weakly. His lungs were constricting from the pressure.

Ladybug stood idly by, striking gaze on him.

“Bug-” he breathed out, his voice coming out worse than he expected-

She pulled the string taut.

The monster fell *forward* though. Chat took in half a breath and screwed his eyes shut. “Nine L-”

Ladybug body-slammed into the fists holding him. It kicked the air out of Chat’s lungs, but also kicked him out of the grip.

He flew through the air, and rolled to soften his landing. Everything hurt.

And yet, he could breathe.

He stared at the blue sky for a split second, allowing himself to breathe in, and out, checking silently for any broken bones.

None. And he didn’t even end up using his extra lives.

So far, so good.

Ladybug appeared over his head. “Up,” she commanded.

“I didn’t promise shit,” he shot back reflexively.

Her expression was stern. “Your lips were turning blue.”

He licked his lips, surprised for a beat. Wasn’t that too quick for him to start to suffocate? Or maybe he just didn’t notice the pressure in time. Being around Ladybug was already a pressure on his chest.

Still, he couldn’t help a grin.

“...you were checking out my lips?”

Instead of answering, she chucked his baton into his face. He giggled, adrenaline thrumming through his body as he stood.

Maybe Plagg was right about the two of them.

She needed him to use his power first.

That in itself was infuriating.

“My lady,” he offered the broken paper to her. She cast a distrustful glance at the butterfly clawing its way out of the edges; the purple glow of it was unnatural in the daylight like this.

She drew a finger over the surface of her yoyo. It opened up into pure magic; the power of creation.

She found his eyes over the paper in the split second left. He smiled – not his usual troublemaker smile, but one that urged her to trust him.

She usually knew better than to do so.

Still, Ladybug steeled herself and captured the purple butterfly in her yoyo. Captured all the purple butterflies, the ones that formed Hawkmoth’s – what a stupid name – giant floating head. “Purification!” she called. It still didn’t make any sense.

Why would a power that sought to destroy what has been built be given to Tikki, instead of Plagg?

And yet, when she opened her yoyo...

Her jaw dropped at the sight of all the alabaster butterflies flying free. It was like seeing blossoms fall, but instead of it being towards the ground, they all rose high above the Eiffel

Tower. She reached out, as if she could touch the miracle, feeling a child-like wonder take root in her heart. It was just like springtime back then...

Over the sudden cheering from down below, Ladybug snuck a glance at Chat.

Instead of marveling at the butterflies like everyone else, he was watching her with a soft smile.

She turned away from him, to address the people of Paris. She needed to make sure they all knew they'd have her as their protector.

(Why was he looking at her like that?)

And, also, that her reliable partner, Chat Noir, was going to be there with her every step of the way.

They needed to show a united front against the butterfly, she knew. And the Guardian as well – she didn't want Tikki taken from her, nor did she want to lose Chat to another black cat. Not before she found him and had her revenge.

There was no other reason.

Nadja_Chamack

Check out our live coverage of Paris' newest heroes facing off against a real life supervillain!
#ladybug #chatnoir #superheroduo

baguette_gimme_strength

T F DID I SAY THEIR REAL

esierthan123

chill

baguette_gimme_strength

no

lottiemottie

is it just me or is lb taking charge like that totally weird

m4x1m1114m

i get what you mean it was weird for me too

ngl_seventeen

let the girlboss be a girlboss people!!!!

well-hello-there

still fake lol

“High-school drama is so quaint.” Plagg snickered from his perch on top of the ceiling beam. He had all he could ever ask for in the world; cheese and free entertainment.

Tikki snorted into her cookie. “Such big words!” Despite her teasing, she stared down at their charges with a twinkle in her eyes too. “I really hope they’ll get along this time.”

Based on the argument happening under them – something about gums and seats? –, that wasn’t the case.

“They’ll be dating in six months!” Plagg insisted.

Tikki’s smile took on a dangerous edge. “I’d say three.”

Plagg knew that tone very intimately. “Wanna bet, sugarcube?” he said, just so she’d have the plausible deniability of not being the one to propose the idea.

“With the reveal or without it?” Tikki shot back without missing a beat.

Plagg thought for a second. “With.”

She nodded. “Then I’ll say without.” She grinned and struck out her tiny limb for the bargain. “When I win, I want two week’s worth of moon cakes.”

Plagg accepted the handshake. “And my two week’s worth of assorted cheeses,” he replied eagerly.

“My littlebug isn’t a millionaire like your kitten,” Tikki warned.

Plagg shrugged. “We can negotiate cheese danishes, once I win,” he allowed, rather generously in his opinion. Tikki huffed.

The argument below them was coming to a close; it was time for the kwamis to leave for their respective humans.

Silently, both ancient gods swore to meddle as much in their human's love life in the upcoming months as necessary to win the bet.

Chapter End Notes

kinda on the shorter end this time! hope the story is still followable with all the blanks i leave in from the episodes (i am busy with the emotional heavy-lifting, will leave the akuma fights mostly to the animated version)
lemme know how easy/hard it is to read along, hope you enjoyed <3

(also, ik i kinda made alix a bitch in this one, but it kinda fits her? and i enjoyed writing her in this chapter and upcoming ones too - she kinda carved out her own storyline without my say-so. so. enjoy slightly bitchy alix xD)

lowkey considering adding a scene or two here but ig we will see what the future brings xD

The new status quo

Chapter Summary

Dynamics shift and mold continuously - but sometimes, bonds are fragile enough to break if one is not careful.

Chapter Notes

Establishing some stuff + dropping breadcrumbs for magical lore~ hope you enjoy :3

(Also look out for some fun easter eggs :3)

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

Chat was already waiting for her, leaning casually against the railing.

She landed on the soles of her feet, balancing carefully for a softer impact.

His ears swiveled her way regardless. “Punctual as always,” he murmured, not bothering to face her. His gaze stuck to the skyline, staring out at the twinkling lights of Paris at night. His hands were nowhere near the baton on his back, instead both gripped the railing, criss-crossed over his chest.

Ladybug scowled. He was trying to make himself seem vulnerable – thus, approachable.

It wasn’t the first time he did this.

But it was long past the times she fell for the act.

“We need to hash out some ground rules,” she said. She didn’t want to waste more of her night than necessary.

Chat hummed and didn’t turn. “That’s what you said this afternoon as well.” She could hear the smile in his voice. “Does that mean I passed your little test then?”

Ladybug’s nostrils flared.

“I must have; you wouldn’t have bothered to call me here otherwise,” Chat continued his soliloquy, as if she was only there to listen to him. “Or maybe the Eiffel Tower is the high place you wish to throw me off of. Gotta admit, it’s not a bad place to die at,” he gestured at the view-

Ladybug grabbed his arm.

Chat froze.

His grip around the railing turned tighter, she could almost hear him dent the metal.

She tapped a finger against the leather of his suit. “Your senses are worse when you are monologuing,” she noted disdainfully. “If this ever comes up in a fight, don’t expect me to save you in a pinch.”

She could see his face now; see the momentary surprise being overtaken by a smug grin. “Oh?” He leaned closer to her. (She hated his height. Why did he have to be so tall?!) “Are you saying what I think you’re saying?”

“Ground rules,” she ground out, letting go of his arm and stepping back. Having successfully grabbed his attention, Chat Noir turned to face her at long last.

“Nice dress,” he commented.

Ladybug refused to take the compliment as anything else than the mockery it was.

(She was very proud of Tikki for this particular superhero suit though. The fusion between her previous, simple outfit, and a half-skirt was an elegant combination. Although she had barely been aware for two days, the fashionista she was growing up to be in the past fifteen years had stars in her eyes at the limitless possibilities her and Tikki’s teamwork would provide in the future.)

“First off,” she began, counting on her fingers, “you’ll tell me what you know about the butterfly and the Guardians.”

Chat raised his eyebrows. “Pretty sure you know more about the latter than I do, Bug.” She glared at him. He lifted his hands in a show of deference. She almost commented on his willingness to let go of the railing, only for him to grab right back at it. “But sure, I will.”

“Then,” she went on, “we need to talk about how we will handle the butterfly and their champions going forward.” After a moment of thought, she added, “And how we need to show a united front towards Paris.”

She waited for him to comment, to joke or mock her, but he only nodded. “We should make sure people know to stay out of our way and stay safe,” he agreed, crossing his arms. “There were too many on the streets today.”

And even more yesterday. Not that he said that.

Her miraculous cure only took care of the surface level things. It couldn’t heal mental trauma, and even then, it took a lot out of Tikki to perform the magic. Ladybug herself had felt weakened on the other side of the mask. (Though that could have been her lack of sleep.)

She knew she wouldn’t always be able to use her miraculous cure to reverse the damages.

Paris didn't.

The eventual backlash of that revelation was something she didn't want to think about right now; it was a problem for when she had Tikki around to brainstorm with.

"We should set up semi-regular patrols and tactical meetings," she said, before the silence stretched on too long. "We could do with a few bases, but those will come eventually on their own, I'm sure."

He kept on nodding, and his tail kept on swishing behind him. It was growing infuriating.

"And," she took a deep breath to keep her cool, "we should... talk."

He cocked his head politely to the side. "...about?"

Ladybug gritted her teeth. She led war before. She protected her hometown from ravaging terrors. And still, having to spell it out for him...

"About how we *totally* shouldn't tell each other our civilian identities." She curled her hands into fists. "About the pyre, what else?!"

Unlike how she expected, he stilled completely.

"...will it impact your ability to work with me?" he asked quietly.

"Take a wild fucking guess."

Chat nodded again, though this time, it was more thoughtful than agreeing. "I can't fault you for that."

Ladybug snorted, and took a step back, before she did something she could regret.

Then she took another step, and another, until she was marching up and down in a line.

It was not getting rid of all her anguish, but it was an outlet that wasn't beating Chat up, and ergo, was socially more acceptable. Was better for *her* if she really wanted to work with him in the long run.

Chat watched her pace with an unreadable expression.

"It was war."

"You think I don't know that?" she spat, spinning on her heel and pointing an accusing finger right in his face. "We were supposed to be on the same side!"

He kept eye contact with her. "It was petty of me," he whispered.

She clenched her hand into a fist again. "That's not what I wanted to hear, Cat."

"What do you want me to say?" He opened his arms wide. "Oh, bugaboo, I'm so sorry? I didn't mean for that to happen, I never wanted it to escalate so bad? That I felt horrible for

the rest of my short life, and that I can no longer walk by a barbecue without gagging?”

She rolled her eyes. “You can’t take anything seriously!” She wanted to punch him, she wanted to scream. Deciding on a compromise, she let out a muffled shriek, gesturing around wildly. “Do you think apologies will help?!”

“*Your* apology didn’t do shit either,” he snapped back, pressing forward until their chests were touching. (This was the moment she decided her next outfit needed platform boots, because the height difference was *ridiculous*.)

She pushed against his chest and he barely moved an inch. “At least I gave one! We were on opposite sides, what did you expect?”

“I didn’t think you’d want my death after what happened between us,” he whispered, deflating as if she pierced his bubble. For a moment, she found herself wishing she could see his face without a mask; maybe then she’d be able to tell if he was still pretending or not.

“I needed you to lower your guard, Cat,” she stated, cold and detached, as she had been when pouring him that glass that ended up taking his last breath.

He shot her a sharp smile now. “I did say there’s no one else whose arms I’d rather die in.”

She huffed, rolling her eyes hard. “Ever the terrible flirt, aren’t you?” Despite her tone, something in her shifted.

He was getting to her again. Ladybug should clear her head and take another look at this conversation lat-

Chat Noir winked, as he grabbed her hand. “Only with you, m’lady.” He pressed a light kiss to her knuckles.

She shook her hand free of his. “This is not a proper apology.”

He shrugged. “You said an apology didn’t matter to you. Why would you still need one?”

She hated that he was right.

Still, it would have been nice to hear him apologize – not just as a joke. But her pride wasn’t going to let her *request* a proper apology.

“Onto our next topic then,” she decided. Her eyes briefly trailed to the lights of the parisian night sky; it would have been a truly romantic experience, being on top of this tower with anyone else, talking about much nicer topics.

But Ladybug wasn’t here with anyone else, and, as the holder of the ladybug miraculous, she had a duty to the world once more.

She forced her attention back onto her black cat, and thanked Tikki for the extra cup of coffee she drank before coming here. It wouldn’t do for her to fall asleep in the middle of this meeting.

Alya was practically vibrating as she slinked back to the lunch table. She was clutching her phone, and was periodically making muffled squealing noises.

Marinette, her new bestie, who had been eating her lunch with an air of murderous disinterest, brightened immediately. “Hey Als,” she greeted, smile turning fond. Alya was waiting for the big question, and her bestie did not disappoint. “Who called you?”

“THE Nadja Chamack!” The words exploded out of Alya. Quite a few heads turned towards their duo, but she didn’t even try to restrain herself. “I just talked to *the* Nadja Chamack about how she wants to use my footage of the superheroes for some of her work?” She had to physically restrain herself from shaking Marinette. “She knows about my blog!”

“Of course she does, didn’t you say it surpassed three million clicks this morning?” Marinette reminded her, like the amazing friend she was.

Alya waved, as if the whole thing was nothing. “Yes, but this is TV! The older generations barely watch internet news, plus,” her excitement was coming back on, “they are officially recognizing my work! Actually paying me royalties and shit!” She stared dreamily. She could already picture it, bright and clear; her, Alya Cesaire, reporter of all things superhero-related! Everyone on the field bowing before her determination and readiness to get the best scoop possible! “And when I get more footage of Ladybug and Chat Noir, thanks to Nadja, it will make it to even more people!”

Unseen to Alya, a shadow crossed Marinette’s face. She put her fork down. “...are you saying you will continue following the fights from up close?”

Alya snorted. “Of course I will! How else am I supposed to get footage for my blog?”

“Why not leave getting the footage to professionals like Nadja?” Marinette asked, attention fully narrowing onto Alya. It would have been alarming if Alya was any less taken with her dreams. “You know, let the adults be the ones in mortal danger?”

Alya huffed, and crossed her arms. “Oh, please. With two superheroes saving the day, it’s not like I’ll be in any real danger.” Before Marinette could object, she added, “Besides! Ladybug has that all-cure thing, so everything goes back to being alright.” Alya nodded to herself, argument successfully made and won. She hummed as she went to pick her fork up. The past few days were full of wonderful news!

Marinette stared at her, wordlessly, before also going back to eating. “You know,” she began absentmindedly, “I actually know Nadja personally.”

Alya dropped her fork. “You do?” She widened her eyes. “And you didn’t tell me?”

Marinette huffed, stabbing a potato. “It’s not exactly some leading thing to introduce myself with, she’s just a family friend. I babysit her daughter sometimes.” She looked at her stabbed potato thoughtfully, before glancing up at Alya with a shy smile. “Maybe I could talk to her about getting you a more permanent position? Like an internship of sorts.”

“Marinette...” Alya called, eyes wide and stinging with unshed tears.

“I mean, it would keep you connected to older generations like you wanted, and you could learn more about being an on-field reporter which is kinda like a journalist? I mean not really, but still close enough to count, no?” Marinette rambled on quickly. “And gods know I would feel so much better knowing that you don’t run out there alone without supervision, and besides, Nadja is a bit of a bulldozer, you’d get on well-”

“Hey, what is that supposed to mean?”

Marinette blinked, caught off-guard. “...I don’t mean it like that?” she offered.

Alya giggled. “Girl,” she grabbed onto Marinette in a half-hug. “You’re the best girlfriend any girl could ask for!”

Marinette flushed. “Just trying to help,” she muttered.

Alya held her close. “I’m so lucky to have met you.”

At that, Marinette gave her such a bright and mischievous grin. “Yeah, I’m Lady Luck herself.”

Alya laughed, and Marinette did too. The joke may have been lost on Alya, but she found herself so eternally happy and looking forward to the future even more so than ever. An internship to set her career up even earlier? Sure, it sounded like a lot of work, and knowing adults, they would try to put boundaries onto her following superhero fights, but Alya couldn’t care less at the moment.

fashionista//queen

is it just me or did i just saw adrien freaking agreste walk down the street

[id: shaky image of a blond boy hurrying through the street]

mme_adrian_agreste

It’s just you <3

zoé_b.

for real tho that kinda looks like him? gabe letting his star go outside again or what

fashionista//queen

not sure will be keeping an eye out tho!

loch-mess-monster

bruh is out here feeding us scraps bles u qwq

fashionista//queen

<3 <3 xoxo

alya-cesaire

ty for all the love on the ladybug yall!!! new updates incoming in a few hours, your girl is ready to overanalyze every pixel captured, tune in for some juicy theory time! *#ladyblog*

catboisrreal

willl def be tuning in lets goooo

nico.de.angel

so we totes agree that she is the supervillain behind all this

was_waston

...have you looked at the footage? How would she have time to be recording and also making the big floating butterfly head of himself??

nico.de.angel

its the oldest trico in the book - pretend to be a normal civilian and shit

fmegentlywithachainsaw

someone needs to get off the internet lol

amogus

my question is: how tf did she get there so fast? thats hella sus

king_creeping

just right place right time shes gonna hev her fiteen mins of fame and then fluff right off lol

shipping-is-hell

okay so apparently superheroes are real

shipping-is-hell

i can live with that

shipping-is-hell

BUT

shipping-is-hell

what the f#@ kinda name is hawkmoth please i am dying

shipping-is-hell

you're telling me i can turn into a raging supervillain's minion any given time of the day and his name is f#@king hawkmoth

shipping-is-hell

call me when you figure out how to travel into the alternate dimension where ladybug and chat noir are the bad guys i'm sure they have better names

inside/the/rabbithole

what if hms au hero name is like butterfly or smg

shipping-is-hell

...thank you for the perspective i am doing just fine in my reality

shipping-is-hell

f@&#king *betterfly*

Nino, by choice, was a loner.

Not to say he didn't get along with people in his class – he did. He grew up with most of them since they were kids, and they knew each other pretty well – or well, they used to. He couldn't deny that old friendships waned as they drifted apart. Nino's most reliable companion these days was his music, and this led to him being even more isolated from his peers.

Until this week, that is.

Nino didn't expect anything to be different this year at school – sure, the new year brought new students, but he would have never gotten to know Alya Cesaire, not as closely as he would later, if it weren't for the other new kid in class: Adrien Agreste.

Adrien, who, despite coming in late on the second day with Chloe Bourgeois on his arm, was someone Nino would have never thought to befriend.

But Adrien clearly had other ideas.

It all started with puppy-dog eyes and a request to have the free seat next to Nino – and then an innocuous question about his music, and things spiraled. Before Nino knew what was happening, Adrien was talking his ear off about some nerdy anime as they sat together during a break, and Nino realized that underneath the designer clothes and cover-worthy smiles, there was an actual person.

A pretty cool person.

Someone, who, the next day they met – because even though one of their classmates turned into a supervillain two days in a row, school still had to go on –, let out a loud, relieved sigh upon spotting Nino in the courtyard.

“I was worried something happened to my new best friend,” he said, when Nino asked him about his long face. Nino could barely blink, before Adrien was shoving a bag of Dupain-Cheng pastries at him. “Here, I grabbed some extra breakfast nearby, but forgot to ask for vegetarian options.”

Nino eyed the bag doubtfully, as it was more than enough for one person, not to mention two. Adrien gave him the innocent eyes again, as if he really did mess up on purpose.

“I hope that's okay? You can always give it away if you don't like it,” he added, when Nino was silent for too long.

He shook his head, to clear himself out of the daze. “Are you kidding me? Dupain-Cheng pastries are to die for.” He grabbed one, and, to prove his point, bit into a fresh, still *warm* baked roll. Nino almost teared up then and there. “Thanks, bro,” he murmured, between two bites. “I'm glad my best friend's okay too.”

Adrien lit up like an excited puppy, and proceeded to keep a running commentary about how the superheroes and supervillains that showed up in Paris totally mirrored that one anime he watched this one time, and could Nino imagine the possibilities...

Nino munched on his pastries, and listened. When it came to his music, Adrien was just as happy to let him go on and on – but Nino was a good listener, if he said so himself. And his newly christened best bro was like a child – who would Nino be to crush all his hopes and dreams and tell him to shut up?

Besides, when Adrien was this deep down in the nerd-hole he dug for himself, Chloe avoided him.

Nino counted that as a great bonus.

Chloe was a problem for a multitude of reasons.

For one, she didn't seem to like Adrien hanging out with Nino, or 'the riff-raff' as she put it.

Nino would have never thought Adrien could go from being a sunshine child to ice cold blankness.

"Chloe. Don't call my friend that." He didn't move from his place next to Nino, sequestered between him and Chloe. And *standing* up to Chloe.

In a figurative sense at least.

Chloe huffed. "Very funny Adrien. You can't be friends with someone so-"

"Yes?" Adrien's voice caught. They were drawing attention from the rest of the class by now.

Chloe rolled her eyes and crossed her arms in front of herself. "You're being ridiculous, utterly ridiculous. You are Adrien Agreste, *you* are only worthy of quality company." She sneered. Her opinion was clear of Nino, but the words still didn't feel good. He glared back at her and for a second, he considered putting his headphones back on.

"Wow, isn't that some classist crap."

Marinette's dry interjection turned the attention onto her. She had dark circles under her eyes, like she didn't sleep despite being late to their first lesson.

Nino appreciated her jumping in. Adrien was childhood friends with Chloe, by his own admission, so really, he wasn't expecting m-

"Stole the words from my mouth," Adrien claimed, grinning at Marinette. She scoffed, and turned away from him. Adrien didn't seem to mind, focusing back on Chloe. "I'll choose my friends for myself, thanks, Chlo." He tilted his head. "Right now, I still consider you one of them. But if you continue calling my other friends names, we won't be for long."

Chloe stiffened. "You're joking. You don't even know Lahiffe-"

"Still no reason for you to be a classist jerk," Adrien interrupted. "We all go to the same school after all, don't we?" He gestured around. Silence reigned in the classroom.

Chloe, unable to form a retort, stormed out of the room, barely snapping a 'Sabrina!' for the redhead to follow her. To Nino, it seemed eerily like she was retreating.

He found himself looking at Adrien with newfound respect.

He wasn't the only one in class, he was sure.

As for Adrien, he smiled at Nino, and went back to their previous conversation like they weren't interrupted in the first place.

Nino... cautiously, he allowed this shift. Around them, others began talking too, and soon the atmosphere was much more pleasant.

And yet. Nino kept himself returning to the warmth in Adrien's eyes and his smile, remembering how quickly that warmth drained away into nothingness. His best bro was amazing, standing up for him like that – but...

Nino's heart was still beating a bit too quickly. He longed for his music board, to push his feelings out into the world.

Much like a child's nursery rhyme could bring joy, it could also turn haunting, he supposed. And yet.

And yet.

Adrien was so good at this school thing.

And considering the fact that in all his lives, he had never once been to school – in fact, only saw school depicted in tv shows and such – he felt like that was an accomplishment! A great one even!

He kinda wished he could brag about it to Bug, but he had the feeling she wouldn't appreciate it so much. *She* probably went to school since she was little, and him dropping any hint of an identity would be a bad step – getting her even more obsessed with finding and ending him was a big no-no.

Still, Adrien wanted someone to appreciate his achievements – and well, father wouldn't, obviously – and even Plagg was too busy alternating between eating cheese and falling asleep.

Honestly, he thought, rubbing a finger over the barely noticeable lump in his shirt. A quiet purr answered him and his lips curled upwards. Didn't you have enough time to sleep while we were apart you lazy lug, Adrien thought, surveying his surroundings. Because the fact of the matter was that he was good at this school thing, yes.

But... Well... He never really got a tour of the building.

And Adrien didn't think that was a problem – he usually followed Nino around or was dragged off with Chloe the past few days.

But for the first time, he was alone, no classmates in sight that he could recognize and... Welp, Adrien had no idea how he was supposed to find his way to...

He checked his tablet again. Free study period? In the quiet room.

Quiet room sounded nice! ...though it gave him zero clues about where it could be.

He hummed, glancing at his tablet. He was supposed to become a good student and not get pulled out – and Adrien did know that if you played the part of little mister perfect well, people let you get away with a lot – but really, how was he supposed to show up if he couldn't find the classroom?

He dug into his back pocket for his phone – he could text Chloe, she wouldn't mind skipping class to come find him. He glanced around once again, trying to orient himself – why did all the corridors look the same? – when he saw-

“A classmate!” He declared, delighted. The girl with ombre hair was not the only one turning to look at him, but Adrien paid them no mind; shuffling over to the girl with a sheepish smile. “Hi! I'm Adrien,” he greeted, sticking out a hand. Then, when she didn't take it, just blinked at him, he took it back, scratching at the back of his neck. “Sorry, I just noticed we're classmates and... It's awkward, but I'm a bit lost.” He dialed up the charm some more. “Can you please help me?”

The girl snorted, not even bothering to hide it. “You've got the wrong gal, pal.”

Adrien frowned. He was sure he saw her around – with that other girl in pigtails... Didn't they sit behind him and Nino? Not that Adrien really got to talk to them – Pigtails didn't even want to hear his apology for what happened during his first day with the gum incident –, but he saw Nino talking to them in the mornings...

“So... We're not classmates?”

“Oh yeah, we are,” the girl told him, nodding, “I'm just also new. Alya Cesaire,” she introduced herself, holding out a hand.

Adrien took it with a growing smile. “Nice to meet you Alya!” His smile faltered a bit. So... You have no idea where the quiet room is, do you?”

“Nope,” Alya popped the sound. “Marinette was supposed to show me, but I'm half-convinced she fell asleep in a corner while I went to the bathroom.”

Pigtails, Adrien noted. He couldn't help a concerned frown. “I hope she's okay...?”

“Sure – think she just needs to get used to school again,” Alya said. Then her eyes lit up. “Plus. You know. *Superheroes!*” She bounced on her toes, clearly eager about the whole thing. Adrien smiled at her enthusiasm – he couldn't remember the last time he was this visibly happy about his miraculous. “Apparently that's like, *world ending* news to some people.”

Her voice was familiar...

Oh yeah, she was the girl filming him and Bug, wasn't she? On the very first day – Adrien even saved her on the second day Stoneheart attacked. She ran the blog named after Bug – Bugblog? No that probably wasn't it... – and Adrien watched the videos a couple times. Alya took pretty good shots, despite only having a phone camera.

It was probably because she ran into danger without a thought, which, as a superhero, Adrien didn't appreciate – as someone looking for quality footage though, he could respect the hustle.

“It's like they missed the memo on the top ten coolest things to ever happen,” Adrien agreed.

“Right?!” Alya's cheer was infectious.

“Hope Marinette's gonna get better soon,” he added, because Marinette was probably looking at things more realistically than Alya did – looking at Hawkmoth and his terrorism and not at the undeniably cool fact that Ladybug and Chat Noir were a thing in the public's conscience now.

Which, yeah, Adrien knew being a superpowered being was freaking cool, but also, you know, terrorism was not.

...he might have hung out with Nino a lot in the past two days.

Was that a bad thing? No, it wasn't. Adrien wanted all the good things for Nino; it was like the two of them had known each other for forever – it was crazy; the kind of connection he only ever experienced with Bug bef-

Adrien shut that thought down.

“Sure she will!” Alya waved it off. Then her excitement cooled a bit. “...but I'm still kinda missing private study because of this.”

“Hey,” Adrien said, offering her a smile. “At least we're missing together?”

Alya snorted. “New kids, unite!”

“We shall become the best superduo ever,” Adrien swore solemnly. “Uproot Ladybug and Chat Noir without any problems.”

Alya gasped. “How dare you! I am their biggest fan!”

“Do you have their merch yet?” Adrien shot back.

“They have been around for three days, how would anyone-”

Adrien wordlessly held up his school bag, with a ladybug yoyo charm on it.

“Oh my gosh,” Alya breathed, leaning in close to admire the craftsmanship. “I *want* one.”

“I can get you one!” Adrien said conversationally. “I am getting a few more things anyways.” The private artists working on releasing their items promised a lot of things – from more charms to stickers to notebook covers, anything really...

Alya's nodding was feverish. Her grin was wide. “We are going to be such good friends, Adrien. I can *already* tell.”

He mirrored her grin. They were, weren't they?

Seeing as they totally ended up ditching that period to geek out over superheroes – real life and comic book – Adrien felt like it was true.

Chloe was puzzled by the sight in front of her.

Adrien was in school with her, which was so far, so good. But...

The moment they arrived, he broke off from her to greet a group Chloe would never associate with – the baker girl, the new girl and that low quality dj.

And yet, Adrien strode over with a smile, one that grew even bigger as they noticed him and welcomed him in their circle. Like *they* were all friends.

Adrien did say he'd want to go chat with some other people before class, but Chloe would have never guessed he'd drop her for *them*.

A temporary lapse of judgment, she told herself, grabbing tighter on the strap of her bag. He was just new to the social scenes of high school and thus, didn't know better...

And yet.

She wanted to march over and correct him, but something kept her back.

It'd barely been a week since he came to school and Chloe could already tell that something about Adrien was very different. Which was weird, because they spent like, half the summer together whenever Chloe could bribe Uncle Gabe into letting Adrien leave the manor. Her friend was depressed about his mum, yeah, Chloe got that, but this was... a different shift.

His smiles came easier these days, but they were no longer innocent; Adrien constantly wore an air like he was laughing at an inside joke no one else knew. He was still the nice, kind boy she knew, but there was that... Shadow, that deeper, darker side in his every move. As if he were playing everyone, fooling them all.

Chloe didn't know what he was trying to portray, but it left her feeling uneasy.

She would have to get to the bottom of this, she decided. She wasn't just going to let her childhood best friend change so suddenly and leave her in the dust.

Steeling herself and throwing on her best mean girl expression, she strode over to the group.

Chapter End Notes

I would like to remind people of the fact that unreliable narrators exist~

Hope you enjoyed this episode, i know i did - we're getting back to akumas next time!

(i almost forgot to post this before heading off to the land of the dead otherwise known as sleeping lol - will probs be doing another round of editing when i am more awake and less likely to murder a marshmallow)

End Notes

Updates are very periodical, but feel free to lemme know what you think, how you feel about stuff, etc <3 like all content creators i thrive off of engagement ^^

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!