

Cheaters

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/20383456) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/20383456>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Miraculous Ladybug
Relationships:	Adrien Agreste Chat Noir/Marinette Dupain-Cheng Ladybug , Alya Césaire/Nino Lahiffe
Characters:	Adrien Agreste Chat Noir , Marinette Dupain-Cheng Ladybug , Alya Césaire , Nino Lahiffe
Additional Tags:	Misunderstandings , Post-Reveal Adrien Agreste/Marinette Dupain-Cheng , Humor , Cheating , At least that's what Alya thinks , Alya is a protective and good friend , Identity Reveal , Two Shot
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2019-08-25 Completed: 2019-10-29 Words: 8,746 Chapters: 2/2

Cheaters

by [11JJ11](#)

Summary

Alya discovers Adrien kissing Ladybug, and she's not happy that he's cheating on her best friend. Adrien knows that he can't reveal his Lady's identity, and he just might have to take the fall– but he's not going down alone.

Notes

Cross-posted on Fanfiction.net under the same username.

Cheaters

"You were sure able to wrap that up quickly, My Lady, no loose ends with that akuma, huh?"

"Really, Adrien?" Ladybug asked, crossing her arms at the blond as he flashed her a smirk.

He leaned up against the wall, and despite being in his civilian form he only radiated the flirtatious attitude of Chat Noir. His smirk grew as she rolled her eyes, her earrings beeping to remind her that she only had a few minutes before she turned back. There would have once been a time where she would have bolted, but the boy in front of her was well aware of who she was.

"Well, it was howdy my idea for an akuma to show up right then," Adrien replied, while Ladybug let out a groan. The cowboy akuma they had just faced had been a difficult one—being able to use telekinesis to guide multiple lassos in their fight— but it had opened up the opportunity for so many perfect puns.

"Okay, that one was horrible," She said, taking a step towards him. "Never make a pun like that again, please."

They were close enough as it was, hidden away in the tiny alleyway they had ducked into to detransform, so a single step forward put Ladybug and Adrien only a nose apart. There was a scowl on her face, but the humorous gleam in her eyes said otherwise. He wrapped his arms around her waist, tugging her close so the remaining gap between them vanished.

Her arms slunk around his shoulders as he brought her into a kiss, the two of them pressing up against each other as their lips touched. A warm feeling filled Adrien's chest, no matter how many times he kissed Marinette he always felt like he was flying when he was with her. The world around them seemed to vanish as they held each other, just the two of them whisked away in the moment.

Neither of them noticed Alya standing at the entrance of the alleyway, watching as her best friend's boyfriend kissed Ladybug.

Adrien knew he was in trouble the moment he saw Alya's glare.

Alya was a good friend— strong, confidence, and always supportive— but anyone that knew her knew that she wasn't a person to cross. She didn't even need to say a word, her icy gaze locking on him the moment he walked up the steps to the school. A friendly wave did nothing to lessen the stiffness in her posture, a scowl forming as he raised his hand.

"Adrien!" Marinette cried the moment she saw him, a smile spreading over his girlfriend's face. Alya put a hand on her shoulder before she could bolt towards him, glaring daggers at him from behind Marinette. He smiled at them, confused at the rage on his friend's face.

"Hey girls," He replied, keeping his expression even as he reached them. He leaned forward, placing a kiss on Marinette's cheek, which caused Alya to stiffen up even more. "Where's Nino? It's not like him to be late."

"He's already inside, he needed to talk to the teacher," Marinette said, and before she could return his kiss Marinette was tugged back to Alya's side.

"Is everything okay, Alya?" Adrien asked, frowning at her slightly. She flashed him a disgusted look, as if he had just crawled out of the sewers, and she simply pulled Marinette closer to her.

"Let's get to class," She said coolly, turning sharply on a heel and dragging Marinette inside the school. He stood there for a moment, confused, before jogging to catch up to them. For the first time Marinette seemed to notice Alya's strange behavior, glancing between her and Adrien.

"Um... is everything okay?" Adrien asked once more.

"No," Alya snarled. "I'll deal with you later, Agreste— just stay away from Marinette."

"What happened—?" Marinette began, stumbling to try to keep pace with her friend, but before she could say anything else the bell rang.

Confusion was racing through Adrien as they headed to class, one step behind the two girls the whole way. Nino was already at their shared desk as they entered, who was given a friendly hello from Alya as they sat down at their desk. Adrien carefully took his seat, looking back at them, and was instantly grateful that Alya wasn't sitting directly behind him.

'What's up with her?' Adrien mouthed at Marinette, who shrugged, looking at her friend in concern. Alya had been staring down at her phone, but jerked her head up at the movement. She gave Marinette a gentle smile, putting an arm around her, before once again glowering at Adrien with burning eyes. It wasn't hard to get the message, slowly turning around to face the front of the room as the teacher started the lesson.

Not that he was paying attention to the lesson. Instead Adrien was reviewing every moment he had spent with Alya since yesterday, trying to figure out why she could be so mad at him. She had seemed completely fine both at school and when they had hung out with the group after school. Then the akuma attack had happened, and he hadn't seen her the rest of the day. Clearly this was about Marinette. Had he said something to Mari that Alya had interrupted as rude? He couldn't think of anything.

"Nino, any idea on why your girlfriend wants to kill me?" Adrien whispered to Nino as the teacher wrote something up on the board.

"I was going to ask you what you did, dude," He muttered back. "She got all fed up this morning when I mentioned she should wait out front for you with Mari."

Great. He was on Alya's bad side and he had no idea why.

Two steps. That's as far as he got when the lunch bell rang— Alya grabbing his shoulder before he could go any farther. He tensed up, feeling her nails digging into him, her rage clearly having not gone down since school had started. Adrien gulped, before turning around to look death in her hazel eyes.

"We need to talk," She said, bitterness filling her tone as she glowered at him. Adrien had Gabriel Agreste as a father, and he had thought he was more than familiar with expression that came from the phrase 'if looks could kill'— but as he looked Alya in the eyes he was convinced that he had used up all of his nine lives.

"Alya, I don't know what's wrong, but—"

"Listen here Agreste, this is the only chance you're getting," Alya tugged him in close, hissing in his ear. "Either you come with me and explain exactly *why* you'd do this to Marinette, or I'll tell her what you did myself."

"I don't know what you're talking about—" He began, mind reeling, but before he could say another word she dragged him out of the room. A few people glanced at them, but with everyone heading to lunch they were mostly unnoticed.

She shoved him into an empty classroom, not even fazed as he stumbled, needing to catch himself on a desk before he fell to the ground. He rose with a grunt, shooting her a frustrated glare. "What was that for—!"

"Don't even bother," She snapped. "I'm giving you one chance to admit what you did last night."

"Our double date? We all went to dinner, and then there was the akuma attack—"

"And after the akuma attack?" She spat, and he stared up at her blankly. He and Marinette had ran off during the attack so they could transform, and after that they had headed home, they hadn't seen Alya after that, nothing had happened!

"We went home—"

"Listen Agreste, I take my job as the Ladyblogger seriously," Alya began, crossing her arms. "I follow Ladybug during the attacks so I can report on it, and I follow her after the akuma's defeated in hopes I can talk to her. But when I followed her last night I found she was talking to someone else— and they were doing more than just talking."

He stared at her, and she glared back at him. For a few moments his mind was blank, not quite understanding what she was getting at. The kiss? Had she seen them kiss? Ladybug and Chat Noir had kept it under wraps that they were together, but Alya finding out they were wasn't the end of the world. There was no reason for her to react like this, especially towards him, and he just didn't understand why...

Then it hit him— he hadn't been transformed during the kiss. Alya hadn't seen Ladybug and Chat Noir kissing, but rather Ladybug and Adrien kissing.

He blanched, and Alya snorted in response. She took a step towards him, and Adrien couldn't help but step back. She had been angry before, but that paled compared to the expression on her face now. Her hands were curled into fists, and if they came flying at him he wouldn't be surprised.

"How could you?" Alya asked, and he was startled to hear her voice breaking.

"Marinette *loves* you. She has for the longest time, she's done so much for you, more than you've even realize and *this* is how you repay her? Kissing another girl behind her back? Doesn't she mean anything to you? Or is this all some sort of game or something?"

"Alya," He said quietly. "I... I know how this looks, but I promise you it wasn't what it looks like—"

"Don't you dare!" She snarled. "I saw the whole thing, Agreste! The soft talking, your arms around her— I can tell that most definitely wasn't your first kiss with her! How long has this been going on? Does Ladybug know, or are you cheating on both her and Marinette? Do you just think because you have your daddy's name that you have the right to do whatever you want—"

"Woah, stop, stop!" Adrien cried. "I swear, I wasn't cheating on anyone! We were just, um, it was just—"

"Listen here, Adrien, because I'm only giving you one chance," Alya took another step forward. "When we walk out of here you're going to go tell Marinette the truth— because if there's anyone she should hear it from, it's you. And however she decides to handle it, that's her choice, but Marinette's the sweetest girl I know. She deserves the truth, and she deserves someone much better than a cheater like you!"

Adrien couldn't be mad at Alya, if anything he was proud of her. Proud of her for defending her best friend, and that she wasn't backing down even though Adrien had more than enough influence to ruin her reputation. He was happy to know that if he ever would betray Marinette's trust Alya would be there to set him right, or if Marinette did ever end up with a cheating liar that she wouldn't be alone.

But right now he had other things to worry about— like how he was going to get out of this mess. He couldn't just say that Marinette was Ladybug and that this was a misunderstanding, because he could never give away his Lady's secret. It was important to her, her way of protecting her friends and family. But if he didn't do something he'd have a very angry Alya coming after him, and potentially a ruined friendship.

"I swear, this isn't what it looks like—" He began once again, but he was silenced as Alya held up her phone, showing him a picture. He instantly flushed, the image showing him and Ladybug holding each other close as they kissed each other. He realized how distracted he and Ladybug must have been for Alya to have gotten such a clear picture, and he was half tempted to ask her for a copy, but that wouldn't help his situation at all.

"Either you tell her the truth right now, or I will," Alya growled. "She deserves the truth, and I won't let you hide this from her."

"I'll— I'll talk to her about it," He said, he'd need his Lady's input for how to figure this out. "In private and—"

"I'm going to be right there to make sure you tell her the whole truth and nothing but the truth," She snapped. "And you're going to tell her right now."

"I'd prefer to do it alone this is very personal!"

"You should have thought about that before you cheated on the best girl you could have ever asked for!" Alya snarled, grabbing his wrist and yanking him forward. "You're telling her right now, Agreste, and you don't get a choice!"

Perhaps he should figure out what color of flowers he wanted at his funeral.

"We were wondering where you dudes went off to!" Nino said brightly as Alya dragged Adrien down the hallways. Marinette was by his side, a smile breaking over her face as soon as she saw him. His gut twisted, realizing in a few moments that smile would be gone, disappointment on her face for what he had done...

What was he thinking? He hadn't really cheated on her!

"I needed to talk to Agreste here," Alya grunted, shoving Adrien aside as they reached their friends. He stumbled slightly, but Marinette grabbed his hand. He smiled, pulling her in close, resisting the urge to give her a kiss.

He didn't need to anger Alya further.

"Alone with a boy that wasn't me?" Nino asked dramatically, snickering. "Oh Alya, how could you do this to me?"

Any other day they probably would have all laughed, but these words just seemed to make Alya's anger spike. Nino saw the look on her face and his humorous expression vanished at once, giving Adrien a questioning glance. He had no means to reply, still having not figured out what he was going to do about all this himself.

"Don't worry Nino," Alya growled. "Unlike *some* people, I'm *loyal* to my partner," She wheeled around to face Adrien. "Get your hands off of Marinette and tell her now!"

He didn't let go of Marinette's hand. "Mari, I need to talk to you. Alone."

"Don't you dare!" Alya snarled, causing both he and Marinette to jump. "You're telling her right now! You tell her the truth!"

"Um... what's going on?" Marinette asked, glancing between him and Alya. Nino stepped back, not wanting to be dragged into whatever was about to go down. "Did something happen?"

"Just a bit of a misunderstanding popped up, My Lady," Adrien began, causing her to blink. He never used that nickname with her unless they were alone or they were transformed, but

he hoped that'd be a hint that their alter egos were involved. "A little, um, predicament you see—"

"Don't you dare act like this is nothing!" Alya snarled. "You have no right! Not after what you did, not after you betrayed her trust!"

"Well, maybe if you'd just mind your own business this wouldn't be happening!" Adrien snapped back, his patience beginning to reach its end. Alya was kind, but there were times she overstepped boundaries when it came to Ladybug. "Have you ever considered that you're stepping into her personal life? That maybe she didn't want to be followed by reporters like that?"

She gritted her teeth. "So you're going to take her side in this then, huh? Well, if you won't tell Marinette then I will!" She turned towards Marinette, who was still holding Adrien's hand, looking very confused. "Mari, I really don't want to hurt you like this, but you need to know the truth— Adrien's been cheating on you!"

Silence filled the halls.

Marinette's eyes widened, looking at Adrien, then all around them. Their shouting hadn't just reached their small group, but everyone around that had yet to return home for lunch. Adrien's heart was hammering, his hopes of keeping this misunderstanding small now long gone. He watched as Marinette narrowed her eyes, looking up at him in confusion. His heart leapt upon seeing her expression, happy that she wasn't just going to believe those words outright.

"Adrien, cheating?" Marinette asked, before letting out a laugh. "Alya, I don't know where this is coming from, but this is Adrien we're talking about. He would never cheat on me."

"Thank you!" Adrien cried, but despite Marinette's words people were still looking at him with narrowed gazes. "You're the only one for me, My Lady, there's no one else."

Her eyes narrowed again at the nickname, and to his disappointment she didn't seem to catch his hint. She just stuffed her hands into her pockets, seemingly trying to lighten the conversation. "And you're the only one for me, Adrien. Well, where do you guys want to go for lunch break? The bakery is always open to you guys—"

"We're not done here!" Alya cried, stepping forward. "You said you'd talk to her about it! You said you'd tell her the truth— and now you try to brush it off?! He's a lying cheater, Mari, and I have the photos to prove it!"

Marinette watched as Alya dug into her pocket for her phone, before looking up at Adrien. His heart ached at the look on her face, confusion in her eyes. He knew that she didn't want to believe Alya... but he also knew that she trusted Alya. She gave him a pleading look, as if begging for him to say this was all a joke.

"...Mari, I tried..." He began, before pausing once he realized this made no sense. He had tried to handle this in a way so their identities wouldn't be revealed, but she didn't even

realized their identities were involved. "I wasn't—!" How was he supposed to explain this when everyone was around them? "...I'm sorry. J-just look at the picture, okay?"

She would look at the picture of him and Ladybug, and she'd understand that this was just a misunderstanding. She'd know exactly what was going on, and then she'd know how to fix this. She always knew how to fix things, she was his Ladybug, and she had the right ideas at the right times.

It wasn't until after he had spoken that he realized what his words would sound like— the stammering, and the apology. Marinette's eyes widened in horror, and she suddenly pulled her hand away from him. He quickly reached for her, realizing that the way he was acting made it look like he had cheated, but Alya pulled Marinette towards her before he could reach her.

"You... you wouldn't..." Marinette whispered in disbelief, pain in her eyes. His heart ached, his poor choice of wording was making her hurt. Alya attempted to hold up the phone, but Marinette pushed it away before she could see the picture. "No! I don't want to see that! How could you do this to me, Adrien? Why? You wouldn't... wh-why?"

Tears were lining her eyes, arms wrapping around herself. Alya was glaring at him, while Nino was watching him in shock. He could hear the whispers flying around them, and he realized that they were going to have to deal with this the hard way. Someone would have to take the fall in this, but it was better than their identities being revealed— and he couldn't let Marinette hurt for another minute.

"I'm sorry, Mari," He said, his voice clear so everyone around them could hear him. "But Alya is telling the truth— last night I kissed Ladybug."

Nino's eyes widened in surprise as he said this, and Marinette froze up. The look of relief on her face could have made Adrien sing, and she looked up at him in understanding. Alya had her arms folded, still glaring at him, while everyone else listening began whispering at the mention of Ladybug. Adrien knew that this would be something he wouldn't hear the end of, and he hoped that word wouldn't reach his father.

Marinette grabbed Alya's wrist so she could see the phone in her hand. She stared at the picture of the kiss, and he could see her struggling to hold back a smile. She then turned away, taking in a deep breath before she turned to face him again. Blue eyes stared into green, and he knew that she didn't want to force him to take the fall. They couldn't risk revealing their identities though, because that could put everyone they cared about in danger. His public image may be hurt, but that was better than their friends and family being targeted by Hawk Moth.

A small smirk tugged on his lips though— because he wasn't planning to go down alone. He leaned towards Marinette, whose eyes widened slightly upon seeing the mischievous smile of Chat. "...Just consider this as payback, Princess," He said, struggling against a purr. "For kissing Chat Noir."

Her eyes widened, and his smirk grew. Yes, he just went there.

"What?!" Alya cried, and he had to bite back a laugh at the look of confusion on his friends' faces. Marinette was fuming slightly, giving him a glare that made it clear that she'd have a few choice words for him once they were alone.

"What, did you think I wouldn't notice that he visits your balcony?" Adrien asked, enjoying Marinette's glare a little too much. "I was planning to come and visit you that night, but instead I see you kissing that mangy cat."

"Says the one that has a whole collection of Ladybug photos on his phone," Marinette countered. "I'm pretty sure you have more of her than you do of me!"

That was true, but only because he had been collecting them longer than they had been dating.

"And what about your Chat Noir doll you made?" He snapped.

Marinette huffed. "Like you don't have a closet full of Ladybug merch!" She took a step towards him, a scowl on her face and a playful gleam in her eyes. "Just for the record, Chat Noir is an *amazing* kisser."

"Well, Ladybug never fails to sweep me off my feet when we kiss," Adrien said dreamily. "There's nothing like being carried in her arms as she races across rooftops, but I suppose your kitty can do that for you, can't he?"

"Yes he does, only because my kitty has an ego as big as his head," She said, grinning. "He's such a flirt, something you seem to lack at times, Agreste. I think it's only your looks that caught Ladybug's eye."

"Well, when it comes to looks, Ladybug's the one that has them," He replied. "But Chat's flirting? I never thought those cheesy puns would catch your eyes, Mari."

Her eye twitched in frustration, well aware that 'cheesy' was a pun itself, with Plagg's love for cheese. She watched him for a moment, hesitating before she spoke. "Well... sometimes his puns aren't half bad. Charming, even."

Adrien's eyes widened— did his Lady just confessed that she liked his puns? A small blush appeared on her cheeks, and a grin tugged at his lips. He wished that he had recorded her saying that, because he wasn't going to let her forget this. She liked his puns! Ladybug just admitted to liking his puns!

He couldn't hold himself back, stepping forward and pulling Marinette into a kiss. She let out a small gasp of surprise, before going up on her tiptoes so she could press into the kiss. Their arms wrapped around each other, ignorant to the confused looks of those around them as they embraced each other, lost in the kiss.

After a minute they broke away, foreheads touching. He whispered softly to her so no one else could hear. "So Bugaboo likes my puns then, huh?"

"Don't let it get to your head, Kitty," She whispered back, pressing a quick kiss against his lips once more.

"I'm afraid I'm already *ahead* of you on that, My Lady," He said softly as she pulled away, before stealing another kiss.

Adrien then pressed her against his chest, looking over at Alya and Nino as he held Marinette, and he had to hold back a smirk. Nino was staring at them in completely confusion, having no idea what to make of what had just happened. Alya's eyes were wide, looking just as confused, if not frustrated. He winked at her as she glared at him, before pressing a kiss to the top of Marinette's head.

"Well," He said cheerfully. "Now that's all sorted out, I heard something about going to the bakery for lunch?"

"My parents are more than willing to have us all over," Marinette agreed with a bob of her head. "Let's go!"

"Hold on– aren't you going to explain what– what all that was?" Alya demanded.

"Nope~" Marinette chirped, before grabbing his wrist and bolting towards the front door, leaving their confused friends behind. Adrien slipped his fingers between hers, sighing softly as he ran to keep up with her.

That was his Lady– and he wouldn't trade her for the world.

Payback

Chapter Summary

Some time has passed since Adrien and Marinette have been "cheating" on each other with... well, each other, but these two are looking for a chance to get some revenge on the friends that called them out.

“Woo!” Rena Rouge cheered as she landed on the rooftop, flute in one hand, the other on her hip. “Now how was that?”

“Very impressive,” Ladybug agreed as she and Carapace landed next to her. “It takes a lot of effort to create a complex illusion. That will be really useful in our next akuma fight.”

Rena couldn't hold on a squeal. “*Next* one— as in we're going to help you in the next fight guaranteed?”

Ladybug grinned. “What? Do you think we've been taking you on patrols just for fun?”

“It'll be awesome to put all this training to the test,” Carapace replied, swinging his shield about.

Rena's necklace began beeping, giving her only a minute before she detransformed. Ladybug's eyes darted between the two of them, but having not used Shell-ter, Carapace wasn't on a timer. Struggling against a smirk she pulled out her yoyo, opening up her communicator.

“I'm not exactly sure when I'll call upon you guys, I might need to go straight for the akuma depending on what it's doing, but do be prepared to be called in for a battle soon.”

Rena's necklace beeped one more time, her transformation fading away, a tired Trixx bursting out from the Miraculous. Alya caught the kwami in her outstretched hand, cuddling him happily. The fox let out a small chirp at the affection, curling up in her palm. She reached into her pocket, pulling out a bag of raspberries she knew Trixx loved. He perked up immediately, gobbling down the fruit as it was offered to him.

“I guess you'll be needing this back,” Alya said, getting ready to pull off her necklace. Carapace moved to do the same with his bracelet, and her eyes widened.

“No need to rush, let's take a moment to rest, we were out pretty late,” Ladybug said quickly, waving a hand dismissively, and to her relief they both stopped taking off their Miraculouses. “The two of you make an awesome team, you're just as in sync as me and Chat are!”

Carapace smiled, taking Alya's hand. Ladybug's hand tightened on her yoyo, but this wasn't quite what she wanted. They were getting closer, so she watched them out of the corner of her eyes, pretending to mess around with her yoyo so they wouldn't wonder why she had it out.

"We try our best," Carapace replied, running his thumb over the back of Alya's hand. "I just follow this pretty girl's lead, she's best at the superhero-ing stuff."

Alya smirked, stepping in front of him. "I don't think you're giving yourself enough credit, pretty boy."

She then grabbed him by his hood, pulling him into a kiss. Ladybug grinned as they embraced, holding up her yoyo and snapping a photo. They failed to notice, whisked away in their kiss, so she took the opportunity to snag a few more. She looked down at her prizes, trying to hold back a laugh as she texted Chat.

[Got them.]

"I think you two can do this later," Ladybug said, clearing her throat. They suddenly seemed to remember they weren't alone, breaking apart, blushing.

"Sorry, dude," Carapace said quickly, pulling off his bracelet, and with a flash of green light he was Nino once more. Wayzz zipped out from the jewel, he and Nino doing their little handshake. A small smile flickered over Ladybug's face, glad to see Wayzz in high spirits. He hovered next to Nino's shoulder, expression falling slightly as Nino held out his Miraculous to her.

There was no mistaking the sadness in their gazes as she took the jewels, the duo saying goodbye to their kwamis they had grown so close to. It was very different than when she had first introduced them to the Miraculous, where the powers and superhero-ing had drawn their attention. Now their eyes were locked on the kwamis as they were drawn into their now-dormant Miraculouses. She carefully slipped them into hammerspace her yoyo provided. She smiled at her friends and teammates, who had their arms around each other.

"You'll be okay with getting down?" She checked. She had come up here many times with them as Marinette so she knew they were fine, but they didn't know who she was.

"Yep, don't worry about us, dude," Nino replied.

"Well, in that case, bug out!" She called, throwing her yoyo off at a nearby building. The string went taut, and with a single tug she was flying through the air. She landed on another roof, taking off running as she retracted her yoyo. It vibrated in her hand, and she looked down to read the message from Chat.

[Perfect. Tomorrow then, My Lady?]

She grinned. ***[Tomorrow.]***

Adrien met her outside of the bakery like he usually did in the morning, but instead of his usual soft expression there was a gleam in his green eyes– a mischievous look that was quite rare for when they were out of costume. She flashed him a smile as she stepped outside, calling goodbye to her mom before they headed off to school.

He offered her his hand with a bit more flourish than necessary, pressing his lips to the back of her hand. “Shall we be off, Princess?”

“That excited, huh?” She asked with a laugh as they headed off to school. Technically Adrien wasn’t supposed to be walking to school– but what Gabriel Agreste didn’t know couldn’t hurt him. Every morning Adrien’s bodyguard dropped him off at the bakery, and they headed to school from there. It was right across the street, but they were sure that his father would still throw a fit if he knew.

“Revenge is a sweet dish, My Lady, and I can’t wait to serve it,” He replied, green eyes glancing around to make sure no one could hear them as he used her nickname. They were careful about keeping their alter egos separated, especially after the little delightful pickle they had found themselves in after Adrien had been found kissing a superhero instead of his girlfriend.

Thank goodness Marinette had convinced Alya to delete the picture, and fortunately there were no copies of it floating about the web, meaning the story hadn’t become much more than whispers flying about the school. Adrien didn’t know what he would have done if tabloids had caught wind of that– meaning his father would have. Despite all this their two best friends still liked to bring it up on occasion, especially the fact that she had apparently kissed Chat Noir, and how they were both okay with that. They just laughed it off the best they could, but unfortunately cheating wasn’t exactly a topic most people were willing to drop.

“Can I see it?” Adrien asked with a grin, and she pulled out her phone to show him the picture of Carapace and Alya kissing. “Oh, this is going to be gold!” He chortled. “Pure gold, I tell you!”

“Just remember to wipe that grin off of your face and play your part,” Marinette reminded him as they reached the school– and instantly Adrien’s face was stoic. It startled her how easily he could change expressions at times, but as a model he could easily slip into almost any role.

One thing that could never fool Marinette, though, was his smile. His ‘model’ smile and his real smile were very different, and when he pulled out his fake model smile she knew something was wrong. She’d do anything to protect his true smile.

“Hey dudes!” Nino called, one arm around Alya, the other waving towards them.

“Hey Nino!” Adrien replied as he reached them, carefully making sure that he didn’t make eye contact with Alya. “How are you doing, is everything okay?”

“Of course dude? Why wouldn’t it be?” Nino blinked at the sudden concern, Adrien’s questions having not been causal, and he put an arm around his shoulder. He gave Nino a grim smile, before guiding his best friend into the school, shooting a glare over his shoulder back at Alya.

“What?” Alya blined in confusion as her boyfriend was dragged away. “Marinette, what was that about?”

Marinette was careful not to make eye contact with her. “Um, what?” She asked, allowing her voice to go guiltily high. “I dunno what you’re talking about! Everything’s fine, let’s get to class!”

“Mari–” She began, but she was already hurrying towards the building without an explanation. Alya’s brow furrowed in confusion, increasing her pace to catch up to Marinette, who still wasn’t looking at her.

Marinette did feel a little bit bad when she saw the hurt expression on Alya’s face, and decided to tone back her wariness just a bit. She gave her a smile, though allowed a trace of nervousness to cross her gaze, and slowed down a bit as they headed up towards the classroom. Adrien on the other hand, was relentless.

Stormy green eyes glared at Alya the moment she walked into class, arms crossed. Alya paused in the doorway, looking at Adrien in absolute confusion, then at Nino in hope he’d have some answer. He just shrugged, mouthing ‘sorry babe’, and Adrien threw an arm around his shoulder. Nino shifted uncertainly, not uncomfortable at the contact, just not sure as to what was going on.

“Marinette, is Adrien mad at me?” Alya asked quietly as they made their way to their seats, Adrien glowering at her the entire time.

“Haha, what makes you say that?” She said quickly.

“Mari, what’s going on?” Alya demanded.

“So! You guys up to lunch at my place?” Marinette asked, giving Adrien a meaningful look. They weren’t going to let this go on any longer than lunch, that wouldn’t be fair. She could see the frustration in Alya’s gaze, but also the worry, clearly wondering what she had done wrong.

“Sounds awesome, dudette,” Nino replied, shifting. “Perhaps we could, er, talk or something?”

“Talking would be good,” Adrien replied coolly. “Some answers would be appreciated.”

“Bro, what’s up with you today?”

“Yeah– what did I do?” Alya said, scowling at Adrien.

He scowled right back. “We’ll talk at lunch, Cesaire.”

Adrien was ruthlessly protective of Nino throughout their next few classes– even stealing him as his lab partner from Alya despite his best friend’s protests. Marinette didn’t know whether to laugh or comfort Alya, who seemed to be stuck somewhere between concerned and fuming. Her frustration was clear, but so was her worry.

“What did I do?” She practically begged as the lunch bell finally rang. “I know you know what’s going on, I’ve seen how you’ve been acting. Why is he so mad at me? He was fine yesterday at school! And I haven’t seen him since!”

“I dunno...” Marinette said uncertainly, shifting. “Let’s just go grab some lunch, I guess.”

“Mari?”

“Come on Alya,” She replied, knowing she couldn’t break character now. The boys were waiting for them by the door, and Adrien carefully wedged Nino between himself and Marinette, leaving Alya on the edges of the group. Nobody said anything as they headed over to the bakery, Nino awkwardly glancing between the three of them.

Sabine had four lunches ready for them when they arrived, Marinette having texted her earlier about their plans to come here during the break. She was smiling happily as they entered, which quickly turned to concern when she saw the clear tension between them.

“We’ll be up in my room, Mom, if that’s okay,” Marinette said, grabbing one of the plates from the counter. The others followed suit, thanking Sabine before they all headed upstairs. Alya hurried forward so she could be next to Nino, who put an arm around their waist. Adrien took this as his cue to let out a snort, before silence settled about them.

Lunch was awkward to say the least, all of them sitting on the floor of her room as they ate, no one knowing how to break the silence.

“Okay,” Alya growled as they were half way through their meal. “I’m sick of this– what is going on?”

“You know what you did,” Adrien snapped back, crossing his arms. There was a playful spark in his eyes, but his scowl was more than enough to cover it up.

“No I don’t!” Alya cried in frustration. “What did I do, Adrien? Why are you so mad? I’m sorry, for whatever it was– okay?”

“It’s not me you should be apologizing to,” Adrien said, tilting his head towards Nino. “But rather your *boyfriend*.”

“What?” Nino yelped. “Alya didn’t do anything, man!”

“Yes she did,” He growled, hands curled into fists. “And here she is acting like nothing even happened last night.”

“What?” She stared at them in confusion.

“Alya... we saw you,” Marinette said in a small voice. “There’s no point trying to hide it, okay? I don’t know why you did that... but I know you’re a good person so please just tell Nino the truth! He’ll forgive you!”

“I didn’t do anything!” She protested.

“Yes you did!” Adrien cried, slamming a fist against the floor. “We saw you Alya, you were kissing someone else! You’re cheating on Nino!”

Silence.

“What?” She cried. “Guys, I d-don’t know who or what you saw, but I’d never cheat on Nino. This has to be a misunderstanding.”

“Yeah dudes, Alya is as loyal as they come!” Nino said, pulling her close. Adrien gave Marinette a meaningful look, and she pretended to hesitate for a few seconds, before pulling out her phone. She already had the photo she had taken last night as Ladybug pulled up, which she turned for Nino and Alya to see.

Any guilt for pulling this act flew out the window the moment she saw their faces as they stared at the picture of Carapace and Alya kissing. They both paled, eyes widening in shock, alarm, then finally settling on a confused-horror. After a moment Nino flushed a little bit, looking like he was trying to say something, though just a few stuttering sounds came out. Alya just blankly stared at the photo, as if trying to make sense of it all.

“That’s you, isn’t it?” Adrien demanded.

“Y-yes, but—” Alya began, before freezing up when she realized that was probably the worst answer. “I mean no, that can’t possibly be me, who took this picture—?”

“Mari took it— and I recognize you, that is you! You just said yes!” Adrien snarled. “You were kissing Carapace! Why am I even surprised though, of course you’d jump at the chance to kiss a *superhero*, even if that means cheating on your own boyfriend!”

“Dude, slow down,” Nino said. “This is a misunderstanding, you see— er— I’m—”

“Nino you can’t!” Alya hissed, so quietly that they barely heard it. Adrien and Marinette glanced at each other, fighting smirks as they watched their friends panic. They couldn’t reveal their identities and explain that Nino was Carapace, and they already had confirmed that this was indeed Alya so they couldn’t play it off as someone else. They were cornered, and their only option was to admit that she had kissed ‘someone else’. Confess to cheating, even when she hadn’t.

“I’m sure it was just a mistake,” Marinette said hurriedly, concern in her voice. “This is Alya after all. She just needs to apologize and—!”

“Apologize! She cheated on Nino! He’s like a brother to me, I can’t just stand here and do nothing!” Adrien shouted, both of them eyeing their friends out of the corner of their vision. They both knew how they felt, panicked, though probably flattered at how much they cared

about them. It was the same thing they had felt when Alya had accused Adrien of cheating on Marinette.

“You know how much Alya loves heros, it was probably just an accident!” Marinette said. “She probably meant to kiss him on the cheek as a hello and missed–”

“You’ve seen the photos Mari, that was no little peck!” Adrien turned towards Nino. “You can’t just sit there and act like nothing happened. Stand up for yourself, Nino. Take a break from each other even if you want to give her a second chance so badly, but this isn’t something to just brush off. I won’t let you!”

“I wasn’t cheating on Nino!” Alya shouted.

“You kissed Carapace!”

“I love Nino!”

“Then explain what happened!” Adrien snarled. “You hurt my bro– so you have to deal with me now!”

“Dude,” Nino said softly. “I, erm, I’m thankful for the support, but me and Alya should talk about this... alone. We’ll sort this out, man, it’s cool.”

“No way,” Adrien growled, glaring at Alya. “We’re discussing this *now*. I want the honest truth, because that’s what you deserve. Why did you betray Nino like this?”

“I, um... I was a...” Alya was fumbling for words, and for once the reporter seemed at a loss for them. She looked at Nino desperately, as if hoping he’d have some explanation to give. Both looked so panicked, eyes wide as they struggled for an answer– but none could get both of them out of this.

Marinette was the first to crack, a small snort of a laugh escaping from her. Everyone looked at her, and she couldn’t hold it back any longer, bursting out laughing. Adrien snickered as well, grinning as he joined her. Alya and Nino looked between them in pure confusion, which only resulted in another burst of laughter.

“The look on your guys’ faces!” Marinette chortled. “Like a deer caught in the headlights!”

“More like a *fox* caught in the headlights,” Adrien said, giving the two of them the widest grin he could. If possible Alya and Nino paled even further, letting out small and uncertain chuckles.

“Heh heh, fox, why would you say fox?” Nino said quickly. “None of us are foxes, or have outfits that remotely resemble them– ouch!”

Alya had sharply elbowed Nino right in the ribs.

“No point in trying to hide it,” Adrien said with a smirk. “We know who you guys are, Rena, Carapace .”

“Oh no, oh no, no no...” Alya whispered. “You guys aren’t supposed to know! No one’s supposed to know, this is bad, this is bad bad bad...”

Nino on the other hand, frowned. He reached out, plucking Marinette’s phone from her hand and stared down at the picture. “You said you took this photo, right?”

“Sure did,” Marinette said smugly.

“But for it to be at this angle, and this close... that would have to mean you guys were on the roof with us and...” He looked up at them in confusion, and you could see the moment the realization passed over his face, amber eyes widening. He physically recoiled, jumping back. “Oh my sweet kwami!”

“You’d think the turtle would be the slower one,” Adrien said, while Nino pointed at them with a shaking finger, it switching back and forth between the two of them. Meanwhile Alya was still panicking over the fact their identities had been discovered.

“You two are—!” Nino cried, pausing, then swallowed. “Okay, Nino dude, you got this. Your friends are heroes, no different than your girlfriend being one... yeah, this is normal.”

“They’ll never give us our Miraculouses again!” Alya said, still panicking, apparently not listening to a word of what the others’ were saying. “We failed Ladybug! I’ll never get to see Trixx again or—”

“Alya!” Nino cried.

“What?!”

He shoved the phone in her face. “Marinette took this!”

“I know! We were discovered! This is bad!”

“*If Mari took this photo that means she was on the roof with us!*” Nino pressed, no longer shouting, just staring right at Alya as he waited for this information to sink in. Alya’s face was blank for a moment as she processed this, blinking.

“Looks like operation payback was a success,” Marinette said, enjoying her friends’ confusion a bit too much.

He held out his fist as she raised hers, the two fistbumping each other, voices calling in unison: “*Pound it!*”

Marinette had to cover her ears at the shriek that followed.

If Nino had been flabbergasted, Alya had put him to shame. She and Adrien burst out into giggles once more as she pointed between them, short babbles escaping her mouth in what seemed to be an attempt to talk. She just stared at them in shock, eyes drifting to the earrings she wore then to the ring on Adrien’s finger, more sounds coming from her. Finally she just let out a small whimper, leaning against Nino.

“Stop laughing!” Alya cried at them a minute later, once she had somewhat recovered from the shock. “You two are— this entire time you’ve guys have been— *You guys are Ladybug and Chat Noir!*” She pulled at her hair. “You two have been right in front of me this whole time and I didn’t even realize...”

“This was hands down the funniest way to tell you guys,” Marinette said.

“Funny?! That was a mean prank to pull! I thought you guys actually thought I was cheating on Nino and I didn’t know what to do and... and...” Alya paused, staring at them. “Wait, so this means when Adrien was kissing Ladybug... that meant he was actually kissing... oooooo.”

“Consider this as payback, sneaky fox,” Adrien said with a smirk. “You backed us into a corner, it was only fitting for us to do the same. Just be glad I didn’t chew you out in front of the entire school like you did for me.”

“You didn’t have to act like you hated me for the whole day!”

“Yes I did~” He said in a singsong voice, before chuckling. “Man, we’ve been waiting *ages* to pull this prank on you guys. But we had to wait for when one of you was transformed and the other wasn’t, and then for you guys to kiss while you were like that. It took us like seven patrols to finally get that picture.”

“Is *that* why you’ve taken us on so many patrols out of the blue?” Alya demanded. “So you could prank us, not train us?” She paused. “Oh gosh, I am *not* going to get used to this... my friends are Ladybug and Chat Noir...”

“You will in time,” Marinette replied. “It took us some time to adjust too once we revealed our identities.”

“I wrote fanfiction about you guys!” Alya cried. “Then asked *you* to read it!”

Marinette gave her a pointed look, before taking a long sip of her drink. Hazel eyes widened again in realization, and Alya buried her head into her hands, muttering under her breath.

“What is it now, babe?” Nino asked, leaning towards her, seemingly taking this much better than she was.

“Marinette would always write Rena Rouge and Carapace fanfiction...” Alya grumbled. “Asked me to read and edit them everytime I sent her Ladynoir fics... it was payback. All of it was just payback.”

“I just wanted you to feel as embarrassed as I did reading fics about myself,” Marinette said with a grin.

“And all those nice things you said about Rena?” Alya asked. “Was that just payback for me fangirling over Ladybug?”

“Of course not, I told you Rena was my favorite superhero and that’s no lie,” Marinette replied. “I didn’t pick the Ladyblogger and my biggest fan to have a Miraculous— I picked my

very best friend and someone I trust to have one.”

“Oh, get over here girl!” Alya cried, reaching out and dragging Marinette into a bear hug.

“I thought *I* was your favorite hero!” Adrien protested.

“Sorry Kitty, but Chat Noir is the most annoying hero,” Marinette replied, sticking out her tongue at him from over Alya’s shoulder. “If it means anything you are my favorite hero to kiss.”

“I am the most kissable,” He said with a dramatic flip of his hair.

“Get over yourself, dude,” Nino replied— and all four of them burst out laughing.

“I thought we couldn’t reveal our identities,” Alya said as they began to calm down. “You told me everything had to be a secret, so why did you tell us who you are now?”

“Well if we’re going to be a team, we need to be able to trust each other completely,” Marinette replied. “It will be easier to coordinate during attacks and make plans out of costume. Also, I really don’t like lying— and I’m sick of having to keep this a secret from you.”

“Team?” Nino asked, blinking.

“Oh yeah,” Adrien said with a Chat-like grin. “Did we mention that we didn’t just come here to prank you guys? We have a gift for you too.”

From his pocket he pulled out a familiar bracelet, and from her purse Marinette pulled out a necklace. Alya took in a sharp breath at the sight of her Miraculous, while Nino’s eyes lit up with excitement at his. They held out the jewels to their friends, which were snatched right out of their hands with no hesitation. Two bursts of light filled the room, their kwamis being released from them.

“Nino!” Wayzz cried, zipping straight towards Nino. He cupped the Turtle in his hands, bringing him close to his chest in a hug.

“Little dude!” Nino said happily as he held him, then wasted no time to slip the bracelet on his wrist. “It’s only been one day, but I’ve missed you!”

Alya was looking at them, hope in her eyes as she slipped on the necklace. “Does this mean what I think it does?”

Marinette smiled, watching as Trixx buried himself into Alya’s hair, who scratched the top of his head. “We want you guys to wear your Miraculouses full time now. Become permanent heros, just like us.”

Tikki and Plagg came out from their hiding spots, dancing about the humans happily and chirping greetings to the other kwamis. Neither Trixx nor Wayzz seemed keen to leave their chosen though, especially Wayzz, currently curled up on Nino’s shoulder. Eventually Tikki

settled onto Marinette's knee, and Plagg began digging through Adrien's bag in search of cheese. Alya was watching their kwamis with awe, before looking at them with a huge smile.

"Wow," She said softly. "This is amazing, like a dream come true."

"You're officially a superhero," Marinette said. "Full time."

"No girl, I'm officially a superhero *with* my best friend and my boyfriend. And some annoying sunshine boy that likes to dress up as a cat," She said, leaning back. "Also I get to be with Trixx, I've missed this little guy so much."

"I've missed you too," Trixx said, burrowed away somewhere in Alya's hair. "It's so hard being bonded with someone but being stuck in the Miracle Box. We're going to have so much fun now!"

"So, um, we just wear our Miraculouses all the time?" Nino checked, offering some of his sandwich to Wayzz.

"Yes, try to keep them inconspicuous though," Tikki said. "Have a causal story ready on where you got it in case it's brought up in conversation— fumbling around for a story just sounds suspicious."

"As for your kwamis make sure you have food for them at all times, not just when we take you out on patrol," Adrien added. "You never know when you need to transform or recharge. Or they're just gluttons like Plagg."

"Am not!" A muffled voice protested from Adrien's bag, which was soon followed by the sound of chewing.

Everyone let out a laugh.

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